

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND DOMINION OVER THE HEARTS OF MEN

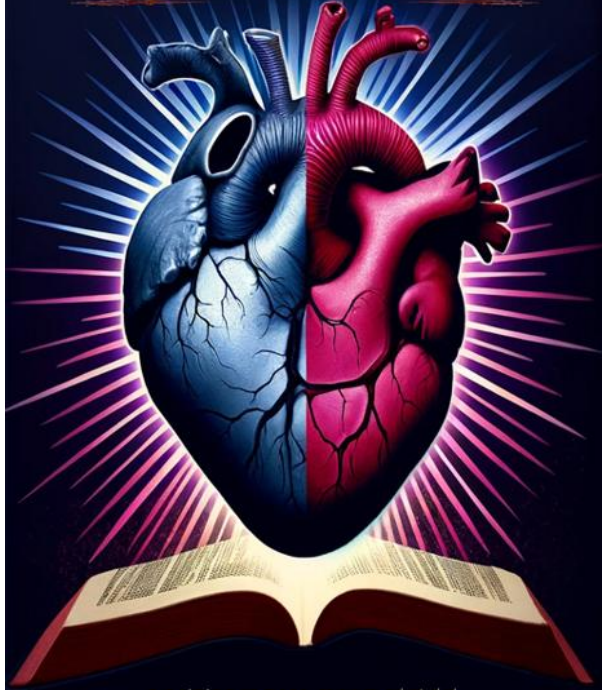
TAKING AWAY THE STONY HEART. GIVING A HEART OF
FLESH. AND WRITING GOD'S LAW IN THE HEART



ANTHONY BURGESS

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God's Sovereignty and Dominion Over the Hearts of Men

by Anthony Burgess

Of the Nature of Grace, under the Expressions of Taking away the
Stony Heart, Giving a Heart of Flesh, and Writing God's Law in the
Heart, with the Counterfeit Thereof.

From Spiritual Refining: OR A TREATISE OF GRACE and
ASSURANCE.

Wherein are handled,

Sermons Preached and now Published by Anthony Burgess,
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SERMON I.

Displaying God's Sovereignty and Dominion over the Hearts of Men.

I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. - EZEK. 32:26

At verse 21 in this chapter, God begins to reveal the treasures of His mercies. We may say, this latter part of the chapter is like the Land of Canaan, a land of promise, flowing with spiritual milk and honey. Here is the promise of deliverance from their miserable captivity (verse 24). But because outward mercies are nothing without spiritual mercies, there is: 1. The promise of the pardon of their sins. It was not enough to be delivered from the power and rage of their enemies unless they were also saved from the guilt of their sins; this is promised in verse 25. But if men have pardon of sin and are not saved from the power of it, they will every moment make themselves subject to their former misery. Therefore, in verse 26, there is a promise of conversion and sanctification, with the consequent effects of it, in verse 27. So that this text, if opened, is like a box of precious ointment; or like the tree in the Revelation, not only the fruit, but the very leaves, every particular word has its efficacy.

For better understanding, consider:

1. The Author and Efficient Cause of the Mercy Promised:

"I will take away," "I will give." See here God's sovereignty and immediate power over men's hearts. No king or emperor in the world is able to say, "I will give men other hearts."

2. The Mercy Promised:

- By removing the obstruction or contrary: "I will take away the stony heart."
- By the position of the good vouchsafed:
 - In the root, habit, or fountain: "A heart of flesh."

- In the fruit, stream, or actual operations: "I will cause them to walk in my statutes," etc.

3. Observable Aspects:

- The manner of God's vouchsafing this: It is by way of promise, "I will do thus and thus"; an absolute promise, not suspended upon man's merits or pre-requisites.
- The manner of the working of this: It is irresistible, insuperable, omnipotent. Thus, the heart of a man is a subject merely patient to receive it; not a free agent to co-operate with this mighty grace.

In all these particulars, we shall find what Samson did in the lion's carcass, many honeycombs of spiritual honey. Let us begin with the first: The sole efficient cause, who has dominion over men's hearts: "I will take away the heart of stone." He who, by His omnipotent word, could say, "Let there be light," and there was light, also here says, "Let the stony heart become soft; let the hard heart become tender," and it presently yields, it does not withstand God. As if God had said, "I know your hearts are too hard for you, you cannot master them, you cannot change them, but I can do it." Whence observe:

That God Hath an Immediate Dominion and Power Over Men's Hearts

This is the sole prerogative of God: He can raise whatever terror and horror He pleases there, and all the world cannot assuage it. He also can give peace and comfort, and all the devils in hell cannot take it away. If they were so affected as to cry out, "What manner of person

is this, whom the winds and seas obey?" how much more may we cry out, "What is that God, how great and wonderful, who works in the hearts of men what He pleases?"

Thus, Psalm 33:15, an excellent Psalm against atheism, wherein the Psalmist gives several arguments to prove the providence of God: that things are not carried in this world as men's lusts and counsels would have it, but as God orders it, either in mercy or justice. This, I say, the Psalmist would have men believe; for when we see things done in the world contrary to what we judge righteousness, and yet no judgments immediately follow, we are ready to be tempted about our faith. As Pompey, when he was overcome by Caesar, fled to Athens, and there disputed there was no providence because he thought he was deserted in a just cause. But this is to be ignorant of God and not to be able to plough with His heifer, to understand the Scripture, by which all those Divine riddles may be opened. Now among other arguments, he brings one that confirms my doctrine: "He fashioneth their hearts alike." The argument is this: He that makes the heart knows everything in the heart and can make it think, will, and love as He pleases. As the artificer that makes a clock knows all things about the clock and makes it strike when and where he pleases. The words are emphatical: He fashioneth; the same word is used of God's fashioning man's body out of the dust at first. So that God can as easily form and fashion the souls of men as He can their bodies; He can as easily strike them with fear as the body with diseases. Again, "He fashioneth them alike"; in the Hebrew קָלַם (kulam), that is, as some expound, all men's hearts, there is not one man's excepted; or else as others, totally and wholly, there is nothing that can arise in the heart, not the least thought or the least motion, but it comes by God's providence. Hence Proverbs 21:1, the king's heart is said to be in the hand of the Lord. A king's heart, the greatest of men, whose counsels and purposes seem to be most hidden and

most potent to be effected; and it's in the hand of the Lord: a notable expression to show how easily He can govern and turn it as He pleases. And then he uses an excellent similitude: He turneth it as the rivers of waters. That as a stream of water running down the torrent can easily by the husbandman be stopped and turned down another course, either to refresh his ground or annoy it. Thus the Lord turneth the hearts of those that rule in the world, either for mercy or judgment, as He pleases.

Now to better clear this truth, we will amplify this sovereign dominion of God over men's hearts in three particulars: 1. In the way of His general providence. 2. In the way of His justice. 3. In the way of His grace. And in all these three particulars, God is admirable.

In the way of His providence, His power over hearts is manifested:

Firstly, in a sudden changing and raising up of their hearts by His mighty work for such employments that they were in no way able for before: That which all the men in the world could not give, that which all the angels in heaven could not, God does immediately. Thus Saul, when he was appointed to be king over Israel, was of the meanest tribe, the meanest family in the tribe, an ordinary man; and yet it is said, God gave him another heart. And when he had that, with what courage and boldness did he take the government upon him. That other spirit was not a spirit of grace and godliness, as the Arminians would have it, but of government and political abilities; in token whereof, Samuel at the sacrifice gave him a shoulder of it, to show the government upon his shoulders, and how he must bear the people. And as this was wonderful for God to make such a change in him, so in the people also to receive him for their king. All those followed him whose hearts God had touched, says the text (1 Samuel 10:26). God did but touch their hearts, as the musician does the

strings of his instrument, and they sound what he would have them. Such a spirit of government those seventy elders had that were to assist Moses; God took of Moses' spirit and bestowed it on them. Thus the judges that God raised up in Israel, when they were in so many extremities, especially Joshua, whom some say was the heathens' Hercules: These all felt the mighty work of God upon their hearts.

God's Power Over Men's Hearts in a General Way

Secondly, this is seen in the abating and assuaging of those fierce affections and angry resolutions that men have against one another. God, in a moment, can command those waves and winds to be still. We have two famous examples of this:

The first is in Esau and Jacob. What resolved malicious intentions were in Esau, after the mourning for his father was over, to kill Jacob? And now there was a full opportunity put into his hand; Jacob had no power to withstand him. Yet, suddenly, Esau's affections are wholly changed toward him (Genesis 33:20). How did this black cloud blow away so immediately? Was it not because God worked and moved upon his heart?

The second instance is of Laban and Jacob. He went out in great fury against Jacob, but what did God say to him? "See that you do not speak any word to Jacob" (Genesis 31:24). This immediately softened his heart. We might add to this the meltings of Saul's heart towards David at times, even when otherwise he was full of poison and venom. Thus also, Joseph found favour in the eyes of Pharaoh. A notable instance is in 2 Chronicles 18:31, where the army of the

Syrians, surprising Jehoshaphat and intending to destroy him, caused him to cry out, and God helped him. But how? The text says, "God moved them to depart from him." Thus, we see that all our appeals should be to God. Men do not have their hearts in their own power; they cannot think harm toward you, nor can they but think and purpose good toward you, where God moves their hearts to do so. Thus, He says to these waves, "Hitherto you shall go, and no further"; He binds up these clouds in the air.

God's Providential Working on Men's Hearts

Thirdly, this is seen in the inclination and determination of them (when they are indifferent in themselves) to such ways whereby He will bring honour and glory to Himself. In nothing under the heavens is God's sovereignty so much seen as here. For the hearts of men are those great instruments by which He produces so many notable effects in the world.

Nebuchadnezzar is remarkable herein. The prophet describes him as standing at two ways (Ezekiel 21:21-22), either to fight against Israel or another nation. Now, it was all one to him which way he went, yet God so ordered that he should go against them. Thus, as God is said to ponder and weigh men's hearts in one sense, so in this sense also, He lays men's hearts in a balance, and they easily incline this way or that way, and God puts in something that inclines their hearts rather this way than that way. Hence, the great monarchs of the world, the Babylonian and Persian, are compared to hatchets, to hammers, to bees, over which God has command. The whole world is His host, and God is the emperor or commander; He bids this go, and it goes; that come, and it comes, as the centurion did his men under him.

What a wonderful work was that upon Cyrus's heart, and his successors', to let the Jews build their temple to God again. Indeed, what a strange occurrence was that of good to Mordecai, when the king could not sleep, and called for a book to read rather than for sports or pleasures. Out of all the books, he chose the history or chronicles of memorable things done in the kingdom, and in that history, he focused on the good service Mordecai had done and was not rewarded. It is also remarkable that when God intended to punish Abimelech and the Shechemites (Judges 9), it is said, "God sent an evil spirit between them," and that was their ruin at last.

Oh then, how much is this God to be feared, to be obeyed, who does in heaven and earth what He wills! It is not as great men, mighty men, or wise men will, but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand.

God's Notable Way in the Old Testament

Lastly, in the Old Testament, God had a notable way of bringing about the hearts of men for His great and mighty works through dreams.

The Three Kinds of Dreams

There are three kinds of dreams: natural, diabolical (by way of delusion), or supernatural, immediately raised in men by God. In such a way, God formerly did inform men sometimes. Thus, Jacob, laying his head on a stone, had a dream, and Joseph had a dream about his superiority over his brethren (Genesis 48:12). Even Pilate's wife had a dream, which she told Pilate, that he should have nothing to do with that just man, to shed his innocent blood (Matthew 27:19).

However, it is disputed whether the Devil put that dream into her, because he would not have Christ crucified, knowing that by Christ's death, his kingdom would be dissolved. But how does that agree with Satan's entering into Judas's heart, tempting him to betray his Master? There were two great kings, and heathens, who had no knowledge of God, and yet God visited them by dreams of things to come: Pharaoh by seven years of barrenness and seven of fruitfulness, and Nebuchadnezzar of the change of his kingdom and the mighty alienation of it in time. But they did not understand them until Joseph and Daniel revealed the mystery to them.

God's Power Over Hearts in Justice

Secondly, God's power over the hearts of men, in a way of justice, is also admirable in two respects:

First, in infatuating the counsels and thoughts of wise men. He strikes the great ones of the world, when He is angry, with the spirit of madness and giddiness (Isaiah 24:45). Thus David prayed that God would turn Ahithophel's counsel into folly; only God could do it. The princes of Zoan and Egypt, who thought they were wise, and none like them, God struck with folly and giddiness. So true is that old observation, *Quos Deus vult perdere, prius dementat*: "Whom God intends to destroy, He first infatuates." When God intends to destroy and ruin man, He first begins with their understanding, inflicting giddiness upon it. The eyes of a man first die, they say, and so men perish first in their counsels, thoughts, and designs, then afterward in other things. Thus God is said to catch the crafty in their own wisdom, and He knows that the thoughts of the wise are vain (1 Corinthians 3).

Secondly, God's justice upon men's hearts is in the spiritual blinding and hardening of them. Thus God is said to harden Pharaoh's heart; and Eli's sons would not heed good counsel because it was of the Lord to destroy them. "Whom He wills, He hardens," says the Apostle (Romans 9). But this is a tender point, and divines are extensive on it. Only know that God does not infuse hardness of heart, nor any evil disposition in men, for He cannot be the author of that of which He is the avenger. Rather, it is by withdrawing and denying His softening grace. As the withdrawal of fire from water makes it immediately cold and return to its natural temperament, so it is here. God forsaking the heart by denying His softening operations, it cannot but grow stiff and obdurate against God.

God's Gracious Power Over Hearts

Thirdly, let us view the glorious power of God over the hearts of men in a gracious way; and that is properly intended in the text: "I will give a heart of flesh." Now, God's work on the heart, when He changes it, includes these particulars:

First, He convinces and enlightens the mind with such a glorious light that the converted person stands amazed at it. "That we should show forth His praise who has translated us out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "And you who were darkness are now made light" (Ephesians 4). This is the seeing eye that God vouchsafes to some men. If restoring sight to the blind was such a wonderful work, how much more wonderful is it to give a man new light? God gives a man new abilities to see; He not only brings the object and the medium, but the ability also. Until this is done, it is impossible for men to ever love or desire what is good. Oh, look up then to this! You are apt to be wise in your own eyes, to say, as the Pharisees did,

"We see." But pray earnestly to God for this spirit of illumination; you will then find as much difference in yourself as one in a dark, close dungeon and another that is come out into the open sunshine.

Secondly, God's work on the heart is to raise up such affections as may make the yoke of Christ easy and may make you embrace what is good with delight and joy. For here is the great obstruction against conversion: men have carnal and earthly hearts; they delight in what is evil, they embrace the dunghill, they love the mire, like swine. Hence all heavenly and spiritual objects are grievous and burdensome to them. Now then, God can turn this clod of earth into a star in the sky; He can change this heavy, lumpish temper into a gracious, spiritual disposition. When He does this, what was once tedious and grievous now becomes pleasant and joyful.

Thirdly, He makes the heart tender and melting. This is the great mercy here promised, for naturally the heart is a stone in spiritual things; it has no apprehension, no joy, no sense. Lay all the wrath of God before it, and you cannot move it, you cannot make it mourn and grieve. But when God puts forth this power, then a dry wilderness is turned into a pool of water; then the mountains melt like wax before Him; then rocks are turned into streams of water. Oh, then admire and pray for this mighty work of God! Do you complain that your heart is like the nether millstone? Oh, it will not melt, it will not change, it will not yield to God! Go to this heart maker, and He will be a heart breaker.

The Most Admirable Operation Upon the Heart

Fourthly, the most admirable operation upon the heart is the bowing and bending of it, making it willing where it was once unwilling. This expression in the text, "I will give a heart of flesh," denotes the efficacy and intimacy of God's power. The Apostle says, "God works in us to will" (Philippians 2:13). Upon this very point hinges the great and special truth that the Orthodox maintain against Arminians and Papists. They may grant an irresistible work of light upon the understanding and a potent work upon the affections, but they will not yield that God makes the will to will, that He so bows and changes the heart that it readily embraces what it once abhorred.

Yet, in all who are converted, this efficacious power must necessarily be put forth. Does not experience show that every man's will, before converting grace came, was as opposed to God and as averse to all holiness as any natural man's in the world? Did he not dispute, argue, refuse, and show all unwillingness until God broke open the gate of the soul? God comes into the heart while the doors of it are shut. Thus, He is said to open the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14). And Paul—was he willing to receive Christ? Did he not oppose, persecute, and violently pursue the Church of God? While he was in these furious outrages, did not God in a moment bow his heart, so that he cried out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" But more on this in the manner of God's conversion.

God's Sovereignty in Comfort and Affliction

Lastly, the sovereignty of God's power is to be adored, for He can comfort the heart with heavenly joy or wound it with sad and heavy temptations and desertions when He pleases. Our hearts are calm or tempestuous, even as He speaks the word (Job 34:29). Who can give

trouble if He speaks quietness, whether to a person or a nation? God struck the heart of great Nebuchadnezzar and made him like a beast. He can strike the heart of a wicked man and make him roar like one damned in hell. Thus, we see David sometimes complaining of great terrors that distracted him, and at other times his heart overflowed with joy. This ebbing and flowing is according to the presence or absence of God's favour.

Practical Applications

This point is worthy of all practical improvement:

First, it shows what poor, weak, and empty shadows all the great, wise, powerful, and mighty men of the world are. They are not the masters of their own hearts; they cannot tell what they shall think, what they shall purpose, much less do, the next day. Well does the Psalmist say, "They are lighter than dust or vanity" (Psalm 62:9). What folly, then, is it to put confidence in such, to trust in any arm of flesh? You see a shadow is not able to move itself, but is this way or that way as the body stirs; so is all earthly and human power. God uses these rods, these axes, whichever way He pleases. Oh then, say nothing is great but God, hope in nothing, trust in nothing but in God. A hill or a high mountain may seem significant compared with the low valleys, but if compared with the heavens, it is but a pin's point. So earthly power and greatness may seem terrifying to those who are weaker. Giants are tall things to grasshoppers, but compare them with God, and they are nothing, yea less than nothing.

Secondly, if God is thus powerful over the heart, let the godly be comforted who find their hearts too strong for them. Oh, their proud heart, their hard heart, their unbelieving heart, their earthly heart—what shall they do? It is true, should you pray to the potentates of the

world, yea the angels of heaven, to give you a better heart, they could do nothing. But God is gracious, ready, willing, and able.

A Warning to the Wicked

Lastly, let this be a warning to wicked men. How easily can He raise terrors and horrors in that jolly heart of yours! If Judas and Cain would have given all the world for a quiet heart, they could not have purchased it. Do not then presume too long; do not continue to offend Him. He can send you home with a roaring, restless heart. He can make you cry out, "There is no help for me. Oh, for a drop of ease!"

SERMON II.

Of the Heart of Stone, and What Wickedness That Name Implies.

"I will take away the stony heart, &c." - EZEKIEL 36:26

The second thing observed in this Magna Charta, or grand promise of conversion, is the good itself spoken of, which is described: 1. Negatively, by removing the opposite; and 2. Positively. Let us consider what is that grand obstruction which must be taken away before we can have a heart of flesh; and that is the heart of stone, which must be removed.

The word "stone" when used tropically in the Scripture, is sometimes taken in a good sense and sometimes in a bad sense. In a good sense,

it means that which is firm and enduring. Thus, Christ is called a foundation stone (Isaiah 28:16) and believers are called living stones (1 Peter 2:5) because of their solid and firm union with Christ. In this sense, Bonaventure said the contrary to this promise: "Nolo Domine cor carneum, da lapideum," which means, "O Lord, I do not want a heart of flesh, that is, flexible and easily drawn any way, but a stony heart, that is firm and enduring in good against all opposition whatsoever."

But in this place, the word "stone" is used in an ill sense, for a senseless, stupid, and rebellious heart against God's word. As the stone in the fire will sooner fly in the face of him that sits by than melt, so the heart of every man by nature will sooner oppose, gainsay, and rage at those who reprove or instruct than melt or yield obedience. Whereas Jeremiah 23:29 says God's word is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces, here it will have no such operation unless God makes this promise effectual.

The Natural State of Man's Heart

Every man naturally, with respect to any divine or spiritual good, has a heart of stone.

The disease of the stone in the body is an exquisite and inexpressible torment; how much would men give to be eased of it? But this stone in the heart, whereby we are wholly senseless and stupid about heavenly things, moved neither with love, fear, nor grief, is above all this torment if men did rightly judge of it. It was the poet's fiction that men were made of stones: *Inde genus durum sumus* ("Hence we are a hard race"). To be sure, there is this spiritual stone on the heart, whereby we are a hard, tough, rugged, and intractable people. Wherever God converts men by the ministry, there He raises up

children to Abraham out of stones, makes water to gush out of rocks, and dry bones to gather together and live.

To amplify this, let us consider how much wickedness this epithet "stony" implies in every man naturally.

Senselessness and Stupidity

First, it denotes senselessness and stupidity, for so commonly we express that by a stone. We say of a senseless, irrational man, "As good speak to a stone." Thus, Nabal's heart is said to be dead within him and become like a stone (1 Samuel 25:37); he was astonished and amazed through the danger coming upon him, made stupid and apprehending nothing. The Scripture, by way of contempt, calls the heathen idols wood and stones because they had eyes and saw not, feet and walked not. Just such stocks and stones are all men by nature; they have ears and hear not, they have hearts and understand not.

Whereas the prophet cried to that insensible altar of stones, "O altar, altar" (1 Kings 13:2), and it immediately rent asunder, here the ministers of God may cry aloud, and no man is sensible of his sin or cries out, "What have I done?" Oh then, pray that God would remove that heavy stone which lies upon your heart, that under all preaching and teaching makes you still so insensible, that ministry or no ministry, judgments or no judgments, are all one to you. Do not then be any longer like the stones in the wall, who know nothing, understand nothing, though they are built in the walls of the church where much preaching occurs. Some derive the word "λαός" (laos, meaning "the people") from "λάας" (laas, meaning "a stone")—I know for other reasons, but we may say it because of the stony heart and insensibility that is in them.

Incapacity and Indisposedness

Secondly, it implies incapacity and indisposedness unto anything that is holy. As they are not sensible, they are much less prepared and fitted for any spiritual duty. The building of the material Temple was a type of believers. Now, as the stone could not polish and fit itself for the Temple, so neither have we any power in ourselves to take away the least enmity that is against God. This text triumphs over all those corrupt doctrines that advance free will and power in man to spiritual things. What, can a stone make itself live? Can Ezekiel's dry bones produce life by themselves? Could the bone taken out of Adam's side make itself a living woman? It is true, man has reason, understanding, and a will, and so in that sense, he is not a stone; but he has no reason to think what is good, no will to choose what is good, and so in that respect, he is like a stone.

Hence, we need not wonder if men of great parts and wisdom are yet so foolish and void of all love and delight in what is good. A man may be very quick and apprehensive in all matters of learning and human perfections, yet be a very stone regarding what is godly. Nicodemus had great understanding in the law of God, yet how unfit he was for the doctrine about regeneration!

Active Contrariety and Resistance

Thirdly, the stoniness of the heart implies not only indisposition but active contrariety and resistance to what is holy. Thus, the Jews are called a people of a stiff neck, which is the same as a stony heart (Acts 7:51). "You always resist the Holy Ghost" (ἀντιπίπτω, antipipto), you fall like a heavy stone with violence upon the word of God and all divine exhortations. The stone is not only indisposed for

polishing, but as much as lies in it, resists and beats back the hammer that falls upon it. Oh, this active enmity and vigorous opposition in all men by nature to that which is holy is much to be lamented.

The Apostle in Romans 8 speaks of this enmity of the flesh, which prevails so far that it makes a man not only not subject, but unable to be subject to the law of God. These two are contrary: the spiritual law and the carnal heart, just as light and darkness, fire and water cannot accord, so neither can these. Marvel not then if you see men whose thoughts, purposes, affections, and all endeavours are against godliness. Their hearts conceive mischief against it; their tongues are always railing or deriding it. Can the toad vent honey? Can the serpent spit cordials? No more can these endure what is supernatural.

Hardness and Impenetrability

Fourthly, this describes the hardness of the heart and its impenetrability. It is a stone, and though the word is a two-edged sword, is it any wonder if a sword cannot pierce through a hard stone? Scripture, in Ephesians 4:18, speaks of a threefold hardness: natural, acquired by voluntary sins against conscience, and judicial, inflicted as a just judgment by God upon those who have rebelled against the light. This natural hardness is what we speak of, the hardness that is in every man and woman.

Take the most civil and ingenuous man, who is so tractable in all things of morality, yet he has a hard heart toward what is spiritual. The doctrine of repentance, mortification, and powerful walking with God can find no entrance in him. Oh, therefore, that this spiritual hardness were more apprehended! You can complain of hard times,

of hard dealings in the world. Oh, what hard dealing has God from you! His judgments have not broken your heart; His mercies have not melted your heart. Oh, think if there were any softness, any drops, any meltings in you, you would not have continued to this day such a rebellious wretch against God. *Illud est cor durum, quod non trepidat ad nomen cordis duri* ("That is a hard heart which does not tremble at the name of a hard heart"). If your soul does not break, tremble, and melt at the very preaching about a stony heart, it is because you are overwhelmed by it. This hard heart is elsewhere called a heart of adamant, which means a heart that cannot be turned. Oh, this is your case; nothing has tamed you or humbled you to this day.

Pertinency and Immovability

Fifthly, this word describes the pertinency and immovability of the heart from the way of sin. A great heavy stone lies many years in the same place; and thus it is with every man naturally, how self-willed, how immovable! You cannot stir him out of his former ways of impiety. Though he hears much, though he is entreated, reproved, and constantly warned over and over again, yet he is still the same man he was.

Just as the godly are commended for their immovable state in godliness and in happiness, standing like Zion, which can never be moved, so are they in a state of wickedness and impiety. Oh, how daily experience witnesses this pertinency of men's hearts in adhering to wickedness! When they are so convinced that they can say nothing for their sins, they must confess it is their duty to be other men. They cannot say one word for self-justification, yet they will not move from their former course of impieties.

What kind of hearts we have was typically represented by Moses when the law was commanded to be written in stones. While one main reason was to preserve the laws perpetually—as heathen lawgivers have commanded their laws to be engraved on brass or cypress trees that will not putrefy—the Apostle alludes to an allegory when he tells the Corinthians they were his epistle, not written (2 Corinthians 3:3) in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. To have hearts of stone is to be pertinacious, willful. Say what you can, bring the Scripture ever so plainly, demonstrate and convince the heinousness of sin ever so clearly, yet nothing shall make any alteration in them. They will be wicked because they will be.

The Coldness and Lack of Grace in a Heart of Stone

Sixthly, a heart of stone is altogether cold and destitute of any warmth or heat of grace. A stone is nothing but hardened earth, and as dryness and coldness are the two properties of that element, so are they of a stone. Hence, it was a miracle to bring water out of the rock: *Citius e pumice aquam* (Sooner get water out of a stone) is a proverb. Stones have these two qualities, as the earth out of which they are generated: dryness and coldness. There is no moisture, no wateriness in them, and thus it is in every man's heart—a dry, barren spirit with no juice, no sap of any grace. Therefore, the Greek words σκληρότης (sklerotes, hardness) and ξηρότης (xerotes, dryness) excellently express this cursed temper, for dryness in any herb means it is withered and good for nothing, as all the juice is gone from it.

Men by nature have not the least dropping or melting of soul. A man may have a very tender, juicy heart about earthly things. If a husband, wife, or any earthly advantage is lost, rivers of water can

gush from his eyes. They may be of a pitiful and tender complexion, yet as dry and barren as a stone regarding the sins they have committed and the iniquities they are guilty of.

Indeed, David speaks of a drought upon his soul, like a parched wilderness (Psalm 42:1), but that was in a gracious sense because of the earnest pantings and longings he had for the enjoyment of God's favour. But in a very wicked and desperate sense, men have no meltings or thawings of soul upon any divine administrations. The other property is coldness: "As cold as a stone," we say; and thus every man's heart is destitute of all that fire and heat which usually accompany the life of grace. Hence, men are said to be dead in sins (Ephesians 2:1); death and coldness go together. The Spirit of God in its operations is compared to fire because of its efficacy and fervency; men destitute of this spirit are wholly lifeless and cold in anything that is good.

Heaviness and Earthliness

Seventhly, seeing a stone is nothing but a product of the earth, it also has the property of the earth, which is heaviness or gravity—an inclination to descend, to fall downwards. This is wonderfully seen in every man's disposition by nature: his affections are wholly set upon earthly things. Though he has a body straight up towards heaven, excelling other creatures, yet his soul is bowed down to the ground. So, in this sense, as well as others, we may say, he is a worm and no man. The bodily curse of the serpent is spiritually fulfilled on him: to lick the dust of the earth and to make that his food. This is the heavy portion of every man by nature: to swallow down iniquity like water, to centre upon earthly objects as naturally as the stone falls downward.

Wonder not, then, if you see men wholly plunged in earthly affairs. They mind not, they regard not, they understand not heavenly things. For how can the earth ascend upwards? How can a clod of clay move itself towards the skies? There must be a change of our natural properties before these things can be done.

Signs of a Stony Heart

Having thus described the properties of this stony heart, let us now consider some effects or signs that abundantly show that men by nature have such hearts of stone.

First, what can be a greater evidence than the security, quiet, and ease which men naturally have, though thus obnoxious to guilt and the wrath of God? Consider what the word of God says of every man by nature: how it aggravates his sin and misery, makes him every moment ready to fall into eternal torments, and declares that all within him and without him is hated by God all day long. Consider all this and believe it. Now, what a stone and stock is man, that for all this truth of God, informing, threatening, and cursing, he is no more troubled and affected about himself! Certainly, were men not like Niobe, turned into marbles and stones, they could never be thus stupid. They would run up and down crying out, "What shall we do to be changed? How may this stone, this mountain, be removed and thrown into a sea of tears and sorrow?"

Do you then doubt whether men by nature are so stupid and senseless about divine things? Look no further than to see how they can eat, drink, rejoice, and be secure, even when so many woes are denounced against them. Oh then, say, "Lord, give me a soft heart, give me a broken heart. Yet, Lord, it is not broken. Oh, let any

judgment fall upon me rather than this hard heart. Oh, let any affliction lie upon me rather than this heart of stone."

Secondly, this stony, senseless heart is manifested in that, although in general they commend holiness and godliness and in general detest and abhor vice, yet when it comes to the particular, they act and love that which they did in the general condemn. For example, approach any profane man wallowing in gross sin and ask, "Is it not an excellent, admirable thing, a life to be desired, to live with the fear of God, to obey His law, to take heed of impiety, to walk religiously, soberly, and righteously?" Without a doubt, they will agree. Yet the same men live in direct opposition to this piety.

If men were not stones and stocks, they could not help but see their contradiction. They could not help but see how vainly they oppose themselves. If wickedness is to be abhorred, then their own wickedness, those lusts they live in, are to be loathed.

Evidence of a Heart of Stone

Thirdly, It is evident that men have this heart of stone because they do not consider the extreme contrariety between their wicked lives and the holy profession they claim. Whoever is baptized into the name of Christ and acknowledges His law thereby commits himself to live as Christ, his Lord, has commanded. The Apostle James extensively shows the vanity and insufficiency of a faith that does not lead a man to give universal obedience to what God commands. The Apostle urges us in Philippians 1:27 that our conversation should be as that which befits the Gospel of Christ, to be sheep and not swine.

If men were not mere idols, having eyes and seeing not, hearts and perceiving not, it would be impossible for them to join an unholy life

with a holy faith, an impure, profane life with so sacred and pure a profession. Can you see or observe anything and not notice this? Why has Christ called you out of the world but to live in an unspotted manner?

Evidence in the Response to God's Wrath and Love

Lastly, we discover stony hearts in that neither the inexpressible wrath of God revealed in Scripture nor the love of Christ and the joys of heaven promised work us out of our sins. What can be a greater argument of our stupidity than neglecting either of these? The wrath of God manifested in the word—how unsupportable is it! Is not hell described by everything that is terrible: fire and brimstone, chains of darkness, despairing horror, a death without death, crying for death that cannot be had? The damned in hell can neither kill themselves nor be destroyed by others, and this torment continues to all eternity, which is a perpetual woe, with no past or future.

For all this fury to be made known to a sinner, yet for him to continue in his sins, desperately venturing upon it, must you not cry out, "Oh men, not men, but stones!" And then, on the contrary, consider the love of God described in the Gospel. To see Christ, God and man, made poor, miserable, ignominious, lying under spiritual agonies, grappling with the infinite anger of God, and at last dying that cursed death for our sakes—would not this make even stones melt? And yet our hearts are not softened by this love. The Temple was rent, the very sun was in a fainting eclipse, as historians say; yet your heart is not rent, nor does your spirit faint within you.

Besides, the joys of heaven, so full, pure, and eternal, are offered to you if you will forsake your sin. Might they not be like the hot sunbeams that arise and melt the ice? But with man naturally, all is in vain. Earthly comforts are most loved and desired before they are enjoyed, and when enjoyed, they do not satisfy and are thus less esteemed. But heavenly joys are less desired and loved before enjoyment; but when partaken of, the desire will increase, and love will then embrace more than faith could believe or hope desire.

Application

First, do not wonder if men, after much preaching, many judgments, and mercies, remain obdurate and immovable in their wickedness. This text tells you the cause of all: they have hearts of stone. Indeed, how many are worse than stones, for *gutta cavat lapidem*—continual dropping will wear away a stone and consume it at last. But the word of God has often distilled like a soft rain upon you, and behold, you are not at all softened; not one lust is yet washed away. Stones, upon a change of weather, will stand on dew as if they were sensible of the alteration. But how many changes and alterations does God make by His just judgments on sinners, and your heart is not affected?

Oh then, let this be your daily prayer: "Lord, I find a load upon me, a mountain, a heavy stone upon me. I cannot pray for it, I cannot mourn for it. Lord, whatever you shall deny me, deny me not the removal of this."

SERMON III.

Of God's Making a True Convert's Heart Tender and Flexible for Every Duty. Also, What a Heart of Flesh Implies, with the Effects and Consequences of It.

"And I will give you a heart of flesh." - EZEKIEL 36:26

We come, in the third place, to consider the mercy as it is positively set down: "I will give a heart of flesh." If "flesh" were taken here properly for a massy part, then it could be no gracious promise, for every man's heart by nature is of flesh. But "flesh" is taken improperly or metaphorically. When it is used in the Scripture improperly, it is either taken in a good sense or a bad sense.

In a bad sense, it either denotes fragility, misery, and vanity, as in "All flesh is grass" and "Your horses are flesh, not spirit" (Isaiah 40:6; Isaiah 31:3), or it denotes sinfulness and corruption, as in "Whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6) and "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18). It should greatly humble us that the Scripture calls sin in us by such names, for it argues sin to be innate and inbred in us, that we and sin are all one as it were, as if we were not so much sinners as sin itself; it cleaves to us as the flesh to the bones.

Secondly, this word "flesh" is used in a good sense, though not so frequently, signifying a tender, pliable, and flexible heart to what is godly, and is by way of opposition to a stone. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 3, the hearts of the Corinthians, which so readily received Paul's doctrine, are called fleshy tables. Here, it is used in this sense in the

text: "I will give a heart of flesh." We may justly admire the mighty work of God in making waters gush out of the rock and in touching mountains so that they melt like wax; but above all, the mighty power of God makes hearts so stony and impenetrable become ready and capable for all duties.

God Makes a Man's Heart Tender and Flexible for Every Duty He Requires

The example of all converts witnesses this. When Matthew is converted, he leaves his custom seat, though full of profit, and follows Christ, which could not be without much self-denial and persecution. Is not here a stone made flesh? Zacchaeus the Publican, no sooner wrought upon by grace, makes restitution and satisfaction, even above the exact command of the law. His heart is made so tender that he would rather go beyond than come short of his duty. Mary Magdalene, a notorious sinner, called "the sinner" by emphasis, when wrought upon, this dry wilderness is made a fountain of water.

The jailer, a cruel and harsh man to the Apostles, when his heart is touched, falls into amazement and becomes tender and compassionate to the Apostles whom he had wronged. He who cast them into prison and put chains and fetters upon them is in a moment altered and washes their sores.

And let Paul close all. What a stony heart had he! His heart was like the stones they stoned Stephen with, and although he did not stone Stephen with his own hands, he was consenting to it and kept their garments. As Augustine says, *Omnium lapidantium manibus lapidavit*—he stoned him with the hands of all who threw stones at

him. He compelled the disciples to blaspheme and was mad against them. See how, in a moment, his stony heart is taken away: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Oh, tender heart! Now he is willing to do and suffer anything! Thus God, wherever He vouchsafes this converting grace, makes an obdurate, averse stony heart tender and pliable.

Understanding the Heart of Flesh

To open this, let us first consider what is implied in this heart of flesh, for it encompasses several gracious qualities:

Tender and Melting Heart

Firstly, a tender, melting heart is principally intended. The heart of stone will neither yield to threats nor be softened by mercies, but the heart of flesh is tender under both. Thus, Josiah is commended for his tender, melting heart when the threatenings of the law were read (2 Chronicles 34:27). Thousands of people reveal that this promise has never been effectual for them, for how obdurate and willful they are against the word of God! They rage and roar like bears and tigers with vexation, rather than be tenderly softened about the matters of religion.

Oh, then consider how tender your spirit is about God's commands. Does it thaw immediately? Is it softened when God's word comes to you? This is a good sign. I know the people of God often complain that their hearts are not as tender and softened as they desire; they complain they are like stocks and stones sometimes, as the Church said, "Why hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear?" (Isaiah 63:17). But because they feel this stoniness and tenderly bewail it, it

is a clear argument that the work of grace is in their souls, though imperfect. It is not expected that all stoniness should be removed from the heart in this life. *Contra vitia pugnamus non ut penitus vincamus, sed ne vincamur* (Seneca: "We fight against vices not to conquer them completely, but so as not to be conquered by them").

Quick Sensibility and Apprehension

Secondly, from this tender softness of heart flows a quick sensibility and a lively apprehension of any spiritual thing that concerns it. The tender skin immediately feels the slightest offense, whereas that which is callous and rugged is not as sensitive. Thus, it is with the true convert; he is very sensitive and quick in understanding, as Scripture expresses it.

This sensibility is discerned in several particulars. First, he can discern between things that differ (Hebrews 5:14). He has senses exercised to discern between good and evil. He is compared to an eagle; his eye quickly discerns afar off. He is the spiritual man who judges all things, so the true convert is not easily seduced by errors and false doctrines, for he has a tender, sensible heart. He is not easily enticed by Satan to sinful lusts, for he is immediately sensitive.

Secondly, his tenderness appears in that the least sins, the very motions, the very inclinations, are a heavy burden to him. Thus, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart (2 Chronicles 32:26). David, when he numbered the people, though the act itself was lawful, did not keep God's order; he did it out of vain glory, and God's anger broke out because of it. See how tenderly he is affected: "Let thy anger be upon me and my father's house. What have these sheep done?" When he cut off the lap of Saul's garment, his heart smote him. Paul, how sadly and miserably he cries out of the inward

lusts of sin within him! Thus, the fleshy heart is so tender that it feels the very weight of a mote as well as a beam.

Repentance and Affected by Unkindness

Thirdly, the sensibility of it is discovered in that when he repents of sin, he is much affected by the unkindness that is in sin against God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned" (Psalm 51:4). The Israelites should loathe and abhor themselves when God is pacified toward them (Ezekiel 16:63). This fleshy heart is so sensitive to the ill requital in all sin, for God's favour and love to them, that it affects them abundantly.

Tractability and Docility

Fourthly, this fleshy heart implies tractableness and docility in the understanding, and flexibility in the will. Tractableness in the understanding, so that whereas a man naturally shuts his eyes against the light, will not hear or understand, but is froward, cavilling, and always disputing against the things of his everlasting peace, he now has that religion which the Apostle calls *εύπειθής* (eupethes), easily persuaded.

One great corruption in man is that his understanding exalts itself against the word, and he has many carnal cavils and prejudices against grace. But when God works on the heart, the understanding is captivated and brought into obedience (2 Corinthians 10:5). The word of God destroys all those strongholds, and they are glad that this spiritual light should enter into their hearts.

Oh, there is little hope for a proud, froward, cavilling person who loves to argue and contradict those things that make for purity and

godliness. When a man is taught of God, he is easily brought to believe and submit. "A little child shall lead them," as Isaiah prophesies (Isaiah 11:6).

As tractableness in the understanding, so flexibility in the will, is also implied in this heart of flesh. The will of man is the hardest part of the stone in a man; it is contumacious, willful, and oppositional. It is the king, the lord, the governor. Until that is mastered and stoops, nothing in man will turn to God. But this converting grace makes the unwilling willing; it makes it choose and embrace what it once abhorred. As Paul said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Oh, it is the wills of men that are the great enemies to godliness. Hence, God is said to work in us to will as well as to do (Philippians 2:13). To will—this is admirable. Oh, pray importunately that God would give you the will to do good, that God would give you to choose and embrace it. It is wonderful to consider how this hard iron, when melted by grace, will be put into any frame or fashion.

The Implications of a Heart of Flesh

Fifthly, a heart of flesh implies an obedient resignation of ourselves into God's hands. We refuse nothing, object to nothing, and do not pick and choose in our obedience, saying, "This, O Lord, I could do, but excuse me in the other thing." No, a heart of flesh yields and submits completely. God does not say He will give us a heart partly of stone and partly of flesh. Although stoniness remains in the regenerate heart, because it is not constantly prevailing or universal, it is still considered a heart of flesh. Nothing will reveal this work upon your soul more than an obedient resignation to all duties. He who breaks one commandment is guilty of all, because he breaks the bond of obedience, which is the authority of the lawgiver.

To have a heart of flesh implies a capacity and readiness to receive any impression. Wherever it finds a command, it cries out, "Here I am to do your will, O God; your law is written in my heart." We shall not elaborate more on this point, as the explanation of a stony heart, by way of contrast, illustrates this heart of flesh. Let us therefore consider the several effects and consequences of a heart of flesh, which are remarkable.

Effects and Consequences of a Heart of Flesh

1. Fear and Trembling Under God's Word

Firstly, a heart of flesh is accompanied by an awe and trembling under the word of God and His glorious majesty. They have deep thoughts of fear and reverence when they come before God. Thus, Josiah, whose heart was tender and melting, trembled at the threatenings in the word of God. If Abraham was so deeply humbled in his spiritual approach to God because he was but dust and ashes, how much more because of sin!

We can quickly discern grace in its tenderness if it is not profane, careless, and formal in religious duties. If your heart is a melting heart, your prayers are melting prayers, your hearing is melting hearing. You would not be so senseless and careless in these duties as most people are. Oh, then cry out for the lack of this gracious disposition. You find your heart like brass and iron, not like flesh, when you come to Him.

2. Yielding to God in Afflictions

Secondly, a gracious heart of flesh readily bows and yields to God in all afflictions and chastisements for sin. The stubborn oak will sooner break than bend, but the tender willow moves every way as desired. Men with stony, unbroken hearts, when afflicted or chastised for sin, are full of rage, discontent, fury, and all manner of vexation, fretting even at God Himself and all His instruments. But the tender heart of flesh accepts the punishment for its sin, as God calls upon (Leviticus 26:41). It says with the Church, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him." It wholly studies to clear and justify God, but to condemn and accuse itself.

Oh, then let the people of God, amidst all the waves and tempests that rise in their souls, remember to allay all by this: they are flesh and not stone. As God made it an argument to take off His afflicting hand because man is frail, weak flesh ("My spirit shall not always strive with man, because he is flesh," Genesis 6:3), so He may also abate His anger because you are gracious and tender flesh. This is a precious symptom of grace when your soul, though afflicted, is like a box of precious ointment broken or like sweet flowers pounded, revealing many precious and fragrant graces. Just as fire reveals whether metals are good or bad, and tempests and winds show whether trees are well-rooted, so do calamities reveal whether men are gracious or not. In nothing does your grace manifest itself more than in justifying God and abhorring yourself. Have any frettings or repinings caused a commotion in your heart? Quiet all and remember, the work of grace is to make a man yielding and readily submitting.

3. Avoiding Sin and Its Occasions

Thirdly, a godly heart of flesh is so tender that it not only avoids sin itself but also the occasions and appearance of it. "Abstain from all

appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). David would not drink the water of Bethlehem because it had the appearance of men's blood. The godly are to provide all things honest in the sight of all men. Christ, who would not wash His hands before a meal—though otherwise a civil custom and lawful—refused to do so to avoid confirming the Jews in their superstitious belief about it. He instructed us that we should not only avoid the fire of sin but also the very flame.

The first sin that proved fatal to all mankind came by occasions and temptations; Eve saw the fruit that it was good and desirable. God had not commanded her to avoid looking at it, but this became a temptation to her, and through the windows of her eyes, death came in. This made Paul keep his body in check. This caused Job to make a covenant with his eyes and David to set a watch before his mouth.

Would you know whether this gracious, tender heart is in you? Are you afraid to come near the brink of sin, anything that has the appearance of it? Do you run away from it, as Moses did from his rod when it turned into a serpent? This is especially important for those who venture into the occasions of wickedness, frequenting places where the profane lusts of the flesh are daily committed. You are like the moth that never stops buzzing and flying around the candle until it has burnt itself.

The Hebrews, who were to eat no unleavened bread during Passover for seven days, were so careful that they diligently searched the house to ensure none was there. They would not even mention the word signifying bread, lest it should tempt anyone. And will you not be afraid to come near where the infection of any sin is? Do you fear the infection of the body but not that of the soul? Then do not come near this mountain, lest you be destroyed.

A Tender and Apprehensive Heart of Flesh

4. A godly heart of flesh is tender and sensitive to all inward heart-sins and secret sins, as well as public and notorious ones. Paul had a soft heart of flesh when he could see the motes in his eyes and complain of them as beams (Romans 7). Because the dishonour of God and offending Him is the great mountain and weight upon his soul, any sin done in secret is as grievous to him as if it had been done in the eyes of the whole world.

Consider the tender heart of Joseph when, in the temptation of secrecy in sinning, he cried out, "How can I do this and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Oh, this reveals how far many are from the tender work of grace. It is shameful to speak of what many do in secret: secret uncleanness, secret injustice and fraud, secret theft, secret drunkenness. If these can be concealed so that the world may not know, so that their reputation may not be tarnished, they do not care. Oh, men of stony hearts! Does not God see you? Is not darkness and light, night and day, all one to Him? Never be encouraged to sin in the hope of secrecy, for God will bring out those deeds of darkness, without repentance, at some time or other, to your great confusion.

There is no clearer mark distinguishing a hypocrite from a true godly man than this. A hypocrite may have great abilities and spiritual experiences, and may live an externally strict life like a godly man. But he always fails in this: he does not humble himself for or mortify inward motions and lusts of sin. He is not affected by heart-corruptions because God looks into the heart and beholds the heart. Oh, then, may the word of God powerfully work upon you in this respect. It is not a heart of flesh as long as wicked, proud, earthly,

unclean thoughts can lodge in your soul, even if they do not break out into action.

Sensitivity to the Dishonour Done to God by Others

Lastly, a tender heart of flesh is greatly afflicted by the dishonour done to God by other men's sins as well as by his own. David must have had a very soft heart when rivers of water flowed from his eyes because men did not keep God's Law (Psalm 119:136). Flesh is easily wounded, easily pierced, and so is a godly man's heart because God is not honoured and magnified where he lives. The Prophet Isaiah cried out, "Woe is me, because I dwell among men of unclean lips" (Isaiah 6:5).

How then do other men's impieties affect you? Are they like a sword in your bowels? Does the tearing and rending of God's Name by blasphemous actions tear and rend your heart? Does the profane naming of the wounds and blood of Christ make wounds and blood in your heart? Then you may praise God that He has not left you without zeal for His glory. Is your soul grieved and tormented by seeing and beholding the wickedness of men in the world?

Application: Consolation for Those with Tender Hearts

Use 1: This is for consolation and comfort to those to whom God has granted this tender and soft heart. It is a mercy you could not achieve by yourself, nor could all the world grant it to you. Say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," and admire His grace, which has thus melted you. There was a time when you were hardened and bold in sin, when you

could swallow great camels, and it did not trouble you; you could commit various impieties, and your heart would never smite you for it. But now, if there is any distemper, any rebellion, any unkindness in your life toward God, it dissolves you, it moves your bowels. Continue to bless God for this mercy.

Do not think it a loss to you, nor a reproach to you. It is not a loss, for you might say, "If I did not have such a tender heart, if I were not so afraid to sin against God, I might gain such earthly advantages. If I were as bold and as loose in my principles as others, I could thus enrich myself; but this tender heart of mine hinders me." Do not judge this a loss. In the end, it will yield a rich crop, though for the present you may only have gleanings. God deals with you as Boaz did with Ruth; first, he gave her only gleanings and a little measure of corn, but later, he gave her himself and all that he had. Likewise, God will eventually give you the enjoyment of Himself and eternal glory, while hardened sinners will vomit up their advantages, which will be like gravel in their mouths.

Do not consider it a reproach. The world judges it as pusillanimity, a tender heart, a foolish, scrupulous heart. But as it is said of God, He can do all things except sin, for that is an impotency, *Potentissime hoc non potest* (Most powerfully He cannot do this). So it is with you; you dare lose your comforts, your advantages; you dare be hated and persecuted, but you do not dare sin, *Magnanimiter hoc non audes* (Nobly you dare not do this)! At the day of death, at the day of judgment, what boldness and confidence will you have, when the great bold men of the world will tremble like leaves and be surrounded by fear?

SERMON IV.

Holding Forth Inducements to Get This Promised Heart of Flesh;

Also Showing the Counterfeit of It.

"I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh." - EZEKIEL 36:26

The doctrine about a heart of flesh has already been explained, and some practical application made of it. This matter is exceedingly necessary; for without this heart of flesh, we preach in vain, you hear in vain, and God's mercies and chastisements are in vain. I shall therefore add another exhortation: Do not rest or find any quiet in your souls until God vouchsafes this mercy to you.

God here promises it as the main mercy, to qualify and sanctify all their temporal mercies. It is as if returning from captivity, enjoying their own country, their liberties, houses, and comforts again, were nothing if this heart of flesh were not also bestowed upon them. To speak to our condition: though God has brought us together, those who by the last wars were scattered from one another, and though many of those fears and terrors that overwhelmed us then are somewhat abated, yet if God does not give us this heart of flesh, a worm will quickly arise and consume this gourd.

Be therefore as importunate with God as the widow was with the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-8). God loves importunity, seeking, knocking, and fervent praying. If the unjust judge was overcome by importunity, how much more will the bowels of a gracious God move toward you? How graciously did God reward Solomon's petition because he did not ask for riches, long life, or the life of his enemies,

but for wisdom to discharge his trust. So will God say to you, "Because you have not asked for temporal mercies or earthly greatness, but for a tender, soft heart, be it according to your desire." As David resolved not to give sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids until he had settled the Ark, so do you resolve to have no rest in your mind and to not let God alone, but importune Him day and night until He has made that heart of stone into flesh within you.

Oh, why are you solicitous about earthly things—what you shall eat, what you shall drink, what you shall put on—and not in a godly manner inquiring, "How may I pray, hear, live, die with this soft and tender heart?" If reason may be any motive to you, consider how much can be said for this particular.

Benefits of a Heart of Flesh

1. A Constant Antidote Against Sin

Firstly, this heart of flesh will be a constant antidote and preservative against sin. This bitter potion will kill all those worms of temptation that may crawl in your breast. The Devil can never come and find the room of your heart swept and ready garnished for him; he is continually on his watchtower, that has a heart of flesh. When David's heart began to be stony and senseless, see how willfully he fell from one sin to another. If his heart had been as tender as at other times, the very entrance and appearance of sin would have amazed him.

As it is the nature of sin to harden and to make obstinate, so it is the nature of grace to mollify and soften. There is always, in every condition and every occurrence of providence, something that would stiffen the heart against God, were not grace a continual thawer of

the heart by its heat. If therefore you would be preserved from those sad falls and wretched backslidings into which others have tumbled, keep up this heart of flesh. Oh, it could never be that you would entertain such monstrous doctrines or commit such unjustifiable practices if your heart were of flesh. No, it is of steel and iron, of a rock or adamant, and that makes you bold to commit such sins, which tender godly persons have their hearts ache at and their ears tingle to hear.

Preservation from Sin and Its Consequences

Secondly, just as this tender heart of flesh preserves from sin, so it also guards against the consequences and woeful effects of sin, which include woes, wounds of conscience, horror of heart, darkness and gloominess of soul, and sad fears that God has forever forsaken them. This results in the loss of all their former sweet peace and communion with God. The God who was once a gracious father is now perceived as a frowning enemy; their hearts become like a hell, where legions of sad unbelieving thoughts constantly lodge. This is the portion of those godly men who, by negligence, carelessness, and hardness of heart, fall away from their former measure of holiness. But a tender heart of flesh prevents not only the cause but also these effects. It will keep you from this roaring lion. As soon as you find this soft heart diminishing in you, fear that some grievous storm may be coming upon you, if God does not prevent it.

Performing Religious Duties

Thirdly, without a tender heart of flesh, a man cannot perform any religious duty in an acceptable manner to God. Prayer without this

heart of flesh is like a dry, unsavory herb; hearing the word, if it does not come from a heart thus softened, is but desperate boldness against God and an immediate provocation of His anger. Hence, a broken heart is preferred above all sacrifices (Psalm 51), above all outward worship; they are the body, this is the soul. They must not be neglected, but this is the Benjamin, without whom we must not see God's face. Oh, then, as you dare not but pray, and hear, and come to church, be equally afraid lest those duties be done without a heart of flesh.

Patience and Thankfulness

Fourthly, a tender heart of flesh is accompanied by patience under the sorest afflictions and thankfulness for the least mercies. What a sudden tempest and whirlwind of afflictions fell upon Job! Yet in all that he did not charge God foolishly (Job 1:22), but reproved his impatient wife with this saying: "Shall we receive good from God, and not evil?" (Job 2:10). As for thankfulness for the least mercies, see how the Church in Lamentations can taste a little honey in an ocean of gall: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed" (Lamentations 3:22). Similarly, the woman of Canaan acknowledges herself a dog and is glad of the crumbs that fall from the table (Matthew 15:27).

What a lovely and comely sight it is to see a Christian patient under the greatest trouble and thankful for the least mercies! Nothing will bring the heart to this admirable temper but the fulfillment of this promise.

The Fit Soil for God's Word

Lastly, this tender heart of flesh is the only fit soil wherein the word of God, sown, will grow and bring a plentiful crop. As they say of the soul, *Animae fabricat sibi domicilium* (The soul fashions and prepares the body for itself to dwell in), as the spider makes her own web in which she resides. Thus, the word of God at first makes the heart, which is hard and stony, fleshy and soft. Once done, the heart is ever afterwards a fit room to receive this spiritual guest. The word never thrives or prospers in respect of the progress and increase of godliness, except where it meets with a tender heart. Lydia's heart is said to be opened to attend to the words of Paul (Acts 16:14).

Naturally, men's spirits are bolted; the word finds a gate of brass upon them until the heart is made tender. After that, it is careful to lose nothing. Oh, that we could say of our hearers what Paul said of the Corinthians: "The word is written in their fleshy tables of the heart" (2 Corinthians 3:3). Now, for the better understanding of these things, it may be asked:

Whether All Tenderness and Softness of Heart Is This Work of Grace Here Promised? Can the Soul Be Deceived About Tenderness of Heart?

Yes, very easily; for there is a twofold soft heart of flesh, which yet is not the heart in the text.

Firstly, there is a natural softness or tendency to relent and be pitifully affected. Augustine speaks of this in himself when he read the history of Dido, "Lord," he said, "I could not but weep when I read that, and yet at the same time, I could not weep for my sins." The tender heart of Joseph, which led him to weep concerning his

brothers, was more an act of natural tenderness than of grace. It seems he was a tender father to all of Egypt, as some interpret the name given to Joseph when they blessed him and called him Abrech, meaning "Tender Father."

Secondly, there is another kind of tenderness or softness, where people are so melted by the consideration of sin that they refuse, like Rachel, to be comforted. It seems Mary Magdalene was too tender, as indicated by the remedy our Savior applied when He told her, "Be of good comfort, your sins are forgiven" (Luke 7:48). The incestuous person in 2 Corinthians 2:7 was also too soft in this way, being "swallowed up with sorrow." Just as a string on an instrument that is too wet can make no melodious sound, so an overwhelmed heart cannot set forth the praise of God with faith and thankfulness.

It is therefore worthwhile to distinguish this counterfeit heart of flesh from a gracious one. Let us examine the first, which, if put to the touchstone, will be thus discovered:

Differences Between Natural and Gracious Tenderness

1. Source of Tenderness

Firstly, natural tenderness arises from the bodily constitution or natural temperament of a person, whereas gracious softness is the work of God in a supernatural way. Thus in the text, "I will give a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). God, as the author of grace, creates this; as stated in Zechariah 12:10, "I will pour upon them the spirit of prayer, and they shall mourn for their sin." Romans 8:26 refers to

the groans that come from a heart of flesh as entirely attributable to the Spirit of God.

Natural tenderness is like Egypt, which is not made fruitful by rain from heaven, whereas gracious softness comes only from above. If you trace the origins of these streams, they are as far apart as heaven and earth. Both may melt and dissolve into tears under God's chastisements and judgments, but one springs from the earth, while the other from heaven above. Do not, therefore, conclude that grace is present simply because you see a tender, soft, yielding disposition. This may come from nature as well as grace; it may be a natural disposition, not a principle of sanctification within.

2. Instrument of Tenderness

Secondly, the instrument by which this softness and tenderness of heart is produced is different. Natural softness is wrought by seeing objects of pity and compassion, but gracious softness is produced by hearing the word preached. The instrument by which a person is changed from obstinacy is entirely the word of God. Received by faith, it acts like a furnace or coals of fire to iron, making it flexible for every shape. In contrast, natural tenderness arises from a natural sympathy between the eye and the heart: "Mine eye affects my heart" (Lamentations 3:51). Tenderness is wrought here, not as a work of faith. By faith, Noah was moved with fear (Hebrews 11:7), and by faith, we find the rockiness of our heart subdued, making us readily yield to God.

3. Motive for Tenderness

Thirdly, the motive, which is as crucial in morals as the specific form is in nature, shows a great gulf between natural and gracious

tenderness. The only motive for natural tenderness is outward evil and misery, not sin or the displeasure of God. Many people can weep for the loss of dear friends or outward comforts until they can weep no more, yet they remain hard as a rock regarding any consideration of sin. Sin is the greatest evil, depriving the soul of the most excellent good.

You may be prone to sigh, be troubled, and have a heart like a fountain of water. But what is the reason? Is it due to outward discontent, the lack of mercies you desire for yourself? This is not the heart of flesh in the sense of the text; it is too much a heart of flesh in another sense, for it is wholly carnal and driven by carnal considerations. If your tenderness and softness of heart stem from the lack of God's favor and the apprehension of His displeasure, as David's often did, then you have indeed felt the power of this promise to you.

Distinguishing Natural Softness from Gracious Tenderness

1. Flexibility to Evil

Fourthly, a natural softness and tenderness is flexible to any evil; it will easily receive any impression of sin. However, this gracious softness, while it is receptive to what is good, remains as hard as stone or adamant to what is evil. This is a significant difference. Many have soft and flexible hearts, which is their fault, for they are easily ensnared. They are like wax, receiving the stamp of any seal upon them, or like reeds shaken up and down by every wind. This is a great sin. It was Reuben's curse to be "unstable as water" (Genesis 49:4). To be good in good company and evil in evil company, to be

like a chameleon changing according to company, is contrary to the command to be "steadfast and immovable in the work of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58), and to confess Christ and His truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Luke 12:8). Their "yes" should be "yes," and their "no" should be "no" (Matthew 5:37).

Do not mistake this for a gracious heart of flesh. He that has this grace, though he be like a lamb, with all sweetness of carriage, yet he is also like a lion in courage and boldness for what is good. Consider, then, that while the work of grace makes a person tender in one sense, it also establishes and settles them upon a rock in another sense.

2. Grief for the Dishonor of God

Lastly, natural tenderness can, and often does, exist without any trouble or grief for the dishonor of God caused by other men's sins. A gracious heart of flesh is easily wounded and torn asunder in pain for the wickedness of others. David had rivers of waters running down his eyes because men did not keep the law of God (Psalm 119:136). But many tender and soft spirits are very insensible to the blasphemies and impieties that others commit. They may have such people in their families or in their company and delight. How can he be called a godly man to whom a wicked, ungodly man is not a torment and a burden? "Horror has taken hold on me," says David, "because of the wicked who forsake Your law" (Psalm 119:53).

If your heart were sensitive to God's glory, horror and trembling would surprise you to see or hear others commit iniquity, just as if you saw them falling into fire or deep waters.

Distinguishing Sinful Tenderness from Gracious Tenderness

Degeneration of a Godly Heart

Secondly, let us consider another form of sinful tenderness: when the heart is indeed godly for the most part, but there is a degeneration. This tenderness extends beyond its bounds. God, by His grace, wounds the heart, but then it bleeds too much and grows weaker thereby. The sinfulness of this softness becomes apparent in the following ways:

Hindrance to Other Gracious Duties

Firstly, when it hinders a person from other gracious duties that God requires. All grace is harmonious, and one grace is to be added to another. They are to cooperate with one another, even those that seem to be at the greatest distance. Thus, joy and trembling, faith and fear, are to accompany one another. Some graces are difficult to have co-operate with this heart of flesh. Therefore, we must be careful that our gold does not become dross, that we do not mistake sin for grace. This is worse than mistaking John the Baptist for Christ; it is like taking a false Christ for the true one.

This occurs when individuals focus solely on their sins without looking to Christ, like the Israelite wounded by a serpent who cries out in pain but never looks up to the exalted serpent. The incestuous person in 2 Corinthians 2 was blamed for being ready to be swallowed up with sorrow. When your soul is so dejected that it refuses the comfort of the Gospel and will not allow any oil to be poured into its wounds, this is a sinful softness. This is like wet

paper, where the moisture hinders any writing upon it. Similarly, the softness of your heart prevents the glorious promise of the Gospel from being written on your soul. Just as God writes the law of obedience in the hearts of the godly, He also writes the Gospel of comfort in their souls. Hardness of heart hinders the former writing, while excessive softness and moisture hinder the latter. Therefore, know that all tenderness and softness that keeps you from Christ and rejects the promise of grace is sinful and not of God.

Inability for Service

Secondly, if your tenderness and softness make you more unable and unfit for any service to God, this is also sinful. If it weakens you so that you cannot pray, do, or suffer for God, this is sinful. When it makes you have feeble hands and knees, like children's bones and joints that are too soft at first, preventing them from walking, this is sinful. Trees that have not had their sap and juice extracted cannot bear up any building. Similarly, a soul that is inordinately tender and sinfully softened cannot go through with the work of the Lord. Ensure that your tenderness does not make you less serviceable.

Scrupulosity and Slavery

Lastly, if this tenderness makes you slavishly and ignorantly scrupulous, so that you cannot enjoy the liberty of the Gospel and the freedom of the spirit which Christ has purchased for you, it is not true tenderness. Though this may seem like wonderful tenderness, it is not. It is true that the godly, through their tenderness, abstain from all appearances of evil and fear sin even where it may not be. Yet, they do not encourage a slavish, scrupulous disposition. Instead, they strive for a sound mind and a filial frame wrought by the spirit of adoption. Although there are too few in the world who need their

tenderness regulated or moderated, there are some who do. This may be a word of season for them: do not mistake that doubtful, fearful spirit of yours for this heart of flesh. Let not the water overflow the banks, for then it gets soil and turns into mud.

Conclusion: The Miserable Estate Without a Heart of Flesh

Let the conclusion be by way of information concerning the cursed and miserable state of those who do not have this promised mercy of a heart of flesh. As Ezekiel's scroll had woe and lamentation written within and without (Ezekiel 2:10), so does a wicked person bear the inward and outward curses of God's word. Oh, you rock and stone! You are not softened by the instructions, exhortations, or reproofs of the word, nor mollified by His mercies or judgments. How can your heart endure against all those ways God has used to melt you?

Consider that your heart is naturally a heart of flesh in respect of its frailty and weakness. Why then should it not be a heart of flesh in a gracious sense? If your heart were made of brass and iron, immortal and incapable of dying, then you might go on boldly in your sin and say, "Who shall contradict?" But since it is a heart of flesh, fainting, miserable, and always dying, why should this not stir you up to be a partaker of this inestimable mercy?

Cry out and say, "Lord, my weak, frail flesh cries out for that tender, heavenly flesh." Furthermore, since your heart is naturally of flesh, how unable is it to combat the wrath of God, who is an infinite spirit? Your heart cannot withstand the sharp arrows He shall shoot into it. Why then do you not take the counsel to agree with your adversary in

the way, with God, who for the present is your enemy, while you are in the way, before death comes and then there is no ransom?

Oh, that you would meditate on the terror of God, how easily He can fill your heart of flesh with hellish horror. How speedily He can make the devils take you by the throat and haul you to damnation. There is no remedy but to cry out, "Lord, make good this promise to me. Oh, it is this I want; this would make me happy."

SERMON V.

Of God's Giving His Spirit to a Man, and What That Promise Implies.
Also of the Operations and Effects of the Spirit of God When It
Comes.

"And I will put my Spirit within you, etc." - EZEKIEL 36:27

In this verse, we have a further description of the grace here promised. Although it is the same thing, the different expressions represent different aspects of it. What is called "a heart of flesh" in the previous verse is here called "My Spirit," and previously "a new spirit." To open up the meaning of these words, let us consider the mercy vouchsafed and the subject receptive of it. The mercy God calls "My Spirit." The subject is "within you," which we will address in due order.

At this time, let us take notice of the mercy, "My Spirit." It would be irrelevant to provide a theological and biblical use of the word "Spirit," which has a wide range of meanings. In this context, a three-

fold sense may be understood, which can be easily composed and united, not opposed:

Understanding "God's Spirit"

1. The Third Person in the Trinity

Firstly, by "God's Spirit," we may mean the third person in the Trinity, promising that they will be made partakers of it. There is a grave and solid dispute in divinity about whether the godly, besides the graces and fruits of the Spirit, are also made partakers of the Spirit itself. Some affirm it, others deny it. However, several places in Scripture evidently demonstrate that we receive not only the graces of the Spirit but the Spirit itself. Therefore, the Spirit is said to dwell in us, and we are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Yet this occurs in such a supernatural and mystical way that, although plain texts compel us to believe it, the manner of it is difficult to express. But this is not the focus of our work at this time.

2. The Soul Renewed by God's Graces

Secondly, "spirit" may be understood as the soul or spirit of a man, renewed and qualified by the graces of the Spirit. Hence, it is called in the previous verse "a new spirit," which is the same as "a new heart." Thus, "Spirit" here refers to the soul of a man, enlivened and quickened by the graces of God's Spirit. This sense seems to be the most genuine and proper. Ezekiel 18:31, where it is commanded as a duty, "Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit," cannot primarily be understood of the Person of the Spirit but the graces of the Spirit.

3. Heavenly Activity and Holy Impulses

The third sense that may be considered is to take "spirit" as heavenly activity, vigor, and holy impulses and motions from God, which are like the wind to the sails, carrying us to our expected haven. While the first and this latter sense cannot wholly be excluded, the second sense is the one I will focus on as the most proper, bringing in the others by consequence.

Conversion and the Spirit of God

Doctrine: That Conversion is the enlivening or qualifying of a man with the graces of God's Spirit.

In John 3:6, it is said, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Hence, the godly are said to have the Spirit in them, to be guided by it, led by it, and to walk after it. There is no need to multiply references for this. Just as Christ's body was formed by the Holy Ghost overshadowing the Virgin Mary in an extraordinary, supernatural manner, so is the new, holy, and spiritual creature begotten in a miraculous way beyond human power and strength. The Spirit of God, moving upon the waters of the ordinances, produces this spiritual man, just as God initially made the fowls of the air out of water, which soar up to the heavens.

To delve deeper into this essential point, let us consider what is implied in this promise, "I will put my Spirit within you."

Implied Promises of the Spirit

1. Natural Man's Inability: Firstly, this implies that every man is naturally a mere dead lump, without life or motion towards anything

holy. Just as God breathed the breath of life into Adam, making him a living soul, so God infuses His graces into us, enabling us to live the life of the Spirit. Some expositors parabolically represent this promise in the next chapter through the resurrection of dry bones, where the wind is called upon to breathe life into bones and sinews, uniting all parts so they may live. Similarly, God works in the conversion of men. Although this parable primarily represents the recovery of Israel from their captivity and miserable state—an impossible feat to human eyes—it also symbolizes their restoration to a spiritual life of grace, which seemed even more impossible.

The phrase "I will put my Spirit within you" should thus strike like thunder and lightning against all doctrines and opinions that uphold free will or the power of nature in conversion. Can man co-operate in the infusion of God's Spirit? The order of nature and the order of grace differ as much as heaven and earth, and one cannot prepare for the other. This expression informs us that we are all sensual beings, destitute of the Spirit. Just as brute beasts cannot perform acts of reason, so men naturally cannot perform actions of grace. He cannot pray or hear spiritually, nor can he love God or repent of sin in a spiritual manner.

2. Elevation of the Heart: Secondly, this implies an elevation or lifting up of a man's heart to those affections and actions that are otherwise far above his power. When the Spirit of God came upon men in extraordinary ways, they performed deeds they could never do before. For instance, when the Spirit came upon Samson, it gave him mighty strength; similarly, Paul received another spirit concerning governance. The gifts of God's Spirit in the Church enabled them to work miracles and speak in tongues, lifting them above human power. In the same way, the Spirit of God sanctifies

and raises a man to holy, spiritual, and sublime duties that he was previously unacquainted with and did not understand.

In Scripture, to be a man or to walk as a man (1 Corinthians 3:3) is considered a diminution and a carnal imperfection because we are to have the Spirit of God, which enables us to perform spiritual actions in a divine manner. Thus, to believe in God, to love God, to be heavenly-minded, to be patient, and to exercise every grace are acts beyond human power. God must put His Spirit within us to enable these actions. This misunderstanding leads the world to grossly err about godliness, the service of God, and repentance of sin. They perform these deeds as mere men, by custom and the principles they were born with. Until this text, "I will put my Spirit within you," is fulfilled in us, our congregations are but Golgothas, places of dead men's skulls.

Duties Motivated by the Spirit of God

Thirdly, having the Spirit of God within us implies that we perform all our duties based on motives revealed through Divine Revelation in the Word. The Spirit of God works in His people in two ways:

1. **Effectively:** By enlivening and enabling them to perform holy duties.
2. **Directively:** By guiding and leading them through His Word.

In the Word of God, we are directed to such motives in our actions that human understanding alone would never discern. These include:

1. Obedience to God's Command

Firstly, we perform duties purely because God commands them, out of obedience to His sovereignty and because it is the law of such a Law-giver. Where is the person who does good deeds solely out of custom or for the praise and report of others, rather than out of obedience to God? Observe the order of the promise: "I will put my Spirit within you, and then I will cause you to walk in my commandments and do them." (Ezekiel 36:27) If you pray, listen to sermons, and abstain from gross sins, why do you do it? Is it because you respect God's commandment, saying, "God commands it, and therefore I do it"? This is what it means to have the Spirit within us.

2. Love and Delight in God

Secondly, we perform our duties not merely because of God's command, but also from an inward principle of love and delight in God. "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) Love for God compels us to do or suffer anything for Him. Love is listed at the forefront of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5), and the Spirit of God descended in tongues of fire to represent His nature. Hence, we are commanded not to quench the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), which burns like fire in our hearts. Performing duties out of love crowns them, making them like perfume and frankincense at a sacrifice.

3. For Holiness' Sake

Thirdly, we are to perform holy duties not only out of love but also for the sake of holiness itself, because God is holy and the duty is holy. "Hate evil and cling to what is good." (Romans 12:9) Be glued to it and made one with it. "Be holy, for I am holy," says God (Leviticus 11:44-45). Just as God loves holiness for holiness' sake and wills good for good's sake (or rather, good is good because He wills

it), we ought to imitate Him. There may be earthly motives and human advantages that incite the heart to do good, but goodness for its beauty and glory should make us fall in love with it.

Say then, as Abraham said to the king of Sodom, "I will not take so much as a shoe latchet from you, lest you say, 'I have made Abraham rich.'" (Genesis 14:23) Similarly, do not entertain or consult with any earthly advantage, lest it should say, "I have made you pray, I have made you profess the name of Christ." Wicked men are drawn to evil for evil's sake, but there is more fullness, goodness, and excellency in God than there can be an appearance of these in sin. It is unacceptable if draff moves with sweetness to a distempered swinish appetite, but honey itself does not affect a sound appetite.

However, I have discussed the nature of this spiritual life elsewhere. Therefore, I shall only briefly touch upon two more aspects of the property of God's Spirit dwelling in the godly, and then speak of the accompanying effects of God's Spirit within us.

The Spirit of God in Suffering and Holiness

Fourthly, to have the Spirit of God within us not only lifts us above human strength and motives in performing duties but also demonstrates its power in matters of suffering. In the converted, the Spirit of God enables them to endure suffering beyond human capability. They can deny their dearest comforts and endure the most exquisite torment with joyfulness and alacrity. Look at Paul and the disciples of Christ in the New Testament: what reproaches, persecutions, loss of goods, and even death did they frequently endure? Yet, with gladness of heart, patience, faith, and courage,

they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41). The history of the martyrs abundantly declares the presence of the Spirit of God in believers.

This should support the godly who fear that in times of temptation and great trouble, they may not remain faithful to God. They find their hearts weak and feeble and doubt their ability to persevere. But consider that the same Spirit of God that lifts you above nature for active obedience will also do so for passive obedience. To love God, to believe in God, to perform any religious duty spiritually, is as impossible for flesh and blood as it is for iron to float. But the Spirit of God takes you and fixes your heart on heavenly things. Similarly, flesh and blood cannot endure persecution, imprisonment, or death for the glory of Christ, but the Spirit of God enables this.

Samson could not perform extraordinary feats of strength as a mere man, but as one empowered by the Spirit of God, he did. Likewise, you cannot act or suffer graciously on your own, but as a spiritual being filled with God's Spirit, you can. Peter's presumptuous claim, "Though all men forsake you, yet I will not," and his subsequent denial of Christ, teaches us what man's power can do in the hour of temptation (Mark 14:29-31, 66-72).

Therefore, do nothing that may grieve or drive away the Spirit of God. Who knows what conflicts and trials God may have reserved for you? Without the mighty work of the Spirit, you may become an apostate, like Judas or Cain. Initially, a man is forsaken by the Spirit of God in its sanctifying role, and then as a comforter. Although the Holy Ghost is never totally and finally driven away from those who have truly received Him, many who appear godly and forward in their profession, both to themselves and others, make a woeful shipwreck of their faith and good conscience in times of trial.

Lastly, because the Spirit of God dwells within them, believers are said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Corinthians 3:16). If their bodies are temples, much more so are their souls. What a strong obligation to godliness this is! You are the temples of the Spirit of God. No unclean thing may enter the temple. God complained when His temple was made a den of thieves (Matthew 21:13). How much more angered must He be if you make this temple a sty of swine or a hell of devils?

This clearly indicates that most people have never received the grace described in the text. If no unclean, brutish, or polluted thing enters your soul, then your heart, like the temple, should be a house of prayer, a heart of prayer, and your soul a soul of prayer. Do you not defile this temple every day with profane and filthy lusts? What hope can you have that this promise is fulfilled in you?

Do not hear these words as if they do not apply to you. Does not your own heart tell you that if the Spirit of God dwelt and worked in you, you could not act as you do, nor commit the sins you commit daily? It was the devil that possessed the swine and drove them violently into the sea, but the Spirit of God appeared as a dove (Matthew 8:28-34, 3:16). With what holiness and godliness should you walk, having this benefit vouchsafed to you? What manner of persons should you be, who are the temple of the Lord, whose souls are made a heaven?

Is it fitting for you to be vain, earthly, and immoderately attached to any creature? Have you not that within you which may be your greatest comfort? Your frail body is a cabinet containing excellent jewels.

To better discern whether the Spirit of God is within us, causing us to walk in His commandments, consider whether the other effects attributed to the Spirit in Scripture are also evident in you. Just as

the sun provides both heat and light, and does not exist with only one of these qualities, the Spirit of God does not come alone but brings diverse and noble operations with it. Some interpret the reference to the seven spirits in Revelation 1:4 as describing the manifold operations of the Holy Spirit.

Effects and Operations of the Spirit

1. The Good Spirit: First, the Spirit is called the "good Spirit" in Psalm 143:10: "Let your good Spirit lead me," in opposition to the evil spirit. Just as the evil spirit, or the Devil, continually inclines and moves wicked people towards evil thoughts, affections, and desires—so they think evil, conceive evil, and act evil, like a spider that only produces poison—the good Spirit of God in righteous people inclines and moves them towards good thoughts, affections, and actions. Hence, they are said to have a "good treasure" in their hearts. The importance of having the Spirit of God is evident because it is named for all good things. Where one Evangelist says, "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more will your heavenly Father bestow good gifts?" (Matthew 7:11), another says, "How much more will He bestow the Spirit?" (Luke 11:13). The Spirit, therefore, is instead of all good things. If the Spirit is present, it will not remain hidden and will be quickly discerned whether this good spirit or the evil, wicked spirit dwells in you. The fruit will reveal the tree. It is strange that people do not more often consider the nature of the fountain from which everything flows, whether it is bitter or sweet.

2. The Spirit of Prayer and Supplication: Secondly, the Spirit is described as a spirit of prayer and supplication, accompanied by a tender, mourning heart (Zechariah 12:10, Romans 8:26). Unutterable groans are said to come from the Spirit. Romans 8:26-

27 excellently describes the help, guidance, and support afforded to the godly in prayer by the Spirit: "We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." If you have the mercy mentioned in the text, you will find it mightily working in the duty of prayer, enlightening your mind, heating your affections, softening your heart, and supporting you against unbelief, fears, and distrust.

Indeed, the Spirit of God gives the gift of prayer, which many unregenerate and hypocritical people possess. They may even be admirable in it. However, there is a difference between the gift of prayer and the grace of prayer. The latter occurs when the soul is poured out in a gracious manner, and this is only present in the godly. A natural man cannot pray acceptably, and those who put confidence in their good prayers, which they have memorized or perform out of habit rather than through God's Spirit, trust in a broken reed.

Do not then scornfully overlook this touchstone.

The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

Thirdly, it is called the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, as in Isaiah 11:2. This Spirit was first communicated to Christ the Head without measure and then, like Aaron's oil, descends to the members of Christ. The Spirit of Revelation allows one to see and behold the glory of the truths revealed in the Gospel and to discern things in a spiritual manner, which the natural man cannot do. The Spirit of Wisdom enables one to understand matters of religion in a godly and practical manner, so as to believe and know in a way that promotes godliness. The ignorance and dullness about holy things in many people clearly demonstrate their lack of the Spirit in this sense; they

understand nothing of the principles of religion so as to have their lives transformed by its power.

Fourthly, and lastly, it is called the Spirit of Adoption (Romans 8:15), which gives us filial boldness and makes us call God, Abba Father. The slavish fears and suspicious doubts within you do not come from God's Spirit. These drive you further from God and fill you with hard and discontented thoughts against Him. No, it is the Spirit of Adoption, and as such, it is also a Comforter and an Advocate (John 14:16). Just as Christ is an intercessor in heaven for us, the Spirit pleads in our hearts for God's love, readiness to forgive, and willingness to receive us. As the godly are to pray for the Spirit of Sanctification, they are also to pray for the Spirit of Adoption. You should pray for the comforts of the Spirit as well as its graces, for these are the wings to the soul.

Instruction and Necessity of the Spirit

This teaching underscores how necessary this grace is to all our congregations. Oh, that God would breathe this spiritual breath into your souls! Oh, that you knew experimentally what it is to have the Holy Ghost descend upon you—not in an extraordinary miraculous way, much less through fantastical delusions and pretended revelations by the spirit of darkness, but through the gracious operations of the Spirit in a sanctifying way.

Where will you blasphemers and wretched mockers appear, who scoff at the Spirit and jeer at it? This is not only to grieve the Spirit of God, which is a grievous sin, but to do despite to it. If the Spirit of God is vouchsafed to you, it will come with twofold benefits.

Benefits of the Spirit of God

1. Spirit of Truth:

Firstly, it is a Spirit of Truth, as promised to lead the godly into all truth. Therefore, no matter how much people talk or boast of the Spirit, if they promote errors and heresies, the good and holy Spirit is not in them, especially if their opinions lead to looseness and liberty. For it is a Holy Spirit.

2. Newness of the Spirit:

Secondly, it enables us to perform duties no longer in the oldness of the letter but in the newness of the Spirit. The Apostle calls for this transformation. To perform a duty in the oldness of the letter is to do so customarily and formally without Christ and His Spirit enabling us. This is dead religion, a dead faith, and yet very few go any further.

Sermon VI:

The Deep, Powerful, and Inward Work of Grace

"And I will put my Spirit within you." - Ezekiel 36:27

The grace promised in this text has been addressed, namely, the imparting of God's Spirit to the converted. The next significant aspect to consider is the recipient of this grace—the subject within which this grace is placed. This is briefly but emphatically expressed as "within you." The English translation does not fully capture the

depth of the Hebrew, which conveys "in the midst," or "the innermost parts of you." Thus, it is translated as "in intimo vestri." This Hebrew phrase carries considerable weight, suggesting that the work of grace penetrates deeply into a person. It is a heartfelt, deeply rooted work, excluding all superficial, formal, or notional approaches, as well as mere intellectual exercises in godliness.

It is important to note how parallel passages consistently emphasize this deep, intimate working of grace upon the heart. In Ezekiel 11:19, the same promise is repeated with this emphasis, indicating the significance of this conversion promise to God. The Prophet Jeremiah also declares this grace several times, as in Jeremiah 31:33, with the emphatic description, "I will put my law in their inward parts." This is the crux of the matter: all outward professions, knowledge, and expressions, if not accompanied by grace in the innermost parts of a person, are mere superficial displays, likened to a tinkling cymbal. Such people's religion is like David's great men in the world, compared to grass upon the house top, with which the mower does not fill his hand.

That the Work of Grace is a Deep, Powerful, and Inward Affecting of the Whole Man

The Spirit of God is placed within their innermost being; the law of God is written within them. Therefore, the spirit of a person, when sanctified and renewed, is often called the "inward man" (Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16). Alas, we may say of many that their godliness is outward, not inward, because it consists only of words, expressions, and at most, transient affections. As for the deep,

constant, and solid working of grace, that is a mystery they do not understand.

Now, that the work of grace is such an inward, deep transformation of a person is also clear because it is often called "life." We know that life is not merely external motion, speaking, eating, or working, but the inward source of these actions. Life is the *actus primus*, the first act, the source, or origin of all other actions. A painter can provide external lineaments and outward representations, but he cannot impart this *actus primus*, this life. Similarly, the hypocrite or insincere person can display many outward colors and representations of grace, appearing admirable in the eyes of others and confident in their own goodness, yet not at all acquainted with this grace in the inward parts.

This point deserves a thorough examination, as it must reach our innermost being. First, let us show how far this grace may be either offered or received and yet not reach our innermost being.

The Insufficiency of Outward Reception of Grace

Firstly, it's easily acknowledged by all that as long as the word of God only reaches the ear and goes no further, it does not descend into the innermost being. Yet, are not the majority of our listeners affected no further than the ear? They come and hear; they sit and hear; but still, there is no work of the Spirit upon the heart. Our Saviour, in His parable, compares such people to the highway ground: the seed fell upon it, and immediately the devil, like the birds of the air, takes it away. Oh, that people should consider it a great sin if they did not come and hear, and not also think it a greater sin to hear and not

inwardly receive the power of the word. For the purpose of hearing is to let the word penetrate the very depths of your soul. Medicine in the mouth, not received into the stomach, cannot do any good. Rain upon the surface of the ground, without soaking to the root, will never make the plant grow. Similarly, though you hear a thousand sermons and never miss a Sabbath, if you hear and only hear, the word does not, like Aaron's oil, go from your ear to your heart, from your head to the deep parts of your soul. You go home as ignorant, as profane, and as obstinate as when you arrived. Know then that the perfection and fullness of every action lie in accomplishing its end, without which it is in vain. Eating without digestion does not nourish but breeds diseases; similarly, the purpose of hearing is to have a potent and divine operation upon the very depths of your soul. As Saul, when he was among the prophets, had the Spirit come upon him, and he also prophesied, so while the word of God, the instrument of the Spirit, is displayed before you, what a mighty change and deep alteration should come upon you! You should go home praying as others, repenting as others, fearing God as others. Do not then give the ear only, but the heart also; otherwise, Christ only stands at the door and knocks, but you do not let him in.

Secondly, a second outward and insufficient work is when the word is received with understanding, and the grace of God indeed opens a person's eyes so that their mind is enlightened, and they both know and believe the truths of religion, but it goes no further. Although this work is inward, being upon the mind, I call it outward in respect to the inward parts mentioned in the text, for that speaks of more than a mind to know or an understanding to comprehend the things of religion. Although enlightenment is sometimes used to signify the whole conversion, and light for grace, at other times it is made distinct from it and can even be possessed by reprobates and apostates, as in Hebrews 6, where enlightenment, though a good and

great gift of God, is distinguished from the better things that accompany salvation. So, knowledge, parts, and understanding in religion do not necessarily accompany salvation, and we hope for better things in people than merely being able to repeat or remember sermons or to understand the principles of religion. Often, knowing God's will and doing it are considered separable things. How far then are they from the fruit of this promise, who remain in gross ignorance, who have blind eyes, know nothing about their corruption and misery by sin, or about Christ and faith in him? To whom all our sermons have been as a sealed book; to whom, though in English, we have preached unknown matters. A people likely to die and be damned in ignorance. For if knowledgeable men, who receive the word with attention and understanding, yet find it not changing their inward being, come short of grace, where must the ignorant man appear?

Thirdly, retaining the word of God in the memory is not this grace in the inward parts. It is indeed laudable, and a forgetful hearer is blamed by the Scripture (James 1:25). David's resolution is to hide the word in his heart, which is a great cause for making it work deeply. For a man cannot carry coals of fire in his bosom long without them setting all on fire. Yet, the mere retention of it does not attain to the inward parts in the text.

Insufficient Works of Grace

Fourthly, transient and sudden workings upon the affections and heart are not the same as having His Spirit within us or the law written in our inward parts. This comes close but lacks root and continuity, and so it ultimately withers. John's hearers rejoiced in his light for a season; the temporary believer receives the word with joy,

yet has no root. This truth is a two-edged sword, dividing the secret and hidden things of the heart. Oh, how fine is the line between the temporary believer and the true convert! Both pray with sorrow, both hear with joy, both perform duties with some enlargement and sweetness. As Calvin said, "They are affected almost the same way." Yet, as two high hills may seem very near together at the top, when their bases are far apart, so these enlargements and affections may seem very near, when their root and foundation are quite different. Oh, the minister of God should never speak on this point without causing the hearer to tremble, like one looking down from a high pinnacle, fearing an easy yet dangerous fall, and yet finding hope in the grace and promise of God experienced in their soul; thus combining faith and trembling!

Lastly, mere external cleansing of one's life from former lusts and gross impieties is not the same as having the Spirit within us. Just as the angels, when they took human bodies, only seemed to eat and perform vital actions of life but could not truly do so because they were not personally united to the assumed body, so people who cleanse their lives and adopt a form of religion do not perform these actions as vital acts of grace. They move like the wheel of a mill driven by the force of water, not by an inward principle of life. Such people are compared to swine washed in water but returning to the mire. Though the swine may be made as white as sheep, because it is not inwardly transformed into a sheep, it eventually returns to its former impurity.

The Inward Deep Work of Grace

Let us now consider positively what this inward deep work of grace is and wherein it consists:

First, It is fulfilled in us when the things of Christ—His glory, will, and commandments—lie closest and nearest to our hearts. For that which is indeed within a man and intimate is what lies next to his heart. As we say, "at the heart of the matter," so does our Savior require in every disciple, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). The love of father and mother is a most natural thing; it comes not by teaching or custom, but is inborn in us as soon as we are born. Yet the love of Christ, His glory, and His commandments should be more intimate than this. Hence the Apostle expresses this innate and inward life, saying, "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God" (Galatians 2:20). What an emphatic expression this is: "I do not live, but Christ lives in me." I do not live the life of sense; I do not merely eat, drink, or breathe bodily breath—comparatively, to the life of faith, my natural life is insignificant. Our very natural life, which is the most inward and deep thing in a man, is said to be lived not in respect of this life of grace, which is even more inward.

Oh, then, examine how close and dear heavenly things lie to your heart. Is there anything more prized than God, grace, and godliness? If so, then know that God has not put His Spirit in you, but the devil, the world, and sin have put their lusts in you. This is a sure discovery of the woeful and sinful state of most people: God is not in all their thoughts; Christ is not in their affections; they choose other things rather than Him. Furthermore, as God and Christ are the beloved of their hearts, so too, sin and all evil are most hated and abhorred from the heart. Sin is more loathed than any other thing, more feared, more avoided. They choose affliction and all misery rather than sin; their hearts are most sensitive and apprehensive of this. What then can they think of themselves who harbor and nourish sin? They no longer live, but sin lives in them; it is their meat and drink to do the

works of the devil. Oh, that at last men secure and bold in sin would be awakened. How can that be embraced in your bosom and practiced in your life, which you should avoid as hell itself?

Secondly, This inward work of grace is seen when the work of humiliation is deep enough. We read in the parable of the man who built a house: when the tempests and storms arose, all fell to the ground immediately. Why? Because it was not dug deep enough. Our repentance and humiliation are deep enough when they are for sin as sin, when they are for sin because it offends God and displeases Him; when people loathe themselves and count themselves abominable in this respect. To be humbled for sin, as Ahab and the Israelites often were, because of the temporal judgments following sin, is not to go deep enough. Herein people fall short: they cry out about their sins in the fear of death or in the extremity of pain. Alas, this is not to go to the bottom; there is a worse thing in sin than all the temporal calamities it brings with it, and that is to offend God and separate oneself from His favor. It is therefore very fitting that your humiliation should be for that which is the worst evil in sin.

Again, in humiliation, people go deep enough when they do not only stay upon actual sins but go to the very origin and fountain of all. Thus David, in Psalm 51, went deep when beyond his actual sins of murder and adultery, he also bewailed the innate corruption of his soul. Oh, the grace of God must indeed have a close and inward work in that person who discovers the root of sin as well as its branches; the fountain as well as the stream. God, in the universal destruction of the world, did not only look at the actual impieties then committed but also at the imagination of the thoughts of a man's heart, which were only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). Similarly, he who wishes to make a sure and good outcome of his humiliation must still dig

deeper and deeper and see more and more abominations until he reaches the foul and bitter root of all.

Evidence of Inward Grace

Thirdly, The Word of God is truly implanted in our inward parts when we perform all the duties God requires truly, sincerely, and without pretense. This is to do it with the whole heart; and if we had anything better than our hearts, they should be offered up to God. Thus David says in Psalm 51:6, "You desire truth in the inward parts." Oh, how we should strive to have this sincerity in all our service to God!

All those who use religion to accomplish their self-interests, who seek themselves and have carnal motives in the profession of religion, are but pictures, not living creatures in the way of grace. Great is the number of hypocrites, even among those who profess the name of Christ. It is damnable blasphemy to charge hypocrisy upon all, as wicked men do. This is to condemn the generation of the godly, to blaspheme Christ and the Gospel. Yet, it cannot be denied that through the hypocrisies of many, grievous offenses and scandals will occur. None who follow Christ merely because of the loaves, or who tread out the corn merely because they may feed on it, setting up the ways of Christ in a seeming manner to gain outward advantages, can by experience witness this promise made good to them. They pray, they hear, they perform holy duties, but still, they lack something within; the soul of all is missing. It is not the appearance of good, nor the name or profession of it, that will bring true or sound comfort. The time is coming when all external things will fail and leave you; it must be something within that supports you.

Signs of Inward Grace

Let us now observe the signs or effects of this inward deep work of grace in a person, and they are excellent:

First, He does not rest in the external, outward performance of any holy duty if all within him is not moved and excited thereunto. He finds no comfort or content in praying, hearing, or any religious duty if the innermost parts of his soul and the depths of his heart have not also been moved therein. Thus David says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name" (Psalm 103:1). All within me, observe that. The godly, like the cock that stirs itself before it crows, prepare and stir up themselves for every duty: "Hear the Word of God, O my soul, and let all within you give ear thereto." Dull, sleepy, and formal performances of holy duties reveal a person void of grace, just as gross impieties do. Not only profaneness and ungodliness abroad but also dull, lazy, and formal duties, when done in a constant manner, reveal a person devoid of this work of grace. Oh, if this grace were truly in the depth of you, in the midst of you, it would break out more vigorously than it does.

Signs of Deep Grace in a Person

Secondly, Where this deep work of grace is present, a person's inward thoughts and meditations are often about holy things. Just as a deeply rooted tree has several roots that fasten it to the earth, similar to how a young infant in the womb is connected to the mother, so your inward thoughts and meditations are a reflection of your spiritual depth. If grace is deep within, your soul will be like heaven, filled with holy thoughts, meditations, and affections. The godly are described as meditating on the law of God day and night

(Psalm 1:2). Conversely, the wicked are described by their thoughts, where God is not present, and their inward thought is to leave themselves a great name. Thoughts are the firstborn of the soul; they reveal what a person truly is, as they come closest to the source. Just as a liquor tastes and smells like the vessel, thoughts either reflect filthiness or godliness, as they come directly from the heart. Consider, then, what your inward thoughts are most of the time, for you are as they are.

Lastly, A person who has this deep grace is well-rooted and established; they are built upon the rock, Christ, and can withstand all temptations. If there come the temptations of persecution, they can show patience; if of error and heresies, they demonstrate godly wisdom and soundness of mind. When people lack a solid foundation or are not built upon a rock, they are like children tossed up and down with every wind of doctrine.

Use of Examination

This doctrine should amaze you and instill a godly fear, for do not most people content themselves with the externals of religion? Is not the entire worship and godliness of many merely a formality? Others place their faith in disputes and opinions, but to have grace in the inward man is rare. Consider the verse, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart" (Proverbs 21:2). God is often described as searching and testing the hearts of men. Not that outward duties of religion and worship are to be neglected, but we should not judge our godliness solely by these; the soul and excellency of them lie in the inward man. Remember, if there is no good treasure within, you will roar and tremble one day when all else fails. Hezekiah comforted himself in this: that he had walked in truth

and uprightness of heart. Something within will be a joy to your soul, even when all outward things abandon you.

Sermon VII

Of the Order and Method that God takes in our Conversion: First, Working in us inward Principles, and then causing us to walk in his Statutes, opposite to the Doctrine of Pelagians, Papists, Arminians, and Moral Philosophy; Also signs to discover whether our outward Duties proceed from Grace within, or from Human respects.

I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. - Ezekiel 36:27

The precious and great mercy of conversion promised in this text under several titles and notions has been fully considered and applied. There remain several other particulars that are not without their great weight and moment. Firstly, the order and method of the promise are to be noted, for God works in the same method as He promises. The method is this: first, He promises to give the inward root, then the fruit; first the fountain, then the streams. He first promises the inward principles and habit of grace, a new heart, a new spirit, and then He will cause them to walk in His commandments. God is both the author of nature and the author of grace. Now, as the author of nature, He first works the principles of life, He gives the principles of motions and all vital actions, and afterward the exercise. So it is here; God, in the way of grace, bestows a

supernatural principle upon men, and then, being first made good trees, they bring forth good fruit.

Observation

God first works the foundations and principles of holiness, and from them, men walk and live holily. Thus the Apostle says, *We are His workmanship, created to every good work* (Ephesians 2:10). We do not first do good works and then become God's workmanship; but we are first His workmanship, and then we exercise ourselves in good and holy works.

This doctrine has great use, both in matters of information and exhortation; and there is more consequence in it than an ordinary apprehension will at first conceive. Therefore, to clarify this, we will first illustrate this truth by contrasting it with opposite or contrary opinions.

And first, Grace does not come at first into the heart as sin came into the world; for Adam was not made a bad tree and so brought forth bad fruit; his person was not made wicked and his nature, and then that infected his actions; but God made him after His own image, in righteousness and true holiness. So that his soul, being furnished with all graces as the heavens are adorned with several stars, might have continued in all holy actions suitable to his original perfection. Adam's sinful disobedience did not, as ours, flow from a polluted, unclean nature but from the mere liberty of his will. When he had thus actually transgressed, that actual sin infected and poisoned his whole nature. Thus you see, the actions of sin were before the habits and principles of sin: there was a branch before a root; there was a sweet fountain, and yet a bitter stream. But God, in converting and changing us, takes the contrary course; He first sanctifies our

natures, all the faculties of the soul, lays a spiritual life as a foundation, and then, being thus inwardly enlivened and established, we are carried out to all holy actions. So that all the glorious outward actions of religion, visible to the eyes of the world, if they are built without this inward foundation, will prove but a Babel. They are but like Sodom's apples, glorious for show, but indeed dust and ashes.

It is good to observe how God, in the creation of the world, both in vegetative and sensitive creatures, still created the principles first, and that in perfection, seminative, able to beget and propagate others. Thus it is also in conversion; He works these holy and excellent principles, which afterwards are operative and vigorous.

Secondly, God, working thus a new nature and thereby enabling new actions, takes a far other course to make holy than moral philosophy teaches. For if we read all the moral philosophers, persuading us to be temperate, just, or prudent, if you ask them, "How shall we come to have the habits of these things?" they will tell you, by frequent actions: *justa agendo sumus justi*, by doing many righteous actions frequently, so we come to have habits. Thus, they know no other way, and there is no better divinity in most people; for they think by doing godly actions, they are made godly. They think by walking in God's commandments, they get a new spirit, which is clearly inverted from the order of the text. God first gives this new spirit, and then causes us to walk in His law. Indeed, we are commanded to be diligent in the use of the means; we must attend to the ordinances of grace. But until this spiritual life is infused, there is not one good action done by us in a good manner. All that you do until this new principle is put in you has but the body of a good action, not the soul of it. Nothing you do is pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6). God is angry with you all the day long. All things are become polluted and unclean to you (Titus 1:15). Oh, were men not hardened in their sins and led captive by the Devil

according to his pleasure, they could never eat or drink or take any rest until they got out of that damnable state, wherein all the day long they were treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.

Belshazzar saw but one handwriting on the wall against him, and he knew not what it was, yet it struck him with terror and trembling. But now you have many handwritings and ordinances against you, even the whole word of God, and you cannot but know what they are, yet you are not affected with fear. What was written of Belshazzar: "You are weighed and found wanting"; the same God's word says of all your duties, performances, and seeming religion: "It is weighed and found wanting." The reason is that all your religious duties are like leaves fallen from the tree, dried and without sap or moisture.

Thirdly, This work of grace is in a far other manner than the Pelagians of old, or the Papists and Arminians of late, do confidently aver, for they do not attend to this order in the text. They say that man, by the power of free will, joins with the grace of God and cooperates with it; and so partly from free will, partly from God's grace, comes this new spirit, this new grace. But this directly contradicts many places of Scripture, which make regeneration and a new birth necessary before all holy actions. If a man cannot make himself a man, much less can he make himself like God, as grace does.

But, they say, in Ezekiel 18:31, the Scripture says, "Make you a new heart, a new spirit." Therefore, by our working, we obtain a new heart. This is answered thus: The same thing may be both our duty and God's gift. When the Scripture says, "Make you a new spirit," it declares our duty, what we ought to do. But when God says, "I will give it to you," that shows our impotence; we are not able to make new hearts, and therefore God graciously works it for us. Augustine

did admirably and orthodoxly defend this truth, that we are not made holy by doing holy actions through grace and free will; but God first makes us holy. As Augustine says, "The wheel runs round, not to make itself round, but because it is round, therefore it runs round."

Indeed, our Saviour says, "Make the tree good" (Matthew 12:33), and then the fruit will be good. But he does not there describe our power, but that excellent order all should look unto in religion. The Pharisees, like most people in our days, looked to the outward actions and did not dare to omit them. They washed the outside of the cup, but our Saviour says not the outside but the inside must be first cleansed. The tree must be first made good before the fruit can. Oh, there is no doctrine more necessary than this. Who looks to good insides? Many dare not neglect the outward obedience to God's commandments, but who minds the new heart, the new spirit within? Hence, they set most preposterously upon the work of conversion. They think by good deeds, by outward duties, to obtain a new spirit from God, not considering that this is to build the top of a house before a foundation is laid. *Non per opera venit ad fidem, sed per fidem ad opera*; we do not come to faith by works, but to works by faith.

Oh then, be affected with this excellent order and method that God takes in our conversion; begin where God begins. What the Apostle said about his preaching, "As a wise builder" (1 Corinthians 3:10), "I lay a good foundation." So do you, as a wise builder for heaven, lay a good foundation. Tempests and storms will arise; God will have His winds and waves assault you, so that unless you are built on a rock, you cannot continue immovable.

These things premised, let us consider the reasons why God takes this order, first giving a new heart and spirit, then causing us to walk

in His ways.

First, Otherwise our duties would be dead duties; there would be no life in them. If a ball or wheel moves, this motion is not a vital action because it is not from a principle within; it comes wholly from without. So all your obedience to God's commandments is but dead obedience, a dead work, if this new heart is not first in you. God in the Old Testament accepted dead sacrifices to be offered to Him, but now we must give up ourselves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). The Scripture delights to call the work of grace a life, and the graces of God's Spirit are compared to living waters. And thus indeed it is: every prayer must be a living prayer, your obedience living or lively obedience, but this cannot be until God begins in the inward man first.

As therefore you cannot delight in a dead wife or dead children, so neither does God delight in your dead religion. We ministers, while preaching of these things, may say our hearts are inditing good things, and our mouths drop like the honeycomb. How glad should you be to hear of a way that may put life into all your dead duties! If those who lived in Christ's time did so exceedingly rejoice to receive their friends from the dead, what joy should it be to have all your duties arise as it were from the dead?

How necessary is this for those who live in a mere formal, customary way of duties! We read of the Egyptian plague, that the firstborn in every family was dead; and thereupon in the morning there were great outcries in every family for a dead son. Oh, how should this truth make many families mourn for their dead duties, their dead religion! There is no life in anything you do until God begins within and so cures you outwardly.

Secondly, As there is no life in your duties, so there is no worth, no excellence, no solidity in them if first God's law is not written in our inward parts. We read in the Canticles of the large commendations that Christ gives the Church, viz., every godly soul, and how her graces are commended for their loveliness, sweetness, and fragrance; whereas if she had only paintings, a mere outside without the inward substance of grace, there might have been some glittering but no true worth. What worth is there in an image of clay and dirt, though covered over with gold? Godliness is *aurea* not *deaurata*; the Church's glory was within. What worth is there in straws or flowers when their juice and moisture are dried up? The hypocrite is compared in his fastings to a bulrush, and such a bulrush is every man's godliness without this inward foundation; it is empty and light. Therefore, weigh your duties in the balance of the sanctuary; do not judge that godliness and holiness which the Scripture rejects as refuse. As the prophet speaks of the Israelites, "Reprobate silver shall men call them" (Jeremiah 6:30). So reprobate duties, a reprobate godliness, shall both men and God call these. As God by the prophet complains of His defective and deformed sacrifices, "Go and offer such to your governors and rulers"; so we may say in this case, go to men and serve them without an inward heart, without inward affections, and will they thank you or reward such service?

Thirdly, As there is no worth, so there is no suitability in such duties to God; for God is a Spirit, and He searches and tries the hearts of men. Our Saviour from this consideration inferred that those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Now then, if God has not begun this foundation in you of a new heart, a new spirit, here is no congruity between God and your worship. Oh, how remote are these things from the common understanding of most men, who know no further in religion than a bodily praying or a bodily hearing! *Sursum corda* was the ancient

acclamation at the administration of the Sacrament, to take them off from the elements of bread and wine; and this should be a daily memento: Lift up your hearts on high in every duty you go about. But men who would be thus elevated in their hearts, and fasten upon God Himself, must go out of all their low and bodily apprehensions. As God bade Abraham come out of his tabernacle, and then look up to heaven to number the stars if he could; you must be drawn out of the tabernacle of your bodily affections before you can set your heart upon God Himself. Oh then, consider that as long as this new spirit is not in you, there is no more proportion between God and your soul for any holy duty, which is nothing but a familiar communion with God, than there is between earth and heaven.

Fourthly, Therefore God begins here before the outward man is sanctified because the greatest power and strength of corruption lie in the inward parts. As the law of God is in the inward parts of the godly, so the law of sin, as the Apostle calls it, is reigning in the members of every wicked man. So that the godly have a good law in their inward parts, and the wicked, the law of sin. If therefore God should only enable us to outward obedience without this new spirit, His greatest work of grace would be left undone; for it is not the body so much as the soul that the Devil possesses and takes for his own. The greatest part of wickedness lies there, where most men neither perceive nor feel it. Though sickness, when it comes to the heart, is presently felt, yet sin, when it comes to the heart and lies at the heart, is not felt as a burden until God's Spirit convinces a man. Seeing therefore that this converting grace is vouchsafed as a healing and a medicinal cure, it is necessary that the greatest operation of it should be upon the vital parts within. So that as in unregenerate men, the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil, and that continually, so the imaginations of their thoughts should be godly and heavenly. As the wicked swallow down iniquity like water,

so rivers of living water should flow out of their bowels. As in the wicked no man can bring the clean out of the unclean, so it should be hard to bring an unclean from a clean.

In these things lie the marrow and quintessence of religion. Men are but in the porch and never enter into the Holy of Holies until they are experimentally acquainted with these things. O that all our congregations were understanding of these things! If ministers preach against outward gross impieties, such as the light of nature condemns, with that you can go along; but concerning this new spirit and new heart, or the old heart and old man, which the Scripture so much speaks of, you know nothing of it.

In the next place, let us consider: What are the signs that may reveal when we perform holy duties from this new spirit within, and not, as most do, from education, custom, or carnal respects to the good or ill will of man? For this is certain: all men perform holy duties either from inward principles of grace or outward principles of human respect. Now, how shall we know when a man does them from this inward new spirit?

First, He that does them from an inward principle is constant, uniform, and immovable in them, for this is made a divine nature in him. As all natural principles in the creatures carry them on in a constant, settled way—the fire always ascends upwards, the stone descends downwards—so the wicked man is constant to his principles of sin. You shall never find him checking or stopping himself except by some extraordinary power. Thus, the godly man's heart and soul carry him on to the things of godliness, and if he is at any time stopped or hindered, it is, as they say, the disease is to the body, *praeter naturam*, besides the nature and inclination of a godly man. Hence Paul makes such a miserable complaint of those lusts

that stirred and moved in him, as those that had led him away captive against his will (Romans 7). Look to this, then, you who are inconstant and are for holy duties in some fits, in some sad moods. So that it is accidental and wholly unexpected if you set upon any religious duty, we may by way of wonder cry out, as they did, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" What makes you pray, come to church? What puts you in this fit? What good disposition are you in so suddenly?

Secondly, Men who perform outward obedience from inward principles do it with delight and joy. There is nothing so pleasing and connatural to them. All principles have a kind of delight in their connatural actions and objects. Thus, the voluptuous principle is for the pleasures of the flesh, the ambitious principle for honours and earthly greatness, and the godly principle is for holiness and godliness. David often professes his delights and even ravishments in the ordinances of God and the enjoying of Him. Christ called it His meat and drink to do the will of His Father; and why? Because the law of God was written within His heart. Indeed, the godly sometimes find dullness, listlessness, and even a weariness upon them in the ways of God. But yet their main and chief delight of soul is in God and the ordinances that lead to Him, rather than in anything else. "You have put more gladness into my heart than they have had when their wine and oil increased" (Psalm 4).

Thirdly, Where inward principles are, they will carry one to the obedience of God's commands, though there be no outward encouragements to allure and draw on. The father and mother love their children, though they have no outward advantages by them, because it is a natural principle. You do not hire and entreat a hungry man to eat his meat or a wearied man to take his rest. Natural appetite calls for these things. Thus, he that has the new heart and

spirit within him, he is godly and lives holily, though there be no favour, no encouragement, no honour to such men.

Fourthly, Where inward principles of grace are, they grow the more powerful and active the more they are opposed. Thus, the water that is stopped swells higher. The colder the weather is, the hotter the fire burns by opposition. And so the people of God have been most holy in times of troubles and opposition. They have borne the best fruit and looked most green in the wintertime, whereas when men do not have inward principles of grace, they wither as soon as the sun rises because they have no root. The godly are stars that shine most in the night, in dark times.

Use of Exhortation: Still and always look from whence all your external obedience comes. Whence is your hearing, your praying, your family duties? What advantage is it to set up Dagon? He will fall down again and again as long as he has no inward life in him, and it will be no profit or comfort to you at your death or at the day of judgment to say, "I have prayed, I have heard, I have been diligent to come to church," if first this new spirit has not been put in you. But oh! How long shall these things be dark parables and hidden mysteries to most men? Who will give you understanding in these things? Remember, your inward nature decays every day, and your outward body; lay up then some enduring treasure.

SERMON VIII.

That True Principles of Grace Within Must Necessarily Demonstrate Themselves by an Outward Godly Life.

"I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes," etc. - EZEK. 36:27

We desire not to lose one jot or tittle of this gracious promise; a drop of this cordial is of great value. The order and method which God uses both in promising and working has afforded us one observation already, but it is so fruitful as to bear a second crop. We may in the second place observe a practical doctrine, which is:

That wherever God works the principles of grace within, they cannot but show themselves in the outward life and conversation.

For thus God promises: He will first put His Spirit within them, and then cause them to walk in His statutes. There is a necessary connection between these two. God has put them together, and so neither man nor devil must put them asunder. Thus, our Saviour shows that the heart within is either the good treasury or the bad, out of which flow either good thoughts and actions or bad (Matthew 12:34-35). Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, the mind thinks, and the hand works.

To open this Doctrine, consider:

First, There are many in the world who flatter and bless themselves with the goodness of their heart, while their lives are full of noisome lusts. You would wonder men should be so bewitched, and yet how often is it? Take the profane man, the most ungodly wretch that is, yet he will say he has as good a heart as the best of men, not considering how impossible it is to divide a good heart and a good life from one another. Just as men do not gather grapes from thorns,

nor figs from thistles, so neither can thorns be gathered from grapes, or thistles from figs. As we cannot expect a clean thing from an unclean, so neither an unclean thing from a clean. Thus, the lives and constant wicked actions of most men declare to their faces that there is no new heart or spirit within them. As there are such kinds of self-deceivers, there are also another sort of persons called Nicodemites, those who thought they might lawfully participate in any false or idolatrous worship or might deny the outward profession of the truth of Christ, as long as they kept their conscience clear to God. This grievous error did much prevail when the outward profession of Christ and His truth was accompanied with great and imminent dangers. They thought they might give up their bodies to any outward pollution as long as they kept their souls for God. But God will be glorified in soul and in body also (1 Corinthians 6:20). As we must with the heart believe, so we must with the mouth make confession unto salvation (Romans 10:10).

Secondly, Even in the godly, the heart may often be desirous of that good which yet, through the power of corruption, they are not always able to perform. So although a new heart is within them, yet much corruption and many frailties may be in their life (Romans 7). Paul exceedingly groaned under this misery, that the good he would do, he could not do; and although out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, yet the mouth cannot speak all the abundance of the heart. There is more strength of grace in the heart than can possibly be expressed outwardly. As no child can express how much it loves its father, so neither can any soul manifest how much it loves God. Howsoever, therefore, a new heart is in the godly, yet because it is not perfectly and absolutely new, it fails in many outward performances. Some outward or inward temptations make it fall short of the grace it desires. Thus the Apostle says, "The Spirit and the flesh lust against one another, so that you cannot do the things

you would" (Galatians 5:17). A godly man then must judge wisely concerning himself. They are ready to think, "Oh, if grace were in my heart, if the Spirit of God dwelt in me, how could I be overtaken with passions, with dullness, and sluggishness?" They must remember that though the spirit is willing, the flesh is often weak; yes, many times both spirit and flesh may be weak. But why do we speak of this as a strange thing? That where the principles of grace are, men may fail in outward duties; for sometimes we see where they have been, yet foul and gross sins have been committed, yes, and for some time continued in. David had the Spirit of God within him, yet in his murder and adultery he did not walk in the Lord's statutes, and so of many others. Therefore, we must not absolutely condemn those as hypocrites, and without any true principles of grace, who live in a godly manner yet sometimes fall in the mire and tumble in blood. Although such a condition is very terrible and greatly scandalous, yet the seeds and inward principles of grace are not quite extinct. Therefore, when we say a godly heart and a godly life are necessarily conjoined, it is to be understood for the most part, and according to the nature of things, though accidentally, through sudden temptations, the contrary may appear.

Thirdly, There may be inward principles of grace, and yet no outward fruits of righteousness: when either the subjects are not capable of actions or they have not time and opportunity to produce them. No doubt in infants who are elected, the inward principles of grace are infused, and therefore they are made members of Christ. Yet, just as they have a soul but that soul cannot put forth any actions of reason, so they have the principles of grace but they do not bud forth into fruit. The thief who was converted at the last hour had a new spirit in him, yet he did not have time to bring forth the fruits of righteousness. Therefore, it is one thing not to bring forth the fruits of righteousness because there is no inward root within, and another

thing because there is no opportunity or the objects about which such graces are exercised are not present. Paul, speaking of the saints' care and love to him, excused them because, though they were ready to do good to him, they lacked the opportunity (Philippians 4:10). A godly man is indeed a tree planted by the waterside that brings forth its fruit, but it is in due season. Although Christ cursed the fig tree that had no fruit on it, although it was not the season, He perhaps would admonish the Jews of how much sorer curse they have cause to be afraid, who had the season of grace but neglected it.

A godly man, therefore, ought not to be dejected if he does not abound in such plentiful exercises of graces as others do if his mind is willing. Only he lacks such opportunities or instruments to make his light shine before others as many of the children of God have.

Lastly, consider this: Although a constant practice of ungodliness is a sure demonstration of a graceless heart, yet a constant abstinence from gross sins is not necessarily a sure evidence of a good heart. Understand this, so that you do not deceive your soul; for many think that if they were to wallow in the mire and filth of sin, it would be clear they were beastly swine. But because they keep themselves clean from the gross transgressions of the wicked, they conclude that this new heart is within them. However, men may be restrained from sin by the providence of God and other means, who yet do not have this spiritual life infused in them. For this Spirit of God does not only cause a man to refrain from sin, but also in such a manner and upon such grounds that the most painted sepulchre, the most exact formalist, can never reach.

These things laid as a foundation, it is good to consider why a man cannot carry this coal of fire, this principle of grace, in his bosom without it breaking out into a flame.

First, The reason is evident from the nature of grace, or this new heart within men. It is of an operative and spiritual vigor; it will not let a man alone. He can have no rest or quiet within himself if he does not outwardly practice that godliness, the root of which is in his heart. Hence, the principles of grace are compared to active and vigorous things, to seed sown, which, though little in quantity, is great in efficacy. Thus John says, "A man born of God does not, nor cannot, sin, because immortal seed abides in him" (1 John 3:9). The Word of God received by faith in the heart is compared to seed sown that brings forth much fruit.

Thus Jeremiah and David, when they were withheld from good, felt a fire kindled in their breasts that burned and scorched them, and they could not but speak. So the Apostle says, "We believe, therefore we speak" (2 Corinthians 4:13). Grace is compared to a fountain of living waters, always springing out of the belly of the godly (John 7:38). "The love of Christ constrains us," says the Apostle. This is the new wine that the Spirit of God puts into the converted, whereby they are heartened and cheered within. O then be afraid of your negligence, carelessness, and neglect of a holy life! If grace were like seed, like fire within, it would set your whole conversation aflame.

Now grace in the heart must be a sharp arrow to wound sin, seeing that it is in the hand of Christ and the Spirit of God. It cannot but conquer sin in the life, seeing Christ and His Spirit dwell in those that are His. "Greater is He that is with you than he that is against you," says the Apostle (1 John 4:4). And though Satan be the strong man that keeps all things quiet before conversion, yet Christ is stronger. No wonder, then, if grace in the heart does not rest until it reforms the life and subdues the most strong corruptions in a man; for Christ and His Spirit set these to work. Therefore, the Apostle says, "If you are led by the Spirit, you will not fulfill the deeds of the

flesh" (Galatians 5:16). And, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are under grace" (Romans 6:14).

So, as the house of Saul grew weaker and weaker, and the house of David stronger and stronger, because God had forsaken the one and was with the other, thus it must be that a new heart will make a new life, because the new heart has God on its side. Christ and His Spirit are with it. We may see the combat of sin and grace excellently represented in the Israelites fighting with the Canaanites. How wonderfully did they subdue all their enemies! No adversaries, though they were the most terrible giants, were able to stand before them. So it is in conversion: no sin, though ever so pleasant, so sweet, so powerful, is able to stand before the Spirit of God, crucifying the deeds of the flesh.

Therefore, let none excuse themselves, saying: "Such a sin, or such distempers, I cannot overcome; I am not able to master such infirmities." Why do you say so? For grace, enlivened by God's Spirit, is able to destroy all your stoutest corruptions. Though they be too strong for you, yet they are not for Him.

Secondly, A new heart within must necessarily produce an outward godly life because that is its end and perfection. In moral philosophy, acts are considered the perfection and end of their habits; and they often say that power is in vain if it is never put into action. This holds true in religion: God gives us the principles and inward abilities of grace so that they may be in action and exercise. Hence, God requires actions principally and the inward principles by consequence. Thus, God requires the act of faith and the act of love: "You shall love the Lord," viz. actually. So, all inward principles of grace are meant to be in outward action and exercise; it cannot be that they should be frustrated in this.

In the Scripture, to have a talent and actually to improve it is the same thing, and those who do not put the grace of God into exercise are said to receive it in vain. Therefore, every godly person who is not diligent in the daily exercise of grace should consider why God has given them the principles of grace, a power to believe, a power to be heavenly-minded, when this is not demonstrated in their life. And all those who live in gross impieties yet boast of a good heart may conclude they have a good heart in vain; for a good heart is to have a good life. Especially the people of God, who indeed have the principles of grace, yet walk dully and negligently, should startle at this saying: "Have I received all my grace in vain? Has God worked all these great works in me in vain?" How severe was that servant's master to him, who took his talent and hid it in a napkin! Even as they buried their dead, tying them in napkins, "Cast that unprofitable servant," says he, "into outer darkness" (Matthew 25:30). Not profuse, deceitful, thievish, but unprofitable servant. May you not fear this doom, you who happily host the principles of grace within you, but your outward life is like a barren wilderness? Stir up yourself, therefore, and say, "All principles of grace are to act with, to be daily exercised and improved."

Thirdly, Principles of grace within will demonstrate themselves in a godly life because God at the day of judgment will make our actions and works the measure of His judgment. The judicial process will not be according to what is within, but what is without. Thus Paul says, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to what we have done in the flesh, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Why then do you have any hope if you live in all manner of ungodliness? Do not think the cry of your prayers or the groans of your heart will be above your crying sins. At that great day, God will not only inquire what your thoughts or desires have been, but what your actions have been. If therefore any grain of wisdom is

in you, you will be sure to look to that against which the Judge will most surely manifest Himself, and that is your actions. It will be no plea then to say, "Lord, I had a good heart, a good meaning, I desired to do otherwise," if you have not indeed done otherwise.

Fourthly, The Scripture expressly declares such to be hypocrites who, having a profession of Christ and of faith and love for Him, yet roll themselves in all impieties: "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). The wicked man's sacrifice, the wicked man's prayer is an abomination unto the Lord. The Apostle James vehemently presses this at length, that faith without the good fruits and works of righteousness is altogether dead, and he calls that person a vain man who reasons otherwise.

You who are so apt to brand those who endeavor to walk strictly and in an unsullied manner from the world with hypocrisy, see yourself as the most notorious hypocrite of all; for you say you believe in Christ, you say you love God, and yet your life is full of profanity and enmity to His holy will. Sincerity is the sweet accord and harmony of the heart and actions together, and it is hypocrisy to pretend heart and affections for God when with your works you deny Him. As the prophets of old complained of those who would come into God's temple, call upon His name, yet curse, swear, steal, and commit adultery (Jeremiah 7), with no less zeal may the ministers of the Gospel complain that people will be Christians, will come to church, will hear, and yet their lives are full of such noisome sins.

Fifthly, Therefore grace in the heart will break out into action because the godly are to endeavor the conversion of others. They are to be examples of holiness, to win others to it. This can never be achieved without holiness in life. For men cannot try or discern the hearts of men; they judge the tree by its fruits. If we would be

instruments to reclaim others from a wicked life, we ourselves must be exemplary in our own. Thus, the believing wife is exhorted to walk in such a holy manner that her unbelieving husband may be brought to the faith thereby (1 Corinthians 7:16). Our Savior exhorts His disciples, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Oh, what a sad thing it is for you, by your wicked and ungodly life, to harden others in impiety! They see a rich man, a great man, a wise man scoffing and opposing the way of godliness, and this confirms them the more in their impieties.

Sixthly, Therefore the Spirit of God within will cause us to walk in all holiness because the daily exercise of grace affords a great deal of sweetness, comfort, and good assurance of our interest in Christ. Though good works and a godly life are not the cause of our justification or sanctification, yet by these we come to have comfortable evidences of God's love for us and ours for Him. As Leah said, her husband would love her because she was fruitful in children, so it is here. Our election is made sure to us by adding one grace to another, one godly action to another. Barrenness in the knowledge of God is reckoned a great curse by the Apostle Peter (2 Peter 1:8). Hence, the more God's own children fail in a daily and diligent practice of godliness, the less comfort and assurance they have in their own consciences.

Lastly, principles of grace will have the acts of grace so that they may stop the mouths of all those who would reproach and blaspheme the holy profession of the Gospel. David, by his wicked action of murder, had opened the mouths of God's enemies to blaspheme Him. And the Apostle complains in Romans 2 that by their ungodliness, the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles.

Oh then, if nothing else, let this make your heart and life accord in the power of godliness, so that the name of God may not be blasphemed, and His pure honor may not be wounded.

Use 1. Instruction: How vainly do all those comfort themselves who plead duties or opinions or any high thing in religion, whose lives are not cleansed. It is a vain thing to plead the Spirit of God in you if it does not cause you to walk in God's statutes and do His judgments. Yet this has been and is a great deceit; men think duties and external acts of religion are enough to save them, though their lives are full of noisome filthiness.

Use 2. What a wonder it is that there should be any in Christian societies whose lives are stained with any gross sin. For who is there that does not think and hope that he has this new heart, the Spirit of God within him, when yet his life speaks nothing but open rebellion and enmity against God? It is not what you are here in the church, with the appearance of piety and devotion upon you, but what you are with your companions in the temptations of sin. Oh, who would think that you would ever go from the Word preached, from God's presence, to commit any lewdness more? Yet nothing is more ordinary.

Oh, how will you endure the trial at the day of judgment? Your works, your ways, what you have done, they will be examined.

SERMON IX.

God's not only infusing the inward principles of grace, but also vouchsafing His quickening, actuating, assisting grace unto His people, enabling them to walk in His statutes; maintained against Pelagians, Arminians, and Papists; Also, the happy condition of those who have this latter grace, as well as the former.

"I will cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments." - Ezekiel 36:27

The method that the Spirit of God uses in promising these great mercies has afforded us profitable observations.

In the next place, you may remember that in the general division of this text, there was the grace of God vouchsafed in the root and in the fruit; in the principles or habits, and in the actual exercise of grace. We have already discussed grace in the root, in the principles, which is called a new heart and God's Spirit put into us. Let us now admire the goodness of God in the fruit; for the text bears both a holy root and holy fruit, and this is expressed in this promise: "I will cause them to walk in My statutes." This is a further distinct mercy of God. It is the first and principal mercy, indeed, to put His Spirit in us; and it is the second, and no less necessary mercy, when this is done, to cause us to walk in His statutes. Thus, the former part of the promise is for the principles of grace; this latter part is for the acts and exercise of grace. We read in Scripture that David, Peter, and others, who had the inward principles of grace, yet for lack of the actual exercise of them, grievously wounded their own souls and sadly dishonored the name of God. Hence, we have a special, remarkable point afforded us, viz.

That God not only at first infuses the principles of grace in His children, but it is necessary He should also enable them to act and improve those principles.

He does not only give us power to perform holy actions but also works the holy actions themselves. Thus, not only the principles of believing, repentance, etc., are the gift of God, but the very acts of these graces as well. The Apostle says that God works in us, not only to will but to do (Philippians 2:13), not only the power but the action itself. This point, in its explanation, will greatly manifest and exalt the grace of God as all in all; it will also set forth the exact duty of Christianity, whose glory lies in the daily exercise of grace, not merely in the principles or root of it.

First, we will explain the sense of the doctrine and then prove it by several arguments. For Pelagians, Arminians, and several Papists are against this excellent and glorious truth, attributing the sufficiency and power of doing a good action to God's grace, but the actual efficacy of it to man's will.

In the first place, consider that there is a twofold grace of God concerning our matter at hand. There is grace regenerating or converting, whereby men dead in sin and wholly senseless come to have a life of grace and partake of a divine nature.

Secondly, there is after this a quickening, preventing, or exciting grace, whereby that former principle of grace is stirred up and provoked to action. I shall not strictly attend to the scholastic distinctions of grace—prevenient, concomitant, and subsequent; or grace operant and co-operant. I shall use the scriptural phrase, "quickenning grace," which is not only at first for men dead in sin, giving life unto them, in which sense Paul uses it (Ephesians 2), but also for the exciting and stirring up of those principles of grace in us, both to act and to increase. As David prays many times in Psalm 119, especially in verse 88, "Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness, so shall I keep Thy testimonies." This is a blessed state, and happy are

those who do not, by negligence or any other sin, provoke God to withdraw this exciting grace. For although a godly man does not lose his principles of grace, yet if he loses this quickening, this acting of grace, he is for the present like a barren wilderness. So then, you see, God has a twofold grace: initial and converting, and exciting and quickening, which we need every hour, every moment, and must pray for more earnestly than we would for our daily bread.

Secondly, you must know that there is a great difference in man while he receives the one and while God enables him to the other. These are not speculative, notional points that do not tend to edification, but are exceedingly profitable. For if we consider man as the subject of that first converting grace, he is merely passive; he does not at all co-operate or work with the grace of God. For, as you heard, he had a stony heart and is dead in sin; and grace converting is compared to the resurrection. Just as Lazarus, when he was raised to life, did not contribute any help thereto of himself, but was wholly passive, so it is with every man that is first converted to God. He does not further this great work; he does not desire it; he does not set it in motion. Indeed, he uses all the power and resistance he can against it until God conquers the heart by His omnipotent power.

But it is otherwise in this exciting and quickening grace. For having the supernatural principles of grace before, when he is stirred up, he is not merely passive; but being first acted upon by the grace of God, we then act and move also. So we are voluntary and free in those exercises of grace; though grace moves, yet we also move. This is excellently expressed by the Church: "Draw us, and we will run after Thee" (Song of Solomon 1:4). The Church was listless, unprepared; therefore she desires the grace of God to draw her, and then she would run after Him. Draw a dead man, and for all that, he cannot

run; but the Church had the life of grace in her, only she wanted this quickening, exciting grace.

Thirdly, when we say that God does not only work the principles but also the acts of grace, that is to be understood as an efficient, not as a subject. Although we say God works in us our faith, our repentance, yet we cannot say God believes or God repents; for they come from Him as an efficient cause merely, but from us as subjects in a vital, formal manner. *Deus non potest supplere vicem formalis aut materialis causae*. So we are the formal causes as well as the efficient. Just as God, in the order of nature, works all natural actions for us, "In Him we live and move," says the Apostle; yet we cannot say God lives, or God moves, or God eats, or God walks; because He is the efficient cause of these actions only, not the formal.

Thus you have the sense of the Doctrine; let us observe the grounds:

First, it is clear that God does not only give a new heart but also causes us to walk in the ways of holiness because these are two distinct mercies and are separable from one another. It may be, and experience tells us, that often where the former mercy of God's Spirit and a new heart is present in His people, the latter may not be.

You heard of David, even while he committed those foul and gross sins, yet the principle and seeds of grace were not quite dead within him, no more than a tree in winter, stripped of all its ornaments, is dead at the root. Yet he was far from this latter mercy in the text, "to walk in the statutes of God." So, at any time, when the children of God fall into sins of lust, carelessness, or negligence, they are not fallen from the root, Christ. However, they have lost this exciting and quickening grace for the present. Seeing, therefore, that this latter is separate from the former, and you may see even one of Christ's sheep

for a time wallowing like the swine in filthy mire, it is necessary that God should not only do the one but the other also for us.

Therefore, the people of God are to consider this: do not please yourselves that you have had the experience of conversion upon your souls. You can tell that God has made a wonderful change in you; but how does God accompany you with this exciting, acting grace? Are you not all over rusty, as it were? Are you not very often unfit for holy duties, unprepared to hear, to pray? Are not your hearts like a barren mountain, yea, like a noisome dunghill sometimes? Do you not refuse to open the door for Christ to come in, who has stood all night knocking while His locks are full of dew? Is it not thus, and far worse with you many times, who yet hope for your conversion to God? And whence is all this? You do not have this acting, this exciting grace, and so you are like one in a deep sleep.

Secondly, the people of God have earnestly begged for this acting grace, not thinking the principles of grace enough. Thus David often prays, "Quicken my heart, incline my heart to keep Thy testimonies." The man prayed that Christ would increase his faith. All the prayers that you read any godly men have made for the acts of grace—that they might repent, believe, walk holily—all these plainly convince that God does not only give the life of grace but also the constant motions of that life afterward. If God did not work these exercises of grace for us also, it would be a vain thing to importune God in prayer for them.

Thirdly, God does this latter as well as the former because He encourages the godly to set upon the exercise of grace, knowing He will enable and assist them therein. Thus the Apostle says, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Why? "Because it is God who works in you to will and to do." This argument may seem very

strange: work because God works in you; but it is the greatest reason and comfort that can be. Do set yourself upon the works of faith, repentance, mortification of the dearest and strongest corruption. Though you are apt to be discouraged and say, "It cannot be," yet God is ready to help with His hand. Paul, speaking of those high expressions of grace—knowing how to abound and how to want—adds, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). A godly man has a kind of omnipotence; he can do what God enables him to do because he has the help of God.

A Christian should not dishearten himself with thoughts such as, "What shall I do when death comes? What if such sudden calamities should overwhelm me?" He must remember that God uses to put forth His hand at that time; and then Peter is emboldened to go upon the waters to Christ.

Fourthly, there must be such acting and enlivening grace, as well as the principles because otherwise, God would lose a great part of His glory in bringing a man to heaven. For not only justification but also salvation is attributed to grace. Romans 9 states, "It is not of him who wills, or runs, but of Him who calls and elects." Now, grace could not have the glory from beginning to end if God did not constantly enable and help in the progress of godliness, as well as at the beginning. So, if God only gave principles of grace and did not daily assist and enable, we might indeed be thankful to Him for what He once did for us, but we might thank our own power and sacrifice to our own will for what is done afterward. But what do you have, says the Scripture, that you did not receive? (1 Corinthians 4:7). It is a general assertion that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of lights (James 1), and we cannot think a good thought, much less have any good affections or desires, even after being converted, by ourselves, if grace were not always ready at hand. So,

this truth should put the soul into daily and constant thankfulness because it has a daily and constant supply from the throne of grace.

Fifthly, if in natural things, where God has given natural principles of actions, they cannot act without God's daily concurrence, how much more must this hold in supernatural things? Take fire, which is a natural agent and determined to one action, namely, to burn. Yet, if God suspends His influence, as in the example of the three worthies, it cannot burn. This is even more evident in natural creatures: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," says the Apostle. We do not only live by Him, but we are not able to move or stir without Him. Now, if it is not enough for a man to have God give him life once, but He must daily enable him to move and stir, will not this follow much more in supernatural things? Can we stir the hand or the foot without Him? And can we stir the heart or affections to God without Him? Just as God, though He rested from the works of creation, does not rest from those of conservation: "My Father is working until now, and I am working," says Christ. So, neither does God cease from the daily conservation and constant help in all the actions of the spiritual new creature.

Sixthly, the Dominicans, arguing against the Jesuits on this point, reason thus: Everything that is potential must be reduced to act by something that is itself in act. Now, they say, God is *actus primus et purus*, the first and pure act. The principles and habits of grace are potential, and therefore they must be determined and actuated by God, who is always in act. This argument has much strength, but it is too metaphysical. I come to a more popular one.

Seventhly, God does not only bestow principles of grace but also excites and quickens, as is plainly evidenced by the fact that two godly men, living under the same means of grace, show different

outcomes. One does not profit and grows colder and colder, while the other grows and thrives more and more. How does this difference come about? One has the grace of God assisting and enabling him, while the other does not. It is not that the one who falls into sin can blame God; his slothfulness, negligence, and carelessness cause God to withdraw His helping hand in that need. So, although the cause of one man's fall is his own sin, the cause of the other man's standing is God's grace vouchsafed to him. Even the same godly man, like David, finds a great change in his own heart: sometimes he can trust in God and overcome temptations; at other times, he is cast down and has no strength within him. Whence comes all this? From the ebbing and flowing of exciting grace. This is a clear experimental demonstration of this truth: at times, the least temptation or snare is enough to make a godly man fall; at other times, though strong winds and tempests blow upon him, he is able to stand like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved. This difference comes not from within a man but from without, as this assisting and exciting grace is either ready or afar off.

In the next place, let us consider how blessed and happy a thing it is to have not only the principles of grace but also the actings and causations of it:

First, thereby the soul will be kept from negligence, dullness, and all abatements or falls in our love to God. All the while grace is causing you to walk and to be always doing, no dullness or stupidity will enter upon you. All the while a man is in exercise and motion, he does not catch cold; all the while the streams run, they cannot grow muddy. A godly man is said to have rivers of living water flowing from his belly (John 7:38). He is not a fountain sealed up; they are daily flowing, and thus they cannot grow noisome. The iron that lies still grows rusty and is not fit for use. What a comfortable condition

this is for the godly, to have your heart never lie still but always hungering, thirsting, or moving after God and good things in one way or another! Just as the heart itself never lies still but is always in motion, so grace in the heart, when stirred up by God, is always working, putting on, and drawing out the soul. What makes the godly so grieved, so dejected many times? It is the decay, the fall they find within themselves, but this causing grace makes all things flourish.

Secondly, this causing grace, as it preserves from decays in the degree of grace, so much more from gross and foul sins. Oh, David and Peter lacked this help in the midst of their temptations, and therefore they were so dangerously overcome. This is the only preservative and antidote against sin—not just the principles of grace, but the actings of grace. This is called by the Apostle, "grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16, χάρις εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν). Oh, this is admirable, when grace comes at the very moment of need! You were even falling into such a sin, you were even drowning, and this comes and lifts up your head.

Thirdly, this actuating grace will make a man in a prepared frame for every duty and to resist every kind of temptation. And what can be more desired than this? Ask this of God, and you beg the whole kingdom of grace. He that is prepared to do every duty and to resist every temptation, though he should drink any deadly thing of sin, though a viper of lust should fasten on him, yet it would not hurt him. Thus the Scripture often speaks of being prepared and ready for every good work. When God commands faith, patience, and zeal, to say, "My heart is prepared or fixed, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Psalm 40:7-8). The heart of itself is in no way fitted for any good action, and though the principles of grace are within, yet a man may be very indisposed to what is holy. Now this causing grace is the file to take off the rust, it is the whetting of the edge, it is the stirring up

or blowing of the coals into a flame. The excellence of this grace is no less seen in the confirming and corroborating of the heart against temptations. We are taught to pray constantly that God would not lead us into temptation. Temptations have discovered the rottenness, guile, and falsehood of men's hearts. It was a temptation that discovered the second kind of ground to have no root; who knows his heart in temptations? Peter, in a temptation, differed much from himself when without it. Now there is nothing that so fortifies and makes the heart inflexible as this grace to help in time of need.

Fourthly, this actuating grace will make a man fruitful and profitable in his place. This is the trading and merchandising grace; it makes a man redeem the time, seize the present seasons of grace, and observe all opportunities to serve God in his generation. No good thing will be lacking for the man who has this daily influence, whereas men lie like lumps of earth or stand like dead and dry trees in the garden of God if this grace does not always water them.

Fifthly, this causing, exciting grace puts a man in a comfortable posture; insomuch that whenever our Lord and Master shall come, he will be pronounced faithful and blessed. Thus our Savior says, "Blessed is he whom his master, when he comes, shall find so doing" (Luke 12:43). He must be doing; he must be in his Master's work. This will ensure a man has enough oil. Oh, therefore, that the people of God would hunger and thirst more after this working, living, and quickening grace. How many opportunities do you neglect? How many prizes are put into your hand, and you, like a fool, neglect them? How often is your heart sluggish, dead, and very much indisposed, if Christ should come at this or that hour? All this is from a lack of this grace, which tunes your heart. This grace would wind up your soul, so that you would be ready for the work of the Lord.

Use of Conviction: To the greatest part in our congregations, you are such who never felt the power of this text upon your souls. Where God renews, there He causes men to walk in His statutes. He will overpower their hearts, subdue their contumacy, and remove their unwillingness. But alas, woe, and again woe for you! You find the Devil, that unclean spirit, ruling in your heart. He causes you to walk in all the lusts of sin. He moves you to serve this corruption, and you do it. That sin, and you do not refuse it. What is more plain and evident than that this mercy is not vouchsafed to you? And yet how confident, how secure are you? What, are you not afraid of God's word? Do you not believe? Do you think to mock God and find His word false? Oh, miserable and wretched men! The more to be pitied because they pity not themselves, neither consider how near they are to eternal woe.

Use 2. Of Admonition to the children of God: You have the principles of grace; know that is not enough. The sweetness and comfort of these lie in the exercise of them. In all good things of this life, you judge the use and improvement of them to be all in all; why not then in the principles of grace? Be always ready to say, "My heart is prepared, O Lord; I can do and suffer Thy will." Especially take heed of all those sins that may drive or chase away this exciting grace. Take heed you do not provoke God to withdraw this assistance and strength from you, for that is easily done. And know, nothing sooner bereaves you of this assisting grace than neglect of the ordinances or the careless and sluggish performance of them. For in and by the use of these, God discovers His power. He bids us wait for this strength and expect it in these.

SERMON X

Showing that true Converts make Godliness their ordinary Practice;
And what it means to walk in God's Statutes.

"I will cause you to walk in My statutes." - Ezekiel 36:27.

This latter part of the promise contains, as you have heard, grace in the fruit and the exercise of it: "I will cause you to walk in My statutes." To subdivide this promise of actuating grace, consider the action promised and the object about which it is conversant. The action promised is to walk. The object is My statutes. I shall speak only of the action vouchsafed, to walk. It is so well-known that I need not spend time enumerating places, for to walk denotes the constant course, endeavor, and practice of a man's life, whether in good or evil. Many examples from Scripture could be produced to evidence this, just as the word "way" in Scripture signifies the form of doctrine, worship, or manners a man accustoms himself to.

This expression of walking is excellently transferred from the body to the soul. By faith, love, and other graces, the soul walks as well as the body by feet, and it signifies not sudden fits and transitory affections about godliness, but a daily settled, steadfast, and immovable way in godliness. So the doctrine is:

That a man converted makes godliness his constant, ordinary practice.

It is a walking; indeed, the Scripture calls it "περιπατέω" (Ephesians 2:10) to walk round and round in the whole circle of good works. All Christians are of the Peripatetic Sect in this sense, as in Galatians 6:16. The word to walk is "στοιχέω," (who walk after this rule) which

denotes an exact, methodical walking, as in writing, where a man carefully puts one letter after another to make sense. But the opening of particulars will give life to this matter. Let us, therefore, first consider what is implied in this expression or metaphor, to walk in God's statutes.

First, it signifies that we make religion and godliness our business, our κύριον (main work), our Joseph, our Benjamin. Whatever else is neglected, this is not. Thus our Savior said, "Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven, and other things shall be added" (Matthew 6:33). Grace is the principal; things of this life are but accessory. Hence, in 1 Corinthians 7, we must buy as if we bought not, we must marry as if we married not, and do all earthly things as if we did them not, so that we may serve the Lord without distraction.

Christ gave us a good example in doing God's will, as He attended to it so diligently that sometimes He refused natural refreshments to promote God's glory, saying, "My meat and drink is to do the will of Him who sent Me" (John 4:34). David describes the godly man as meditating on the Law of God day and night. This phrase does not imply that we should give up our callings and read nothing else but the Bible; it shows that we make it our chief business and employment to attend to that rule.

Therefore, the Rabbis took it too literally when, being asked whether a man may read Greek authors or any human books other than the Bible, one answered, "If there were any time that was not part of day or night, he might take that time and spend it in reading such books." But this was too strict; it commands us to give primacy, to give the best, as it were, to the matters of God.

Oh, but who then is converted if this be so? Where is the man who makes godliness his main work and business? Who rises up early and

goes to bed late to get this bread of life? Look into persons, into families—are not the matters of the world preferred before the matters of godliness? Do not earthly things make you pray as if you prayed not, serve the Lord as if you served Him not? You who are godly, think of this truth and mourn; it is a two-edged sword. Does not your own heart often tell you that you do not make godliness your main business? The cares, the snares, and the temptations of the world make you many times seek the things of the earth in the first place.

Secondly, it implies voluntariness, delight, and pleasure in the ways of godliness. It is not only our employment and labor (for we may be compelled to that), but it is our delight, our joy, our greatest pleasure in this life. To walk is a voluntary action and frequently used to express a man's delight. For example, "He is gone to walk," or "He walks in his garden." Thus, to express His protection and delight in us, God promises to walk with us or among us and set His tabernacle among us (2 Corinthians 6:16).

Those who are converted find doing the will of their Father more delightful than honey, riches, or all other advantages. Hence, Psalm 110 calls them a willing people. David often expresses his great delight and pleasure in the commandments of God. Paul says in Romans 7, "I delight in the law of God, in the inward man." If grace and godliness are your walk, how great will the joy and gladness of your heart be in all your approaches to Him? Every duty will be like the Mount of Transfiguration, of which you will say, "It is good to be here." As our Savior said, "He that drinks of the old wine does not care for the new." Similarly, the godly person who has tasted the goodness of God and the sweetness of grace will forget earthly pleasures. This manna will make a man despise Egyptian garlic; this fatted calf will make a man regard no more any husks.

So, if you constantly view all godly duties as wearisome and burdensome, how can you say God has wrought this new heart in you? Indeed, the dullness, sluggishness, and partial weariness that even the godly often experience argue that conversion is only partial and imperfect. Therefore, they should be grieved and ashamed in their souls to hear and think of these things, saying, "These holy truths have too much luster and dazzle more than my weak, infirm eyes are able to behold." Oh, then hunger and thirst more after this sweetness and pleasure, which is to be had in holiness. This will be like oil to the wheels, like the spirit in Ezekiel's wheels, making the soul move swiftly.

Thirdly, to walk denotes diligence, frequency, and customariness. There is a great difference between setting a man's foot accidentally or occasionally in a path and walking in it. Ahab occasionally humbled himself, but it was not his way. Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, but did he ever do so before? He did not walk in the way of righteousness. To walk is a constant, frequent, customary exercise of a man, and does not signify what a man may do in some fits or on some occasions, but what he is accustomed to. Even the godly man sometimes turns aside out of the path of righteousness into ways of wickedness, as David and Peter did. Yet we do not say they walked in wickedness; wickedness was not their constant customary practice. Similarly, the wicked sometimes, especially under calamities and fears, step into the ways of godliness and do some godly and righteous things, but this is not their way, it is not their custom. It is not the mere doing of holy and righteous actions, but whether these are your way. Do you walk in these? Is it not by mere accident or some sudden occasion, as a contrary wind sometimes drives a passenger to a port other than the one he expected or desired?

Fourthly, to walk implies progress and increase in godliness. Walking is a progressive motion, and with every step a man takes, he gains more ground and is nearer to his journey's end. Thus, it is in godliness. The converted man gains, grows, and is nearer the top of the hill than he was. Paul is seen not only walking but even running, pressing hard after and forgetting the things that are behind (Philippians 3:13-14). Oh, this is a necessary point, for who attends to growth in grace, to get more of this treasure, though the Scripture often presses it? The old rule is, *Non progredi, est regredi*; not to go forward is to go backward. Yet how many are at a standstill, even decaying and abating in former graces! Is this to walk in the ways of God? Like Hezekiah's sun, you have gone so many degrees backward. Into what a consumption have you fallen? Who would take you to be the same as you once were? Every duty and grace is so withered that, as David said of his body, "My bones stick out through my skin" (Psalm 102:5). It may indeed be that even a converted man's condition is not to walk forward but to fall backward and be many degrees short of what others are who set out at the same time with him. But then they recover again to their great advantage. As children, after a disease has pulled them down, when they recover, they shoot up higher. As stumbling makes a man gain more ground, even in their very sins, though they are *extra semitam*, yet not *extra viam*; for the grace of God recovering them will make this very stumbling a whetting to them, and they will be more zealous and active, the more they have been negligent.

However, although there may be accidental obstructions and checks to grace in its walk, the nature and inclination of godliness are always to carry us on to further perfection. This walking is still nearer and nearer to our journey's end: faith is increased, love and heavenly-mindedness are more promoted. Remember, therefore, you are a traveler; your godliness is a walk. Do not sit down and say,

"Soul, take your ease, for you have grace enough, godliness enough." This is an argument you have none at all. When Laodicea said she was full, rich, and wanted nothing, then she was poor and miserable and wanted all things (Revelation 3:17).

Apelles, when he had drawn his line, would write *faciebat* in the imperfect tense and not *fecit* to show that he still intended to perfect and complete it; still, something is wanting. This may be written upon all our graces, *credebat*, not *credidit*; *amabat*, not *amavit*. There are some imperfections, yea many defects, which are constantly to be amended. I earnestly desire this truth might be fastened upon the godly. They are not in growing postures; they do not come and say, "Lord, this talent of five has gained ten." They do not say, "This mustard seed has grown up into a great tree." They speak as children in grace and not as perfect men.

Fifthly, as walking implies progress, it also supposes that in this life, we can never attain a period of full rest; all is walking here. In this life, we walk, but in heaven, there is rest. There, we are set on our thrones after victory and conquest over our lusts and the world. Just as God in the Old Testament first had His tabernacle, which was not fixed but ambulatory, moving from place to place, and later had His temple, a place of rest where His people were to sit down and enjoy Him, so it is with His children in the New Testament. They are in a tabernacle here; their temple is in heaven. This should comfort the people of God, just as the former should provoke and inflame them. They do not have mastery over their hearts as they desire; they are in continual combat and conflict, falling far short of those excellent graces propounded to them. Let not this dismay them, for they are but walking as yet in the way of godliness; they have not reached their journey's end, they are not yet to sit down. The godly would

have an "heaven upon earth," whereas God has made this life and the life to come two distinct dispensations.

Sixthly, this walking in the way of godliness supposes a guide, a light to direct and inform them so they may not stumble and fall. There are landmarks and seamarks for passengers, and so the Word of God is the guide and light to walk by. "As many as walk according to this rule," says the Apostle. Many walk in a disorderly, loose, and lawless manner; they have no law but their lusts, no guide but their blind passions and affections. But the walking of the godly is in an exact, orderly, and godly manner. Only the Word of God can direct and guide them in this. Hence David often commends it as a lantern to his feet and a lamp to his paths. No man can tell how to live, believe, or worship God without His Word. We cannot tell how to pray, hear, or live godly and righteously without this rule.

Thousands of people show they have none of this mercy in the text vouchsafed to them. Do they not live like brute beasts? Are not their lusts and fancies the rule they live by? Give me the man who lives by the Scripture, who walks by the Scripture, who thinks, speaks, and acts according to Scripture directions. There could not be such walking in darkness and stumbling therein if men attended to this light. Oh, that this truth might enter into you: My life is a walk, and I must have some rule to guide me. And what is that but God's Word? How then can I lie, curse, or blaspheme by that information? Where does the Word allow or command me such things? Be no longer like the horse and mule that have no understanding, but remember you are men, and so must have a rule of reason and piety to live by, and that is God's Word. Men are convinced they must have no other faith or religion than what the Word commands, but they do not consider this is as true also for their lives. They must live no other lives, do no other actions, than this Word requires.

Seventhly, as God's Word is the rule they walk by, so God Himself is the companion they ought to walk with. You are not alone in this walk; God is with you. The Scripture has a three-fold phrase: walking with God, walking before God, and walking or following after God, and they all have their peculiar emphasis.

To walk with God: Thus Enoch is said to do in Genesis 5:24, and that implies a heavenly, holy, and humble yet familiar enjoyment of God in our way. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" Therefore, no wicked man can walk in these paths of godliness because he is not agreed with God. God is an adversary and an enemy to them. But the godly, in their journey to heaven, have sweet communion with and enjoyment of God. Just as God spoke to Moses as one friend to another by way of apparition, so does God in a spiritual way to the godly. God is graciously present with him, supports him, and comforts him. If it is said, "A pleasant companion is as good as a coach in the journey," how much more admirable is it to have God as our companion on the way?

To walk before God: Genesis 17:1 commands Abraham to do this, which means to walk in the ways of godliness while keeping an eye on God, to seek to please Him, and to take heed of the most secret sins, knowing God has an omniscient eye. Therefore, this is the ground of sincerity, which the Scripture calls perfection: "Walk before Me and be perfect."

To walk after God: This is in opposition to the phrase "walking after their idols" or other gods or the imagination of their own hearts (Jeremiah 18:12). This means following the directions and guidance God vouchsafes, especially in matters of worship. God goes before us, as it were, with the light of His Word in His hand, and we are to follow after. This truth has been too spiritual for almost all ages of

the Church, which have not followed God in their worship but rather the customs and superstitious inventions of men.

Now, among other qualifications in walking that the Scripture may speak of, there are four observable ones:

First, to walk uprightly. "He that walks uprightly," Proverbs 10:9, "walks boldly." Contrary to this is halting in the way of godliness. The Apostle, in Hebrews 12:13, exhorts them to make straight paths for their feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. It is not enough to be in the way of godliness; all hypocrites are so. We must take heed not to halt between God and Baal, as the Scripture speaks. Judas was in Christ's way, but he halted between Christ and the affections of the world. As the heifers taken from their young ones went straight on with the Ark but bellowed and moaned for their young ones, so it may be that you are driven on in the external ways of holiness, but you moan and your heart runs after sin or the world.

Secondly, to walk by faith, and not by sight. The Apostle says, "We walk by faith," 2 Corinthians 5:7. This is a kind of walking that the world does not understand. To walk by faith is to be above all principles of sense, carnal reasonings, worldly fears, or delights, always eying the promise and beholding God's favor in Christ. This is a comfortable, peaceable, and secure walking.

Thirdly, to walk requires that our feet be shod with the preparation of the Gospel, Ephesians 6:15. That was part of their armor in former times, to have a defense or munition for their feet. The Apostle calls this preparation the Gospel of peace. We have many doubts, fears, and other discouragements on the way to heaven. Not sluggishness, but truth itself may say, "There is a lion in the way" (Proverbs 26:13), indeed many lions, roaring to devour. The guilt of sin may make

every man like Cain, wandering and trembling. Now, the Gospel makes a sure and good preparation against this.

Lastly, it is required that we should walk circumspectly. The Apostle says, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (Ephesians 5:15). If this were the main intent of the text, it would be profitable to show the grounds of this circumspect walking. We may hint at them for you. The way you walk in is a strait and narrow way; it is easy to step out of it into the pit. Godliness is bounded with limits, but sin is a broad way. Now, how difficult it is to order our steps so as to step aright continually. Tertullian calls Christians "funambuli," rope-walkers. Those that step even slightly awry are in danger of killing themselves. How apt we are to take that for faith, patience, and zeal which is not so.

Secondly, walk circumspectly because we have a great journey to go and little time. Our walk is a very long one, and night is suddenly coming upon us. If the saying goes, "Ars longa, vita brevis," we may say, "Pietas est longa, lata, et profunda."

Thirdly, there are many enemies, thieves, and robbers on the way—spiritual and invisible adversaries in heavenly places—and these watch to intercept you on the journey. They do not lie in wait, as those spies did to kill Paul, but to damn the soul. Your grace is a precious treasure, and they strive to rob you of it.

Use of Examination: Try yourself by this touchstone: what is your walk, your way, your employment? Is it not to make provision for the lusts of the flesh? The Scripture says some men's hearts walk after their own imaginations, others after covetousness; some men's tongues are said to walk through the earth. Oh, do not think, if you walk in such ways, that heaven will be the journey's end. Neither may you take sanctuary under your duties, your devotions on some

solemn occasions, for these are not your walk, your way, and so they will not be recognized as the paths of godliness. We who walk and pass away like shadows, how should we lay up for an enduring treasure?

Use of Exhortation to the godly: Make godliness your chief employment, your business, and your great delight. Oh, take heed of everything that shall steal away your heart. Though grace indeed is such a treasure that thieves and robbers cannot by violence steal it away, yet there are spiritual thieves, sweet and sugared enemies, temptations both within and without, and these may deprive you of your choice jewels if you do not watch. Oh, say, "I am not myself, I am not as I would be, all the while I am hindered or opposed in the work of godliness." Is your heart at any time overcharged and even drunk with the comforts of this life? Reprove and chide yourself. Count every day and hour lost that does not contribute to heaven in one way or another.

SERMON XI

That Converted Persons are very Careful and Tender of the Worship of God, Observing That and Only That Which He Hath Commanded

"I will cause them to walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them." - Ezekiel 36:27

We subdivided the grace here promised in the latter part of the chapter. The considerations were: 1) The action, "I will cause you to

walk," and 2) The object of the action, "in My statutes." This we are to treat upon at this time.

Although there are three words in Scripture often used for the same thing—commandments, statutes, and judgments—there is, in many places, a difference between these terms.

- **Commandments** properly refer to the perpetual rules of the moral law, which enjoin the same duties in all ages of the Church.
- **Judgments** are strictly used for those duties of the Judaical law, which concern justice and equity one to another.
- **Statutes** are all those rites and manners of worship that God has commanded.

While we may, in this text, consider statutes and judgments as the same, it is better to distinguish them, as the Holy Spirit seems to branch out the whole practice and life of a converted person into two areas:

1. **Duty to God:** "To walk in God's statutes."
2. **Duty to man:** "To walk in His judgments to do them."

Although in the New Testament we do not have the same statutes of worship as they did, nor the same judicial law for justice and equity between man and man, the meaning is that God will cause His people to walk in all the worship and equity which He commands at any time. It is common in the Old Testament to express the worship of God, which shall be used in the times of the Gospel, under these names, which were proper to the legal administration.

This then is the sense: When God has put this new heart and new spirit into His children, He will make them diligent in all that

worship which He has commanded. They will be careful to worship Him in that pure and holy manner which is appointed. All their worship will be statute-worship; there is the statute-law of the Scripture for it. They dare not adopt any form or manner of worship about which God might say to them, "Who has required these things at your hands?" From this, observe:

That converted persons are very careful and tender in the worship of God, observing all that, and only that which He has commanded.

You may discover the work of grace in a man as much by his principles and practice in the worship of God as by his moral principles and actions. Idolatrous and superstitious worship grossly practiced is no more consistent with grace than profane and ungodly ways. I grant indeed that even godly men may, for want of light and better information, live in some remnants of superstitious worship. As in the reigns of some good kings, the high places were not taken away; and John's disciples, yea, and Christ's disciples, were but old bottles. They were not able suddenly to receive such pure and spiritual worship as Christ intended for them. In the infancy of the Church, how much were believers led astray by their love of and attachment to ceremonial worship! They would still be circumcised; they would still observe certain meats and days. Indeed, the worship of angels was introduced under the pretense of humility.

To open this point, consider:

First, divines make a twofold worship: internal and external. Internal worship includes all those spiritual graces of the soul that are immediately directed toward God Himself. Thus, faith in God and love for God, giving Him preeminence and the chief place in the

heart, constitute the worship of God. This is spiritual and inward worship, commanded in the first commandment.

External worship consists of all those visible parts and means of worship that God has appointed. In the Old Testament, this included praying, reading the Word, offering sacrifices, and many bodily adorations. These are commanded in the second commandment. When God forbids worshipping Him with images, He thereby forbids making any part or means of divine worship without His command.

In the New Testament, God's external worship consists of prayer, reading and hearing the Word, administration of the sacraments, sanctifying His Sabbaths, and singing of psalms. Therefore, the truly godly person will be careful to perform all those duties of religious worship commanded in the New Testament. He does not adopt the vain customs of men, nor does he follow the traditional worship of his fathers, but he worships as it is written, knowing God is most jealous of His worship. God is very sensitive to any abuse, corruption, or mixture of His worship by human presumption.

Secondly, although God has commanded this statute-worship, the golden rule of our Savior must always be remembered. In John 4, Christ, taking the woman of Samaria away from her old traditional worship, said, "God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." By this, we are admirably instructed that all external worship of God must yet be spiritual. It is not the bowing of the body or the external humiliation that God looks after. God is a Spirit and thus chiefly requires spirit-worship.

This text would have been like the flaming fiery sword to keep off that intolerable burden of false worship that later crept into the paradise of God. It is a sin we are very prone to, to rest upon external worship without lifting up our hearts to God. This is what made the

Apostle speak so contemptuously of ceremonial worship and all those Jewish ordinances, though appointed by God, calling them "carnal and beggarly elements" (Galatians 4:9). The superstitious Jews made these elements the first principles and foundation of religion, but he calls them beggarly because they were without Christ. So, all your outward service and worship of God is but an empty, beggarly religion unless it is spiritually performed, and that is mainly by resting on Christ in those ordinances.

But I do not intend an exact treatment on the religious and divine worship of God. I shall therefore, in the next place, instance in two or three of the New Testament statutes which God has commanded to be religiously observed, and then show the grounds of this pious and religious disposition in converted persons.

First, one of Christ's main statutes of worship is prayer. Not in the Socinian sense, who make prayer a new instituted worship by God, claiming it was not a duty commanded before. Not so, only Christ continued and confirmed this duty, revealing the manner of it more clearly. Thus, you have many precepts and examples for prayer, which is to be done fervently, humbly, and incessantly. It is recorded as a sign of Paul's conversion, "Behold, he prays" (Acts 9:11), and in Zechariah 12, the Spirit of prayer and supplication, with mourning and heartfelt grief, is promised under the Gospel. Thus, you cannot have a surer sign of a graceless man than one who is not diligent in this duty and worship of God, prayer.

Although our manifold necessities might provoke us to this duty, God has also diligently enjoined it to open the fountain of His mercy to us. Oh then, how few partake of this benefit? Where is he of whom we may say, "Behold, he prays," constantly, fervently, and effectually? Instead of prayer, there is cursing, swearing, and

blaspheming. If they do pray, they have some short prayers by rote, which they utter like parrots, understanding nothing, and so irreligiously discharge it.

Private, Personal Prayer: David speaks much of this, and Christ often went apart to pray. Do you take Christ's command, "Enter into your closet, and shut your door" (Matthew 6:6)? Does God see your secret groans, your secret tears, your private debasements? If grace is in you, you will be diligent in this course.

Public Prayer: The prophet Jeremiah speaks of this, and Christ quotes it, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matthew 21:13). Our Savior speaks of two or three gathered together to ask anything of the Father in His name (Matthew 18:20). This public prayer is also much observed by the new heart, for there is united strength and force to lay hold upon God, and God is in the midst of His people to open His hand and bestow His mercies.

Family Prayer: Joshua declared, "I and my house will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15), and God took special notice of Abraham, knowing he would make his family serve the Lord (Genesis 18:19). Jeremiah prayed that God would pour His wrath upon families that do not call on His name (Jeremiah 10:25). You may read of the churches in some Christians' houses because of the spiritual worship of God therein. If God has ever wrought this new heart in you, how diligent would you be to walk in all the statutes of prayer—private, public, and family prayer. You would not dare neglect this worship of God.

Think not that any civil and honest conversation in the world is enough without this worship. But what unclean dens, what noisome hells are some men's families! Is prayer there? Is there constant religious calling upon God? No, instead, there is dissoluteness and

profaneness. The pillars of the house and its walls will one day witness against such men.

Second, the Lord's Day and the strict holy observation of it. Where godliness is, they will call the Sabbaths a delight (Isaiah 58:13) and not speak their own words or think their own thoughts. This is a promise to be fulfilled in the times of the Gospel. The observation of a seventh day is not Jewish, as it was instituted for Adam in innocence. Although Adam was made pure and holy, able to have a heavenly heart in all his works, God would still have him observe one day, which He blessed and sanctified for the immediate worship of God.

For the continuation of a seventh day, though the Jewish day is altered, you have plain examples of its alteration to the first day of the week upon Christ's resurrection. We read of their church assemblies on that day, and John calls it the Lord's Day (Revelation 1:10). All these conjoined make it clear that there is a moral and perpetual obligation to diligently observe it. Where God puts His new Spirit, He makes a willingness, a tender conscience, and a delight to sanctify it.

Oh, then, take heed of those licentious doctrines that decry the Lord's Day. By the holy sanctifying of it, you will come to delight in the Lord more, and your graces will increase and flourish. Some neglect it from corrupt principles, while others do so from vicious and profane affections or worldly covetous desires. They, like those in the prophet Amos, ask, "When will the Sabbath be over, that we may buy and sell and get gain?" (Amos 8:5). Your tender conscience about the holy sanctifying of the Sabbath will greatly demonstrate the savory work of grace upon you.

This may suffice for two examples of the statute-worship of God in the New Testament.

Why the Godly are Careful and Tender about God's Worship

First, because God Himself is so tender about it. There is no sin about which God's jealousy is more provoked than false worship. Reading the Prophets, you will see that the great controversy God had with His people was over the corruption of His worship. This is complained of in almost every chapter. Therefore, the common word the Scripture uses for idolatry and false worship is "abomination." When Christ said, "What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination unto God," He was chiefly speaking of the Pharisaical instituted worship, where they placed all their righteousness. What was highly regarded as the only religion and service to God was an abomination to Him. Since God's worship is the apple of His eye—the main thing He is so jealous about—and His judgments have been so severe upon those who have violated His order regarding religious matters, as shown in the punishment of Nadab and Abihu for offering strange fire, and striking Uzzah dead for not adhering to the order, a godly person becomes very careful about the worship of God, ensuring they give nothing but what God requires.

Secondly, they are diligent in this because the Word of God is the only rule of worship. Everyone must be able to give a reason from Scripture for such religious duties. Those with a new heart are made light in the Lord; they take the Scripture as the way to walk in, and whatever is not Scripture-worship, whatever religion is not Scripture-religion, they dare not own. Tell a godly person of the antiquity of such worship, its universality, or its excellent fitness to keep humble and devout; all these are but fig leaves. Is it

commanded worship? Is there the statute law of the Scripture for it? Let your fathers and grandfathers, let all the world admire such worship; if it is not God's command, it is a vain thing. How clear is our Savior: "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Our Savior told the woman of Samaria, "You worship what you do not know," because she did not have the Scripture (John 4:22). This should silence all the cavils and foolish pleas people have for superstitious false ways of worship. Bring your Scripture for it; show God's Word for it. Your dotting and raging for these things, where God's Word is no light to you, is as great an argument of a carnal heart devoid of grace as profaneness, and they often go together. Those who are for superstitious worship are commonly profane and ungodly in their lives.

Thirdly, the people of God are careful about worship and only that which God has commanded because they are a spiritual, heavenly people, endowed with knowledge and wisdom from God's Word, and so able to discern things that differ. The Apostle, in Colossians 3:1-2, uses this argument against observing superstitious worship, which he had spoken against in the previous chapter: "If you are raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." Calvin solidly understands this not only of lusts and earthly things but also of the human ordinances and will-worship Paul had immediately spoken of. It is a brutish, blind mind, an unclean beast that never chews the cud, who does not consider and well advise about the worship of God but takes everything out of custom and what is imposed upon them. A godly person has a more noble, rational spirit; they will search the Scriptures to see whether such things are to be done or not.

Fourthly, the godly are diligent in the pure worship of God because He draws near in those religious duties. Where everything is done according to His will, He delights to be present. How many glorious blessings did God promise to His pure worship in the Temple until they defiled it with abominations? Then He destroyed both the nation and the Temple. Where the pure worship and ordinances of God are, He walks there and pours out His love. The Church is then adorned in the beautiful ornaments God has decked her with. When God's worship is thus purely performed, He adds to their graces. None seek God's face in vain; His promise and institution go hand in hand. Let a man use a thousand times over such ceremonies and worship God has not commanded; he will never be the more holy. There cannot be any spiritual effect communicated unto him because God will only work where He has promised, and His promise is only to His own institutions.

Fifthly, they are careful to observe His statute-worship because it is a duty to God. He is their Lord and God, their sovereign from whom they have all, and outward worship is a paying of homage to Him, as an humble and submissive acknowledgment of God. "Come," says the Psalmist, "let us fall down and worship before Him, because He has made us and not we ourselves." All solemn religious duties are not only instituted means of grace but also solemn testifications and acknowledgments of our humility, submission, dependence upon God, and exaltation of His great excellency. So if the godly man were negligent here, he would not give unto God that which is God's.

This greatly reveals the falsehood and arrogance of those who think they are above ordinances. Suppose (which is not in this life) that you were already so holy and perfect that you were above any benefits from the ordinances, that you did not need the benefit of the Word preached and the sacraments; yet you cannot be above them as

they are testifications of your duty towards God. Hence, the angels in Heaven worship and serve God according to their way. And will you, O vain man, set yourself on so high a pinnacle as not to worship God? Remember, ordinances are not only means of grace but also solemn testifications of our humility and dependency on God.

Use of Examination: Try the work of grace in you by this particular: how tender and careful are you about the worship of God? Are you among those who pray for the purity of ordinances, to have everything in church assemblies done according to the pattern in the Scripture? David cried out, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts" (Psalm 84:1). In what zeal was Christ when He saw the Temple of God turned into a den of thieves? What holy invectives does Paul make in his epistles against superstitious worship? Yet how few are the men who mind the pure, instituted worship of God, who would have the fountains of Israel without the mixture of any mud in them? Outward oppressions in Popery were nothing so heavy upon the godly as the corrupt mixtures in God's worship.

If you observe the general disposition of men, they are wholly carried out to some sensible superstitious ways of worship. They do not love the simplicity and purity of God's worship. It is great proficiency in Christianity not to have our minds corrupted herein. As children delight in baubles, so do men in some forms of worship they have made. What is Popery but a mere stage play in the worship of God? If you ask about the hundreds of ceremonies they have, whose image and superscription is upon them, you shall find none of God's imprinted on them. There were the statutes of the heathens, as mentioned in Leviticus 20, which the people must not follow, and in Ezekiel 20, they are warned against walking in the statutes of their fathers. Oh, there is too much of this superstition still in men! By false worship, men manifest they do not have spiritual hearts.

Sermon XII:

Of Righteousness and Equity between Man and Man: And How
Tender and Conscientious a True Convert Is Therein

"And ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." - Ezekiel 36:27

I am now upon the latter general branch into which the whole work of conversion divides itself. Religion to God and righteousness to man are the two pillars upon which this spiritual temple is sustained. God has put these two together, yet how often do the devil and man's corruption divide them! Some attend wholly to the religious worship of God but are grossly neglectful of righteous and just actions. Others take great pride in their righteousness to man but show no piety at all in their lives to God. Where God gives this new heart, there is a tender conscience of both. The first has been discussed under the notion of statutes, which strictly taken, relate to the purity of God's instituted worship.

We now come to the second particular: righteousness and equity to man, contained in these words, "Keep my judgments, and do them." It cannot be denied that the word "judgment" in the Scripture is of a vast and broad significance, which I shall not enumerate at this time. Here, I take it strictly and distinctly, as in other places, for obedience to those laws of God which contain righteousness and equity between man and man. In this sense, the prophets often call upon the Israelites to do judgment and justice, and to break off from the ways

of violence, oppression, wrong, and all unrighteousness. So that we may observe:

A converted person is very conscientious and tender in all the duties of righteousness and equity to others. He dares not pray, hear, or make a strict profession of religion to God while lying, cheating, dealing falsely, wronging, or defrauding any man in his dealings. He has respect for all God's commandments (Psalm 119). He knows the same God who commanded the precepts of the first table, containing duties to and worship of God, also equally and indispensably requires duties of faithfulness and righteousness to men.

This point is of singular use, for wherein does religion get greater wounds, and the gospel more dishonour, than when men reputed for godliness are found guilty and blameworthy in the ways of dishonesty? When wicked men lie, swear, forswear, defraud, and injure others, the world expects no better and looks for no other. But for you, a professor of religion, it expects all truth, fidelity, and righteousness. Otherwise, you are a dead fly in the box of ointment, a scandal and reproach to the ways of God. You had better never have been born than to prove such a stumbling block in the ways of piety.

Indeed, there are passive scandals when men maliciously and falsely raise slanders and false reports against the professors of religion, laying to their charge things they never did, believing lies, and misinterpreting their words and actions. These will persist as long as wicked men are in the world. Hence, all godly men are often looked upon as hypocrites, as such who will lie and act falsely, even do anything for their advantages. But these are passive scandals, and these offenses come from the venomous disposition of wicked men. The godly may rejoice in their innocence while such crimes are falsely attributed to them.

But then there are active scandals, when men of strict profession indeed walk in such unjust and unrighteous ways that thereby the name of God is blasphemed among wicked men. Our Savior says, "Woe to that man by whom such offenses come" (Matthew 18:7). So, we desire this truth should sound aloud in the ears of all those who consider themselves converts: their faith and piety must be accompanied by all righteousness and honesty.

Hence, while converted persons have several titles and attributes denoting various qualities in them, nothing is more frequent and ordinary than to call them righteous. This is mentioned on every page. How then is a liar righteous in his words? How is a breaker of his word and promise righteous in his fidelity? How is a cheater or an overreaching man righteous in his dealings?

To open this, consider that there is a twofold original fountain of righteousness towards man:

1. There is the immediate command and word of God, called *Jus Divinum* (Divine Righteousness).
2. There is the law and command of nature, called *Jus Humanum* (Human Righteousness or Right).

This is either general, consisting of the first and immediate principles of nature, such as the Apostle speaks of in Romans 2:14-15, concerning the Gentiles, that they had a law written in their hearts about just and unjust things, and their consciences accusing or excusing them upon the omission or commission of such things. Or it is more specific, consisting of particular dictates, such as the good and wholesome laws of all lawgivers in respective nations. What is righteous and just between man and man is determined by the laws of the land where they live. Indeed, if any lawgivers (as some heathenish ones have) command or allow anything against the law of

God or the universal dictates of right reason, such commands are not worthy of the name of laws; they are rather unjust decrees and do not bind. Otherwise, the laws of a land determine what is righteous and just between man and man. For although it is God's command that a man should not steal, it is human laws that give the bounds and proprieties of estates to men.

Thus, Christians and Jews differ somewhat about the rules of righteousness and equity, for God was the immediate lawgiver to the Jewish people. Moses, as a messenger from God, received from God's mouth the judicial law, which he delivered to them. The judicial law appointed by God himself was the statute law of that realm. Their laws were not human, as are all the laws of kingdoms and states since Christ's coming, but divine. Their laws about a thief, a murderer, the buyer and the seller, were all divine laws because they were immediately commanded by God, though the matter was merely human.

Now, it is greatly disputed how far these judicial laws, commanding judgment and justice between man and man, bind us Christians. Are all lawgivers and statesmen bound to implement those judicial laws? For who can determine what is righteousness and equity better than God, a righteous and wise God? It is not pertinent to delve into this excellent question at this time. Though some are very rigid in this point, making all obligatory that are not expressly repealed by Christ, and some are very lax, yet all conclude that the moral equity and reason in every judicial law bind Christians as well as Jews. And with that, we shall conclude this particular: whatever law God made about justice, restitution, or punishment to the Jews, the equity and reason of that law still bind us, though not the particular manner.

As for the New Testament, Christ's kingdom was not temporal or of this world. Therefore, he only commands righteousness in general and enforces that excellent maxim, which a heathen emperor so admired, saying he received it from Christians: "What ye would have men do to you, do ye to them, for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). That is, all the duties commanded by the law or required by the prophets are comprised in this maxim: "Whatever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them." Oh, the world would not be full of such wickedness and unrighteousness if this were observed! Further, note that when our Savior pressed them to earnest prayer and encouraged them therein, he added this as a necessary condition to their prayers. So let men be never such angels in duties and expressions, let them pretend never so much piety and religion, if they do not walk by this rule, they do not follow Christ's directions.

Therefore, Christ has only given us general rules of righteousness, and for the particulars, he commands Christians to obey and submit to the wholesome laws of the place where they are, as in Romans 13:7: "Pay tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom." The Scripture often presses this point, so none might think that the freedom they have by Christ takes them off from human obligations and relations. This was a great temptation, as they thought that being Christians and made free by Christ also took them off from obedience to civil magistrates and the laws they lived under. No, the Scripture is diligent to teach that Christianity and the gospel do not abolish political and civil government, but rather greatly advance it as an institution of God, pressing obedience thereto for conscience's sake.

Thus I have explained the foundation and origin of all righteousness and equity between man and man.

Now let us consider why converted persons are tender in doing what is just and righteous. The doctrine may even be heightened: they are not only tender about righteous things, but they are very conscientious in doing them, even to their external loss. The Psalmist, describing who shall ascend into the holy hill of Zion, a type of Heaven, gives such characteristics, most of which relate to duties of honesty and righteousness (Psalm 15:2-4). These include veracity in words of assertion and promises, and our Savior is extensive in Matthew 5 in convincing and heightening those duties against murder, adultery, and perjury, condemning all the subtle distinctions the Pharisees had invented to palliate their guilt. You may read of Zacchaeus, when converted, where the first thing that works upon his conscience is to restore fourfold what he had wronged. He went beyond the command of God, which did not require so much, but a godly man is so tender in matters of wrong and injustice that he prefers to do more than his duty rather than less.

Let us see what causes such tenderness in this matter:

First, the new heart promised in the text is what in other places is called the image of God. The Apostle says that the image of God, renewed in all converted persons, consists partly in righteousness and partly in true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). Holiness pertains properly to things related to God; righteousness pertains to matters concerning others. Wherever the image of God is, there is righteousness as well as holiness. Thus, as we are called to be holy as God is holy, it is also our duty to be righteous as God is righteous. The Scripture greatly celebrates God's attribute of righteousness, stating that His nature is righteous, His judgments, His word, His actions, and all His ways are righteous. Every converted person labors to emulate this. If you see a man who is unjust,

unconscionable, and false in his ways, ask yourself how the image of God can be in such a man. How can God be the father of such an unrighteous man? It is not your prayers, your knowledge, your abilities, or your spiritual fervor that can testify that God's image is on your soul unless this also accompanies your conversion.

Secondly, a converted person keeps God's judgments and does them because God expressly rejects all worship, no matter how zealously and fervently performed, if it is not accompanied by justice and equity. Should you walk in God's statutes and ordinances of worship but not keep His judgments, God will not recognize you (Jeremiah 7). Will you lie, steal, and swear falsely, then come into His house and say, "The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord?" See with what indignation God rejects such hypocrites. Will you come to His worship, to His temple, and yet live in sins of fraud and injustice? Oh, then think that God speaks to you if such guile and falsehood are found in your life. Will you deceive, lie, deal falsely, overreach others, and yet pray, repeat sermons, and speak of God and Christ? Oh, vain man, know that God is not mocked. The Jews, who were more forward in outward worship than others, offered ten thousand rams and rivers of oil, even the firstborn of the womb. But what does the prophet Micah say (Micah 6:8)? "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you but to do justly?" Oh, notable place, worthy of all your considerations if you profess religion in a strict manner. It is not about your knowledge, your opinions; no, even if you had revelations and high, admirable points of religion, that will not advance you unless you do justly as well. And verse 11 says, "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances and with bags of deceitful weights?" See, God counts no one pure or to have purity who uses any fraud or deceit in their dealings.

Thirdly, a godly man must walk righteously because outward actions between man and man engage the conscience just as much as anything else. Consider what Paul says in Acts 24:16: "Herein I exercise myself, to keep a good conscience both towards God and towards man." This exercise signifies diligence, industry, and a commitment to maintaining a good conscience. Note that a good conscience towards God is necessary; even if one is just and righteous towards men, failing to perform all duties and worship that belong to God means the conscience is not good.

Conscience is involved in matters towards man as well as towards God. A person of conscience is evident in both human affairs and religious matters. Such a person abhors the saying, "Quicquid libet, licet," which means, "What is pleasing to a man's desire is also lawful." Conscience is not limited to matters of religion and worship but extends to civil and worldly matters as well.

Learned men handle many cases of conscience regarding the righteousness and unrighteousness of civil actions, such as those under the headings "De Jure" and "Justitia." Hence, it is a mistaken belief that Christ has purchased any such freedom that excuses one from making a conscientious effort about civil matters. It is erroneous to think that civil matters do not matter if one keeps the doctrine and worship of Christ. This is a sinful delusion.

The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared, teaching us to deny ungodly lusts and to live righteously and soberly. Therefore, not only the things of God but also the things of man are matters of conscience. In fact, the things of man often have a greater impact on a natural conscience because they are discerned by natural principles of reason.

The sins of unrighteousness and injustice trouble the conscience more deeply if it is awakened, more so than other sins. The pardon for such sins or the sense of pardon is difficult to obtain, and such sinners struggle to find comfort because they have sinned against the plain and clear light of nature. The Apostle provides a catalogue of such sins in Romans 1:29-31. People have suffered more terrible wounds of conscience for these sins than for others.

Therefore, a converted person must abound in all righteousness because their conscience is tender; it is a heart of flesh.

Fourthly, They walk righteously because there are so many promises in Scripture made to righteousness. This must be an eminent duty, given the numerous and glorious promises attached to it. You shall scarcely find any action so encouraged by God or any men as praised as the righteous. If a righteous man has but a little estate, yet that little is better than many riches of the wicked (Psalm 37:16). To have great estates and large revenues in this world, acquired through unrighteous means—by fraud, oppression, or violence, whether by oneself or ancestors—is like Jonah's gourd. It may provide some ease and shelter for a season, but soon a worm arises within it that consumes it. Thus, a righteous man with his little cottage, small morsel of bread, and little cruise of drink is better than the wealthy Dives, who gains his wealth unjustly. The rich man may fare more sumptuously every day, but the righteous fare with more true joy. Lazarus may be glad of his crumbs, but Dives would be glad of the crumbs of his spiritual joy and contentment. Indeed, the righteous man has a promise that the greatest potentate in the world does not have (Psalm 37:25): "The righteous shall never be forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Righteousness carries God's spiritual bonds for outward happiness. In times of outward calamities, who is more looked upon than a righteous man? Noah, a righteous man and a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), was saved by God through an ark. From Lot's example, Peter concludes, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly" (2 Peter 2:9). So, no matter how forward one is in religious duties, without righteousness, one cannot lay hold of any temporal mercies nor expect deliverance in times of public calamities. Indeed, righteousness in evil times is better than all policy and wisdom. Men may think that by choosing one side or another, they ensure their well-being. However, remember that righteousness is the surest wisdom and safety (Proverbs 4:18): "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." Righteous men are the saviors of a land or nation. Just as injustice and violence destroy it, righteousness exalts a nation.

Use of Admonition

To all those who have a tender respect for God's worship: they long for reformation in the Church, pray for godly order, observe the Sabbath, and are diligent in family duties. Remember righteousness. Let your words be righteous, void of lying, guile, and falsehood. Let your actions be righteous, without fraud, oppression, or overreaching your brother. Otherwise, God will cast all your duties and religion as dung upon your face. Let the world blush and be forever ashamed to accuse the godly of lying, overreaching, and dealing unjustly. Let all men be ready to say, "They regard their word more than other men's oaths."

Use of Instruction

How far most men are from this new frame of heart! May we not, with the Prophet, go and search for a righteous man and find none? What lies, falsehoods, fraud, unjust trading, and overreaching of others! How many men can sleep in the houses they have acquired, or walk in the fields alone, without horror of soul for their unconscionable dealings, unjust bargains, and secret fraud used to gain wealth? Do you not hear the very timber in the wall groan against you? Does not the rust of your money witness against you? The cries, sighs, and groans of those you have wronged cry aloud for vengeance.

SERMON XIII

The Hammer of Arminianism: Demonstrating That God, in Converting and Changing a Sinner, Works in an Omnipotent, Efficacious, and Irresistible Manner Against the Patrons of Free Will and the Power of Man in Supernatural Things

"A new heart also will I give you, and I will take away the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." —Ezekiel 36:26

It is now time to draw near to a conclusion concerning this full and quintessential text of Holy Scripture. There remain two particulars only to be improved, that were noted in the main division of the text. For as we told you, here was observable the precious mercy promised, described both positively and oppositely. Here was also

the efficient cause of this mercy and the fruit thereof. So we told you there was a two-fold modus, or manner observable about this mercy: There was a *modus rei* and a *modus dicti*; the manner of God's working this grace in those whom He converts, and that is by His mighty omnipotent power, efficaciously, insuperably, irresistibly.

Consider with what authority God speaks it: *I will take away the heart of stone, I will give a heart of flesh.* God will do it, and man's will shall not hinder. Here is no conditional, suspended operation, as if God would not convert or turn our hearts to Him until we also by our free will began to turn to Him. So that this text is a hammer to beat in pieces all those doctrines of old, and which now of late multiply, concerning free will and the power of man to supernatural things. May not this text satisfy every man? Does it not make every man's heart by nature a stone, insensible and stupid about holy things? Does not God here appropriate the whole work of conversion to Himself? *I will give a heart of flesh, I will take away the stony heart.*

Indeed, does He not also declare the manner how He will do this by His sovereign, omnipotent, and irresistible power, so that the heart cannot but bow and yield and give itself up? Whereas now, if the patrons of nature and free will, who are enemies to God's grace, spoke truth, then God should have said no more but this: "I will give you a heart of flesh if you will; I cannot do it alone unless your free will goes along with it also; I must suspend, or stay my work till I see what you will do." This is the first manner observable.

Then there is *modus dicti*, the second manner how God will vouchsafe this, and that is by way of gift; by a free absolute promise: I will do thus, and thus. He does not suppose any previous or antecedent conditions on our part.

I shall at this time pitch only upon the manner how God works this glorious mercy in us, and from thence observe.

Observation ~ Doctrine:

That God in Converting and Changing Our Hearts Works in an Omnipotent, Efficacious, and Irresistible Manner

When God speaks to the soul to believe, to repent, to reform, it cannot, it will not but repent; He makes the unwilling, willing. Even as at the first creation God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. There was no power in the creature to reject God's omnipotency; so it is when God sees a man wallowing in his blood or dead in his sin (Ezek. 16.6, Eph. 2.1). If He says, "Arise and walk," or "Come forth out of the grave of sin," as He did to Lazarus, presently the soul obeys. This point, both doctrinally and practically, is very necessary. The orthodox handling of it makes much for the excellent praise of grace and the utter overthrow of those dangerous and proud errors that advance free will, giving it either all or part in the work of conversion. This is contrary to the whole scope of the Scripture, which continually debases man, discovering his impotency and unworthiness, but giving all to the power of God. Let us first explain this doctrine and then prove it.

The Doctrine Explained:

1. Man in the First Work of Conversion is Passive and Does Not Co-operate.

First, therefore, we distinguish between a man in his first conversion and afterwards in the progress of it. In the first moment and instant of conversion, which is the taking away the heart of stone and giving a heart of flesh, we say man is merely a subject passive, receiving the

work of God. He does not in any way co-operate; he has no strength or power to join with God. As Augustine said well, these things are wrought *in nobis, sine nobis*—"in us, yet without us." God works this spiritual life, this tender heart in us, without our help or strength. Even as when Christ raised up any dead men, He put natural life into them. This was done in them, yet without their help. Life was put into Lazarus, and Lazarus had no helping hand to effect this. I shall prove this in the grounds of the doctrine; I only now explain it. This then is the truth of God, plainly grounded on Scripture, that man in the first instant of conversion has no free will, no power working with God, but is a mere passive subject, receiving the mighty work of God upon his soul. But if you consider man in the progress of sanctification, thus having received this heavenly supernatural life, he is not a mere patient; but being acted and moved by God, he also acts and moves. Then indeed we need grace to quicken and enliven those principles of grace, as before was proved; but we do not need a new life to be infused into us.

2. Hereby Man's Will is Not Taken Away.

Secondly, although this is the good truth of God, yet we do not take away the nature of a man and make him a beast (nor a rock, nor a robot), as the adversaries calumniate. "Oh," say they, "this is to turn man into a stock or stone, to deprive him of reason and liberty of will." No, we deny the consequence; for although we say that he is thus passive for the initial working of grace, yet we say he has his understanding, his reason still, he has a will still—only, to discern or will what is good, that he cannot. So then we deny not that a man has understanding, has a natural liberty of his will; he cannot be a man if he does not have these. But yet in respect of that which is holy, his mind is blind, his will is obstinate, and rebellious against it. So that in man here are these three things: to be able to understand, to be

able freely to will—this is of mere nature; to have a corrupt understanding and a corrupt will is of defiled nature; to understand and will what is good is of sanctified nature. So then, what is the true state of the question? It is not whether there be an understanding and the natural faculty of free will in a man or not. None denies that; every man has free will in natural and civil actions. The question is about the object of these—whether he has power to understand or will things that are merely spiritual and supernatural; and this the Scripture expressly denies.

3. When We Say God Works Grace Thus Powerfully and Irresistibly, We Do Not Mean the Heart Does Not Resist at All.

Thirdly, when we say God works grace thus powerfully and irresistibly, the meaning is not as if the heart of a man in conversion did not resist and reject the work of the Spirit in some measure and in some degrees. There is no question but the heart of a man naturally refuses and opposes the Spirit of God. Stephen told the Jews, “They had always resisted the Spirit of God” (Acts 7), and the word of God is said to cast down those strongholds and every high thing that exalts itself against God (2 Cor. 10.5). So that as there is a natural contrariety and active opposition between fire and water, thus there is a constant enmity and active resisting of God’s Spirit by our spirit. For if this combat and conflict remain still in a godly man, how much more in natural men who are altogether carnal? You must therefore distinguish between a prevalent, conquering resisting and a gradual resisting. God in conversion works in such a way that He takes away the prevalent, but not the gradual resisting. Though a man before he is converted is froward and full of cavils and prejudices, is unwilling to be saved, cannot abide the truth, and does what he can to stifle all good motions; yet if he belongs to election,

God will at last overmaster his heart and make him willing. His hard heart cannot refuse this converting grace, because the first thing it does is to take away the hardness of heart.

Fourthly,

Therefore, it is not every kind of grace that a man may acknowledge as sufficient unless it is a grace that is antecedently efficacious to our will and omnipotently bowing and changing it. Augustine said that the Pelagians used the word "grace" *ad frangendam invidiam*, to avoid the hatred that their opinion might incur. Similarly, those who advocate for free will will acknowledge grace, and God forbid they should speak against grace. But you must know that in this matter, there has been a horrible abuse by well-meaning men who acknowledge grace but not the kind of grace that is efficacious in itself by its inward power, not dependent on man's will.

Pelagius of old, when he saw his opinion was universally distasteful, as if he argued against grace, began to use the word and acknowledge it to avoid such odium. He deceived an entire council with his ambiguities and generalities, who then acquitted him. Even Augustine himself, who was a diligent opponent of Pelagius, was almost deceived by him. Therefore, if any who argue for free will also speak of grace and say they are for grace, remember it is not every kind of grace that is sufficient, but such that mightily changes the heart. It is not grace that works with free will but first makes the will free, which was a servant and captive to lust. "Then you are free if the Son makes you free" (John 8:32-36).

Fifthly,

Although God omnipotently bows the heart and grace is *vorticordis*, as Augustine called it, there is still great use for the ministry: of

exhortation, of reproof, of commands, of promises and threatenings. Men are apt to cavil and say, "If God works all, why then is the ministry necessary? Why are we exhorted when we have no power? Why does God command when we have no ability?" The ministry and exhortation are necessary because they are the instituted means by which God will work. Just as Christ did not in vain say to Lazarus, "Lazarus, come forth," because it was a practical, powerful word, so it is here. The ministry speaks not in vain; we exhort not in vain because, in and by this, God inflames the heart and quickens it to good. Thus, the commands to turn to God, to love Him above all things, are not in vain because they are not to demonstrate our power but our duty. The creditor may lawfully demand of his prodigal debtor the sum of money he owes, though he is not able to pay. We, being full of self-righteousness, carnal confidence, and earthly adherence, must have these commands pressed upon us all the more earnestly so that we may be ashamed and confounded.

Sixthly,

It cannot be denied that this doctrine of God's sole power and efficacy of grace in conversion has been and may be abused in two ways: either to sluggishness and negligence, with men thinking, "If God takes away the stony heart, why should I care? I may sit down and take my ease"; or to enthusiasm, where some will not pray or attend the ordinances, expecting the Spirit's immediate working on them instead. These were two reasons, says Chemnitius, why Pelagius, a Briton, otherwise an ingenious and famous man, as well as very innocent in his life, fell into his error. But there is no truth of God that can be preached without carnal hearts abusing it. Paul abundantly testifies to this when he speaks of the corrupt inferences some made from his preaching of grace. The best truths, when corrupted, prove most dangerous, just as when manna was not used

according to God's institution, it degenerated into noisome worms (Exod. 16:20).

Grounds of the Truth of this Doctrine for its Proof:

Let us discover the grounds of this truth:

First, all those places of Scripture which describe the total and universal pollution of man, making him not so much a sinner as even sin itself, plainly argue that God's converting grace is all in all; that man is a mere patient and cannot actively consent to the least good thing. Thus, Genesis 6:5, "The imagination of the thoughts of a man's heart are only evil, and that continually." What more can be said? Every imagination or thought that stirs in a man is evil, and only evil, and that continually! How then can this consent or be active to God?

Similarly, Ephesians 2:1, "You hath he quickened that were dead in sins." What does a dead man do to get life again? "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." (Job 14:4). That is, no man, only God. Our Saviour says, "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit" (Matt. 7:18), especially Romans 8:5-7, and also 1 Corinthians 2:14, "A natural man perceiveth not the things of God, neither can he" (Geneva trans.); he does not, and he cannot. See what compelling places of Scripture these are. Mark them, because that unsavoury error spreads so much. If these texts are true, all our thoughts and affections are only evil; we are dead in sin, we do not, we cannot so much as perceive the things of God. How then dare anyone think of the power of nature and its ability to what is holy?

Secondly, this is fully proved by the excellent and emphatic metaphors used to declare the work of conversion, which the Spirit of God purposely uses to declare God's glorious power in us. It is often called a creation, and grace is a new creature: we are said to be

created to good works. Now, *creatio fit ex nihilo*, creation supposes nothing pre-existent, either physically or morally. Was the world, when it was created, in any way co-operant to its creation? Neither is it so here. Remember then, "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves" (Psalm 100:3). If we did not make ourselves men, shall we make ourselves new creatures, better than men? It is also expressed by the metaphor of a new birth: "He hath begotten us by his word." A godly man is said to be born of God. These are full expressions to show that we are not born by our free will or consent, but by God's sole power, as in John 1:13.

Lastly, it is compared to the resurrection: "You that were dead hath he quickened" (Eph. 2:1, Col. 2:13). Now, was there ever any man that could raise himself out of the grave and give life to himself? Yes, in Ephesians 1, it is compared to that glorious power of God in raising up Christ; the very same power is said to work in those who believe. How can any man answer these comparisons the Scripture uses? For although metaphors should not be stretched beyond the intent of the one using them, the Holy Ghost uses such expressions to make us attribute all to God, debasing ourselves, saying, "Not unto us, Lord, not to our free will or our power, but to Thy name be all glory" (Psalm 115:1).

Thirdly, all those places prove this which take all ability of good from man and attribute it wholly to God. Our Saviour likens every man outside of Him to a branch separated from the vine (John 15:4-5): the branch out of the vine can bring forth no fruit; thus every man out of Christ. Hence, our Saviour concludes, "Without me ye can do nothing." He does not say, "You cannot do any great thing," but nothing. Again, in 2 Corinthians 3:5, the Apostle says, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think one thought," in reference to the good

either of others or of ourselves. Thus, you see how man is made utterly impotent.

Then see those places that positively attribute all to God: "It is God that works in us both to will and to do" (Phil. 2:13). You see all is given to Him. Again, "What hast thou that thou hast not received?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Above all, how plain is this in Romans 9:16: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." This is a noble place, for who is likely to have it but him that wills or runs? Yet it is not of him, but of Him that shows mercy. If free will or man's power had any co-partnership in this work, we might as well say, "It is not of him that shows mercy, but of him that wills or runs." This doctrine robs God of all the honour and glory due to Him in the prayers and praises of His people.

How will the patrons of nature's free will deport themselves in this duty? Must they not, in effect, come to this? "Lord, I pray Thee, mollify and soften my heart, if I will." Again, "Lord, I praise Thee that Thou gavest me a heart to repent when I consented and was willing." And is not all this highly derogatory to God's glory? This made profound Bradwardine encourage himself to write against Pelagius because he could heartily pray for the grace of God to help him in that work, whereas his adversaries could not do so.

Lastly, if it be that the will and power of man made grace effectual to us, so that God's grace should not take away our stoniness until we consented, then the greatest glory of a man's conversion would belong to him. We may suppose God offering grace equally to the same men; they both live in the same family, both under the same ministry. Now, what is the cause why one receives the Word and not the other? Shall we say because he, by his free will, entertained the grace of God and not the other? What derogation would this be to

God's glory? Does not the Apostle say, "Who hath made thee to differ from another?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Why was Peter converted and not Judas? They both enjoyed the same means, they both saw the same wonderful miracles. Shall anyone say because Peter used his free will well and not Judas? This would make Peter no more beholden to Christ than Judas was. A gracious heart knows not how to digest such presumptuous opinions! "God made me to differ from others. By the grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10).

So then, keep all these arguments in your mind, they are plain and easy. Though error be never so subtly painted, it will not make you enamoured with it, especially if, to all these places of Scripture, you can add your own experience of God's wonderful change upon you. Are you not able to say that though ten thousand teachers should come and preach free will, yet your own experience in your conversion will make you not believe it? For you were so far from consenting or agreeing to the work of grace that all your shifts and care were to put off the work of God. How often did you labour to blind your own eyes, to harden your own heart? How unwilling were you to be convinced, how sorry to part with your dear lusts? How often did you put off and defer, saying, "Yet a little more, and still a little more," that had not God, by His mighty power, opened your heart, made you willing from unwilling, to this very day you would still have been wallowing in your blood! (Ezek. 16:6).

Use of Instruction: Concerning a Three-Fold Duty:

- 1. Of Deep Debasing and Humiliation:** How vain, weak, and unprofitable we have become! To go from rich to poor, from honourable to debased, is nothing compared to this: from holy and altogether holy to altogether sinful. Oh, why does this not

wound you? Is there any room left for pride, carnal jollity, and confidence while in this polluted state?

2. **Of Daily Thankfulness to God:** Be thankful to God, who has put forth His great power on you. Oh, call upon your soul, and all within you, to speak for the grace of God.
3. **Encouragement to Pray:** Here is encouragement to pray to God for the subduing of any strong corruptions or passions. He who did the greater, taking away the heart of stone at first, can He not do the less?

SERMON XIV

The Freeness of God's Grace in Conversion Displayed and
Maintained Against Arminians and Others

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."

—Ezekiel 36:26-27

I shall now conclude this text, whose matter, like our Saviour's loaves, has multiplied and increased in the breaking and distributing of it. The last thing observable is the manner of the conveyance and bestowing of it, which is by an absolutely free promise: "I will do thus unto you." Here is nothing spoken of what they should do, but what God will do; here is no mention of their preparatory dispositions, but only of God's gracious operation.

Now, although it is true that this promise is made directly to the exiled Jews—therefore, with the promise of justification and conversion, is joined that of restitution to their own land again, with all their former temporal mercies—yet the Apostle Paul makes it clear that this is an evangelical promise, or the Covenant of Grace for all ages in the Church (Hebrews 10:16). Thus, this promise is not to be understood only of those in captivity, as the Remonstrants would evade, whom God should convert, but of all who, in successive ages, shall be brought home unto God.

Just as Isaac is said to be a child of the promise because he was not born by natural power, but by the mere promise and power of God, so all the godly are, in this sense as well as in another, like Isaac: the children of the promise, being not born by the power of flesh and blood, but by virtue of this promise. It is this text that gives spiritual life to all who receive it. It is because of this promise that the Word of God has any successful effect at any time.

The Promise of Conversion and Regeneration as an Absolute Free Promise

Thus you see the text runs without any "ifs"; God will take away the heart of stone, and nothing shall frustrate His intention. The Lord has said it, and it will come to pass. *Iter ad gratiam is per gratiam, perque ipsam venit ad ipsam.* Grace makes way for itself. As by the light of the sun, we come to see the sun, God does not only offer grace to the heart, but sanctifies the heart to receive it. He does not only give the oil but the vessel to receive it. He gives the bread of life and the stomach to eat it.

To explain this doctrine, consider:

First, a promise is a far more comforting thing than a mere prediction. God often foretells what He will do, but at other times He also promises what He will do. A prophecy of what will be and a promise differ significantly. This text is not a mere prediction or prophecy but a gracious promise. A promise pertains only to that which is good, either temporal or spiritual, whereas a prophecy or prediction may concern both good and evil. All the desolations and calamities that befell Jerusalem were prophesied; but we cannot say they were promised, for promises are to be embraced, as Paul excellently expresses in Hebrews 11:13, to show how hearty, joyful, glad, and ready the heart should be to receive them.

Oh, remember, you who are exercised with doubt and discouragement, a promise is to be embraced as you would the dearest, most welcome friend in the world! A promise also imposes some tie and obligation on the one who promises, unlike a mere prediction. And because God, in promising, cannot be said to be bound to us or tied to us, He becomes a debtor to His own fidelity through His promise. He cannot deny Himself or His own word, *Reddis debita nulli debens*. Thus, the soul urging God with a promise may say, "O Lord, it was in Thy choice whether Thou wouldst do such a thing or not, but since Thou hast promised it, and the word has gone out of Thy mouth, Thy truth, Thy constancy, and Thy fidelity must make good Thy promise."

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such a thing or not, but since Thou hast promised it, and the word has gone out of Thy mouth, Thy truth, Thy constancy, and Thy fidelity must make good Thy promise."

Absolute and Conditional Promises

Secondly, the promises of God, as for their matter, are twofold: some are temporal and some are spiritual. As for their manner, they are either absolute or conditional.

Absolute Promises are those God has made and will fulfill, even if we do not believe at all. Such promises do not depend on any grace in us beforehand, nor do they suppose any good qualification in us. For instance, the temporal promise that God will not flood the world again is absolutely determined; even if men do not believe it, God will still make it good. Similarly, the promise in Isaiah 9 of sending Christ, the Messiah, into the world, was an absolute promise. The calling of the Gentiles and the calling of the Jews after the destruction of the Temple are also absolutely promised. Just as God has absolute threats for the destruction of a people—so that even if Noah, Job, and Daniel were present, they could not save that land—He also has many absolute promises that no wickedness or unbelief can void. It is these absolute promises that Paul refers to when he says, "He is faithful and cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13) and that our unfaithfulness shall not nullify the faithfulness of God (Romans 3:3). For it is evident that in many promises, if we do not believe, God does not fulfill them; for example, if we do not believe, we cannot be justified. But Paul speaks of such absolute promises that God will certainly accomplish, removing all obstacles that hinder.

Conditional Promises, however, must be understood correctly. It is not that there are any conditions to be performed by our strength and power, as if these conditions were causes and merits of the grace promised. No, they are only qualifications of the subject, without which he could not be a partaker of the grace promised. Thus, justification is promised to faith, pardon of sin to repentance, overcoming of temptations to perseverance, growth and increase of grace to the improvement of the grace one has, and finally, glorification is promised only to the sanctified. Here, some promises are made only to those who already have grace. Grace is the condition for grace. There is no condition or qualification required that is not the absolute gift of God initially. For although justification is promised to the one who believes, if you ask how a man comes to believe, we must say it is absolutely promised and wrought by God Himself. I do not delve here into the specifics of a qualification and a condition, nor the nature of conditions; that belongs to the controversial part. Now, this promise in the text is of the former sort, an absolute promise making way for itself. Just as kings carry their own furniture for their entertainment, grace qualifies and works the initial preparations so that all is from God in a promise. Nothing is our plea but a promise; all our spiritual riches and treasures are bound up in a promise.

In the next place, let us consider what is comprehended in this, when we say, Conversion is absolutely promised to the converted, and that implies:

First, the free grace of God bestowing this inestimable benefit where He pleases, and when He pleases. Who can give any reason why God takes away Jacob's stony heart and not Esau's? Who can give a reason why God softens Peter's heart and not Judas's, but only the mere grace and good pleasure of God? See Paul in Romans 11, even

ravished with the depth of God's unsearchable wisdom in this matter; and Christ Himself greatly affected herein, Matthew 11, "I thank thee, O Father, that thou hast revealed these things to babes, and hidden them from the wise." And "To you it is given to understand," Matthew 13, but not to others. So that God making this absolute promise to some, and not to all, thereby makes His free grace perspicuous, that every mouth may be stopped that would boast of itself.

Secondly, it supposes that we cannot so much as prepare and fit ourselves to receive grace. God finds a heart of stone in every man, and a stone is impenetrable. It was a doctrine received a long while, *Facienti quod in se est, Deus dat gratiam*, though differently explained. Let a man do what he can by natural strength and power, and then God will vouchsafe grace and supernatural mercies to him; yes, this is too much divulged even today; let a man use his natural abilities well, and God will give supernaturals; but first, there is no such promise in all the Scripture. You cannot in all the Scripture find any promise of grace made to nature, or the improvement of nature; God nowhere says, "Do as much as you can, what you are able by your own power, and then I will come and help you." There is no such promise in Scripture, but either it is absolute, as you have heard, or else conditional to some grace already wrought by God in us.

Thirdly, this promise is of a most excellent and precious nature; it far exceeds all temporal promises. Should God promise you all the glory of the world, all that your heart could in this life desire, yet it is nothing compared to this promise of a new heart. Hence Peter calls them precious promises, 1 Peter 1, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature. God to this people in captivity promises a new and tender heart, as that which would qualify or put a luster upon all

other mercies; their return from captivity, their enjoying of their former houses and mercies again would be nothing, if God gave not this mercy also. Oh then, that the hearts of men were made more spiritual and wise, to look after and prize this promise. Let your condition be never so miserable, your state never so distressed, yet if under this promise, you are in an ark, when others are tossed up and down in the uncertain waves of this world. Even the Virgin Mary, who was called blessed among women, was more blessed that Christ was spiritually formed in her heart, than that the body of Christ was corporally fashioned in her womb. Oh then! How wretched is your estate even in the midst of all earthly prosperity, when you can say, "These new houses, these new honours are mine," but you cannot say, "This new heart is mine."

Fourthly, this absolute promise is sure and certain: for there is truth in God, and so He cannot lie; and there is power in God, and so there cannot be anything to hinder Him. Heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one iota or tittle of this promise fall to the ground. How angry was God with Sarah, because through unbelief she laughed when God told her in her old age she should conceive and bring forth a child? Do not think your heart, your lusts are too strong, too evil for God to conquer and subdue. Now the reason why this promise is so sure and cannot be frustrated, is because it is the execution of God's election from all eternity; and the election of God, that is absolute and cannot be frustrated. Read Romans 11, where the Apostle in a grave and profitable way handles this sublime mystery of predestination; he argues that God's will and purpose must take effect, election has obtained, and it will obtain. If then the election of God is absolute, and that must stand, then the promise of conversion, which is nothing but a gracious manifestation of this election, must also be absolute. And this shall suffice for clearing the nature of this absolute promise. But because this doctrine is subject

to carnal cavils, I shall answer one or two objections which a froward heart, not humbly submitting to the authority of Scripture, is apt to raise.

First, it may be said: If this promise of conversion is absolute, and God will work it without any condition on our part that we can naturally perform, then what need do we have to come to hear the Word preached? What need do we have to attend the ordinances? If God will take away the heart of stone, He will do it whether we are eating and drinking and making merry, or praying and hearing the Word preached. But take heed of such destructive conclusions, for they do not follow from this truth. For,

Firstly, though we say it is an absolute promise, it does not mean it is accomplished without the means God has appointed. Therefore, the promise may be said to be absolute either in opposition to conditional, as if it required something as a condition to be done on our part, and in this sense it is absolute; or it may be called absolute as it opposes that which is to be ordered by some means, and in this sense it is not absolute. Paul had absolutely foretold that none in the ship that were with him should die, yet he also said that they must use the means and stay in the ship. Likewise, God told David many times before he went to battle that he would have the victory, yet David was careful to order his army and prepare the soldiers. So, although God's promises are often absolute, they also include means for that end.

There are means of two sorts: one external, having no immediate influence upon grace but being the necessary way that God has commanded everyone to walk in, such as coming to the ordinances and hearing the Word. A man has free will or the power of nature to do this, as with any other civil actions. Indeed, to hear with faith, to

hear with godly attention and brokenness of spirit, that he cannot do; but simply to come to hear and generally attend to what is delivered, that by nature he can do. Even this very hearing and bodily presence God has required as a means wherein He will dispense His grace. So, whoever wilfully neglects the use of these means cannot promise himself any conversion; indeed, he may certainly conclude that God will not convert him. Therefore, there is no place for your profane question: What need do I have to come and hear? What need do I have to frequent preaching? Every way, because although God has absolutely promised this mercy, it is in the use and exercise of these means. Oh, that those who customarily and wilfully absent themselves from the preaching of the Word would consider that they turn their back on God and in effect say, "We will not be converted. We will not have this new heart, this new life." If a man wilfully refuses to eat or drink, will he not be considered a self-murderer? And if you carelessly or obstinately refuse the Word of life, will not God judge you for a self-damner?

But then, in the next place, there are formal and internal means that immediately receive Christ in the soul, such as faith, or hearing in faith, and these a man has no power of himself to perform, faith being the gift of God. So, although internal means of obtaining Christ cannot be performed by natural strength, there are external means, which, if refused, mean rejecting the counsel of God and pronouncing oneself unworthy of salvation. Therefore, harbour no more such thoughts unless you wish to violently throw yourself into the mouth of hell.

Secondly, it may be said: If God's promise of conversion is absolute, this is discouraging and may easily cast men into despair; for though I desire and groan after conversion, if I am not within this absolute promise, I can never partake of it.

But first consider, though it be absolute, yet it is also indefinite; it does not exclude any particular man. So that no man in the world living under the means of grace can truly say he is not intended in this promise, as well as others. Seeing therefore God has nowhere excluded you by name, there is no clause that shuts you out; it is a grievous sin in you to shut yourself out. So then, know those dejecting and discouraging thoughts arise from hell; it is the devil and your own black heart, not this doctrine, that discourages. If there were a malefactor among many others, and the magistrate should make an indefinite promise that he would spare them and pardon them, and does not by name exclude any man, would anyone be so injurious to himself as to question whether he is intended in the pardon or not? No less injurious are you to yourself in disputing against this promise.

Secondly, if you live under the means of grace, and where the word of life is tendered, then you have much more cause to hope that this promise of conversion belongs to you. Indeed, all those who sit in heathenish darkness, to whom the gospel was never yet made known, they are a hopeless people while so; there is no promise outside the church of God. But to those who have the grace of God tendered to them, they may plead this argument: Lord, you have given us the outward means, we have the ministry that sounds daily in our ears, oh give us the inward grace also!

Thirdly, if you are one who groans and desires after conversion, and are afraid lest God has excluded you, be of good comfort, for those sighs and pantings after grace are a sure sign that you are included, and that this work of a new heart and a tender heart is already begun in you. Where you hear a sigh or a groan in a man, it is a sign there is natural life; and so where there are inward groans and affections for this new heart, there are the beginnings, and the foundation is

already laid. God will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. Even hunger and thirst have a promise of being satisfied, Matthew 5. Therefore, let this turn your water into wine presently.

Fourthly, although the promise of conversion is in a well-explained sense absolute, yet there is no man damned who would have been converted, only he lacked the promise, and God would not put his name in there, and that is the cause of his utter perishing. No, this is a firm truth: O Israel, your destruction is of yourself; and, As I live, says God, I do not desire the death of a sinner, but rather that he should live. Turn, turn, why will you die? This is a sure truth: every man's damnation is of his own self; he wilfully and with delight goes on in destructive ways, he cannot say, "Lord, I would have been converted, but the absoluteness of your election, or your promise, hindered." No, a man's own wilful lusts destroy him: insomuch that were it not for this promise of God, none at all would be converted. It is well we are not left to free will, for then not one would be converted. And the adversaries to this opinion cannot instance in one heathen ever since the world was made, who used his natural abilities so well that God vouchsafed supernaturals. Insomuch that the doctrine of free will may well cast a man into despair; for if my conversion cannot be wrought until I go along with God in it, I am forever undone.

Lastly, let it be granted that there are some difficulties in this doctrine, that human reason cannot untie all the knots, yet this is no more than Paul acknowledged in Romans 9, and reprov'd man for such bold disputing with God: God's ways are wise and just, even when they are hidden and secret to us. There is no end when human wisdom talks against heavenly dispensations.

Use: Is this promise, though absolute, yet ordered in the use of means to be accomplished? Then be diligent in hearing the Word: Oh pray that this new heart may at last be found in you! Oh why should we leave this text before every auditor finds the power of it upon his soul! Oh that the leaving of this text might not leave one carnal stony heart! Oh that as we have done with the text, so God had done this work in you! But oh our barrenness, our barrenness! Oh the just anger and wrath of God against many persons, to whom God says, "Let them alone in their sins!"

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