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Gospel Remission

A TREATISE SHOWING, THAT TRUE BLESSEDNESS
CONSISTS IN PARDON OF SIN

JEREMIAH BURROUGHS



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by Jeremiah Burroughs

This book serves as a certification to all who come across it, that the sermons contained within these pages (on Psalm 32:1 – "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered"), entitled "Gospel Remission," and originally published by Dorman Newman, a stationer, are the dedicated and insightful works of Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs. These sermons have been published under the title of "Gospel Remission" and have been carefully transcribed from the best and most accurate copy available.

January 17th, 1668.

Philip Nye, William Greenhill, William Bridge, William Adderly,
Matthew Mead, C. Helms.

We are pleased to announce the re-printing of "The Christian Man's Calling," accompanied by instructions on how to carry out religious duties, everyday actions, specific vocations, family guidance, personal recreation, and interactions within various relationships including parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, servants, and across all circumstances such as dealings with others in social settings, solitary moments, weekdays from morning till night, visits to the sick, and during the final moments on a deathbed. This work is by George Swinnock, M.A., formerly of Great Kimball in Buckinghamshire.

"Gospel Remission," a treatise that elucidates that true blessedness is found in the pardon of sin, is presented here. Within its pages, the manifold mysteries of the Gospel are unveiled, along with the splendid outcomes that flow from it. The misconceptions that have arisen about this topic are addressed, and the genuine signs and

indications of forgiveness are explained. Furthermore, the path and methods to attain this forgiveness are outlined by Jeremiah Burroughs. These sermons were delivered shortly after the ones on the wickedness of sin by the same author.

This work is now published by:

Philip Nye, William Greenhill, William Bridge, William Adderly,
Matthew Mead, C. Helmes.

The prophetic words of Isaiah 33-34 are apt: "The inhabitant shall not say, 'I am sick'; the people who dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquities."

London, Printed for Dorman Newman, and available for purchase at his shop at the Surgeons Arms in Little Britain, near the entrance to the hospital gate, in the year 1668.

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To the Reader.

Dear Reader,

The providential care of God is visibly shown towards His people through their current preservation and provisions. It's akin to having the mouths of lions closed when we're thrown into their den, the waters forming a protective barrier on both sides when they could otherwise engulf us, and a burning bush that remains unconsumed. These occurrences, which display God's goodwill, just as He dwelt in the burning bush of old, indicate His presence with and acknowledgment of His afflicted people even now. They provide us with the sweetness of honey from a flinty rock, sustenance in the form of manna in the wilderness, and the voice that guides us, saying, "This is the way, walk in it." This should evoke the same sense of wonder and gratitude as it did among the Israelites of old. Among the numerous English prophets whose wisdom endures beyond their lives, the esteemed author of the forthcoming treatise deserves a place among the most venerable. His works, not my words, serve as the most eloquent testament to his brilliance. One might inscribe the scripture commendation upon his Stepney and Cripplegate Lectures: "This and that man was born there." For though many among the living currently benefit from capable teachers and mentors, they owe their spiritual lineage to him, as an instrument of their conversion. I can confidently apply the words once spoken of a learned scholar from abroad to the virtuous Burroughs: "Learned men deserve to live even after their deaths, and through their writings, instruct the generations born unfortunate to follow them. Among such distinguished individuals, placing Burroughs is an undisputed choice, one that no one except those lacking in their own virtues would contest."

The sermons now presented to your eyes have been transformed into the tract you see, with the assistance of a capable and erudite theologian who also had the privilege of hearing these sermons preached. This transformation has been undertaken without any significant additions or alterations. These sermons were delivered shortly after those persuasive discourses on the wickedness of sin, and thus, this discourse on the soul-reviving aspects of the Gospel was indeed a timely utterance.

Within this treatise, you will find the proper elucidation of Gospel grace, the clarification of God's justice, the exaltation of His mercy, and the comforting encouragement for trembling sinners to approach Christ's blood for forgiveness. It rouses presumptuous sinners from their perilous and deluded notions of heaven, just as they stand on the brink of plummeting into hell. In short, this treatise provides a panoramic view of the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the fountain opened for sin and impurity. It offers life-giving waters to the sinking and fainting sinners. Here, you can observe the nature of sin, damnable sin, the sin that God abhors and cannot help but abhor. It is the sin that God punishes and cannot avoid punishing. Yet, this sin is lifted from the believing sinner and placed upon the Surety, Jesus Christ. It is sin that has been condemned and punished in Christ, while the believing sinner stands justified, pardoned, and acquitted. So, if you treasure peace with God through Jesus Christ, pray for the light to guide you into a clear understanding of this Gospel truth. Take up this book and read it. May the Lord grant you insight into all things that align with the author's intentions and the heartfelt prayer of one who earnestly desires your salvation and growth in the knowledge of God and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

C. Helmes.

A Note from the Publisher to the Reader.

It has been quite a while since I embarked upon the publication of this book. With numerous encouragements at my back, I secured the opportunity for one of the esteemed divines who have lent their endorsement to peruse the work. He had also given his testimony that he had attended the very sermons these writings are based upon. Upon reviewing the contents, he confirmed that nothing of significance had been omitted from what the author, Mr. Jer. Burroughs, had delivered. I am aware that Mr. Peter Cole, who had previously printed many of the author's works, had made repeated attempts to obtain this manuscript from those responsible for publishing the author's books. He even offered substantial rewards for it, but was unable to procure it. Finally, after much urging from his supporters, and with their assurances that the entire work contains an abundance of spiritual and delightful material, brimming with Mr. Burroughs' spirit and style, I deemed it fitting to convey this assurance to the reader.

Dor. Newman.

Gospel Remission.

CHAPTER I.

Opening the Text and Presenting the Main Doctrine.

PSALM 32:1. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

I've dedicated many sermons, as you may recall, to illuminate the malice and dire nature of Sin. And what topic could be more pertinent and fitting for discussion now than the blessed state of Sin's Pardon? How comforting and welcome would this be to those souls who, having understood the dreadfulness of sin through the previous argument, now find solace in the thought of forgiveness? They might readily echo the Prophet's sentiment: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring such good tidings!" Therefore, it seems as I read this Text, I stand amidst an echo, each broken-hearted sinner in this congregation responding, "Indeed, blessed is the person whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sin is covered."

Solomon wisely states that a timely word is like "Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver." Considering the substantial time I've spent unveiling the Evil of Sin to you, if ever there was an apt time for a word, I hope it's from this Text—a message of reconciliation and the forgiveness of Sin. If I can successfully illustrate the excellence of the truths found in this Scripture, I trust you'll find them as valuable as "Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver."

The verses before us mark the opening lines of one of David's Penitential Psalms. They truly encapsulate the voice of a genuine Penitent, embodying the very essence of a humble and contrite soul. Such an individual is awestruck by the blessedness of sin's pardon. I won't spend time dissecting the entire Psalm; the sweetness and joy inherent in the topic compel me to approach it directly. And may your ears be blessed, for after hearing about the direness of sin, you've come to hear the doctrine of Pardon—a privilege denied to many thousands. Who knows if even among this congregation, some who heard the sorrowful doctrine have now passed on, perhaps to their eternal place, experiencing firsthand what they heard before, and much more. They're beyond hearing the argument for pardon and forgiveness of sin. Instead, they're tormented by the dreadful sounds of wailing, roaring, and cursing from damned souls, suffering under God's wrath for their transgressions.

This Psalm's title labels it as a "Psalm of David, Maschil," indicating it as a Psalm for instruction. And what instruction could be more valuable than revealing the true nature of blessedness? What guidance could be better than pointing humans towards the path of pardon and forgiveness of sin—the pathway to true happiness? The happiness of rational beings is a pursuit that many wise individuals attempted to fathom, but their quest left them perplexed and in darkness. Despite their wisdom, they failed to locate its essence. Only rational creatures can truly be deemed blessed, for only they have the capacity to introspect. And it is this capacity that renders them capable of blessedness above all other creatures. Yet, knowing not only ourselves but also where our blessedness lies is an invaluable instruction. David, who enjoyed worldly comforts to the fullest, wore the crown and possessed riches, didn't proclaim, "Blessed is the crowned one with a kingdom." David, despite possessing the world's wealth, didn't announce, "Blessed is the one with worldly possessions." Nor did David, amidst his honours and reputation among the mighty, declare, "Blessed is the one with worldly honour." Even though David had triumphed over enemies, he didn't proclaim, "Blessed is the triumphant conqueror over foes." And while he lived amidst lavish palaces and worldly delights, he still didn't say, "Blessed is the one in possession of such luxuries." Instead, amid all the temporal riches David experienced, he identified his blessedness in this: the pardon and forgiveness of his sins. He declares those and those alone as blessed whose sins are pardoned.

This instruction on the blessedness of Sin's Pardon, as presented here, holds profound significance and infinite relevance. As Luther asserted, the theme of free justification and the remission of sin makes one divine. To this, one might add that it also constitutes one's Christianity. To be truly educated in the justification of a sinner is what makes one a Christian. Even if we had countless educators in various fields of knowledge—both natural and theological—it would all be in vain regarding salvation unless we were taught this instruction about the blessedness of justification and forgiveness of sin. Luther posits that if this doctrine is neglected, then all other

knowledge loses its purpose. Therefore, the title of the Psalm fittingly stands as "A Psalm of Instruction." "Blessed is the person whose transgressions are forgiven, whose iniquities are covered." Thus, our Doctrine, based on these words, is as follows:

DOCTRINE: The true blessedness of a person, or any soul, lies in the free grace of God forgiving their sins.

This is our main focus: the true blessedness of any individual, be it man or woman, is not found in the enjoyment of worldly possessions or achievements. Rather, it resides in the free grace of God forgiving their sins. It does not stem from anything we can do or possess, but from God's grace that forgives our sins. This interpretation aligns with Romans 4:6-7, where St. Paul references this very passage from Scripture. Observe its relevance: "just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.'" In this context, the Apostle aims to elucidate that the blessing of Abraham, the father of the faithful, did not originate from his possessions or actions, but from God's grace that pardoned his sins. As Paul says in Galatians 4:15, "Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me." Paul questions the fading of their initial enthusiasm for the blessed doctrine. What does "blessedness" signify in this case? It unquestionably refers to the blessed doctrine mentioned in my text—a teaching St. Paul introduced to the Galatians concerning the free justification of a soul through faith in Jesus Christ and the pardon of sins by faith in Christ. This is the blessedness referred to. Initially, the Galatians were so captivated by this doctrine that they would have given their eyes to Paul. However, false teachers later swayed them, dulling their affection for this profound truth. Addressing them, Paul queries, "Where then is that sense of blessing you had?" He reminds them that, during his initial teaching, they deemed the doctrine of free forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ as profoundly blessed. Yet, their hearts were now distant from that

estimation. This dynamic is common: Christ's ministers preach doctrines that initially grip people's hearts and kindle great fervor upon first hearing. However, due to various influences—such as sin or the company of worldly acquaintances—this fervor might wane. Although their hearts burned within them during the hearing of a specific truth, it's disappointing when they later grow dispassionate. May this not occur among you. Perhaps you were deeply moved when you recently heard about the severity of sin. You acknowledged the profound evil within even the smallest sin, and driven by this conviction, you began to reform. However, you might have relapsed. May it not be said of you, "Where is that sense of the Evil of Sin you spoke of?" Where is the bitterness that your hearts carried based on your convictions about sin's evil? What became of it? Just as St. Paul inquired, "Where then is that sense of blessing you had?" What has happened to the strength and power that the doctrine of sin's remission once exerted over your hearts? Another scriptural example is the unique blessedness of the second Covenant made with Abraham. When God approached Abraham, promising that through his Seed, all nations would be blessed (Galatians 3:17), we learn in Galatians 3:24 that the Law that came 430 years afterward did not invalidate this promise. In fact, it aimed to lead us to Christ. The Apostle's intention here is to emphasize the existence of a Grace Covenant beyond the Law Covenant. The Law Covenant's purpose was to guide us to the Grace Covenant. The key element of the Grace Covenant is presented in Galatians 3:24: "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." This faith brings about the remission of sins. This connection between blessedness and the forgiveness of sins is unmistakable in Scripture. It's our task to expound on why this is so—namely, to explain the essence of blessedness found in the pardon of sin. We'll explore the aspects in which the blessedness of sin's forgiveness is evident. There's much to discuss in this regard.

CHAPTER II:

The Blessedness of Sin's Pardon

1. The Negative Aspect: Deliverance from Evil

The exploration of the evil of sin in the previous chapter helps us unveil the essence of blessedness found in the pardon of sin. Given the magnitude of the evil of sin, as previously discussed, the statement "Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven" becomes significant. If sin is as dreadful as explained, then surely the person who is freed from this great evil is blessed. Picture this: when someone is in grave danger or subjected to intense suffering, and they are rescued from it, we regard them as blessed. The feeling of happiness upon escaping dangerous storms and achieving tranquillity is undeniable. Shouldn't those who are delivered from the evil of sin also be deemed blessed? Let me address the troubled sinner who comprehends the nature of sin and grasps its terrible implications. I ask you, O distressed sinner, what do you perceive? The response would likely be: "I see the wrathful countenance of an infinite God directed towards me, His eyes blazing like fire with indignation. I witness a dark, foreboding cloud of divine displeasure looming over me. I observe a dreadful sentence of wrath poised to descend upon me. I behold distress, misery, and destruction pursuing me. I am surrounded by darkness, desolation, and woe. The accusing voice of a guilty conscience relentlessly torments me, filling my soul with terrifying visions of eternal torment. I sense the heavy burden of guilt and horror dragging me down, a weight that accompanies me wherever I go. I perceive the unfathomable abyss of eternal horror and despair gaping open, ready to swallow me whole." Now, imagine this revelation occurring to an enlightened and awakened conscience. In this moment, the pardon and forgiveness of sin intervenes, dispelling the ominous cloud, silencing the tempest, and dispelling the darkness and misery. The soul is liberated from all forms of evil—sin and its harrowing repercussions. Such a

transformation would be called blessed indeed. When we contrast the individual's previous state, plagued by the awareness of sin's dreadful evil and burdened by its weight, to the current condition of sin's pardon, the change is astonishing. The blessedness of a person whose sin is pardoned is undeniable. Everything that God, one's conscience, the law, the devil, or the world held against them is absolved. Old things have passed away, and all things are made new, just as 2 Corinthians 5:17 proclaims—not only in terms of sanctification but also justification. They have become a new creation, an outcome of the new creation in Christ. A person who has their sin pardoned enters a new state through the new creation. Their blessedness is grounded in this new creation in Christ. This is the initial aspect of blessedness—a negative one—wherein one is freed from a tremendous evil.

2. The Positive Aspect: Abundance of Mercy in Forgiveness

Secondly, let's focus on the positive dimension. A person is blessed when their sins are forgiven, considering the profound mercy that God bestows upon them. As Daniel 9:9 says, "To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness." Forgiveness is a fruit of glorious mercies, as highlighted in Exodus 34:6: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity." Let's delve into this positively, exploring the richness of mercy within the context of sin's forgiveness. Scripture employs diverse expressions to associate mercy with the forgiveness of sin. It refers to "riches of mercy" (Ephesians 1:7), "plenteous mercy" (Psalm 86:8), "God's fullness of compassion" (Psalm 78:38), and "multitude of mercies" (Psalm 51:1). The mercy shown in the forgiveness of sin encompasses these descriptions: rich, plentiful, compassionate, and abundant. This mercy operates on various levels. Let's explore two: the efficient and the final cause.

1. Efficient Cause of Mercy in Forgiveness of Sin:

Consider the abundance of mercy God reveals in forgiving sin. It is akin to an infinite ocean that engulfs the sins of the Elect. No matter the number or enormity of sins, or the various grievous factors accompanying them, when a soul arrives at justification, God acts like an infinite ocean of mercy, swallowing up all the evil within sin. Just as a vast ocean absorbs both a load and a shovel of earth without discrimination, God's mercy, when applied to sins through justification, makes no distinction based on the gravity of those sins. It's essential to pay attention: while discussing sin's forgiveness, I will reveal so much grace that if you misinterpret or misuse it, it might lead to serious consequences. Be cautious as I proceed, especially those eager to hear about God's pardoning mercy. Whether your sins are minor or significant, when approaching God's pardoning mercy, it's like plunging into an infinite ocean that engulfs everything. To those whose sins remain unforgiven, whether small or substantial, there's no distinction. Both lead to damnation and are engulfed by an infinite ocean of wrath and horror. Similarly, in terms of justification, it doesn't matter if your sins are minor or severe; pardoning mercy engulfs them all.

2. Final Cause of Mercy in Forgiveness of Sin:

Moreover, mercy serves as the final cause. God forgives

CHAPTER III:

The Profound Mysteries of Godliness in Sin's Forgiveness

3.1 The First Mystery: Mediation

Blessed is the person whose sins are forgiven, for within the act of forgiving a sinner lies a wondrous mystery of godliness. There is an

abundance of glorious mysteries woven into God's work of forgiving. The argument unfolds as follows: anyone for whom God accomplishes a task brimming with numerous glorious mysteries is indeed blessed. And wherever sin is pardoned, God performs a peculiar work, the most extraordinary He has ever done. This work comprises countless marvels, each of which, when unveiled, highlights the blessedness of the individual. My intention is to unveil these mysteries inherent in the forgiveness of sin. This serves not only to emphasize the great work of God in pardoning sin but also to elevate your understanding of it. It is my aim to evoke thoughts that align with the significance of the subject at hand and to sanctify God's name through those thoughts.

The First Mystery: Mediation Through a Mediator

When sin is forgiven, it happens through the intervention of a mediator between God and the soul. The mediation of the Son of God is key to grasp—a point of paramount significance in comprehending God's way of forgiving sin. There's a multitude of divine mysteries contained herein, and I am confident in demonstrating that this is no trifling matter. Understand this: when God pardons sin, it's always done through the mediation of the Son of God. God doesn't forgive sin like a ruler pardoning an offender who humbly pleads for forgiveness. The ruler might then say, "Very well, I forgive you." However, God's forgiveness is distinct. Yet, many people, when seeking God's pardon, fail to consider this crucial aspect. There's much more to it than meets the eye. Whosoever has their sins forgiven experiences this pardon through the mediation and intercession of the Son of God. The Son stands before the Father and pleads for the soul. Even if all the angels in heaven intercede, their efforts would fall short. It's solely the Son of God who can do this. It's as though a criminal's case were such that the mediation of all nobles couldn't sway the king to grant a pardon. Instead, the prince himself must mediate for the pardon to be secured. Similarly, for you, dear soul, this might seem trivial. However, recognize that if your sin is pardoned, it's exclusively through the mediation of the Son of God.

He intercedes with the Father, advocating for your forgiveness. He pleads, "Father, this soul has been a Sabbath-breaker, a liar, a drunkard, unclean. Yet, let their sins be pardoned; spare them from damnation. Father, extend your mercy to them." Consider the blessing: you, a humble creature, have the Son of God interceding for your forgiveness. In truth, if there's any veracity in divine teachings, it lies in this—forgiveness and pardon originate solely from the mediation of the Son of God. He's been committed to this from all eternity. Such grace abounds in this truth, so I caution against misuse. This first mystery implies that you can't seek forgiveness by simply crying out for it in a natural manner. Instead, you must approach the Father through the mediation of the Son, following this mystical path.

The Second Mystery: Christ's Undertaking of the Debt

The second mystery is this: Christ's entreating the Father won't suffice. Note this well, for I speak in the name of God and must only proclaim His truths. If any sin is pardoned, it's not solely due to Christ's prayer. It goes beyond that. When God forgives any sin, it's because of this covenant between God the Father and the Son: your sins are transferred to Christ. Every oath, act of drunkenness, and wickedness are placed upon Him, and He bears the burden. As the sinner, you might continue your sinful ways, thinking that a simple cry for mercy and confession absolves you. However, I must emphasize this: if your sin is pardoned, Christ must bear the weight of your debt and become your surety. Second Corinthians 5:21 captures this: "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us." The path to pardon involves a transfer of all our sins onto Christ. He, the beloved Son of God, must bear the weight of your sin—He who knew no sin must carry the sins of the guilty. Reflect on the words of Nathan to David in 2 Samuel 12:13: "The Lord has put away your sin." In the original text, it reads, "The Lord has made your sin pass over." This signifies a transfer of your sins onto His Son. This is the second mystery of justification: your sins are placed upon Christ's shoulders. Regardless of how recklessly you indulge in sin, if you are

to be saved, your sin must be placed upon Him. Your transgressions, whatever they may be, must be attributed to His account.

The Third Mystery: Through Christ's Suffering

Whenever sin is pardoned, Christ not only bears the sin but also endures the punishment equivalent to what you would have faced had you been eternally damned. This isn't a pardon without punishment; instead, it's an agreement between God the Father and the Son that the Son will endure the same punishment for your sins as you would have for eternity. These transactions between God the Father and the Son occur from all eternity concerning the pardoning of any sin. While you might commit a sin, confess it, and assume that's the end of it, I tell you this: if your sin is pardoned, Christ must endure the same punishment your sin warrants. This Gospel teaches that you can never attain pardon through any other means.

The Fourth Mystery: Righteousness Before God

Herein lies a mystery: wherever sin receives pardon, God not only absolves the transgression but also establishes the soul as righteous before Him. Every justified individual stands righteous in the presence of the Lord. A comparison can be drawn to a criminal who receives forgiveness from a prince; despite the pardon, the criminal might still be perceived as a wicked individual. However, God's forgiveness doesn't merely absolve the offense; instead, it satisfies the law, and the soul stands before God as righteous. This occurs through an Act of Justification—not to be confused with Sanctification. A prince might pardon a traitor, but the law's demands remain unmet. In contrast, when God forgives sin, He orchestrates a resolution that not only forgives the offense but also satisfies the law, thereby enabling the soul to stand before God as righteous. Indeed, the blessed state of righteousness is the natural consequence.

The Fifth Mystery: Righteousness in Another

This righteousness originates from another—a higher righteousness than the innocence Adam possessed. This mystery is profound: a soul stands righteous before the Lord, yet this righteousness isn't of one's own making. As Philippians 3:8-10 illuminates, St. Paul regarded his personal righteousness as worthless compared to being united with Christ. His righteousness, derived from adherence to the law, held no value; instead, he sought the righteousness that emerges through faith in Christ. Romans 5:19 similarly testifies that just as one man's disobedience brought about condemnation, the obedience of one man—Christ—leads to the justification of many. This righteousness is transferred to us, surpassing our own. In the same manner that our sins are transferred to Christ, Christ's righteousness is imputed to the justified soul. This phenomenon leads the soul to stand righteous before God. Thus, blessed is the one who adorns themselves with the luminous attire of Christ's righteousness. Consider this as Ahasuerus honoured Mordecai by clothing him in the king's royal robes, proclaiming the man whom the king delights to honour. Equally, a person or woman is truly honoured when God adorns them with the radiant robe of His own Son's righteousness. Formerly draped in the sullied rags of sin and wickedness, they now wear the righteousness of Christ, veiling their iniquities. What a splendid garment! All the world's diamond-studded attire pales in comparison to the robes of Christ's righteousness bestowed upon a soul upon forgiveness of sins.

The Sixth Mystery: Proximity Between Christ and the Soul

When God forgives sin, He orchestrates a profound unity between man and His Son—such an intimate unity that makes one indivisible with Him. A unity with Christ is unparalleled; no other fusion in the world compares to the bond between you and Christ. The forgiven soul achieves this unity as God makes them one with His Son. This isn't a superficial bond; it surpasses all other connections. This close bond is likened to the union of branch and root, body and members—analogous to the close union between bones and flesh in a single body. Even the closeness between spouses seems distant compared

to the union between Christ and a justified soul. In John 14:20, Christ speaks of being in you and you in Him, describing an unparalleled unity. No other union rivals this—neither the presence of members in the body nor the root in the branch. The union between Christ and us signifies Christ in us and us in Him. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," as stated. This is a spiritual union, the closest form of unity achievable by spiritual entities. Thus, the individual whose sins are pardoned is truly blessed. Through this divine act, God forges such an intimate bond between the soul and Christ that all natural unions are mere shadows in comparison.

The Seventh Mystery: Faith as the Catalyst, Boasting Excluded

This transformation occurs through faith—an illustrious achievement bestowed upon humble beings. However, boasting is excluded. Scripture bars boasting in both realms—not just the realm of works but also in the realm of faith. A query may arise: how can both law of works and law of faith exclude boasting? Some argue that boasting is eliminated from works because they're our own achievements, while faith is God's gift. As God empowers us to believe, boasting about faith is rendered impossible, given that it's a divine gift. Yet, this argument falls short. If God empowers us to perform any work, that empowerment is also divinely granted. Every gracious work is performed by the grace and gift of God, just as faith is. Even Adam's actions in innocence were executed by the gift of God. Thus, claiming that boasting is precluded from faith due to its divine origin doesn't suffice. The mystery of Justification is substantial: although faith is a remarkable accomplishment—one of the most remarkable any being has ever achieved—it excludes boasting. Yet, righteousness is attributed to it as if it were our own. Hence, I'm convinced that faith entails more than anything Adam possessed. The power of belief wasn't inherent in Adam during his state of innocence. Why? Because faith, as a grace, is elevated to a level that precludes all forms of boasting. If faith merely stirred a dormant power within us, it wouldn't exclude boasting any more

than if God roused another grace, such as Love, Hope, or Fear. However, the exclusion of boasting is better explained by this: though works could be empowered by the grace and gift of God, they remained within the realm of human nature. If God created rational beings, He would bestow perfections due to that nature, such as the Image of God. Nevertheless, God bestows something greater upon us when He grants faith. Thus, faith holds a greater mystery than other graces, making it remarkable that God justifies through faith—exclusively excluding boasting more than any other factor.

The Fourth Mystery: Standing Righteous Before God

Here lies a mystery: wherever sin finds pardon, God doesn't just dismiss the sin and forgive it; rather, He establishes the soul as righteous before Him. Every justified individual stands righteous in the sight of the Lord. A comparison can be drawn to a criminal who receives pardon from a ruler; even though pardoned, the criminal might still be seen as a wicked individual. However, God's forgiveness doesn't merely wipe the slate clean—it goes further, satisfying the law, and positioning the soul as righteous before Him. This transpires through an Act of Justification, distinct from Sanctification. A ruler might pardon a traitor, yet the demands of the law remain unmet. In contrast, when God pardons sin, He follows a process that not only forgives the transgression but also satisfies the law, allowing the soul to stand before God as a righteous person. It's reasonable to conclude that one who stands righteous is inherently blessed.

The Fifth Mystery: Righteousness in Another

Another mystery unfolds here: the righteousness that emerges isn't self-derived but originates from another—an even loftier righteousness than Adam's innocence. This is a profound reality; the soul stands righteous before the Lord, yet this righteousness doesn't stem from one's own efforts. As Philippians 3:8-10 reveals, St. Paul considered his personal righteousness as worthless in comparison to

being united with Christ. The righteousness stemming from adherence to the law held no value; instead, he sought the righteousness that arises through faith in Christ. Similarly, Romans 5:19 illustrates that just as one man's disobedience led to condemnation, the obedience of one man—Christ—leads to the justification of many. This righteousness is transferred to us, surpassing our own. In the same manner that our sins are transferred to Christ, Christ's righteousness is attributed to the justified soul. This causes the soul to stand righteous before God. Therefore, blessed is the individual who dons the radiant attire of Christ's righteousness. Consider it like Ahasuerus honouring Mordecai by adorning him with royal robes and announcing, "This is to be done for the man the king delights to honour." Equally, a man or woman is truly honoured when God clothes them with the brilliant Robes of His own Son's righteousness. Once clad in the soiled rags of sin and wickedness, they now wear the righteousness of Christ, concealing their iniquities. What an awe-inspiring garment! All the world's diamond-studded clothing pales in comparison to the Robes of Christ's Righteousness bestowed upon a soul upon forgiveness of sins.

The Sixth Mystery: A Close Bond Between Christ and the Soul

When God forgives sin, He fosters an intimate union between man and His Son—such a union that makes them indivisible. A unity with Christ surpasses all other connections. For the forgiven soul, it's not merely a matter of pardoning your sins; it's a profound process. No, when God pardons you, He brings you into such close unity with His Son that there's no comparison in the world to describe the bond between you and Christ. Scripture captures this union by likening it to the bond between a branch and its root or the unity between the body and its members—a parallel to the close union of bones and flesh within one body. Even the bond between husband and wife, often deemed close, pales in comparison to the bond between Christ and a justified soul. John 14:20 records Christ's words: "On that day

you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." This union surpasses all others; there's no bond closer. Although the members exist within the body, the body doesn't exist within the members. Similarly, the root is in the branch, yet the branch can't envelop the root. However, the union between Christ and us isn't mutual—it's Christ in us and us in Him. "Whoever is united with the Lord is one with Him in spirit." This is a spiritual union, the closest connection attainable between spiritual entities. Hence, the person whose sins receive pardon is genuinely blessed. Through this divine act, God forges such a profound link between the soul and Christ that all natural unions are mere shadows in comparison.

The Seventh Mystery: Faith as the Catalyst, Excluding Boasting

The pathway to this transformation is through faith—an exalted achievement given to humble beings. Nevertheless, boasting is excluded. Scripture rejects boasting in both realms—not only within the realm of works but also within the realm of faith. An inquiry may arise: how can both the law of works and the law of faith reject boasting? Some argue that boasting is eliminated from works since they're our personal achievements, whereas faith is a divine gift. As God empowers us to believe, boasting about faith is rendered impossible because it's a gift from God. Yet, this explanation falls short. If God empowers us to perform any work, that empowerment is also a divine grant. Every gracious work is carried out through the grace and gift of God, just as faith is. Even Adam's actions during his state of innocence were executed through the gift of God. Therefore, asserting that boasting is excluded from faith due to its divine origin doesn't fully explain the matter. The mystery of Justification is significant: even though faith is an extraordinary accomplishment—one of the most remarkable any being has ever achieved—it excludes boasting. However, righteousness is attributed to it as if it were our own. Thus, I am convinced that faith encompasses more than anything Adam possessed. The power of belief wasn't inherent in

Adam during his state of innocence. Why? Because faith, as a grace, has been elevated to a level that precludes all forms of boasting. If faith merely stirred a dormant power within us, it wouldn't exclude boasting any more than if God activated another grace, such as Love, Hope, or Fear. However, the exclusion of boasting is better explained in this manner: while works might be empowered by the grace and gift of God, they remained within the realm of human nature. If God created rational beings, He would bestow perfections befitting that nature, including the Image of God. However, God bestows something greater upon us when He grants faith. Thus, faith holds a deeper mystery than other graces, making it remarkable that God justifies through faith—exclusively excluding boasting more than any other factor.

The Eighth Mystery: The Infinite Justice and Mercy of God

The eighth aspect unveils this truth: when God pardons sin, He maintains infinite justice and yet infinite mercy. An astonishing harmony emerges between God's justice and mercy, revealing a profound mystery. In religion, three great mysteries exist: the Trinity's mystery—the coexistence of distinct Persons within one God; the mystery of Christ's Person—the coexistence of two natures in one Person; and the mystery of reconciling God's mercy and justice in pardoning a sinner. Often, when people seek forgiveness for their sins, they contemplate God's boundless grace and mercy but overlook His justice. Yet, anyone pardoned witnesses God's unswerving justice alongside His mercy. His mercy is evident to all, but how does His infinite justice manifest? Romans 3:26 provides clarity:

The Ninth Mystery: Forgiving All Sins, Past and Future

Now, let us delve into the ninth mystery, a perplexing revelation. When God extends forgiveness for a sinner's present transgressions, He simultaneously forgives all sins that lie ahead. This presents a profound enigma. When God pardons a soul for a specific sin, it isn't

just that sin alone that's forgiven—He includes in the pardon all sins that the person will ever commit. This way of pardoning sin is uniquely divine; no creature pardons the transgressions of another in this manner. Thus, the prophet Micah exclaims, "Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance?" (Micah 7:18). This mystery of divine pardon distinguishes God. No father pardons a child's sins, and no ruler pardons a subject's sins as God does. Because of this remarkable way of forgiving sin, it's essential that we explore and clarify it. When God grants forgiveness initially, He encompasses all future sins within the scope of His pardon. Allow me to elucidate this concept. In Romans 8:1, the apostle Paul states, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." From this assertion, I deduce that if God did not forgive all future sins at the time of justifying a sinner, then whenever a justified individual commits a sin, they must experience condemnation until they renew an act of faith for forgiveness. The moment a justified person commits a sin, if that sin remains unpardoned, they are under condemnation. However, there isn't a single moment in time when a justified person can be said to be under condemnation. I emphasise that not a single instant can be identified when a justified individual exists in a state of condemnation. While a justified person might stumble into sin after their justification, at the very moment of that transgression, God applies a previously established pardon, even if the individual doesn't renew a specific act of faith for that particular sin. This is the crux of my argument. Although renewing an act of faith to claim pardon is our duty and aids our comfort, it isn't an absolute necessity to escape condemnation. Once justified by Christ, a pardon is in place. Thus, when a new sin is committed, this established pardon is activated by God Himself, even if we don't immediately renew an act of faith to seek a fresh pardon. Indeed, it's true that renewing an act of faith is necessary due to God's command and for our comfort. However, it isn't an absolute necessity for evading condemnation. Once one is justified, a pre-existing pardon is stored, ensuring that it's applied in response to any new sin committed, even if an act of faith isn't immediately renewed to solicit pardon. In fact, without

this provision, there would be no time when a believer isn't under the threat of condemnation. After all, there's no moment when a believer doesn't in some way transgress against God. Moreover, it's undeniable that renewing an act of faith for the pardon of every committed sin isn't obligatory. This argument remains unassailable. If this weren't the case, believers would need to renew an act of faith after the last action they undertake in this world since every action, even the last, involves some measure of sin. While some assert that believers can't ultimately fall away, they do contend that believers can fall into a state of condemnation. According to their view, a believer might commit sins leading to a state of condemnation, although they maintain that God ensures the believer won't die until they renew an act of faith to obtain pardon. I counter that Scripture doesn't offer evidence that there's no moment in which a believer might not die. If a believer were to die without renewing their faith, they would indeed perish. They further argue that not all sins lead to a state of condemnation. Some sins can be forgiven naturally as infirmities, while others that trouble one's conscience plunge the believer into a state of condemnation until they renew an act of faith for pardon. I reply that if any post-conversion sin could bring a believer into a state of condemnation, where should the boundaries be placed? Should we say that crossing a certain line triggers condemnation, while remaining just short of that line spares the believer? Scripture doesn't set such limits. Instead, every sin intrinsically leads to a state of condemnation, yet no sin leads a believer into that state. This is a profound mystery of God's approach to pardoning sin. God doesn't merely forgive a believer's current and past sins; He also includes a pardon for all the sins that believer will commit in the future. Christ has procured this forgiveness for us in advance. It's akin to a parent paying off their child's current debts and setting aside enough money to cover all future debts, ensuring the child won't end up in prison due to unpaid debts. Similarly, God forgives all our sins initially and reserves a pardon that prevents us from suffering condemnation and punishment if we stray into further transgressions. This mystery holds immense significance.

Those who teach otherwise deprive God's people of the abundant comfort they could enjoy if this truth were clearly understood.

Isn't this a Doctrine of Licence?

Could one argue that this doctrine grants licence to sin? Might some individuals use this concept to rationalise their actions, assuming that since a pardon is pre-established, they are free to sin without consequence? Could they claim that even if they sin, there's already a pardon in place for them?

Your statement reflects a lack of understanding of the true nature of the Gospel's grace. What you're suggesting is quite different from what you might comprehend; the grace within the Gospel doesn't bear that malevolent quality that would lead to such negative effects in the hearts of believers. Martin Luther drew a comparison between sin and quicklime, likening the law to water, which intensifies the burning of quicklime. However, he described the grace of the Gospel as oil, which has the ability to quench the heat of quicklime. The Gospel's oil has the power to extinguish the flames of human sin. In fact, the more God's grace is revealed through the Gospel, the more the sinful desires that remain in a believer's heart are subdued. This is a clear indication of the significant difference between the mercy of God revealed in the Gospel and received through faith, compared to the understanding that's attained through a natural means. For those of you who are unbelievers and perceive the Gospel merely through a natural lens, your sinful desires might indeed be nurtured, leading to a false sense of liberty for wrongdoing. However, once you genuinely receive God's mercy through Christ Jesus, that mercy becomes the most potent adversary against your sinful inclinations. Clearly, you don't grasp the profound work of God in forgiving sin through Christ if you reason as you do. Allow me to clarify this matter. An understanding of the immense work of Christ's propitiation leads the soul to abhor all forms of sin. This understanding doesn't serve to nourish sin, as you're implying. First John 1:9 speaks of the remarkable grace of God in Christ toward us: "If we confess our sins,

he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Similarly, in 1 John 2:1, the Apostle addresses believers: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." While they might argue that these teachings are meant to prevent them from sinning, they acknowledge their sinful natures which inevitably lead them into sin. Nevertheless, to provide comfort for the saints, the Apostle declares that if anyone does sin, believers have an Advocate with the Father. Even if they sin due to ignorance or neglect, and fail to renew acts of faith to seek pardon, Jesus Christ remains an Advocate before the Father, pleading on their behalf. This is an incredible privilege bestowed upon God's saints through the Covenant of Grace. When believers commit sin and either overlook it or allow their conscience to be dulled, preventing them from seeking pardon, the text assures them that they have an Advocate who pleads their case. This Advocate's presence prevents God's wrath from being unleashed, ensuring that believers aren't condemned. This Advocate is present because they have an Advocate with the Father. The second verse of the passage reads, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." Here, "the whole world" refers to believers. The third verse further asserts, "By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments." In other words, understanding Christ's propitiation leads to a greater inclination to uphold His commandments. This knowledge is both a means and an evidence of a believer's relationship with Him. The fourth verse emphatically states, "Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." If someone claims to understand Christ's propitiation yet disregards His commandments, that individual is deceiving themselves and lacks the truth within them.

Furthermore, let's consider a scenario where a person might reason as follows: "Well, if there's such a hidden truth about the forgiveness of sin, and God not only forgives sins at the beginning but also includes a pardon for all future sins, won't this potentially lead to more sinful behaviour?" Observe the boundless waywardness of the

human heart. Suppose it were the opposite, that God forgave a believer's sins upon approaching Him, but any subsequent sin post-pardon would place them under a verdict of death and condemnation. In such a case, a person's heart might not be any more driven to seek Christ; instead, they might conclude, "No matter how hard I work, how much I endure to secure assurance of sin's pardon, what difference does it make? Tomorrow, even the next hour, I might fall into sin again, and be right back where I started." Regardless of the situation, humanity tends to formulate arguments against God that suit their lustful desires. Let me ask you, or any person open to God's presence and grace, which doctrine truly ignites a fervour for God? Is it the belief that God will forgive sin, yet if you stumble into new sin, you'll be condemned? Or is it the understanding that God's grace is so abundant that not only does He pardon sin in the present, but also, to bolster your resolve, He extends His forgiveness to accommodate instances of frailty and relapse? Which of these concepts brings forth the greater encouragement? Granted, for someone burdened by a slave-like mentality, the former might seem more appealing. However, for a spirit that possesses innate nobility, the latter words inevitably capture their heart, compelling them to remain steadfast in their walk with God.

Consider this: Is God's grace truly boundless? Is it possible for Him to have such compassion for humble beings that, right at the outset when they turn to Christ, He pardons their extensive and severe sins? And not only that, but upon their entry into this new covenant, God undertakes to absolve all sins yet to be committed in the days to come. Even if they find themselves on the precipice of sin day by day, there is no fear of condemnation. Oh, the immeasurable attraction this holds for a soul that embodies grace and ingenuity! Truly, nothing compares to this. If indeed this holds true—that a forgiven individual is pardoned in such a comprehensive manner, encompassing not only their past but also their future—then we must declare the blessedness of the person whose wrongdoings are forgiven, whose transgressions are pardoned.

The Tenth Revelation: Pardon as a Catalyst for Transformation

Now, consider the tenth profound revelation—a mystery I wish to unveil to you, lifting your hearts to a loftier appreciation of the monumental significance of Sin's Pardon. Understand this: God does not bestow forgiveness upon a sinner because their heart and nature have already undergone transformation; rather, He extends forgiveness so that this transformation can take place. This sets God's pardons apart from all other forms of absolution. When a prince pardons an offender or a father pardons a child, they both do so under certain conditions. A prince expects the subject's discernible change, and even the most compassionate father will not pardon a child unless they show signs of repentance and a shift in their disobedient attitude. However, when God offers pardon, it is not contingent on our existing change; it is offered with the intent of catalysing change. In fact, God's pardon comes first, as Romans 4:5 aptly illustrates: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness." Take note—when God justifies a sinner, He views them as ungodly; He doesn't wait for the sinner to become godly before justifying them. This distinction is essential because it opens the door for all those burdened by sin and guilt to seek God's grace and mercy through Christ. So, do not hesitate, even if you feel ungodly, sinful, and devoid of a sanctified nature. Remember, God justifies the ungodly.

Now, one might wonder if it's audacious for a sinner to grasp hold of Christ in this manner. If faith merely consisted of believing Christ died for them—something many believe—then seizing Christ could indeed be presumptuous. However, justification is a profound enigma, and faith, its counterpart, is a powerful work of the Spirit within the soul. This work compels the soul to cast itself upon God's boundless grace in Christ, risking everything—its hopes for good, happiness, and even salvation—on Him. This faith isn't merely about seeking pardon; it's about pursuing grace, holiness, illumination,

goodness, and happiness both in the present and the future. It seeks all from Him. When this divine work is at play, a soul, though currently steeped in ungodliness, has the right to approach God for forgiveness. Remember, God justifies the ungodly. Romans 5:6 further reiterates that "Christ died for the ungodly," and verse 10 goes on to say, "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Even when we were His enemies with hearts filled with enmity, Christ's death aimed to reconcile us with God. So, you can confidently come to Him for pardon, even if you perceive no immediate transformation. His pardon intends to bring about your change. This is the glory of God's work in pardoning sin—a work that reconciles and justifies, even in the face of enmity and hostility.

The Eleventh Revelation: God's Costly Acquisition of Pardon

Let's delve into the eleventh revelation—a revelation that paints a distinct portrait of God's divine nature in the context of pardoning a sinner. When God pardons, He invests Himself in procuring that pardon, a manner distinct from earthly pardons. Consider this: a prince pardons a wrongdoer, yet he does not himself secure the pardon. Likewise, if someone wrongs you, your act of forgiveness does not involve purchasing a pardon for them; perhaps a friend might intercede on their behalf, but the act of purchasing does not rest with you. However, God's method stands in stark contrast. God's pardon isn't granted lightly; it comes at a great cost to Him. Therefore, do not underestimate the weight of being pardoned. You cannot assume that by merely crying out for mercy, God will instantly pardon you—this is not how divine pardon operates. In a natural sense, God never pardons sin so casually. Instead, the act of pardon is dearly bought by God Himself, costing Him more than the entirety of the world. If the world's worth could have sufficed, God might have chosen to dismantle heaven and earth rather than part with what He ultimately gave. What was this price? It was the blood of His own Son. God surrendered His Son to death as atonement for humanity's sin and to acquire the means of pardoning humanity.

You might wonder: why did God need to purchase a pardon for mankind? Could He not, by His sovereign authority, forgive freely? The answer lies in the need to satisfy justice. God needed to wrest the pardon from the grip of justice itself; He had to offer a payment before He could grant a single pardon. Justice demanded satisfaction before God could extend His forgiveness. Therefore, understand this comprehensive truth: Christ became our surety, assuming our debt and enduring punishment equivalent to what we should have faced in eternal damnation. Our righteousness stands in Christ, a union close and profound. Moreover, this salvation is through faith, eliminating any grounds for boasting. It highlights God's boundless mercy while maintaining His perfect justice. When God pardons one sin, He establishes a pardon for all sins yet to come. He justifies the ungodly, forgives sin, and simultaneously purchases the pardon. Reflect on these eleven revelations concerning the pardon of sin, and the astonishing nature of this divine work becomes abundantly clear. When these revelations are intertwined, the conclusion emerges, as the verse declares, "Blessed is that man whose sins are forgiven." Indeed, if such a wondrous and mysterious act of God is enacted to pardon sin, then the individual for whom God undertakes this magnificent task is truly blessed. Now, having explored the profound realm of the mystery of Godliness in forgiving sin, I move on to another aspect of this discourse:

CHAPTER IV:

The Foundation and Overflow of Mercies through Pardon of Sin

The pardon of sin bestows true blessedness, and why is this so? Because it serves as the cornerstone for an abundance of other mercies. Pardon of sin is not just a solitary mercy; rather, it stands as

the entrance to a multitude of other mercies. It is akin to the queen of mercies, royally accompanied by a magnificent train of other blessings. In fact, it forms the bedrock of all the mercies contained within the Covenant of grace. It is not just a mercy among many; it holds the esteemed position of being the key mercy, the gateway through which all other mercies flow. Within the Covenant of grace, like an opulent treasury, there resides an immense wealth of mercy. Pardon of sin flings open the doors to all these treasures.

Picture the flow of God's mercies as an infinite stream of goodness, cascading towards His creation. God takes great pleasure in imparting Himself to His creatures. Yet, humanity's sin erected a dam, obstructing this flow and rendering the channel impassable. Every drop of mercy—each drop destined to reach specific individuals according to God's eternal purpose—was held back. But when God forgives sin, He removes the obstruction, pulls out the stopper, and opens wide the floodgates. His boundless grace and benevolence pour forth generously and sweetly, drenching the soul, body, and every facet of the believer's life. When sin receives pardon, the full currents of all the mercies enshrined within the Covenant of grace surge into the soul. Therefore, if it holds true that pardon of sin is the gateway to other mercies, then the individual who receives pardon is indeed a profoundly blessed individual.

Allow me to elucidate further. The forgiveness of sin forms the foundation and opens the sluice that permits the influx of all other mercies. In the Book of Jeremiah (31:31), God reveals His plan to establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. This new covenant will not resemble the one He made with their forefathers. He promises, "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." (31:33) The pivotal revelation, the bedrock upon which all these mercies rest, is articulated at the end of verse 34: "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." The core of this new covenant—the reason for God's abundant outpouring of mercy and the bestowing of graces such as

enlightenment and sanctification—is rooted in the declaration, "I will forgive their wickedness."

This forgiving of iniquity serves as the primary gateway through which the mercies of the covenant flood in. In fact, the flood of divine goodness is so vast that Jeremiah 31:34 illustrates it with several particulars: the infusion of God's law within their hearts, the cessation of one person teaching another to know the Lord, for all will know Him. Each of these facets is granted as part of a broader grant of blessings. However, this abundance climaxes with a universal declaration: "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Let me now unfold the specific mercies that the pardon of sin opens the door to. These serve to magnify the blessedness of those souls whose sins are pardoned, for pardon of sin functions as the gateway to these very blessings.

Peace with God: The Inlet of Pardon

1. Peace with God—this is the result of justification, which, to clarify, means pardon through faith. As we move forward, the verse unfolds: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1) Here's the remarkable truth: our justification and reconciliation don't stem from our humility, nor even from our sanctification. Note this well—our justification and reconciliation rest on neither of these, though both are essential for our growth. The ultimate bedrock and foundation of our justification and reconciliation is not any of these. Instead, it's the free grace of God, applied by faith, that secures the pardon of our sins. This serves as the basis for all our peace and reconciliation with God. And this is how men and women should pursue peace with God. The cornerstone for attaining peace with God is the action of faith, wherein the righteousness of Christ secures pardon for us, over any act of humility or sanctification

by the Spirit. Yet, let's not forget, both these aspects are comforting and sweet. They are when we locate the core and the fundamental basis of our peace within God's free grace, as it pardons our sins and justifies us through faith in Christ. God doesn't say, "You, who are weighed down by immense sin, must wait until you are humbled and despise sin before you find peace with me." No, you may be deeply troubled by sin, forsake it, reform your life in numerous ways, live more righteously than before, and still not attain peace with God. Then how do you find peace? The answer is this: Through the action of faith, when you're justified, looking upward to God's grace, you receive pardon for your sins, and thus you find peace with Him. This is a profound privilege. Conversely, when a creature remains unreconciled, they cannot view the Almighty Creator without experiencing fear, trembling, and dread. Their perception of God is that of an adversary; the perfections of God only foretell doom and misery. This is a grievous predicament. But when pardon is granted, God is reconciled, and all fears and terrors stemming from the Almighty dissipate. The fears that once whispered of God's intention to destroy are silenced. Even if one were to witness God's judgments befalling others, they wouldn't instinctively feel that they were next in line. A justified soul could confidently declare that the judgments of God, however fearsome in the world or His Word, do not carry terror for them. In this state of reconciliation, the Word of God speaks solely of goodness, dispelling all previous fears.

"But can't a pardoned individual still be plagued by fears, or at least experience echoes of those fears?"

Yes, that's possible. Yet, the very foundation of those fears is eradicated and gone. They no longer originate from the work of God's Spirit, as they once did, as it's elucidated in Romans 8:15: "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" Although residual fears

may linger, they do not stem from the spirit of bondage. Therefore, when you're justified by faith, you haven't received the spirit of bondage anew. Even if you experience fear of God's judgments and wrath in the future, it's not the spirit of bondage, not the Spirit of God evoking these fears. Such fears may arise due to your own misunderstandings, but they do not originate from the Spirit of God. The spirit of bondage—the one that showed us our enslavement to sin, causing dread—has been dispersed. As for peace with God through the pardon of sin, this removes the grounds of enmity between the soul and God. There's an element that could have been added to the previous discussions. When a ruler pardons a criminal, they spare their life, and the criminal, relieved, departs. However, the ruler doesn't concern themselves with the pardoned individual any longer. The criminal might still harbour animosity towards the ruler. Yet, when God pardons a sinner, not only is enmity eradicated, but simultaneously, the soul is welcomed into a state of boundless friendship. God receives the soul into His very heart. This closeness involves a love and intimacy surpassing that of even the closest and dearest human friendships. This is a wondrous truth and an actuality. Just as God's act of pardoning sin involves more than just clearing the guilt of sin—it indeed justifies the soul—similarly, it entails more than merely nullifying enmity between God and the soul. It propels the soul into an endless, intense bond of love and friendship with the Creator. The sweetness and blessedness of a pardoned individual's state are beyond comprehension. This reconciliation with God ushers in an era of intimacy, wherein God enfolds the soul within His embrace. In fact, this leads to two subsequent blessings: peace in one's conscience and peace with all creation.

Inner Peace: Silence in the Conscience

1. Peace within the conscience—those fears and distressing terrors that once surged upon the weight of guilt in the conscience, now they have ceased. The haunting accusations of conscience have been quelled. Granted, after pardon and justification, one's

conscience might still cause unease, but that is due to misunderstanding. The root of all these conscience troubles has been eradicated. Troubles of conscience post-pardon of sin are akin to the sea's behaviour—mariners know how the wind at sea stirs the tumultuous waves skyward, yet even after the winds have abated, it takes a considerable time for the waves to regain calmness and stillness. In human souls, it's guilt that spawns tumultuous disturbances. However, when God pardons sin, He enters the soul akin to how Christ calmed the ship, commanding serenity. While human weakness might lead to some lingering turmoil even after the sting and guilt have been removed, God eventually aids His people's frailty. He doesn't only pardon sin in the heavenly court but also within the courtroom of conscience. Then, all fears and troubles evaporate. Those acquainted with the burns, throbs, and agonies of an accusing conscience recognise the blessing in possessing peace within their conscience. It's truly a great blessing to have everything right there. After all, the soul is deeply intertwined with the conscience, and the conscience is directly associated with God—indeed, it has an exclusive connection to God. If all is well with something that has such an intimate link with the Almighty, it undoubtedly signifies immense blessedness. "Blessed is the man whose sins are pardoned."

Harmony with Creation

2. Additionally, a sense of harmony extends to one's relationship with the created world. While I'd ideally expound on each point exhaustively, time permits only a brief touch upon this. God is the Lord of Hosts, and all the creatures stand armed, prepared to enforce God's cause. They not only stand at the ready but also seem to implore God to designate them as the instruments of His wrath. "Shall I go and strike this drunkard?" asks one creature. "And should I punish this blasphemer?" queries another. Day by day, all the creatures in heaven and on earth seemingly cry out against transgressors. Yet, when God pardons

your sin, these very creatures instantly become your allies. Just as when a judge pardons a criminal, the subordinates lose their jurisdiction over the pardoned. Conscience and creation are like subordinates, and when God's peace reigns, they are at peace too. It's akin to the tale of Joab coming to strike Absalom, and the ten young men, his armour-bearers, followed suit. Similarly, if an unpardoned sinner comes under God's judgment, and God "strikes," all creation seems ready to join in. Yet, when God pardons the sin, He forges a covenant between you and even the stones in the field, as depicted in Scripture. This is the first grand mercy that graces the soul upon receiving pardon of sin and peace with God.

3. Another blessing following pardon of sin is the remarkable way in which God unveils Himself to the pardoned soul. God reveals His secrets to those whom He forgives. Pardon of sin serves as the bedrock upon which God's mysteries are unveiled through the Holy Spirit to the pardoned. In Jeremiah 31:33, amidst the promises of the New Covenant, God pledges that all will be taught by Him. In Hebrews 8, this passage is further illuminated—verse 10 and 11 declare, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Notice this insight is grounded in God's mercy, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Pardon of sin thus becomes the cornerstone of God's instructive presence within the Covenant. This knowledge, from the least to the greatest, encompasses even the youngest. Should God, in His mercy, bring you to Christ and forgive your sin, a magnificent light will permeate your spirit. This light will far exceed any previous illumination, unveiling the mysteries of God. You, the younger generation, should fervently seek understanding. The crux lies in grasping the profound doctrine of Justification and the pardon of sin. As

Luther attested, three things—Prayer, Meditation, and Temptations—render one divine. Similarly, I assert that a deep comprehension of Justification births true Christianity. Those unfamiliar with this doctrine remain vulnerable and feeble in other aspects of faith. Once the soul achieves justification, a radiant light floods in. Those who've experienced this grace know the transformation well. To you, the youth, know that you too can have your sins forgiven and the divine mysteries unveiled. In 1 John 2:12, paired with verse 13, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake," know that even the young ones can find happiness through faith and forgiveness. Furthermore, verse 13 declares, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." What an extraordinary illumination descends upon the souls of the young ones when their sins are pardoned! They come to know the Father. This is why many esteemed and learned scholars, though well-versed in the knowledge of the natural world, fail to grasp the mysteries of godliness. Don't marvel at this; the understanding of these mysteries comes through pardon of sin. When God pardons sin and justifies a soul through faith in Christ, He opens the Covenant, revealing all its glorious mysteries to that soul. A prince would not confide in a traitor shackled in chains, but if the prince pardons the traitor and lifts his chains, granting him favour, welcoming him to the Privy Chamber, sharing his heart and kingdom's secrets, a profound change occurs. Likewise, God extends this privilege to pardoned sinners. A soul laden with sin's guilt is akin to a criminal languishing in a dungeon, bound by bolts and fetters. The guilt of sin is the soul's shackles. However, when God extends pardoning mercy, He removes the bolts, summons the soul from its prison, welcomes it into His presence, and unveils secrets kept since the world's inception. Princes do not typically act this way with malefactors; once pardoned, they're often left to their own devices, not ushered into the Privy Chamber to partake in royal secrets. However, this is precisely what God does for those He pardons. He doesn't pardon anyone without

calling them into His Privy Chamber, unveiling the profound counsels of His will. Although some souls receive more light than others, God bestows a splendid and radiant light to every pardoned soul. This light, compared to the light of nature, is truly glorious. Even the weakest and most impoverished creature, once pardoned, understands more about God's grace and Covenant than the most eminent doctors or rabbis. Though they might not speak as eloquently on these matters, their souls confidently rest in God's revealed goodwill within the Covenant. These rabbis, despite their eloquence, wouldn't dare entrust their eternal welfare and fate entirely to God's sovereignty. However, a believing soul dares commit their name, estate, life, and even eternal life into God's hands. Such a soul knows that God will honour His Covenant. Psalm 25:14 assures this: "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant." If you lament your lack of understanding, struggling to grasp the profound mysteries you hear, remember that the Saints have a depth to their prayers that arises from God's work in their hearts. Through faith, they gain the liberty to pour out their entire souls to God. This freedom, enabling you to share your heart's entirety with Him, is a direct fruit of Justification. Similarly, pardoned Absalom was not allowed to see David's face. Yet, when God pardons a soul, He grants it the freedom to enter His presence and communicate openly. This forms the second privilege: Pardon of sin opens the door to various other blessings.

The Significance of Pardon in Understanding Mercies

4. Pardon of sin not only opens the door to various other blessings but holds a unique position that transforms all other blessings into true mercies. Without this mercy, no other blessings would hold their true worth. With pardon, all other blessings are seen as genuine mercies: when a soul attains forgiveness, it views its possessions through a much sweeter lens. Houses, land, spouse, children, and every other possession become true mercies. Why?

Because of the pardon; a man might possess a beautiful home, luxurious furnishings, a loving family, and all desires fulfilled. However, if he remains condemned, it all seems futile. Yet, if he unexpectedly receives a pardon and returns to his home, family, and possessions, they all become sweeter to him. This difference lies in the enjoyment of outward comforts before and after pardon. Prior to pardon, even if you possess homes, land, family, and prosperity, the weight of sin's guilt corrodes your conscience. Yet, with God's pardoning mercy, He removes the corroding guilt. At that point, your possessions are not merely fruits of material wealth, but gifts from the eternal wellspring of God's love, akin to Jesus Christ himself. This truth should strongly motivate the pursuit of pardon—so that you may find sweetness in your worldly comforts. Even if there were no other reason to seek forgiveness, this alone should suffice—to transform all your external blessings into true mercies. You might possess an estate, a loving family, children, and all you desire, and these indeed are mercies. However, if they lack the foundation of God's Covenant, they're mere external blessings, not the "sure mercies of David." Moreover, these blessings would not even deserve the title of mercies.

Consider two aspects:

First, the enormity of sin's guilt on your soul is so immense that even when combined with these blessings, they are like a grain of sugar dropped into a barrel of gall. Would not the bitterness of the gall drown out the sweetness of that one grain? Similarly, even if you were granted the entire world's riches, your unpardoned sin would corrupt the enjoyment of everything you possess.

Second, you cannot discern whether your blessings stem from God's love or His anger. In fact, you might conclude that they are borne out of God's wrath rather than His love. How can you then view them as mercies when they might emanate from God's infinite anger? Until you secure pardon, no mercy can be assured to you; only after

pardon can you confidently declare that every mercy you possess is truly a mercy.

This underscores two important points:

1. The folly of those who seek pardon only when other comforts are stripped away from them. They intend to indulge in worldly pleasures and seek pardon only when circumstances force them to. When all is well—eating sumptuous meals, enjoying companionship, and basking in abundance—they are content. However, when these comforts are taken away—perhaps during sickness—they suddenly cry out for mercy. It's only then that they recognise their wretchedness and seek God's mercy. But why now and not before? When they had everything, they should have sought God's mercy then. Why didn't they cry out for mercy when their hearts were comforted by other things? The truth is that the perceived comforts were not truly mercies because their origin remained uncertain. Perhaps they were products of God's anger. Now that these comforts are disappearing, is it a suitable time to cry out for mercy? This is a profound mistake. How greatly you erred by not crying out for mercy earlier! You now find it suitable to cry out for mercy, but remember that you had no true mercy to enjoy until your sins were pardoned. So, when sickness arrives and God takes away your comforts, you think you're left naked. The truth is, even before this, you were spiritually naked. If you desire a life of comfort, if you wish for your home, possessions, and relationships to be true mercies to you, do not rest until you obtain forgiveness for your sins. This should be a powerful incentive to seek pardon.
2. If outward blessings are not true mercies unless sin is pardoned, then what gain can you or anyone achieve through the increase of sin? You may perceive it as a gain, but consider that all your current blessings are not true mercies until your sins are forgiven. Would you then expect to gain something valuable

through the increase of sin? When tempted, remind yourself that everything you possess holds no value unless your sins are pardoned. Therefore, the increase of sin can never bring any true gain. If people truly understood this, they could easily counter the Devil's temptations through this reasoning.

The Comfort of Pardon in Times of Affliction

[4] Whenever sin is forgiven, an accompanying benefit emerges—any misfortune that befalls a person becomes much easier to endure. For someone who has received forgiveness, bearing affliction is a straightforward task. This is indeed a profound blessing. Alternatively, one may view it in this way: someone in such a state can either rest assured that afflictions will be alleviated or, if not entirely removed, made much easier to endure. Pardon rescues us from numerous afflictions that might otherwise have plagued us in this world. While it is true that God allows afflictions to affect His people even after their sins are pardoned, they are often unaware that their forgiveness has saved them from far greater miseries they could have faced. For instance, your current tribulations might be more significant than before, yet these might have been multiplied manifold had your sins remained unforgiven. Consider Isaiah 40:2, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." The completion of iniquity through pardon signifies the end of warfare. If afflictions are not entirely removed, they are at the very least made far more bearable. This is due to two primary reasons.

First, the magnitude of the good found in the pardon of sin renders the bitterest and most grievous evils of affliction insignificant. To illustrate this, imagine a condemned criminal facing a gruesome and horrifying execution. If he has a friend within the royal court who pleads for his pardon, or he manages to approach the King to plead for clemency; suppose he is granted an audience with the King and is received graciously. The King freely forgives him, absolving him entirely of his guilt and rescuing him from all danger. Now, imagine

that as he leaves the King's presence, he loses his glove or handkerchief. Would it not be absurd for him to lament and wring his hands over the loss of a glove, even though he has received a pardon that saved his life? Would that not be irrational? Similarly, for anyone who has received pardon for their sins, it is equally irrational to complain and distress themselves as if they were utterly ruined due to affliction. When weighed against the immense good of sin's pardon, the most significant affliction in this world is as trivial as the loss of a glove when compared to a life saved by the King's pardon. Even if your afflictions exceed the loss of a glove in severity, remember that your pardon for sin is far greater than any royal pardon. Considering these realities, recognise the irrationality of being excessively troubled by afflictions when you possess the assurance of sin's pardon. There's a need for self-restraint in such moments, given the immense good granted by God through the pardon of your sin.

Moreover, for those troubled by afflictions, let me pose a simple question: Are you pardoned or unpardoned? If you are pardoned, why then are you so troubled? If you remain unpardoned, then it's imperative for you to channel your energy into seeking pardon for your sins rather than solely mourning afflictions.

Secondly, the pardon of sin contributes to the ease of bearing afflictions, for the soul can be certain that the harm of affliction has dissipated. Those who have received pardon can be certain that nothing that befalls them in this world could transpire without them willingly embracing it with all their heart if they were privy to all the details. Is this not a blessed condition for anyone living in a world teeming with adversities—to be absolutely certain that nothing shall befall them, as long as they dwell in this realm, that they would not willingly choose, accounting it a better state than any other? Truly, it is an exalted state to be in, for God to testify from the heavens that no creature on this earth possesses the power to inflict any harm upon them. Once a man or woman attains justification, it is as if God Himself is speaking from the celestial realm, declaring to that

humble soul, "Soul, you are secure; rest assured that no entity in the world can harm you" (Psalm 116:7). You may echo David's words, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (Psalm 116:7). God has pardoned your sin and rescued you from death. Now, my soul, return unto your state of rest. The term "rest" in the original text is plural—return unto your "rests." A soul that God has pardoned and delivered possesses an abundance of places of rest. To such a soul, all afflictions resemble the viper on Paul's hand—something that can be shaken off with no lasting harm. The sting of death is sin, and afflictions are the precursors of death. However, once sin is expunged, afflictions assume a different character. They no longer act as instruments of avenging justice but rather as manifestations of love and mercy. The origin and goal of afflictions are altered from what they once were. When sins are forgiven, deliverance from evil inevitably follows, as affirmed in the Lord's Prayer. As noted earlier, if afflictions stem from the fruits of sin, they indeed bear a heavy and grievous weight. In such circumstances, affliction and sin mutually exacerbate each other. This scenario can be likened to a cruel creditor who sends a merciless bailiff to a debt-ridden, bedridden individual. The bailiff confiscates everything—chairs, tables, beds, pillows—leaving the individual with no comfort, not even a pillow to rest their weary head upon. Similarly, when a sinner falls ill and grapples with affliction, the guilt of sin robs them of every comfort. If they possess any promise, it's snatched away by the guilt of sin. This guilt strips away any comfort or solace sinners might have sought during their time of affliction. But once the burden of sin is lifted, tranquility can be found. You can lay your head down in serenity, resting upon a promise that transforms affliction into something far more bearable. This transformation spares you the need to lodge complaints as you once did. Isaiah 33:24 succinctly states, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick," with the cause of this transformation rooted in the preceding verse: "For the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." The bestowal of God's great mercy of pardon alleviates the grievous complaints of affliction among the inhabitants. As Luther aptly said, "Strike, Lord, strike, for I am

absolved from my sin." Once God absolves you—or any individual—from their sin, no affliction possesses the power to disturb them. As Job 34:29 asks, "When he gives quietness, who can give trouble?" And when God conceals His face, who then can behold Him? When God grants tranquility—such as in the forgiveness of sin—who can cause disturbance? No matter how many rumours of war, bloodshed, and misery flood the world, and even if it seems like the heavens and earth are colliding, when God imparts tranquility to the heart through the assurance of sin's forgiveness, who can bring trouble? The world is powerless to take away the peace that comes with the pardon of sin. Therefore, blessed is the person whose sins are pardoned.

Healing Through Forgiveness

5. When God pardons sin, He simultaneously heals and sanctifies the soul through the immediate manifestations of the Spirit. This is indeed a great blessing. Who, understanding the wickedness of sin, would not perceive this as an immense blessing—not only to be liberated from the guilt of sin, but also from the defilement of sin? Sanctification, the freedom from the dominance and enslavement to sin, is an outcome of the fruit of forgiven sin. This truth is substantiated by various Scriptural passages. I won't address all of them, but rather some that illustrate the consequence or immediate results that flow from forgiveness.

Jeremiah 31:33-34, for instance, declares God's promise to implant His law within our innermost beings. The basis of this promise is laid out in verse 34: "I will forgive their iniquities and remember their sins no more." The inscribing of God's law upon our inner parts, the liberation from the tyranny of sin, and the sanctification of our hearts are all the fruits of God forgiving our iniquities.

In Romans 6:14, it is stated that sin shall not have dominion over us. Why? Because we are not under the law, but under grace. The grace

of the Gospel, epitomized by forgiveness of sin, renders us immune to the dominion of sin. To put it differently, as the Apostle implies, while you may strive to resist and combat sin with all your might, as long as you remain under the law, sin will inevitably reign over you. It's only by embracing the grace of the Gospel that sin's dominion is abolished. Colossians 2:13, in its final verses, reinforces this by saying, "And you hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Thus, revitalization and sanctification are outcomes of the forgiveness of all trespasses.

1 Corinthians 15:56-57 also sheds light on this truth: "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God that giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The power of sin lies in the law, with God's justice in the law allowing sin to gain a foothold. However, God, through Christ and the grace of the Gospel, liberates us from the grip of sin.

Some of you may have grappled with the weight and authority of sin, attempting to conquer it through resolution and striving, yet achieving no mastery over your sins. I recall someone writing to Luther, recounting that they had vowed and covenanted against their sin, but their sin persisted until they grasped the grace of the Gospel. Perhaps you've taken a similar route, only to be defeated by your sin due to your failure to adopt this approach. Try the exercise of faith in justification; renew your faith in God for the forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ. This path is the key. Even though you may pray, resolve, and fast as diligently as before, make sure to primarily renew your faith in justification. By seizing the infinite riches of Christ's grace in the Gospel, focusing on pardon and the empowerment it provides against your afflictions, more healing will flow into your soul than through any other means. Once you connect with Christ, the streams of your sins that previously flowed ceaselessly will begin to dry up. Even though your efforts to stem them had been in vain, this renewed focus on God's forgiveness will create a difference between God's forgiveness and human forgiveness. A king may pardon, but he cannot heal. When God

forgives, He also heals and eradicates the evil disposition that previously weakened you. When Christ arrives, He arrives with healing in His wings. Thus, blessed indeed is the person whose sins are forgiven, for it results in deliverance from the grip of sin and the restoration of the soul.

Comfort in the Face of Death Following Pardoning Mercy

6. Blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven, as such an individual can confront death and judgment with a heart at ease. When death approaches a natural person, it serves as God's messenger, arresting the soul on His behalf. However, where sin is forgiven, death transforms into a conduit that leads to eternal rest. Hebrews 2:14-15 emphasises that Christ's purpose in His death was to secure pardon for sin and, through His death, nullify the power of the devil and liberate those who, due to the fear of death, had been enslaved throughout their lives. The fear of death can only be eradicated by the forgiveness of sin. This then allows a person to face the day of Judgment with assurance.

The day of Judgment serves a significant purpose—to declare God's boundless mercy in forgiving sin (Acts 3:19). "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." As soon as a person believes, their sins are blotted out. The times of refreshing will reveal this truth more vividly to themselves and to the world, potentially prior to the imminent great and formidable day. This is a point that some interpreters consider, and I cannot dispute it. It is possible that there will be a time of renewal in this world before the momentous and terrible day arrives. During this time, Christ will make it apparent that the sins of elect believers have been blotted out in a way that surpasses current understanding. Regardless, it will certainly be fully apparent on that day. A day that terrifies the ungodly will offer refreshment to the saints. Why? Because they will discover that their sins are blotted out, rendering that day refreshing. Despite the heavens ablaze and contracting like a scroll, and

notwithstanding the fearful cries of the ungodly, that day will refresh the saints because their sins have been erased. Therefore, indeed blessed is the person whose sins are forgiven, for they will experience that day as a source of refreshing. Woe, however, be to the soul that lacks pardon for even a single sin. If but one sin remains unblotted, eternal woe will be their fate. Those who find their sins pardoned will find that day to be an unparalleled source of refreshing. In conclusion, the person whose iniquities are forgiven is truly blessed.

Freedom from Worldly Reproach

7. When God forgives sin, one need not be troubled by the criticisms and reproaches of the world. The people of the world often heap reproaches upon the saints, accusing them of hypocrisy, falsehood, and pride. Yet, for the soul that finds itself acquitted by the Lord, there's no need to be concerned about the condemnations and censures thrown at them by worldly individuals. Romans 8:33 speaks of the tremendous grace of God in justification. The verse seems to issue a challenge to the entire world: "Who can lay anything to the charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifies." Many might levy charges against them, but the ultimate authority rests with God's justification. To illustrate, a person would not care much if a prince pardoned them, even if some insignificant courtier spoke ill of them. As long as the pardon comes from the king, it holds the most weight. Bernard once made an astute observation regarding David's reaction when Shimei insulted him. Bernard noted that David wasn't disturbed by the insults because he had already experienced God's grace towards him. The awareness of God's grace in pardoning him rendered Shimei's railings inconsequential. Similarly, in Isaiah 50:7, Christ Himself did not let the abuse and spitting affect Him. In verse 7, He stated, "For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded for all this." This firm resolve was underpinned by the knowledge that God, who justifies Him, is close at hand. In verse 8, Christ challenges any adversary to come forward. His stance

was, "He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me?" Even though Christ Himself had no personal sin to be pardoned, He bore the sins of all the Elect and suffered death on their behalf. Notably, Christ is justified just as a believer is. A believer's justification hinges on Christ's own justification. Christ's initial justification serves as a common representative, followed by individual justification through faith. While God justifies us in Christ as a collective entity, faith brings about personal justification. Christ's justification precedes all, becoming the foundation of His challenge against adversaries. With God's acquittal in mind, Christ declares that He's near, ready to counter any opposition. Acquiring the pardon of sin is indeed a blessed achievement. It grants immunity against the world's reproaches. One can confidently challenge anyone in the world, just as Paul asserted in 1 Corinthians 4:3: "I pass not for man's judgment, he that judgeth me is the Lord." While the world may exert its judgment, Paul dismisses it because the supreme judgment rests with the Lord.

The Bedrock of Eternal Life - Pardoning Mercy

8. Fortunate is the person whose iniquities are forgiven. This becomes the cornerstone of eternal life. Whoever receives this mercy obtains an unwavering pledge of eternal life. Romans 8:30 states, "Whom he predestinated, them he called: and whom he called, them he justified: and whom he justified, them he glorified." If you are justified and your sins are pardoned, you will undoubtedly be glorified. A prince might pardon someone, but they can't promise them eternal life, even if they grant them their natural life. In contrast, when God forgives, He assures that the forgiven soul will share eternal glory with Him. Thus, indeed blessed is the one whose sins are forgiven, for in this lies a promise of eternal life.

The Bedrock of True Comfort

9. Fortunate is the person whose sins are pardoned, for the forgiveness of sin forms the very foundation of all genuine comfort. "Be of good comfort, your sins are forgiven." If Christ speaks this word to a soul, even the most despondent, it's sufficient to lift that soul from the depths of despair. "Be of good comfort, oh soul, your sins are forgiven you." In Isaiah 40:2, we read, "Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." God offers comfort when sins are pardoned; this serves as the cornerstone of all authentic comfort. If you build your comfort on any other foundation, it's inevitable that the structure will waver and crumble if this foundation is not in place. The yearning for comfort is intrinsic to human souls, as innate as fire's inclination to burn. Everyone seeks comfort, and you too are on the lookout for solace. To ensure your comfort stands strong, focus on establishing a solid foundation. Many base their comfort on their sins or material entities. However, you must root it in the pardon of your sins, in the free grace of God that justifies your soul. This foundation will be steadfast; rest it there, and you shall find comfort in this world and for eternity. This concludes our discussion of the significance that the forgiveness of sin holds. It's a profound mercy, acting as both a foundation and a gateway to numerous other mercies. Truly blessed is the individual who finds their iniquities forgiven, as this grand mercy paves the way for many others to follow.

CHAPTER V:

The Journey of Pardoning Mercy Through Challenges

The Fortunate Soul

Blessed is the individual whose sins are forgiven, for truly, this mercy embarks on a journey through numerous challenges before reaching the soul. A mercy that traverses many difficulties is undeniably strong and significant. This strength of grace that overcomes multiple obstacles renders the person blessed, as the grace navigating these challenges is truly remarkable. Just as it indicates the immense power of sin when it surmounts numerous obstacles to manifest, a soul fixated on sin will triumph over all impediments to indulge in it. In a similar vein, when God extends the mercy of forgiveness to a soul, this divine mercy must surmount countless hurdles before reaching its intended recipient. This resilience demonstrates the extraordinary potency of the mercy, consequently bestowing blessedness upon the one who receives it.

A Great and Difficult Task

When God brought forth the creation of the world, it occurred through a mere spoken word: "Let there be light," and there was light. Yet, when God undertakes the task of pardoning a sinner, the heavens and the earth seem to shift. The act of pardoning a sinner necessitates a more profound intervention from God than the act of world creation. Undoubtedly, this undertaking is more substantial and fraught with more challenges.

The First Challenge: Wrongs Committed

Firstly, every transgression committed against God stands between you and pardon. No person has ever wronged another as profoundly as humanity has wronged God. Although we have discussed the nature of sin and its profound contrariness to God's infinite holiness, mercy transcends even this challenge. It ascends above the daunting task of satisfying the demands of God's infinite justice. Yet, even in the face of these monumental difficulties, mercy prevails and stands firm.

The Fortunate Soul

Blessed is the individual whose sins are forgiven, for indeed, this mercy undertakes a remarkable journey through countless obstacles before reaching the soul. A mercy that navigates numerous difficulties emerges as strong and significant. This strength of grace that surmounts multiple hurdles bestows blessedness upon the person, as the grace's ability to traverse these challenges is truly awe-inspiring. Just as the great power of sin is evidenced when it overcomes various obstacles to manifest, a soul deeply entangled in sin will break through all barriers to engage in it. Similarly, when God extends the mercy of forgiveness to a soul, this divine mercy must surmount countless obstacles before reaching its intended recipient. The tenacity displayed here underscores the exceptional potency of the mercy, ultimately rendering the individual blessed.

A Great and Difficult Task

When God initiated the creation of the world, it transpired through a mere spoken word: "Let there be light," and light appeared. Yet, when God undertakes the task of pardoning a sinner, it appears as though the heavens and the earth shift. Pardoning a sinner demands a more profound divine intervention than the creation of the world. Undoubtedly, this endeavor is more substantial and fraught with greater challenges.

The First Challenge: Wrongs Committed

Firstly, before you can be pardoned, a monumental work must be accomplished: God must become incarnate, remaining the same God he was before. You cry out for the pardon of sin, as your predicament is dire. However, even if God's merciful compassion were to yearn intensely towards pardoning your sin, this great work must precede it: God must become human, yet retain his unchanged divinity. This formidable undertaking is more intricate than the creation of the world, and yet mercy triumphs over this challenge.

The Second Challenge: Death and Curse

An insurmountable barrier stands between sin and pardon: when God becomes human, he must die and be subjected to the curse. Moreover, it is God the Father who must undertake this task. He must take his own beloved Son and wound him for your sake, subjecting him to death. The Father himself must pour out his wrath upon his own Son before your sins can be pardoned. This act, where the Father takes his own Son—his delight—and inflicts a fatal wound, represents an immense undertaking. Yet, this must be accomplished before you can receive pardon.

The Third Challenge: Transformation of the Heart

Another significant impediment lies in the path: before sin can be pardoned, the blind, dead, wicked, carnal, foolish heart of man must be raised up to perform the most remarkable act a creature can undertake—the act of belief. Yet, God declares that to facilitate the pardon of your sin, he will deploy his infinite power to achieve this transformation. He will elevate the blind, dead, foolish, carnal, and wicked heart of man, which is steeped in every form of wickedness, to undertake the greatest act imaginable: believing. God's immense power is harnessed to achieve this transformation. All these challenges lie in the path, and yet mercy surges through each one to effect the pardon of sin. Undoubtedly, the soul that receives pardon must be considered blessed. God sets his heart upon that individual to such a degree that he is willing to traverse all these formidable challenges that obstruct the way. Upon reflecting on this, three potent meditations can be drawn, which will resonate deeply within our souls.

First Meditation: Esteeming the Mercy

It is undoubtedly a great disrespect to trivialize such a profound mercy as the pardon of sin—a mercy that overcomes numerous difficulties to manifest.

Second Meditation: Embracing Difficulties in Seeking Pardon

If God's mercy perseveres through numerous difficulties to pardon your sin, you should be willing to endure challenges when seeking that pardon. When you encounter hardships in this pursuit—be it waiting for a prolonged period or grappling with temptations—remember the immense obstacles that God's mercy has overcome to grant you pardon. Embrace these difficulties willingly.

Third Meditation: Willingness to Serve Despite Challenges

Considering the difficulties God's mercy overcomes to pardon sin, you should be prepared to undertake any service, no matter how challenging it may seem. Even if God assigns you a demanding task with multiple hurdles, do not complain as if God is a harsh master. Remember that you are never assigned a task as arduous as the work of God in pardoning your sin. The difficulties you encounter in seeking pardon are far greater than any other service God might require of you. As you approach God and seek his mercies, numerous challenges may arise in your path. However, remember that God himself traversed through countless difficulties to reach you. Therefore, do not grumble about the challenges you face, and know that the soul blessed with pardon should never complain.

CHAPTER VI:

Pardoning Mercy and the Well of God's Everlasting Love

Mercy from Eternal Love

When God bestows the gift of pardon upon sin, it emerges as a mercy flowing from the wellspring of God's everlasting love. Other forms of mercy do not possess this characteristic. If this aspect is absent, you cannot consider them as signs of God's eternal love. Even if God grants you bodily health, successful sea voyages, and worldly prosperity, you cannot deduce from these that God holds eternal love for your soul. However, when God extends his pardon to your sins, it serves as irrefutable evidence that God's affection has been upon you from eternity. Imagine a chain lowered from heaven, and if you were able to grasp just a single link, it would inexorably draw you towards its source, uniting both ends. In Romans 8:30, there is a chain composed of numerous links lowered down. If you can seize hold of the link of justification, you can surely lay claim to predestination, for they are intrinsically linked. By virtue of your justification, you can be assured of your predestined status—an individual whom God has chosen to shower his goodness upon from the very dawn of time. This recognition holds great significance for someone traversing this earthly existence. Knowing that God has harboured affection for you since eternity to shower you with goodness is truly a splendid realisation. Restlessness prevails within until this understanding is embraced. If your heart is aligned, you cannot be satisfied by the meagre provisions granted to reprobates. Your contentment requires richer sustenance than the world can offer. If your heart is true, you will not find tranquillity until you gain insight into God's ancient intentions towards you. Seeking to understand God's thoughts concerning your predestination is neither mere finickiness nor idle curiosity. In the era of the Gospel, God has opened his heart, revealing his timeless thoughts towards his people. This revelation enhances the blessedness of a pardoned sinner. This blessing surpasses anything a monarch can grant a wrongdoer. A royal pardon might be given, yet the monarch's heart might remain as averse as ever. However, when God pardons, it is not a fleeting gesture; it is a divine act that God has cherished from eternity, a process upon which the infinite wisdom of God has tirelessly laboured. If a wrongdoer seeks a pardon from a monarch and hears, "I have been contemplating your pardon since I first learned of your

transgression," it would indeed bring some comfort. Yet, this pales in comparison to the comfort God provides to the pardoned soul. God's pardon is not a momentary action; it is an act conceived in God's eternal purpose and enacted by the profound wisdom of God. When God comes to a soul, he does not merely say, "I pardon you." Rather, he assures the soul, "Know, O soul, that my wisdom and eternal counsels have orchestrated this act of pardon for your benefit and my glory since the dawn of eternity. This is a manifestation of my eternal plans—a gift from my eternal purposes." Hence, the blessedness of the individual whose iniquities are forgiven lies in the fact that such eternal purposes have been woven into God's divine counsel to bring about this pardon.

CHAPTER VII:

Pardoning Mercy and the Triune God's Engagement

The Three Persons in Unity

Blessed is the person whose sins are forgiven. For this mercy captivates the heart of God above all else. Moreover, all three Persons of the Trinity are profoundly invested in this work. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are harmoniously engaged in it. Let's delve into this:

God the Father

In Isaiah 43:25, God the Father claims this as his own glory: "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins." This act belongs exclusively to God's sovereignty. It's his prerogative, and he takes pride in it, as seen in Exodus 33:18. When Moses sought to witness God's glory, God promised to reveal his goodness in its entirety. In Exodus 34:6, God proclaimed his attributes: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands..." And the pinnacle of these attributes, closely related to our subject, is the act of forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. To illustrate the extraordinary importance God placed on this work, consider this: The very thought of accomplishing it through the death of his Son brought God immense pleasure and delight in the Son's sacrifice. This signals a deep commitment; for, in order to achieve it, God was willing to let go of his Son. The death of the Son of God was an unprecedented event, and if there was any delight associated with it, the rationale behind it must have been significant enough to counteract the horror of the Son's death. Isaiah 53:10 provides insight into this phenomenon: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." The pleasure of the

Lord prospered through this event. Scripture asserts that God does not take pleasure in the death of sinners. However, when it came to the death of his Son, God derived satisfaction from it. It pleased God to see his Son suffer the consequences of wrath—sweating drops of water and blood under the curse of the Law. What could possibly sweeten such a horrific occurrence? The answer lies in the fact that, through Christ's sacrifice, sinners could be redeemed, justified, and pardoned. This very aspect turned the death of God's Son into a source of delight for God the Father. Therefore, God's heart was deeply invested in this work.

God the Son

What motivated Christ to leave the Father's presence, willingly take on human nature, suffer, and become a man acquainted with sorrows? Christ even exhibited a certain eagerness in enduring God's wrath. He expressed, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15). This Passover was a preparation for his sufferings—the culmination of God's wrath manifested in various forms due to humanity's sins. When Christ established the Lord's Supper and offered his blood for the remission of sins, the text records that he gave thanks. What was the cause for his gratitude? It was the essence of this very sacrament—forgiveness of sins through his death. Christ's desire to partake in this event led the supper to be referred to as the Eucharist, derived from the Greek word signifying thanksgiving. As Christ was to face the culmination of God's wrath due to sin, he blessed and thanked God the Father. This indicates a significant factor sweetening his sufferings. He thanked God despite the sacrifice entailed, demonstrating that a substantial element must have been present to make his own death delightful to him. Isaiah 53:10 again provides insight: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." His soul was an offering for sin. Christ endured everything for this purpose. What was Christ's soul journeying for? Through his knowledge, "My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11). Essentially, Christ's soul travelled towards

justifying souls, procuring the pardon of sins for the elect, and justifying their beings. Christ considered this the crux of his soul's mission, the pivotal aim of all his deeds and sufferings. He pursued this purpose with all his soul's travel and labour, wishing to see souls pardoned and justified. He petitioned the Father to grant him this satisfaction, as if to say, "Let me witness the fruition of my labour, the justification of souls, and I will be content." Christ regarded justifying souls as a worthy recompense for his entire labour and suffering. If Christ views the pardon of our sins as sufficient satisfaction, should we not likewise find satisfaction in Christ? If Christ can say that the pardon of our sins is enough to satisfy him, can we not also say, "Let me have Christ, and I shall be satisfied"? Indeed, Christ is sufficient to satisfy us, as the forgiveness of our sins suffices to satisfy him.

The Involvement of the Holy Spirit

As much as the hearts of God and Christ are deeply immersed in this enterprise, the Holy Spirit's heart is equally vested in it. The Holy Spirit's grand task in this world, the mission for which he was sent, revolves around enlightening the souls of the needy about the righteousness found in Christ for justification. In John 16:8-10, Jesus promises the Comforter, who will first convict the world of sin, then of righteousness. What is this righteousness? It entails that, when the Spirit arrives, he clarifies and convinces believers that the righteousness required for standing righteous before God is solely the righteousness of Christ. This is a formidable undertaking of the Holy Spirit, a feat that wouldn't have been accomplished had he not come. It remains a profound mystery that we can attain righteousness through another's righteousness, one beyond the comprehension of both humans and angels. To be declared righteous in Christ baffles all, yet only a few, those whom God intends to save eternally, are illuminated by the Spirit's presence from the Father and the Son. The Spirit's mission is to illuminate this critical truth, that the righteousness required for us to stand justified before God is rooted in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is not

only a witness but also a sealer of this truth, as stated in Hebrews 10:15. This truth of sin's forgiveness is a cornerstone of the Holy Spirit's witness. His role is to seal this reality in your soul, confirming that your sins are forgiven. This pivotal task is one of the reasons why the Holy Spirit bears the title of Comforter. Just as he convicts of sin, he also witnesses and seals the assurance of sin's forgiveness. This underscores the excellence of the mercy of forgiveness and the grandeur of its requirement of such a lofty Witness. Indeed, the soul remains unsatisfied until it receives this special seal from the Holy Spirit. While signs of God's love may offer probable arguments, and the Holy Spirit may manifest in these signs, there remains the immediate witness of the Holy Spirit. Restricting his role to signs alone surpasses any warrant. Additionally, I emphasize that all signs of God's favour will not appease the soul until the Holy Spirit performs the distinct work of sealing and witnessing God's favour. In 1 John 3, various signs of God's favour are presented in verses 9 and 19, culminating in verse 24: "Hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us." Ultimately, it's the Holy Spirit who convinces and satisfies the soul of God's love. Many desire the pardon of their sins and seek signs to affirm it. While I may elaborate on these signs later, know that all the signs in the world cannot fully calm the heart. They may temporarily quell doubts, but true pacification can only be achieved by God through the Holy Spirit's witness. Considering the vast chasm created by sin between the soul and God, once the soul comprehends this reality, reassuring the soul of God's reconciliation requires an extraordinary work. Nothing but the Holy Spirit can accomplish this to the soul's satisfaction. Perhaps this analogy illustrates the situation: Imagine a prisoner confined and bound for a grievous offence against the ruler. A friend brings tidings of potential pardon, but the prisoner remains sceptical. Another acquaintance relays news of royal pardons being issued, offering some relief. Yet, the prisoner's doubts persist. Then, the King's favourite—the confidant who shares the King's secrets and intimately knows his mind—visits the prisoner. This confidant informs the prisoner that he comes on behalf of the King, delivering a pardon directly from him. Displaying the pardon, the confidant

states, "Take this; it comes from the King." The prisoner's spirit revives; such a special envoy instils genuine hope. In a similar manner, all signs can be compared to acquaintances at the prison grate who speak of another's happiness upon receiving a pardon. However, the soul's blindness and apprehensions, due to the weight of sin, make it exceedingly challenging to convince it of pardon. But, for the solace of those God intends to favour, he sends the Holy Spirit, nestled in his very bosom and privy to his deepest secrets. The Holy Spirit is dispatched to convey God's intentions and say to the soul, "Peace be with you; your sins are forgiven." This declaration satisfies the soul profoundly.

Addressing Doubts and Discerning the Spirit's Testimony

Now, you might raise an objection at this point: How can I discern whether it's truly the Spirit of God bearing witness or just my own imaginings or the deceptions of Satan?

I respond that, just as we recognise the sun by its own light, similarly, we can identify the Spirit by its own testimony. Although there might be occasional uncertainties, the Spirit's affirmation will resurface. This witnessing work of the Spirit involves a discreet and sweet interaction between God and the soul, overpowering all doubts and fears. While I don't claim that everyone experiences this to the same extent, I do assert that when this profound certainty emerges, even if doubts and numerous questions clouded the soul before due to fear of deception (for indeed, many are deceived), the Spirit then prevails over all doubts and fears. It attests to the soul its own work. Don't discard the notion of the Spirit's witness merely because some are misled by fancies. The Scripture indeed speaks extensively about the witness of the Spirit in relation to the Gospel. Admittedly, those who evaluate Gospel mysteries solely through human reason, understanding only what reason comprehends, and those who are less acquainted with the intimate dialogues between God and a believing soul, might disregard this witness of the Spirit. However, it's essential to acknowledge that no soul obtains assurance of its

journey to Heaven through any but the most supernatural and mysterious process. If the sole means of providing evidence to the soul were through signs, it would be no higher than using reason alone. Yet, consider this: just as great is the mystery of godliness in the manifestation of God in flesh, equally great is the mystery of godliness in God being justified in the Spirit. The latter—God being justified in the Spirit—is a profound mystery. Just as Christ's incarnation remains a mystery, so does a believer's justification, akin to Christ's incarnation. Likewise, the witness of justification also encapsulates a profound mystery. Thus, I urge you to seek a higher perspective beyond signs that reason may grasp, and implore God to reveal to you the witness of the Spirit of God, testifying that your sins are forgiven. Hence, blessed indeed is the individual whose iniquities are pardoned, given the profound involvement of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in this work.

CHAPTER VIII:

The Perfection of Pardoning Mercy

Blessed is the person whose sins are forgiven, for this mercy is utterly perfect. When God pardons any sinner, that individual stands before God in terms of justification just as perfectly as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or any of the Prophets or righteous individuals who ever lived in this world. You, whether man or woman, young or old, servant or free, if God comes to you and pardons any of your transgressions, you stand justified just as completely as Abraham, Paul, Peter, or any of the Apostles and Prophets. While you might fall short of them in sanctification, in terms of justification, you are just as perfect as they were. Justification is an act that is fully and instantly accomplished,

making it a perfect work. This fact brings immeasurable consolation to the saints of God, for the paramount matter of justification between God and them is perfected.

Consider Psalm 51:7, where David implores God to cleanse him with hyssop, indicating his desire to be purified through justification by having the guilt of sin removed from his conscience by a renewed act of pardon. Consequently, he proclaims that he shall be whiter than snow. Though sanctified believers may not surpass others in sanctification, it's in justification that they are whiter than snow. Ephesians 5:27 states that Christ presents his Church without blemish, and in the context of justification, every believing soul stands spotless before the Lord. Numbers 23:21 reads, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob," implying that while God acknowledges the presence of iniquity, He does not hold them accountable for it or impute it to them. Through justification, all of that is eradicated.

A pertinent passage to consider is found in the Song of Solomon 4:7: "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." Though there are spots when it comes to sanctification, the same cannot be said in regard to justification. In terms of justification, it can be affirmed that there are no spots at all. Christ's words echo, "Thou art all fair, my love." Christ himself declares, "Thou art all fair, my love." While the believer may perceive their own duties and efforts as blemished and besmirched, Christ perceives them without a spot. The Father looks upon them through the lens of Christ without a spot and asserts, "Thou art all fair, there is no spot in thee." It's possible that you might believe that if God revealed the true state of your heart to your Christian friends and acquaintances, you'd appear so tainted that they'd shun your company and sever ties with you. However, despite these doubts, Christ affirms, "Thou art all fair, there is no spot at all in thee." Justification doesn't vary in degrees, not even in Heaven. You're no more justified there than you are here. Your justification is as perfect now as it will ever be, and you're accepted by Christ just as you are. While sanctification is renewed daily due to God's work within us, leading to our gradual growth, justification is a

work of God external to us and is accomplished all at once. Hence, this is what renders a pardoned soul blessed—because the nature of pardon is perfection. Consequently, I will briefly touch upon:

1. **Abundant Comfort for a Pardoned Soul:** Even if you're weak in sanctification and troubled by how you fall short of the faith of Abraham, the meekness of Moses, the love of David, the zeal of Paul, the wisdom of Solomon, and the patience of Job, remember that you are on par with them in terms of justification. This fact can bring immense comfort amidst the weaknesses of your sanctification.
2. **A Powerful Incentive for Spiritual Pursuit:** Consider the fact that God has made you equal to them in justification. How should this inspire you to strive to resemble them in sanctification? Reflect on this: Has God's rich and glorious mercy made you equal in justification to the greatest saints? How much more should you labour to mirror their qualities in sanctification? Allow this argument to have a potent effect on your heart, motivating you to emulate the meekness of Moses, the love of David, the zeal of Paul, and the patience of Job, as you stand on equal footing with them in terms of justification.

CHAPTER IX:

The Unchanging Nature of Pardoning Mercy

Blessed are those whose iniquities have been forgiven, for this mercy is unchangeable. Once God pardons sin, He never takes it back. It's true that a pardoned soul might later commit many transgressions that might displease God, yet no matter how much one might displease God, He will never revoke the mercy of pardon

for all eternity. Once you are pardoned, you are forever pardoned. God's way of pardoning differs from human ways; a king might pardon a criminal with the condition of good behaviour afterward. While it's true that a believer will be more cautious not to offend after being pardoned, God's pardon is not contingent upon one's good behaviour but on His free grace, and thus, it remains unaltered. God does not tell a struggling soul, "I will pardon you, but only if you behave well, and if you falter in any way, I will withdraw my pardon."

Consider the analogy of a royal pardon. If a person is pardoned for life, and later commits a transgression, even a minor breach of peace that another person could easily make amends for, it might cost them their life due to the terms of the pardon. In contrast, a regular person committing a similar act might only face a charge of assault and battery. A person with a life pardon could have their pardon revoked and lose their life for such an act. While it might be concerning to some that this understanding could be misused, God's grace must still be proclaimed to believers. It is God's will that His grace be fully known to them, for they should comprehend that His Pardoning Mercy is irrevocable. Therefore, a believer should not question their justification with every failing in their sanctification. This would dishonour the free and abundant grace of God. While it is natural for the conscience to wrestle with such thoughts, especially when new sins are committed, if you have ever been assured of the pardon of your sins, know that this mercy will never be revoked. The foundation of God stands steadfast, and this mercy is a foundational one that endures.

Consider the case in Song of Solomon 4:7 where Christ states, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." However, in Song of Solomon 5:2, you'll find her in a state of drowsy security and sinfulness, a condition in which she might be easily influenced, yet even in this state, her heart was awake. "I sleep, but my heart waketh," she confesses. A principle of grace was still alive within her. Notably, even in this condition, Christ addresses her as "my Sister, my Love, my Dove, my undefiled," showcasing God's grace in

pardoning sin without retraction. To elucidate the unchanging nature of God's mercy in pardoning and justifying grace, I shall offer some scriptural references, which, when explored, will reveal the immense scope of this mercy and provide abundant solace and encouragement to every believing soul.

Blessed are those whose iniquities have been forgiven, for this mercy is unalterable. The Lord takes delight in the phrase and emphasizes it in Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." To explain the term "blotting out," we can liken it to the practice of tradesmen who maintain account books where they record debts owed to them. When these debts are paid, the debt entry is crossed or blotted out. Similarly, if you owe a debt and upon payment see the entry crossed out, you can be assured it's settled.

Understand that all sinners owe a debt to the Lord, a debt of punishment for failing to pay the debt of obedience. By sinning, many people accrue debts with God daily. While God may not immediately call for these debts, they are recorded in Heaven. Every sin is inscribed in God's Debt-book, just as your owed debts are noted by creditors. Just as debts must be repaid to creditors, your debts to God must also be satisfied. This is where Justification comes in. When Jesus Christ sees a soul indebted to Him, He presents a payment to God the Father to settle the debt. God ensures the debt is blotted out. When God offers pardoning mercy, He reveals the debt Book to a believer, showing that all debts are erased, guaranteeing they won't be called for again. This mercy is unchangeable; once the debt is paid, it's never reinstated. This is the first scriptural expression, one of immense blessing.

Imagine being in debt, constantly at risk of being arrested. The sight of someone willing to pay off the entire debt and blot it out would bring immense happiness. Similarly, God pardons sinners and wipes the slate clean.

Secondly, while these sins may be blotted out, God still sees them, even though He won't bring them up again. The scripture assures us that God will cast our sins behind His back, as in Isaiah 38:17, "You have cast all my sins behind your back." Just as when something is placed behind your back, you avoid looking at it, God does the same with our sins.

Thirdly, Psalm 103:10 expresses that God removes our transgressions as far as the East is from the West, signifying the utmost distance. These two points never meet.

Fourthly, though sins are removed as far as East is from West, God's eyes can perceive much. Micah 7:19 enhances this idea by saying that God casts our sins into the depths of the sea, a place beyond sight. Even if doubts persist, rest assured that God doesn't merely remove sins, but He ensures they are completely forgotten and will never be called for again. This irrevocable aspect of God's pardoning mercy offers boundless comfort and encouragement to all who believe.

Fifthly, let's explore another expression to further reassure you. God declares, "He will remember them no more." You might argue that it's impossible for God not to remember, but when God pardons, it becomes as unchangeable as if He never recalled them. There are several notable scriptures that emphasize this. Isaiah 43:25 - "I will blot out your transgressions...and will not remember your sins." You may think, "Perhaps not now, but surely later." Consider Jeremiah 31:34, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Neither now nor in the future will God remember their sin.

Sixthly, their forgiveness is such that their sins will never be brought up again. This is affirmed in Ezekiel 33:16, addressing every godly person who turns to God: "None of his sins that he has committed shall be mentioned unto him." Here, a caution is needed not to taunt God's people for their past sins. While you might have known them in their unenlightened days and accuse them of their past mistakes, remember that God has pardoned their sins. Be cautious not to

throw their past sins in their face, saying, "You are so righteous now, but I know who you were before." Shouldn't we respect God's declaration that He won't remember their sins anymore? If God Himself refrains from recalling their sins, how much more should we? This assurance is comforting to every believer. God will not remember their sins to reproach them. Remember, He wants them to be mindful of their past sins to foster humility and genuine repentance, but He will not recall them to shame them. Beza, reflecting on his own life, once wrote of composing sinful poems in his youth, which his enemies later used against him. He noted that those who did this were envious of the grace God bestowed on him. What a comfort and privilege it is for you, a believer. Even if you were once wicked and abominable, know this: in the presence of God, I tell you today that He will never remember your sins again. This should encourage men and women to believe and turn away from their wicked ways. If you fear that your sins will be charged against you either in this life or on Judgment Day, be at ease. Perhaps many of you are acutely aware of significant sins you've committed, wishing fervently to be rid of them. Some may argue that certain sins are so grave they cannot be forgiven. They may mourn and lament, wondering if there's any benefit. The weight of past sins, especially from youth, may oppress them, and they might feel God and their conscience reproaching them. How can they lead a fulfilled life when both God and their own conscience condemn them? Here's the encouragement: take heart and be emboldened. Believe the good news that if God forgives your sins, He will never mention them again. He will strongly disapprove of anyone who brings up your forgiven sins to reproach you.

Seventhly, to highlight the richness of this mercy, consider this: when God forgives sin, it vanishes to the point where it cannot be traced. In Jeremiah 50:20, it's stated, "In those days... the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." When God pardons, He reserves the right to do away with them, and once forgiven, they are eradicated to the extent that they cannot be discovered.

Moreover, the righteousness bestowed upon Believers through Christ is termed an everlasting righteousness, thereby enduring eternally and impervious to future removal. Daniel 9:24 proclaims, "Seventy weeks are determined... to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." The righteousness imputed to your soul by Christ in the forgiveness of your sin is everlasting, enduring forever.

Additionally, Hebrews 10:14 asserts, "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." This refers to the justified believers. Justification, often paralleled with sanctification, designates those set apart to partake in the great blessings of the new Covenant, sharing in Christ's blood for justification. Through His single sacrifice, Christ has eternally perfected those who are sanctified. Therefore, since you are perfected in justification, this mercy cannot be rescinded.

Once more, this mercy is aptly illustrated by the symbolic ritual of the Scape-Goat described in Leviticus 16:20. Upon its head, all the sins of the people, their transgressions, and iniquities were placed. It was then sent into the wilderness, the Land of Forgetfulness, amidst wild creatures, never to be revisited. Similarly, the sins of all Believers were transferred to Christ, transported into a Land of Forgetfulness, and shall never be brought to account again. This concludes the aspect of the Irrevocability of Pardon of Sin, revealing the blessedness of those who have had their sins pardoned, as they will never be reinstated.

CHAPTER X:

Pardoning Mercy Denied to the Fallen Angels

Blessed is the person whose iniquities are forgiven, for this mercy is withheld from the fallen angels. When God pardons your sin, He extends to you a greater benevolence than He would to the countless millions of angels. Such a mercy has been withheld from those multitudes of angels who transgressed against God. To illustrate: imagine a destitute individual charged with treason against the king. In a similar vein, a substantial portion of the esteemed nobility of the land is implicated. Yet, when the king examines this situation, he singles out this humble man – perhaps one who had begged for sustenance – and decrees, "This impoverished soul shall be absolved. I shall overlook his transgression. Moreover, I shall elevate him to a position of high esteem in the royal court." Meanwhile, all the nobles are condemned. Now, envision this scenario: as this penniless man observes the noble peers, who might have committed only one act of treason, confined in chains, while he himself, perhaps engaged in treasonous acts for 40, 50, or 70 years, witnesses their condemnation. He knows they are sentenced to suffer excruciating torments and a torturous death. The immense significance of the king's mercy in pardoning the offences of this poor individual becomes magnified. How awestruck and astonished he must feel. "I, who share in the same offence, indeed, more heavily guilty than they, receive pardon, while the highest echelons of nobility must endure a harrowing, torturous demise for their crime. What a remarkable distinction the king's favour has made between them and me!" This parallel echoes the experience of any individual whose sins have been forgiven. God has shown you immeasurable grace. The angels were the most splendid beings ever created by God. In contrast, you are but a lowly creature in comparison to them. Although they sinned against Him only once, and you are guilty of countless transgressions, God directs His favour towards you, stating, "I shall bestow great favour upon this humble individual by pardoning their sin. I shall exalt them, even as I condemn the angels to everlasting chains of darkness." When a person comes to fully comprehend the boundless richness of God's grace, which sets such a remarkable distinction between them and the angels, they cannot help but be filled with admiration. It should profoundly affect the hearts of all

sinner, leading them to exclaim, "How can it be that God would bypass the most splendid of His creations – the angels – and turn His mercy towards me, a mere worm? He extends His compassion to me. Let me forsake all worldly excellences to fulfil my obligations to Him. If God has chosen to neglect the angels in His mercy towards me, then I must disregard all worldly allurements and serve Him wholeheartedly. Should I let base desires rule me, neglecting my devotion to Him? Far from it!" This serves as another compelling argument that those who have received forgiveness for their sins are truly blessed, as God's actions towards them are unique and not extended to the fallen angels.

CHAPTER XI:

Pardoning Mercy Granted Selectively

Furthermore, blessed is the person who has their iniquities forgiven, because this mercy is bestowed upon only a small fraction of the world. The entire world is steeped in wickedness, akin to carrion in a ditch or prisoners bound by the chains of sin's guilt. Yet, God chooses to rescue some from this pit of filthiness, those who are ensnared in a wretched dungeon. This, indeed, is an astonishing mercy. A ruler who has a multitude of wrongdoers often pardons the majority and punishes only a minority. Conversely, God frequently punishes the majority and pardons the minority.

Now, why does this pattern emerge? How is it that a ruler often pardons the most and punishes the fewest, while God seems to do the opposite, despite being more merciful than any ruler?

Answer 1: When it comes to executing many guilty individuals, [Answer 1] it can be a cumbersome and risky undertaking for a ruler,

especially when a large portion of the population has transgressed. In such cases, a ruler may find it challenging to execute a significant number. However, for God, the execution of vast numbers poses no difficulty; He can accomplish it with a single word.

Moreover, a ruler cannot afford to execute all offenders, as [Answer 2] it would lead to a shortage of subjects. In contrast, God has no need for creatures and is not dependent on us. A ruler may require subjects for governance, and if there is any way to maintain their loyalty and obedience, the ruler will refrain from destroying them.

Additionally, rulers tend to execute fewer individuals and spare more [Answer 3], as the execution of a few may serve to bring others into submission. However, when God executes wrongdoers, the act of punishing a few cannot bring about positive changes in others, particularly on the grand Day of Judgment. Indeed, in this world, God's patience allows for the execution of a few to possibly inspire change in others. But how can it be reconciled that God is a deity of boundless and glorious mercy, yet pardons only a minority and punishes the majority? After all, the entire world has been in rebellion against Him. How is it that God pardons so few and punishes so many? I intend to provide you with a cogent explanation and resolution. By demonstrating how the infinite splendour of God's mercy is revealed in this context, I hope to clarify why only a select few are pardoned. In fact, the limited number of pardons serves to illuminate God's extraordinary mercy even more profoundly.

It is entirely consistent with the boundless richness of God's mercy that many are destroyed while only a few are pardoned. This is because God intends to maintain a balance between His justice and mercy. You might wonder, "Shouldn't God be as merciful as He is just? Shouldn't the number of pardoned individuals match the number of condemned?" No, if God seeks to maintain a balance between His mercy and justice, allowing both to shine forth, then more must face damnation than salvation. How does this become

evident? Here's the explanation: The glory of God's justice in condemning two thousand is not as remarkable as the glory of His mercy in saving two. You can grasp this through an analogy from human experience: If a king were to spare only two criminals, he would magnify his mercy just as much as his justice when executing a hundred. Similarly, if God were to save only two souls, His mercy would be equally magnified as His justice is when condemning two thousand. The rationale behind this is as follows: There is an element within the creature that invokes God's justice, demanding its due. Conversely, there is nothing within the creature that necessitates His mercy. When God displays His justice, He undertakes an action that is owed to the creature. There is something intrinsic to the creature that warrants such an action from God. However, when God demonstrates mercy, there is nothing within us that can demand such an action. His mercy is purely and entirely His own doing. It emanates from His own heartfelt love and is unrelated to any claim we might make. Given that there exists something in the creature that invokes justice, but nothing at all that can demand mercy, it follows that if God shows mercy to only a few, it is as much a glorious manifestation of His mercy as it is for His justice to condemn a hundred. However, were He to save as many as He condemns, His mercy would greatly outweigh His justice in proportion. Yet, as this is not feasible, it stands to reason that only a minority are saved, and many face damnation.

Answer 2: More Damned than Saved - Revealing Mercy through Contrast

There are more individuals facing damnation than those who are saved. This serves as a means for God to showcase His mercy even more to those who have been granted salvation. By allowing so many others to perish, God accomplishes a purpose: to magnify the glory of His grace before you, the saved soul. It's comparable to the art of a painter who, while crafting an ornate coat of arms or a vibrant painting in gold and other splendid colours, starts with a black base. This enhances the brilliance of the subsequent hues. So, for your

understanding, the foundation of your mercy, pardoned soul, is laid upon the sombre backdrop of the destruction of countless ungodly sinners. God gives them what is rightfully theirs—justice. But the higher aim of God's design extends to this point: the destruction of the damned illuminates the brilliance of His glorious grace even more radiantly for those who are saved.

For the saints whose sins God has pardoned, this serves as an additional reason to extol His grace in heaven. They will have this reason to celebrate His grace more fervently: that they were chosen from the mass of sinners condemned to damnation. This ardently stirs their hearts to glorify God. He orchestrates the demise of thousands and millions, ultimately to amplify the magnificence of His grace towards them. God's intention is to form a congregation, eternally recipients of His rich grace. This illuminates the depth of His mercy all the more—allowing many to perish in order to magnify His grace towards the saved. This underscores how little value God places on the wicked. He allows their eternal perdition to elevate His grace for the saints. What a striking elevation of God's mercy it is for the saints, knowing that He permits the destruction of countless others to enhance His mercy toward them.

It's akin to a prince celebrating the birth of his child. The joyous celebration may involve the loss of thousands of animals. This demonstrates the immense value the prince places on his child. Otherwise, he wouldn't sacrifice so many creatures unless it was to magnify his affection for the infant. Similarly, God declares, "I have a select group of people whom I intend to bless for all eternity. I have placed my affections upon them. In order to reveal the enormity of my mercy towards them, I will permit multitudes to perish eternally. They will serve as a stark contrast against which my glorious work in the richness of Christ's grace, through the pardoning of their sins, will shine."

In essence, this showcases the unique nature of this mercy. It's a mercy exclusively granted to a specific group. Therefore, those who

have their sins forgiven are truly blessed. How greatly they should bless God! He has chosen them from the multitude, leaving others to follow their own carnal, foolish, and malicious ways—straying from the paths of grace. This is all in accordance with God's sovereignty in extending mercy as He pleases, for His mercy is His own prerogative.

CHAPTER XII:

The Preciousness of Pardoning Mercy

Moreover, blessed is the one whose iniquities are forgiven, for the mere possibility of it would be more prized by thousands under wrath than ten thousand worlds. Those currently damned in Hell, facing the weight of God's fearsome wrath for their sins, utterly engulfed in the abyss of misery and condemnation—how greatly they would treasure the mere possibility of having their sins pardoned! Imagine a divine messenger being dispatched to the gates of Hell, crying out, "O damned spirits! Behold a message from the Almighty. I come to deliver His word that there is a chance, conditioned by terms He will specify, for your sins to be pardoned and you to be liberated from the dreadful wrath you now endure."

How the damned spirits would erupt in singing and rejoicing! Amidst the fiery flames, they would extend their hands in jubilation to receive news of even a possibility. They wouldn't hesitate to enquire about the terms, whether they be onerous or lenient. To them, the mere existence of this possibility would suffice; each would hope it was meant for them. Considering this, if the potential of salvation would evoke such boundless joy amongst those damned, then what can be said of the reality and the glorious knowledge of it to a soul already pardoned?

If, upon hypothetical revelation of the chance for some to escape Hell and receive pardon, the damned would sing praises and testify to the blessedness of having sins forgiven and being saved, how much more should we echo this testimony? Though there is a blessed distinction between your condition and theirs, it wasn't so long ago that such a distinction didn't exist. Perhaps some of them recently sat beside you in church, hearing sermons on the wickedness of sin—sermons that now they're experiencing firsthand as they languish in the abyss, beyond any glimmer of pardon. Yet, to you gathered before the Lord today, I declare with boldness that there's hope, even for the worst of sinners. They can come, believe, and find pardon.

Now, if those damned in Hell would attach such immense value to the mere possibility of their salvation, shouldn't you esteem it even more highly than they? Reflect upon this: if those in Hell would rejoice at the hint of a chance for pardon, shouldn't your hearts be stirred beyond measure upon hearing this message of the pardoning of sins? Imagine that a preacher could lament that he might have better listeners in Hell than in his present congregation. May such a thought never become a reality—that more fervour could be found in Hell if news of a potential pardon reached their ears—than among you, if your hearts remain unmoved by the hearing of this blessed doctrine of the pardon of sin. May it never be the case that Hell, even in its torment, proves more responsive than you to the glorious unveiling of Gospel truths that illuminate the way for sinners to attain forgiveness.

CHAPTER XIII:

Pardon of Sin as the Ultimate Purpose of God's Ordinances

Moreover, blessed is the one whose iniquities are forgiven, because forgiveness of sin stands as the distinctive objective behind all of God's ordinances. The ordinances instituted and established by God within His Church achieve their ultimate purpose in this blessed outcome—forgiveness of sin. It's a convincing argument that there exists great blessedness in the pardon of sin, for it is through this very act that the invaluable ordinances of Christ fulfil their specific intentions. I shall highlight three prominent ordinances: the Word, Sacraments, and Discipline. The people of God should regard themselves as fortunate when they witness these blessed objectives being realised in them, as these are the very ends that God has ordained these ordinances to accomplish.

Pardon of Sin as the Chief Purpose of God's Ordinances

Furthermore, blessed is the individual whose iniquities are forgiven, because the forgiveness of sin serves as the ultimate objective behind all of God's ordinances. The ordinances which Christ, in His ascendancy, has instituted hold as their special purpose the attainment of this blessed outcome—forgiveness of sin. This provides compelling evidence that there exists substantial blessedness within the act of pardoning sin, as these precious ordinances of Christ materialize their specific intentions.

Allow me to focus on three significant ordinances: the Word, Sacraments, and Discipline. Those who belong to the assembly of God should consider themselves fortunate when they witness these blessed goals being accomplished within them, for these are the very aims for which God has ordained these ordinances.

Hearing the Word as an Ordinance

For instance, consider the ordinance of hearing the Word. It is a great gift that Christ, upon His triumphant ascension, has bequeathed to humankind. Upon ascending to the Father, Christ bestowed this remarkable gift upon His Church, ensuring that His

Church would have pastors and teachers. By the way, this underscores the grievous wickedness of those who disregard the pastors and teachers of His Church, for these individuals are integral to the glorious gift granted by Christ in His ascent.

Christ ordained pastors and teachers for the purpose of proclaiming the Word. Surely, this serves a significant end and purpose, given the profound glory He intends to achieve through it. What, then, is the objective for which Christ has established this momentous ordinance? As stated in 2 Corinthians 5:18, "And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself, and hath committed to us the Ministry of Reconciliation." Ministers of the Word are, in essence, ministers of reconciliation bestowed upon God's people.

What does this mean? Read the subsequent verse, which explains that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Hence, the purpose of reconciliation is closely tied to the forgiveness and pardon of sins for the souls in and through Christ Jesus. This underscores the profound scope and ultimate purpose of this ordinance—forgiveness of sin. It is no wonder, then, that we must emphasise this point. The primary duty is to declare the Ministry of Reconciliation. When a minister engages in this, they are fulfilling the task appointed to them by God. All other doctrines serve to pave the way for this primary message, and to instruct people in living worthily of it.

This is the doctrine that resonates with all those whom God has appointed for this mercy. Although ministers of Christ may preach against the vanities and worldly gains, this is not the principal matter nor the most effective approach to engage people's hearts. It is not the central purpose of Christ's ascension to provide gifts for these matters. The primary intent is to enable individuals to proclaim the significant doctrine of the pardon of sin.

Ministers need not strive to earn respect, love, or honour. If they apply themselves to preach the great doctrine entrusted to them—the

reconciliation of the world through Christ, with sins not being imputed—they cannot help but earn honour in the hearts of those whom God has destined to receive this mercy. Many may speak against such a minister, but the hearts of those whose eyes are opened will not waver. Similar to the response of the blind man to the Scribes and Pharisees in John 9:24, where he declared, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see," those who have experienced spiritual insight will counter the slander against the minister with the conviction that God has indeed worked mightily through them.

Therefore, such a ministry is bound to elicit the hearts of the people. It is not merely the individual minister, but Christ within the minister, which is captivating. The true end of our ministry is not to relay personal opinions or anecdotes, but rather to unveil the richness of God's grace in pardoning sin, justifying souls through Christ Jesus, and granting acceptance and reconciliation through Him. This constitutes the primary ordinance.

Moving on, consider the ordinance of the Sacraments. Why has Christ ordained them? Their primary objective is for sealing. In the Lord's Supper, God's mercy in the pardon of sin is sealed. As stated in Matthew 26:28, Christ informed His disciples, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." It's as if Christ were conveying that this significant ordinance is intended to seal the pardon of people's sins.

Brothers and sisters, it is not common for a king to apply the Broad Seal to trivial matters, trifles, or fancies. Instead, the Broad Seal is reserved for matters of great significance and consequence. Likewise, the Broad Seal of Heaven is ordained for the sealing of the pardon of sin because it is a truly blessed thing. When the Sacrament is administered appropriately, it serves no other purpose than to act as the Broad Seal of Heaven, affirmatively sealing the pardon of your sin. Therefore, when men and women come to partake in the Sacrament, they should consider the occasion as a day of sealing.

Just as there are designated sealing days in courts of justice, a Sacrament day is a sealing day, signifying the sealing of the profound blessedness of the forgiveness of sin.

A soul might contemplate in this manner: "I stand as a poor, wretched, and vile sinner before the Lord—woe unto me. I have committed these transgressions, and woe is me. Yet, I have heard about the abundant grace of God in pardoning my sins. Today, God calls me to come and have the pardon of my sins sealed with the Broad Seal of Heaven. This will assure my soul, and I can leave in peace. I will be comforted and consoled regarding the pressing matter that burdens me—the sins that have heavily weighed on my conscience and caused dreadful apprehensions of God's displeasure. Today, I am here to have the pardon of all my sins sealed." Thus, individuals should approach the Sacrament with such thoughts in their hearts, recognizing it as an ordinance instituted by Christ for the purpose of sealing the pardon of their sins.

The Role of Discipline

Moving on to the third ordinance, the Ordinance of Discipline holds significance. As mentioned in John 20:22, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." Furthermore, those who are removed from the Church and subsequently reinstated experience this as an ordinance of Christ, providing assurance of the remission of their sins. This ordinance casts out those who engage in scandalous behaviour, and when they repent, it welcomes them back in, effectively assuring them of the pardon of their sins.

Transition to the Application

Having concluded the explanation, if you were to take a moment to review and reflect upon what has been conveyed regarding the glorious blessedness of the mercy of forgiveness of sins, you would witness the resulting effects. I have expounded on the abundant grace of God revealed in the forgiveness of sin. I have uncovered the

manifold mysteries encompassed within it and highlighted its role as a gateway to various other mercies. I have addressed the formidable challenges it overcomes and emphasised the heartfelt investment of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this mercy. I have demonstrated that it is an absolute and unchangeable mercy, denied even to angels and disclosed only to a limited number of mankind compared to those who are passed by. I have demonstrated that the mere possibility of it would evoke rejoicing even among the damned. I have also established that it is the ultimate end of all ordinances. And now, having reached a point of conclusion in this explanation, a particular Scripture verse springs to my mind—Romans 8:31. If these things hold true, if God's glorious manifestation in the riches of His grace for the pardon of sin is so evident, what should be our response to these things?

The apostle, after investing time in elaborating on the doctrine of free justification to instil it in the hearts of the Romans and himself, poses the question: "What shall we then say to these things?" This holy apostle stood as if in awe, amazed by the wondrous richness of God's grace in the act of pardoning sin. In the previous verse, he had stated, "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Having extensively discussed the theme of justification in this chapter, he concludes in verse 31, asking, "What shall we then say to these things?" It's as if he were expressing, "Lord, how does Your glory manifest in the justification of a sinner and the pardon of their sin through Jesus Christ? We are so overwhelmed by the greatness of Your glory manifested here that we struggle to find words. What words can adequately express these things?"

And so, now that we have heard of these glorious aspects—the glorious revelation of God's grace through His Son, operating in a profound and mysterious manner for the justification of a sinner and the forgiveness of their sin—imagine if we could collectively sit down as individuals astounded and astonished. Imagine if our hearts were

so filled with the glory of these truths that we found ourselves unable to articulate our feelings, but instead, just sat down in wonderment at the brilliance of these revelations. This would indeed be a remarkable fruit of our attendance in hearing these truths. It would serve as a way of sanctifying the name of God, and it would be profoundly beneficial for us. If not during our time together, then later, when you find yourself alone in your quiet place, ponder this mystery of godliness. Recollect what you can from what you have heard. Allow this contemplation to remain warm in your hearts and thoughts.

"O Lord, what shall we say to these things?" God's thoughts regarding such mercy and grace in the pardon of sin are as we have heard. "What shall we say to it?" Even if, for now, your hearts struggle to articulate more, through meditation, the fire will likely ignite and bring forth some extraordinary expressions that glorify God's name. Perhaps you'll find yourself singing a psalm in praise or echoing the heavenly host's blessed proclamation from Luke 2:14: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Indeed, here lies the good will of God towards poor, wretched, and fallen mankind. "Glory be to God in the highest." Consider, "What is man that You are mindful of him?" You have made him a little lower than the angels. Moreover, as you've heard today, God has elevated humanity above those angels who sinned against Him. Christ chose not to show mercy to those angels, for they could not be pardoned. Instead, this mercy is intended for the poor sinners of the world, a generation that seeks Him, one that has this great mercy of pardon and forgiveness of sin revealed to them. "What shall we say to these things?" The apostle's words may serve as a stepping stone to transition into the application. As I've shared, let us sanctify the name of God by marvelling at the wondrous grace that gloriously surfaces in the justification of a sinner, as expounded upon in various particulars.

Now, in the application of these truths, much remains to be said. In response to the question, "What shall we say to these things?" Listen

attentively in the fear of God, and you shall hear in the application what shall be said concerning the truths you have encountered in the preceding doctrine.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Disrespect Shown to God's Pardoning Grace Through Disregard

First and foremost, in response to these truths, we must acknowledge that if the pardon of sin holds the immense significance you've comprehended and indeed embodies a profound divine intervention, then it follows that to commit transgressions against this cherished grace that holds the heart of God must be an abominable and contemptible act. To undermine this grand accomplishment of God must undeniably be an odious and reprehensible deed. This has been my objective, my primary focus—to not only illuminate the magnitude of God's grace in the act of forgiveness but also to caution you against acting contrary to this grace. If those upon whom this colossal and glorious act of God in forgiveness of sin is bestowed are indeed considered blessed, then it is unquestionably horrendous and dreadful for any individual to act against this divine grace, and equally atrocious to dishonour such a momentous work of God.

Yet, who are the individuals responsible for dishonouring this significant work of God? Or in how many ways can we be culpable of sinning against this profound divine mercy of forgiveness? Firstly, I will elucidate who these individuals are that tarnish the honour of this great divine work. Secondly, I will expound upon the gravity of the transgression, highlighting the perilous nature of acting against this monumental divine accomplishment in pardoning sin.

Firstly, those who sin against this monumental work of God in pardoning sin are those who display utter carelessness. These individuals hardly acknowledge it, scarcely invest any time pondering it, and barely concern themselves with it. In the world, there exists a group of men and women who bear the weight of sin and guilt upon their souls. Yet, they scarcely ever contemplate or inquire about the terms that govern the relationship between God

and their very souls. They rarely consider how matters stand between them and God. They fail to question what God might have to charge them with. They remain oblivious as to whether God holds anything against them. How few among you, who have gathered in God's presence this morning, have engaged in such introspection? How often have you questioned the state of your soul? How does the situation between you and God appear? What guilt lingers upon your spirit? What accusations does Divine Justice have against you? Conscience, speak openly and truthfully: Is there anything in heaven that stands against me? Is there anything recorded that I am accused of? What is the relationship between God and me? What a rarity it is for most individuals to entertain such thoughts! Instead, they continue to lead lives marked by apathy, security, and a lack of urgency. Either they believe they carry no guilt on their souls, or they perceive their guilt to be insignificant. Alternatively, they think it's of no great consequence for God to grant pardon. People are exceedingly concerned about the flesh—what to eat and drink, and what clothes to wear. They're preoccupied with their material possessions, seeking to acquire and accumulate wealth in this world. Yet, when it comes to rectifying the ledger between God and their souls, seeking its reconciliation and erasing the celestial record against them, how seldom do these concerns occupy their minds?

For those who possess such an indifferent disposition regarding this momentous matter of sin's pardon, it is essential to recognise that their carelessness is an aggravation of their sin. Their lack of concern about the immense work of God in the forgiveness of sin is a grievous transgression. It is crucial to understand that being indifferent and dedicating so few thoughts to a matter that has—so to speak with reverence—captivated the heart of the infinite God from eternity is a great distortion. Indeed, there is an immense disproportion between your thoughts and those of God. While the godly should endeavour to labour as God does, engaging with the matters that have captivated God's heart, those trivial matters that are unworthy of an immortal soul seem to occupy your thoughts. Those objects that occupy the thoughts and heart of God concerning the pardoning of

sin are, regrettably, scarcely present in your thoughts and hearts. Certainly, my brethren, if people's thoughts were preoccupied with this grave and weighty matter of seeking pardon for their sins, it would prevent and rectify the deluge of other frivolous, insubstantial, foolish, and wicked thoughts that plague them.

Many among you, I assume, are becoming aware of sin's presence within you. You're beginning to acknowledge the base, wandering, impure, and wicked thoughts that occupy your minds. You wish for a solution to counteract these scattered and ungodly thoughts. Engaging with serious subjects could indeed serve as a significant aid, offering substantial weight to dispel those light and frivolous thoughts. Among all subjects, the most serious one is the grace of God—how His infinite wisdom has worked to reconcile Himself to your souls, culminating in the pardon of sin and the establishment of peace between Him and humanity. If your thoughts were genuinely preoccupied with the monumental task of obtaining the pardon of your sins, it would redirect your thoughts away from other matters. Imagine if a person possessed a frivolous, casual, wandering mind. However, if they were condemned to face a dreadful and tormenting death, their thoughts would quickly shift from those trifling matters, focusing on seeking means to avert this impending death. Jerome, in one of his letters, recounts an instance of someone plagued by impure thoughts. This individual approached him for help, and he provided a rather unorthodox solution. He caused the man to be falsely accused of a crime, bringing him before a judge, imprisoning him, and later inquiring about the state of his thoughts. The man responded that he could no longer concern himself with impure thoughts when his life was in danger. While I do not present this as an endorsement, it illustrates the point that when faced with danger, one's thoughts can be redirected from trivial matters. From this, we can infer that if a soul recognised the presence of sin, the jeopardy of condemnation, and the necessity and significance of pardon, it would significantly redirect their thoughts and focus on this matter. Indeed, whoever you are—whose thoughts aren't intensely occupied with the profound subject of pardoning your sins—you take the name of God

in vain and fail to sanctify Him in this exceptional work of His. It's crucial to realise that for those who spend their days in complacent slumber, your damnation does not rest; it does not slumber or sleep. Until your sin is pardoned, the infinite justice of God is working to fulfill your fate—for the full satisfaction of it.

Thus, the first form of dishonouring God occurs when one persists in a state of security, pursuing courses of action without giving due regard to the significance of the pardon of sin.

Secondly, there are those who dishonour God by devoting themselves not to obtaining the pardon of their sin— their prime concern in this world—but to escalating the magnitude of their guilt. They continually heap guilt upon guilt, intensifying the flames, and perpetually adding to their transgressions. Imagine this scenario: if a man were sentenced to a grievous and terrifying death, yet a pardon was offered to him, along with a possibility of securing it. A friend, with the intention of helping, obtains a reprieve from the king for two or three days, granting him time to seek his pardon. Now, consider this: if during this reprieve, granted specifically to seek a pardon, the man indulges in feasting, music, merry-making, and jesting, and furthermore, engages in disparaging the prince, thereby aggravating his guilt and provoking the prince even more—wouldn't everyone declare that this man deserves the most severe and agonizing form of punishment imaginable? In fact, upon hearing of a condemned individual being granted a reprieve for the purpose of seeking a pardon, one might think, "Surely, this man will spend these days differently from how he spent his time before." Remarkably, some of you may be guilty of the very same misdeed before the Lord today. For it is an undeniable fact that all human beings are sentenced to eternal death, and the entirety of your lives is bestowed upon you precisely for this purpose: a few days granted by God for the sole intention of affording you a brief opportunity to secure your pardon, make peace with God, and reconcile your sins. How I wish that men and women would understand the purpose of their existence, recognizing that the span of their lives is designated for

making peace with God. Your lives are granted for this very purpose, just as a condemned criminal is granted a reprieve to pursue a pardon. Your situation is analogous: you stand before the Lord, guilty of eternal death, yet through His patience and forbearance, God grants you a few days to live, intended solely to seek a pardon and reconcile your relationship with Him. If you let this opportunity slip and these days pass, I solemnly profess before the Lord today that even mercy itself will not rescue you. I would inquire of many of you: How do you spend these days? You are not assured of even one day; perhaps not even an hour. Do you utilize these days to make the paramount mission and duty of your souls the pursuit of a pardon? Allow me to address you, and I implore you to answer in the privacy of your hearts, in the presence of God and your own souls. Respond in the name of God to this question: Have you made seeking a pardon, reconciling with your God, and gaining absolution for your sins the principal purpose and mission of your life, surpassing all other pursuits in the world? I genuinely fear that many of you who hear me today, if your consciences could speak, would reply, "What? Make seeking a pardon the primary purpose and mission of my life? God knows it has been the chief endeavor of my existence to accumulate guilt. Not a single day passes without me piling more guilt upon myself through profane oaths, blaspheming God's name, neglecting His worship, mistreating His creations—perhaps through drunkenness or impurity." Your consciences might remind you that far from making it the chief mission of your lives to seek pardon, you dedicate yourselves to heightening your guilt.

Do you believe that you will ever obtain pardon for your sins while continually amassing more guilt, thereby further degrading yourself? The lives of many individuals follow a pattern of wickedness that indicates either a willingness to perish eternally in sin or a desire to burden the mercy of God to the utmost extent in the act of pardoning their sins. If pardoning sin is indeed a tremendous work of God, as I've explained, then observe this logical deduction: if it is such a remarkable feat for God to pardon a single sin, consider whether it is rational to continue piling more sins upon sins, thus magnifying the

task. Imagine a scenario where a person is afflicted with a severe illness. In this situation, the most extraordinary effort would be required to cure them, surpassing any effort ever exerted since the inception of Earth and Heaven. Now, suppose this person, with the means to recover, persists in pursuing intemperate behaviours that only intensify the severity and venom of the illness with each passing day. How recklessly unreasonable this would be, especially when the possibility of a cure exists! Such an individual might even advise others about the possibility of a cure, yet they persist in exacerbating the malady. Wouldn't everyone perceive this individual's actions as illogical? Reflect upon the unreasonableness of human interactions with God. People are ashamed to exhibit unreasonableness in their dealings with fellow humans, yet when dealing with God, their actions are marked by unparalleled irrationality. Many of you are guilty of numerous sins. Do you hold out hope for forgiveness? Yes, you may claim to possess hope. However, if God were to forgive you for even one of your sins, it would require an action greater than the creation of Heaven and Earth. So, what are you doing by adding more sins, when it is already a monumental task to forgive your current sins? The profound wickedness of individuals in augmenting their sin is truly remarkable. I may liken this to a scriptural reference, as in Joshua 22:17. Though I paraphrase it, the essence remains: "Is the iniquity of Peor not enough for us, from which we are not cleansed to this day?" Similarly, I might say to sinners who persist in their transgressions: "Is the iniquity of your past insufficient to magnify God's grace in pardoning it? Must you then heap on additional sins, as if to test how far God's mercy can extend?" Allow me to declare this in God's name: the sins you've committed already are so grievous that forgiving them requires an astonishing work of God. Therefore, why must you add more and more, enticing God to extend His mercy further? Be cautious about tempting God to extend His mercy beyond what He may be willing to grant. Though God might be inclined to extend His mercy to a certain extent, who can dictate how far He should go? Who can determine whether, if you continue in sin, He will continue extending His mercy? Certainly, it's true that when God forgives, He

eliminates all sins. However, be aware that if you persist in augmenting the guilt of your sin, you may discover— as many have— that it is a formidable challenge, causing great spiritual anguish and distress, to have the pardon of your sin affirmed within the court of conscience, even though it has already been sealed in heaven. Oh, the anguish of spirit it has caused them! Yet, you persist in adding more sin, as if the pardon of your sin held no significance. It is a truly rational plea to implore sinners to halt their course of transgression, for you have already progressed far enough. Do not proceed any further. This constitutes the second form of abusing God's mercy in pardoning sin.

Thirdly, those who hold extremely shallow views of the pardon of sin are guilty of abusing God's mercy. They believe they can obtain it whenever they wish, simply by repenting. This reminds me of an anecdote about King Louis XI of France, who reportedly carried a crucifix in his hat. Whenever he committed a sin, he would take down the crucifix, kiss it, and consider himself absolved. Similarly, many idolatrous Catholics possess such casual thoughts about the pardon of sin. If they sin, they think little of it, resorting to a priest for confession or kneeling before a crucifix to perform a brief penance, as if that were sufficient to rectify everything. Undoubtedly, it is a great affront to God for anyone to hold trivial thoughts about the pardon of sin. This pardon is a monumental accomplishment; if anything could be said to have challenged God (metaphorically speaking) to pardon sin while maintaining His justice, it would be this task. If you genuinely experience God's love, your perspective on this matter will undoubtedly change. The slight thoughts that individuals entertain concerning this issue are often why they remain trapped under the spirit of bondage for an extended period. When God begins working on them, stirring their conscience, and making them confront the guilt of their sin, how long does it take them to obtain assurance of pardon? Justly, it might take time, due to their previous trivialization of the concept of pardon. I recall a story about Pompey. One of his captains approached him, complaining of a shortage of men. Pompey confidently responded that he could simply

stamp his foot and produce the required number of men. Yet, when the enemy arrived, the captain returned, asking, "Where are your men now?" Pompey found himself unable to muster the men he needed when faced with adversity. Similarly, many assume they can achieve great feats through mere words, as if everything would magically fall into place at their command. However, when it comes to the actual situation, they falter and find the outcome far different from what they anticipated. Many trivialize the process of obtaining the pardon of sin. They believe they can accomplish it effortlessly with a last-minute plea, such as uttering "Lord, have mercy upon us" on their deathbeds. Yet, when the moment arrives, they realize that securing pardon is the most significant task they have ever faced throughout their lives. There is no aspect of God that He is more protective of than His honour, particularly in regard to this monumental work. Had God not been so protective of His honour and resolved to correct humanity's trivial views of this significant task, there would have been no need for such intense humiliation and the manifestation of the spirit of bondage. If only sinners understood the magnitude of this work, they would seize any indication of God's favour and eagerly embrace it. Just as the servants of Benhadad diligently watched for any communication from their master, hastening to receive it when it arrived, so would a soul that comprehends the concept of pardon grasp eagerly at any opportunity or sign of God's favour. Psalm 32 holds great relevance in this context. David found it extremely challenging to obtain pardon for his own sin (verse 4), as he acknowledged. Nevertheless, God forgave him (verse 5), and what followed? David essentially declared in verse 6, "This is a lesson for all the godly; they should pray to you when they have the chance." It's as if David were speaking to all the poor sinners, cautioning them not to trivialize the matter of obtaining pardon. He wanted them to understand that it cost him dearly before he could gain assurance of pardon. Therefore, he urged anyone who was familiar with God's ways to seek Him at the right time and not delay, for the matter is not something to be taken lightly. Many misinterpret David's example, thinking that since he sinned, they also have the liberty to sin. However, they fail to

realize the immense sorrow he experienced while obtaining his pardon. It required so much effort that David conveyed his message clearly: everyone should seek God in due time. He does not suggest that because he found mercy in pardoning his grave sins, people should take the liberty to postpone seeking it until a convenient time. No, he emphasizes that those who are godly, who have some insight into God's ways, will diligently seek God at a time when He can be found. If the godly, who have received pardon for their sins in the heavenly court, find it challenging to receive pardon in their own consciences, how much more should you, who perhaps have neither received pardon in the court of heaven nor in your conscience, who are ensnared in bitterness and the bondage of iniquity, be concerned about it? This constitutes the third form of abusing God's mercy: holding shallow thoughts about the pardon of sin.

Fourthly, those who seek pardon but lack an awareness of the enormity of God's work in pardoning exhibit a flawed approach. They don't delay seeking pardon, but they do so with an extreme lack of sensitivity. They don't approach God with brokenness, turmoil, and a contrite spirit when seeking forgiveness of sin. Many people repeat their sins before God and possess a gift for prayer. It is truly astonishing to consider how numerous individuals excel in prayer, spending up to half an hour and meticulously listing their sins. They narrate elaborate stories and bring forth every conceivable aggravation against their sins, condemning themselves and using strong words of self-reproach. However, throughout all this, they approach God with a desperate, apathetic, lifeless, and unfeeling heart concerning their sins. Even if others join them and are moved by their expressions, your conscience might be telling you that your heart remains obstinately hard before God. It's as if you're discussing a matter of trivial consequence. This constitutes a severe form of taking the blessed name of God in vain. We must recognize that God's name in relation to the forgiveness of sin is exceedingly glorious. Therefore, we must exercise caution in how we approach God on this matter, ensuring that we do not take His name in vain. For God will not hold those guiltless who misuse His name. We need

to ensure that we sanctify God's name in this context. Many people believe that swearing and blaspheming constitute taking God's name in vain, and they are right because these actions violate the third commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain" (Exodus 20:7). However, personally, I believe that making extensive confessions of sin while having a dead heart is also a severe form of taking God's name in vain. Please do not misunderstand me; if your heart is sensitive to your lack of sensitivity, you are not among those who misuse God's name in vain. God accepts this. Rationality is involved here, and this is pleasing to Him, even if the sensitive part of your soul does not fully engage. I'm referring to those who have developed a formal habit of crying and confessing sins but remain insensitive to them. They may even take pride in their ability to articulate their sins before the Lord in a church setting. Beware of this practice. If you wish to display your talents and abilities, do so in a different context. Do not attempt to showcase your skills before the holy God or in a sacred duty before others. It is perilous for anyone to meddle in this manner. In Hebrews 9:22, the author mentions that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. Similarly, I would argue that without the blood of your heart—without genuine repentance and a sense of the enormity of your unsensibleness—there is no remission of sins. At the very least, you need to be aware of your lack of awareness. If you find it difficult to mourn, mourn the fact that you are unable to mourn. Be conscious of your lack of sensitivity, and then God may be willing to accept you. Without this kind of emotional engagement, there can be no remission of sins. This is what it means to sanctify God's name in this context. Consider this insight—it could be useful in many ways. To sanctify God's name is to develop a disposition that aligns with the particular aspect of God's work that you are dealing with. When dealing with God in any task, your heart must exhibit a disposition that suits that task. For instance, sanctifying God's name in prayer entails speaking of God's glorious attributes and titles while cultivating a heart disposition that aligns with those attributes. Sanctifying God's name during confession of sin means developing a disposition in your heart that resonates with the role of Judge that

God plays in that scenario. Similarly, sanctifying God's name while seeking pardon involves cultivating a disposition that corresponds to the magnitude of God's work in pardoning sin. Thus, everyone must be mindful when entreating God for pardon. Seek not only pardon but also a sanctification of His name. How is that done? Plead with God to reveal the magnitude of this glorious work to your soul. Then work to cultivate a disposition in your heart that aligns with this profound task. Those of you who seek God daily for pardon—have you grasped the enormity of this task? Has God revealed the magnitude of His work in pardoning sin to you? Or have you, since learning of this great task, been striving to develop a disposition that resonates with these divine truths? To the extent that you fall short in this regard, you fall short of sanctifying God's name. Moving forward, your primary task should be to cultivate dispositions that correspond to the enormity of God's work in seeking pardon for sin. If someone approached you, petitioning you to rectify a wrong committed by someone who had offended you, and they approached you lightly, you would surely insist that they present themselves with more gravity. Would you expect such an approach from a child, servant, or subordinate? Then why, when seeking pardon from God, would you approach with an insensible attitude, expecting that to suffice? Your approach is insensible, and your heart remains unstirred. In contrast, when Christ approached God, He was acutely aware of the weight and burden of sin. As mentioned in Hebrews 5:7, "In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears." Christ sought the Father earnestly, pouring out His heart through prayers, cries, and supplications. It's worth reflecting on the fact that if Christ, facing His impending suffering, could be so attuned to the weight of sin and approach the Father in such a manner, then we, too, should be conscientious about our sensitivity to God's pardon.

Fifthly, those who seek pardon while treating the process lightly and frivolously deserve rebuke. They lack seriousness in their approach, despite the fact that seeking pardon demands the utmost seriousness. Who are these individuals, you may wonder? There are

several categories of people who approach seeking pardon with a sense of frivolity.

1. Those who fervently cry out to God for forgiveness, appearing earnest, yet continue to hold onto their love for their sins and persist in their regular sinful ways. I am not referring to those who genuinely seek forgiveness and occasionally stumble back into sin. Instead, I'm addressing the general pattern of people. They implore God to pardon their sins while remaining entrenched in their sinful conduct. I'm not discussing those who lack awareness when confessing their sins; rather, I'm highlighting those who cry out to God mightily for pardon while living in the very sins they are pleading to be forgiven for. Let's take a moment to reflect on the sins that have marked the course of your life. I pose this question: have you prayed to God to forgive these sins, or have you neglected to pray? Neglecting prayer would categorise you as a grave atheist. If, on the other hand, you do pray, you ask God for forgiveness of sin while engaging in those very sins daily. This is a prime example of toying with God. You pray against sin, yet you persist in committing it. You fall into the same pattern: praying, sinning, praying again, sinning again. Unfortunately, this is the path that many choose. They fritter away their lives and squander their opportunity for salvation by treating God lightly. They implore God to extend His mercy and forgive their sins, only to continue committing the same sins. They fail to realise the powerful commitment that accompanies praying against sin. Take note: every time you pray against a specific sin, that prayer serves as a significant commitment from God to you, urging you to avoid that sin in the future. Perhaps you have not considered this aspect. You claim to pray daily, but remember to not rest solely in the formulaic prayers handed down by your parents. If you genuinely care for your soul, you will invest thoughtful consideration in your prayers. You will approach God and admit, "Lord, I am guilty of such and such sins. These particular sins are deeply ingrained in my nature, and I recently committed

these specific sins." Then, in humility, you will earnestly ask God for forgiveness. Mumbling a few words does not constitute prayer; it's mere prattling, not true prayer. Instead, when you conscientiously assess your own heart and acknowledge your guilt before the Almighty, when you sincerely repent your sins in God's presence, specifically naming the sins you're guilty of, that's the correct way to seek pardon. Do you follow this approach? Such a process will forge a powerful connection between your heart and the commitment you make before God. You will remind yourself: "I have stood before the Almighty, confessed my sins, and earnestly implored His forgiveness. I must take extra care to avoid falling into the same sin again." For those prone to outbursts of anger, if you pause to reflect on the fact that you prayed this morning for forgiveness for such a flare-up of temper, it would undoubtedly help you control your anger and prevent its escalation. Sadly, not everyone considers this. They confess their sins in the morning, then proceed to commit them anew. In essence, they are creating a cycle of perpetual confession. This phenomenon is the reason many people engage in such trifling with God. If God were not infinitely patient, He would be incapable of tolerating this behaviour. He might well say, "Seven years ago, you came to me and confessed your pride, anger, worldliness, and the like. And now, you're coming to me again with the same confession?" If not for God's infinite patience, He would not endure this trivial treatment. Frankly, this amounts to nothing short of treating God with infinite frivolity. Reflect upon the words in Jeremiah 3:5: "Will you not from this time cry to me, 'My Father, you are the guide of my youth?'" These individuals appeared to cry out to God, addressing Him as their Father and the guide of their youth. While the words may seem meaningful, their deeds demonstrated a different story. They cried out to God, confessing their sins and pleading for mercy, only to continue committing those very sins. God responds to them in condemnation: "You have spoken and done evil things as much as you could." This is a grave transgression—an accusation of

confessing sin, praying for forgiveness, and then committing that sin again. So, if you've been confessing sin today and yet persist in sinning, bear in mind that this is nothing more than trifling with God. Many people weave their prayers this way, crafting eloquent prayers only to unravel them by promptly returning to the same sinful behaviour.

2. Another group includes those who earnestly seek forgiveness for certain sins while retaining affection for other sins. They deceive themselves into believing that they can obtain forgiveness for one sin while nurturing love for another. This approach is nothing more than frivolity and trifling with God regarding this matter. Your efforts lack genuine commitment. You may fervently cry out against sins that conflict with natural morality—sins that trouble your conscience when exposed to the light of reason and the Word of God. However, you secretly harbour other vile inclinations, all the while assuming that God will forgive the sins you openly petition for, while permitting you to continue in your hidden sins. Beware, for if you cling to any secret sin while seeking pardon for others, the chains of guilt from that hidden sin will perpetually shackle your soul. Unless you detach your soul from all sinful inclinations, you will remain in eternal bondage. Understand that when you approach God seeking forgiveness, you must come with a heart willing to relinquish every sin. If you believe that God will pardon certain sins while granting you freedom to indulge in others, you are gravely mistaken. Know this: when you implore God for forgiveness, you must do so with a heart willing to renounce every sin, otherwise all your efforts will be in vain, and you will remain ensnared by the chains of sin.
3. Another group consists of those who neglect to assess the outcomes of their prayers. They pray to God but fail to examine whether their prayers have been answered in their hearts or if God has confirmed their pardon through any divine ordinance. You should scrutinise your prayers for pardon, both during your

prayers and after. The psalmist declares in Psalms 85:8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." If you were not trifling with God, you would similarly eagerly anticipate an answer. After beseeching God for forgiveness, you would keep a watchful eye on Heaven's gates, seeking His response. The soul that genuinely and earnestly seeks pardon remains anxious until an answer is received. Many cry out for forgiveness, but they are not troubled by God's silence until an answer is provided. They interact with God similarly to how Pilate dealt with Christ, asking, "What is truth?" but walking away before receiving an answer. Such behaviour reflects mere frivolity in prayers and petitions—asking for forgiveness yet neglecting to wait for an answer.

4. Just as those who do not await the answers of their prayers engage in trifling, so do those who fail to follow their prayers with corresponding efforts. They petition God for mercy, but what actions do their souls undertake after making these petitions? If your efforts do not align with attending the means of grace that God employs to bring peace to souls, your prayers are empty. However, I will delve into this topic later. You should examine the Covenant and seek insight from fellow believers on the course they have taken and the means they have utilised to secure pardon.
5. A final category encompasses those who pray for forgiveness yet find contentment in other matters. For example, they pray for pardon, but if worldly comforts are granted, they are pacified and satisfied with those. Similar to a child who receives both a piece of gold and an apple, yet chooses to be satisfied with the apple, many beseech God for the crucial work of pardoning their sins. However, if worldly prosperity and comforts arrive, they are content and cease pursuing forgiveness for their sins. This constitutes the fifth group—individuals who trifle with God when it comes to seeking pardon for their sins.

6. Furthermore, those who remain content with weak and flimsy evidence dishonour God. They clearly do not hold high thoughts of God's mercy in forgiving sins, as they settle for meagre evidences of it. Many individuals, if asked, claim to hope for God's pardon for their sins. However, they rest their hopes on the feeblest of evidences imaginable. These evidences bear such fragility that one would be astounded, considering the immense worth of a soul, that they would risk such a monumental matter on such a frail foundation. What is the reason for this? It's because their estimation of forgiveness is shallow. When a person highly values something, they take all measures to ensure it. Conversely, if they hold it in low regard, they lack the same intensity. For example, if someone pays you with silver, gold, and farthings, you might not even bother counting the farthings, but you'll definitely count the silver, and you might even weigh the gold. Why? You value the brass little, so you disregard it. You value the silver more, and therefore you count it. You value the gold most, hence you both count and weigh it. This serves as an argument to convince the world that their value of earthly things exceeds that of heaven and their souls. This is evidenced by the effort they put into securing worldly matters compared to heavenly ones. When they strive to make earthly affairs more certain than heavenly matters, they demonstrate that their esteem for the former exceeds the latter. A worldly person employs various bonds, seals, and legal counsel to secure their possessions. In contrast, they trivialise the eternal by relying on feeble evidence for their pardon. However, those who truly understand the magnitude of forgiveness and value it highly employ various means to attain assurance.

To conclude, people who are assured of God's mercy possess a profound understanding of forgiveness, hold it in high regard, and ardently pursue it. In His kindness, God condescends to assure them using various methods. It is as if God engages in the following conversation with them: The troubled soul trembles, crying out, "Oh,

that I could have my sins forgiven and be certain of it!" God responds, "How do you establish certainty among yourselves?" The person replies, "We give our word and commit it to writing." God responds, "You shall have My word, written in the Covenant of grace. This covenant is permanent, unlike our forefathers who passed it orally. What else do you do?" The person continues, "We bring witnesses." God replies, "You shall have witnesses. According to earthly standards, the testimony of two or three witnesses establishes a fact. Now, when I reconcile a soul to Me, I provide not just two or three, but six witnesses to confirm a believer's assurance of My grace and favour. There are three witnesses in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and three on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood. This assures you of forgiveness. Is there another way?" The person replies, "Yes, Lord. We often take oaths to confirm agreements." God replies, "I will also take an oath, as I did in the Covenant of grace. I have sworn by Myself to make My grace certain to your souls. As stated in Hebrews 6:13, when I made a promise to Abraham, since I could swear by no one greater, I swore by Myself. This oath provides strong consolation. When a soul, pursued by guilt, seeks refuge in My hope, I assure it further through My oath. Is there anything else?" The person replies, "Yes, Lord. We place seals on agreements. An oath may pass, but a seal endures." God responds, "I will grant you seals. There are several types: the Broad Seal of Heaven, which is the imprint of God's image on the soul; the Privy Seal of the Holy Spirit, which persuades and assures the soul of its connection to Christ and the Father; Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which seal the assurance of forgiveness. These ways of assurance are provided because My people desire it, even though I am always with them. When you partake in the sacraments, approach them with a sense of your soul's great need for God's grace in forgiving sin. View them as sealing days, not only as days of condemnation. Be cautious, as unworthy participation seals condemnation. However, worthy participation, even if the administration is not perfectly ordered, allows God to use His own ordinance to comfort and strengthen the believer's evidence. In conclusion, those who settle for weak evidence regarding this significant matter dishonour God. While we delight in

preaching about mercy and find it a blessed topic, our concern is that you do not misuse it. Indeed, there is nothing that God takes more seriously than the dishonour shown to His pardoning mercy. Nothing magnifies people's sin more than their light estimation of this great work.

7. Furthermore, it greatly dishonours God's pardoning mercy when people procrastinate seeking it until the most dire circumstances. Isn't it common for many individuals to postpone seeking God's grace, pardon for sins, and reconciliation until the moments of sickness or impending death? They spend their entire lives indulging in sinning against God, yet only in their moments of infirmity or on their deathbeds do they cry out, "Lord, have mercy upon me! Forgive me, a wretched sinner that I have been!" At such times, we often hear such words. They may even divulge specific sins to a minister or faithful neighbour if they believe death is imminent, imploring them to pray for mercy. However, if they sense hope of recovery, they conceal these sins, reluctant to expose the transgressions of their lives. To delay seeking God's pardoning grace until such times is to greatly dishonour God, for it is to put it off to the worst possible time.

First, individuals seek forgiveness when sin is leaving them or when they must abandon sin, whether they wish to or not. After they have extracted all the supposed pleasure from their sins, they seek deliverance from sin's guilt and punishment. This self-centred approach to seeking God shows a lack of genuine pursuit for pardon. God perceives this, as it's not about seeking pardon to honour His infinite grace. Otherwise, they would seek it now, valuing God's honour highly at present. Instead, they seek it at such times out of self-concern, dishonouring God. Forgiveness is the crown jewel of God's glory. However, to seek it solely to save their own skin diminishes its worth. God might regard such individuals with disdain, questioning why His grace's magnificence should be sought only for personal salvation. This dishonours His grace, reducing the

pinnacle of His majesty to a lowly purpose. Thus, do not postpone seeking forgiveness until the end; it dishonours His grace.

2. It is the worst time because they seek pardoning grace during God's time of wrath. The period of affliction, trouble, sickness, and death is referred to as the day of wrath. Earthly riches offer no solace during God's wrath. Though riches might bring comfort now, they fail in the day of wrath. God has His appointed times to visit humanity for their sins. Therefore, seeking the pardon of sins during such times when God's visitation for sin occurs is the worst possible timing. Consider this: if God withholds His mercy on a day of mercy, is it likely He will grant it on a day of wrath? When you are alive, healthy, and have the opportunity to hear about the justification of sinners and the forgiveness of sins, it is the day of God's grace. Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation and grace. When God provides the liberty and opportunity to hear the Gospel's mysteries, it's the day of His grace. If, during this time of mercy, God denies you His grace, not even enlightening your soul or stirring your heart, do you think He will show you mercy during the day of wrath? For those whose sins are not pardoned, the time of sickness or death is a day of wrath. Is it likely that God will show you mercy at such a time?

Consider the ordinary manner in which God works through His ordinances. The usual way God conveys grace is through the Ministry of the Word. Can you find any other scriptural text that reveals another ordained method by which God conveys His pardoning grace in Christ to a soul? No, it is through the ministry of the Gospel and by faith, which seizes the pardoning grace of God by engaging with the preached Word. If God does not work on you during this appointed time and bestow mercy through His ordained method, it is unlikely that He will do so in any other way. As Mr. Bolton expressed in his treatise, "Let anyone provide an example where someone living under a powerful ministry, who was not genuinely moved through that means, was moved in another way." Many may be stirred, but

Bolton observed that he knew of no one genuinely converted through affliction alone without prior work by God through the means of grace. Therefore, seeking pardon during times of affliction or trouble, which usually signify God's wrath for sin, is undoubtedly the worst possible timing.

3. The task of the soul in seeking God's pardoning mercy and applying it personally is not only the most exceptional deed any creature has ever undertaken, but it also demands the most refined work of the Spirit ever required or embarked upon by any being. The application of God's grace in Christ and embracing it for justification is the most intense labour of the human spirit. It stands as the loftiest, most refined, splendid, and wondrous task of human spirit throughout history. It necessitates the highest level of intensity and the utmost strength of a person's spirit that any task has ever demanded. Thus, delaying this vital work until one's strength is diminished, ailments render them unfit for any exertion, and every ounce of strength is needed to endure suffering, undoubtedly constitutes the most inopportune time.

Do not be deceived into thinking that applying God's mercy in Christ is merely a matter of uttering, "Lord, have mercy upon me." No, it's God compelling the human heart to undertake the most magnificent endeavour, one that holds immense transformative power. I recall a story about a man who lived a sinful life and had numerous attempts at reforming him. He would retort, "Wait until I am on my sickbed; that will be time enough." However, when he fell ill, others reminded him of his statement. His response was laced with strong oaths, "Is this a time to repent?!" In his anguish and torment, his focus was consumed by the overwhelming pain he experienced. The prospect of repenting amidst such anguish infuriated him, as he found it inconceivable to engage in repentance while grappling with such overwhelming spiritual agony. If that isn't an apt time for repentance, then it should be undertaken in due time.

4. Furthermore, it is the most inopportune time because God's very purpose in granting pardoning grace could be thwarted to a significant degree. When God forgives sins, it's with the intention that His creation may glorify and worship Him within His creation and render service unto Him. But to seek God's pardoning grace when your ability to serve Him in this world has waned — how can you expect that He would receive you then? Christ came to redeem us, so that we might devote ourselves to holy and righteous service throughout our lives (Luke 1:74-75). God is fully aware that pardoning grace is a compelling catalyst for the human heart to worship and serve Him. Upon realizing deliverance from the adversaries of sin and the Law, a soul's fervour to honour God and serve Him in sanctity and righteousness is greatly ignited. Therefore, waiting to seek pardon when you are no longer capable of offering service to God in this world is undoubtedly the least opportune time. How can you be certain He will accept you then?

I implore you to consider a Scripture passage that is often misconstrued by many. It appears that I am addressing numerous individuals who may not be well-versed in the ways of God, thus I aim to speak directly to you. There is a passage, though misunderstood, that serves as the primary support for many carnal hearts, as it is misquoted in some sources. "At what time soever a sinner repents, &c." I cannot locate such a scripture passage. It is true that there are passages suggesting a similar sentiment without explicitly limiting the timing, but no Scripture phrased it as such. Many individuals mistakenly latch onto this expression, assuming it is valid. No Scripture actually contains those words. The passage closest to this notion is Ezekiel 18:21. However, it serves a different purpose, and you would benefit from understanding its intended context. It states, "But if the wicked shall turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my Statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." (Ezekiel 18:21)

This Scripture does not impose a specific time limit. Although it doesn't include the phrase "At what time soever," it emphasizes turning from all sins, observing God's statutes, and practising what is lawful and right. Thus, the Scripture promises mercy to one who forsakes all sins and pledges to observe God's statutes while abiding by lawful and righteous conduct. However, if you postpone repentance until illness or death, how can you fulfill these requirements? Can you genuinely turn from all your sins and keep all of God's statutes in your sickbed state? Can you do what is lawful and right then? This condition should be met alongside the ability to uphold all of God's statutes. On the whole, this Scripture does not provide as much encouragement for the prevalent idea that "At what time soever a sinner repents" as many commonly believe. Instead, it outlines a repentance that demands adherence to all of God's statutes. Furthermore, God addresses the Jews in line with the context of the Covenant of Works. They were relying on justification through the Law. God cautioned them that they might delay repentance, believing that He would extend mercy to them at the last minute. Yet, He reminded them that their repentance would have to be accompanied by an unwavering commitment to keep all of His statutes. If you don't comprehend the Gospel's essence and depend on a deathbed repentance, God might hold you to this Scripture. This illustrates why deferring repentance until your sickbed or deathbed is the least opportune time. How can you manage to uphold all of God's statutes and perform what is lawful and right under such circumstances?

Moreover, it is the least opportune time because even the lowest of the low, the most contemptible and wretched individuals, will also resort to this time. Is this truly the only disposition you possess, to delay seeking reconciliation with God until that point? Do you hold your soul in such low regard? Is your affection for God and His path so meagre that you postpone it until a time when even the most vile and contemptible individuals will do the same? This signifies the seventh way in which you undermine the dignity of God's pardoning

grace — by choosing to seek it during the most unfavourable circumstances imaginable.

8. The eighth way of dishonouring God's pardoning grace, and perhaps the most significant of them all, is seeking and expecting it through any means other than the mediation of the Son of God. As I mentioned when I began to uncover the awe-inspiring mysteries of pardoning grace, this grace can only be accessed through a Mediator. This folly is not just limited to the grossly ignorant, but is unfortunately shared by many others who fail to recognise that the sole source of this grace is the mediation of the Son of God.

We must not underestimate the pardoning grace of God by entertaining the possibility of attaining it through any means other than the mediation of the God-Man. If we believe that crying out to God at any time or pouring out our anguish in spirit over the course of decades is sufficient, then our understanding of the pardoning grace is grievously diminished. It's a terrible blasphemy to think that any work of our own can appease God. In this regard, I recall the powerful words of Luther: "It is a horrible blasphemy if you presume to pacify God by any works." And indeed, I echo this sentiment: it's a most deplorable blasphemy and an intolerable notion to imagine that anything of our own, however minuscule, can lead God to be pacified. For God can only be appeased by the infinite price of the Death and Blood of His own Son; even one drop of this precious Blood holds more value than all the beings in Heaven and Earth combined.

Have I revealed such a profound path to reconciliation with my Creation, one that comes at the staggering cost of my own Son's death? Shall His life and blood be expended to secure pardon, with one drop of His blood being more valuable than the entirety of countless worlds? After all this, shall my creation attempt to placate me with their feeble prayers, tears, good intentions, or their most splendid acts? Even the grandest and most remarkable deeds that

humanity can accomplish are not worth a fraction of a drop of Christ's blood. If you don't hold such lofty thoughts about God's Pardoning Mercy – that it can only be obtained through something of higher worth than the entire Creation – then you dishonour it by entertaining these lesser thoughts. When you believe you can earn it through your own deeds, you diminish this grace. When you reform your ways and carry out dutiful obedience in the hope that God's mercy will overlook your faults, you mistakenly reduce the grandeur of God's pardoning grace to a mere pity for those in distress.

Certainly, when you conceive of God's pardoning grace in this manner, you relegate it to a common and everyday sympathy that one creature might feel for another in misfortune. However, the grace of God surpasses this commonplace empathy. To think of it in such a diminished manner dishonours God. If you view it as a slightly elevated form of pity, you're missing the mark. This grace must be seen from a different perspective – as a distinct kind of compassion that transcends ordinary human interactions. While God's pardoning of His poor creatures is rooted in pity and compassion, it's also intricately tied to the death and satisfaction of His own Son. To consider acquiring this grace through any means other than the mediation of the Son of God is to perceive it in a merely natural light, as your instincts might guide you. While it's true that witnessing someone in distress might evoke sympathy and compassion, you must delve deeper. The pardoning grace of God is the most supernatural and mysterious concept in the entire Book of God.

So, when God operates within us, we must exercise faith in a mystical manner, treating it as a great mystery. Those among you who've felt the weight of sin – perhaps you've pondered God's grace for the forgiveness of your sins, using it to soothe the turbulence within your souls – ask yourselves:

Many a humble soul might attest, "I've often approached God when no human eye witnessed, only His omniscient gaze, seeking pardon

for my transgressions amidst the turmoil of my spirit." You may have traversed this path, but ask yourself – during those moments, was your focus fixated upon the Son of God? Did you consider Him, the mighty Mediator between God and humanity, interceding with the Father to secure this mercy by satisfying infinite Justice? Amidst your pleas for forgiveness, did you envision the Son of God at the Father's right hand, advocating for mankind? Did your hearts resonate with the profound mysteries of godliness and resonate with the boundless grace of God? Did you release a potent surge of the Spirit of Faith, offering up to God the Father the Atonement accomplished by His Son's blood and death for your sins? Did you grasp that the height of God's pardoning grace is unattainable through human deeds, save by the mediation of the Son of God?

Should these experiences align with your spiritual journey, then you've gleaned some sense of the profound workings of God in this realm. However, if you've lacked such insights, even though you may have been deeply affected and shed torrents of sorrow, your earnest cries for the absolution of your sins notwithstanding – unless your heart has embraced thoughts akin to these, fostering a connection with God in this manner – you've yet to fully grasp the path of God's pardoning grace. Thus, you've inadvertently dishonoured Him by harbouring diminished notions of His grace. Unless your hearts have aspired to such heights, as articulated in Psalm 51:7, during those moments when David was immersed in repentance, pleading for God's purifying touch, you haven't thoroughly comprehended the intricate ways of God's pardoning grace.

Consider David's plea for purification using hyssop – a plea steeped in mystery. In the era of the Law, blood was often sprinkled using a bundle of hyssop, symbolising the future role of Christ's blood in making Atonement. Leviticus 14 outlines how a bunch of hyssop was employed for sprinkling. And so, David implores, "Purge me with hyssop," which translates to "Apply to me the redeeming blood of Christ." David yearned for renewed assurance of God's mercy through Christ, particularly in the context of pardoning his grievous

transgressions. His prayer for hyssop represents the plea for a fresh application of Christ's blood, acknowledging the stain of sin that exposed him to God's wrath and burdened his soul with renewed guilt. This symbolic request for a new sprinkling echoes the urgent call for the blood of God's Son to be applied afresh. It's possible that many readers have overlooked the profound meaning here. When seeking pardon for your sins, remember this – plead for the purging touch of hyssop, petitioning God to cleanse you anew with the blood of Christ. Understand that all your prayers, tears, and actions can't free you from the guilt of your sin, unless you're cleansed by the hyssop – the application of Christ's precious Blood. This, then, marks the eighth way of dishonouring God's grace – seeking it through avenues other than the blood of His Son. As you search for this grace, bear in mind that it might be your final opportunity. Therefore, remember to direct your gaze towards God, seeking His grace through the death of His Son, for to do otherwise, even with the most earnest prayers, would diminish the reverence due to this grace. It's undemanding to convince people that seeking pardon indifferently or sluggishly dishonours God's grace. However, even if you earnestly and vigorously seek it, you're still dishonouring God unless you acknowledge its profound exaltation, attainable only through the mediation of the Son of God.

The ninth way of diminishing the significance of God's grace involves daring to engage in sin with the misguided belief that divine pardon will eventually absolve the transgression. This pertains to those who, though not steeped in unceasing sin, are indeed convinced of their transgressions. Were they certain that God would never extend His pardon to these acts, they would encounter countless deterrents against committing them. However, a mere hope of God's pardon serves as a reason to venture into sin. Although they acknowledge the wrongfulness of their actions, they reason, "God is compassionate; even though this is sinful, He will forgive." The gravity of this mindset surpasses comprehension.

Imagine this: You're genuinely aware of your sinful nature, yet you decide to sin because you're convinced God will ultimately forgive you. In this, I echo Peter's words to Simon Magus in Acts 8:22. Pray fervently to God that this perilous inclination of your heart might be pardoned. Such a notion, harboured within, is immensely malignant and fiercely offensive to God, rivalling even the sin against the Holy Ghost. To dare any sin with the hope of pardon is an affront of staggering proportions.

Certain individuals might argue, "Why should we impose such stringent rules on ourselves? God is merciful." Consequently, they adopt a lax stance, assuming there's no need for rigorous adherence. This approach is akin to that which Jude 4 addresses as "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." Here, he speaks of people within the church who, having professed faith in Christ, now distort God's grace to justify unbridled conduct. This is a grave matter. If any within our assembly, having tasted the radiance of the Gospel, fall into this pattern of reasoning, it's imperative to comprehend its malice.

Let me illustrate how this occurs: Such individuals subtly infiltrate, their presence initially unnoticed by the genuine believers. This is a reminder that a church should admit only those whose lives exhibit signs of godliness. Unrighteousness must be barred entry, for ungodly elements that sneak in undermine the church's sanctity. It's true that no congregation is impervious to some degree of impurity; yet, this doesn't equate to an inability to expel such individuals. Some argue against church participation due to the presence of unrighteous members, while others contend that within any earthly congregation, tares will invariably mix with the wheat. Do not be deceived. No assembly is utterly pure, yet this doesn't absolve the church of its duty to address the matter.

When evil individuals infiltrate the church, those who discern their ungodliness must fulfil their duty. Admonish them privately, and if this fails, bring the matter before the congregation. The power to

expel them lies with the church, and if the church neglects this responsibility, it shouldn't hinder our association with them. The real question is whether we should withdraw merely due to their presence or whether we can engage with a church that lacks the capacity to prevent such infiltration and expel wrongdoers post-infiltration.

These individuals creep unnoticed into the Church, seemingly genuine in their religious dedication, but the state of the Church should be such that it permits no evil men to infiltrate. And if they do, it's unwittingly, due to their outward religious facade. For the Church can only assess what is visible on the surface. If people profess religion and their conduct aligns, the Church has no basis to go beyond these appearances. However, for a Church to admit anyone who refrains from swearing, adultery, or open vices without requiring a profession of faith, or even those who merely rent a house in the parish, is insufficient for Church membership. Moreover, once admitted, there's no authority to expel them. If such power does exist, the remedy can sometimes prove worse than the disease, often being a power not ordained by God. The question emerges: Should we associate with such a Church or should we abstain due to the presence of wrongdoers? The answer is debatable. Certainly, no congregation can be so pure that it remains untainted by impurity. However, if each Church had the authority to admit only those who demonstrate an appearance of godliness and the power to expel those who prove otherwise, then although ungodly individuals might unwittingly infiltrate, this shouldn't impede participation in the ordinances of God.

Let's now consider the state of these infiltrators. First, they "creep in." Second, they were "of old ordained to condemnation." These individuals abuse God's grace by taking liberty to sin, thereby turning grace into licence. Those who thus abuse grace should be kept out of the Church. If they infiltrate, they shouldn't be counted as members and should be expelled when their conduct reveals that they were always meant for condemnation. Third, they are ungodly

individuals, devoid of godliness and characterised by their carnal and worldly nature. For a minister to declare someone ungodly based on God's Word is a serious matter. If you've perverted God's grace for licence and indulged in sin because of the mercy you think God extends, you are ungodly. You've turned grace, meant to restrain sin, into an enabler of sin. Moreover, fourth, you "deny our Lord Jesus Christ." You may speak of God's mercy in Christ, but your actions deny the Lord. Consider the multitude of expressions used here to describe those who misuse God's grace: they creep in, were ordained for condemnation, they are ungodly, and they deny the Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflect on Romans 6:1: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Some abused God's grace to justify sinning. The Apostle vehemently rejects this notion: "God forbid!" To continue in sin under the pretext of grace's abundance is appalling. Those who comprehend the magnificence of God's grace cannot help but be astounded and appalled by this vile act. Remember, forgiveness is never a licence for willful wrongdoing. Imagine you pardon one servant for an error, and another servant uses that as a reason to commit the same mistake, expecting similar leniency. Instead, because of the presumption, your forgiveness is withheld from them. This analogy helps highlight the gravity of this sin.

1. It reveals a detestable heart that has no motivation to abstain from sin other than avoiding guilt, wrath, and hell. You don't use God's grace as a reason to resist sin or see the inherent evil in it. This disrespects and dishonours God. Sin, even without considering its guilt and punishment, is immeasurably more evil than all the suffering in hell combined. Yet, your only deterrent from sin is the dread of guilt and punishment. This reflects a morally corrupt heart.
2. Even if there were no guilt or punishment, a sincere and virtuous spirit would still not engage in sin. Can I indulge in sin because God pardons? Should I take that risk? No, I will never

yield. Grace compels us towards an entirely different direction. Titus 2:11 captures this beautifully: "The grace of God that brings salvation..." This grace reveals the forgiveness of sins and salvation, and it has appeared to everyone. But for what purpose? To instruct us to renounce all ungodliness and worldly desires. This grace teaches us not to presume on sin with hopes of divine pardon. It doesn't endorse licentiousness, deceit, theft, impurity, or similar behaviours under the pretext of God's willingness to forgive. Instead, it imparts an alternative set of lessons. Additionally, it prompts us to live soberly, righteously, and godly. This grace does not provide licence to sin; it educates in the opposite direction. Furthermore, it encourages us to anticipate the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Consider this text closely; it holds profound meaning. The revelation of God's grace that brings salvation, mercy, and forgiveness teaches us these invaluable principles. As grace and divine favour are unveiled, they lead us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Only then can we eagerly await the blessed hope—the glorious manifestation of the great God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. However, without living in harmony with these teachings, you cannot sincerely expect that blessed hope. To those who reason that sin is permissible due to God's pardoning grace: does the revelation of God's grace inspire you to lead an ungodly life, indulging in worldly desires? Can you eagerly anticipate the blessed hope while embracing this mindset and expecting the glorious manifestation of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ? The truth is, you can't. Your hope isn't blessed; it's misguided—a hope that everything will be fine in the end, even if you lead a wicked life and await the divine appearance. Yet, it will be a dreadful appearance for you, as you've twisted Christ's purpose, turning Him, who came to undo the Devil's works, into a supporter of the Devil's agenda.

3. Has any true Child of God ever employed Scripture to justify sin in such a wicked manner, presuming to sin because God is willing to forgive? You cannot find a single example in all of

Scripture where those to whom God has shown mercy reasoned in this manner. I can provide examples to the contrary. Consider Psalm 130:4, where the meditation of a devout heart is evident: "But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared." The individual reasons from the perspective of God's pardoning grace, aiming to cultivate reverence for God. Essentially, they are saying, "Lord, I've heard about the teaching of forgiving sins and the tremendous workings of Your grace in achieving it. Your readiness to pardon serves the purpose of inspiring fear and reverence for You. This is how this doctrine should impact a heart devoted to God. If the sermons you've heard about this doctrine have cultivated fear of God in your heart, it's a sign that they've had a positive effect on you. When you reason along the lines of 'There is forgiveness with God, so my soul shall fear Him more and avoid sin more than before,' it signifies that the Word has deeply influenced you. Another verse, Psalm 103:1-3, captures this sentiment: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity." It is a psalm that celebrates God's mercy in forgiving sins, leading David to exhort his soul and all within him to bless the Lord. This is not a rationale for taking liberty in sin, thinking, 'God forgives sins, so my soul, relax; you don't need to be stringent.' No, it's an invitation to bless the Lord wholeheartedly, recognising His immense graciousness in forgiving our iniquities. Those who possess the strength to offer anything to God find their hearts stirred to bless Him fervently when they see His infinite grace manifested in forgiving their sins. This reasoning drives them to dedicate everything they have and are to Him.

4. For those of you who believe that you can indulge in sin due to God's graciousness and take the risk, assuming God will not punish, consider this: the example of the damned in hell. They defy God because they know He will never pardon them. In contrast, you sin because you hope God will pardon you, which is even worse. The devils and the damned find themselves in a state where they know God will not pardon them, and their

response is cursing God. Yet, God offers pardon and extends grace to you. He presents Jesus Christ, His blood, and His suffering for your forgiveness. In spite of this, you blaspheme because you assume He will forgive. Comparatively, the second group appears more reprehensible. You blaspheme because you hope God will pardon, while the others blaspheme because they have no hope of pardon. Blaspheming with the expectation of God's pardon is more grievous than those who blaspheme because they consider themselves beyond hope. You, who currently blaspheme because you hope for God's pardon, what do you anticipate for your future? Currently, you blaspheme while holding onto the hope of pardon; eventually, you might reach a point where you blaspheme God eternally because He will not pardon you. Just as many individuals who have engaged in swearing, drunkenness, impurity, and similar sins might have proceeded under the notion that God would pardon them, now rest in their final destination and blaspheme because they realize God will never pardon them. So, while you blaspheme now in the hope of God's pardon, there, you may blaspheme because you have lost all hope of ever receiving His pardon.

5. If you persist in sinning with the hope that God will pardon, be prepared for these thoughts to become an unbearable burden when God enlightens your mind. If anything threatens to plunge your soul into the abyss of despair, it is likely to be this. At present, you yield to the inclinations of your own heart, allowing the idea of God's forgiving mercy to justify further transgression. Yet, the very reasoning that fuels your present sin through reliance on pardon will eventually breed thoughts of despair regarding God's mercy.

Consider this: either God will eventually illuminate your conscience, or He will not. If He never does, you are eternally lost. However, if He does intervene and awaken your conscience, then a heavy weight of anguish and distress will rest upon your soul. You will cry out, "O Lord, not only have I sinned, but as I come to seek mercy, my mouth

is silenced by the memory of the mercy I've misused. Only free grace can save me now. Conscience testifies to how I've abused this grace, using it to propel myself further into sin. How can I now seek this grace and mercy with any credibility?" These thoughts will pierce you deeply in the future.

When a Minister attempts to apply the grace of God to your soul, you might acknowledge that there is indeed mercy with God to pardon sinners, but you may conclude that it excludes those like you, who have abused His grace. Reflect on Manasseh and Paul. While they did commit significant sins, did they ever sin with the intention of exploiting the hope of pardon? Take heed, and let no one depart from the presence of the Lord today with the intention of risking sin on the pretext of potential pardon. Engaging in sin with such an intention is profoundly wicked and accursed.

Tenthly, Dishonouring the Pardoning Mercy of God through Post-Pardon Sin

A tenth way of dishonouring the pardoning mercy of God pertains to those who, after being pardoned, continue to sin. This is a grievous affront to God's grace. Many individuals who have experienced distress due to their transgressions have cried out to God for mercy in their affliction. God, in His compassion, has responded by speaking peace to their souls, reassuring them of pardon and promising to cleanse their hearts from sin through the blood of His own Son. Yet, even after receiving these assurances, they fall back into their former transgressions.

This dishonour takes on a more grievous form when not only do they lapse into the same sin they sought pardon for, but they also succumb to a sin for which they had received comfortable assurance of pardon. Reflect on 1 Kings 11:9, where Solomon's heart turned from the Lord despite having experienced His divine appearance twice. Have you, too, encountered the Lord's appearances and received the reassurance of His love and pardoning grace? If so, how

could you turn away from Him after He has twice affirmed that your sins are forgiven? Indeed, it is a grievous matter.

Consider Ezra 9:14. Would God not be angry with us if we were to break His commandments again? After God has liberated us from condemnation, the guilt of sin, and the bondage of the spirit, it would be just for God to be displeased if we were to transgress once more. Psalm 85:8 highlights this: "The Lord will speak peace... but let them not return again to folly." If God imparts peace, resist the urge to return to folly. Let me question you: Has God ever spoken peace to your soul? Have you experienced the voice of gladness resonating within you, saying, "Be at ease, my child; depart in peace, for your sins are pardoned"? If not, it is crucial that you seek it. Yet, if you have heard this voice, refrain from returning to the very sin that God has so graciously forgiven you for.

To elaborate further:

- 1. Do not revert to the same sin.**
- 2. Do not revert to any other sin.**

Is it possible for a child of God to commit the same sin after receiving God's pardon? Some theologians, such as Origen and Tertullian, have denied it. Hebrews 6:4-6 has been applied to the sin of uncleanness, suggesting that a second repentance is not assured for adulterers and fornicators. Although we do not have a specific biblical example of a child of God committing the same gross outward sin after repentance and reconciliation, there are instances of individuals like Peter and Lot who have fallen into other sins, but not the same one.

Consider the case of David. While he did commit adultery, he did not repeat the sin after his contrition. Peter, after weeping bitterly for his denial of Christ, did not deny Him again. Abraham, too, equivocated, but there is no record of him committing the same sin again after an actual renewal of faith and repentance. Just as a healed wound or set

bone becomes stronger, the people of God often emerge stronger after sinning and being restored. Galatians 6:1 suggests that those who are spiritual must restore a fallen member, likening the process to setting a bone back in joint.

If a bone is dislocated and left untreated, it becomes increasingly painful. Similarly, if you persist in sin, you will find yourself more burdened and unwieldy. Just as a bone out of joint hampers one's ability to function, unaddressed sin hampers your life's smooth progression. Christ's words to the healed man, "You are made whole," serve as an example. So, if you have sinned and received pardon, consider yourself set in joint again. Go your way; you are made whole. Beware of returning to sin, as worse consequences might befall you.

Another group that dishonours the grace of God comprises those who, although they do not fall into the same gross sins again after receiving pardoning mercy, exhibit negligence in their approach to God's ways. They become lax, heedless, frivolous, and indulge in sensuality and carnality. Their hearts are lifeless in their conduct, failing to respond to the revealed grace of God. In fact, they become more impure in their disposition than before.

Perhaps during the period they sought God's grace, they displayed conscientiousness in their conduct and closely adhered to His ways. They regarded no duty as trifling and devotedly attended to the Word, embracing it wholeheartedly. Their lives bore spiritual fruit, and their communities benefited from their presence.

However, following the comforting assurance of God's pardoning mercy, they descend into heedlessness, frivolity, and a spiritually lethargic state. This phenomenon is deplorable, irrespective of its occurrence. While it is certainly wrong to misappropriate God's general bounty, patience, and forbearance, along with the blessings He bestows through creation, it is even more egregious to exploit the grace manifested in Christ's pardoning mercy.

I shall elucidate why this is a grave matter and endeavour to persuade you of its significance.

Pause and recall the days of old. Reflect on how it used to be when you sought the pardoning grace of God. Remember those moments when you pondered, "If God were to enter my soul and grant me assurance of the forgiveness of my sin, how profoundly grateful and devoted would my soul become? I would dedicate my entire being, body and soul, to live in praise of God's grace. Should God enter my soul and pardon this heavy burden of guilt that weighs upon my spirit, I would offer myself up wholeheartedly."

I beseech you to consult your own consciences. Did you not entertain thoughts during your quest for God's merciful pardon that you could never possibly sink into the state you find yourself in today? Surely, many among you would testify that there was a time when, while seeking God's mercy to absolve your sin-stricken conscience, you believed that those who possessed the assurance of pardon were blessed indeed. If peace were to be spoken to your soul, you thought your life would naturally lead to a state that, in your perception, now seems impossible to have drifted away from—namely, one marked by insipidness, lethargy, frivolity, and vapidness.

Recall Paul's words to the Galatians: "Where is the blessedness you spoke of?" Once, you esteemed the pardoning mercy of God as a source of blessing. Yet now, having received it, why do you allow yourself to descend into licentiousness, indifference, and triviality? Do you not possess stronger arguments to incline your hearts towards God following the declaration of His peace? The apprehension of guilt, danger, and spiritual distress due to sin once served as a deterrent. However, if God has spoken peace by bestowing this pardoning grace, are there not more compelling reasons to shun sin?

Without a doubt, those who are acquainted with the grace of God in Christ understand that no argument holds the power of this grace to

prevent sin and draw the heart to God. The contemplation of God's grace is uniquely effective in quelling and subduing lust. Yet, those who persist in sin after receiving this mercy, allowing their lusts and corruptions to overpower the influence of pardoning grace, forfeit the most potent and specialised spiritual aids for resisting sin.

Recall Philippians 4:7: "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." The original text holds even more significance, stating that this peace will "guard your hearts." As if emphasising the point, the Apostle implies, "The remarkable peace of God, which transcends comprehension, will serve as a guard for your hearts." Indeed, the peace that emerges from the sweetness of God's pardoning grace surpasses understanding. Nonetheless, despite this, you will encounter numerous perils and temptations. Yet, the peace of God remains the guard for your souls, preserving you from sin and temptation.

Imagine the soul of a believer, its peace resembling a commander at war or a prince sensing imminent danger. Such a person stations a formidable guard around them to ensure their safety. In a similar vein, what is the guard that shields a believer's soul from temptation and danger? It is the peace of God, the mightiest and most impregnable guard. If you bemoan sin and fear its allure, what guard do you seek? The peace of God stands as the ultimate protection. However, if sin breaches this guard, invading as if no protection existed, your condition is indeed dire.

Allow me to address those who, after receiving the pardoning grace of God, fail to live in accordance with the grace that bore witness to the forgiveness of sin. It's highly likely that you'll lose your assurance. Yes, it remains unchangeable in God's heart, yet your lax conduct might lead to losing the assurance of it in your own soul. Consequently, your situation could be as bleak as if you had never been pardoned.

Consider this: when evidence is presented concerning the pardon of sin, each subsequent act of sin becomes a blot on that evidence. Just as someone possessing documents of land or property rights would safeguard them from blemishes, you must take similar care. Should these documents become marred, perhaps to the point of illegibility, it could be a laborious process to restore them. Likewise, a person who has obtained a comforting piece of evidence for the forgiveness of their sins, but then succumbs to temptation and commits a sin, tarnishes that evidence. Subsequent temptations might lead them towards worldliness, anger, unbelief, apathy, sensuality, and misuse of worldly pleasures, accumulating even more blots. Consequently, when these evidences are examined, they will be found so marred that it's unsurprising they're unreadable during times of temptation.

Skilled individuals who understand the ways of God and the nature of the covenant of grace may glean some meaning from these blurred evidences. However, your estrangement from God may have resulted in your evidences becoming so obscured that, in your perception, you can't discern anything. It may feel as if your condition remains as precarious and discomfoting as before. This should be the duty, and ultimately the source of comfort, for every Christian: once they've obtained their evidences, they should strive to keep them so clear that they can read them every morning. They should be able to retrieve them, read them, and avoid straining themselves by searching their minds and hearts for what once constituted evidence of pardon. Failure to maintain clarity in these evidences is born of neglect. If only they had been diligent in preserving their evidences, what comfort they could derive from reading them each morning.

Should the stain of sin return, it's unsurprising that the sense of guilt also returns to your conscience. If God has entrusted you with such a precious jewel as evidence of the pardon of sin, and you fail to make the most of it, God may justly take it back into His own hands. Even if God does show mercy to you in the end, you might not recognise it in this world. Recovering it can prove exceedingly difficult. Many who initially had the pardon of sin sealed to them have lost and

obscured their evidences due to subsequent sin, never to recover them again. Think of David, who cried out, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation." David realised all had slipped away. He needed a new creation and restoration. He yearned for the return of that joy he had once experienced, the joy of God's salvation. Though David briefly indulged in sensual pleasure, he paid a heavy price—he forfeited the joy of God's salvation. Imagine what David would have given to regain it. For all we know, he never regained it to the same extent. Those who, due to negligence, laxity, and vanity, lose their comforting evidence of pardoning grace might never reclaim that former comfort. Hence, when Peter sinned against his Master, recall how Jesus asked him, "Do you love me?" Peter replied, "Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus questioned him again, not content with his first answer, repeating the inquiry three times. It was as if Jesus was telling Peter, "Don't be hasty to restore your evidence. It's not a sudden action that will recover it. Those of you who have sinned and dimmed your evidences must put this question to your hearts repeatedly to ascertain that you truly love Christ and Christ loves you."

Now, let me address those who continue to sin even after receiving pardon. Such actions may rightfully provoke God to act, not by removing His eternal love, but rather by dealing with you as a servant rather than as His child. What I mean is that He might subject you to severe and weighty chastisements. While He might ultimately save your souls, it could lead Him to bring about difficult and adverse circumstances in this world. Due to the apathy and inertia of your hearts, you might find yourselves paying a heavy price before your life comes to an end.

Indeed, God's dealings with His pardoned children might resemble the words He spoke in Jeremiah 2:14, addressing His own people: "Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave?" In verse 18, the question continues: "What hast thou to do in the way of Egypt?" Similarly, these words can apply to you, to whom God has previously extended

His mercy and pardon. However, your conduct has led to a perception of God's dealings with you as if you were a servant or a slave. It's spoken with a sense of compassion. Remember, Israel is referred to as "my dear Son." So why have you found yourself in a state resembling that of a home-born slave? Why does it seem as though you've become a servant? The answer could be traced back to your alignment with the ways of the world, much like being in the way of Egypt. This could apply to you if you persist in the worldly and sensuous tendencies of your spirit. Have you not been walking a path akin to Egypt? Are your actions such that God's dealings with you reflect the treatment of a servant or a home-born slave? Where is the once present filial and genuine spirit within you, that God is now compelled to address you in this manner?

Let's delve into another aspect: those who persist in sin even after receiving pardon. Your actions might actually magnify the gravity of your sins beyond the wrongdoings of the wicked, in certain respects. You're quick to denounce those leading immoral lives, branding them as wretched, vulgar, intoxicated, blasphemous, deceitful, and untrustworthy individuals. Yet, your sins, committed after experiencing mercy, carry a weightier burden. Why? Because the wicked have never tasted the sweetness of God's pardoning mercy. They've never heard His voice whisper peace to their souls, as you have. They've never experienced the intimate visits of God's Spirit or felt the warmth of His merciful light shining into their hearts. Those who continue in their sinful ways might have become accustomed to it, making their actions less surprising. However, for you, who have tasted the sweetness of God's love in Christ through pardoning mercy, committing sins afterward carries a greater weight of aggravation.

Furthermore, your sins are more piercing to the heart of Christ than those of the wicked and godless. Even the most profane individuals in the town can't wound Christ's heart as deeply as you can by sinning after receiving mercy. Imagine a scenario: Caesar, surrounded by a group of individuals, is stabbed repeatedly in the

Senate House. Amidst them stands Brutus, who had been the recipient of much kindness from Caesar. When Brutus delivers a blow, Caesar looks at him and exclaims, "What, thou my son Brutus, wilt thou give me a blow and stab?" The wound from Brutus seems to strike closer to the heart of Caesar than the combined attacks from the others. Similarly, Christ might cast His gaze upon you, for whom He has provided pardon, shed His blood, and offered His life. The question echoes in His divine mind: "What, thou my son, wilt thou sin against me?" It's understandable for strangers to commit sins against Christ, but for His sons and redeemed ones, who have experienced His gracious pardon, to sin is to hurt Him more deeply than even the vilest sinner. Would you not hesitate to wrong Christ more than the most despicable wretch in the parish? Keep in mind the abundant mercy you've received from Christ.

Moreover, the sins of those who have received pardon hurt and grieve the Spirit of God in ways that other sins do not. They pierce God's heart and distress the very Spirit that has sealed your soul with the assurance of pardon. Be cautious not to grieve this blessed Spirit, for it's a graver sin than you might realize. Additionally, your actions tarnish the Doctrine of Assurance of Pardon. We proclaim that not only can one possess a measure of hope that their sins are forgiven, but we also assert that God's Gospel reveals such an abundance of grace that one can possess an unwavering and complete assurance of pardon. This assurance can be as real as if they heard a voice from Heaven personally declaring their pardon, or as if Christ Himself, in His earthly days, said, "Go in peace, thy sins are pardoned." However, our opponents contend that by allowing such assurance, it could lead to a dangerous liberty to commit any sin. They argue that if people know they are pardoned, they may not feel the need to be mindful of their actions. Yet, we argue that the grace of God accompanying the pardon of sin holds not only the power to comfort the soul but also to heal it. We respond to this objection by saying that if our doctrine holds true, you should be walking with stricter adherence than anyone, even during the most intense torment of conscience. Such behaviour would bring honour to the Doctrine of

Assurance. However, by sinning after receiving pardon, you inadvertently discredit this blessed doctrine and remove our response to the criticism. This concludes the discussion for now, focusing on those who undermine the honour of God's pardoning mercy by persisting in sin even after receiving it.

CHAPTER XV:

Discrediting God's Grace Through Unbelief

Let's delve into another group that significantly undermines the honour of God's pardoning grace. These individuals might think they are showing reverence to Him, but in reality, their actions dishonour Him immensely. They are those who, due to their deep awareness of the enormity of their sins, the repulsiveness of their actions, and their own wretched state, find themselves sinking into a despondent, almost desperate, and discouraging frame of mind. They bear the heavy weight of their sins and come to believe that they are condemned to forever bear this burden and suffer the everlasting consequences. Although they have heard much about the boundless richness of God's pardoning grace, they personally doubt that they could ever partake in it. This type of melancholy and discouragement, while lingering in the grip of their sins, actually compounds the seriousness of their sin and greatly discredits the pardoning grace of God.

There are many who fall into this category. No matter how extensively they hear about the unmeasurable abundance of the Gospel and the limitless grace of God, it seems insufficient to dispel the gloominess and discouragement that hangs over them. It's similar to the people in Exodus 6:9 whom Moses addressed. Despite

his efforts, they couldn't truly hear his words due to the overwhelming anguish they felt and the heavy bondage they endured. In the same manner, when God seeks to awaken the consciences of many people, the anguish they feel over their sins often prevents them from truly listening to the message. Regardless of how much they hear, whether in private or public settings, they remain entrenched in the same complaints, despondency, and objections. You might counter their objections to God's grace, and for a brief moment, they might seem persuaded. However, give them a short break, and they'll return with the same objections as if no one had spoken to them. There's more harm in this attitude than they might realise – it's akin to setting limits on and doubting the grace of God.

While it's reasonable to acknowledge one's unworthiness and the possibility of God's denial, it's a different matter to conclude that God will undoubtedly reject them. There's a significant distinction between these perspectives. Some might acknowledge the importance of engaging in spiritual practices and embracing the means of grace, but they lack the hope that God will ever deliver them. They might feel like the woman in 1 Kings 12:17, who, left with only a small amount of meal and oil, gathers a couple of sticks to prepare her final meal before she faces death. Similarly, some individuals think, "I'll pray and listen to the word, but it won't have a significant impact. I'll do these things, and then I'll face the inevitable." It's as if they believe that, after making a small effort, their spiritual resources will be depleted, and they will succumb to spiritual death.

So, consider what is being communicated to you today: this attitude gravely diminishes the honour of God's pardoning grace. It's crucial to understand that allowing doubts and unbelief to take root minimises the glory and importance of God's grace.

Firstly, it's important to recognise that your view of God's pardoning mercy is quite limited if you hold such low opinions about it. You

seem to underestimate what Christ has achieved and what God has planned from eternity in the Covenant of grace for those souls He intends to bless. While He keeps His intentions concealed until He reveals them through the work of grace, in the meantime, He expects you to rely on His grace through Jesus Christ. Even if you consider yourself unworthy, inadequate, and despite using spiritual means, feel unproductive, distracted, and spiritually stagnant – so you don't anticipate receiving grace – remember that these thoughts underestimate the true power of God's grace. These objections fall short and don't truly match the enormity of His grace. In a way, they demean His grace by trying to pit them against each other. Imagine a scholar being presented with feeble arguments that aren't worth addressing; they'd consider it an affront. Similarly, it's a disservice to the grace of God to present such minor concerns against it. You're viewing it from a limited, natural standpoint without realising that magnifying His grace through pardoning sins is God's paramount objective. If understood fully, these objections would seem unworthy in comparison to this grand purpose, which is the most significant way God magnifies His name.

Secondly, you're making judgments about God based on your own thoughts, and this displeases God greatly, as stated in Psalm 50:21: "You thought that I was altogether like you." It's detrimental to evaluate God through our limited perspectives, and there are two ways this discredits God.

1. The approach of the spiritually indifferent sinner: They judge God according to their own thoughts, assuming that God isn't too strict and won't be angered by every transgression. They believe that a simple plea for mercy after an offense will appease Him. This mindset trivialises God's holiness and His view of sin, which diminishes His honour.
2. Another way is when a person becomes convicted of sin and their conscience is enlightened. In this case, you might underestimate God in a different manner. If you have a

hardened heart and wouldn't pardon someone who repeatedly offends you, you project that trait onto God. You assume God is like you, unable to endure certain actions just as you can't tolerate them in others. This is a misguided judgment, for the thoughts of God's pardoning grace surpass ours as greatly as the heavens exceed the earth. Thus, we must refrain from measuring God based on our own limited understanding.

Thirdly, you diminish the honour of God's pardoning grace when you hold low opinions of it, as it contradicts the Scriptures. The main purpose of all the Scriptures is to exalt the pardoning grace of God, to vividly portray its magnitude to your soul. Yet, you seem intent on undermining it. As Luther aptly stated, the entirety of Scripture serves to help us understand and acknowledge God as a gracious and merciful Being. To expand on this, a noteworthy scripture passage can be found in Acts 10:42-43: "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Notice how all the prophets bear witness to this truth – that through believing in Christ, remission of sins is granted. While you might argue that it's about believing in Him, the crux of the matter is the act of believing. Yet, you hinder yourself from believing. You want assurance before believing, but you must believe to receive it. You need to take the leap and trust God's grace. Every prophet testifies to this remission of sins through faith. Therefore, when you allow yourself to be engulfed in despondent thoughts, you are essentially accusing all the prophets of falsehood. Your doubt doesn't only discredit our preaching, but it challenges the testimonies of all God's prophets. Why would you oppose what they all declare?

Furthermore, consider that your reasoning contradicts the Scriptures. You reason that pardoning mercy won't be yours because your sins are significant. In Psalm 25:11, David implores God to

pardon his transgressions because they are great. He employs the gravity of his sins as an argument to drive him towards God, not away from Him. This aligns with God's reasoning as well. In Genesis 8:21, God declares that He won't curse the ground again because man's heart is evil from youth. It's as if God is saying, if He were to curse until humanity ceased to sin, He'd be cursing indefinitely. Similarly, in Hosea 2:13-14, God reasons along similar lines. Despite her unfaithfulness, God plans to allure and comfort her. Once again, the Scriptures depict that the magnitude of sin isn't a deterrent for God's mercy.

Let's explore another example from Isaiah 57:17. "For the iniquity of his covetousness, I was wroth and smote him, I hid Me and was wroth; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." But notice the next verse: "I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also lead him, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners." Even though he pursued a wicked path, God's response is to heal and comfort. The entire chapter is designed to encourage those who are aware of their sins, even if they long to feel the weight of their wrongdoing. The enormity of sin doesn't negate God's compassion.

In conclusion, the depreciation of God's pardoning grace due to doubts runs contrary to the Scriptures. The prophets, David, and God Himself confirm that sin's magnitude doesn't diminish God's willingness to forgive and comfort.

Moreover, the path you're treading leads to destruction; there is no good to be found in that direction. While you may waste away in your transgressions, don't expect to receive counsel, aid, solace, or mercy – be certain that such help won't come your way. Therefore, reason as the lepers did in 2 Kings 7:3: "If we sit here, we shall certainly die. If we say, 'We will enter the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die." Their choice to step out and approach the Syrian camp proved fruitful, as they

encountered assistance and relief. In the same way, consider that if you continue to wallow in despair, death is inevitable. But even if you might not find immediate solace or help, it's still wiser to venture in that direction than to persist in your current course. Although you may perceive this as humility – to remain in this state – be wary, for hidden beneath these discouragements, there might lurk a dangerous form of pride. Even the proudest spirits can suffer from profound discouragement. As illustrated by the Devil himself, portrayed as proud as Lucifer, intense pride often resides within the hearts of those suffering discouragement. Hence, be cautious not to find secret satisfaction in your present condition. It's possible to delight in the suffering you endure, and to take some form of contentment in your own path. Similar to how many individuals, despite facing numerous challenges, derive satisfaction from sticking to their own way. Be mindful, as lurking at the core of all these feelings could be a desperate form of pride.

If this indeed amounts to tarnishing the pardoning grace of God, then what would you have us do? (We wouldn't utter this unless it held true. Why would we expend efforts to study and implore God for enlightenment and aid in revealing His grace if the slightest discouragement and despondency could render all our efforts futile? Thus, there's substantial reason to declare that this greatly belittles the pardoning grace of God.) But hold on, would you have us stop doubting altogether, and instead, convince our hearts that our sins are forgiven, and leave it at that?

No, even if I were to claim that you could achieve this, it would prove fruitless, for you lack the power to simply dispel all fears of divine wrath and immediately convince yourself that your sins are pardoned. Such a feat is beyond your capability. Hence, this is not the task I'm urging you to undertake. It's a monumental work that God must perform. Consider Ezekiel 2:1-2, where the prophet, after receiving instructions from God, is told to "stand on your feet," but this alone was insufficient to raise him up. Not even God's command was enough to elevate him. Only in combination with the voice of

God, mentioned in verse 2, does the Spirit of God enter into him and set him on his feet. The same principle applies to ministers of the Word. We address souls burdened by their sins, urging them to rise from their low state and stand tall. Yet, our words alone won't suffice. In tandem with our message, God must speak and infuse His Spirit into the soul for it to rise.

Question: Alright, but what exactly do you want us to do?

Answer: Here are the steps I suggest you take:

Firstly, transform your apprehensions about presumption into concerns about dishonouring God's grace. Be equally afraid of dishonouring God's grace through unbelief, as you currently fear presuming upon it. Those who are complacent don't fear presumption, whereas those with awakened consciences worry about presuming upon God's grace and thereby dishonouring it. If you're afraid of dishonouring God's grace through presumption, then why not also fear dishonouring it through unbelief? Remember, this temptation's potency comes from the Devil. When your conscience is troubled by sin, he tries to prevent you from embracing God's grace, fearing you'll presume upon it. But to counter this, fear more the dishonouring of God's grace through unbelief. Many don't view unbelief as a grave sin, yet God is just as displeased with unbelief as with presumption.

Secondly, for those of you wrestling with conscience-stricken doubts about God's pardonability, and those who are convinced that their sins are beyond forgiveness, strive to place the profoundness of God's pardoning grace, in all its richness, right in front of your inner eye. Even if you can't fully comprehend it, keep it before you. You're unaware of the potency the pardoning grace of God possesses when it's consistently set before your soul's gaze. The efficacy of God's grace lies greatly in its presentation before your soul. Consider the Bronze Serpent; it wouldn't heal unless people looked upon it. Similarly, although the pardoning grace of God is present in books

and sermons, unless you actively fix your soul's focus upon it and keep it in your sight, it won't bring healing. Therefore, maintain its presence in your vision. As Psalm 5:3 beautifully puts it: "In the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up." Notice the phrasing – it's not merely about saying prayers, but about directing prayer. This emphasises aiming your prayer rightly, launching your soul heavenward correctly, and attentively following the path God intends for you in prayer. It's not enough to resist offering a lifeless, sluggish prayer. However, if you spent your day revisiting your morning prayers, what you prayed for, your soul would undoubtedly experience a heightened efficacy.

Thirdly, Pay close attention to keeping your hearts active and engaged. Guard against lethargy and apathy. Beware of entertaining thoughts like, "Why bother praying and reading when I feel no inclination to perform any duty?" Rise up and take action, and may the Lord be with you. If your hearts have ever been active in anything in this world, they ought to be most active in matters of the divine. Should you grant yourself permission to remain idle and the vigour of your spirits wanes, you find yourself in a lamentable state. Rekindling them might prove challenging. Avoid nurturing a morose heart. You can be quite dynamic while remaining tranquil, serene, and composed. There's a significant fusion of these two qualities in those whom God guides towards Himself.

Fourthly, Reaffirm your resolutions. Regardless of what fate awaits you – whether God grants you His peace or not – as long as you live, pledge to honour His name and shun sin. Keep your heart firmly committed to this resolution.

Fifthly, Keep your heart in an expectant disposition. Engage in the means, linger at the pool, like the man who waited for many years for the waters to stir and eventually found relief. So, maintain a hopeful mindset and contemplate that if mercy does come in the end, it will compensate you for all your waiting and efforts.

Sixthly, Be ready to seize hold of any initial revelations of God's presence. Even if it's just a fleeting glimpse, cherish it and offer gratitude to God. During times of distress, many beseech God for forgiveness, yet they are often absorbed in complaining either to others or themselves. Expressing gratitude is rare. Therefore, you should take note of whatever God has granted, even if it's just a small start or a glimpse of His grace. If you perceive a tiny cloud the size of a man's hand, acknowledge it. This small sign might herald a downpour of grace. But be sure to recognise it even when it's as tiny as a man's hand. It's a significant error among those grappling with a troubled conscience that, due to not immediately attaining full assurance, they think they've gained nothing at all. Follow these guidelines as you wait upon God, and as you become less culpable of dishonouring His pardoning mercy, you will also open the door to great blessings for your soul. With this, we conclude the various ways in which the pardoning grace of God is dishonoured. Since God is exceedingly protective of this and takes it very seriously, I've elaborated on it at length. Now, I will proceed to highlight the gravity of this matter.

The Evil of Dishonouring the Pardoning Grace of God

First, This evil arises from sinning against mercy, which God regards as His glory. Just as a person takes great offense when wronged in their possessions, reputation, or anything they value highly, the greater the value attributed to something, the more grievous the wrong against it is considered. For instance, a miser cannot tolerate being wronged in his wealth; similarly, a scholar would rather suffer any indignity than be deemed a fool, because intellect and learning are of paramount value to him. Likewise, mariners skilled in navigation would react as if their property was attacked if their expertise were disparaged; they hold this skill as their treasure. In our relationship with God, if we wrong Him in what He esteems as His treasure, He cannot bear it. The pardoning mercy of God is that treasure; it is God's glory. When God revealed His glory to Moses in Exodus 34, His pardoning mercy was among the greatest

masterpieces, more valued than the creation of heaven and earth. Thus, dishonouring God in what constitutes His glory is a significant affront. God's mercy emanates from His compassion; insulting the pardoning grace of God is akin to striking at the very heart and soul of God and Christ. God perceives it as such. Those who hear this message and neglect it, valuing base matters over it, are akin to kicking and spurning the very heart of God. A child spurning its mother's heart is less blameworthy than you who persist in sin despite hearing about the pardoning grace of God. Your continuance in sin is akin to kicking at the very essence of God.

Secondly, This intensifies the sin of such individuals compared to the sins of the pagans. The sins of those who live under the Gospel and have had God's grace revealed to them are far weightier than the transgressions of the heathens. On the Day of Judgment, when you hear the heathens condemned for their sins against the light of nature, they might say, "Lord, what about these others? We never heard of the grace and pardoning mercy in Christ as those who lived in certain places, where the pardoning mercy of God was expounded. Even if they don't argue against you, it will be disclosed before all humans and angels what you heard and were preached. What God did for you will be laid bare. By persisting in sin despite this knowledge, your sins will be compounded, and your condemnation will be exacerbated."

The Greater Sin of Dishonouring the Pardoning Grace of God

Thirdly, Your sin surpasses even the sin of the devils. The sin of the devils is not as great as yours, who live under the light of the Gospel and have the pardoning grace of God preached to you. Though the devils continually blaspheme God, their sins lack the particular weight that yours possess. God never approached them to express His willingness to pardon their sins, nor did Christ shed His blood to purchase forgiveness for them. In contrast, the Gospel is proclaimed to you daily, and pardon is consistently offered. Consider, aren't your

sins then greater than those of the devils? Wouldn't it greatly amplify an offence if someone wronged and harmed you, sought your forgiveness, and yet you extended pardon to them, even going so far as to beseech them to accept it, but they disdainfully rejected it? Surely, you would find this to be an intensifying factor. Realise that your act of sinning against this grace places you in a worse condition than even Beelzebub, who is the chief of all devils. He was never faced with this aggravation, which is indeed a terrible one—sinning against the pardoning mercy of God. Thus, the very devils might raise their grievances against you, saying, "O Lord, we sinned against You, but You swiftly took action against us for just one sin. However, how have these individuals sinned against Your offered pardoning mercy, which was never extended to us?"

The Evil of Dishonouring the Pardoning Grace of God: Scriptural Warnings

Fourthly, I could illustrate the wickedness of this act with Scripture itself. Let's consider a couple of passages: John 3:18, 19 says, "He that believeth not is condemned already," and in the final verse, "He that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him." The wrath of God remains steadfast upon such an individual. Additionally, in Hebrews 10:29, it is stated, "If they that sinned under Moses' Law died without mercy, who had but little of this grace revealed unto them, how much sorer punishment shall they have that sin under the Gospel, under the full revelation of this grace?" To conclude, nothing will intensify your torment in Hell more than these sermons on God's pardoning mercy, if you persist in sin. When we discuss the pardoning grace of God, we cannot help but feel tremors in our hearts. Why? Because we know God will swiftly respond to those who have been exposed to the grace of the Gospel. Therefore, when we approach this subject, we do so with a sense of urgency, similar to a physician administering a potent potion to a patient—a potion that could either cure them or quickly lead to their demise if it doesn't work. A physician cannot help but approach such a task with a trembling hand, knowing the potential outcome. Similarly, we

understand that God acts promptly with those to whom He reveals His pardoning mercy through Gospel preaching. The truths we preach possess a rapid effect—they either steer you out of sin towards salvation, or they hasten your condemnation. Mark 16:15, 16 demonstrates this urgency: Jesus instructs, "Go and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." It's as though Christ is emphasising, "Go and share the Gospel, the doctrine of justification for sinners through God's grace in Christ Jesus. Whoever believes and embraces it shall be saved, but those who do not believe shall be condemned." There's no room for trifling in this matter. He who believes and accepts shall find salvation, but the one who resists shall face damnation. People need to understand that when they are confronted with the Gospel, it's not something to be taken lightly or postponed. The choice is clear—either come in and be saved, or remain apart and perish. John, when preaching about forgiveness of sin in Matthew 3:10, declares, "Now the axe is laid to the root of the tree; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." "Now also the axe is laid to the root of the tree." Why not earlier? Previously, in their ignorance, they didn't comprehend sin and the grace of God extended to them for the pardon of their sins. During that time, God permitted their growth, even though they bore little or no fruit. However, now the axe is at the root. If the tree fails to bear good fruit, it will be felled and thrown into the fire.

Honouring the Pardoning Grace of God: How to Embrace and Uphold It

So, when you encounter the concept of the pardon of sin and the grace revealed in the Gospel, there are two possibilities: either you produce fruit, or you do not. If you do not, God is resolute in His response. If you come forth and embrace the Gospel, you will find salvation; however, if you do not, the axe is poised at your root to sever you. The Gospel operates swiftly, as Paul highlights in 2 Corinthians 2:14. Its potency is such that it can bring death through

its very fragrance. To those who believe, it brings the aroma of life leading to life; but for those who do not believe, it brings the scent of death leading to death. In the times of ignorance, God overlooked sin; when people were unaware of the wickedness of sin, God showed leniency. But now, He commands everyone to repent. In the past, when you were unaware of the grievous nature of sin, God might have overlooked it. However, now, having heard numerous sermons detailing the evil of sin, God expects you to repent. Otherwise, He will respond swiftly, as conveyed in Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful." Notice, in verse 2, it states, "Unto us was the gospel preached." It refers to the gospel message. In verse 8, it mentions, "If Jesus had given them rest," referring to the rest proclaimed in the gospel. Pay attention to the opening words: "Let us therefore fear." Why? Because the Word of God acts swiftly and promptly. No sermons have a quicker impact than those on the gospel. Fear lest you fall short. Fear lest you continue in a way that suggests you reject the gospel. This recalls God's dealings with ancient Israel. God never swore against them until they rejected the land of Canaan and preferred Egypt over it. When the spies were sent to scout the land, and they brought back grapes from it, they murmured due to the challenges in conquering it. At that point, God swore an oath that they would not enter it, despite their repeated provocations over forty years in the wilderness. It's a dire situation when God swears in His wrath that you will not enter His rest. If you persist in your sinful ways, ignoring God's truths, you're walking in the wilderness of your sins. However, if God has revealed the mysteries of the Gospel and the pardoning grace through Christ to you, and yet you still yearn for the comforts of your sinful life, be cautious. Fear the possibility that God might swear that you will never enter His rest. Those who were wicked, impure, or lived in sin while having a basic sense of right and wrong from their conscience were in less danger before hearing the Gospel's grace and pardon. Now, a drunkard, an immoral person, or someone indulging in vice is in greater danger of God's wrath. Every time you renew your sin, you risk God swearing in His wrath against you, prohibiting your entry into rest.

Now, if this is your concern, you might ask, "What should we do to honour this precious grace and glorify God through it?" Does your heart resonate with such questions, desiring above all else not to dishonour this invaluable grace? Is this the current disposition of your heart? Lord, though I've been negligent and unworthy in the past, I commit to dedicating my future to following whatever God commands, so I may not dishonour Him. Does your spirit exhibit such devotion? May the Lord preserve it. To provide guidance on this significant matter, I will first identify who are the ones pardoned; this will lay the groundwork for direction. Then, I will proceed to outline what you must do to attain it, offering guidance if you don't yet have evidence of it. Lastly, I will clarify how those who possess comforting evidence of this grace can honour God through their actions.

CHAPTER XVI.

Different Misconceptions Regarding the Forgiveness of Sins

Our current focus is to elucidate who are the recipients of forgiven sins. Nothing is as pertinent as understanding our standing with God and our souls, whether we have received pardon or not. Mistaken assumptions in this realm are indeed remarkable. However, numerous individuals stake the weight of this profound matter on flimsy, feeble grounds or even mere intuitions of their hearts. Thus, we must foremost strive to rectify people's misconceptions about the pardon of sin. Subsequently, we shall establish some reliable indicators of pardon that can engender authentic and solid peace.

People are remarkably prone to error when it comes to the pardon of sin. They often harbour the hope that God has absolved them and

will not hold their wrongdoings against them. Yet, these hopes are often grounded in frail premises that lead them astray. I implore you today to regard yourselves as standing before the Almighty, just as you inevitably will one day. Approach what we impart with the mindset that God is speaking directly to you. Imagine Him saying, "You, sinner, are privy to certain transgressions, and you are guilty of them. What can you offer in defence against a sentence of eternal damnation? Why should God not pass judgment against you in accordance with His law?" It's likely that most of you harbour some hope that God will never enforce the full weight of His law against you. Indeed, your eternal fate might be jeopardised if He did. Yet, what underpins your hopes? Why do you believe that God will not exact punishment for your sins but rather pardon you? Let us delve into the foundations of these beliefs, for they carry immense significance. Undoubtedly, many individuals have tumbled into the abyss of Hell due to their reliance on erroneous foundations. I shall endeavour to uncover the frailty of their stance, those who rest upon false bases,

Firstly, many believe that their sins have been pardoned due to the comparative insignificance of their transgressions. They assume that since their sins are relatively minor, pardon is a given. They reckon that if their sins were as heinous and notorious as those committed by others, they might indeed be in trouble. However, their own sins appear trifling in comparison, leading them to hope that God will overlook them. In response:

1. Understand that you fail to grasp the true nature and malignancy of sin. If you believe that even the smallest sin doesn't create a chasm between you and God that all the powers of Heaven and Earth combined cannot bridge, then you dismiss the profound impact of sin. If you disregard all the sermons you've heard concerning the wickedness of sin, it's indicative of a flawed perspective. Consider that just as a small penknife can fatally wound you, much like a massive sword, and a single shot from a pistol can be as deadly as a cannonball, a seemingly

insignificant sin can be as ruinous as a grievous one. Hence, the magnitude of your sins is not a valid argument for God's pardon.

2. God's act of pardoning is solely His prerogative. He exercises this prerogative by sometimes forgiving great sins while damning others for minor ones. Presuming that your sins are less severe than those of others, and thus hoping for forgiveness, overlooks the fact that God's mercy is His own to dispense. What if He pardons heinous crimes in one person while condemning you for a fleeting immoral thought? He has the authority to do so, for His mercy remains His prerogative. Consider David and Saul in comparison. David committed significant sins, notably adultery and murder, yet he was pardoned. Saul, on the other hand, committed fewer sins, yet he was rejected eternally. Saul's rejection by God was based on two sins:
3. He disobeyed Samuel's instructions to wait for his arrival, opting instead to offer a sacrifice prematurely. Despite Saul's intention to honour God, his impatience and disobedience resulted in God's disapproval.
4. Saul spared the best of the Amalekite spoils, supposedly with the intention of offering them in sacrifice. Even though his intentions were good, God viewed his actions as insubordination.

Although Saul committed other sins, these two were the ones on which God grounded His rejection. Conversely, David's heinous crimes didn't lead to rejection because God's prerogative allows Him to pardon one and condemn another. Your belief that your minor sins guarantee pardon reflects a flawed premise. Even if your sins are indeed minor compared to others, you must understand that God might forgive greater sins in others while condemning you for even the slightest transgressions. Hence, if your sole argument for pardon hinges on the size of your sins, I declare in the name of God that your sins are not pardoned. Without a stronger basis for their pardon,

your sins remain unforgiven, and you'll perish in them. Thus, never consider the comparative insignificance of your sins as evidence of their pardon.

Secondly, there might be others who argue, "My sins are not numerous; we're all guilty of transgressions, but I haven't amassed as many sins as others have. I'll briefly respond to that. Understand that even a single sin is enough to condemn you just as thoroughly as a million repeated transgressions. One chain can secure you in eternal darkness. God might condemn you for one sin just as He did the angels for their initial and solitary sin. So, your lack of numerous sins doesn't hold as an argument. Furthermore, when we examine the course of God's pardoning mercy, we see that He pardons some who have persisted in their sins for an extended period, while quickly judging others who have engaged in wickedness for a shorter span.

Consider the examples of Manasseh and Amon. If you compare the two, you'll find that Manasseh reigned for approximately 55 years. He was a notably wicked sinner against God, indulging in numerous abominations. For a substantial portion of his reign, he persisted in these evil ways before his conversion occurred later on. (2 Kings 21:1) He ascended to the throne at the age of 12 and ruled for 55 years in Jerusalem. During much of this time, he was engrossed in grievous sins. Nevertheless, God extended pardon to him.

Now, shift your attention to his son, Amon. He might have reasoned in his heart, "My father lived this way for years, pursuing his lusts and desires. Why shouldn't I follow in his footsteps?" Thus, he continued in his father's wickedness. However, note that God swiftly intervened. Amon's reign lasted only two years before he met his end. While Manasseh had a lengthy 55-year reign, his son, following in his father's sinful ways, faced divine judgment within a mere two years. Manasseh's path of abominations spanned decades, possibly enticing others to emulate him, while Amon's time was significantly shorter.

The lesson here is that some individuals can persist in immoralities and even enjoy external prosperity for several decades. But God might still choose to withhold His judgment. Yet, should you follow their example, He might swiftly intervene, punishing you for your initial or second act of disobedience, and consign you to the depths of Hell. Hence, don't assert that your sins are few, assuming that God will overlook them, for that reasoning holds no ground.

Thirdly, another false assumption is that some believe their sins are pardoned because they don't feel guilty about them on their consciences. They argue that the sins were committed long ago, and much time has passed without any reminders. They think that God has overlooked those sins because they happened a while back and have remained unheard of. Let me address this. Don't delude yourselves, even if you haven't heard about the sins you committed twenty, forty, or sixty years ago, it's not proof that they are pardoned. They could be documented in Heaven, standing as a debt against you. Even if those sins were committed eighty years ago, don't think you're pardoned just because you haven't heard about them. It's not a convincing argument that a criminal is pardoned because the trial isn't scheduled for tomorrow or the next day. Indeed, God will hold His trial sooner for some and later for others. The reason you haven't heard about your sins is that God's day of reckoning hasn't arrived. Exodus 32:34 declares, "In the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them." God has His appointed time for visitation, and perhaps your day hasn't come yet. Therefore, assuming you're discharged just because God's visitation hasn't occurred is misleading.

Secondly, realise that though your sins were committed decades ago, they are, in God's eternal perspective, as if they were committed this very morning before you came to this gathering. Even if you committed those sins forty or fifty years ago, to God, they're akin to a sin committed yesterday. You might believe your conscience would trouble you if you were drunk last night and then came to partake in the Sacrament this morning. Surely, only a desperate and utterly wicked individual would dare to approach the Sacrament in such a

state without making peace with God. Your conscience might haunt you unless you are devoid of reason. However, for God, your sins of forty or fifty years ago hold the same weight as if they were committed only this morning. This concept requires clear understanding. It's meant to humble individuals and make them reflect on their sins, acknowledging their gravity. These sins are presented before God as if they occurred this very moment. In Job 14:16-17, Job speaks of God watching over his sins and sealing up iniquity in a bag. Just as the Clerk of the Assizes retrieves indictments from his bag to read in court, God retrieves and reads your sins openly before both humankind and angels.

A scriptural example of God's judgment for past sins can be seen in the account of Joseph's brothers. They sold Joseph into slavery and didn't face consequences until a long time after the act. Perhaps their consciences weren't troubled until two decades later when they arrived in Egypt and experienced affliction. Joseph was seventeen when sold, and he stood before Pharaoh at age thirty, leaving a thirteen-year gap. Seven years of plenty and two years of famine in Egypt add another twenty-two years. It took twenty-two years for their consciences to stir, causing them to regret their sin against Joseph. Be cautious, for the sins of your youth might torment you in old age. Even if you overlook it now, remember that God might confront you for your youthful sins when you're older. This should serve as a strong warning against sin. The sins you commit now might bring harm to you forty or sixty years later. Just as the recklessness of youth leads to physical ailments in old age, sins of youth may later haunt your soul. Joab's youthful sins caught up with him in his old age, revealing that God's judgment doesn't dissipate with time. So, don't assume your sins are pardoned merely because they occurred long ago. Instead, reflect on your past sins, lament them, and don't rest on the assumption that the passage of time equates to pardon. You must seek other foundations, or your eternal fate could be dire. This ground will undoubtedly crumble beneath you.

Fourthly, there are those who believe that God has pardoned their sins not only because these transgressions were committed long ago, but also because they have enjoyed prosperity. They believe that God has shown them favour and blessed them, suggesting that if God hadn't pardoned their sins, He wouldn't have allowed them to prosper. I'll touch briefly on this reasoning, though it's quite unfounded. I'll focus more on other arguments. Be aware that using prosperity as evidence of God's pardon can actually indicate God's eternal curse. Allowing a person to thrive after committing great sins might signify that God has allowed that person to become hardened of heart, which is a tremendously dire curse. After Saul was rejected by God (as described in 1 Samuel 14 and 15), he experienced some success immediately afterward. Similarly, individuals who have been rejected by God might still achieve success. If you're a sailor, you can't conclude that your sins are pardoned because you've had a successful voyage and overcome dangers, even if you've committed numerous transgressions. Many successful voyages don't equate to God's reconciliation; you could still face consequences for the sins committed during those voyages. Saul had successes in warfare, yet he was ultimately cast off.

Fifthly, there are others who claim they're not foolish enough to rely on outward prosperity as evidence that their sins are pardoned. They declare that they feel genuine sorrow for their sins, repent of them, turn away from them, and trust in God's mercy through Christ for their pardon. These are indeed arguments of greater weight than the previous ones. If true sorrow, genuine repentance, reform, and trust in God's mercy through Jesus Christ exist, they can indeed serve as strong arguments. However, I'll now demonstrate that even when all these conditions are met, sins might still not be pardoned. Even a reliance on Christ, or at least a belief that one relies on Christ, doesn't necessarily guarantee the pardon of sins.

Though these recent points may seem challenging, testing them is both secure and beneficial. Making a mistake here could lead to your downfall. You examine evidence when dealing with matters of

property and land; do the same when it comes to the significant matters concerning God and your souls. Concerning sorrow for sin, let me clarify that there can be substantial remorse for sin, yet the sin remains unpardoned. Consider the example of Ahab in 1 Kings 21:27-29. When Ahab heard the prophet's words confronting his sin, he immediately showed deep sorrow by tearing his clothes and donning sackcloth, even placing it upon his skin. He fasted, went about humbly, and exhibited remorse. His heart's arrogance appeared to diminish, and God acknowledged it in verse 29: "See how Ahab has humbled himself before me." Despite this display, Ahab's sin was neither pardoned nor would ever be forgiven. Allow me to ask you this morning, aren't many of you hoping for the pardon of your sins while falling short of Ahab's level of repentance? Your repentance might merely involve saying, "God, have mercy on me. I'm sorry; forgive me," and that's the extent of it—everything's done in an instant. Yet Ahab went much further, and still, his sin was not pardoned. Look at the example of Esau. The Scripture states that he sought his father's blessing with tears, yet he found no opportunity for a change of heart. This rejection of blessing was indicative of his rejection from heavenly blessings. Some interpret this to illustrate that tears can accompany non-genuine repentance, which is accurate. Esau was genuinely troubled and shed many tears, but true repentance was absent. However, I interpret the text differently: he found no place for repentance in his father, Isaac. Isaac had already given the blessing to Jacob and couldn't revoke it, even though Esau sought it with tears. There was no place left for Isaac to reverse his decision. This illustrates that you can be deeply sorry, cry numerous tears, and still, God might remain unresponsive, offering no chance for a change of heart. In the case of Judas, it's said that he repented when he saw Jesus condemned. Yet, even though it's mentioned he repented, Judas wasn't pardoned. Clearly, there can be repentance without pardon. True repentance does indeed come with pardon; however, the Scripture talks about a kind of repentance that might not lead to pardon. Thus, when you claim to repent, don't mistakenly believe that your sins are automatically pardoned due to your repentance. Not every form of repentance is genuine. You might

misunderstand the essence of repentance, believing that genuine repentance leads to salvation by being truly sorrowful at heart for your sins. Nevertheless, it's possible to experience deep sorrow and still face eternal loss. Judas likely experienced heartfelt sorrow, wishing he hadn't committed his betrayal. He might have regretted his actions profoundly and declared he would never do it again. Indeed, he demonstrated remorse by returning the thirty pieces of silver. Thus, assuming that this form of repentance is adequate is a serious misjudgment. So, where do our shortcomings lie?

I won't delve deeply into the doctrine of genuine repentance at this point. My focus is to address it insofar as to convince you that it isn't a valid basis for hoping for the pardon of sin. Here's the essence: when your repentance arises because you realize that sin will bring you trouble, you're primarily concerned about the adverse consequences it may bring. You've already tasted the pleasure or benefit of sin, and now you see that it will lead you into danger. Naturally, you're remorseful about the trouble that sin might cause you. However, if God were to be content with this kind of sorrow, there would be enough of it in hell. In hell, there's wailing and sorrow due to the afflictions sin has brought upon them. Feeling sorrow because of the difficulties that our sins attract is a common reaction rooted in human nature. But this isn't an indication of saving repentance; it's a far cry from it. Hence, the kind of repentance that many anticipate goes something like this: they want to enjoy the pleasure of sin and, when confronted with the punishment, they wish to be sorry and repent for it. People typically counter this notion by saying, "How can you be sure you'll live long enough or that your heart won't be hardened?" Nevertheless, even if you live and retain a soft heart, your form of repentance might still fail you. If your repentance is only derived from sorrow due to the fear of punishment, it's insufficient. Undoubtedly, the repentance that holds weight in heaven is of a different nature. I may elucidate the distinctions between true and false sorrow later, but presently, I'll address where the misunderstanding lies.

So, whoever believes that their sins are pardoned solely based on their sorrow—especially this kind of sorrow—is akin to someone trying to construct a substantial edifice on a marsh or sandy ground. In scriptural terms, this is comparable to building a house on sand, as when storms arrive, the structure collapses. I'll discuss those who build on sandy foundations later; for now, let's focus on those who build on a marsh, relying on a few tears and the distress of spirit that arises from the dread of sin's punishment. This kind of foundation will crumble in times of adversity and danger. It's why those who place their hope on sorrow never truly experience peace. After all, how can I quantify the sorrow required before I can attain peace? If individuals don't sense enough sorrow, they start doubting again. It's perilous to anchor the hope of sin's pardon on our personal sorrow.

So, where should we rest our hopes? On the sorrow of Jesus Christ. Here, you'll find the most steadfast ground (although there could be some misconceptions here as well, I won't dwell on that presently). We should focus on the sorrows of Christ ten thousand times more than our own sorrows. When your hearts are troubled, and you seek mercy, place your trust overwhelmingly on the sorrows of Christ rather than on your personal sorrows. The sorrow for your sin cannot appease God's justice. Anything that serves as a foundation of hope for the pardon of my sin must be something that satisfies God's justice. Despite your utmost sorrow, it will not satisfy God's justice. Consider this: genuine sorrow more often follows the work of justification rather than preceding it. To clarify, I am not pardoned because I grieve; rather, because I am pardoned, I come to mourn. This is how the truth stands in the realms of theology concerning justification and repentance. If you think that mourning and being somewhat sorrowful will lead to your pardon, you're distorting the sequence. Truthfully, if your sorrow and mourning stem from authentic, saving grace, you grieve and sorrow because you're justified. Sorrow of genuine repentance predominantly emanates from pardon; it isn't the other way around. When God pardons sin, He releases the graces of His Spirit. Subsequently, sorrow emerges as a fruit or sign of God's forgiving love and reconciliation. While God

might bestow external favours upon an unpardoned individual, He never imparts His Spirit to instigate any saving grace within the heart unless reconciliation has occurred. This outpouring of His Spirit and the work of sorrow and repentance are consequences of His pardoning grace and favour. Because He has justified you, He sends His Spirit to facilitate sorrow and repentance. Some assume that justification is an outcome of sorrow, but the path to sorrow and repentance takes a different route. Know that all genuine sorrow stems from justification. The sorrow that exists before justification is essentially legal sorrow and reveals certain barriers that could hinder your connection with Christ, such as sin and the terror of the law.

And God's wrath doesn't provoke a connection with the soul in Christ. I firmly assert this as an indisputable divine truth: no sorrow can establish a soul in Christ. The sorrow that occurs within them before justification might, in the order of events, lead them to God and prompt them to inquire about Christ. It might stir their hearts to remove hindrances that keep them from Christ. However, it doesn't establish the soul in Christ. If you believe that sorrow establishes the soul in Christ, you've misunderstood the essence of the Gospel. The true way is through faith, which lays hold of Christ for justification. Subsequently, repentance's sorrow follows. You might perceive yourself as a lost and wretched sinner due to sin, and no worldly thing can console you. This can occur due to the Law's influence. Then, God reveals His grace in Christ, enabling you to embrace it for justification. Evangelical sorrow emerges, a deeper and more poignant mourning than before. Yet, it emerges differently now, stemming from the Spirit of God melting the soul, primarily because it has sinned against Jesus Christ. Christ's pardoning mercy has so graciously revealed itself to the soul. Consequently, you sorrow because you're pardoned. This sorrow arises as a result of faith's grasp of God's pardoning grace. Few arguments in the world can induce sorrow as much as faith telling the soul that sin is forgiven.

Even if your previous sorrow was minimal and has now intensified, don't be troubled. If God deepens your humility for sin after knowing

your pardon, you needn't worry. God's revelation of grace through the pardon of your sin is the most powerful means to humble your soul. The sorrows of God's children after pardon impact both their hearts and God's heart. God is profoundly moved by it. Once your sins are forgiven, God causes your heart to melt towards Him, just as His heart melts towards you. In contrast, the sorrow of someone who remains hostile to God doesn't soften God's heart. There's a significant distinction between the sorrow of God's children and that of others. Some place sorrow as the basis for pardon, but this God doesn't accept. Yes, you may experience sorrow due to sin, as it might lead you to Christ. However, it's the union with Christ through faith that justifies the soul. All sorrow that fosters repentance towards salvation flows from God's grace in Christ, having justified you. Justification is the initial aspect that establishes you in blessedness. Sorrow doesn't lay the foundation for your blessed state; rather, it's a consequence of the blessedness in which you've been established.

These are truly the divine truths. Therefore, when you seek blessedness through any other means, you're essentially pursuing it in a natural or heathen-like manner. Even a heathen knows not to offend God, acknowledges the need for God's mercy, and recognises the need for sorrow over their sins. I could provide numerous examples, but I must expedite my explanation. So, those who pursue the pardon of sin through this route are seeking it in a purely natural manner.

Secondly, there are those who say, "I'm not only sorry for my sins, but I'm also making changes and reforming. Isn't this a basis for receiving pardon?" However, understand that it's possible to leave behind sinful habits and yet not have your sins pardoned. Consider the example of Herod. It's said that he listened to John the Baptist with enthusiasm and made many changes in his conduct. He was undoubtedly influenced by John's preaching, and yet Herod was not pardoned. This serves as a significant example for those who attend sermons, seem deeply moved, and are visibly affected. Allow me to

pose this question in the name of God: What specific evils have you reformed in your life since hearing sermons about the wrongness of sin and now about the forgiveness of sin? What wrongs have you rectified in your families and in your hearts? I dare hope that many of you can say, through God's grace, "These were the faults in my family before, but now I've addressed them. These were the wrongs I committed, but now I've ceased." Many can probably claim such progress, and we must be thankful to God if anything positive emerges from our preaching efforts. If Sabbaths are better observed, family duties are established, and personal religious practices are conducted; if you're less prideful, less hot-tempered, and less obstinate—oh, that these improvements might be the case! It's certainly worthwhile to restrain sin, thus honouring God to a greater extent. Even if nothing else changes, that's still a significant outcome. However, our preaching has loftier goals and purposes. We don't preach merely for surface-level reform; our aim is that souls wouldn't be content with reform alone.

Herod heard John the Baptist, and he did various commendable things, yet this doesn't provide a foundation for the pardon of sin. Those who base their hope of pardon on their sorrow are building on a quagmire. Similarly, those who rely on their reformation are building on sand. The person who depends on their sorrow for pardon is like someone who digs deep for a foundation but fails to remove the old soil before building upon it. The person relying on reformation not only digs deep but also clears away the old debris and introduces new soil—a commendable change. However, even after this thorough process, they still build on it, not on the solid foundation of Christ. They introduce their own efforts, works, and duties as the new soil, which they build upon. They fail to build upon the true foundation, which is Christ, for the pardon of their sins and the justification of their souls before God. This error leads to their downfall. Yet, it's an undeniable truth that each of us would fall into this misconception if the Gospel didn't reveal an alternative way to receive pardon and justification through God's Son. Without this revelation, we would all likely stop at this point and not go any

further. No person on earth who hasn't heard the Gospel would proceed beyond this stage. Indeed, we can dig deep, discard the old debris, and introduce new soil—all without the Gospel's influence. Therefore, we should be immensely grateful that the mysteries of the Gospel are unveiled to us. Without this revelation, we'd remain stagnant, and if we stagnate, we'd certainly perish. Consequently, if we limit ourselves to this point, it's not building on the solid foundation of Christ. Therefore, the foundation for faith in justification cannot be found in reformation or anything within ourselves. It must be in something outside of us, beyond us, and yet accessed through faith—faith that's generated within us. This is the Rock, Christ, and the foundational truth for the forgiveness of our sins. This is the foundation of our faith, not our own deeds or accomplishments.

1. Understand that all the reformation in the world won't make up for the wrongs you've committed in the past. I want to impress this upon you, and I hope you're open to hearing it, as it could greatly benefit you. When we preach about Christ and free grace, our aim is to lead you to Christ. Our emphasis on diminishing the importance of works isn't to discourage you from doing them, but to prevent you from placing your ultimate trust in them. My intention is to cultivate a mindset of seeking, of restlessness within you, so that we can guide you towards true rest. Rest assured, we're equally eager to guide you towards true rest as we are to inspire a sense of restlessness within you. Understand that no future reformation will appease God for past transgressions. This is a truth I wish to instill in you.

Consider this analogy: if you owe your landlord several quarters of rent and you only bring one quarter's worth when you have three or four quarters or even two or three years in arrears, thinking that this single quarter's payment would cover it all, it would be regarded as a foolish notion. Similarly, you err if you believe that the current duties you perform could satisfy the accumulated debts of your past. If you think that by doing what you're doing now, you can make up for all

your past wrongs, you don't truly understand how God operates. Even if your present deeds were flawless and you never sinned again in the future, it wouldn't be enough to make amends for the past. This perspective solely focuses on the future without addressing past wrongs. Furthermore, in your best efforts at reformation, you might still provide God with enough grounds to condemn you—not only for your prior sins but also for sins committed during your reforming process. Yet, even if your reformations were completely sinless, they would still not serve as atonement for past sins. Recognise this: for your sins to be pardoned, the foundation for that pardon must cover both your past and future sins. This truth was unveiled when I explained the mysteries of godliness regarding the pardon and justification of a sinner.

2. Realise this: God accepts your actions not for the actions themselves, but because He accepts you as the one performing them. God's manner isn't to first accept your actions and then you as the performer; rather, He first accepts you and then your actions. God never approves of what you do until He first approves of you. For instance, God's regard was first for Abel as a person and then for his offerings. Similarly, God's initial attention is always on a person, and subsequently on their offerings. You might consider yourself a pitiable soul and think that if you possessed certain qualities and accomplished certain tasks, then perhaps God would accept you. Yet, let me clarify: all your abilities and performances are meaningless until God accepts you. Even St. Paul, who lived blamelessly according to the Law, counted it as loss for the sake of Christ. He realised that God's revelation of the Gospel made it clear that he couldn't be accepted based on his righteousness alone. Instead, God must first accept him as a person, and then his righteousness. Therefore, although good works and a life of sanctification are nurturing influences for faith, if you make them the origin of your faith, your faith is illegitimate. If your faith is conceived solely from your duties and performances, without a different source, then your faith is illegitimate and not genuinely born. It

lacks the proper origin. The authentic mother of faith is the revelation of God's grace in the Gospel covenant, made known to the soul through the mediation of the Son of God. This revelation, brought forth by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, sparks and generates faith in the soul. This is the birth of genuine, saving faith—the faith of God's chosen people, as the Scriptures say. Duties and performances cannot serve as its mother. It has a loftier birth than the kind of faith born from abilities, duties, or performances. If your faith has no foundation beyond your sorrow and reformation, it's an illegitimate faith and not the kind that leads to salvation. As you can see, many misunderstand this significant aspect of a sinner's justification and the path to becoming blessed. Hence, we must be vigilant to ensure that what we rely upon will hold firm. Otherwise, when we come to claim and seek blessedness, our foundation might deceive us. Some people believe that the crux of religion is merely having faith in Jesus Christ and repenting. Yet, from the points I've discussed, it's evident that the journey of true faith requires a great deal of soul-searching and the profound guidance of the Holy Spirit. Mistakes can abound along the way to achieving peace with God. This is a matter of utmost importance, not something to be taken lightly or done hastily.

Some declare, "We trust in God's mercy," and here I'll address two distinct groups. Firstly, those who are profoundly ignorant, relying solely on the notion that God is merciful for their hope of pardon: Grasp this understanding—although you hear that God is merciful and desires not the destruction of humankind—Scripture clearly reveals that despite His grace and mercy, the majority of the world perish in their sins. It's evident that most people on Earth do indeed perish. Therefore, merely stating that God is merciful is insufficient. You might repent, reform your ways, and acknowledge God's mercy, yet still face ruin. If these three factors were sufficient, then why did the Son of God have to descend, take on human form, endure the curse for mankind's sin, sacrifice His life, and shed His precious blood? Why couldn't these three factors suffice without Christ's

intervention? If Christ had never come, I could still have felt sorrow, reformed my life, and proclaimed God's mercy. Those who are oblivious to Christ and His message can still feel remorse, reform their ways, and acknowledge God's mercy. Contemplate this point: I can never attain forgiveness and salvation in a manner that could be achieved even if Christ had never come. I can never be pardoned and saved through all the means I employ for pardon and salvation, if those means could still exist without Christ's intervention. If you're left with nothing else to depend upon, then you'll never achieve salvation. Reflect on this: What changes have I made within myself that I couldn't have made if Christ had never entered the world? Many of the things upon which most people rely for pardon and salvation could have existed without Christ's intervention. Furthermore, you say, "God is merciful." True, the mercy of God is a comforting and wonderful concept. Our souls rejoice in exploring the grace and mercy of God, as I've endeavored to do by revealing the Gospel's message. However, God's mercy is freely given. Although He delights in magnifying His mercy, He has countless subjects through which to display it—even if you were to face eternal perdition. Even if you were to perish eternally, God's mercy can still shine through the blessedness of His mercy. God has numerous entities to glorify His mercy besides you. Just as a beggar might approach someone for alms and not receive any, it doesn't imply that the person lacks mercy. He has other recipients who are more appropriate. It's not a discredit to His compassion if He doesn't provide for everyone. The same applies to God: He has countless recipients for His mercy, even if you perish. Moreover, you assert that God is merciful and therefore you hope for pardon. Yet, consider this: God has shown immense mercy to you beyond your comprehension. He has already demonstrated His mercy to you. Acknowledge that you are alive at this very moment—this is due to God's mercy. You possess the ability to see, hear, and employ your senses. You stand here today amidst the means of grace, with God inviting you to repent and believe in His Son, even as you persist in sin and spiritual deadness. He sends His Son and His Spirit to you, conveying His intent to rescue you and grant you life. Isn't this an abundance of mercy? Perhaps you have

already received your share of mercy, intended for you by God. You may have received so much mercy that even angels and saints will applaud God for the mercy He extended to you, despite your potential perdition. God has displayed His mercy toward you in various ways, to the extent that even demons themselves would acknowledge His benevolence towards His creation. Furthermore, you speak of mercy. Haven't you misused and exploited mercy for your own desires? The mercy you now mention could possibly be pleading with God against you at this very moment. It might be saying, "How has this wretched individual abused me? The more I've displayed my beauty and excellence, the more wicked they've become." What if mercy is presently standing against you—those very mercies you've misused? Therefore, you ought to seek something more substantial to anchor your soul upon than just claiming that God is merciful. This applies to the first group, those who are profoundly ignorant.

Secondly, there are others who grieve, pray, and reform, placing their reliance on God's mercy to pardon them for the sake of His mercy. To them, I say this: Understand that God's mercy must be embraced according to His divine plan; He has ordained the means through which it is communicated, and it must be received in that way. Otherwise, it will never result in the pardon of your sin. Note this: All the mercy inherent in God as the Creator of Heaven and Earth, unmediated through the person of Jesus Christ, God-man, has never led to the pardon of any single sin. Therefore, if you focus solely on God's mercy and neglect the proper conduit for its bestowal, you are prone to a grave misunderstanding. The foundation of faith that justifies is not merely casting oneself upon the general notion of God's mercy (for even in a natural sense, people recognise God's merciful nature). The primary basis for justification or justifying faith is the free grace of God through Jesus Christ, that God is merciful through a Mediator. Otherwise, if your faith is founded solely on a vague concept of God's mercy, it will undoubtedly falter. Even a non-believer could have as much basis for their faith, reasoning that the supreme Creator of Heaven and Earth pities those

in distress, and since I am in distress, I will cry out to Him, reform my life, and rely on Him. This far a non-believer can go. However, the true foundation of faith is not merely the overall mercy of God, but the mercy of God through a Mediator. Observe this further: The foundation of justifying faith is not the belief that, for Christ's sake, God will forgive me based on what Christ has done to secure my pardon. Rather, there is another aspect of faith's work within the souls of believers, even if the soul does not comprehend it. The work of faith in justification isn't to believe that Christ has paid an amount equivalent to my debt. Instead, the work of faith is to bring the soul to Christ, and to firmly attach it to the person of Christ—to claim Him as mine, and thereafter to make the righteousness of Christ mine. The process isn't just about believing that a certain amount has been paid to satisfy my debt; it is akin to bringing yourself to marry a person. Through this union, the debt becomes the responsibility of the person you're married to. He will discharge the debt because of this union. So, the foundation of faith isn't merely looking to God through His Son to attain pardon. Instead, I must come to possess Christ as mine. I must become united with Christ in marriage. Through this union with Christ's person, I come to inherit all that Christ has done and suffered. Therefore, when I contemplate the richness of God's grace in Christ's mediation, I must do so with the eyes of faith, aiming to be united with Christ through marriage. Christ and I become one, and thus, the richness of God's grace in Christ becomes applicable to me. This exemplifies the concept I previously explained about the abundance of God's grace in Christ's mediation. We are now employing it as an illustration to underscore the dangers of constructing faith upon false foundations when relying on God for pardon.

Furthermore, although mercy from God leads to the pardon of sin, it doesn't work in this manner: "You have sinned, and My law mandates certain actions to be performed under specific conditions; otherwise, you will perish. However, due to My mercy, I will forgive some of the strictness and severity of the Law." Many people admit that they are condemned by the Law's strictness, yet they hope that

God's mercy will grant some leniency to the Law. This resembles the human legal system, where executing all punitive measures would be exceedingly harsh. However, a legal system usually includes provisions for mitigating the severity of punitive measures. In this light, people attempt to attain pardon by interacting with God in a way akin to dealing with humans. You believe that imploring God for mercy will mitigate the strictness and severity of the Law. However, you err by assuming that this approach will lead to reconciliation and peace with God. God's mercy does not lie in merely reducing the strictness and severity of the Law. Instead, God's mercy operates by finding a surety for you and then negotiating the debt upon that surety.

Moreover, contemplate the function of God's mercy in justifying a sinner when faith seizes upon it. Faith must not simply lay hold of it as a solitary act, but rather, consider all the components of God's gracious work in facilitating the justification of a sinner. The mercy of God operates in multiple ways, and faith should engage with God's grace, taking into account the diversity of its actions in bringing about the justification of a sinner. For instance, you have sinned and you cry out to God for pardon. However, God's mercy doesn't function in a solitary manner to merely pardon you. Instead, God's mercy operates in various ways towards mankind.

Firstly, He chooses to establish a second covenant with mankind after the initial one had been broken. A second facet of God's mercy involves employing His wisdom to identify a means by which mankind could be reconciled to Him, and their sins forgiven, all while God remains uncompromised. This intricate task showcases His boundless wisdom. Thirdly, when a solution is determined – one achievable only through the Son of God assuming human nature and enduring suffering – this is where God's mercy shines. His willingness to send His Son as an intermediary for wretched creatures reflects His mercy. There's also an additional mercy in entrusting your soul to His Son. It's essential to note that His Son was sent not to secure the pardon of all, but specifically to redeem

those whom God the Father had chosen since eternity past. Consequently, there's a significant display of God's mercy in choosing some while bypassing others, and granting you to His Son.

Furthermore, the potent ministry of the Gospel plays a role in revealing these truths. Additionally, God's mercy is at work when He draws you to embrace His Son, uniting you in a spiritual marriage with Him. Moreover, it's an act of God's mercy to reassure you of the pardon and justification of your soul. Faith ought to perceive God in this comprehensive manner rather than reducing it to a mere assertion that God is merciful and you trust in His grace for pardon. We greatly misconstrue God's mercy when we fail to perceive it through an Evangelical lens, as it's illuminated in the Gospel.

Furthermore, understand that if God's mercy is powerful enough to pardon your sin and save your soul, then it's undoubtedly potent enough to strip away the dominion of sin, preventing you from persisting in the mire of transgression. Numerous individuals assume that God's mercy will manifest remarkably in the future, yet it will have minimal impact now compared to the future. They anticipate that God will grant them temporal blessings but withhold spiritual blessings until later. Undeniably, it's an absolute certainty that if God's mercy doesn't operate forcefully in the present to bestow spiritual blessings upon you, you can be confident it will not operate so powerfully in the future to save your soul.

Can you imagine a scenario where a ruler pardons a criminal, ensuring they won't be executed, yet permits them to languish in a prison cell and decay in a dungeon? Such a pardon would be incomplete and insufficient, sparing them from the gallows only to allow them to waste away in confinement. Certainly, while rulers might behave this way, God never grants pardon in such a manner. When He extends mercy to pardon from damnation, He also liberates and breaks the chains. We'll explore this concept further. Hence, if you claim to hope in God's mercy for pardon, I must inquire: What transformation has it initiated in you? If you assume

that God's mercy will operate mightily in the future to save your soul, rest assured it's just as potent now to sanctify you. If God's mercy isn't working powerfully within you to sanctify you now, it's improbable that it will work so compellingly to save you later.

Lastly, there are those who assert that they aren't solely contrite for their sins, reformed, and relying on God's mercy, but they also put their trust in God's mercy through Christ. Hence, they hope for pardon. I could certainly address this at length. While it's valid to place our reliance there, there's a misapprehension here too. Trusting in Christ isn't a mere fleeting thought that passes by; it's a steadfast commitment. Often, when people hear that salvation is exclusively through Christ, they can't deny it. Because they're unwilling to believe they are beyond salvation, they avoid holding negative opinions about themselves. Thus, upon learning that Christ is the only way, they convince themselves they will find mercy through Him. However, true reliance on Christ is a substantial endeavour. Faith's work isn't a brief, fleeting activity or a few passing thoughts focused on being saved through Christ. Absolutely not. Genuine faith and true reliance on Christ entail a profound work of the Spirit of God. It elevates the soul beyond its own limitations, surmounting all challenges. This faith brings the soul to trust in God in ways that may often be misconceived. Many may claim they rely on Christ, yet consider this a conviction: relying on Christ isn't just about thinking that my sins are pardoned by Christ. It's about receiving Christ, possessing Christ, entering into Christ, abiding in Christ, and inviting Christ to reside within me. It's akin to consuming the flesh and blood of Christ, deriving nourishment and strength from Him, just as the body is nourished by the food it consumes. Faith imparts this sustenance to the soul. It's not a shallow notion like water passing through a pipe, leaving no lasting impact. For most people, thoughts are ephemeral. However, faith accomplishes something far greater – it invites Christ into the soul and ushers the soul into Christ. It feeds on Him and draws life from Him. This is genuine reliance on Christ for pardon, where the accompanying blessings and comforts of pardon are ever-present.

Having heard these truths, depart and implore God to establish things correctly within your souls. Address your hearts, saying, "Lord, I realise that anchoring my heart in Christ for justification and pardon is a more profound undertaking than I previously grasped. Had I died before, I surely would have passed away holding onto some of these misconceptions. Lord, anchor my heart correctly in this significant matter." Do not leave with thoughts like, "The preacher discusses these misconceptions, but I'm confident it's not the case for me." Refrain from treating our words lightly. When we speak to you, it's in the name of God. Neglecting to scrutinise our words through the lens of the Word is a grave misuse of God's name. Therefore, be aware that today, in the name of God, you are instructed to examine what foundations you rely on for the pardon of your sins, to prevent misconceptions. To aid you further, we'll offer some positive foundations upon which you can securely rest for the pardon of your sins.

CHAPTER XVII:

True Indicators of Sin Forgiveness

However, if we were to ask, "Who are the ones whose sins have been forgiven?" it's certain that they are not numerous. This passage signifies it in the singular form: "Blessed is he who has his sin forgiven." Considering what has been discussed regarding misconceptions, it's evident that only a few fall into this category. Yet, there are some, and today, in the name of the Lord, the purpose is to convey to certain afflicted souls that their sins have been forgiven. This message, I hope, is intended for various individuals present in this gathering. It's delivered on behalf of Christ, assuring them, "Take comfort, my son and daughter, your sins have been

pardoned." Indeed, blessed is the individual, man or woman, who today hears this joyful proclamation resounding in their hearts. Furthermore, blessed is the person who has the Spirit of God bearing witness to their spirit, affirming, "As I have heard, so have I experienced this day that the indicators of sin forgiveness that have been communicated, I have tangibly felt within my own soul."

So, what are these indicators?

Firstly, the Apostle provides insight in Romans 8:30: "Moreover, whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified." Justification primarily involves the remission and pardon of sin. The Holy Spirit affirms that those He has called, He has justified. If you wish to discern your justification and the pardoning of your sins, the Spirit of God reveals that it isn't a mere assertion from me, but it originates from the Holy Ghost: "Whom He has called, He has justified." Calling is a definite evidence of Justification. This Calling, or Vocation, forms the second link that connects the two links of that golden chain mentioned in that verse. The first link is God's foreknowledge and Predestination, followed by Vocation, then Justification, and finally Glorification. Thus, Predestination and Calling are joined together, as well as Calling and Election. In 2 Peter 1:10, they are encouraged to make their Calling and Election sure. Note that while Election is sure from God's perspective, Vocation is the starting point from our standpoint. Ensure your Calling, and thereby secure your Election, Justification, and Glorification. Now, what does Vocation mean?

For clarification, there is an outward call and an inward call. When God dispatches His Ministers to proclaim the Gospel and the path of Salvation, it's nothing other than God summoning souls from paths of sin and death into the path of life. Those who gather to hear the Gospel's message must recognise that it is God's call to sinners to turn and repent. When you attend to hear the Gospel's proclamation, that is God's call for you to come and repent. To those living in sin, God calls the Drunkard, the Unchaste, and others, urging them to

repent. As you listen to the Word, God is calling you. Just as you hope for God to heed your plea for mercy when you call out in your time of need, realise that as I call and cry through the Ministry of the Word, I am doing so on God's behalf. Would you want me to listen to your cry when you beseech for mercy? Are you now listening as I call out to you? Oh, that people would comprehend the significance of the Ministry of the Word as God's call for sinners to return and repent. Look beyond the human messenger, recognising that it is God's voice speaking through them. Therefore, it is perilous for people to neglect, resist, or rebel against the Ministry of the Word. There's reason to hope that God has chosen certain souls in a particular location where the Ministry of the Word is sent. God doesn't send the call of the Gospel to a place unless there are souls meant to be called. Hence, if God's Gospel call reaches you,

Secondly, apart from the external call, there is an internal call that the Apostle speaks of. Many have heard the outward call of the Word to embrace Faith and Repentance, yet they meet eternal destruction. However, those whom God intends to rescue and truly loves, He approaches them with an inner call. This internal call of God operates in the following manner: God observes a wretched sinner trapped in the paths of sin, death, and damnation. He reaches out through a secret and potent voice, penetrating their very heart. "Oh, sinner, reflect on your current state. What are you doing? Where are you headed? What lies at the end of your path? You are moving away from God, from happiness and life, towards dismal misery and unfathomable perdition. Turn, turn, oh sinner, away from these treacherous and perilous paths, or you shall be lost eternally. Behold, here is the way to life before you. Observe my Son, sent into the world to atone for your sin and guide you towards godliness, which leads to eternal life. Turn, sinner, towards these paths."

This divine voice addressing a person's soul arrives with power, an overwhelming force that influences the heart. It's akin to the enigmatic voice described in Isaiah 30:21: "And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' when you turn

to the right hand and when you turn to the left." This is a promise of God's mercy, converting people to Himself. Those who have only outwardly professed faith will hear a voice urging them from behind, saying, "This is the way, turn into it." This occurs when God summons a sinner from paths of death and destruction. Such a sinner hears a voice behind them. They might have attended many sermons and heard voices externally and in front of them, but this time, it's an inner, secret voice speaking to the soul: "Turn away from your sinful ways. Why do you choose to perish eternally?" This secret call from God engages in reasoning with the soul. It's not mere reasoning; it's a voice infused with power and divine efficacy. It propels this work within the soul and compels the heart to listen and surrender to God. When God calls the soul towards the path of life, the soul responds, "Lord, I come." With a trembling heart, it cries out, similar to Saul at his conversion, "Lord, what do you want me to do?" No longer asking what sin or lust desires of them, but fully understanding that the way of life and salvation is the only blessed path. At this moment, salvation arrives, along with reconciliation with Jesus Christ. For "whom He has called, them He has justified." Observe the impact of the call in Isaiah 30:21: "Your ears shall hear a word behind you." The fruits of this call follow: "You shall defile also the covering of your graven images with silver... cast them away as a menstruous cloth." Previously, they took delight in their lavish images adorned with silver and gold, but now, upon hearing the voice, they cast these objects away like filthy rags. This is God's call – when a soul perceives an inward secret voice that many cannot. Amid a multitude, a humble servant or youth stands, hearing a voice others do not, a secret prevailing voice. This voice resonates within their soul, causing them to yield immediately, even before leaving the church. They declare, "Lord, today you have exposed the evil of sin to me and revealed the path of life and salvation. I come to you." Even if they saw nothing, and no one else hears that voice, a secret divine voice reaches the soul. Though they stand amid the crowd, the voice impacts them. At that moment, pardon for sin enters their soul, as does reconciliation through Jesus Christ. Once this happens, they will not tolerate certain sins any longer and command, "Depart from

me, I renounce my association with these beloved lusts and idols." Men and women that God calls to Himself, even those who initially defended idolatry and superstition, will respond to this divine voice, shifting their perspective from "Why shouldn't we follow our forefathers?" to a readiness to yield to God's beckoning.

Yet, when they hear this hidden voice of God and understand the beauty and purity of His worship, they will respond by considering those things as vile and unworthy, saying, "Depart from me, I want nothing more to do with you." This is the usual course of God's call. Although God sanctifies some from birth, He subsequently reveals to them, through the mighty work of the Spirit, the true nature of their soul. There's a semblance of this even in those sanctified from birth. Although God extraordinarily draws a soul from sin to the ways of life, the ordinary way of God's grace entails three or four voices calling to the soul. Firstly, God says to the soul, "You are created for God and eternity." Secondly, "You are currently on the path to hell and eternal damnation, destined to perish." Thirdly, "Behold, the ways of life and salvation are revealed to you in the Gospel of my Son." Lastly, "Come into these ways, and you shall find favour and acceptance in my Son." These are the four voices of God's call. I don't assert that everyone hears them distinctly and clearly, but essentially, through the ordinary distribution of God's grace, they do. Every soul that God justifies experiences this call of God, a compelling call that causes them to submit. Further discussing this divine call, I'll delve a bit deeper. Take note: a soul that hears God's call to enter the ways of life will thereafter constantly depend on God's call in all other aspects. If God has called me away from death's paths into life's ways, a call to which my soul yielded, I will perpetually heed God's call in all other matters. Whatever God calls me to, whatever service He commands, whatever trials or sufferings He deems suitable, my soul is content and responds, "Here I am, Lord; speak, your servant listens." When a soul is so attuned to God that it dares not undertake anything except in accordance with God's call, it serves as evidence that the soul is acquainted with the profound call of God to shift from sin's ways to the paths of life and

salvation. Moreover, those familiar with this divine call possess a corresponding disposition in their hearts – to call upon God for guidance, assistance, and blessings in all their endeavours. They are eager to approach God and invoke Him. Just as God calls out to them, they call out to Him. This aligns with God's work in the soul. He imparts a gracious frame within the soul, congruent with His call. Similar to Election, those whom God elects receive a gracious disposition that aligns with His election. As God chooses the soul, the soul chooses God above all things. The soul answers God's declaration, "I will choose you for myself," with its own declaration, "I will choose you as my God." As God calls the soul to live in the ways of grace in this world, the soul calls on God for assistance, entreating Him for support on all occasions. The Scripture summarises the worship of God with the expression, "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). A soul acquainted with God's call will reciprocate by calling on God. Incidentally, those thus called are most suitable for church communion. I mention this because the word translated as "church" originates from a Greek word meaning "to call out." In Scripture, a "church" essentially means a congregation of people called out from the paths of sin to embrace godliness. Hence, the church should comprise individuals called out from sin's ways through the powerful and efficacious voice of the Spirit of God. Such individuals have their sins pardoned. You say you hope God has justified you. You have read what God states and what has been presented to you. Those who are called are justified. Then, in terms of sequence, Calling precedes Justification. You'll find this in your hearts, and if not, when you come before God to hear the external call, approach with a waiting heart, eager for the inner call and seeking it with the same disposition. Say, "Lord, I've learned about your outward call in the Word and the inner call. Today, I'm here to hear your Word calling me away from sin's ways. O, grant me the inner call of your Spirit. When will I hear that secret voice?" This is why, even though I've been convinced many times by the Word, sin has still prevailed over me because that powerful, secret, inward voice has not reached my

soul. This constitutes the first evidence: "Whom He justified, them He also called."

The second evidence is this: Whomever God pardons, He includes in His covenant. All pardoned sinners are participants in God's covenant. God does not pardon any soul without bringing them into the bond of His covenant. This is how the grace of God for the forgiveness of sin is conveyed – by bringing the soul into the bonds of the covenant. The Scripture is clear on this point, portraying forgiveness of sin as a distinct fruit of the New Covenant. Consider Jeremiah 31:33: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah." The primary purpose of this Covenant is clearly stated: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." But how does this come about? It occurs through the avenue of the covenant. God initiates a New Covenant, and as a result, He brings individuals into this covenant. He first establishes a covenant with them, and subsequently, they receive the benefits of this New Covenant – the forgiveness of sins and the cessation of the remembrance of iniquities. The New Covenant is an enigma to many, yet it is an indisputable truth. Your forgiveness and eternal well-being hinge on it. If you are pardoned or will be pardoned, God will make it known to your soul that He, through His Son, has bound Himself to you, to be your God. Although you once strayed from Him, became His enemy, and broke the initial covenant, God is willing to initiate a second covenant with you. Despite your breach, He is willing to establish another covenant, in and through His Son, to be your God. You are invited to participate and join in this covenant. A complete covenant requires assent from both parties, involving a mutual commitment. When God unveils this revelation to your soul – that although you are naturally at odds with Me, you've broken the first covenant, and you've been cast away due to this breach – understand that I am willing to enter into another covenant with you. There exists a second covenant, centred around life and salvation, that I have established with humanity through My Son. I require you to step in, to dedicate yourself in an eternal covenant, to

acknowledge Me as your God. You must align yourself with Me and My Son in whatever I call you to do. Whatever you possess or can achieve, surrender it to the power of Me and My Son. This commitment should be unbreakable – this is the essence of the covenant. We know there are two covenants. In the first, all the good for mankind hinged on aligning with its terms. The terms of the first covenant were, "Do this and you shall live." However, it was broken, and our capability was lost. The second covenant's terms are, "Believe and you shall live." A soul that God pardons is brought into the bond of the second covenant. It is led to come forward and yield itself to the Lord, to be content with binding itself with the strongest of bonds to God. The soul commits to acknowledging Him and Him alone as their God, desiring His grace and mercy to be their own. Everything they have or can do is devoted to Him. They give up themselves and engage their souls to Him for eternity. Their possessions, abilities, everything they possess or can achieve, is surrendered to Him. Now, reflect on your own soul: You hope that your sins are forgiven. But has God brought you into the bonds of the covenant? Has God committed Himself to being your God through His Word? On your end, is your heart deeply committed to Him, tied by the strongest bonds? And if there are any bonds stronger than those binding your soul to God, can you confidently say that you are willing and content to be engaged? Is it your utmost happiness to be bound by the strongest of bonds? If this holds true for you, then let peace be unto your soul – your sins are forgiven. On one side, God has established a covenant with you, and on the other, He has led you into covenant with Him. Therefore, take comfort – your sins are pardoned.

Thirdly, those whose sins God has forgiven, He has relocated them into the realm of His Son's dominion. Scripture depicts these ideas in various ways, each carrying a distinct significance. I derive this point from Colossians 1:13-14: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Notice the subsequent text: "In whom we have redemption

through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Forgiveness of sins is the objective behind God's act of transferring us into the realm of His dear Son. By providing redemption through His blood, which entails forgiveness of sins, God accomplishes this. Hence, whoever God has bestowed redemption upon through the blood of Christ – specifically, the forgiveness of sins – is thereby relocated into the dominion of the beloved Son of God. What does this signify?

1. This indicates a profound transformation that must occur within those who are pardoned. The Scripture conveys this as a translation into a different realm – a realm governed by the Son of God, the beloved Son of God. God's mercy is responsible for this translation into the realm of His beloved Son. Naturally, we exist within a different realm, under the sway of another ruler, not the Son of God, and we have a different sovereign. Undoubtedly, this is our natural state; we are under Satan's dominion and within his realm. However, when God moves to redeem a soul and bestow forgiveness of sin, He effects a transfer out of that realm. Such a soul declines to remain subservient to Satan any longer, or to indulge in his sinful desires any further. Instead, Christ will be my King – the Son of God, through whom I anticipate reconciliation. He shall rule as my King, and His laws shall govern my heart. His scepter shall govern my soul. No longer shall my personal thoughts, opinions, will, and affections dictate my actions. Jesus Christ shall be established as the ruler of my soul. Previously, I was led – an ignorant, wretched creature – by the customs and examples set by others. I adhered to their laws in matters of worship. However, now Christ shall be my King. I will look to Him for my directives, and any obedience I extend to fellow humans will be in service to Christ, my King. This is the transformation into the Kingdom of God – when a soul experiences the authority of Christ reigning within, dominating, and influencing it. The soul turns to Christ for protection and provision, prioritising the establishment of Jesus Christ as King in all aspects of His governance – both within the soul and in the external world.

This soul ardently anticipates the day when it will hear the proclamation, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." Thus, those who experience redemption through Christ's blood, specifically the forgiveness of sins, are translated into the realm of His beloved Son. As Scripture phrases it, "The kingdom of God is within you" – a statement inspired by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel.

Now, it's upon you to examine your hearts: What evidence of Christ's Kingdom lies within you? Do you live and conduct yourself as someone who carries the Kingdom of Christ within? Is Christ truly the King and Ruler over your thoughts, words, and deeds? Do you seek His guidance for the law that governs your thoughts, words, and actions? Do you walk before Him as your Sovereign Lord, relying on Him continually to discern His will, and displaying reverence and honour for Him as a King? If indeed the Kingdom of Christ resides within you – in other words, if the Gospel has effectively impacted you – because the Gospel's potency is often referred to as the Kingdom of Heaven, when the Word is introduced in any context, it is as if the Kingdom of Heaven has been brought forth. Although elaborating on why the Holy Spirit designates the Gospel as the Kingdom of Heaven would require extensive time, suffice it to say that it is termed so because it represents the dominion of Christ, the Lord from Heaven. Through the proclamation of the Gospel, Christ reigns. However, though it may be the Kingdom of Heaven and the royal authority of Christ may be present within the Gospel's proclamation, it does not resonate with everyone. It can be likened to a fishing net cast into the sea – essentially, when the Gospel is preached among a multitude of people, it acts as a net thrown into the sea, capturing some while others remain worldly, unclean, and of no spiritual value. That's the essence of this concept, and it does not provide any support for mixed Communion. Its implication is this: where the Gospel is preached, some individuals are worthy of acceptance, comparable to good fish, while others are unsuitable and should be cast aside.

In the same vein, just as there is an external Kingdom, an internal Kingdom of Christ also takes residence within our hearts. A definite truth is that Jesus Christ Himself establishes His throne within the hearts of every pardoned man and woman. Today, in the name of God, I declare to you that if your sins have been forgiven, Jesus Christ has indeed established His throne within your hearts. Conversely, if you find any ruler or authority in your life other than Christ, know it is from God Himself that your souls remain embroiled in bitterness and entangled in iniquity. In such a case, your sins have not been pardoned. However, that soul who, within the realm of Gospel preaching, can sincerely say, "Blessed be God, I have felt Christ enter my heart and exert His influence over me. Christ's statutes are now the laws I am eager to abide by. I admit my limited understanding of them, but I am determined to comprehend them better. That's why I'm here today – to gain a deeper understanding of God's law and to welcome Jesus Christ's dominion over me more powerfully than before." To the individual in whom this transformation has transpired, I affirm in the name of Christ: Take comfort, your sins have been forgiven. God will indeed show kindness to you when this earthly existence concludes. You are among those whom Jesus Christ has incorporated into His Kingdom, establishing His throne within your heart. Hence, you can be assured that ultimately, He will welcome you into His eternal Kingdom.

Fourthly, where God grants forgiveness, He also bestows abundantly. Giving follows forgiveness. God never pardons without giving much to the soul He forgives. Just as in the case when the Apostles preached the doctrine of forgiveness and pardon of sin, the Holy Spirit descended upon them, so undoubtedly, where the preaching of the pardon of sin wields power through the ministry of the Gospel over a soul, God imparts much to that soul. Three aspects, which have already been discussed in elaborating on the blessedness of sin's pardon, particularly underline this point. I'll briefly reiterate them now to fortify this criterion for examination.

1. Has God forgiven you? Then He has also bestowed His Spirit to illuminate you regarding the profound mysteries of salvation. You might claim ignorance or lack of scholarly education, but if God extends such a remarkable favour as to pardon your sins, He will also grant you understanding in the depths of the Gospel. Jeremiah 31:34 highlights that in the act of pardoning sin, God's mercy includes instruction from Him.
2. God will bestow upon you the inscription of His Law within your heart. This signifies that He will cultivate within your heart a disposition and attitude that aligns with His Law. Your heart and God's Law will resonate like two matching copies, devoid of any discrepancy. A harmonious affinity shall emerge between your heart and God's Law, not merely because you're obliged to adhere to it, but because you find it resonating with your renewed nature. He will etch His Law onto your heart. Thus, I solemnly declare before the Lord this day that anyone who obtains pardon for their sins, anyone to whom God grants the forgiveness of their iniquities, has God's Law inscribed within their heart by the touch of His own Spirit. Your heart, once unyielding as stone, will bear God's Law etched upon it, akin to how Moses received the Commandments on tablets of stone. Even if you don't always consciously perceive it, this truth remains, serving as a comforting reassurance of the pardon of your sins.
3. God bestows healing mercies to cleanse you from your transgressions, as found in Jeremiah 33:8. "I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins." Cleansing from sin and the pardon of sin are inextricably linked. If God pardons your sin, He also purifies you from it. Therefore, don't solely seek pardoning mercy; also seek cleansing mercy. These two have been united by God, and let no one attempt to sever them. Pardon and cleansing have been intertwined by God. While God may grant other blessings, such as health, strength, and prosperity, without pardoning, He never

imparts cleansing from sin without pardoning it. Consequently, if you sense your heart being cleansed, may peace embrace your soul, for your sins are forgiven.

Fifthly, in addition to these points, those whom God pardons, He bestows His glory upon. Pardoned sinners are adorned with a divine glory; they are truly splendid beings in the sight of God and the angels. Moreover, the saints of God can perceive this glory that rests upon them. This radiance might remain hidden to the world, blinded by its own darkness, but those with discerning eyes can witness the glory bestowed upon every pardoned soul. This concept is affirmed by Romans 8:30, which states, "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." This passage does not solely refer to the future glory that saints will attain in the highest heavens when they are united with Christ. Instead, it speaks of the glory that God bestows upon souls in this present world. It does not say, "he will glorify," but "he has glorified." Every justified soul is a glorified soul—this truth is a cornerstone of divinity. At the precise moment a soul is justified, it is simultaneously glorified. This reality is similarly hinted at in Jeremiah 33:9, which follows the pardon of sin. "Then this city will bring me renown, joy, praise, and honor before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it." In essence, God places glory upon them, and they become a source of joy, praise, and honour among all the nations on earth. You might question, "How is this possible?" What constitutes the glory of a justified soul? Without a doubt, a justified soul possesses glory. God bestows glory through the glorious graces of His Holy Spirit, which He endows upon the soul. Every justified soul receives the glorious graces of the Holy Spirit immediately. Consequently, it becomes beautiful and glorious, becoming the sole object of glory that the Lord Jesus Christ delights in throughout the entire world. Consider the most impoverished soul, and when God imprints His image upon it, a greater glory and radiance envelop that soul than that which adorns the heavens and the Earth combined. Regardless of the

glorious splendour of other creatures, God beholds no greater glory in them than in a single soul whom He has justified. Holiness and the graces of God's Spirit are even deemed the glory of God Himself (Romans 3:23, 24). The phrase "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" signifies a deprivation of God's image. Yet, when a person is justified, God's glory is anew placed upon their heart, intellect, will, and affections. This prompts the Lord to take delight in dwelling with, engaging in communion with, and conversing with them due to the glory He has bestowed. Consequently, a glorifying glory is also present in one's conduct and lifestyle. Indeed, every soul whom God justifies immediately gains a new radiance in their way of life and behaviour. Those who previously engaged in reprehensible wickedness and ignoble behaviours, when transformed, manifest the graces of the Holy Spirit radiating throughout their conduct. They exude meekness, patience, humility, heavenly-mindedness, and similar virtues. This effulgence in their conduct is perceptible to those capable of discerning it. It occasionally leaves the world astounded, prompting them to acknowledge that indeed a divine work is at play within these individuals. In their more reflective moments, they aspire to meet their end as honourably as these justified souls. This transformation is observed in the life of even the humblest servant or child within a household. Once depraved, once justified, their conduct becomes luminous, distinctly contrasting with their previous behaviour. Although they might disregard this transformation, they recognise that God's glory has been unveiled through these individuals. They acknowledge that this transformation, a manifestation of God's glory, belongs to Him alone, and they anticipate a day when God will acknowledge this as His own glory. Therefore, if you seek to ascertain your justification, ponder this: Are you glorified? How has God's glory penetrated your heart, and how does it manifest in your conduct and way of life? Can you affirm that your life reflects a semblance of God's glory, even while acknowledging your many weaknesses? For indeed, this is the case. No justified soul lacks the glory of God shining through their conduct. Hence, if these truths resonate with you, you have every reason to dispel any doubts about your justification. Although

presently, this might not be readily apparent, since many of you inadvertently obscure God's glory in your lives, those who are justified should endeavour to amplify this glory in their interactions with all they encounter. Doing so would undoubtedly serve as a testament to your justification.

Sixthly, those whom God pardons, He imparts an understanding of what pardon truly entails. If you have the hope that your sins are forgiven, do you grasp and comprehend the significance of this? Undoubtedly, those whom God pardons experience a sense of awe and wonderment about the excellence of this blessed state of having sins forgiven. The soul is captivated by admiration for three aspects: Firstly, it stands amazed at the boundless generosity and opulence of God's grace. Secondly, it contemplates the cost paid for this pardon. Thirdly, it is struck by the marvellous goodness it receives through this blessedness of sin's forgiveness. Other blessings may be bestowed upon individuals, but they might not grasp their worth or acknowledge God's hand in them. However, when God bestows the pardon of sin, He stimulates the soul's capacity for awe, allowing it to truly understand its nature. Jeremiah 33:9 corroborates this: "And this city will bring me renown, joy, praise, and honour before all nations on earth that hear of all the good things I do for it; and they will be in awe and will tremble at the abundant prosperity and peace I provide for it." If others are led to such awe, then those whom God pardons, showered with such blessings, will experience an astonishing sense of trembling awe. Thus, consider: Has your heart been stirred by this understanding? You can discern the extent of your evidence through your capacity for marvelling at it. When God forgives sin, He does so to magnify His grace and demonstrate its infinite ability to redeem souls. Consequently, those whom God pardons are endowed with a grace that evokes profound admiration. If your soul has been so moved by the greatness and goodness of God's grace, take comfort—your sins are pardoned.

Seventhly, the more certain assurance of pardon God grants, the more a heart softens before God in mourning for the very sins God

has forgiven. The degree of melting, according to the degree of God's mercy manifest in the pardon, reveals the work of God's grace in the soul's holy mourning for the sins that have been pardoned. Many assume they must mourn for sin in order to obtain pardon, but once pardoned, why continue mourning? I have previously addressed this notion, explaining that many mourn to obtain pardon, but I assert that they mourn because they have been pardoned. This evidence for pardon is exemplified in the 51st Psalm. David expresses profound remorse for his sin, but consider the heading of that Psalm: "For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba." If you desire to know what Nathan did when he visited David, you can discover it by reading about David's adultery and murder in 2 Samuel 12. Nathan's purpose was to convey news of the pardon for David's sin. After convicting David of his sin and revealing the Lord's displeasure, Nathan proceeded to declare, "The Lord has taken away your sin." Now, a complacent heart might conclude that all is well, that there's no need for further trouble since God has pardoned the sin. But observe how David responds in the psalm—he cries out to God: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." He prays for restoration of his broken spirit and implores for confirmation of God's presence. The same grace of God that Nathan brought—news of the pardon—breaks and melts David's heart even more. After receiving the assurance of God's pardon, David's mourning intensifies. Never before do we read of David being so deeply distressed over his sin as in Psalm 51, after Nathan had visited him. Thus, if you notice that at the moment when God, through the Word or private revelation, confirms the pardon of your sins and provides comforting evidence, your heart becomes profoundly devoted to mourning over those very sins, take heart: your sins are forgiven.

Eighthly, another point to consider is that the growth of all other graces corresponds to the degree of pardon of sin. The knowledge and confidence in God's love through Christ's forgiveness of sin

causes other graces to develop proportionally. This is emphasised in Ephesians 3:19 regarding the comprehension of God's love in Christ. Note the connection: Paul desires "that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." Understanding the love of Christ which is the very reason for the pardon of sin accomplishes this. Let's break it down:

1. **Bringing God into the Soul:** First, it brings God into the soul.
2. **Filling the Soul with God:** Secondly, it fills the soul with God.
3. **Filling the Soul with God's Fullness:** Thirdly, it fills the soul with the fullness of God.
4. **Filling the Soul with All the Fullness of God:** Fourthly, it fills the soul with all the fullness of God.

When you truly comprehend the love of God in Christ that grants pardon for sin, you also come to be filled with all the fullness of God. What does this mean? As your faith grows along with other graces, you increasingly become saturated with the fullness of God. This, in turn, leads to a deeper assurance of the pardon of sin. The soul can now declare, "As my certainty of God's love in His Son increases, so does the abundance of God's fullness within me. In the past, under the Law, God and I were distant; I experienced little of God's presence. But now, as I understand God's love through the Gospel, my soul overflows with the fullness of God. Gone are the impurities and defilements that used to fill my thoughts, will, and affections. A transformation has occurred—I am now filled with all the fullness of God." A soul capable of expressing this can confidently embrace Christ's words to the woman in Luke 7:50: "Go in peace; your faith has saved you." Romans 5:1 also speaks of this peace through justification by faith: "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This peace accompanies the revelation of justification by faith in Christ and brings strength. We can now "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Furthermore, not only can we endure

tribulations but we can even "glory in them," because we understand that tribulations lead to endurance, experience, and hope. This interplay of various graces becomes evident, and it can provide solace to many struggling souls.

At times, one might ponder, "Though I once had strong assurance of pardon and experienced immense joy, can't hypocrites also feel joy?" Absolutely, hypocrites can experience profound emotional experiences and even fleeting sensations of pardon. However, something might be lacking in terms of other graces. So, how do you ascertain whether your assurance of pardon is genuine?

In this manner, the extent of your assurance of pardon corresponds to the commensurate growth of other virtues, such as Humility, Patience, Heavenly-mindedness, Self-denial, and the like. As your faith flourishes, there is a corresponding expansion in all other virtues. Faith serves as the root, and just as greater sap nourishes the root, the branches too flourish. Those individuals who possess unwavering assurance and never experience doubt, while being deficient in other virtues like the Fear of God, Meekness, Patience, Self-denial, Heavenly-mindedness, and so forth, might need to consider the authenticity of their faith. For if your faith is elevated while your other virtues remain stunted, it raises concerns that your faith might not be genuine or what the Scripture calls "the faith of God's Elect," and it might not be "precious faith." The growth of all virtues hinges on the degree of your assurance. When you anticipate that your sins are forgiven, how have you arrived at this conclusion? A soul genuinely forgiven of sin obtains it from Heaven through the correct channel—God's way. This is how it transpires: When a soul recognizes its wretchedness due to the burden of sin and when God reveals His infinite grace through the Gospel, the soul perceives God on His throne presenting His Son, the God-Man, as the Mediator for atonement. Through a robust act of faith, the soul embraces this glorious path of reconciliation through the Son. It discerns that God the Father extends His mercy, and so the soul draws upon grace from God's treasury in the Gospel—a method established in Evangelical

terms that had been previously unveiled. Thus, examine yourself: Have you obtained your pardon through the Gospel's path, where your faith, in a robust display, ventured your very being and eternal destiny upon the Son of God? Have you regarded Christ as a potent Mediator capable of delivering you? If so, you have indeed exercised faith in a Gospel manner, and your sins have been pardoned. Moreover, if you have been pardoned, you have also been sealed, as I previously mentioned. This seal is akin to the royal stamp that imparts the King's image onto the seal of the kingdom. Similarly, the Image of God, the Heavenly Seal, is imprinted upon the soul. I bring this up so that you can employ it during your introspection.

Ninthly, Those whom God pardons will exhibit a corresponding response within their souls to God's work in justifying them. This is true not only in the context of Election and Calling but also in Justification. How does this work? It's like this: Just as God accepts you despite your sins, so will you accept God and His ways despite the troubles and afflictions inherent in them. He embraces your soul despite its sinful state, and in return, you embrace Him and His ways even in the face of difficulties and tribulations. While your soul carries the burden of woeful sins, God accepts you; in the same way, even though God's ways come with great challenges and afflictions, you willingly accept them and deem it reasonable. Reflect on this: If God accepts me despite my sins, can I not justify God's ways despite the adversities, troubles, difficulties, and sufferings that might arise on this path? Undoubtedly, a pardoned soul cannot help but answer God in this manner: If God justifies me despite my sins, I shall justify God despite any afflictions, troubles, or hardships I encounter in His ways. This stance serves both as evidence of your pardon and as a duty you owe. God justifies our souls despite their sinfulness; we should therefore have reason to justify God's ways even when they seem challenging. If you fail to do so, it's an indication that you might not be among God's children. For "wisdom is justified by her children." If you hold the hope that your sins are pardoned and that God will justify you, shouldn't you also justify Him? Do your sins not hinder God's grace toward you? Then why should troubles and

afflictions hinder your glorification of God? O person! If you possess such a depraved heart and ignoble spirit that you cannot justify God and His ways, it's unlikely that you are one of those whom God has pardoned. If you were a child of wisdom, a recipient of God's pardon, just as God has justified you, you would also justify Him. This observation applies to those who hear ministers and others critique the ways of God in company, yet find themselves speechless when it comes to defending God. Perhaps when gentlemen and others criticize God's ways, you remain silent, unable to speak in defense of God and His ways. Consider this deeply: If you believe that God has justified you, and if you hear God, His people, and His Word being reviled, should your heart not be stirred to stand up and justify God?

Tenthly and finally, Those whom God pardons and forgives, He instills in them a merciful disposition to forgive others, grounded in divine principles. There exists a kind of innate forgiveness: many people do forgive, but often in a manner akin to how a non-believer might forgive another. It's indeed unfortunate that many who profess Christianity do not even reach that level of forgiveness. Yet, you must forgive in a spiritual manner, for that is the path that accompanies the pardon of sin. You forgive because you yourself have been forgiven abundantly. When someone has wronged you, consider how much more you have wronged the Lord. If the Lord has forgiven me, should I not also forgive? In the Gospel, you'll recall the story of the man who was forgiven a great debt but then refused to show mercy to his debtor. How displeased the Lord was with his lack of compassion, considering the immense forgiveness he himself had received. Has God forgiven you of your sins, which, if left unforgiven, would have chained you eternally in torment? And yet, won't you forgive? Forgiveness is both evidence and duty, even a part of the divine directive known as the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6), where it says, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Another rendering says, "Forgive our sins, for we also forgive." Hence, you cannot possess evidence that God has pardoned your iniquities and forgiven your wrongdoings if you haven't also forgiven others in your thoughts and heart. I could cite various scriptures, but

I emphasize it as a duty. Those of you who are aware that your sins have been pardoned should use this as a foundation for forgiving your brethren. Reflect and say, "Alas, poor wretch, has God forgiven me? Has the distance between my brother and me ever been as vast as the chasm between God and me? God has pardoned me, and shall I not then forgive my brother?" A soul that becomes acquainted with God's rich mercy in forgiving sins cannot help but possess a gentle spirit that forgives others. No external force can dissolve the harshness, bitterness, and sternness that one person holds against another; only the soothing oil of God's grace in forgiving sins can achieve that. Once it enters the soul, it transforms it into a gentle, kind, and tender disposition. Take note: if you carry a rough and unyielding nature, attributing it to your inherent character, and if you believe nothing can alter it, remember that the mercy of God in forgiving your sins has the power to change even your rugged nature. Indeed, it does. If not, you have little reason to believe your sins are forgiven. Therefore, if God has pardoned you, you must extend that same forgiveness to others. I am convinced that many among you eagerly anticipated and longed for this sermon. I chose to be thorough, aiming to present the evidence clearly. Now you've heard the description of the blessed man and woman, but only a few can depart and confidently say, "As we have heard, so it is." Yet, I believe many of you can. This sermon was meant for you, delivered from heaven to nourish your souls. It's as necessary as the sustenance you consume. But there's one more thing to add to all that's been conveyed. Without this addition, I fear that many who truly belong to the group this text and topic offer comfort to will leave with little solace. It's the practical application of these signs, a guide to effectively using them to understand your spiritual condition. These same rules will enable you to understand and apply any other tests of your spiritual state in various situations.

CHAPTER XVIII:

How to Apply the Evidences of Forgiveness of Sin

It's a matter of utmost importance for us to assess whether our sins have been forgiven. During times of danger, our hearts tend to falter, yet the assurance of having our sins forgiven can bolster our spirits even in the face of the gravest threats. Following the pronouncement by David that one is blessed whose sins are forgiven (Verse 6), he goes on to say, "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." While torrents of great waters may arise, the one with forgiven sins shall be shielded and encircled by God, enveloped in songs of deliverance. Conversely, those whose sins surround them will be gripped by horror and terror. But as David asserts, having the certainty of one's sins being pardoned, "Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance." Therefore, should your hearts align with these presented evidences, you can find solace even in the midst of tumultuous waters; God will be your sanctuary. It's of great importance to diligently seek to remove all doubt regarding this matter. Don't postpone it to a time of illness or near death for examination.

Now, alongside these evidences, there's another crucial aspect to consider in this matter. It involves providing some guidelines on how to apply these evidences, or any others that may be offered, for the purpose of assessing various states, especially in terms of Justification or Sanctification. These rules, however, can be beneficial for the application of any evidences, no matter the context.

First and foremost, so that you can effectively employ these rules for testing and evidences provided, understand this: even if you can't identify all of them, if you find just one of these evidences, you can derive comfort from that singular aspect, even if the rest remain elusive. You can rest assured that the others are present within you.

Many a time, a soul may hear evidences regarding the blessed condition of having sins forgiven. It's possible that they can grasp hold of one, two, or even three of these, yet others remain beyond their reach. If you discover even one of them within your heart, even if the others aren't evident or tangible, God still perceives their presence within you, even if they're not as palpable to you. Therefore, seize hold of that which you can perceive or feel, and rest assured that the others are there, though they remain unseen. Just as holding onto one link of a chain allows you to draw the entire chain towards you, since by grasping one link, you effectively grasp the whole, even if the others aren't directly touched or perceived, so it is with the interconnectedness of God's graces. If you manage to latch onto one, you can be confident that the rest are present, even if they're not immediately visible.

Consider the situation of someone ignorant in the realm of medicine. A physician informs them that a certain remedy requires specific ingredients, yet when the apothecary blends them, only one may be visibly apparent due to the colour or external aspect. Perhaps one syrup could dominate the outward appearance. When the mixture is presented to the individual, they might remark, "I was told it should contain these various ingredients, but I only see one." However, even if you only perceive one ingredient, its efficacy might encompass all the required elements, even if not all are visible or detectable. Similarly, when it comes to the graces of God's Spirit, even if one seems prominent, the power and presence of all the others might also reside within the soul, despite their limited visibility. Just as in certain concoctions, you might only see and taste one ingredient while the power of twenty is at work, unperceived and untasted, so it is with the spiritual work of God within the soul. Sometimes, only one grace might be evident, felt, or tasted, yet where that one exists, all the others are present. This is a principle to remember when searching for evidences and signs. If you can identify even one in your soul, rest assured that all the others are also present.

This principle mirrors the reality of sin. When one sin gains dominion over the soul, even if other sins aren't visible, rest assured that they also hold sway. Every unregenerate person outside of Christ is under the dominion of all sins; they're in bondage to the devil through every sin. While someone might exhibit a greater weakness for one particular sin, such as covetousness or ambition, they're, in truth, enslaved by all sins. Despite refraining from certain transgressions for external reasons, they could just as easily commit those sins if it suited their purposes. It's an undeniable fact: whoever isn't conscientious about every sin, is, in reality, not conscientious about any. So, the one under the power of one sin is, in actuality, under the power of all sins. Some individuals might believe they have only a few sins while keeping away from others. This mindset is a fallacy; they might think, "I can't shake off this particular sin, but I'm free from all others." Are you avoiding all sins except one? Know that God sees you as under the dominion of every sin and will hold you accountable accordingly. Now, conversely, the godly are deeply troubled by their inability to perceive the work of God's graces consistently across all areas. They might detect one grace, yet feel its absence in another, as it might not be as evidently active as the others. Just as the truth applies to the wicked on one side, it holds true for the godly on the other: where one sin exists, every sin is present; and where one grace resides, all grace abides. The power of godliness is within every grace that's present. This serves as the first guideline for effectively utilising the provided evidences.

SECOND RULE: Remembering Past Experiences

The second rule is this: whenever you've identified any single evidence and have thoroughly examined it in the presence of God, if it doesn't currently appear positively contrary, and you're merely uncertain about the things you once felt because you don't feel them now, in such cases, you can and should look back to what God has previously worked in you. Indeed, when we offer evidence of grace in our ministry for those who possess it, we might encounter times

when they sense nothing at all, being in a state where they can't discern their own hearts or feel any workings within. If, however, the absence of sensation is solely due to a lack thereof, without the presence of positively contrary evil, and it's just the lack of feeling compared to what you experienced before, then you should reflect on days gone by, as David often mentions that he would remember the days of old. You might argue, "But some hypocrites have thought they were in this state; they've experienced many emotional moments, yet turned out to be insincere. How can we return to what was before, when God was working within me? I can remember when God moved my heart, and at that time, I believed I could embrace any evidence from the Word. I felt such stirrings within, but it's possible that all of that was mere hypocrisy." In response, it's certain that the mere lack of sensation isn't reason enough to believe that everything was hypocrisy. Consider this: if you grieve over the absence of sensation as if it were an affliction, yearn to feel those past manifestations again, derive little comfort from your present state, and your soul continues to hunger and thirst after the workings of God's grace you experienced before, then, if there's nothing to the contrary, if you haven't turned towards sin or the world to fill your soul with sinful ways, and your heart remains hungry for God, you can take comfort in what you experienced before. You can feed on it as provision set aside in advance for your soul, as if you had it at hand. However, hypocrites who stray from the visitations of God's Spirit don't merely lose the sense of those past movements and workings of the Spirit. Instead, their hearts become content with other things; they settle for alternative sources of satisfaction. It's not just a lack of feeling for what they previously had; their hearts veer away from God towards other paths of sin and wickedness. This is the way of hypocrites. Yet, you have this assurance: this is not your path. Even though you lack the present sense of God's work within you, your heart still longs for God. You find no satisfaction in your current condition; it's your greatest affliction. Your heart doesn't stray towards anything else; it's yearning to recapture the blessed state you experienced before. If this resonates with you, then peace be unto you. Reflect on what you've previously had, and wait upon

God for His return, for He will come, and your soul will rejoice in Him. Think of the martyr Mr. Glover, just before he faced execution. The Spirit of God appeared to have departed from him, and he was engulfed in darkness, devoid of any sense of God's love for him. He was to face death the next day, and all his evidences seemed lost in his perception. Yet, his friends assured him that God would reveal Himself. They asked him to give them a sign if God returned to him. Throughout that night, he remained in darkness. Even when the officers came to take him to the stake, he still felt no sense or evidence of God's love. But when he was tied to the stake, he cried out, "He is come, He is come." Therefore, don't conclude that the absence of present sensation implies a lack of evidence for your favourable condition. If you've experienced it before, you can rely on it to affirm your good state, even in the absence of present sensation. That concludes the second rule.

THIRD RULE: Avoid Testing During Temptations

The third rule is as follows: when seeking to assess yourselves and put yourselves on trial, you must be cautious not to base your evaluation on moments of temptation. Do not judge your spiritual condition solely by what you experience and feel during times of temptation. Such moments are highly unsuitable for determining your state. For instance, during periods of intense temptation, when you may be overwhelmed by strong allurements, fear, and distress, it's not the time to focus on self-examination. In these circumstances, you would do better to call upon God and engage in prayer, rather than attempting to evaluate yourselves.

This can be likened to individuals who, struck with a profound fear of death before a judge, are handed a book to read. Even though they may be proficient readers, capable of reading under normal circumstances, the overwhelming fear of death renders them incapable of reading even a single word. Similarly, during moments of powerful temptation, many of God's children find themselves unable to read their spiritual evidences, just as children with blurred

vision cannot read from a book. When your hearts are besieged by intense temptations and afflictions, it is not a suitable time for self-examination. This is even truer for those who are ungodly. Many wicked individuals delay self-examination until their conscience is burdened with horror or the fear of impending death compels them. Such moments are inopportune for God's people to scrutinise themselves.

Consider the analogy of weighing gold: you would not attempt it during a storm or strong winds. Evaluating our spiritual condition is akin to weighing gold, and we must use the balance of the Sanctuary to ascertain whether we will hold weight when God assesses us. Each soul will be weighed, and woe unto those to whom God shall say what He said to Belshazzar, when the writing appeared on the wall and terrified him to the point that his knees knocked together. What was that message? "You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting." Many will face such an outcome one day: souls that believed they were in a favourable condition, and their sins were forgiven, only to be told that they were found wanting in God's balance. It's vital for you to weigh yourselves in the balance of the Sanctuary now. Just as you wouldn't weigh gold in the midst of wind, storms, and tempests that would disrupt the balance, similarly, when assessing your spiritual state, do so in a calm place where the scales can remain steady, undisturbed by external forces. In the wind, the lighter end may be blown down, and the heavier end may rise. But in a serene setting, you can achieve accurate measurement.

The human soul, like scales in the wind, is susceptible to being swayed during times of temptation. You might encounter influences that tip the balance, elevate one side, and make you appear spiritually insufficient. Therefore, when you seek to evaluate your condition, do it when your heart is at peace, when you are composed and in control. Assess your state when your heart is tranquil. Many individuals try to evaluate their hearts during moments of trouble and affliction, but this approach proves futile. In such times, there are only two viable options: either confide in someone who can assist

you, or kneel in prayer to beseech God for guidance and deliverance from the temptations pressing upon you. However, these moments are not conducive to self-assessment. During times of intense temptation, a person may barely recognise themselves.

That concludes the third rule.

FOURTH RULE: Cling to the Word

The fourth rule for evaluating your spiritual state is this: whenever you find the Word of God supporting your perspective on any matter, hold fast to it. When you are convinced that the Word aligns favourably with your position, refrain from acting in contradiction to it. Just as you should only draw comfort from the Word, you should likewise reject only on the basis of the Word. Some might say, "I discover something in the Word that seems to be in my favour, but I fear I am not qualified in a certain manner." Yet, do you discover anything in the Word that provides grounds for such thoughts? You should anchor yourself in the Word from both angles. Just as you don't accept anything to build your comfort except what you find in the Word, similarly, you shouldn't accept anything to trouble you except what is derived from the Word.

You might encounter passages in the Word that seem to support your case, but your own doubts and misconceptions prevent you from embracing them. However, you should rest assured that, as you shouldn't base your comfort solely on others' opinions, you shouldn't rest on your own conjectures during times of trouble or the opinions of others. Instead, your comfort must be grounded in the Word. If you say, "I'm apprehensive about my spiritual state," ask yourself: Does the Word of God contain statements that declare those with certain qualities are not forgiven? Just as you wouldn't conclude you are pardoned without finding explicit support in the Word, you also shouldn't conclude your state is bad without the Word confirming it. Despite various disorders and spiritual wanderings within me, let me ask you this: Where does the Word of God assert that a person

plagued by wandering thoughts is not justified? Where does the Word state that a heart burdened by some remaining corruptions, one that struggles under them as though they are the heaviest burdens in the world, is not justified? Many people, when afflicted by a troubled conscience, have a measure of evidence and substantial reasons drawn from the Word that offer them comfort. Yet, they are plagued by fears and uncertainties due to the remnants of certain corruptions within them. However, the source of their doubts isn't from the Word, but rather from their own fears. Thus, when someone applies the Word to their situation and the message resonates, confirming that God has indeed shown them mercy, their fears and their inner thoughts gain dominance once that person leaves. This leads to their comforts being eroded more by their own apprehensions than by all the Word-based reassurances that initially upheld and sustained them. This parallel holds: many godly individuals, in times of doubt and apprehension, are similar to the ungodly in terms of their hopes. The ungodly person has the Word against them, indicating their poor state, but their self-love and self-conceit drive them to presume that they are in a favourable condition. They prioritise their own opinions and conceits and rely more on that presumption of goodness than on any scriptural evidence to the contrary. Similarly, God's people, even though they are in a good state, often harbour doubts based on their own ideas and opinions rather than on the Word. Receive this rule: just as you should derive comfort only from the Word, you should likewise acknowledge trouble only when it aligns with the Word. When trouble originates from any other source, you should remember that God has elevated your spiritual condition to a point where all your troubles rest upon nothing other than the Word. Consequently, respond to every situation with Scripture. When the Devil hurls temptations at you, challenge him to prove that your state is not good using the Word. I have this scriptural evidence to support my position, and you lack anything to the contrary. Similarly, in other matters, you wouldn't be swayed easily, especially in cases involving the evidence for your spiritual state. Suppose someone challenges your claim to something, even if you struggle to fully substantiate

your right, you would counter by asking them to prove their claim and provide reasons for their assertion. The noisy assertions and words of others wouldn't easily compel you to relinquish your position or convince you that your right was never rightfully yours. Yet, when the Devil raises a clamour concerning your soul, you are swift to join him in doubting, thinking, "Indeed, I am a hypocrite. I lack true grace and spiritual life. My soul remains under the curse of the Law and the dominion of sin." How poorly you respond to the blessed Spirit of God and all His grace and goodness that has been manifested and revealed to you, especially in regards to the pardon of your sins. How inappropriate it is that, with every outcry from Satan and every stir of corruption within your heart, you should undermine the very foundation of your comforts by immediately casting doubt on all the work of God. Many individuals who, by evidence from the Word, come to realise that their state is good, depart with a cheerful countenance. Yet, if on the following day they encounter the slightest internal turmoil, they abandon all and dismantle the foundation of their comfort. Do not conduct yourselves so poorly in light of God's grace. Rely on the Word, both for your troubles and your comforts. Just as you derive no comfort except from the Word of God, do not become disheartened except where you discover the Word of God opposing you.

FIFTH RULE: Renew Your Evidences

The fifth rule for assessing your spiritual condition is this: when you find yourself searching for your evidences but can't locate them, it's better to renew them than to waste time trying to recover the old ones. Imagine someone seeking evidence of their salvation, evidence they once had, yet now cannot find. They may be scrutinising their hearts for past experiences and emotions, coming up empty-handed. This could lead them to conclude that all is lost and feel disheartened because they cannot retrieve the evidence they once possessed. In such a situation, it's more advisable, instead of fixating on the old evidence and becoming disheartened, to spend that time renewing their evidences. Rather than lingering in search and discouragement,

they could be actively engaging in acts and attitudes that would renew their evidences. It's like the analogy of disputes between individuals in the world. They might possess evidence that could settle their disputes, but perhaps the evidence is missing or too aged to decipher. In such cases, people expend a considerable amount of time on them, not realising that if they were to consult a legal authority, they might get them renewed more efficiently and at less expense. This concept applies to the soul as well. When you can't locate certain evidences, you might squander significant time and then wallow in discouragement. But what if, instead, you could renew those evidences in less time? For example, suppose you're attempting to pinpoint an evidence of your calling. You're troubled because you can't recall how God previously worked on your heart during your calling or at some earlier moment. Rather than letting this uncertainty overwhelm you, consider the following approach: Listen to the present voice of God in your heart. Ask yourself, "Am I not sensing God's work within me? Isn't He drawing my heart away from the world towards Himself?" Remember, God's call isn't confined to your initial conversion; He's always beckoning and pulling your heart from the world to Himself. If you're struggling to apply past experiences, lean into the present work of God in your life. Similarly, those who are justified by God enter into a covenant with Him. While you may worry that you can't recall a specific instance of entering this covenant, don't be disheartened. Invest the time you'd otherwise spend seeking that past experience into entering into a covenant with God now. Even if you can't recall previous occasions, if you surrender yourself to God through an eternal covenant at this present time, it's sufficient. You can have the same comfort from this evidence as if you vividly remembered all the past instances of entering into a covenant with God. Also, consider those whose sins have been forgiven—they are welcomed into the Kingdom of Christ. You might lament that you can't remember a particular moment of being transformed. However, consider this: Take up the authority of Jesus Christ and wield it in your life. Often, individuals trouble themselves, thinking, "I've never experienced the level of humility and sorrow for my sins that you're speaking about or that others

have encountered." But ask yourself: How do you currently feel about sin? Isn't it your greatest affliction? If given a choice, wouldn't you endure anything in the world rather than commit a sin against God? And isn't this not only due to convictions of conscience but also because your inner disposition aligns with this truth? While you might not have experienced the same depth of sorrow and conviction as others in their bondage to sin, you can still find comfort in the present disposition of your heart. Therefore, in similar situations where you can't find your old evidences, don't be discouraged. Instead, focus your energy on renewing those evidences. Rather than spending time disheartened by your own thoughts, actively engage in renewing your evidences.

SIXTH RULE: Remember the Covenant of Grace

The sixth rule to guide you in self-examination is this: As you scrutinise yourselves to discern your evidences, keep in mind that you are in a covenant relationship with God's grace. This perspective can have a remarkable impact, even though to some, these concepts may appear dry or inconspicuous. Yet, I am hopeful that many of you are acquainted with the notion of an eternal covenant between God and your souls. To you, these words will hold great value. I'm addressing those of you who have been touched by the fear of God, those who have made it their supreme pursuit to ascertain the standing of their everlasting destinies. I recognize that there are numerous individuals who hardly ever question these matters, for whom these rules might not have much or any utility. But if my words offer aid and guidance to even one troubled soul, my time will have been well invested. Therefore, as you engage in your introspection, constantly remember that you are dealing with God within the framework of the covenant of grace, not the covenant of works. Many troubled consciences are afflicted because they view God through the lens of the covenant of works. When they sense the stirrings of their inner corruption or face formidable temptations, they swiftly conclude that all is lost and that God will never accept them. Why does this happen? It's because if we were subject to a

covenant of works, the slightest emergence of corruption would suffice to plunge the soul into eternal horror. Just as in the case of Adam, even though he was graced with the divine image and goodness, one sin would have condemned him eternally, had it not been for the advent of the covenant of grace. Though people acknowledge the existence of the covenant of grace, their reactions to the stirrings of corruption often resemble those who deal solely with the covenant of works. It's as if the covenant of grace has no purpose at all. This, however, is a disservice to the immense richness of God's grace. The covenant of grace reveals that we will not be judged for our eternal status based on the covenant of works. It declares that our Judge concerning our eternal destiny is also our Advocate with the Father. Moreover, it affirms that God values the integrity and sincerity of the heart, and that the absence of perfection will not condemn our souls. The One who stands before the Lord to make reconciliation and advocates for us before the Father, He will be the Judge of our eternal state. Thus, whenever I stand before the Lord, I remind myself that I am engaging with Him under the canopy of the covenant of grace. So, if I become aware of my corruptions and weaknesses, could it not be possible that my eternal condition is blessed by the covenant of grace? I gather my thoughts and inquire, "Why am I hastening to conclude my eternal destiny?"

Reflecting on the Covenant of Grace

Consider this: If I am dealing with God within the Covenant of grace, can't these imperfections coexist with it? Why do I jump to the conclusion that my state is worthless due to the stirring of these corruptions? Most Christians' doubts and fears stem from a lack of clear understanding regarding the disparity between the Covenant of grace and the Covenant of works. There's nothing more likely to pacify the consciences of people than a comprehensive comprehension of this distinction. Many individuals blame preachers for disquieting and perturbing hearts with their sermons. The reality is that no preachers provoke as much turmoil and confusion in consciences as those who solely preach morality and the

path of duty, without clarifying the divergence between the Covenant of grace and the Covenant of works. Let me ask you this: Who are the preachers that bring tranquility and contentment to your consciences? Are they not the ones who illuminate the disparity between the Covenant of grace and the Covenant of works? Undoubtedly, those preachers who elucidate the essence of the Covenant of grace are the ones who calm and satisfy consciences. Truth be told, nothing else has that effect. So, you who identify as Christians, how important is it for you to delve deeper into understanding the Covenant of grace? Instead of engaging in discussions of lesser significance, make this your focal topic—the distinction between the Covenant of works and the Covenant of grace, or the blessings bestowed by this Covenant. Realise that this is the Covenant upon which we must rely, despite our weaknesses.

Now, speaking of this Covenant, it's possible that some with carnal hearts might abuse its implications. Remember, however, how dearly the comforts of your souls cost God. He is willing to have His ministers comfort you, even if revealing such truths might endanger the salvation of other souls. God is willing to take the risk of others' damnation to bring you comfort. The things we reveal for your solace may potentially lead others astray. Consider this: Must the comfort of my soul come at such a price, with the risk of many souls being endangered? Shouldn't I then make the most of this grace, which comes with the peril of so many other souls? Imagine someone offering precious balm to heal a wound, saying that each drop cost at least a thousand pounds. Wouldn't that be highly esteemed? Likewise, when we present matters that can soothe your hearts and satisfy your souls, know that we are sharing things of immense worth. Each drop of Gospel-comfort costs the blood of Christ, and its revelation can lead to the damnation of many souls. Still, God is willing to risk this for your comfort. In the name of God, we preach the grace of the Gospel, knowing that it may harden some and lead to misuse of God's mercy. However, we find solace in the fact that comforting a troubled soul holds such precious value to Jesus Christ that He is willing to risk the hardening of other hearts. By this, we

discern the value of these comforts. Hence, treasure them and do not dismiss them lightly. For instance, imagine a captain risking the lives of a thousand men to save just two or three lives. Would those few lives not be extremely precious to him? Similarly, Jesus Christ is willing to risk the hardening of many hearts to comfort a few. This illustrates how precious your comforts are. Therefore, do not readily cast them aside, as they come at a great cost.

Applying Evidences with Faith

Now, let's explore the seventh Rule for applying Evidences: Even when you can't perceive the work of faith leading to Assurance, make an effort to exercise the work of faith in Adherence. It's possible to have a significant manifestation of the faith of adherence even when the faith of assurance is not fully present. Indeed, genuine faith can cling to Christ for the forgiveness of sin even without absolute certainty. Many individuals are lamenting and stating that if they possessed an assured faith and were fully convinced of their sins being pardoned, they would find comfort. However, due to their lack of absolute persuasion and assurance, they assume they lack any trace of grace. Yet, true faith can indeed be present in the context of sin's pardon without the reflective act of the soul through which the knowledge of having faith and sins being pardoned is acquired.

In 1 John 2:3, it is explained that one can possess knowledge without acknowledging that they possess knowledge: "And hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments." This distinction between knowing Christ and knowing that we know Him underscores that there exists a knowing and a recognition of knowing. Similarly, there is a distinction between believing and being aware that we believe. Therefore, the absence of faith of assurance does not exclude the presence of faith of adherence. In this sense, faith of adherence pertains to a state where the soul clings to Christ and willingly commits itself to Him for the pardon of sin, salvation, and life.

Imagine a scenario where, in your quest for Evidences (many derived from the effects and fruits of faith), you are unable to discover them. Consequently, you can't activate the reflective act of the soul associated with faith of assurance. However, in this situation, you can still exercise faith of adherence. Your heart may sense a connection to Christ, and you may be willing to entrust your soul to Him. This form of faith will provide salvation, even if you lack faith of assurance. This means that although you may not identify the exact Evidences that allow you to draw a definitive conclusion or judgment regarding your forgiveness, if you possess faith of adherence and are able to remain steadfast in your commitment to Christ, entrusting Him with your life, salvation, and all that is good, this faith will indeed secure your salvation. Thus, when examining your Evidences and finding it challenging to reach the level of assurance, rely on faith of adherence to Christ. Resolve to stick with Him, pledging to live and die with Him, and entrust yourself to the grace of God found in Christ. This act of entrusting your soul to Christ requires significant faith. By venturing your soul onto Christ, you are implicitly placing your possessions, reputation, and everything you have on Christ. Therefore, remember that even if you lack a faith of assurance, you can still find comfort by embracing a faith of adherence—holding onto Christ and entrusting yourself to Him.

Eighthly, If you ever experience a surge of comfort from Evidences entering your souls, and you find the ability to apply these comforts to yourselves as signs that the Lord has communicated with you as a pardoned sinner, be cautious not to overly rely on these Evidences. At that very moment, remind yourselves that although comforts have come, they might vanish, and God could lead you to a different circumstance. These aids were never granted by God to make them your foundation; they are like lifebuoys helping me stay afloat. God might take these away and prompt me to rely solely on the direct acts of faith, without relying on sensory experiences. This is a certainty—He can do that. When we bring forth these Signs and Evidences of grace, considering they emerge from faith and are its effects and

fruits, they resemble lifebuoys assisting inexperienced swimmers in learning to swim. These swimmers can progress to swim without the buoys, but take them away from novices, and they will sink. Thus, these Evidences serve young and feeble Christians who are unable to exist on fundamental acts of faith—a feat a strong Christian can achieve even when all else is taken away. Therefore, when you sense comfort from any signs, do not depend solely on them, for the Lord might choose to remove them. As God delights in the pure acts of faith, He sometimes withdraws the availability of Signs and Evidences that believers had experienced before. This is His way of teaching them to rely on the more crucial acts of faith. God finds joy in the attitude of Job, who proclaimed, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Job was willing to place his soul in God's hands, regardless of the outcome. When nothing else remains as support except God, relying solely on Him through acts of faith brings God great delight. Hence, be cautious not to anchor your comfort primarily in signs, as if all consolation is lost and you are doomed when you no longer experience them in the way you once did.

Ninthly, When you find yourself deprived of the use of signs, do not hastily conclude that everything is lost, and you will never experience their utility again. This hasty conclusion is a significant obstacle for many distressed Christians. When they fail to discover evidence of their sins being pardoned and their deeds being accepted by God, they swiftly surrender to a dreadful pronouncement of condemnation upon themselves. They assert that the Spirit of God has now departed and will never return. Guard against attaching such thoughts to your situation or concluding that God's Spirit will never come back to you. Instead, humble yourselves before the Lord and wait upon Him.

Tenthly, When you encounter moments where all Signs and Evidences fail you, and you're tempted to conclude that all hope is lost, even then, maintain positive thoughts about God. Just as the Spouse in the Canticles treasured her Beloved and declared, "He is the chiefest of ten thousands" (Cant. 5), even when he was absent,

nurture similar sentiments. When asked about her beloved, she described him and then concluded, "He is altogether lovely." This happened while he was gone, yet she held onto favourable thoughts about him. Similarly, it's a positive sign for any soul that, when faced with trouble of conscience or any other adversity, they uphold positive thoughts about God, Christ, and God's ways. The soul might declare, "Regardless of my fate, even if I were to perish eternally, God is good. His Word, ways, Gospel, and Covenant through his Son are all good. Despite my troubles, God remains righteous." If there's a soul that can't find their Evidences or any of the aforementioned signs, they can employ this approach. When other avenues seem blocked, strive to vindicate God. If you're concerned that God won't justify you, justify God instead. Sometimes, many individuals behave like unscrupulous servants who deceive their Master. As long as they can exploit their Master for personal gain, they praise him. Yet, if the Master dismisses them due to their deceitfulness, they curse him. This is a common occurrence with bad servants who lash out when expelled for their wrongdoing. Similarly, when everything is going well, many approve of God's ways. However, if they find themselves in a situation where they believe God might truly forsake them and they are destined to perish, they begin harbouring negative thoughts about God. Gradually, they even speak against God and His ways. Be cautious of this tendency. Even if you lack the Evidences of His love and mercy, maintain positive thoughts about God and His ways in your heart. This will greatly aid in bringing comfort and assurance of your Justification to your soul. Having concluded this discourse, I've outlined who receives forgiveness of sins, addressed various misconceptions, and provided certain infallible Scriptural Evidences of the pardon of sin, along with Rules for utilizing these Evidences. Now, based on what you've heard, you either possess testimony and assurance of the pardon of your sins, or you don't. If you find that your hearts don't align with these Evidences or you're apprehensive about the forgiveness of your sins, then allow me to exhort you to actively pursue this blessed state.

CHAPTER XIX.

Encouragement to Seek Forgiveness of Sin, Along with Cautions and Guidelines for Action

I have now reached the point of exhortation, and it pertains to us all—both those who have not yet received pardon and those who have assurance of forgiveness. Indeed, none with assurance should neglect its application. Christ taught His disciples to pray daily for the forgiveness of their wrongdoings, just as they prayed for their daily sustenance. What we pray for, we should also pursue. Therefore, this concerns everyone. The yearning for blessedness is innate in every human being, as natural as fire's inclination to burn. However, a great misconception prevails: all desire it, but many do not seek it through the right means.

Now, so that you do not trivialise the pardon of sin, saying, "I hope they are forgiven," or the like, I aim to awaken you. Imagine being on the edge of the boundless Ocean of Eternity, with the abyss ready to engulf you. The records of Heaven unfold, revealing that your sins have not been erased but remain recorded. Whatever you would do in that moment, do it now. This is our time, and this is the paramount task of our lives—not to be burdened by myriad concerns, but to focus on this single matter: working out our Salvation with fear and trembling. To secure the blessing of sin's pardon, which serves as the cornerstone of all blessings, is our preeminent duty. In obtaining this, we secure all blessings. It should be our primary concern, and we should dedicate our foremost efforts to its pursuit. If God were to inspire your hearts, redirecting the current of your thoughts and efforts, even the inclination of your heart towards this endeavour is a great mercy. The blessedness contained in this pursuit is so immense that the very orientation of your heart in this direction is more valuable than the entire world.

In Acts 2, we read of many thousands whose hearts were moved when they heard the preached Word. They cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Oh, that such a disposition were present in the hearts of men today! We see that possessing such a disposition is our blessedness. Conversely, without it, we are eternally cursed. "What shall we do to attain it?" In Mark 10:17, we encounter an individual who hurried to Jesus, asking, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" May your hearts be similarly inclined to seek after Christ, asking, "What shall we do to secure the pardon of our sins?" However, before delving further, it's imperative to provide a few cautionary statements or prerequisites.

First, Understand This: Even though I must seek God for the forgiveness of sin, bear in mind that there's nothing in a natural person that is or can be pleasing to God. All their efforts lack the essence to earn God's approval. So, why should we even strive to do anything, you ask? Well, indeed, we should endeavour to obtain the pardon of sin, even though we can achieve nothing without Christ. A bad tree can't yield good fruit, yet it is purposeful for us to be active, for God appreciates the exercise of common talents. While they might not lead to salvation or eternal life, God favours the application of these gifts insofar as they hold anything good and commends them. When the young man approached Christ in Mark 10:21, Jesus looked at him and loved him, although not with a love that would save him and grant eternal life. Still, God did reveal love to such an individual. Therefore, it's worthwhile for a person to engage in whatever they can, if only for that reason.

Secondly, Remember: Any pursuit of Christ before establishing a union with Him should not be counted as a condition of the Covenant of Grace or a Gospel-related effort. No preliminary actions are required to access Christ as part of the Covenant of grace. Although we must engage in such activities, they do not constitute the Covenant's conditions. The actual condition of the Covenant of grace sanctifies the individual possessing it and follows our union with Christ. Even though God may lead the soul through legal

terrors, humiliations, and similar experiences, these are not the works of the Covenant of grace. This insight can offer solace to many distressed souls dealing with conscience-related fears and humiliations. Some are troubled by not having experienced the same degrees as others. However, these preparatory works neither ready you for Christ nor hinder you from receiving Him.

The third Warning follows in line with the previous one: Even as you engage in all possible means to receive Christ, be cautious not to find contentment in any of those preliminary efforts. There's a significant danger here; many souls make a mistake, and it's quite likely that they do so in this aspect. They find solace in something they have accomplished. Perhaps God has stirred their consciences, and they embark on actions like humbling themselves and reforming their ways. Yet, beware of stopping at that point. Do not be at rest until you find yourself in Christ and until there's a union between Christ and your souls. The work isn't complete merely because you have been humbled and reformed, or have changed your course. As Romans 9:16 states, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." It's not just about willing or putting in effort; even if your endeavours are earnest, it still isn't solely about that. Many assume they have inner peace based on their good intentions and efforts. When their hearts are deeply moved and they feel greatly expanded, they are certain everything is done. They console themselves with this notion and believe no further effort is required. However, it's not the case. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Although we must will and we must run, it's possible to strive and run to enter in, yet not truly enter. This is an important revelation to make us understand how much we rely on the free grace of God to forgive our sins.

Fourthly, even though God isn't bound to grant forgiveness based on these preceding preparatory efforts, it's still highly worthwhile for any soul in the world. The very possibility of obtaining forgiveness demands the utmost exertion from each individual. Even if we could

do far more than our capabilities, the mere possibility of gaining forgiveness is enough to summon all our strength. Understand that the potential of having sins forgiven is sufficient to motivate all of you to fervently seek it. Though God doesn't commit to granting forgiveness when people do all they can, it's not structured in a way where God would simply have His creation seek Him and leave everything to that seeking. No, that's not the case. If God were to foresee something that His creation would do and then grant pardon based on that, then everyone in the world would be saved. However, not everyone does what they can. If God had bound Himself to grant pardon when individuals do their best, the entire world could potentially be saved. But that's not how it works. God has designed it in such a way that even when His creatures do their utmost, they still have to depend on Him. When He does intervene, He then enters into the most unbreakable and powerful covenants to benefit His creatures. Now, let's turn to strengthening the exhortation to seek forgiveness of sin.

You might wonder, "How should we seek it? What are the necessary steps?"

Firstly, when seeking forgiveness for your sins, envision yourself standing in the presence of God, and deeply embed this thought into your soul: "I am currently pursuing the pardon of my sins, but am I engaging in this with the depth of commitment that my conscience can accept? Is my approach a demonstration of the immense respect I hold for God, from whom I seek forgiveness? Is it an undertaking that signifies my awareness of the immeasurable significance this has in my life? Do I truly comprehend the infinite Power and Majesty of God, who stands far above me?" When pursuing forgiveness, your approach must carry the weight of acknowledging the glorious greatness of the God you are pursuing. It's quite common for many to pray with superficiality, uttering a few words and moving on. But can such an approach reveal a genuine understanding of the immense power of the God they seek? Most likely not. This is the initial point to consider.

Secondly, if you are intent on seeking forgiveness for your sins, it must be a pursuit that showcases your valuation of your life in this world above everything else within it. After all, God has granted you time in this life specifically to seek Him. Does your pursuit reflect the fact that the time you've been given is intended for this very purpose? If you truly grasped this, your approach would be different. You would approach it like a condemned individual seeking a pardon. In truth, every individual is, in a sense, condemned, and the time of your life is akin to that of a condemned person, existing between the pronouncement of guilt and execution. Does your pursuit manifest that you are utilising your time and emotions to seek forgiveness, treating your life as precious and using it to achieve the goal of obtaining pardon for your sins? Just as a condemned person with a few days left to seek a pardon who spends their time drinking and indulging in idle pursuits would not appear as though they were striving for a pardon, so too should you assess whether your life's path and actions testify to seeking forgiveness. If individuals were truly as aware of this as they ought to be, they would cry out, lament, and implore God for forgiveness while carrying themselves in a manner that shows they highly value their lives for the purpose of seeking forgiveness.

Thirdly, it must be done in such a way that your conscience bears witness that you've never pursued anything in the world with the same intensity. Even if it's the most significant matter, your efforts must be more fervent in pursuing forgiveness. Allow me to pose this to you: Is your pursuit of forgiveness so passionate that you can confidently affirm in your conscience that nothing else has ever consumed your heart's desires to this extent? Has your spirit been equally absorbed by any other matter in the world? If not, then you have yet to fulfil what God expects from you.

Fourthly, your approach should be one of perceiving that God might be ready to withdraw and turn away from you. Seek God with the understanding that, for all you know, He might be on the verge of leaving, and if you don't receive forgiveness now, there's uncertainty

about ever obtaining it. Approach your quest as a soul in a state of peril. Imagine a criminal in court who cries out for mercy while the judge is presiding. This individual pleads incessantly throughout the hearing, but it's when the judge is about to rise from the bench and depart that the cry for mercy intensifies. It's when the condemned believes that if they let this moment pass, they might never have another chance to plead for clemency. Similarly, your pursuit of God's forgiveness should bear this urgency. Imagine yourself standing before God, the ultimate Judge of all existence, aware of the sentence of death hanging over you. At this moment, God allows you to behold Him and seek His forgiveness. But approach this as if you believe God might be ready to turn away, and you may never have the opportunity to encounter Him again. If you deeply comprehend the gravity of sin and the blessedness of forgiveness, this perspective would leave a profound impact on your heart.

Fifthly, when pursuing forgiveness, strive in such a manner that your efforts testify your commitment to sanctifying the great Name of God through this endeavour. I don't suggest that you can achieve this perfectly, but you must make a genuine effort and aspire for your actions to bear some resemblance to it. Among all the works that God has undertaken from eternity, none embodies His Name as much or more than the act of pardoning sins. This is a positive divine act, intended to declare His Name. The plans and actions of God in relation to this matter are of the utmost significance; you've already heard much about the glory of God in this context from the earlier teachings. Now, in this practical application, what I propose is that as you seek forgiveness for your sins, you should understand that your efforts should reflect the profound nature of God's Name. Indeed, this is a way of sanctifying God's Name—when our endeavours resonate with the excellent and glorious attributes that characterise His nature and are evident in the work we are engaged in.

Imagine, for instance, that you are reflecting on a specific attribute of God. Sanctifying His Name involves having a reverent and respectful

disposition in relation to that attribute. Similarly, when you offer praise for a mercy received, you sanctify God's Name by aligning the state of your heart with the glorious attributes that shine forth in that bestowed mercy. Likewise, when you seek God's blessing, you demonstrate reverence for His Name when your heart's disposition corresponds to the glorious attributes of God inherent in that blessing. Therefore, in your pursuit of sanctifying God's Name as you seek forgiveness, you achieve this goal when your inner state aligns with the glorious attributes of God, which are inextricably linked to this pursuit. In essence, this entails creating a disposition within yourself that is somewhat congruent with the magnificence of God's Name that is revealed in the process of seeking forgiveness. This constitutes sanctifying His Name—a grand task that not only exemplifies the purpose for which you were created but also corresponds to the profound intentions and plans of God, even His eternal designs.

The inclinations of our spirits must exhibit a quality that underscores the grand purpose and wisdom of God's intentions. Consequently, this task must be substantial in nature to truly exemplify this objective. After all, those whom God pardons come to comprehend the essence of pardon. Therefore, if your pursuit is informed by a profound understanding of what you are seeking, it should naturally align with the glorious nature of God's Name that is profoundly embedded within it. As you apprehend this concept, your heart's impulses will naturally follow suit. So, in those private moments when you sense your heart moving in this direction, take a moment to reflect. Ask yourself, "Am I genuinely calling upon God and seeking Him in a manner that proclaims to both God and my conscience that my pursuit is dedicated to unveiling the splendour of His majestic Name within it?" Truly, if you are not doing this, you are falling short of honouring and respecting God's Name in this process.

Sixthly, proceed to seek forgiveness as if you were presently to account for all your sins before the Lord—just as you would wish you

had done in those dire moments. I challenge each of you: have you not found yourself on a sickbed, fearing the proximity of death? Has God not stirred your conscience, filling you with dread due to your sins? Recall the state of your soul at that juncture and understand that this disposition should characterize every day of your existence. Your reactions now should mirror what you would have done then. If you fail to seek forgiveness with the same intensity you experienced during those moments, you truly haven't grasped the significance of obtaining pardon for your sins.

Seventhly, approach this pursuit as you would imagine the damned souls in Hell would if God presented them with the possibility of pardon. Contemplate their response—what actions would they take? Various scenarios might unfold in your imagination, and it falls to me to present this challenge: imagine, if you will, preaching the possibility of God's pardon to the inhabitants of Hell. Do you not believe that each of them would fervently cry out to the God of Heaven? It's inconceivable that any member of such an audience wouldn't cry out to God with great urgency if the profound plans of God for pardoning sins were proclaimed to them. Then, why should you not do the same now? Whatever you think they would do, do it wholeheartedly and without vain pretenses, right now.

Eighthly, embrace this mindset: seek forgiveness with the desire, if it were somehow possible, to bring as much glory to God as He would have received if He had chosen to damn you forever. This is a remarkable state of spirit—though you might not yet recognise it. Even if you haven't grasped it, you should strive to adopt such an attitude, and God may well respond. While you might be crying out for forgiveness, you could also cry out for the honour of God. Consider, "What shall become of God's honour, which I have tarnished? How have I shamed His Name? O Lord, I yearn to restore Your honour to the extent that I have besmirched it. Even if my eternal damnation might somehow restore Your honour, I'd willingly bear it. However, O Lord, I fervently wish to perform deeds that can

mend the dishonour I've caused through my sins. If only I could undertake actions that would bring You honour. Lord, I'd do it."

To conclude, ponder this: regardless of your circumstances, whatever actions you would undertake under certain suppositions, do them now. You must exert the full extent of your capacities as a creature. Given the sermons you've heard about the grave nature of sin and the subsequent teachings about the immense blessing of sin's pardon, how can you expect to stand before God seeking pardon if you fail to exert yourself to the utmost? Thus, whatever actions you'd contemplate under certain hypothetical scenarios, engage in them now, even if pardon might not be immediately granted. Imagine a situation in which you were on the verge of damnation—would it not be wiser to undertake these actions now than to abstain from them? After addressing these general principles, I will now proceed to the specific aspects of the question: What must be done?

First, make sure you detach your heart from any other perceived forms of blessedness. No one in this world is exempt from chasing after something else, whether it be friendships, worldly pleasures, or indulging in desires. You must disentangle your heart from whatever it had been fixated upon. If it was friendships, or carnal pleasures that seemed to bring you happiness—as if fulfilling your lusts would satisfy you—realize that you've been consuming ashes, and there is no truth in these pursuits. God has unveiled the falsehood, revealing that the sought-after bliss is only attainable through His grace.

Secondly, grant your conscience the liberty to expose your sins, to hold them against you, even to accuse and judge you. Assist your conscience in this task; when it accuses and condemns, join in the condemnation of yourself. If you seek forgiveness, then allow your conscience to operate without restraint. It's perilous to hinder or silence your conscience when God begins to stir the hearts of individuals. The wisest path is to give your conscience the freedom it deserves; after all, it will one day have the freedom to accuse and condemn you. So, why not give it the freedom it seeks now? Your

conscience will ultimately lay your wrongdoings bare and accuse you. Bring a simulated day of judgement upon yourself, condensing the divine tribunal into your heart. Request the Book of Conscience and ask, "Conscience, what do you say against me? Let me deal with it now so it won't stand against me on the Day of Judgement."

Thirdly, be ready to admit all your sins, confess them, and reveal them with every heart-rending detail, along with any aggravating factors you can recall. God is aware of your sins, whether you confess them or not, yet God wants you to come forward and lay them bare. He desires you to accuse yourself. Open your conscience sincerely before the Lord, not superficially, but in an anguished manner, filled with bitterness of spirit, lamenting your sins. Cry out against them through prayer and supplication.

Fourthly, be willing to embrace the consequences of your sins. Say, "O Lord, I acknowledge and bemoan my sins. I am here, Lord, ready and willing to accept the consequences of my sins." A soul in this disposition is on a promising path towards the pardon of sins.

Fifthly, resolve to shun sin, whatever the outcome may be. While seeking pardon for your sins, firmly commit to never sinning again. Consider that, for all you know, the very next sin you commit might prompt God to hold you accountable for all your past transgressions.

Sixthly, cast aside gains acquired through dishonest means and make restitution, just as Zacchaeus did in Luke 19.

Seventhly, make certain that nothing else satisfies you except the pardon of sin. Never settle; keep your soul in a state of anticipation, looking up to God for forgiveness. I must emphasise that all these actions are to be connected with the great work of the Son of God. When you ask, "What shall we do?" remember that despite the various aspects I've discussed, they all revolve around Christ, the Son of God and God-Man. Regard Him as the head of the second Covenant, offering Himself for our sins. Keep your focus on Him,

and while you allow your conscience to accuse you before your own soul, also place your guilt upon Christ, the head of the second Covenant. Look to Him for absolution. When you confess your sins and plead to God for forgiveness, remember that you approach Him through the mediation of Jesus Christ. Consider the One who must mend the breach, restore you to His favour, and remove the curse. In every action, ensure that Christ is your focus. Apply these principles in a way that propels your soul to trust in Christ. Unless your soul ascends to this level of seeking Christ, all other efforts are merely natural actions, unless they serve to lead you to Christ.

And now that I have explained what you are to do, what will you do? Will you resolve, through the grace of God in Christ, to engage in these actions you've been told of? If so, you are blessed. But if you neglect them, you might one day regret it when the weight of sin bears down upon you. Then you might plead for God's mercy, but God and conscience will remind you that you were warned, guided, and put on a path to seek forgiveness. What did you do after that? The following day, you might have returned to your companions, engaged in debauchery as before. If that's the case, trouble awaits you. Perhaps someone who sat in the same pew as you had a heart to seek pardon, and they are absolved before humanity and angels. On Judgment Day, they might sit at Christ's right hand, while you, who heard the same Word but neglected it, find your soul burdened with the weight of your sins forever. May such a disparity not occur. You've heard the way—pursue the pardon of your sins. Let it not be in vain that these sermons have been preached to you. In Acts 10:43, when they preached about pardon of sin, it says, "To him all the prophets bear witness." May you also bear witness that today the remission of sin has been preached to you. As you listen to these words, may the Holy Spirit touch your heart, igniting strong resolutions powered by the Holy Spirit, compelling you to embark on this journey and not rest until you find pardon.

Now I proceed to offer you some encouragements, which can work in two ways: either they will draw you to Christ or forever close

your mouths, leaving you with nothing to say against Him. I will provide fifteen encouragements for you.

CHAPTER XX:

Encouragements to Seek Pardon of Sin

First, consider that the span of your life is dedicated to the pursuit of sin's forgiveness. Imagine a man with a crucial task that affects his very life, and someone approaches him, saying, "Sir, this is the opportune moment you've seized, or else you would have been lost forever." Likewise, this very moment is the perfect opportunity granted to you to attain pardon for your sins and establish a connection with the redemptive blood of Christ.

Secondly, recognise that this time is not merely given for the sake of time but is accompanied by the means the Lord has provided as a strong indication of His intention to bestow mercy upon you. You can deduce that there are more of God's chosen ones who will receive pardoning mercy than in times past. The illumination of the Gospel is spreading, and undoubtedly, more souls are yet to be gathered. The Gospel itself is a result of Christ's sacrificial death and is given for the sake of the Elect. In Acts 18:9-10, God commands Paul to preach fearlessly because there are many people He has chosen in that place. While opposition may arise, God's Word carries an assurance that where it is sent, there are people destined to be gathered. By observing God's Providence in this matter, you can draw great encouragement to approach. Surely, among this congregation and others where the Word is preached, there are many whom He will pardon. Just as Mark 10:46 tells the story of the blind man who heard that Jesus was passing by, and despite being urged

to be silent, he cried out for mercy and, in response, Christ called him and granted him mercy. In a similar way, if you perceive your sin and cry out for forgiveness, Christ will summon you to Himself and bestow His pardoning mercy, just as He did for Bartimaeus.

Thirdly, you might find yourself not just within the reach of grace and the outward call, but sensing an internal call, experiencing the stirrings of God's Spirit within you. A while back, you may have wondered why people were drawn to sermons, but now you're starting to feel the impact of it. The glory of God becomes evident to you in this place as you listen to His Word. Reason this way: Remember Manoah's wife in Judges 13:23, who concluded that if God had intended harm, He wouldn't have accepted their offerings or shown them these things. Apply that to your own situation—consider that if God meant to harm you, He wouldn't have drawn you towards Him or revealed these insights. Let this thought be a source of encouragement.

Fourthly, the reason God sustains the existence of this world is to offer pardon to His Elect. This world would have ceased long ago if not for God's intention to extend pardon to His chosen ones and to those who recognize their sins. This should greatly embolden your soul, especially if you see your sins. After this work of granting pardon is accomplished, Christ will present His Kingdom to the Father. Imagine a scenario where a criminal comes to request a pardon, and someone tells him, "You've come at the right time, as the King was only waiting for your arrival." Wouldn't that be an incredible encouragement? Similarly, if it weren't for the purpose of individuals seeking the forgiveness of their sins, the worldly matters would have concluded long before now.

Fifthly, the primary purpose of the Scriptures is to unveil God's pardoning grace. Through the Scriptures, you gain insight into the heart of God. Christ lamented and mourned over the fact that sinners refused to come in to receive pardon and salvation. There's a tale from Athens about a temple where a woman wept, holding a bleeding

heart in one hand while writing pardons with the other. In a similar way, Christ stands mourning for you, His heart bleeding on your behalf, and in one hand, He holds the means of forgiveness. Luke 19:41-42 speaks of this. Christ doesn't merely weep; the sixth encouragement is that He dispatches His messengers to invite you to come in. He instructs them not to accept a refusal from you. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, these ambassadors entreat on His behalf, beseeching you as if it were God Himself pleading. It's like a king sending an attendant to a condemned prisoner, imploring them to come for a pardon and insisting they not decline. In the same way, God employs ministers to implore you to accept pardon. Understand this to be as if God spoke directly. Such appeals should move you. Christ beseeches you to be reconciled so that His sacrifice isn't in vain. Given that God entreats you to come in, why would you hesitate? Why not come and seek forgiveness for your sins, surrendering all you are and possess to Him?

Seventhly, recognise that it's the primary role and purpose of Christ's mediation to mend the hearts of wounded sinners. Isaiah 61:1 states, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." In the New Testament, this is applied to Christ. Considering that binding up the broken-hearted is the fundamental mission for which Christ entered the world, contemplate whether you can't place your trust in Christ through an act of faith. This thought should be a significant encouragement.

Eighthly, contemplate that the God you're dealing with has mercy ingrained in His very nature. If this is the case, His mercy is freely given. Just as the sun shines because it's its inherent nature to do so, the mercy of God must operate freely because it's inherent to His nature. Just as fire burns naturally, Exodus 34 and Micah 7:18 reveal that God pardons because He delights in mercy. You might say you're a poor sinner, and though that may be true, you could also say

that because God is a God who takes pleasure in mercy, this might prompt me to come forward.

1. God takes more delight in pardoning any sinner than in all the creatures of heaven and earth. While God finds joy in all His creations, this joy is surpassed when His grace in Jesus Christ is magnified through pardon. Pardoning a humbled sinner brings Him more pleasure than any other creation.
2. No one can take as much pleasure in their own soul's salvation as God does in pardoning your sin. The reason behind this is that it serves the greatest purpose of God—to showcase His glory through pardoning mercy in Christ. This, therefore, becomes a substantial encouragement.
3. God finds more delight in your heart embracing free grace than in all the legal acts of humility. Christ states this as God's goodwill and pleasure. David, referred to as a man after God's heart, was designated so because he obeyed God's will. This serves as significant encouragement. While many may twist this truth to their own detriment, God intends for it to be taught so that you can find comfort in it. Therefore, you should align yourself with God, approach Him, and grasp His pardoning mercy.

Ninthly, although God has chosen such a merciful path to pardon sin, His justice remains intact. Christ has orchestrated it so that His glory will not be diminished in any way; His justice will be satisfied. Therefore, you need not say, "I have sinned against God so grievously that I can't figure out how to restore His glory." There's already provision for that, so don't let it discourage you.

Tenthly, remember that there are sinners as wretched as you, now rejoicing in heaven. No matter how dark and wicked you think you are, don't be disheartened by the enormity of your sins. Even if

they're immense, they won't keep you out; others just as depraved as you are have entered heaven.

Eleventhly, even if you amplify your sinfulness, it need not stop you from approaching God. As far as anyone, whether human or angelic, can tell, you have as much claim to Christ as any saint in heaven ever did. When you come forward and seize Christ, that act alone will clearly demonstrate your rightful ownership, so don't lose heart; come forward.

Twelfthly, once you embrace Christ, you'll experience an unprecedented transformation, unlike anything ever witnessed in any creature. Even if you were more unclean and loathsome than a newborn child, stained by original and actual sins, you will be made purer than any child cleansed from their impurities. Wouldn't you do anything to be pure in God's eyes? Take heed of what I say, and you'll be cleansed. When the ministers proclaim God's warnings, you might complain that they only preach terror. Understand that our delight is in proclaiming God's pardoning grace. Our aim is to show the gravity of sin so that you might embrace mercy. Realise that we derive greater satisfaction from preaching mercy than anything else. Moreover, if you desire for all your thoughts, actions, and ways to glorify God, rest assured that He won't reproach you for coming to Him. As John 6:37 assures, "He that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Regardless of how sinful you've been, you can come and align with Christ; if you come to Him, He won't reject you.

Thirteenthly, your entrance will fill heaven with joy, surpassing even the welcome of a prince to his kingdom. In this very place, if you come forward, the angels will rejoice. There are many angels observing you, so be mindful of your conduct. They've come to witness how you behave. Ensure that your heart is committed to the purpose you've come for, as they're here to observe your actions.

Fourteenthly, as you obtain pardon for your sins and embrace Christ through faith, you become an heir of the entire world, not in the

future, but in the present. Just as many mariners and others embark on perilous journeys to amass great wealth in this world, you, by embracing Jesus Christ through faith for the forgiveness of sins, become heirs of the entire world. Although you undoubtedly desire nothing more than what will lead you to heaven, you indeed become true and legitimate heirs of the world. Everything belongs to you; the scriptures are clear about it, as seen in 1 Corinthians 3.

Fifteenthly, consider that, for all you know, you might be one of God's chosen ones, and anything He requires of you, He has promised to equip you to achieve. There's a divine arrangement between God and Christ that ensures not only favour but also empowerment for everything God demands of His elect. If you give yourself up to Christ, along with all you possess and are capable of, who's to say you're not one of the elect? Perhaps you'll be eternally blessed. However, if you disregard this rich and extraordinary grace of pardoning mercy, and fail to promptly pursue it, let shame be your companion, while the pardoning mercy of God is forever magnified.

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