

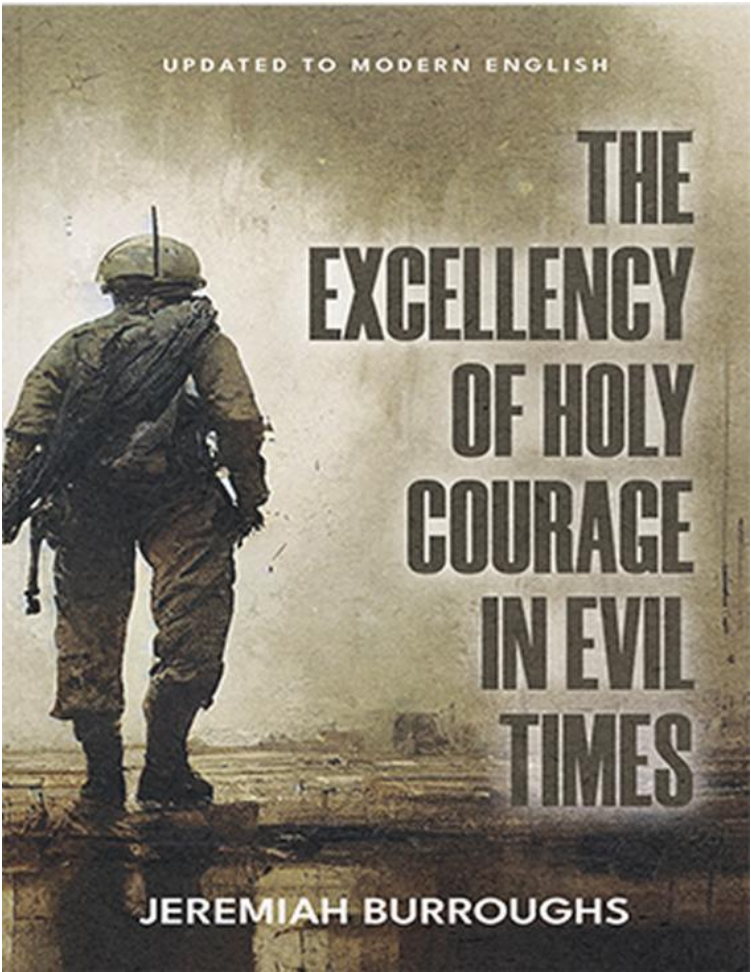
UPDATED TO MODERN ENGLISH



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# **The Excellency of Holy Courage in Evil Times**

**by Jeremiah Burroughs**

In addition to many other relevant truths, the following is demonstrated:

1. That wicked individuals in positions of power are extremely fierce when angry.
2. That having faith will prevent a noble heart from experiencing excessive fear of people in authority and power.
3. Guidelines for handling fear of authority.
4. Guidelines on how to conduct ourselves if those in authority command us to do unlawful things.
5. How faith assists in overcoming the fear of mankind, explained in fifteen specific aspects.
6. Arguments against fearing people, including the notion that wicked individuals are less fearsome than others.
7. Differences between natural boldness and holy courage derived from faith.
8. How much we may justifiably avoid danger by fleeing, along with various moral considerations related to fleeing.
9. Responses to objections regarding fleeing.
10. How to divert one's heart from the fear of people.

11. The power of faith to guide God's people through the most challenging tasks and duties.
12. How to determine whether faith will enable us to accomplish difficult tasks.
13. Aids in cultivating faith in our endeavors.
14. How faith sustains the soul during the arduous journey of forsaking Egypt.
15. A comparison of the wickedness of Sodom and Egypt with the wickedness of Antichrist.

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## **Chapter 1**

The Words Explained; Six Doctrines Presented

Having completed Moses' Choice, namely, what he chose, the exceptional quality of his spirit in making such a choice, and the principle of faith that enabled him to do so, I now proceed to discuss another remarkable outcome of the faith of this Honorable Servant

of the Lord, as it is described in verse 27. In this passage, we are to take note of two things:

1. The action of his faith.
2. The reasoning that fortified his faith to act.

Firstly, regarding the action, we should observe two aspects:

1. The noteworthy act of his departure from Egypt despite the anger of the King.
2. His perseverance, enduring through everything he did.

Secondly, the reasoning that strengthened his faith was the vision he had of the Invisible God.

Now, let's delve into the meaning of the words and the various doctrines present in the text.

"By faith he forsook Egypt": Through Moses' departure from Egypt, his faith was greatly demonstrated. For him to undertake such a task, leading thousands out of Egypt into a wilderness without knowing what would become of them, considering their inability to resist their enemies and the uncertainty of provisions, this was a tremendous feat.

"Not fearing the wrath of the King": Moses couldn't help but think that he was in danger from Pharaoh, and that Pharaoh and his company would pursue them. Although Pharaoh seemed willing, in the end, to grant them permission to leave, Moses was aware of Pharaoh's disposition, which could quickly change, leading him to relentlessly pursue and exterminate them, as he eventually did.

Nevertheless, Moses had no fear of such a scenario. He continued on his path, enduring because he saw the invisible God.

Objection: But it appears that Moses abandoned Egypt out of fear of the King's wrath.

Answer: It is true that at one time, when he left Egypt, Moses did fear the wrath of the King. In Exodus 2:14, it is mentioned that Moses witnessed two Hebrews quarrelling, and he asked the one in the wrong, "Why are you striking your fellow Hebrew?" The man replied, "Who made you a ruler and judge over us? Are you planning to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" At that moment, Moses became afraid and fled.

If we understand the text in reference to Moses' initial departure from Egypt, we can reconcile the Apostle's words with that passage. Initially, he fled not so much out of fear of the King, but out of concern for displeasing God. If he had exposed himself to the danger without making an escape, it would have been presumptuous and a temptation to God, as Osiander suggests.

Alternatively, it can be understood that he did not flee out of personal fear, but rather to ensure that his calling was not hindered if he stayed, as Simler suggests.

However, these words are better understood in relation to Moses' second departure from Egypt. The first time he left, he did so out of fear. But the second time, he departed out of faith and without fear of the King's wrath. After he had killed the Egyptian, he was afraid, but when he later led all the Israelite people with him, that was when he abandoned Egypt without fearing the King's wrath.



From this, we can draw the following observations:

Doctrine 1: Firstly, wicked individuals, especially when in positions of power, are highly fierce and furious in their anger when something goes against their will.

Undoubtedly, Moses perceived Pharaoh's wrath to be great, as the Holy Spirit highlights it as a significant result of his faith not to fear the King's wrath. It is evident that Pharaoh's wrath was severe, considering the power he would have exerted against the Israelites if not for Moses. Such a circumstance would have instilled fear in most people, but Moses had faith and did not fear.

Doctrine 2: Secondly, faith will prevent a virtuous heart from experiencing excessive fear of any person in the world, no matter how powerful or influential they may be.

Doctrine 3: Thirdly, there is a significant difference in the spirits of God's people at different times.

There was a time when Moses was afraid, but now he continues on without fear.

Doctrine 4: Fourthly, faith will enable a person to persevere through challenging and demanding tasks that God calls them to.

Doctrine 5: Fifthly, it is an honour for the people of God to endure in God's ways, despite all the hardships they may encounter.

Doctrine 6: Sixthly, the vision of an invisible God is a powerful means to propel someone forward in the ways of God, regardless of the opposition and difficulties they face.

These are the doctrinal conclusions we derive from verse 27.

## Chapter 2

### Addressing the First Doctrine

Doctrine 1: That the wrath of wicked individuals, particularly when they hold positions of power, is often intense and uncontrollable.

To prove this point, it must be acknowledged that sometimes God does restrain it, but generally, this is the case. Within every person, there is a great amount of unruly wrath that erupts and manifests itself in despicable and terrifying actions and consequences when given the opportunity and temptation. As the Holy Spirit states in Proverbs 29:22, "A furious man abounds in transgression." Those whose hearts are disturbed by passion, anger, and wrath are prone to committing transgressions. Horrendous things often emerge from them when they are consumed by rage, with little regard for their words or actions. They disregard all of God's commandments in those moments.

We read about Moses when he descended from the mountain (Exodus 32:19) and witnessed the people's sin. His anger was stirred, leading him to break the tablets. However, in that instance, his anger was righteous, for though the tablets were shattered, not a single commandment was violated. However, our anger and wrath are usually not righteous, and in our rage, we break all the commandments written on both tablets.

The Hebrew word that signifies transgression also means anger, as it is rare for someone to remain without transgressing in their moments of fury. It has been said that if there were two principles of things (as some heathens believe, one principle from which all good arises, and another principle from which all evil arises), then anger would be the principle of all evil, while God would be the principle of all good. Much evil and very dreadful things originate from uncontrolled and unleashed wrath.

Firstly, anger greatly blinds people's judgment. It obstructs the mind from perceiving what is true. In Job 5:13, it is said, "The counsel of the perverse is carried headlong."

An interesting anecdote I came across involves a poor woman who had her case presented before Philip, the King of Macedon. He rendered a verdict in his fury, and feeling that she had been wronged, she said, "I appeal." The king smiled at this, for as the sovereign, he asked, "To whom will you appeal?" She replied, "I appeal from you when you are angry to you when you are not angry." This incident highlights the fact that anger blinds judgment.

Secondly: Passion and wrath are compared to fire, which is active and quickly surpasses its boundaries. Once it goes unchecked, there is no holding it back, and much evil can result from it. The same applies to wrath.

Thirdly: Inordinate passion brings about much evil because, like a diseased fire, it consumes the natural heat. Just as a fever distorts the body's heat, causing it to consume the true natural heat, passion consumes the innate kindness and goodness within a person. Even if there is some natural warmth or inherent goodness in an individual, it is taken away when they are in the grip of passion. To illustrate

this, one can compare kindness to someone who is naturally hot. When passion arises, it consumes and eradicates the good natural heat, leaving only a distorted and immoderate heat.

Fourthly: Wrathful passion ignites all the lusts that reside within the heart, infusing them with activity. Previously, these lusts were dormant, cold, and motionless, like snakes that do not stir when they are cold. However, when they become heated, they begin to crawl about and sting. Similarly, many corruptions lie within the hearts of both men and women, lying dormant in the cold. But when the heat of passion arrives, it enlivens these corruptions, causing them to emerge and wreak havoc.

Every person possesses a disordered wrath, and if it is not subdued, dreadful consequences will follow. However, when power is combined with passion, its effects become truly outrageous. For instance, we witness Pharaoh's violent wrath against Moses, and therefore, the Holy Spirit commends Moses for not fearing the combination of passion and power. Similarly, consider Saul. His passion became exceedingly fierce once he attained power. Initially, he appeared to be a man of a tranquil spirit while in a private position and upon his initial ascent to the throne (as described in 1 Samuel Chapter 10). However, once he occupied the throne and his power became more entrenched, you can read about the outrageousness of his wrath in 1 Samuel 22:18-19. He commanded Doeg to slaughter eighty-five priests of the Lord in one instance, and Nob was struck with the edge of the sword. All of this was because David, his presumed enemy, had been there, and as Doeg informed him, Abimelech the priest had inquired of the Lord on David's behalf.

You can observe here how furious individuals can become in their wrath, particularly when it is self-centered. In the meantime, they can remain relatively calm when it concerns the cause of God. For instance, when God commanded Saul to slay Agag and the Amalekites, along with all their livestock, he was reluctant to be so outrageous. Out of compassion, he spared some for sacrifice. However, when the cause was his own, he ordered the slaughter of everyone—priests, men, women, infants, oxen, and sheep. Thus, many individuals are willing to overlook and forgive many things when it concerns the cause of God.

Many individuals who hold power within their families, such as parents or masters, can tolerate their children or servants sinning against God. However, if their children or servants offend them personally, they become outrageously furious. This demonstrates the violent and fierce nature of wrath when it is accompanied by power.

For instance, Rehoboam, when he had power, responded harshly to the people, saying in 1 Kings 12:14, "My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions."

You may also recall the example of Jeroboam, who held power in his hands. When a prophet came from God and prophesied against the altar, he ordered, "Seize him!" as mentioned in 1 Kings 13:4. Similarly, Jehoiakim, upon hearing the reading of the will, commanded them to cut it with a penknife and throw it into the fire, as described in Jeremiah 36:23. Even gracious individuals, when they possess power and are overcome by anger, can commit many evil deeds. Asa, a gracious king, struck the preacher who angered him, as seen in 2 Chronicles 16:10. However, when grace is absent,

wrath becomes outrageously extreme. For example, Xerxes, a renowned commander, expressed his anger towards water by cutting a great river and diverting its course.

There are reasons why wrath and anger become so extreme when accompanied by power:

Firstly, power inflates the heart with pride, and pride is the foundation of passion. The more passionate individuals are, the less their pride is subdued. Just as one person may be more prone to passion due to their bodily disposition, some may also be more susceptible to pride due to their bodily disposition. Power and strength greatly inflate the hearts of individuals. As stated in Psalm 90:10, "Their strength is labor and sorrow." The word translated as "strength" actually signifies pride, for they tend to believe that the strength and power they possess are due to some inherent excellence and worth above others, even though it may be far from the truth. It is possible that God elevates certain individuals above others not because of their worth, but out of his indignation towards others whom he intends to chastise through them.

Anastatius Arenus tells us a story of a monk who was appointed as a bishop over a very wicked place. He became prideful, thinking he was raised to such an honor due to his own worthiness. However, a voice was heard, saying, "Not because you are worthy, but because they have deserved such an unworthy man." Thus, God raises some to honor not because of any excellence within them, but out of indignation towards others.

Secondly, individuals with power become fiercely wrathful because when anything opposes them, it comes as a great surprise. They cannot conceive that anyone would dare to defy them. Therefore,

when the three children refused to submit to Nebuchadnezzar's command, he was filled with fury, and his countenance changed, questioning, "How dare you resist me? Do you know who I am?"

It is said that there was a king named Canutus who, being inflated by flatterers, believed that all creatures must submit to him. Consequently, he had his chair placed by the sea and commanded that no one should dare approach his seat, declaring, "Because you and the earth I sit upon are mine." Similarly, those in positions of power believe that everything belongs to them. Therefore, when anything opposes them, it is unexpected, and this leads to their outrageous behavior.

Thirdly, there is a vengeful spirit inherent in human nature, and where there is power, individuals tend to act upon it, considering revenge to be their ultimate glory. While it is the glory of God to show mercy, people mistakenly perceive revenge as glorious.

Fourthly, when individuals hold power, they perceive every offense against them through the lens of their own greatness. Just as God may justly view every sin against Him as significant due to His own greatness, those in power also adopt a similar perspective. They consider offenses committed against them as unbearable.

Fifthly, those who hold superiority over others tend to regard those beneath them as lowly and contemptible. They deem it better for the subordinate individuals to perish as filth and worthless material rather than endure any opposition, valuing the satisfaction of their own desires over the well-being and lives of those beneath them.

Sixthly, individuals in positions of authority have nothing to restrain their anger, unlike those of lower status whose anger can be kept in

check by higher authority. Without any restraints, their anger exceeds its bounds.

Seventhly, they are often surrounded by flatterers who further provoke their anger and add fuel to the fire, as the young men did with Rehoboam.

Eighthly, they mistakenly believe that the only way to maintain their authority is through displaying their wrath. However, nothing hinders the authority of a governor more than uncontrolled passion, and nothing undermines the respect that governors should receive more than passionate outbursts.

Ninthly, furthermore, they believe that it suits their greatness to possess more wrath and displeasure than others. Seneca expressed it well, saying, "It is not the greatness of the mind that causes wrathful anger, but the swelling of the mind." Just as a leg affected by gout appears larger than the other, it is not praiseworthy for the leg itself, but rather a result of swelling. Similarly, Antiochus Epiphanes was called "Epiphanes" by some, signifying a manifestation of divinity, yet the Holy Spirit refers to him as a vile person. Rehoboam's counselors might have claimed that his great spirit was befitting, but Scripture labels him a child.

Tenthly, they have nothing else to satisfy them or compensate for anything that opposes them. Therefore, when they encounter opposition, they become outrageously wrathful.

USE 1: From this, we learn that it is a grave affliction for any people to be under the rule of evil and passionate individuals, as their passion will be extreme, leading to fearful, lamentable, and grievous consequences.



USE 2: Furthermore, we see that those who find themselves under the authority of passionate individuals have reason to earnestly seek God on their behalf, beseeching Him to temper and calm their passions. As stated in Psalm 76:10, "God restrains the remainder of wrath." Thus, we should pray for those who hold positions of power and authority, asking God to moderate their anger.

USE 3: Moreover, we recognize the cause for admiration in God's goodness towards His Church, as He preserves it despite the many powerful individuals who oppose and confront His people. The Church is not overwhelmed by them, for the Lord commands the proud waves, "Thus far you shall come, and no farther" (Job 38:11). Psalm 76:10 is also significant in this regard, stating, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise you." It is God who redirects the wrath of man to bring about His own praise, and not only does He safeguard His Church, but He also makes it work for the good of His Church.

USE 4: This provides valuable guidance to those who have authority over others, such as parents and governors, urging them to be cautious in their exercise of power. Therefore, consider carefully:

1. Who has given me this power? Is it not the Lord?
2. Furthermore, consider how I have provoked the wrath of God against myself, yet God does not exercise His power against me. Those who are in positions of authority and are prone to anger should reflect: How is God provoked and opposed? If I think that because I am opposed, I should use all my power against those who oppose me, then why is God so patient? Why does He not exercise His power against me? Though I may have authority over others, I am under God's authority, and God would be just in exercising His full power to execute His wrath

against me. For when I, who have limited power, unleash all my power against those who oppose me, it is not fitting.

3. In addition, consider the power you hold over others. When it is the power of authority, it is a glorious thing, for it bears a resemblance to the Image of God. Will you then take your authority and power and subject it to your own desires, turning it into an instrument of the Devil? This would be a great evil. The more authority and power one possesses, the more evil it is to use it in the service of the Devil. Joseph's words to his brothers in Genesis 50:19 are worth noting. When they were afraid that he would seek revenge against them, he replied, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?" There are various interpretations of this statement, but it can carry the following meaning: The power I have is from God and under God. In fact, it places me in a position like that of God. Therefore, I cannot abuse it by employing it for revenge. The Lord deserves the glory, the glory of our strength, as the Psalmist expressed. If God has granted you strength and power over others, let God receive the glory for your strength, and do not misuse it.

Many people consider it a humiliation to yield to others when they oppose them, yet they do not consider it significant to yield to the Devil. The Scripture advises in Ephesians 4:26-27, "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the Devil." It is better to yield to any creature than to the Devil. If someone opposes you and you continue to harbor anger towards them, you are giving way to the Devil. Instead, yield to any creature rather than the Devil.

4. Furthermore, it is extremely dangerous and should not be resisted: the higher a person is above others, the less anger they

should possess.

5. Additionally, consider that God may grant you power more in anger than in mercy. A learned individual once said, "You must distinguish between what God gives in His good pleasure and what He gives when He is angry." Whatever we receive from God, whether in favor or in anger, I must use it with fear, lest God is not honoured by it. If God grants something in His anger, I must be careful not to misuse it to my own ruin.

Often, God allows some to have authority over others not only in His wrath towards those under them but also in His wrath towards themselves, so that they, being above others, may stumble and suffer harm. Therefore, those in positions of authority need to be cautious not to abuse it. Consider, have you used it for God's purposes? When you had power for God, you were willing to restrain yourself. Will you now use your power to indulge your own desires?

USE 5: Hence, we learn that since those in power often have such wrathful and uncontrolled passions, we should be cautious about opposing anyone in a position of authority over us. Many are under the authority of others, yet possess higher spirits than those above them. It is not wise to provoke a lion, and unless we have a valid reason, we will find little comfort in any suffering we endure. Let us continue in the ways of God, and we will face false accusations that provoke those in authority, even if we have done nothing to provoke them justly.

USE 6: The final lesson to be drawn from this is that the more common it is for those in power to have such wrathful tendencies, the more honourable it is for them to control their anger and passions. It is a blessed thing for a person in a position of power to

believe that it brings greater glory to use that power to restrain their own passion rather than to seek revenge against those who oppose them. You may think that making others yield to you is an impressive feat, but those who have authority over others should understand that it is a greater honour to use that authority to govern their own emotions rather than to force others to submit to it.

Philip II, the King of Spain, was engrossed in an important task of writing a letter to the Pope. Due to the urgency, he stayed up all night to complete it. While his secretary, who was half asleep, stood by, Philip instructed him to throw some sand on the letter. However, in his drowsy state, the secretary mistakenly poured ink on it. Despite being crossed, the king simply put it away and did not make a fuss about it. How shameful it is then for Christians to be so vengeful! When someone named Cradon spoke ill of Philip, some advised him to seek revenge. However, Philip sent him many gifts and spoke highly of him. When asked about what Cradon had said, the response was, "No man spoke better of me." To which Philip replied, "I am a better physician than you." Such behavior is commendable in anyone.

And this concludes the first point: that the wrath of wicked men, when they have power, is very fierce and outrageous.

## **Chapter 3:**

Handling the second Doctrine

Doct. 2. That Faith helps against the immoderate fear of people in authority, or any creature.

First: The godly should have, and indeed do have, respectful and reverent regard for all those in authority. Though they may not fear the wrath of the king or anyone in authority when it comes to matters concerning God, truly righteous and godly individuals give due reverence to them in their personhood and in their authority and power. While they are not cowardly afraid to yield to anything against God or their conscience, they are the people in the world who show the most honour and respect towards authority.

Secondly: Their actions are grounded in good reasons. They do it out of conscience and submit to authority more than others do. They do not entertain ill thoughts about authority in their secret minds. They see the image of God upon those in authority, not for their own sake.

Thirdly: Their fear of authority is of a noble kind. They do it willingly and cheerfully, not out of coercion, but because it is the will of God. It aligns with the disposition of their souls to do so. While naturally no one desires to be under another's authority, it is congruous with grace to be in such a position. Therefore, there are no subjects more respectful of authority than the godly, if properly understood.

Religion has often been scandalized throughout history, accusing its followers of contempt towards authority and failing to show proper fear towards it. Pharaoh claimed that they would rebel against him, and similar accusations were made in Nehemiah's time. Even Justus Martyr and Tertullian had to make apologies for Christians to demonstrate that no one was more obedient to authority than they were.

Tertullian made a notable statement in his apology: "Why do you not consider us obedient to authority? Is it because we refuse to worship idols and pray to idols for your governors? Yet, we pray to the true God for your governors." Similarly, people today, because they will not submit their consciences in an unlawful manner and seek the honour of authority through illicit means, are deemed to be not subject to authority. However, the truth is that no one is more truly subject to men than those who are obedient to God.

And so we read of Constantius, who took this approach to identify his true subjects: he proclaimed that anyone who refused to worship idols would be banished from the court, while those who complied could stay. Some, rather than leaving the court and being banished, chose to sacrifice to idols, while others left the court. In response, Constantius chose those who left the court and banished the others, saying, "If you are not faithful to God, you will not be faithful to me."

Can anyone truly submit to a Justice of the Peace if they refuse to yield to the King? If they submit to the lower authority, they will submit to the higher authority. Therefore, those who submit to authority on proper grounds do so because they are subject to the authority of God. In fact, there can be no trust in anyone to be faithful to authority except those who are godly. A notable example is that of Homizda, a prominent figure in the court of the King of Persia. The king tried persuading him to abandon the Christian faith using flattering arguments and urging him to sacrifice to idols. Homizda responded, "O King, do not be so eloquent to your own destruction. Who would consider someone faithful to man if they are not faithful to God? If we do not obey the authority of God, how can we be obedient to you?" Therefore, the godly give due and reverent respect to authority, even though they do not fear any authority in

matters concerning God. Yet, insofar as God requires, their hearts do fear and they show reverence.

Before I proceed to demonstrate how faith helps against the fear of men, I will provide some guidelines for properly respecting human authority. Although we must not fear it in any way that goes against God, we must still fear it. Faith will teach us not to fear it in one way, and yet it will teach us to fear it in another way. As the Apostle says in Romans 13:7, "Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." It is a Christian's duty to give fear to those who deserve it. Martin Luther, speaking about obedience to authority, said, "I would rather obey than work miracles." We also have a notable passage in Peter's Epistle, where the Apostle includes those who despise government among those whom God will judge. Therefore, we see that God does not want us to despise and disregard government.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Guidelines for Properly Respecting Authority**

Therefore, in order to properly order ourselves in our fear of authority and those who are above us, the following points must be established as a foundation:

1. First, we should only fear authority as being under a higher authority.

2. Secondly, we must differentiate between the concept of authority and the individuals who hold positions of authority.
3. Thirdly, it is important for us to understand the various callings that people have in their positions of authority.
4. Fourthly, we need to be aware of the boundaries and limitations of authority.
5. Fifthly, it is important to know how to respond when authority is diminished or diminished in its scope.
6. Lastly, we will provide some guiding principles for our passive obedience to authority when it is being misused.

These six points encompass this part of addressing the topic, and I will keep my explanations concise.

Firstly, we must establish this as a foundation: No authority should be feared and obeyed except in relation to a higher authority. I recall the customary expression used in England during jubilees and commissions: "In all things, make sure there is no prejudice to the right of the King." Similarly, among the Turks, when someone held a position of judgment or authority, a proclamation was made before them: "Let nothing be done against the truth." It is said that Frederick the Third, when asked who was most dear to him, replied: "Those who fear God more than me." Augustine also expressed it by saying, "He does not despise power who chooses to serve a higher power." He addresses the Emperor, saying, "Grant us permission not to serve you in certain matters, for you threaten imprisonment, while God threatens judgment and hell."



Indeed, a person in authority is God's representative, but not only God should be feared above His representative; in every individual, there is a representative that should be obeyed even more than any other representative, and that is the conscience of man. Thus, man comes to be obeyed in the third rank. Firstly, God is the highest. Then, there is a second, which is God's immediate representative, the conscience. And then, there is a third, which is the authority of man. This representative is subordinate to the other two. Therefore, nothing should be done against the highest authority, nor against the authority of conscience.

Secondly, for our guidance in subjecting ourselves to those who are above us and in rightly fearing them, we must distinguish between authority and the individuals in authority. Authority is established by virtue of a lawful power granted to a person in authority. However, if a person in authority commands something that is not based on the authority given to them, even if it may be good, it is not true authority but merely their own thoughts and desires. As Sampson said, "If I do this or that, I will be like any other man." Similarly, a person in authority may be like any other person when they only command according to their own will. Therefore, to disobey the mind and will of individuals in authority is not always to disobey authority, if the matter is not commanded by virtue of their authority.

Thirdly, it is necessary for us to understand the various reasons why individuals are called to positions of authority in order to properly order ourselves in our fear. This is to be accepted as a given: all lawful authority is from God, even the power held by non-believers.

But there are two types of calling to positions of government and authority.

Firstly, there is an immediate calling, as when God called Saul and David to their roles in government.

Secondly, there is a mediate calling, which occurs when God, through people, places either a specific individual or a particular family in a position of government or authority.

Now, when someone is brought into a position of government by those who have lawful power, even though it is through human means, they are in that position as appointed by God and are to be obeyed not only out of fear but also for the sake of conscience.

It is crucial to understand what initially binds a person's conscience to be in submission to another individual. There was a time when such individuals or families did not possess the power of authority. Therefore, something must grant them power. It is not their strength or conquest that can achieve this because my conscience is not obligated to submit to someone who is stronger than me as my governor; I would only do so to ensure my own safety. If another person comes and achieves victory, am I supposed to abandon my previous sovereign and submit to them? That would not be accepted. We cannot relinquish our sovereign to go to another simply because they have more strength. So, what must bind my conscience? It must be some indication of God's will that this is my governor. This indication can come either directly from Heaven through the prophets or through the inclination of those in power to appoint a particular individual or family to a position of authority. As far as God's will is made known to me, I am bound in conscience to submit accordingly.

Fourthly, it follows from this that you must consider the extent to which this authority is limited. If no individual has authority beyond

what God reveals, and God reveals His will either directly from Heaven or by inclining the hearts of those in power to grant authority to a specific person, then the limitations must align with the power that bestows authority. If God confers authority directly, then it is to be limited accordingly. However, if God confers power through humans, then it is to be limited accordingly.

In various kingdoms and countries, there are different forms of government. One country is governed by states, another by a monarchy, and other countries have different types of governance. What causes this difference in governments? The difference is necessarily determined by the power that initially bestows this authority, and thus it is to be limited by that authority.

5. But what if those who have limited authority abuse their power and exceed their boundaries?

To that, I answer: People in positions of authority are to be respected, but their abuse can take two forms. Firstly, when they command something that is unlawful, and secondly, when they command something that is beyond their authority. For example, if a Lord commands something that falls under the jurisdiction of a Prince and goes beyond their rightful power, it is not disobedience to authority to refuse because the authority does not require it. If we believe that there must be power to confer authority, this power can come from either God or humans. If neither God nor humans bestow the authority, then they have no legitimate authority.

But what if those in authority command something that is unlawful, yet they do not exceed the limits of their authority?

How can that be? It is true that God only grants commissions to command lawful things, but humans can confer so much power upon others that, by virtue of that power bestowed by humans, they can command what is unlawful. I do not say this is right, but their power enables them to do so. Now, if someone, by the power granted to them by humans, commands something unlawful, even though we should not actively obey, we must passively obey or find a sly way to obey. We must not seek justice through mutiny or rebellion. My reasoning is that the relationship between a governor and a subject is similar to the relationship between individuals. For instance, if another person possesses something that rightfully belongs to me, I cannot violently take it back. I would be justly regarded as someone who is doing wrong and treated as a criminal. I must patiently endure until I can legally recover what is rightfully mine. Similarly, if someone in authority has been given power to command things that are unlawful either by our forefathers or by our own submission, I must endure until I can legally reclaim what is rightfully ours through the power that initially granted it to them.

This explanation addresses a significant objection.

The Christians in the early days, who lived under persecuting Emperors, were commanded to worship idols, which was an unlawful thing. Yet, they did not rebel against them, even though they had enough strength. Instead, they chose to suffer passively. Some people believe that whenever those in authority command something, the only way to address it is through passive obedience. It is true that the Christians did not rise up but chose to suffer passively. This was because the Emperors held power in their hands, and the Christians could not legally reclaim their rights from them using the same power that granted them authority.

From this, we can draw three conclusions:

Firstly, all true authority comes from God.

Secondly, as long as authority is administered lawfully, we should submit to it not only out of fear but also for the sake of conscience.

Thirdly, even if authority is administered unlawfully, as long as it is recognized as authority, we must practice passive obedience or find a way to avoid it.

This should be sufficient to shed light on the concept of obedience to those who are in positions above us.

## **Chapter 5**

Some further guidelines on how to behave if we are commanded to do unlawful things.

But to provide additional rules of guidance: if we are commanded to do things that are unlawful and we cannot legally regain power from those who enforce such commands, here is how we should conduct ourselves.

First, do not act rashly and do anything contrary to the commands of authority. Refrain as long as you can and seek consultation, considering the matter further. We should be reluctant to do anything that goes against the instructions of those above us. If there

are arguments that demonstrate the permissibility of such actions, we should listen to them. Some people immediately react and act upon forbidden commands without even trying to assess the situation. Consequently, when they face the consequences, they find little comfort in their actions. We should thoroughly evaluate our actions, especially when they appear to contradict authority.

Secondly, if we are compelled to perform actions that authority prohibits, we should do them privately to demonstrate that we are reluctant to disobey those in power. By doing so, others who are unaware of our reasons will not hold contempt towards authority.

Thirdly, we should keep our actions silent and avoid boasting about them. Many individuals take pleasure and pride in openly defying commands. If we have sufficient justification to act contrary to a command, it is enough for us to quietly proceed, performing our duty to God without drawing attention to ourselves.

Fourthly, pay attention to the timing, location, and other circumstances, ensuring that our actions provoke the least possible resentment from those in authority. Some people, when their conscience prevents them from obeying the commands of those above them, respond with a bitter spirit, as if they take pleasure in provoking conflict. This is not a fitting attitude for a Christian.

Fifthly, no matter how we engage in actions that authority forbids, we must be careful to show as much respect to authority as possible. Let us avoid using violent or insulting words, and refrain from provocative speeches. Such behaviour reveals our own pride rather than anything else.

Sixthly, make sure to stay true to your principles so that it is evident that your actions stem from conscience and not from a rebellious attitude. If you claim that you cannot do certain things due to your conscience, but they observe you willingly engaging in other actions that clearly go against conscience, they will see that it is not about conscience but about stubbornness. However, if they see that there is nothing you dare do against the dictates of your conscience, they will understand that it is not out of disobedience towards them but out of obedience to conscience. Therefore, the more you are compelled to disobey in some matters, the more careful you should be to obey in whatever you can.

It is common for truly righteous individuals in positions of authority to strive for the execution of laws that promote God's glory. As a result, they may be considered overly zealous because of their dedication to upholding authority. Nevertheless, it should be the concern of all God's people to be obedient to authority in whatever ways they can.

Lastly, even if authority treats you harshly, be cautious not to entertain thoughts of revenge. Instead, entrust your cause to God, repay good for evil, and pray for those who persecute you.

With these guidelines in mind, you can discern the extent to which you should fear the wrath of the King and the displeasure of those in positions above you.

## **Chapter 6:**

## Pursuing the Point More Strictly

But now we come to the point more rigorously: After you have observed these rules and followed these directions, you are to proceed resolutely, comfortably, and cheerfully in your journey. Whatever may happen, you must not deviate in the slightest from what God requires of you, but continue without fear.

The Scriptures say about a righteous person, in Proverbs 28:1, "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion." If a person knows they are in the way of God, they should proceed boldly like a lion. In Proverbs 30:30, it says they should not turn aside from their path due to fear of any creature. We find in the Scriptures how the godly are praised for their determination and courage, as they do not fear mankind or any creature.

Consider the examples of three prophets: Elijah, Elisha, and Micaiah, as recorded in 1 Kings. When Elijah met Ahab, he said, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" Elijah boldly responded, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have" (1 Kings 18:17-18). Likewise, Elisha, when the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom came to him, declared, "If it were not for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not look at you or even notice you" (2 Kings 3:14).

Micaiah also exhibited courage when pressured to prophesy favorable things. He said, "As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak" (1 Kings 22:14). We could provide many more instances of Job and David displaying bravery, as they did not fear the wrath of man. Job expressed it well when he said, "Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence and did not go out of the door?" (Job 31:34). He was not afraid even though he lived among the wicked.



David also demonstrated great courage, as seen in Psalm 23 and others. Despite walking through the shadow of death and facing various trials, he would not be afraid. The Church of God also declares in Psalm 46:2-4, "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling." They have the assurance of God's presence and the enjoyment of His ordinances, and thus they will not fear even amidst the turmoil in the world.

And so, regarding Jeremiah, as stated in Chapter 15, verse 12, "Can iron break the iron from the north, or the bronze?" Although those who opposed Jeremiah were as unyielding as iron, Jeremiah himself was to be as strong as steel when iron strikes against steel. It does not break, but rather it shines brighter. Therefore, all the opposition Jeremiah faced from the powerful ones only served to strengthen his spirit. Likewise, in Daniel 3:16, the resolute spirit of the three young men is evident when they say, "We do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter." Additionally, the words of Saint Paul in Acts 21:13 demonstrate his unwavering commitment: "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

We also have many expressions from the martyrs in the early times. Justin Martyr, in his apology to Antonius Pius, declares, "We do not speak to deceive you, but for our own right. We can be harmed by no one; you can kill us, but not harm us. If, like madmen, you choose to uphold human customs over the truths of God, go ahead, we will not." I do not mention each speech of these servants of God as something to be imitated, as we do not know the spirits with which they were carried, but to demonstrate the strength of their spirits.

Furthermore, Ambrose, speaking to the Emperor, says, "Do not exalt yourself, O Emperor. If you truly wish to rule, be subject to God." And when Theodosius, a righteous man, had been confronted by the people of Thessalonica and caused many of them to be killed, Ambrose refused to give him the sacrament. Although Theodosius came to the church door, begging for it and prostrating himself on the ground, Ambrose stood firm and resisted him until genuine repentance was demonstrated to the Church.

Similarly, Chrysostom confronted Empress Eudoxia when she unjustly took someone else's vineyard. He prohibited her from receiving communion.

Likewise, Basil wrote to Julian the Apostate, saying, "Surely, if you understood what we wrote, you would not oppose it. But when I consider the dignity and crown you possess and the manner in which you use them, I tremble. They are intended for your honor, but they only bring you more dishonor."

And when Julian met Pagmelius, he said, "I thank God I see you." When Pagmelius replied, "You cannot see," Julian said, "I thank God I cannot see, for you are an apostate."

A notable statement from Luther was when he was going to Worms to defend his faith. He said, "Even if all the tiles on the houses of Worms were devils, I would still go." Moreover, many women, though considered weak due to their gender, displayed great courage when faith came to them.

Thus, we can see through numerous examples from both scripture and ecclesiastical histories the courageous spirits of believers.

Now, we shall proceed to explore the point in these three aspects:

Firstly, we will discuss where the power of faith lies in helping us overcome the sinful fear of authority, whether it be from man or any other creature.

Secondly, we will distinguish between audacity of spirit and the courage that arises from faith.

Thirdly, although we are not to fear man in a sinful manner, we will consider how far it is lawful to fear him.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **How Faith Helps Against the Fear of Man: Explored in Fifteen Aspects**

First, let us discuss where the power of faith lies in helping us overcome the fear of man.

Much has been said about the power of faith in assisting us through sufferings. However, we now have several points to address regarding the power of faith in combating the fear of man.

Firstly, wherever faith exists, it places the believer in a secure and safe state, ensuring the safety of the soul. It assures the believer that the terms between God and the soul are good, thereby delivering the soul from being overwhelmed by fear. Nothing can provide security

to the soul regarding the goodness of its relationship with God except faith. This is accomplished by placing the soul within the Covenant of Grace and conveying the blessings of that everlasting Covenant, which can never be broken, to the soul. Thus, the soul is endowed with the sure mercies of David, resulting in a state of security. Just as a person is not troubled with fears when they know they are provided for in life, a believing soul is provided for eternity. What could trouble such a soul now?

The Apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 4:19, urges us to commit our souls to God in times of danger while doing what is right. When the soul is entrusted to God in righteous conduct, there is no need for further fear. It is similar to a person travelling with a precious jewel of great worth. If they can entrust their jewel to a safe and secure hand, they have no reason to fear. Likewise, in some countries, there are banks where individuals, who are afraid of losing their money, entrust it to the bank for safekeeping. In this way, the soul that can commit itself to God through virtuous actions and be assured of it is not troubled by excessive fear.

Question: But should we not be concerned about our estates, lives, and liberties?

Answer: The Apostle says, be concerned about those things, but make sure you commit your souls to God, and you will be well enough.

It is similar to a time of widespread fire and burning. If a person has some ordinary items in the fire, they do not care about them. However, if they have jewels and treasures, they entrust them to a safe place. Similarly, a believer, having entrusted their soul to God

through faith and being certain of the relationship between God and their soul, will not entertain fear.

We read about Noah in Genesis 6:14. When he built the Ark, he covered it with pitch. The word translated as "pitch" is the same word used for "propitiation" or "atonement." This signifies that the pitch for Noah's Ark is comparable to the atonement of Christ, apprehended by faith, for the soul. When a soul can apprehend, through faith, the sure mercies of David in the propitiation of Christ, it keeps the soul from fear amidst dangers, just as the pitch kept Noah's Ark safe from the waters. This is the first point.

Secondly, faith prevents fear because it has a special focus on the highest, ultimate being of all things. It is a rule that no inferior cause can function except through influence from the superior. Therefore, when faith can behold the highest supreme cause and see:

First, that all power in any creature comes from it, Second, that the action of that power is from it, Third, that the force of that power is from it, Fourth, that the success of that power is from that cause,

And when the soul looks up to this highest cause and sees clarity in it, it does not need to scrutinise the lower causes extensively. Just as a person has an instrument with many wheels, and even if the lower wheels move and it appears as if it might break and fall upon them, if they have their eye on the highest wheel that moves them all, upon which all depend, and they are sure that it holds, they do not pay much attention to the others. It is the same with a spiritual eye. A worldly eye only looks at things that are perceptible, at the creatures. But a believer looks at the highest supreme cause, and if that is right, they do not concern themselves with the lowest causes.

We have a significant statement in Isaiah 54:16: "Behold, I have created the smith who blows the coals in the fire and produces an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. Are you afraid of the sword and the wasters? I have created the smith who blows the coals, and I have created the waster to destroy. If they have any power to harm, it is from me. Why do you focus on the instrument and not the hand? If there is any power in any weapon of war, it depends on God, and He makes them to destroy." Therefore, faith looks to the highest cause, is concerned with that, and directs its affections towards it. It is not greatly affected by subordinate causes. It does not fear the wrath of men or the power of any creature because it looks so much at the highest cause that is above all.

The confidence that worldly hearts have in external aids keeps them from fearing God. Shouldn't the confidence of the saints in God keep them from fearing man?

Thirdly, faith helps against the fear of man because it helps the soul overcome a greater fear than any fear that a creature can cause.

A believing soul has experienced fears greater than the wrath of a king, namely, the wrath of an infinite God. A believer knows what the wrath of a deity means, the terror of conscience, the curse of the Law, and the flames of Hell. They have experienced something of the spirit of bondage that causes them to fear things other than the fear of man. And when faith comes, delivering the soul from these fears, the others must inevitably fade away. The power of faith quickly extinguishes them. Just as David, when he was delivered from the mouth of the lion and the paw of the bear, was not afraid of Goliath, a believing soul is not afraid of the wrath of man because it has been

delivered by faith from the wrath of an infinite deity and the terrors of the Law and conscience.

In Isaiah 51:22, observe how God presents the deliverance of His people from the fear of His wrath as an argument to strengthen them against all other fears. "Behold, I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of my fury." Why is this spoken? In the beginning of the next chapter (for chapters were not divided by the prophets but added later, and therefore they have an immediate connection), it says, "Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion, put on your beautiful garments." This is what faith says to a believing soul: "Why are you afraid of the wrath and disapproval of men? Do not be fearful, for I have taken the cup of trembling out of your hand. There was a time when you held that cup of trembling and were afraid you would drink from it. But I have taken it away, so awaken, put on strength, and do not fear man, for you have been delivered from such fear."

It is a passage in the book of Job, Job 38:17. When God wanted to bring Job to fear, He said, "You seem to have some boldness, but have you seen the gates of death? Has the shadow of death been revealed to you?" That would be a different matter if you had experienced those fears and yet remained bold. But a believing soul can say, "Yes, Lord, the gates of death and the shadow of death have been partially revealed to me, and yet I am bold."

The prophet says in Jeremiah 17:17, "Do not be a terror to me; you are my hope in the day of disaster." Lord, let me be delivered from your terror, and no one in the world will terrify me. Those who have been raised delicately and know not what danger means, tremble when they hear of any disturbance and danger. But those who are

accustomed to wars, who constantly hear the noise of cannons and witness alarming and desperate situations, are not easily frightened because they have been where terrors exist and have been delivered from them. Similarly, a believing soul has encountered terrors other than the terrors caused by humans, and faith, which delivers from them, will also deliver from these.

Fourthly, faith helps against the fear of men, as well as all dangers and evils, by instilling the true fear of God in the soul. When faith comes, it brings all grace with it, including the grace of the fear of God. The root cause of all disorderly fear in the world is the lack of true fear of God. By this, I do not mean fear of His wrath, but the reverence that we owe to God as creatures to the Creator, the fear of God that constitutes a significant part of His worship. If the soul is filled with that fear, other fears will vanish.

Just as in other afflictions, true spiritual joy overcomes carnal joy, and the best way to cure carnal joy is to have the heart filled with spiritual joy. Many find satisfaction in the flesh, but they will never mortify their carnal joy until their souls are filled with spiritual joy. Therefore, when they cry out against their carnal joy in times of sickness, it is not truly mortified because they return to it again. They only had the conviction of conscience that their carnal joy was wrong, but their hearts were not filled with its opposite.

The same applies to sorrow. There is no better way to mortify carnal sorrow than to sorrow for sin. Similarly, for desires, there is no better way to mortify sinful, worldly desires than to have desires sanctified for God. Just as in other afflictions, the most effective way to mortify carnal, sinful fear is to have the true fear of God planted in the heart.



As Moses, when the rod turned into a serpent, the magicians also turned their rods into serpents. However, the text in Exodus 7:12 states that Moses' serpent devoured the magicians' serpents. Similarly, the true fear of God has enough power to occupy the entire soul, leaving no space for the fear of man. Just as God is truly worshipped in His presence, when God is truly feared, He is the only one feared, and all other fears are subordinate to that. When God is truly feared, nothing else is feared, and indeed, nothing else needs to be feared. Just as where God is not feared, no creature can help us, where God is feared, no creature can harm us. In Hosea 10:3 it is said, "Because we feared not the Lord, what then should a king do to us?" On the contrary, because we fear the Lord, what then can a king or all the power in the world do against us?

Fifthly, faith reveals to the soul that it has more on its side than against it. You may recall the story of the Prophet who was afraid when he saw his enemies surrounding him, ready to seize him. The Prophet prayed to the Lord to open his eyes, and in 2 Kings 6:16-17, he saw that there were more with him than against him.

Until a person's eyes are opened by faith, they may see many enemies against them, causing fear. But when God opens the eyes of their soul to see that there are more with them than against them, all fears disappear. They see all the attributes of God, all the ways of God's providence, all the angels, and all creatures working for their good. They see that there are more on their side than against them.

If a child or a person is alone in danger, they are afraid. But when they are in the company of their friends, who have more with them than against them, they are not afraid. Through the eye of faith, we

see that there are more with us than against us, and that frees us from fear.

Sixthly, faith prevents fear by bringing the spirit of Jesus Christ into the soul and making the soul a partaker of Christ's spirit. Christ is referred to as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah in Revelation 5:5. He was full of courage and did not fear anything that opposed him on his path. Every Christian partakes in the lion-like spirit of Christ and has something of it within them, which imparts strength and courage.

In Isaiah 11:2, we read about the spirit of Christ with which He was anointed: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Wherever the spirit of Christ is present, there is a spirit of strength and might that does not easily yield to fear. It is a sign of a poor and low spirit to cower in fear at every little thing, but a magnanimous and elevated spirit will not easily fear. The spirit of Christ is a magnanimous and glorious spirit, sharing the same spirit with the Father. Those who belong to Christ also possess the same spirit of the Son and of the Father. Therefore, as Saint Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:7, "We have not received the spirit of fear, but of power." The spirit of Christ is filled with power and strength, and when faith brings in the spirit of Christ, it undoubtedly helps against fear.

Seventhly, faith helps against fear by redirecting the heart away from the creature and all the comforts associated with it. Why does a person fear? It is because they believe that the creature will take away some comfort from them. But if the heart is detached from the creature and its comforts, and from the evils brought by the creature, not valuing them or considering them of great importance, there is not much reason to fear. Faith takes the heart off from the creature.

In Revelation 12:11, it is mentioned that those who overcome Antichrist did not love their lives. By consequence, if they were detached from the love of life, they were also detached from the love of any creature.

Chrysostom made a notable statement regarding a worldly person. He said that there is no one more miserable and fearful than someone who is attached to earthly things. Such a person lives a life of constant worry and trembling. However, when faith comes, it detaches the heart from being fixated on the creature. As a result, that person no longer lives a life of anxiety and no longer trembles. Chrysostom's life reflected this sentiment. Speaking about Empress Eudoxia, he said, "What will she do? Will she banish me? The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. Will she cut me asunder? So was Isaiah. Will she drown me? John was cast into the sea. Will she stone me? So was Stephen. Will she behead me? So was Paul. Will she take away my substance? My heart is taken away from that already."

There is a story about Illaria encountering thieves who asked if he was not afraid. He replied, "No, I have nothing to lose." They threatened to kill him, to which he said, "I am prepared to die." When a heart realizes it has nothing to lose and is prepared to die, it does not fear. It does not value any evil in the creature or any good in it, and therefore it is not afraid. It is faith, that glorious and powerful grace, which takes the heart off from all creature evils and creature goods. You can recognize the work of faith in your soul when you feel a principle within you that detaches you from the creature, lifts you above creature comforts and creature evils. That is the glorious work of faith, and that is the seventh aspect.

Eighthly, faith involves God in the cause of a believer. Whatever cause a believer undertakes and exercises faith in, their faith involves God in it. This means that it not only receives the support, command, and faithfulness of God to assist it, but also the name of God and God Himself. It is similar to a situation in England where a person has a debt and does not know how to collect it. They may turn it over to the King, hoping that involving the King in the debt will provide a solution. Similarly, when a believer is in a difficult situation and doesn't know what to do, they look in every direction and see nothing but fear and terror. If they can turn the cause over to God and involve Him in it, they find peace.

Ninthly, faith has a remarkable effect in helping against fear by filling the heart with spiritual goodness. True courage and boldness in the heart stem from the abundance of spiritual goodness within the soul. Just as naturalists observe that lions possess courage and boldness because their hearts are filled with strong spirits, many things are weak when empty but become strong when filled with what is suitable to them. Similarly, when a soul is filled with spiritual goodness, it becomes very strong.

The reason behind the audacity and courage of wicked people in their sinful ways is the abundance of wickedness within their souls. The Apostle addressed this when he said in Acts 5:3, "Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost?" If Satan had not filled their hearts, they would not have been so bold as to lie to the Holy Ghost. An example of this can also be found in Esther 7:5, where the king asks, "Who is he? And where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so?" In Hebrew, it is phrased as "Who hath filled his heart to do this?"—indicating a heart so full as to dare such an evil act.

Just as the filling of the heart with evil makes one bold and courageous in doing evil, the filling of the heart with spiritual goodness propels one to pursue what is good. Consider the case of Stephen, who, after being filled with the Holy Ghost, displayed great boldness. He could look upon the faces of his persecutors without fear, as mentioned in Acts 6:15. The council gazed upon him and saw his face as if it were the face of an angel, all because his heart was filled with the Holy Ghost. Similarly, the apostles were very fearful before the Holy Ghost descended upon them, but once they were filled with the Holy Ghost, they had no more fear.

Elisha also exhibited great courage when the three kings approached him. He said, "Had it not been for Jehoshaphat, I had not seen thy face." The reason behind his boldness was that he had the double portion of Elijah's spirit upon him. Just as there is a plenitude of evil that causes boldness, there is also a plenitude of good that fills the heart with boldness. And nothing fills the heart more than faith, which draws from the fullness of Christ. As it is written, "Of his fullness have all we received" (John 1:16).

In the tenth place, faith possesses great power to instill boldness and remove the fear of man. This is because faith acquaints believers with God's ways towards His people, and as a result, they do not fear. Believers gain understanding of God's providential dealings and come to know that it is His usual manner to allow enemies to rage against His people, to prevail over them, and to have power over them, yet they remain His people. Affliction does not signify that God has forsaken them. Therefore, Scripture often speaks of God leading His people through fire and water, assuring them that He will be with them there (Isaiah 43:2). It is God's way to choose His people and set His heart upon them in the fiery furnace. When He intends

the greatest good for His people, He guides them through trials and places them in prosperous circumstances (Psalm 66:12). When one is acquainted with God's ways, fear is dispelled.

If a soldier is unfamiliar with the tactics of his General and witnesses him undertaking great and perilous tasks, he becomes afraid. However, someone who is acquainted with the General's strategies and knows that it is customary to face such dangers does not fear. Similarly, carnal hearts are quick to fear at the sight of any danger because they lack the understanding to comprehend God's intentions and ways towards His people. On the other hand, the people of God are aware that it is God's ordinary course to bring about good from evil.

As Luther said, "He kills in order to make alive, and casts down in order to raise up." He elaborates further, stating that understanding this is the art of arts and the knowledge of knowledges, but very few truly grasp and comprehend God's ways. It is a secret that God unveils only to those who fear Him. Faith does not render one ignorant like a child, but rather instructs the soul in the ways of God, empowering it to overcome fear.

In the eleventh place, faith aids in conquering fear by elevating the soul to a lofty and glorious state, ensuring both safety and a remarkable condition. Just as a person of high status in the world is not fearful like others, faith elevates God's people to a position of great eminence and splendour. As stated in Isaiah 43:4-5, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not, for I am with thee."

If a King were to approach a poor subject and say, "Fear not, you are honourable in my eyes. I value your life more than the lives of thousands," would this not prevent the subject from being afraid? God says the same to every gracious soul, and faith embraces this assurance, keeping the soul free from fear. In Matthew 10:31, Jesus declares, "Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows." God's providence extends even to sparrows, but His people are of greater worth. They are so precious to God that He even takes note of the number of hairs on their heads (Matthew 10:30) and is aware of their every step. He collects their tears in His bottle (Psalm 56:8). Surely, He values every drop of their blood, much more their lives (Psalm 116:15), and their spiritual privileges. They are in a lofty and excellent condition above others.

Chrysostom beautifully describes the priest Azariah who resisted King Uzziah's attempt to offer sacrifice. He says, "Everyone who commits sin is a servant to sin, and therefore lowly, even if adorned with a thousand crowns. But he who maintains righteousness is more of a king than any king, for he is in a higher position than anyone in the world." A most remarkable expression comes from Tertullian, asking, "Why should I fear when the saints shall be raised to judge the world? Why should that man fear who ought to be feared by angels, for he shall judge them? Who ought to be feared by devils, for he shall have power over them? Who ought to be feared by the entire world, for he shall judge all the world? Does a judge fear the prisoner before him?" This is the condition of a saint of God, and faith makes use of this knowledge, understanding what God has revealed about the exalted state of His people, thereby banishing fear.

Twelfthly, faith aids in overcoming fear by greatly strengthening a good conscience. Wherever faith exists, a good conscience is also

strengthened in proportion. They are inseparable. Hence, the Scripture speaks of those who have "made shipwreck of faith" as also putting away a good conscience (1 Timothy 1:19). One cannot stand without the other. We understand the immense power of a clear conscience in eradicating fear. To have no knowledge of wrongdoing concerning ourselves is like a wall of brass. The breastplate of righteousness guards against any incoming dart, and a good conscience upholds this breastplate. It declares, "They accuse, but I will excuse. They condemn, but I will justify. I will stand with you in death and before the Lord, pleading on your behalf."

If a person becomes a terror to themselves, it is no wonder they would fear everything else. However, if a person is not a terror to themselves, if they can behold God in righteousness, and if their conscience is sound and good, they can confidently face anything. As Job 11:14-15 states, "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear."

Once again, faith provides significant assistance in overcoming fear by bringing in and utilising all the gracious promises to combat fear. I will mention just two promises, and you will see the immense power they possess in aiding the soul against fear. Deuteronomy 31:8 declares, "He it is that goeth before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." Note how God emphasises these expressions. Before Moses is instructed to encourage Joshua to be strong in verse 7, God first assures him that He Himself goes before Joshua, secondly, He will be with Joshua, and thirdly, He will not fail him. Similarly, in Isaiah 41:10, we read, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed;



for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." God piles up expressions to provide support against fear. Faith makes these encouragements from the Word of God tangible to the soul; faith brings the divine power and efficacy of these promises to the soul.

Furthermore, faith aids in conquering fear by drawing upon all the experiences of God's dealings with His people in the past. Habakkuk, throughout chapter 3, makes use of the ways of God and recounts what God had done for His people before. Psalm 87:4 states, "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there."

Lastly, faith assists in overcoming the fear of man by causing a Christian to evaluate people as God Himself judges them, to see them as God sees them, and to have the same thoughts about them as God does. This is a powerful aid against fear.

Now, we must examine how God has revealed Himself concerning humanity and how little reason there is to fear men, especially wicked individuals and enemies of God's people. The Psalmist boldly proclaims, "In God have I put my trust: I will not fear what man can do unto me" (Psalm 56:11). Similarly, in verse 4 of the same psalm, he declares, "In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."

## **Chapter 8**

## Arguments against the Fear of Man

Arguments against the fear of man, based on the consideration of man in six notable aspects: 1. His nature, 2. The vanity of man, 3. The dwelling place of man, 4. The worldly splendor of man, 5. The foundation of man, 6. The brevity of man's life. Secondly, the consideration of man as a wicked individual: 1. His baseness, 2. His opposition to the godly in his exercise of power, 3. The imminent ruin and destruction faced by the enemies of God's people.

Firstly, we need to reflect on what the Scripture tells us about man in general.

Secondly, we need to examine what it reveals about man as a wicked individual.

There are six aspects that we should consider regarding man:

- Firstly, his inherent nature.
- Secondly, the futility and emptiness of man.
- Thirdly, the temporary dwelling place of man.
- Fourthly, the worldly grandeur and ostentation of man.
- Fifthly, the unstable foundation upon which man stands.
- Sixthly, the fleeting nature of man's life.

In all of these aspects, there are significant expressions that demonstrate the insignificance of any individual, prompting us not to be afraid of him.

First, let's consider what man is:

1. He is of the Earth. As the Psalmist says, "What is man that I should be afraid of him?" The word signifies Earth.

2. It signifies a poor, sickly, sorrowful person. Should anyone be afraid of the Earth or a sick man?
3. The Scripture calls him a Worm, Job 25:6. Would anyone be afraid of a Worm?
4. Man is called Clay, Job 10:9.
5. In the Scripture, man is referred to as grass and the flower of the field, Isaiah 40:6.

Secondly, let's examine what the Scripture says about the vanity of man:

1. A man is likened to vanity, Psalm 44:4.
2. He walks in a vain shadow, Psalm 39:6.
3. Man is vain himself, Job 11:11-12.
4. Man is vanity itself.
5. Altogether vanity.
6. Every man is vanity.
7. In his best state, he is vanity. See Psalm 39.
8. He is lighter than vanity, Psalm 62:9.

If we could see man as God sees him, we would not be afraid.

Thirdly, let's consider the dwelling of man:

In all his grandeur and opulent palaces, they are no more than the dwelling of a moth, a temporary shelter, and a fragile house of clay.

Fourthly, let's examine the pomp of a man:

Even if a man is adorned in the greatest splendour that could cause fear in the hearts of carnal men, in Acts 25:23, when Bernice and Agrippa came to sit in judgment, they came with great pomp, as judges often do to intimidate their prisoners. Now, the word "pomp" signifies an ostentatious display. Faith enables people to judge things as the Holy Spirit does, and thus keeps them from fearing them.

Fifthly, let's consider the foundation of man:

It is in the dust, and anything that has no foundation except the dust has no great strength.

Sixthly, let's examine the life of man:

Sometimes it is compared to a bubble and a vapour, a weaver's shuttle, and the wind. In Job 7:6-7, he is compared to an eagle flying in the air and to a ship in the middle of the sea. He is compared to the days of a hired worker and to a shadow. He is such a feeble creature that the moth can crush him. Moreover, his days are as short as a handbreadth, and his breath is in his nostrils. All this shows that there is little reason to fear man. When we consider all these aspects together, it becomes clear that man is not a creature to be greatly feared. This highlights the dishonour that God receives when man is feared more than Him.

Now, let us consider man as a wicked man, and in that state, he is even less to be feared. We will examine him in three respects.

Consider the following:

1. Their baseness.
2. Their opposition to the godly in the greatness of their power.

3. The nearness of destruction for the wicked and enemies of God's people.

First, let's consider the baseness of wicked men. We should not fear things that are base.

1. No matter how glorious they may appear outwardly, wicked men are mere dross and dust.
2. Their foundation, which should uphold them and be their source of power, is rotten.
3. They are like straw trampled down for the dungheap.
4. They are compared to the froth and foam of the sea.
5. Their baseness is expressed by being compared to briars and thorns.

Why should we fear wicked men who are likened to such base things? This is how God judges them, and those who have faith should judge them likewise. Despite their power and strength, they are of lowly nature.

Secondly, let us consider what God says about the power of wicked men.

1. It is nothing more than noise. Egypt may have been a great kingdom, but the king and all his power amount to nothing more than noise.
2. Their power is like insignificant dust.
3. In all their might, they are comparable to a group of beasts or little children holding reeds instead of spears.
4. Their power is cursed. When they are filled with pride and rage, and they look down upon the servants of God with scorn and

contempt, they are cursed in their pride and strength. Anything cursed by God is destined for destruction.

5. All their power is nothing. If their power amounts to nothing, there is no reason to fear it.
6. They are less than nothing. It is even more profound that the power of all nations is considered less than nothing. If we hold the same judgement as the Holy Spirit does regarding man, there is no reason to fear him.

Thirdly, and finally: Consider what the Scripture says about wicked men in terms of their proximity to destruction. They are on the verge of perishing.

1. They are likened to tow, which ignites quickly when touched by a spark of fire.
2. They are like the crackling of thorns under a pot.
3. They resemble smoke that ascends and vanishes swiftly. The greater their power, the sooner they meet their demise.
4. They are compared to wax melting before fire, chaff blown away by the wind, and stubble.
5. All their light is as fleeting as a candle. Solomon says, "The candle of the wicked shall be put out."
6. They are also compared to the tops of ears of corn that can be easily nipped off.
7. The Psalmist declares that God cuts off the spirit of princes, like cutting off a cluster of grapes with a knife.
8. They are likened to withered corn, not only as grass but as grass on a rooftop. Wicked men are heading towards destruction like something rolling before the wind. They are said to be placed in slippery places, and the angel of the Lord persecutes them. If

one is standing on ice and another comes to persecute him, he cannot maintain his position for long.

9. They are like garments eaten by moths.
10. They are compared to the fat of lambs before the fire and to snow melting before the sun.

First, consider what man is in himself, and how wicked men in their baseness and power are close to destruction. This serves as a potent means to help overcome fear. Oh, let us be ashamed, as those who profess to have faith, that when we see how the Scriptures judge men, we still harbor so much fear of wicked men. We fear that they will crush us, that we will never find peace in their presence, and that they are ready to obstruct our path.

Thus, we can see the power of faith in assisting against fear.

There are two remaining aspects to clarify regarding this point:

1. Differentiating between the boldness and audacity of those who lack faith and the fearlessness that comes through faith.
2. Explaining how far it is permissible to avoid danger without fearing men.

## **CHAPTER 9**

How Audaciousness and Boldness of Spirit Differ from Faith.

1. Audaciousness makes us bold to sin.

2. It is more apparent in matters concerning ourselves than in those concerning God.
3. Boldness involves suppressing one passion with another, while faith involves the healing of passion through grace.
4. Natural boldness makes people reckless and hinders thoughtful consideration.
5. It is the cause of immodesty.
6. It is sudden and impulsive.
7. It relies on and thrives on external encouragements.
8. It stems from ignorance.
9. Or despair.
10. It is more focused on outward expressions than inward sincerity.

FAITH helps against fear, but it must be acknowledged that people can be greatly aided against fear by mere audaciousness of spirit.

Question: How can we discern the difference?

Answer: Audaciousness of spirit, even though it may appear as faith when it pertains to God's cause, has many distinctions.

First, where it is audaciousness of spirit, individuals will be bold in committing sins against God when the occasion arises, not just in doing good for God. But with faith, although it makes the soul bold and fearless for God in His ways, those who possess it are fearful of sin. They tremble at the sight or prospect of sin. Many who are audacious in sin become greatly afraid when they are in danger, while others who are fearless in God's ways lack boldness in the path of sin. Wicked individuals, who have the basest spirits of all, are bold in sin. Take Manasseh, for example, how audacious he was in sin. But when he faced danger, how fearful he became! It is said that he was found among the thorns (2 Chronicles 33:11).



Likewise, consider Ahaz, who had a bold spirit in sin. When he encountered danger, his spirit turned cowardly. He was afraid and shook like an aspen leaf. There are accounts of Caligula as well, a bold wretch in sin, yet he would seek refuge in a hiding place when he heard thunder (Isaiah 7:2).

Some individuals may go so far as to exhibit boldness not only in sin but also in facing danger, which may happen to be in God's cause. However, be aware that if there is any boldness in sin, and if you do not fear every sin, then your boldness and fearlessness in anything else do not stem from faith.

Secondly, in the case of natural audaciousness, individuals are particularly bold in matters that concern themselves more than in matters that concern God. When they are involved in a business that opposes them, they do not care about anyone who has more power than themselves. However, this is not the case when it comes to God's cause. Truly gracious individuals, who are fearless due to their faith, are very yielding and modest in their own affairs. They exhibit a different spirit when it comes to matters concerning God. They have a new spirit.

Thirdly, in cases of mere natural boldness, one passion is treated by another passion. But the boldness that arises from faith involves treating the passion of fear with the opposite grace. In natural audaciousness, the passion of fear is cured by the passion of wrath and anger. They are only fearless and bold when their anger is stirred up. On the other hand, when faith cures the passion of fear, it does not ignite another passion. Instead, it sanctifies fear and introduces the true fear of God into the soul. It does not replace one evil with another, but overcomes evil with the infusion of the contrary good.

Fourthly, in cases of natural audacity, boldness often hinders thoughtful consideration. Individuals lack control over their spirits and act rashly and impetuously in their boldness. In Isaiah 35:4, the word translated as "fearful" actually means "rash heart." The same word is used in Isaiah 32:4, where it states that the heart of the rash understands knowledge. This illustrates that excessive fearfulness leads to rashness. However, when fear is moderate and properly guided by faith, it empowers individuals to carefully consider, advise, and examine matters. On the other hand, bold and impudent individuals do not care or consider what they say. When fear is rightly ordered by faith, the heart is capable of sound judgment and wise counsel.

Fifthly, natural audaciousness makes individuals forget the hierarchy and immodestly disregard what they say to superiors. However, when individuals are fearless through faith, although they are not hindered by fear in their own path, they know how to show due respect to those in positions of authority. This is something that a naturally audacious spirit lacks.

Sixthly, natural audaciousness is sudden and violent, whereas a person who is fearless through faith does not immediately acquire such boldness of spirit. It is a gradual process with several stages. At first, they may experience more fear, which then diminishes over time. Through gradual progression, they gain control over the spirit that was previously fearful. Conversely, natural audacity erupts abruptly and does not develop gradually.

Seventhly, natural boldness relies on external encouragement, while the fearlessness that comes from faith is based on the workings of God's Spirit in one's heart. Depending on the varying influences of

God's Spirit, individuals may be more or less fearful. On the other hand, natural boldness always operates in the same manner if the external encouragements remain constant. However, God's people, even with the same external encouragements, may experience different levels of fearlessness at different times due to the varying workings of God's Spirit upon them.

Eighthly, natural boldness stems from ignorance and insensitivity because people lack knowledge or awareness of the danger they are in. Faith, on the other hand, reveals the danger and makes individuals aware of it, and then it provides help. It is of no significance to be bold when one is unaware and does not understand the danger. However, a gracious heart perceives the danger correctly and is sensitive to it. Then, faith lifts them above their senses and beyond reason.

Ninthly, individuals who are naturally bold may exhibit desperateness because they have nothing to lose and do not care about their own well-being. However, through faith, individuals are not fearless due to desperateness; rather, they see hope in God, in Christ, and in His mercy. The more they have hope, the less they fear. In contrast, the naturally audacious are driven by desperation and therefore do not fear.

Tenthly, in cases of mere audacity, the outward appearance may be bolder than the inward reality. But through faith, individuals are less fearful inwardly than they appear outwardly. Faith has a greater effect in curing internal fear than in expressing outward courage and boldness. On the other hand, natural audacious people may speak boldly and make grandiose boasts, yet deep down, their hearts tremble. This is not the case with true faith. Some cast aspersions on

God's people, claiming that they are impudently bold, but those who truly rely on the grace of God through His Spirit and maintain their faith are not impudently bold. Other individuals, although bold in many things, are far from possessing the excellent spirit found in God's people.

## **Chapter 10:**

### **Showing How Far We Can Rightly Avoid Danger Without Fear of Men**

1. Religion does not teach people to be foolish or desperate.
2. A Christian's concern should be to fulfill their duty rather than avoiding potential dangers that may arise in the course of duty.
3. When God allows His people to face danger, His intention is to exercise and strengthen their graces, not merely to test their discretion.
4. While it may be possible to avoid danger, it is more honourable for a Christian to be called to exercise faith, courage, patience, and suffer for the sake of their faith, rather than relying solely on prudence to avoid danger.
5. Be cautious of mistaking discretion, which does not diminish the vigour of God's graces but rather enhances and strengthens them.
6. The primary aim of a Christian should be to align their will with God's will.

Now, the last point to be addressed in explaining this matter is as follows: Faith helps to overcome the fear of danger and the fear of man.

Objection: Some may argue that what has been said so far may encourage people to recklessly rush into danger. This is the justification used by many who willingly expose themselves to danger, ultimately leading to their own downfall. We should not fear men.

Response: In answer to that, I state that religion does not teach people to be foolish or desperate. It is an excessive boldness for anyone to expect God's assistance in foolish, desperate, or reckless actions. As Cyprian said, God would rather have us wait to demonstrate our faith until we are called by Him and see Him leading the way, rather than acting on our own accord. Faith, in its great act of entrusting the soul to the Covenant of Grace, is grounded upon the Word. Similarly, in every action prompted by faith, it is grounded upon the Word. Proverbs 10:8 provides a notable text on this matter: "The wise in heart will receive commandments, but a prating fool shall fall." The wise in heart, those who are truly gracious, receive commandments. Before rushing into danger, they wait for the commandment, for the Word. However, a prating fool who boldly ventures into danger, speaking or acting without being called to do so, will ultimately fall into it. Such a person should not expect God's assistance in such ventures.

Question: If we should not fear man, can we not flee from danger? Can we not make efforts to deliver ourselves from it when it arises? If we should not fear creatures, must we not protect ourselves from them?

Answer: First, I will provide some general answers, and then I will specifically address the question of whether it is permissible for a Christian to flee from danger.

In response to the general question, consider the following five points:

Your question pertains to whether a Christian may flee from danger.

First, the foremost concern of a Christian should be to fulfill their duty rather than simply avoiding potential dangers that may arise in the course of fulfilling that duty. We should be more afraid of our own base, earthly, cowardly, and unbelieving hearts than we should be afraid of any harm that may come from the malice and power of all the people in the world or the devils in hell. No Christian is in as much danger from the malice and power of others as they are in danger from the mischief that their own heart can cause. If one does not fear their own heart and its vileness more than they fear the power and malice of people and devils, then they do not truly understand their own heart. It is a greater judgment to be delivered to one's own heart than to be delivered to the malice of all the enemies in the world, and it is an even greater judgment to be delivered to one's own heart than to be delivered to the devil himself.

Those who are eager to deliver themselves from the danger and harm caused by the power of others should first strive to free themselves from the danger and harm caused by their own hearts.

Secondly, you ask whether you may flee from danger. My answer is that when God arranges events in such a way that His people are brought into danger, it is usually His intention to exercise their faith, courage, and patience more than their discretion, even though both

may be required. Our primary concern should align with God's usual intent. Often, in times of danger, the focus of most Christians is on exercising their discretion for their own safety rather than exercising the faith, courage, and patience that God calls for.

Thirdly, even if the danger can be avoided, a Christian should consider it more honourable to be called to exercise faith, courage, and patience in the face of suffering, rather than being called to exercise discretion in avoiding it. While God does not always call us to the most honourable service, a Christian should still regard suffering as more honourable. They should not take pride in their better condition compared to others who are called to suffer, as it provides them with an opportunity to exercise faith, courage, and patience, while they are given the liberty to avoid suffering and exercise their discretion. The most honourable Christians are those who endure suffering.

Fourthly, when God does require the exercise of discretion to avoid suffering, Christians must be careful not to mistake discretion as something that diminishes the vigour, activity, and strength of any of God's graces. On the contrary, the role of discretion is to manage, improve, and increase all the graces of God's spirit. There is a common misconception that being zealous must be tempered by discretion, which is believed to reduce the activity and vigour of grace. However, no grace is an enemy to another to the extent of diminishing its vigour and activity. The true exercise of discretion lies in effectively managing and improving our faith, courage, patience, and all other graces for the glory of God and the benefit of His people. If discretion is understood as something that diminishes the vigour and activity of grace, although it may be labelled as such, God refers to it by different names such as cowardice, self-seeking,

and compromise. What will become of those who fall into such mistaken understanding?

Fifthly, you ask whether you may avoid danger and suffering. The primary approach a Christian should take in avoiding danger is by labouring to cultivate a willing submission of the heart to God in the face of suffering. It is the best way to obtain mercy from God to have a heart that is willing to do without it, should God see fit. Similarly, the best way to avoid danger and evil is to have a heart that is willing to endure such evil if God calls us to it. With these considerations in mind, there may be liberty to avoid danger.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Further Resolution of the Case**

This chapter provides a more detailed answer to the question of whether one may flee from danger, discussing several specific points.

1. Firstly, it is established that God permits His people to avoid danger.
2. Secondly, when done appropriately, it does not indicate a lack of trust in God or a deficiency in courage and bravery.
3. In certain situations, it is not only permissible but necessary for Christians to flee.



- When one's current station does not involve any extraordinary responsibilities.
  - When God releases the obligations arising from certain relationships.
  - When there is an opportunity elsewhere to bring greater glory to God.
  - When uncertainty exists regarding the present call to suffer.
4. Conversely, there are cases in which it is strictly forbidden to flee, which are the opposite of the aforementioned situations.
5. Mistakes can occur in the act of fleeing, such as:
- Fleeing in response to every trivial matter.
  - When it leads to spiritual harm.
  - When fleeing is motivated by the fear of facing shame due to secretly denying the faith.
  - When one prioritises personal safety without considering preparation for further service to God.
6. It is important to discern whether the act of avoiding danger arises from faith or from base cowardice.
- Faithful avoidance is not impulsive, reckless, or headstrong.
  - When rooted in faith, it is accompanied by a resolve to return and bear witness to the truth when called by God.
  - The freedom to avoid danger is used as an opportunity to cultivate a heart willing to return.
7. The chapter addresses the specific case of public officers, including magistrates and ministers, and their role in avoiding danger.

8. Objections against avoiding danger are addressed and answered.
9. Practical guidelines are provided on how to conduct oneself when fleeing and avoiding danger.

Firstly, it must be established that God permits His people to flee and avoid danger. This is a certain conclusion. We see evidence of this in Matthew 10:23, where Christ instructs His disciples, "When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next." Here, there is both permission and instruction given. It aligns with the natural understanding of self-preservation, and religion does not extinguish this understanding. While it may elevate it with additional commands, we can follow the guidance of our natural instincts as long as we don't mistake false lights for true ones.

Furthermore, we find numerous examples of God's people, including Christ Himself, avoiding and fleeing from danger. Elijah, a man of great courage, fled for his life in 1 Kings 19:3. The prophets hidden by Obadiah in 1 Kings 18:4 were willing to avoid danger. Even Jesus, immediately after His birth, escaped to Egypt with Joseph when Herod sought to kill all the children. Throughout His ministry, when Christ perceived danger, He took measures to avoid it. We have various passages that illustrate this, such as Matthew 12:14-15 and John 10:39. Similarly, the apostle Paul, despite being a chosen vessel to bear God's name before the Gentiles, fled from danger. In Acts 9:25, the disciples lowered him in a basket through the wall to escape the Jews who sought to kill him. Even in 2 Corinthians 11:33, we see Paul employing a humble and seemingly undignified way to avoid danger. These examples make it clear that fleeing from danger is permissible.

Secondly, you may raise the concern that fleeing from danger seems to diminish faith and courage. However, avoiding danger in the way of God should not be considered a decrease in faith and courage. I will provide two scripture passages that address this point. In Matthew 10:23, Jesus instructs His disciples, "When they persecute you in one city, flee to another." Yet, He also says, "Fear them not" in verse 26 and "Fear not them which kill the body" in verse 28. This may appear contradictory. The disciples might have questioned, "Lord, you tell us to flee. How can we flee and not fear?" This shows that fleeing from danger does not necessarily involve cowardice or fear of man. One can flee from danger without diminishing faith and confidence.

An example can be found in Psalm 3, titled "A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son." When David saw himself in danger from Absalom, he did not boldly confront it by saying, "God has established me in my kingdom and made promises to uphold me. Why should I flee?" Instead, he fled. But was this a decrease in his faith and confidence in God? No. In verse 3, he declares, "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of mine head." This demonstrates that one can flee and still have confidence in God as their shield, glory, and lifter of their head. In verse 5, David says, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." He fled, yet he found peace and rest in the Lord. In verse 6, he boldly declares, "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about." He fled from his own son, yet he remained unafraid of a multitude of enemies. In verse 7, he calls upon God to save him, confident that God has already defeated his enemies. David's faith was so strong that it allowed him to see the outcome as already accomplished, even while he was in a state of fleeing. Thus, the second point is evident.

Thirdly, in certain cases, a person not only may but must flee. It is not just a matter of permission but a command. Jesus says, "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another."

Question: What are these cases?

Answer: Firstly, if the situation is such that no extraordinary outcome depends on me in the position where God has placed me. Every position has some level of importance, so if we were to say that fleeing is only allowed when nothing significant depends on it, then no one would be allowed to flee. However, this applies to situations where there are no extraordinary dependencies.

Secondly, when I sense that God is loosening the ties of my relationships, which would otherwise bind me.

Thirdly, when God, through His providence, opens a door elsewhere for me to honour Him, perhaps even more so.

Fourthly, when I find my heart filled with doubts about my calling to suffer at present. After seeking God diligently and carefully examining the situation, if my heart still desires to submit to God, then in such a case, there is undoubtedly an obligation to flee. It would be a sin against God and a temptation of God not to do so.

There are certain cases in which we must not flee. If you ask what they are, the answer is simply the opposite of the previous cases. When God has placed me in a position where something significant depends on me, or if my conscience (with a willingness to be convinced) tells me that the cause of God and His people would suffer more harm from my fleeing than from my staying.

Augustine expressed this in his letter to Honoratus on this matter: When fleeing would cause more harm than a person could ever make up for through their works in their entire life (as is sometimes the case), then they are bound to take the risk and not flee. It largely depends on a person's own conscience and the judgment of others to determine this. One might be inclined to favour themselves in such a situation, but they should make sure they act honestly towards God and their own soul. They should not rely solely on their own judgment, but seek the judgment of others as well. If conscience dictates that their life cannot compensate for the harm they would cause by fleeing, they should stay. If they see that the cause of God would suffer greatly and God provides special assistance to help them in an extraordinary way, they can take it as a sign from God that He has a special task for them to fulfill. This was the case with Daniel. He understood that the cause of God was depending on his actions, and it would suffer if he deviated from his path. God provided him with exceptional assistance and strength. Rather than allowing the cause of God to suffer, he was willing to expose himself to danger. From a natural perspective, people might think he could have avoided opening his window, but his conscience was convinced that his life was not as valuable as bearing witness to the cause of God at that time. Especially if we find ourselves in a situation where God is closing off our avenues of escape and removing the things that could aid our flight, to the extent that fleeing would go against our conscience and require us to commit evil acts, we should understand that God is calling us to suffer and to put our trust in Him in such circumstances.

Fifthly, those who flee to avoid danger must be cautious, as there can be many missteps in their fleeing that may lead them to sin against God and bring dishonour to their cause. These missteps include:

1. Fleeing at the slightest thing, which is unbecoming of a Christian. It should be a weighty matter that compels someone to leave their position. For every person in any station, God has placed them there, and therefore, without God's command, they should not move. We are all like soldiers, and God has assigned us our ranks. Just as a soldier cannot step out of their rank without a commission, regardless of their intentions to do good for their country, we must have a commission from God and not flee at every trivial matter.
2. Many, in their fleeing, sacrifice their spiritual well-being. They may flee out of fear of losing their possessions and worldly liberties, without considering whether the place they flee to will actually benefit their spiritual journey. Even if they may experience some loss in their worldly possessions, staying in their current place may provide greater spiritual growth. It is a misstep to prioritize material gain over spiritual advantage. However, if a person's aim in fleeing is to find a place where they can have the greatest spiritual advantage through God's ordinances rather than worldly pursuits, they can find comfort in their decision. But if people flee to places where they gain no spiritual advantage but only pursue worldly gains, it is a misstep.
3. Some flee because they have already denied their faith in their hearts. They not only fear what they may do under persecution but their hearts already acknowledge that if they are called to suffer, they will not stand firm. Their only reason for fleeing is to avoid the shame of apostasy. They cannot face their acquaintances who would know that they have become apostates. This is a misstep.

Tertullian wrote extensively on the topic of fleeing in persecution, and I know of no one who denies that fleeing may be necessary in certain circumstances except for him. He did not want anyone to flee for the sake of religion in any danger, and he presented several arguments. However, these arguments can be easily refuted by a simple understanding Christian. One of his points is that when you flee, either you already believe in your heart that you will deny God's truth, or you have already done so, or you are uncertain whether you will deny it. If you believe in your heart that you will deny the truth, then you have already fallen away. If you are uncertain, Tertullian argues that it is within your own power or God's power to sustain you. If it is within your own power, why not believe that you will stand for the truth? If it is in God's power, why not rely on God? I mention this to illustrate that if you already think you cannot stand for the truth, then you have already weakened your position.

4. A fourth misstep is when people, in their fleeing, prioritize their own safety without considering the need to prepare themselves for future service to God or for potential future suffering if God calls them to it. They neglect to make their place of hiding a provision for future suffering when God may call them to it.
5. It is important to understand that a person may flee out of cowardice or out of faith. Moses, for example, left Egypt by faith.

Question: How can one know if their fleeing is driven by faith rather than cowardice?

Answer: Firstly, fleeing driven by faith is not done in a violent, rash, or impulsive manner. It is not a hasty escape in a state of panic, as if fleeing from a common fire or imminent danger. Rather, fleeing to avoid danger driven by faith is characterized by a calm and

composed spirit. This can be seen in the scripture previously mentioned in Psalm 3:5, "I laid me down and slept." David did not flee in a state of fear but followed the path opened by God, and his spirit was tranquil. Another example is observed in 1 Kings 19:8, regarding Elijah's flight. He arose and went, not in a frantic manner, but in the strength provided by God's sustenance. The phrase implies a sense of peace and serenity. Therefore, those who flee in faith do so with a composed spirit, content with God's guidance, and without bitterness or vexation of spirit. Some may flee out of a sense of obligation driven by conscience, fearing the consequences of not fleeing, yet they do so with great bitterness of spirit. They may think to themselves, "There was a time when I had a comfortable life with a home, wealth, and the support of friends. Now, I must leave everything behind and venture into an unknown land among unfamiliar people. I do not know what will become of me." Such an attitude is far from the contentment that should accompany forsaking all for the cause of God. Instead, Christians should not only exhibit contentment but also rejoice because fleeing is a form of suffering for the sake of faith.

2. Furthermore, when fleeing is an act of faith, a person who flees from danger does so with a disposition of spirit that is willing to return and bear witness to God's truth if called upon, even if the call is not yet clear. Chrysostom, in his commentary on Moses' flight, seems to refer to his initial fleeing when he killed the Egyptian and fled from Egypt upon its discovery. Regarding the statement that Moses was afraid in the scripture, Chrysostom explains that it is not attributed to fear because, although he was afraid, he had a heart willing to return when God would call him. Moses feared because he did not have a clear call, yet he departed with a disposition of heart that was willing to witness



for God's cause when called upon. Therefore, the scripture says he was not afraid.

3. It is an indication of fleeing in faith when I use the opportunity to prepare myself for suffering and make that place of refuge a chamber for that purpose. I make use of the liberty I have to cultivate a heart that is ready to respond when God calls. This kind of fleeing is more attributable to faith than fear.

Seventhly, concerning those in public office, such as magistrates and ministers, great care must be taken in their fleeing. They, above all others, should be most willing to risk themselves. However, in certain cases, magistrates and ministers may flee and avoid danger. For example, in 2 Samuel 21:17, the people did not allow David to go out to war to prevent the light of Israel from being extinguished.

Augustine makes a noteworthy statement about this in his letter to Honorius. He says that he himself would have gone and not abstained from the danger to avoid setting an example of laziness, but it was the people's responsibility to keep him from it. Now, specifically addressing the case of a minister whose duty is to stand firm against danger in perilous times, they should not readily flee, especially when persecution is widespread. Augustine also provides remarkable insights on this topic in his letter to Honorius, arguing against fleeing. He states that the weak shall perish not due to their lack of knowledge, as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 1:11, but rather due to the ignorance of those who should guide them. Augustine further emphasises that we should fear more for the living stones of Christ's building to be demolished while we flee, rather than the stones of our earthly houses being set on fire while we are present.

Furthermore, he says, let us be more concerned that the members of the body of Christ, deprived of their spiritual nourishment, should be harmed rather than the members of our physical bodies being tormented and greatly afflicted by the violence of our enemies.

But if that is the case, then consider the following:

Firstly, you, the people, should not easily abandon a Minister either. If Ministers are bound to risk themselves for your benefit in times of danger, surely the people are not free to separate themselves from their Ministers, for the bond is mutual. You may argue that there is a difference between a Minister and another member of the church, and it is true in terms of function. However, when it comes to the bond, the bond of another member is just as real and strong as the bond of a Minister. Just as in the body the eye may be more useful than the hand, yet sometimes the hand may save a life more effectively than the eye, and though the eye may have greater utility, the hand is just as firmly and truly connected to the body as the eye. In fact, if we consider all the members collectively, there is a greater bond tying them to their Minister than the Minister to them. The Minister is directly tied to the whole body, and they are tied to him by being connected to one another. If there is the freedom for one member of a church to depart whenever they wish, then there is freedom for another, and so on for all. And if there is freedom for them to leave, then there is freedom for the Minister as well. Many may criticize the Minister if they leave their people at will, but there is equally valid reason for a Minister to criticize their people if they leave him whenever they please.

Secondly, if there is such a binding obligation on a Minister to risk himself for his people, he must carefully examine his calling. The

main reason why we, and even others elsewhere, were so prone to fear and flee on every occasion was because there remained some fear and uncertainty regarding our calling.

Thirdly, if there is such a bond between a Minister and his people, the people must make every effort to encourage their Minister. There should be strong unity in their spirits, and they should be cautious not to entertain divisive thoughts or harbor suspicions that hinder even the slightest unity. In times of danger, they should be willing to wholeheartedly and cheerfully support and stand alongside their Minister. We do not know what trials God may call us to face. The path we walk, and desire to continue walking, is one that the world and the Devil despise. Although we may currently enjoy a period of respite by God's providence, if we remain steadfast in this path, we may encounter many challenges before we die. Just as we are obligated to risk everything we are and possess for you, all that you are and possess should likewise be bound to us.

But in certain cases, a Minister may be afraid and choose to flee without sinning, just as the Prophets, Christ, and the Apostles did flee in times of danger. A Minister may flee if the persecution is directed specifically at them and not a general persecution affecting their entire congregation. They may also flee if they have made provisions for their people to be cared for by others and if their absence would allow them to be more useful to their people. Furthermore, if they flee with the intention of returning when God shows them the way, and if the people themselves break their relations, then certainly the Minister may flee. Augustine, in his epistle to Honorius, uses the example of Athanasius and justifies his fleeing, as the Emperor was furious with him, and he was willing to return when God provided the opportunity. I could provide more

instances, but I will only mention that they may flee with the intention of returning as God gives occasion.

For example, Saint Paul and Barnabas, as mentioned in Acts 14, fled multiple times from various places due to persecution. Yet, when they had a respite, they returned to the same places they had fled from. In Chapter 13, they came to Antioch where they faced persecution and were expelled. From there, they went to Iconium, but faced persecution once again. Then they went to Lystra, but even there they were pursued by their enemies. Despite the persecution they faced in these three places, they eventually returned to them, as mentioned in verse 21. This demonstrates the practice of the Apostles. However, if the relationship between the Minister and the people is broken, then they may depart.

During times of persecution, the situation becomes more challenging. It is not as difficult for a Minister to leave their people due to sickness or physical weakness as it is in times of persecution. In fact, a Minister is even more obligated to stay with their people during such times. Christ referred to the hireling who flees from the sheep when the wolf comes, implying that a true Shepherd is willing to risk their life against the wolf. For a Minister to avoid that danger which they have undertaken to face would be unfaithful. Jacob was willing to watch over his sheep in the night, enduring frost and cold, just as he did during the day and in the summer. Scripture does not say that a hireling flees when a lion comes. If the danger is such that only a miracle can preserve the Minister's life, and if their life can be more beneficial to the Church in another place rather than being laid down there, then they are not acting as a hireling, but as a wise Shepherd who may choose to avoid danger.

# Chapter 12

## Objections Against Fleeing

Containing the eighth point, which is addressing objections against fleeing. Objection 1: Men should not leave their country. Answer in two points. Objection 2: Shouldn't someone stay to suffer? Answer. Objection 3: God is all-sufficient to help in the greatest dangers. Answer. Objection 4: Fleeing means ceasing to bear witness to the truth of God. Answer. Objection 5: Many of God's servants had the ability to fly but chose not to. Answer. Objection 6: What will happen to those left behind if they are forsaken by capable individuals? Answer. Objection 7: If people would overcome their fears and stay for a while, the difficult situation would pass. Answer. Ninth point: Directions for our conduct when we flee. 1. Minimize the guilt left behind in the place. 2. Conduct yourselves in a way that does not bring dishonor to God's name in the place you flee to. 3. Behave as exiled individuals, detached from worldly matters. 4. Cultivate a contented mindset. 5. Maintain fervency of spirit even after you are delivered. 6. Pray for those from whom you flee.

And now I address the Eighth point, which is responding to objections that may be raised against this.

Objection 1: It may be said that men should not leave their country.

Answer: We know that people leave their country for various reasons, such as for trade to provide for their families, as Ruth,

Abraham, and his sons did. They also leave for the purpose of learning, like the Queen of Sheba did. Therefore, it is reasonable to leave one's country for the sake of religion. If there is an opportunity to establish religion in our own country, we should prioritize that over anywhere else. However, if such an opportunity does not exist, we are permitted to leave our country for the sake of religion, just as the Ethiopian eunuch traveled and left his country to come to Jerusalem. Furthermore,

God has a significant purpose in scattering His people through His providence, and if it were not for persecution, it is unlikely that the word of God would have been spread to various countries.

Objection 2: But should no one stay to suffer?

Answer: We should understand that fleeing is a form of suffering. If we examine the matter closely, many people urge others to stay and suffer because they themselves are reluctant to endure the immediate hardships of leaving their country, shops, and possessions. Peter Martyr, in a treatise on fleeing from persecution, provides a notable response to such individuals and describes their temperament and attitude. It is similar to someone who is afflicted with a disease that requires the amputation of a limb or enduring great hardship to cure it. If a delicate person, reluctant to endure hardship, can find someone to argue that this is not the way to cure the disease and that it can be treated with gentler means, they may choose to venture with the gentler means, even though it may eventually cost them their lives. Similarly, some people, due to their aversion to certain present troubles like leaving their countries and possessions, prefer to venture with gentler means. However, in doing so, they often end up denying the truth, defiling their consciences

with superstitious practices, and shamefully subjecting themselves to others.

But why don't they stay to suffer? Perhaps their time has not yet come, as Christ says in another case. If they had seen their time come, they would have been as willing to stay as others.

Furthermore, if they were to stay, they would show ingratitude towards God's providence in opening a door for them to enjoy the ordinances elsewhere.

Moreover, they dare not stay because it would be tempting God and relying on their own strength. If they were to stay without God's calling, they could not expect God's strength, and they are aware of their own weakness.

Objection 3: But is not God all-sufficient and able to help in the greatest dangers?

Answer 1: Certainly, if we were to compare who trusts in God's power the most, it may be found that those who flee to avoid danger have more exercise of their faith in trusting God's power than many who stay and argue in a manner as if we didn't greatly need the power of God to support and deliver us. Trusting in God's power for that purpose is as much as an ordinary, or even a strong faith can accomplish.

Answer 2: However, we must be cautious not to impose our own desires on God's power. God has sufficient power to provide relief and defense for His people, but if we expect God's power to work according to our own will, it is not belief but presumption. If God chooses to manifest His power in upholding the way He has

ordained, who are we, as men or women, to assume that God should exert His power to uphold our own way?

Furthermore, God will exert His power through the use of means.

Objection 4: But then we leave to give testimony to the truth, and isn't giving testimony to the truth of God worth more than our estates?

Answer 1: Fleeing is itself a form of giving witness, and those who argue against it are reluctant to give as much witness. Isn't it a witness for a man to leave his estate and country for the sake of truth?

Answer 2: Moreover, even in their absence, they can give witness through their writings or their actions, and they may be reserved to give further witness.

Objection 5: But many of God's dear servants, such as the Martyrs, had the ability to fly, and yet they chose not to.

Answer 1: To that, I first answer that there may have been many obligations upon them that God did not release.

Answer 2: Furthermore, much depends on circumstances, and a faithful Christian, by comparing different factors, may discern where God's glory is most manifest.

Answer 3: It is possible that they experienced some extraordinary work of God's Spirit in the form of assistance, comfort, and emboldening, so their example cannot be generalized as a rule.



Objection 6: But what will happen to those who are left behind if others with abilities abandon them?

Answer 1: I answer that by the example of those who flee and what they should do if God opens a door. However, if it is argued that they cannot flee, I respond as follows.

Answer 2: Firstly, even if they cannot flee, they can be confirmed in the truth by others who depart and are willing to suffer for the truth in their departures. This may have a greater impact than numerous exhortations.

Answer 3: Lastly, I answer that if God closes the door for them to flee and opens doors for others, even if their abilities and graces are weak, if they remain faithful, they can confidently expect that God will provide for them and bless them with more assistance than those with strong abilities and graces could have anticipated if they had not taken the path that God opened for them.

Objection 7: But if men would stay a while, the clouds may blow over, but they are fearful and cannot stay.

Answer: To that, I answer that we should be glad that those who remain may enjoy what we do and bless God for it. Even if we cannot enjoy it for the present, we should still value the opportunity to partake in the ordinances for a year more than compensating for the loss of our estates throughout our lives. Thus, we have concluded the eighth particular in addressing this case of conscience. However, to provide further guidance to Christians in this matter, there are several considerations for how we should conduct ourselves when we flee.

Firstly, when we are compelled to flee danger, we should ensure that we leave behind as little guilt in that place as possible. Let us strive to cleanse the guilt that we have brought upon that place, for all of us have not only burdened our consciences but also burdened the place where we resided. Reflect on whether it was our concern to remove the guilt from that place, and if it was not, let us now mourn for our sins so that they may not bring judgment upon the location.

Furthermore, in the place where we have taken refuge, let us conduct ourselves in a manner that upholds the name of God. We should not give others reason to say, "These are the people who flee for religion, but do they live accordingly?" Instead, let us strive to walk in such a way that they may say, "These individuals who have conscientious convictions surely came here for the sake of their beliefs. Their conduct aligns with their profession." We have a notable example of some who came from another country for the sake of religion but behaved in an offensive manner, causing great harm to the reputation of God's name. The heathens said, "These are the people of the Lord who have gone out of His land" (Ezekiel 36:20). Although we may not be among heathens, those who flee from their own country and then profane the name of God in another country provide an opportunity for the people among whom they seek refuge to say, "Look at these individuals who have left their own land, professing to be the people of the Lord and fleeing for religion. See what kind of people they are." Thus, God's name is dishonoured. Let us be cautious not to give any occasion for the people with whom we live to make such remarks about us, as the ones who have fled for the sake of religion.

3. We must be careful to conduct ourselves as those who have fled for the sake of religion, as exiled people who are detached from

worldly things. We should be content with whatever circumstances God calls us to. Should we complain when we encounter troubles? That would indicate that we have overly sensitive spirits, expecting to escape all difficulties when we flee from great danger.

4. When we have fled, we should strive to cultivate a contented mindset and walk in obedience to God. We should offer praise to God as if we were in the greatest prosperity we could have experienced in our own country. We should not let any inconveniences dampen our spirits but maintain a sense of freedom in God's service. We find a remarkable expression from David when we compare two Psalms, Psalm 57 and Psalm 108. Psalm 57 was written when David fled from Saul and was in a cave. Notice how David's spirit remained steadfast. He was not discouraged or numb like many who come from comfortable homes and are now forced to live in cramped and dark places. Their hearts start to complain about the lack of fresh air and the luxurious living they once had. However, David was different. Despite being in a poor and dark cave, he considered it the shadow of God's wings. Furthermore, he proclaimed, "I will cry to God Most High," even though he was brought low and in a humble state. He acknowledged his connection to the exalted God who accomplishes all things. Did God fulfill all things for David? God had promised David the kingdom, yet David found himself in a desperate situation, having to fend for his life in a lowly cave. Still, David declared that he would cry out to the God who fulfills all things for him. He believed that God would send salvation from heaven, even though he was in a dark place (verse 5). He exalted God above the heavens and desired His glory to surpass all the earth (verse 7). David's heart was resolute, fixed

on God. He would sing and offer praise. These sentiments were expressed while he was in the cave. If we compare this with Psalm 108, which was a psalm of thanksgiving and rejoicing that David composed upon his deliverance, we find the same expressions that David had within the cave. He continued to bless God's name for the great deliverance. This teaches us an important lesson: the attitude of our hearts in times of great blessings should be the same attitude we seek to maintain in our submission to God when we have fled from danger.

5. Furthermore, it is crucial for us to maintain fervency in our hearts and spirits for God even after we have been delivered from the danger we once feared. We should keep the same fervency of love for God and His truth that we had during the time of danger. Many people, when faced with the threat of enemies and overcome by fear, experience a great fervency and zeal for God and His truth. They rejoice when they can gather together to fast, pray, or hear a sermon. However, once they are in a place of safety, their hearts become dull and lifeless. When they gather for prayer or to discuss the word, their spirits lack the same fervency as before. May the Lord preserve us from such a state.
6. Additionally, let us strive to contribute to the well-being of the place we have fled from, whether through our prayers or in any other way possible. Just as the people of God, even when they were away from their own country, remembered Jerusalem, so should we. We owe much gratitude to God for the good we have experienced in that place.

7. Lastly, let us view the hiding place God has provided to deliver us from danger as a preparation for even greater dangers. We should not assume that everything is fine just because we have avoided some danger and found temporary safety. Instead, our concern should be to use those places that serve as hiding spots from one danger as preparation for facing greater dangers in the future. By following these directions, we will honour God in our fleeing and have no reason to regret our choices. With this, we conclude our response to the conscience dilemma concerning fleeing.

# Chapter 13:

## How to Overcome the Fear of Man

Firstly, it is important to recognize the negative aspects of fearing man. The following points highlight the evils associated with sinful fear of man or any danger that may befall us:

1. It goes against the solemn charges of God. God strongly warns His people to avoid this fear, considering it highly displeasing in His sight. There are numerous instances in Scripture where God solemnly commands His people to refrain from fearing man. For example, in Deuteronomy 20:3, God urges His people with words such as "let not your hearts faint," "fear not," "do not tremble," and "neither be terrified." Similarly, in Isaiah 41:13-14, God reassures His people by saying, "Fear not, I will help thee," and even addresses them as "worm Jacob," emphasizing that they should not fear. In Matthew 10, within a few verses, there are multiple expressions cautioning against fear. These passages indicate that our human nature tends to be inclined towards sinful fear, while we often lack true fear of God. Thus, going against God's solemn charges is a grave evil.
2. It leads to idolizing the creature. When we excessively fear man, we elevate the creature above its rightful place and give it unwarranted power over us. Instead of recognizing God's ultimate authority and trusting in Him, we place undue importance on the opinions and actions of human beings.

3. It is incompatible with the state, spirit, and profession of a Christian. As followers of Christ, we are called to live by faith and not be controlled by fear. Our identity as Christians should be marked by courage, trust in God's providence, and a willingness to face opposition for the sake of truth.
4. It dishonours God and undermines His cause. When we fear man more than we fear God, we diminish God's glory and compromise the integrity of our faith. It hinders us from boldly proclaiming the truth and standing up for righteousness.
5. It strengthens the enemies of God's people. Our fear can embolden those who oppose God's purposes. When the enemies of truth witness believers succumbing to fear, it gives them confidence and discourages other Christians from taking a stand.
6. It is warned against as a severe judgment from God. Scripture warns that sinful fear of man can lead to severe consequences. It is considered a judgment from God upon a people, a sign of their rebellion and departure from Him.

### The Word of Exhortation: How to Overcome the Fear of Man

There are two aspects to addressing this matter: first, Christians must be cautious of sinful fear of man and recognize its evil nature; and second, we need to employ certain means to overcome this fear and redirect our hearts.

Firstly, we should heed the solemn charges of God and not give in to an excessive and sinful fear of man. God's Word repeatedly urges us to resist this fear and place our trust in Him. Ignoring these divine

warnings would be a grave error, given the weight placed on this matter in Scripture.

Secondly, fearing man or the creature is a form of idolatry, as it involves giving to the creature what is rightfully due to God. Just as we elevate the creature by loving, desiring, trusting, and rejoicing in it in an excessive and improper manner, fearing it inordinately and sinfully also constitutes idolizing the creature. This is especially significant because the emotion of fear is powerful and strongly captures the heart's attention. Therefore, God commands that He alone should be feared, as stated in Isaiah 8:13: "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Consequently, to fear the creature sinfully is contrary to the sanctification of God's name and runs counter to the special worship that God demands for Himself. In verse 12, God exhorts His people to rid their hearts of fear towards man and the creature, advising them not to join in the fear that others may have or follow their sinful fear. The fear of God encompasses the entirety of His worship, so when one says, "I fear the Lord," it is equivalent to saying, "I worship the Lord." They are taught to worship Me by the commandments of men; they are taught to fear Me. Isaac was described as one who feared the name of God because his special worship of God was manifested through his fear of God's name. Hence, if the fear of God's name is a distinctive aspect of God's worship, then giving that fear to the creature without subordination to God is a great evil.

Thirdly, it is highly unbecoming of the state, spirit, and profession of a Christian.



1. It is unbecoming of the Christian's state. What is the state of a Christian? It is an elevated state, higher than the world's state. However, fearing man lowers their status by subjecting them to the whims and desires of others. We need not fear what man can do when he does not adhere to proper principles and misuses his power. Fearing sinfully means we submit ourselves to the lusts of men. It goes against the exalted state of a Christian to subject oneself to the desires of any person in the world. While we must submit to the authority of man according to God's rule, we should not subject ourselves to the lusts of any person, even if they are the greatest monarch in the world. The Christian's state is rich and established, but this fear makes it appear uncertain, as if we have nothing to rely upon. The Christian's state is accompanied by numerous privileges, yet this fear diminishes their significance, as if there were no good to counterbalance even the smallest evil. The Christian's state is one in which all the attributes of God work in their favour—His power, wisdom, mercy, and truth. However, this sinful fear makes it seem as if we have no help in times of difficulty and distress. The Christian's state is one that expects to encounter a significant amount of trouble along the way, but this fear presents a picture as if we only anticipate ease and comfort for the flesh. The Christian's state has already experienced different kinds of fears, such as the fear of God's wrath, the impact of justice, and the curse of the law. Yet, this sinful fear makes it seem as if we have never encountered such fear before.

It is unbecoming of the spirit of a Christian, as stated in 2 Timothy 1:7: "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." The spirit of a Christian is elevated, while fear is associated with a low spirit. The spirit of a Christian is strong,

whereas fear denotes a weak and effeminate spirit. The spirit of a Christian is built upon high principles, whereas fear stems from base principles. The spirit of a Christian is courageous, while fear is discouraged even in the face of minor dangers. The spirit of a Christian is characterised by love, while fear is marked by jealousy. The spirit of a Christian is pure, but fear is tainted and conscious of its own abundance of evil.

Furthermore, it is unbecoming of the profession of a Christian. A Christian professes a special relationship with God, the covenant of grace, and the promises of the Gospel. To be intimidated by every little fear contradicts this profession. This is exemplified by Ezra in Ezra 8:22. After proclaiming God's presence with them, Ezra was ashamed to request soldiers from the king. He was hesitant to show fear towards the enemy. Similarly, when a Christian professes to have a connection with God but is gripped by base and sinful fear, it greatly contradicts the profession of genuine Christianity.

Moreover, sinful fear dishonours God and His cause. It reflects poorly on His power, truth, faithfulness, and care for His people. It is a dishonour to God and undermines the sanctification of His name. Therefore, it is noteworthy that where the Lord rebukes His people for sinful fear, He also chastises them for not remembering Him. As stated in Isaiah 57:11, "And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me?" Sinful fear diverts the heart's focus away from God, as if there were no divine help available for a Christian. Consequently, when Nehemiah was confronted with attempts to instill fear in him, he refused to be afraid, recognising that it would dishonour God and His cause.

Additionally, sinful fear greatly emboldens the enemies of God's people and discourages God's people. It provides the enemies with increased confidence. As seen with Gideon, when he overheard the fearful conversation of his enemies, it bolstered his own courage. Likewise, the spies sent to the land of Canaan were encouraged by the fear they instilled in the people. When one knows their adversary is afraid, it strengthens their resolve. A dog will chase after another that flees from it. This situation disheartens the people of God when they witness others being afraid in the cause of God.

Sixthly, it is a grave evil because it is threatened as a significant judgment from God upon a people. It is not merely a sin but also a punishment for past sins, as stated in Deuteronomy 28:65-66. Christians should consider it a severe and great evil if they are overcome by the spirit of fear.

Seventhly, the evil of fear is evident in the detrimental effects it has on ourselves:

1. Fear causes our thoughts to become scattered and unfocused. In Isaiah 32:4, the word translated as "rash" actually means fear, as fear has the tendency to distract and confuse one's thoughts. It is considered admirable in courageous individuals like Alexander and Caesar that they were able to maintain control over their thoughts during times of danger, enabling them to make wise decisions and handle various tasks. Fear, on the other hand, typically leads to mental distraction.
2. Fear greatly weakens the heart. While a sudden surge of fear may initially produce a burst of energy and action, it ultimately drains the spirit. In 1 Corinthians 2:3, weakness and fear are

mentioned together. Deuteronomy 20:3 also associates a fainting spirit with fear.

3. The fear of man significantly erodes the genuine fear of God, just as excessive love for the creature displaces the love of God and finding joy in sinful things replaces true joy in God. Isaiah 57:11 poses the question, "Of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me?" It is as if God is saying that His fear and the fear of the creature cannot coexist.
4. Sinful fear renders one entirely unfit for any kind of service or role in God's work. In Judges 7:3, God commands those with a fearful heart to return, indicating their unsuitability for His purposes.
5. The fear of man is a powerful snare. Proverbs 29:25 states that it leads individuals into many sinful and deceitful actions. In Isaiah 57:11, it is associated with lying. When servants are afraid of incurring their masters' displeasure, they resort to lying. Similarly, when people are consumed by the fear of man, they may resort to various sinful measures, including lying, to avoid danger. As stated in Psalm 19, the fear of the Lord is pure, but the fear of man is highly impure. The fear of God purifies the heart, while the fear of man defiles and greatly corrupts it. Saul admitted, "I was afraid of the people and obeyed their voice" in 1 Samuel 15:24. Likewise, many individuals in the Scriptures recognized Jesus as the Christ, but were afraid and did not confess Him, as noted in John 12:42.
6. The fear of the creature entails numerous evils, particularly the emergence of desperate fears. If one succumbs to the fear of any

creature, dreading any danger and consequently avoiding it in a sinful manner, they subject themselves to the most desperate fears. Consider the woeful state of Francis Spira when he feared those who held power over him and, against his conscience, denied Christ. Oh, the dreadful torment of conscience he experienced! It is common for individuals who, against their enlightened consciences, evade God's ways to be burdened with fears they cannot bear, fears far more intense than the fear of man. In Jeremiah 1:17, God says to Jeremiah, "Do not be dismayed by their faces, lest I confound you before them." The same word translated as "dismayed" can also mean "fear." Do not fear, lest I fear you; do not be dismayed, lest I dismay you. To reconcile both translations, the meaning may be that one should not fear, lest God instills fear to the point of confounding. Thus, the significance of this observation is evident: By fearing the creature and dreading danger, we descend into the depths of the most desperate fears. Let this serve as a warning from God to us all: Do not be dismayed or afraid in any way that opposes God, lest God terrify you. We have witnessed numerous dreadful examples of individuals on their sickbeds or deathbeds who have endured fearful apprehensions, leading them to act against their conscience out of fear.

7. Lastly, the final consequence of sinful fear is the judgment of God resulting in our destruction. In Revelation 21:8, among those cast into the lake of fire and brimstone are the fearful. Therefore, we must exercise caution regarding sinful fear and make God our sole fear.

To conclude this argument with an exhortation, as sinful fear is an immensely dreadful evil, the true fear of God is a precious jewel. In

Isaiah 33:6, the fear of the Lord is referred to as the treasure of God's people. Sinful fear possesses a treasure trove of evil and should therefore be avoided. Therefore, let us be cautious of sinful fear of the creature. Just as God instructed through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 41:4, saying to those of a fearful heart, "Do not be afraid," let me also say to you, the people of God, in your journey with God, although you may naturally tend to be fearful, if your hearts have come under the influence of the Gospel, there is now a spirit of courage within you. As Lactantius expressed, speaking of the power of the Christian religion on the hearts of individuals, give me a man who is afraid of pain and death, and once the Christian religion prevails in his heart, he will readily defy crucifying fire and even the cruel torture of Phalaris' Bull, in which that savage tyrant delighted to hear the screams of those placed within it when it was made scorching hot.

In the Epistle of Saint Peter, the Holy Spirit directs his exhortation to women who are naturally fearful (1 Peter 3:6). It may seem peculiar at first glance how the Apostle addresses this to women. It is presented as follows: If you consider Sarah, the wife of Abraham, Abraham was called to leave his own country and was likely to encounter many dangers, difficulties, and hardships. Sarah is commended and set as an example for all Christian women because, although she was naturally fearful as a woman, she did not hinder Abraham. She did not succumb to paralyzing fear. She overcame her natural fear through her faith. This is an important lesson for women. When God calls their husbands to leave their homeland, they may be willing, but their wives may be fearful of the sea and difficulties, becoming hindrances to them. However, if they desire to be daughters of Sarah, they should follow her example and not be afraid with overwhelming fear. They should be true companions,

supporting their husbands in their work, rather than hindering them with passionate fear.

Furthermore, the mention of "whose daughters you are" is directed to Christian women. Some of them may have unbelieving husbands. Now the Apostle encourages them to imitate Sarah's example and, through faith, surpass the limitations imposed by their gender. Their husbands may threaten them, saying that if they continue on this path, they will live an uncomfortable life. Such words can discourage many and hinder their progress. Thus, the Apostle emphasizes that if God has revealed His truth to them, they should not be afraid with overwhelming fear, regardless of the difficulties they may face.

Moreover, living in those times, whether their husbands were good or bad, they were likely to suffer persecution. They might question how weaker women like themselves would be able to endure imprisonment or death by fire. Such thoughts could weaken even the strongest individuals. Therefore, the Apostle directs this message to women, urging them not to be afraid with overwhelming fear. They have a mighty God who will be with them in whatever suffering they are called to endure.

Scripture contains numerous gracious promises that a time will come when God will deliver His people from the fear of man. That will be a blessed time, for much harm comes to God's people through sinful fear of man. We should strive to fulfill God's promises as much as we can. In Isaiah 54:11, God promises, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires." Where has this promise ever been fulfilled? The condition of the Church will be glorious, for God will lay the foundations with sapphires and the

stones with beautiful colours. Normally, we lay foundations with rubble and ordinary stones, but God will adorn them with sapphires. Verse 14 continues, "In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee." Similarly, in Jeremiah 23:4, God declares, "I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed." Many people have shepherds, but they fear losing them. However, in that promised time, they will have shepherds and will not live in fear. This theme is also echoed in Jeremiah 30:10-11 and chapter 46, verse 27.

There is a blessed condition of God's people, and the more it is fulfilled in us, the more glorious our state shall be. I have come across an interesting observation regarding a passage in the Song of Solomon 8:4. It says, "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please." In earlier parts of the book, in Song of Solomon 2:7 and 3:5, the church charges in a different way, saying, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and hinds of the field, that you stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please." However, in Song of Solomon 8:4, the reference to the roes and hinds of the field is omitted. Instead, she simply charges them not to stir up her beloved until he pleases.

What does it mean to stir up her beloved? And what is the significance of the roes and hinds? "Stir not up my beloved till he please" means that when the church is in a state of comfort, there is a charge to not do anything that would disrupt or make it uncomfortable, not to provoke Christ in a way that displeases him. As for the roes and hinds, they are fearful and timid creatures that flee at the slightest movement. Similarly, some conditions of the church are such that many would be willing to join, but if they



perceive even the slightest danger or turmoil, they would immediately run away. Therefore, the charge is directed towards the church of God. When God has granted prosperity and peace, they must be cautious not to take actions that would jeopardise their prosperity. Many are observing them and would like to join, but they themselves are fearful and not firmly established to face risks and troubles. If they cause disturbances and stir up Christ prematurely, those who are fearful by nature will be afraid. They will reason, "We thought of joining them, but now we see the troubles that are likely to arise among them." These are the roes and hinds that retreat. However, as the church later reaches a more established state, those whom God intends to bring into His people should not possess such fearful natures. Thus, in Song of Solomon 8, the reference to the roes and hinds is omitted, and the charge remains: "Take heed to what you do." Indeed, there is no longer the same danger of fearful natures. Those whom God will bring in will come through dangers and troubles. They will reason that there have always been troubles among God's people since the beginning of the world, and they will not turn back because of them. Nevertheless, it is important to be cautious of troubles and disturbances.

Now, there are several specific ways to help overcome these fears, such as:

1. Work on redirecting your love away from worldly things, and you will not have much fear. An ancient saying goes, "He who has nothing in the world that he loves, has nothing in the world that he fears." The foundation of all fear is love. The more we love something, the more we fear its opposite. So, let us diminish our attachment to worldly things, and we shall diminish our fear of them.

2. Let us obtain and maintain our connection with God, as that will guard us against the fear of the creature.
3. Let us strive to clearly see that the cause we are involved in is God's cause.
4. Consider the calling of that cause. Even if the cause is good, if we do not have a genuine calling to it, we cannot be helped against fear.
5. Endeavour to view it as an honour, a richness, and a satisfaction to be engaged in God's service in any capacity. Regardless of the outcome, if I should endure certain troubles in the process, let the will of God be done. God calls for my possessions, my freedom, and my comfort to be used in this way, and that is sufficient. Anything I possess may be employed in God's way, and if it is lost in God's service, it is a worthwhile loss. If our hearts are aligned with this mindset, we will not fear the loss of anything.
6. Maintain a clear conscience in God's path. As stated in Job 11:14-15, "If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far from thee; and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast and not fear." When the heart begins to deviate even slightly, it becomes filled with fear.
7. Maintain a close, genuine, and comforting fellowship with one another. Let there be no fear among yourselves. This is exemplified in a notable passage in 1 Corinthians 16:10, where the care of Saint Paul over Timothy is mentioned. Paul wanted Timothy to be with the church without fear, especially

considering his youth and vulnerability. It serves as a means to assist Timothy in navigating any troubles he may encounter in his journey. Likewise, by maintaining strong unity with one another, you will find it to be a significant way to strengthen your hearts and be fearless in the face of the world's dangers.

8. If you feel the need to fear, then fear prosperity rather than trouble. In truth, there is more reason to fear our comfort and prosperity than any trouble in the world. There is greater cause to fear the favors of people than their threats. The world should be feared when it approaches like a cunning fox, rather than when it appears as a fierce lion. The joys of this present world should be feared by a Christian. However, Christians often fear present adversity entirely while neglecting the fear of prosperity. Therefore, strive to develop a fear of prosperity.
9. Lastly, consider how little benefit fearing any creature will bring. It will not alleviate the evil you fear in the slightest. Instead, it may hasten its arrival. Just as when Peter was afraid of the waves and feared sinking, did it help him? No, it only brought the waves upon him. Similarly, in times of trouble, your fear cannot aid in your deliverance but may instead invite trouble sooner. It is worth noting the difference between John and the other disciples. When Christ was arrested, all the disciples fled except for John. He stood his ground in the priest's hall and even at the cross, Jesus entrusted his mother to John's care. John was not afraid for his life. Whereas none of the disciples who fled for their lives survived, John, who did not flee, lived for eighty years after Christ and continued in his ministry. This demonstrates that God often preserves those who exhibit the least fear, while those who succumb to fear may fall into the very

troubles they fear, either at the time or afterward. Thus, we have concluded the second doctrinal point from these words: that faith cures sinful fear.

## **Chapter 14**

Significant variation in the spirits of God's people at different times

Another Doctrine. Significant variation in the spirits of God's people at different times, illustrated by examples. Reasons: 1. Due to the differing dispositions of their hearts in receiving truths. This arises from three causes: First, the weakening of opposing strengths against that truth. Secondly, the activation or liveliness of habits aligned with truth. Thirdly, the dominance of self-interest. Reason 2. Resulting from the varied presentations of truth. Reason 3. Because the virtues of individuals do not always shine as brightly and purely. Reason 4. Stemming from the fragility of grace, its components and aspects are not consistently consolidated. Reason 5. Because our hearts are occasionally filled with more heavenly consolations than at other times. Reason 6. Due to the diverse inspirations of the Holy Spirit. Reason 7. Because individuals sometimes have a clearer and distinct awareness of their calling to suffer than at other times. Particular directions in this case. Reason 8. The differing temperaments of the human body. Reason 9. Resulting from differences in the encouraging events of God's providence.

Now we move on to the next doctrinal point that arises from this passage: there was a time when Moses was afraid, causing him to flee from Egypt out of fear. However, Moses, through faith, eventually left Egypt without fear. The point is:

Doctrine: There is a significant difference in the spirits of God's people at different times.

Now Moses appears to have even greater courage and strength than before. We have numerous examples in scripture and in daily experience that show a remarkable difference in the spirits of God's people at different times. For instance, Elijah was a man of great courage who could boldly face Ahab and respond, "It is not I who trouble Israel, but you and your father's house." Yet, at another time, he fled from Jezebel, and God asked him, "What are you doing here, Elijah? Are you running away from a woman, when just the other day you displayed such courage?" Similarly, there was a time when David was afraid and acted foolishly out of fear, as seen in his behavior before the King of Gath. But in Psalm 23, he declared that he would not fear what man could do to him, even in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. In many Psalms, we witness David's heart initially dejected but then powerfully lifted up.

Likewise, Abraham at times had great strength and confidence in his faith, but there were also moments when his faith faltered, leading him to resort to equivocation and self-preservation. Jeremiah, too, experienced fluctuations in his courage. At one point, God promised to make him like a brazen wall and endow him with a spirit of bravery, but on another occasion, Jeremiah became greatly dejected due to the reproach he faced, refusing to speak in the name of God to the people. Peter, who was once afraid of a young girl, later displayed

remarkable boldness. Joseph of Arimathea initially followed Christ secretly for fear of the Jews, but eventually, he boldly approached Pilate to request the body of Christ. Nicodemus, who initially visited Jesus at night out of fear, eventually stood publicly with Joseph and boldly proclaimed his allegiance to Christ.

Paul, too, experienced moments of fear and had to escape for his life, such as when he was lowered in a basket. However, he later displayed an abundance of courage. In subsequent times, many martyrs also went through phases of intense fear followed by great strength and bravery. Bilney, a blessed martyr, faced severe distress initially, to the point that hearing promises brought him great anguish. But in the end, he endured a glorious martyrdom with abundant courage, as documented in his story. Similarly, when Doctor Pendleton came to strengthen Saunders, the latter questioned if Pendleton, who had renounced Antichrist, would now give in. Saunders may have had great fear that he would abandon Christ, but it turned out that Pendleton shamefully fell away, while Saunders, in contrast, suffered with much comfort and courage. Mr. Glover, too, experienced fear and a heavy spirit while in prison after his condemnation. On the morning he was called to the stake, he struggled with doubt until he caught sight of the stake, at which point he was filled with abundant courage and joy. These are the examples; now let us consider the reasons.

#### Reason 1:

The first reason for the differences in the spirits of God's servants is the varying disposition of their hearts when receiving the truths of God at different times. It is truly astonishing to observe how a certain truth, when merely hinted at, can profoundly impact their hearts, easily convincing and overpowering them. Yet, at other times, even

when strong arguments are presented to bring the truth more powerfully and fully to their hearts, it fades away and has little effect. We often say that what we receive is received according to our disposition as receivers. So why is it that people in times of sickness are willing to hear any truth and readily accept it without argument or objection, whereas when the same truths are presented in times of prosperity and good health, they mean nothing to them and they engage in wrangling and objections, refusing to yield and be convinced? The truth remains the same, but the difference lies in the disposition of the receiver.

Similarly, in relation to temptation to sin, there are times when the heart immediately succumbs to the temptation without examination. But by God's mercy, there are other times when the same temptation does not easily take hold, and a person's heart resists it. Sometimes the heart is like tinder to fire, readily catching every spark of temptation, while at other times, it resembles the hearts of the three children who, though walking in the midst of fiery trials, are not affected by them. Three factors contribute to the difference in the disposition of the heart when receiving a truth or facing a temptation to sin.

First, the weakening of the strength of that which opposes a truth or a temptation. When a truth is presented, every person's heart contains something that opposes that truth. If the strength of that opposing element is diminished and remains dormant, the truth prevails with great strength. However, if the opposing force is active and stirring at the time when the truth is presented, even if it comes with greater force, it cannot prevail. Similarly, if a temptation arises and the principle that opposes that temptation is active at that moment, a person can overcome it. But if a person possesses some

principle of grace that lies dormant when the temptation comes, even a lesser temptation prevails.

Secondly, the activity of habits that align with a truth or a temptation affects the disposition of a person's spirit. When a truth is presented that calls for duties, service, or suffering, if a person possesses principles that align with those obligations and these principles are active and stirring, they can readily embrace and be deeply influenced by that truth. On the other hand, in the case of sin, if a person has seeds and habits of sin, and a temptation arises when these seeds and habits are active, they immediately yield to it.

Thirdly, but the specific factor that differentiates a person's disposition to receive a truth or a temptation at one time from another is when self-interest is involved. Let's consider it in terms of personal relationships or opinions. Suppose there is a person whom I am engaged with and whom I serve my own purposes in. In anything said about them or in their commendation, I am ready to embrace it. However, if this person no longer serves my interests and the engagement is broken, I will believe even the slightest negative remark about them, whereas before I wouldn't have believed ten times as much. It's not that there is more truth in those remarks, but rather the frame and disposition of my heart towards them has changed. The same applies to opinions. If a person holds an opinion that leads to certain consequences they didn't see before, once they have embraced this opinion and its consequents, they will vigorously defend it—not because the consequents are true, but because it is their opinion. If you approach an ignorant person who holds an opinion and simply present the consequents that will follow from that opinion without any reference to it, they will strongly oppose them. But if you come another time and try to derive those



consequents from the opinion they hold, they will strive to maintain them solely because of their engagement to that opinion. However, when a person with a gracious heart realizes that all engagements to others, the world, and oneself are broken and wholly commits themselves to God, placing their self-interest in the name of God, the praise of God, and the advancement of God's truth and Gospel, then any truth of God that reaches their soul at this time prevails mightily. This is because their heart is engaged in God and His truth. In truth, if we truly understood, we would recognize that our true good lies in God rather than ourselves. This is the basis and principle of self-denial—when the soul comes to understand that their true good is found more in God than in themselves, and therefore they will deny their own good and comfort to the extent that it is in themselves, and they will seek their good and comfort in God. The truth is, no one in the world seeks their own interest more than the godly. The difference lies in that one seeks themselves within themselves, while the other seeks themselves in God. The former is engaged in self-centered goals and self-praise, while the latter engages themselves solely in God. When a person becomes thus engaged in God, any truth prevails with even greater strength than before. This is the first reason (which is a fundamental one) that causes the heart to be in a different state at one time compared to another.

#### Reason 2:

The second reason pertains to the differences in the presentation of truths. Even if we are indisposed, no matter how powerfully the truths come, it makes no difference. However, if the heart is reasonably prepared to receive a truth, there can be a significant variation in the manner in which the truth is presented. Sometimes the truth comes more clearly, with more evidence, specificity, and power. Sometimes it comes with a greater manifestation of the Spirit

of God than at other times. It's not just a mere glimpse of a truth, but a radiance that one cannot ignore. Occasionally, the truth reaches the heart in a particular way. God not only presents a truth in general, saying that it is a duty Christians must fulfill, but it reaches the very framework of the heart, addressing every objection and uncovering and answering the hidden thoughts. The truth comes like a perfectly fitting key to a lock. If you bring a key to a lock that, although it may resemble the correct key and be equally strong, misses even a single ward of the lock, no matter how much force you apply, you can damage both the lock and the key, but you cannot open the lock. However, if you come with a key perfectly suited to the lock and simply turn it, it opens instantly. Likewise, when God pleases to bring His truth to our souls, we may have been resistant and heard many truths, but they did not address all our objections, so they were halted by some obstacle. However, later on, it pleased God to arrange things in such a way that the truth fully confronted the heart, addressing every objection, and then the heart yielded peacefully. Thus, it is said that God opened Lydia's heart. Paul preached to others and encountered much resistance, unable to prevail. But when Saint Paul came to Lydia, he prevailed immediately because God had disposed Lydia's heart to be receptive to the truth that Saint Paul spoke. Many people, when they come to hear the word, cannot help but say that the truth of God has addressed every aspect of their lives, and there are no hidden objections in their hearts. Sometimes the truth comes with greater power than at other times. In Isaiah 8:11, it is written, "For the Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people." God not only informed the prophet of his duty but spoke with a strong hand. Sometimes, when God comes, He tells you what you should do, but He does not always come with a strong hand as He

does at other times. In Job 36:10, it is said, "He opens their ears to instruction and commands that they turn from iniquity." Doesn't God always command people to turn from their iniquities? Doesn't God command people in prosperity to turn from their iniquities? Yes, but during affliction, the truth typically comes with more commanding power. It seals instruction. In Job 33:16, it is mentioned that when people came to hear the word, they received instructions on what duties to perform, but those instructions did not come with command; they were not sealed. However, in affliction, God seals them. If a person sees a document with the signatures of others, it may persuade them to see that others hold that opinion. But when they see the official seal on it, it carries authority. Similarly, when people come and hear the word of God, they may perceive it as mere opinion and dismiss it. However, in times of affliction, those truths come with authority and bear the seal of Heaven upon them, and then they prevail. People develop a different perception of those truths than before. The words spoken by Saint Paul carried power in the hearts of the people, and they could not resist the Spirit with which Stephen spoke because he was full of faith and power.

Sometimes God speaks with such power that we cannot resist. We can observe the different spirits of people through the diverse ways a truth is presented to us or to others. Sometimes when God chooses to convince and work upon us, we are amazed. We wonder why we were not convinced before. There seems to be such great power in the truth that we cannot withstand it. What was the reason? The same can be seen in others. Two individuals may hold the same principles, have the same intentions, and upright hearts, yet they cannot agree on the same thing because it is presented to one person in one way, and they see it clearly, while it is presented to another person in a

different way, and they cannot see it. This should teach us to be patient when dealing with those who do not see things clearly. Just as when we encounter a lock for which we do not have the right key, we do not immediately discard it. We consider that there may be some dust in it, so we remove it and try again. If it still doesn't open, we think maybe we didn't insert the key correctly—either too far or not far enough. If it still doesn't open, we consider that we may not have turned it the right way. We try again, applying more force this time. If it still doesn't open, we think perhaps we don't have the right key, and we try another one that might open it. We continue to make attempts because we are reluctant to give up on the lock. We think maybe there is a ward in the lock that is slightly bent and would need to be fixed, or perhaps the key itself is bent. Rather than discarding it, we would repair the key, thinking that maybe we bent a ward ourselves. A person will exhaust all possible reasoning before abandoning the lock. Similarly, when you encounter others with differing opinions, do not dismiss them immediately. Reason with them in various ways because there is much significance in how we engage people's spirits and communicate truths to them. It is not solely the evidence of a truth that is enough to convince; it is also the manner in which the truth is presented. This is the second reason for the differences in people's spirits.

### Reason 3:

The third reason is that sometimes the graces of individuals do not shine as brightly and purely as they do at other times. It is like when you kindle a fire, initially there is a lot of smoke and little brightness, but if you wait, the smoke will dissipate and the fire will burn brightly. Similarly, in the graces of men and women, there can be a lot of corruption when grace is first kindled, but as grace continues and works to remove that corruption, it burns more clearly. Just as

the rising sun may be obscured by mist in the morning, but as it ascends higher, it consumes the mist and shines brightly. Likewise, when children are young, they may exhibit many negative traits, but as they grow and their natural strength develops, those traits diminish, and they become more active and lively. Similarly, even though the godly may lack the disposition of heart to do as much for God as they should, when grace burns more clearly within them, they are able to do so.

#### Reason 4:

Fourthly, just as grace is initially mixed and sometimes weak, with its parts and components not fully consolidated and strengthened, so too are Christians in their early stages. Like an infant exposed to cold weather, they may not be able to endure certain hardships, but as they grow and become stronger, they are able to bear them. Young plants may not withstand frost initially, but as they mature, they become more resilient. In the same way, new believers are like children who are easily swayed by various teachings until they grow stronger. As Jesus did not call his disciples to fasting and praying initially, recognizing that these were demanding duties for them while they were weak, he used the analogy of new wine not being put into old wineskins or new cloth being sewn onto an old garment. The meaning is that uncertain duties should not be imposed on people's spirits. Fasting and prayer are indeed duties, but individuals need to grow stronger before engaging in them. As people become stronger, they become more suitable for duty, service, and suffering.

#### Reason 5:

The fifth reason is that sometimes our hearts are filled with more heavenly consolation than at other times, refreshing the souls of God's people like new wine, enabling them to face any task like giants

and endure challenges. When a person's heart has been warmed by sin and they have taken pleasure in it, they can easily cast it aside when someone speaks against it. Similarly, when God's people have been invigorated by performing their duties and their spirits are refreshed in God's way, they approach their responsibilities with great resolution. Mr. Saunders, a martyr, said that the difference in him was due to God's refreshing his spirit, experiencing the consolation of God not only in his soul but also flowing into his body. This filled him with courage. In the stories I have read about Scotland, Mr. Knox reports an account of a young man of eighteen who was martyred under the Bishop of Glasgow. Initially, he was greatly afraid and considered recanting, but at that moment, God's spirit came powerfully upon him. He fell to his knees and praised God, acknowledging His great mercy and the comfort of heaven filling his heart. He declared his freedom from the fears that had oppressed his soul and expressed readiness despite any opposition. At times, God fills the hearts of His people with profound consolations, and this makes a significant difference.

#### Reason 6:

The sixth reason is that sometimes the movements of God's Spirit, not only in consolation but also in assistance, come more fully than at other times. The Spirit of God blows where it pleases and when it pleases (John 3:8). Sometimes it comes more abundantly, and sometimes more sparingly. As Mr. Glover experienced, even though he was downcast before, when he was at the stake, he cried out to his friend Austin, "He is come, he is come." Similarly, with Samson, the miraculous work of God's Spirit would come upon him at times, and then he would be strong. In a spiritual sense, the Spirit of God comes upon His people, and then they become strong, even if they were weak before (Isaiah 59:19). When the enemy comes in like a flood,

the Spirit of the Lord raises a standard against him. So, when a strong temptation arises like a flood that threatens to overwhelm, the Spirit of the Lord raises a standard and provides abundant assistance.

Reason 7: The seventh reason is that sometimes a person sees their call to duty or suffering much more clearly than at other times, and that brings forth greater strength. Just as Moses saw a clearer call to stand against Pharaoh and all his enemies, there is often deceit in the hearts of people when they are reluctant to face trouble, and they cannot be convinced of their calling. Let us be cautious of this deceit.

Question: What should we do to guard against this deceit?

Answer:

1. When there is work to be done, whether in performing difficult tasks or enduring hardships, if you say, "I do not see the Lord calling me," examine your heart again and honestly ask yourself if you do not see the Lord's call.
2. Another rule to observe is this: If you have postponed service or suffering based on the belief that you were not clearly called, examine whether you find your heart as active and lively in all other services as before. Usually, if people, out of laziness and reluctance to endure hardships, postpone the call of God, their hearts will become more lifeless and sluggish in other areas. If you maintain your zeal in all other things, then even if you do not do what others expect of you, it is a comforting indication that you have postponed it because your call was not clear, not out of laziness.

3. Finally, you can take a course of action where your sluggishness gains nothing from it. For example, take advantage of your heart's inclination. If you cannot see that you are called to a particular duty that requires enduring hardships, and thus you have spared yourself from it, let your sluggishness and the dullness of your heart gain nothing. Instead, exert yourself even more in those duties that you are sure you are called to. If our hearts are in this state, we can find comfort knowing that it is not due to our sluggishness.

#### Reason 8:

The eighth reason is that there can be a significant difference in terms of a person's bodily temperament, especially for those who are sickly and weak. They may find themselves greatly disinclined towards what is good at one time and more inclined at another time. However, this does not necessarily indicate a decay of grace but rather the influence of their natural disposition.

#### Reason 9:

The ninth reason is that there can be a great disparity in the spirits of individuals due to the varying occurrences of God's providence. Sometimes God guides them through His eye (Psalm 32:8), which is different from His guidance through His word. His eye represents a providential occurrence that serves to encourage them. Depending on the different encouraging providences of God, there can be significant variations in their spirits. Just as in the case of sin, individuals may find everything aligning perfectly for their sinful desires, similarly, God's people may experience the providence of God aligning perfectly to encourage them, and this creates a difference in their spirits.



# Chapter 15:

## The First Use

The First Use, which teaches us to request that God does not take advantage of us when our hearts are low.

Use 1: This should teach us all to implore God not to take advantage of us when our hearts are low, when we are inclined towards evil or disinclined towards good. Instead, we should ask God to have mercy on us and show us favor. We should pray that God would only call us to undertake great service or suffer for Him when He sees that we are in the right disposition for it. It is a remarkable mercy of God not to call out His people except when they are prepared.

The same applies to temptation to sin. God sees the various dispositions within each of us, and He knows how corruption often works. If a temptation to sin were to come at such a time, what would become of us? We would likely forsake God, His cause, and wound our consciences. So, acknowledge the mercy of God in keeping temptations away from you at such times. There are moments when we stray from God, and if the roaring lion were to encounter us then, how likely it would be that we would be devoured. Sometimes we are ready to stumble upon every straw, and if God were to place stumbling blocks before us at that time, what would become of us?

This is a mercy that God does not grant to others. In fact, God frequently deals with wicked individuals in a different manner. When

an opportunity arises for them to enjoy great good, something occurs that opposes that good. It may be God's providence ordering it such that a minister is about to discuss a subject that would be remarkably beneficial, and God is assisting him more than usual. Then, something happens to prevent them from participating in that exercise. Their corruption is stirred up to harden their hearts, or some other occurrence captures their attention, preventing them from receiving the good they could have obtained. However, this is the mercy of God towards those He intends good for—that He grants them an opportunity to receive good when they are ready for it. There was a time when their hearts would have been unprepared if a certain point had been addressed, but at another time, that point will be emphasized, and God says, "I will order it so that they will break through difficulties to engage in the exercise. Even though corruption may be present, I will ensure it is not stirring at that time."

Similarly, when it comes to temptation to sin, God often observes how a person's corruption is active, and they are susceptible to temptation. If temptation were to come at that time, they would be drawn and succumb to it. However, those whom God will curse, He allows Satan to prey upon them and permits them to continue when their corruption is at its peak.

As for the case of Ahab, when he wanted to go to Ramoth Gilead, God said in 1 Kings 22:21-23, "Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go?" Then a spirit came forth and said, "I will persuade him." God instructed the spirit, saying, "Go and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." God permitted it to happen. Now, if Ahab had been a godly man, God would have prevented him from going. Sometimes, godly individuals are in such a disposition to sin that if they receive

any encouragement, they would indulge in it. But God tells Satan not to go. It is interesting to note how God takes advantage of wicked individuals, just as in Genesis 34:25 when Simeon and Levi attacked the Shechemites while they were vulnerable. Similarly, when many people are in a disposition where they have no ability to resist temptation, that's when the Devil comes upon them. We see this in Psalms 35:6 and 73:18. In Psalm 35:6, it says, "Let their way be slippery and dark, and let the Angel of the Lord persecute them." Notice how God takes advantage of wicked people—they are in a dark and slippery way, and then the Angel of God persecutes them. When a person is in a slippery place, they need something to lean on. But when they are in a slippery place and their enemy persecutes them, it becomes dangerous. That's how God deals with the wicked. It is different for the godly. When the godly are weak and their way is slippery, God pities them, and the good Angel preserves them. So, when people are in a slippery way and on the verge of falling into sin, God says to the evil Angel, "Now, follow them in that sin." In Psalm 37:18, it says, "Surely thou didst set them in slippery places, thou castest them down into destruction." Learn from this to always entreat God to consider your state and say, "Lord, you know I am in a slippery place and not in the right frame of mind as I am at other times. Lord, keep me from temptation now. Do not let me fall." God has promised in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that He will not allow His people to be tempted beyond their strength. Sometimes the godly can say, "My heart is fixed, speak Lord, here I am to do Thy will." Sometimes God's people are able to endure any danger, and then God brings them to the trial. Just as the disciples, after the Holy Spirit came upon them, were called to suffer. They had never experienced such trials before. When God shows His people mercy in this way, it is truly a mercy.

## **Chapter 16:**

### **Another Use - Not to Be Discouraged, but to Be Humbled**

The second use of this point is as follows: If there is such a difference between the hearts of God's people at certain times compared to others, it should encourage the servants of God. Even if they don't always feel their hearts in the same disposition and the same spirit to do good, they should not be discouraged. It is true that they should be humbled for not having their hearts elevated at all times, but they should not be discouraged. This is a common experience even for the most devoted servants of God. So, even if you don't always find your hearts as uplifted as before, do not conclude that there is no good in you. God's people are ready and prepared for every good work, and though your heart may feel dull, heavy, and lifeless, it will not always be so. Don't fear that when you are called to serve God, your heart will always remain in this state and that you will forsake God and betray His cause. Do not reason in a way that discourages yourself by assuming that your heart will always be like this just because it is so at present. There is a significant difference between the spirits of God's people at different times, and therefore there may be a difference in you as well.

To help counter these discouraging thoughts, consider the following:

Firstly, recognize that you are united with a principle that is filled with all Grace, even if you don't always feel its influence in the same way. You have a union with a principle that is so full that you have no reason to determine against yourself.

Secondly, remember that you have promises filled with Grace to encourage God's servants. These promises provide an abundance of good that can be drawn from. Therefore, you cannot determine that it will always be this way for you.

Thirdly, understand that the glory of God is as precious to Him as your own souls are to you. If the cause and honour of God are at stake, know that God will take care of His own honour. You may be afraid of betraying God's cause because of your current state of heart, but what troubles you? You fear bringing guilt, misery upon yourself, and dishonouring God. However, know that the glory of God is precious to Him, and since you are one of His, He will take care of you.

Fourthly, consider how graciously God has come to supply His people in times of need. He has filled their spirits in moments of difficulty when He has called them to do hard work. They have accomplished things they never thought they could do. Similarly, with wicked people, you see some who are so vile and wicked that you could never have imagined it. Likewise, the godly, though their hearts may be down at times, experience moments of assistance, enlargement, and spiritual fullness that one would never have anticipated.

Fifthly, God has made a significant difference in your spiritual condition compared to what it was before. Therefore, why should you not hope that God will bring about a difference between your current

state and what you may become in the future? If God has worked even the slightest degree of saving grace in you, He has made a greater difference between you and someone in their natural state than there is between you and the glorified saints (as mentioned before). If God has made such a tremendous difference, why should you trouble yourselves by thinking that it will never be anything other than what it is now?

Sixthly, I appeal to you: Have you never experienced moments when your heart was uplifted for God? Was there never a time when you felt a quickening and enlargement of your heart, a comfortable readiness for service or suffering?

Objection: I cannot deny that it has happened to me, but those moments have passed, and my heart is down again. Everyone has some fleeting moments and stirrings, some good moods, and mine may be no different from those experienced by someone who has no grace. Grace is a constant thing, and the heart is established with it. Therefore, even though I feel my heart lifted at times, they are just momentary flashes that anyone could have, even without grace.

Answer: I respond to that by saying that there are some works of grace that are steady and constant, directly flowing from the principles and essence of grace. On the other hand, there are other works of grace that are more distant and not as consistent.

1. There are some works that are steady and constant. Consider God's people in any condition, and if they truly know their own hearts, they will find two things: First, an approval of the life, power, and strictness of godly ways. Secondly, they will have a taste for what is spiritual, whether in ordinances or in God's

people. Even when their hearts are greatly down, they consistently experience these two things.

2. However, when it comes to the ability to perform duties, to serve or suffer, those abilities do not lie as closely to the root of grace. They are like the leaves, blossoms, or fruit of a tree. While the sap at the root may be constant, the blossoms, leaves, and fruit are not always present.

Objection: But you may argue, even in the case of individuals who have good moods, consider the worst among them. Although their hearts may be wicked at times, their hearts are uplifted at other times. So, instead of encouraging God's servants, are you not encouraging the wicked? They might think, "We hear that there is a difference between God's people, that they are not always the same. It is the same with me. Sometimes I am troubled, but at other times (thanks be to God) things are better. Therefore, instead of removing discouragement from the weak, this may provide encouragement to the wicked. So, where does the difference lie between the good moods experienced by those who have no true grace and the difference in spirit among those who do possess true grace?"

To that, I answer:

First, a distinction can be discerned based on what has been said. There is something that is constant. Is that which lies at the root of grace still present in you? If you do not find those two constant things (namely, an approval of the life, power, and strictness of godliness, and a taste for that which is spiritual, whether in ordinances or in God's people), then all the good moods in the world, even if your hearts are uplifted, will not reveal the truth of grace.

Secondly, those who only experience temporary good moods without a foundation of true grace do not feel humbled for what was lacking in them before. Their hearts may indeed be uplifted at times, and they may praise themselves for that. However, this does not make them reflect on their past state and feel ashamed and humbled for the wretchedness and disorders of their hearts in the past. On the other hand, when a heart that possesses true grace is uplifted for God, it uses that experience to be abased and humbled in its own thoughts for the previous deadness and disorders of the heart. The good moods of others tend to inflate them rather than lead to any work of humility regarding the evils that were present in them before. They believe that their current good moods and favourable disposition towards God will satisfy Him for their previous disorders. However, this is not the case with a gracious heart. When a gracious heart is uplifted, it uses that work of God upon it to be ashamed and confounded by its own past disorders. The more uplifted the heart is, the more it becomes aware of its own baseness, vileness, and wretchedness, which others, when their hearts are uplifted, do not experience.

Thirdly, when the hearts of God's people are uplifted, it brings about gracious revelations of God and of those things that wonderfully spiritualise their hearts. On the other hand, others, even when their hearts are uplifted, only experience certain emotions. In their good moods, they do not have those heavenly revelations of God that purify their hearts, make their hearts more spiritual, and cause their hearts to become more heavenly, as is the case with the godly.

Fourthly, those who only experience good moods without the truth of grace are not carried beyond themselves to a higher principle by those moods. They find satisfaction in the workings they feel in their



hearts. However, when God raises and improves a gracious heart, it is carried beyond itself to a principle that transcends itself. It does not rest in the stirrings and workings it experiences in the present, thinking that it is safe and well solely because of them. Rather, it is carried beyond itself by those stirrings and workings.

Fifthly, in the case of mere good moods without the truth of grace, they do not work in a timely and orderly manner as the breathings of God's spirit in His servants do. The breathings of a gracious heart, which come from the Spirit of God, work seasonably and orderly in their hearts when there is a spiritual purpose for them. As Christ said, "In that hour shall it be given to you," meaning that the Spirit will come upon them when they have the greatest need for it. On the other hand, in the case of others, their good moods work only according to external circumstances and as means present themselves. But at those times when they have the greatest need for them, they are farthest from experiencing those moods.

Sixthly, when the heart is right and truly godly, and God breathes in it more than before, such a person will watch over themselves and not become complacent. However, those who only have moods become less watchful and more secure based on those moods.

Seventhly, those who are truly gracious, even if they do not always find their hearts uplifted in the same manner, consider it a sickness and disease, and it causes disquiet and trouble in their spirits. On the other hand, those who only have some moods are not aware of their hearts being down as a sickness and disease, or as a burden and trouble to their souls.

Lastly, in those who have grace, when their hearts are uplifted at any time, it is only a preparation for further service. On the contrary,

those who only have moods, when their hearts are uplifted, that becomes the culmination of their godliness, in which they find their rest. However, the godly, when their hearts are uplifted at certain times more than others, see it as a preparation for further service. As stated in 1 Chronicles 29:18, "The hearts of the people were uplifted, and David blessed God for it and said, 'Prepare their hearts unto thee.'" Unsound hearts may question, "Now that our hearts are uplifted and we have offered freely, is it only for preparation?" Yet David prays to God to prepare their hearts, as if all their heart and affection at that time is merely a preparation for further duty. This is the difference between the good moods of the greatest hypocrite, which reach their peak, and the difference between the breathings of God's Spirit. By considering these means, it may help in discerning the difference between good moods at certain times and the different breathings of God's Spirit in His people.

## **Chapter 17:**

### **The Third Use**

The Third Use of Direction: branched into four particulars. 1. If courageous and fit for service, give God the praise. Four reasons for it. 2. Learn to rebuke unbelief. 3. Work to keep your hearts up. The manner in which that can be done, in eight particulars. 4. Utilise this gracious working of God.

USE 3.

Thirdly, if there is such a difference between the hearts of God's people at times and at other times, this serves as a direction for all the people of God who are familiar with this variation in God's influence on their hearts. Here are Four Particulars to consider:

First, when you find your hearts uplifted more at certain times than at others, give God the glory. Secondly, learn to rebuke your unbelief. Thirdly, strive to keep your hearts uplifted. Fourthly, make use of this significant working of God.

Firstly, if you indeed find your hearts more uplifted at one time than at another (as God's people often experience significant differences and can say at times, "Let my Beloved come into his Garden"), give God the glory and praise for it, as it is a great mercy. Here are four reasons for it:

1. It prevents and delivers you from many dangers you would have faced when your hearts were down. If a temptation had come at that time, you would have been in great peril. Now God has prevented that danger.
2. If your hearts were right when they were down, you poured out your complaints to God about the deadness of your hearts. Now, if God has come in, it is a result of your seeking God and humbling yourselves before Him. Therefore, what comes as a fruit of humiliation and earnest seeking of God should be a matter of praise.
3. This is a gracious visitation of God. When God comes in with this, His presence is felt, and there is ample reason for praise.

4. It is an indication that God has a specific service for you to carry out. Those who are godly consider this a great mercy, for God to have any task for them. Now that you have received assurance in your souls that God intends to employ you, this is a great mercy to be acknowledged.

Secondly, learn to combat your unbelief. When your hearts were down, you were prone to say that things would never change. Now, restrain your hearts and come to this conclusion: I will never consider seeking God in vain, even if I don't experience His immediate presence. I will learn that, although I may deem myself unworthy of God's attention, I will never conclude that God will not come in. His ways are not like my ways, and His thoughts are not like my thoughts. Be cautious in judging God's ways and thoughts based on your own.

Thirdly, has God come in? Do you find that you possess a spirit of courage and boldness more than before? Now that you experience God's sweet breath reviving your dead and heavy heart, and comforting and enlivening your soul, instilling confidence in your previously unbelieving heart, strive to maintain this state. It can be quite challenging to lift something up once it has fallen, but once it is up, with careful attention, it is not difficult to keep it that way. David expressed it well when he observed the people's willing offering in 1 Chronicles 29:18. He said, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this forever in the imagination of the thoughts of the hearts of your people, and prepare their hearts unto you." Let this be your prayer, and it is my prayer for you as well. If your heart is in an elevated state, pray, "O God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, keep this in the thoughts of the heart of this individual

forever." Be diligent in maintaining the uplifted state of your heart, whether you are well or not, to avoid losing it due to negligence.

1. Neglecting to keep your heart up will lead you to question the truth of these gracious inspirations. You might think they were mere fleeting moments, something even hypocrites can experience. Not only will you question this, but you will question the truth of everything. This is what causes people to undermine the foundation of it all because their hearts were once lifted but, due to negligence, they let them fall and lose that spiritual life and courage they once had, bringing much sadness upon themselves. Therefore, if you desire evidence of the truth of God's work in you and the truth of grace, labour to keep your hearts uplifted.
2. Strive to keep your hearts uplifted, for if they falter again, the ways of God will become wearisome to you. Just as a person who walks unsteadily due to uneven legs or an uneven path becomes quickly tired, if a Christian's path is inconsistent and lacks steadiness, discouragement sets in rapidly. A key means to help one move forward with freedom and courage in God's ways is to proceed with consistency.
3. If you lose this state of uplifted hearts, you will lose the beauty of your profession and the beauty of a godly life. Consistency plays a significant role in the beauty of a godly way of living, and if your path fluctuates, there is no attractiveness in your conduct. It diminishes the convincing power of your way and conduct. If others see your hearts lifted and witness a consistent and steady path, it would greatly convince them that it is the work of God's Spirit in your hearts. However, when your hearts are sometimes

elevated and then brought low, when you display patience and meekness at times and passion and fretting at others, it does not convince them that it is the work of God's Spirit but merely the stirring of a natural disposition.

4. By not maintaining your uplifted hearts when God has elevated them, you will cause God to deal with you differently. Even though God may be inclined towards mercy, you will provoke Him to respond in displeasure.
5. Furthermore, when your hearts are lifted, that is when the Devil is most watchful, seeking to trip you up. Just as Daniel conducted himself so diligently in all matters of the kingdom that no fault could be found in him, he was accused concerning his God and his religion. The Devil says, "If I were to tempt them with certain sins, I cannot prevail, but there is another way I may succeed." The Devil strives most to trip you in that area. It is similar to what he did with Christ in a different circumstance. When you are at the pinnacle, he labours to bring you down. It is true that it is the work of God that has elevated you to the pinnacle, but there the Devil endeavours to throw you down.

Question: You may ask, "How can we maintain our uplifted hearts when they are in a better state than at other times?"

Answer: First, when your hearts are uplifted, strive to utilise the grace that has elevated them. Improve it to make your hearts more holy and upright. Just as a tree, if it only sprouts upwards without proportionate growth in the roots, it will wither and die. Similarly, if grace only works upwards in terms of abilities, performance of duties, and joy, without proportionate growth in the roots, it is likely to yield little fruit and you may soon lose it all.

Secondly, employ that grace you find within you, both inwardly and outwardly. Do not consider it sufficient to have stirrings of grace that enable you to carry out your duties. Instead, utilise this grace to combat and overcome the corruptions of your heart. Take the opportunity to address the weaknesses in your heart.

Thirdly, make sure you do not claim anything that belongs to God at this time. If God has uplifted your hearts, although you may experience the peace and joy of it, remember that the glory belongs to God. Be cautious not to allow pride to creep in when your heart is uplifted. It is enough that your heart is lifted in grace, and you should be content with that. However, many people, when God lifts them in grace, are not satisfied with their portion of peace and joy. They become proud and desire a share of God's glory, and that spoils everything.

Fourthly, when you are in the best condition, prepare for the possibility of the greatest suffering. Submit yourself to God's will and remain humble. This will help maintain a sweet disposition in your heart. Many people, when their hearts are uplifted for service, never consider the possibility of suffering. They believe they are in a safe and trouble-free state, and they congratulate themselves. But when trouble unexpectedly befalls them, their hearts sink, and they think that God is displeased with them. If that uplifted spirit had been genuine, they believe God would have protected them from such difficult circumstances. However, they are mistaken. A wise and gracious heart, when most capable of serving, will also prepare for suffering.

Fifthly, be cautious not to rely solely on past experiences of grace. Do not rest solely on the grace you have received but keep your heart

sensitive to the need for a continual supply of grace. Many people, after seeking God and receiving a measure of what they prayed for, think they have enough to sustain them and can manage well in the world. However, even if we had a hundred times more grace than we currently possess, without a constant supply from Christ, we would fail.

Sixthly, guard against the slightest decline in your spiritual state and consider it a great evil to backslide. Therefore, regularly examine and assess yourself. Reflect on past times when you may have experienced a decline and compare it to your present state. When people experience decline, it becomes difficult and burdensome for them to think about returning to their previous state, and as a result, they continue to decline until they lose everything. Therefore, pay attention to the initial signs of decline and hold yourself accountable daily so that when you notice even the slightest decrease, you can correct it.

Seventhly, do not settle for where you currently stand but strive to go higher and higher. The heart must be in constant upward motion or it will naturally descend. Therefore, the path to establishing yourself is to continually strive for growth, as the Apostle Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:17-18. He warns against being led astray by the error of the wicked and falling from your own steadfastness. Instead, grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Make efforts to reach higher levels of spiritual growth.

Eighthly, make good use of what you already have, for that is the way to receive more from God. If you fail to make good use of it, God is just in taking it away. It would be a blessed thing if our hearts could remain constantly uplifted. Our lives would be comfortable not only



to ourselves but also to others. We would bring joy to the people of God. Otherwise, the inconsistency of our uplifted state would diminish the comfort that God's people might find in us. Though we may experience moments of being uplifted, there are also times of great inconsistency. Saint Paul expresses this sentiment to the Philippians, saying, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." A minister of God may indeed thank God when he remembers certain workings of grace upon the hearts of his people. It is a great matter to be able to thank God and to always make requests with joy in every prayer for the people. People should strive to walk in such a way that a minister can make requests with joy on their behalf. Now we move on to the final point.

Fourthly, if God has uplifted your hearts, make good use of it. We have limited time and opportunities, so it is important not to waste any time. We do not often have the abilities to serve God, so when we do, we should seize the opportunity. Just like a scholar with a weak body who is not always fit for study, if they find themselves able to study at any given time, they are reluctant to lose even a single hour of study. Similarly, a merchant or mariner who has waited a long time for a favourable wind is eager to make the most of that opportunity. We, too, often wait for a wind, as we see our duty and are convinced of it, but we lack the breath and assistance of God's Spirit. Therefore, when God comes in a timely manner, we should make good use of it. If we had made use of all those opportune times, imagine how much progress we could have made by now. When we are in a suitable state for external work, we can accomplish more in one hour than we could have done in ten hours before. On the other hand, when we are unfit, we only stumble and struggle, achieving little good. But when we are ready for work and it goes well, what a source of encouragement it is! Therefore, if we had seized every

advantage presented to us since we came to know God's ways, think of how much we could have accomplished. Of course, in comparison to what God truly deserves, even if we had spent our entire lives in His service, it would still be very little. But compared to what we have actually done, it could have been abundant.

Question: How can we make good use of this time?

Answer: First, when God is working within you, reflect on past neglect during times of unfitness. Many times you have said, "I am unfit for duty," and as a result, you have left it undone, which should not have been the case. Now, if God has put your hearts in a state of fitness, strive to make up for your past neglect in running with God. If a person suffers financial loss and setbacks due to negligence, and then they are given a second chance, it is expected that they would make up for their past neglect. God expects the same from us.

Secondly, focus on those duties that you were never able to do before.

Thirdly, gather all the experiences of God's dealings with you during this time. If you have had more manifestations of God's presence with you than before, treasure them up.

Fourthly, when God grants you peace and joy, make use of all the peace and comfort you have to further the work of your grace. This is a great improvement of what God has given you. Do not only enhance your grace but also the blessings that come with it. Many people, when they experience comfort and peace, view it as the fruit and reward of all the good they have done, but they fail to see it as a means for further service.

Fifthly, make the most of this work of God in your hearts by seizing every opportunity. Let time be precious to you now, and do not let any moment go to waste.

Sixthly, strive to develop the skill to use God's graces in every way as God calls for their use. God's graces have diverse purposes. Sometimes they are for life and comfort, and other times for defense. Sometimes they are for drawing in, and other times for pouring out, as described in Isaiah 2:4, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." In this case, they will have peace and their instruments will have a different purpose. But in Joel 3:10, it is the opposite, "They shall beat their plowshares into swords, and their pruning hooks into spears." Apply this to grace; sometimes grace is meant to bring life and nourishment to the soul, and at other times it is meant to bring in more grace. For example, faith is sometimes meant to receive and derive nourishment from Christ, and at other times faith is meant to be a shield. Many Christians focus on the work of grace to bring life and strength to themselves but lack the skill to use grace as a shield. The same goes for hope, which can be a prop for the soul or a helmet. We should strive to understand the different uses of graces according to the various purposes God calls for. Sometimes one way, sometimes another. And this concludes the third use.

## **Chapter 18.**

A fourth Use. To be restless until we attain a good frame.

Use 4.

A fourth use is this: If it is true that God's people experience different states of mind, sometimes being afraid and downhearted, while at other times they possess courage and readiness for any service God requires of them, then it should teach us that when our hearts are down and not in the desired state, we should be restless until we restore ourselves to a good frame. Sometimes the godly have their hearts in a good frame, and therefore it is possible to attain it, and we should not rest until we have achieved it.

Question: But how can we uplift our hearts when they are not in a suitable frame for service?

Answer: Firstly, we need to be aware of the evil of having an unserviceable heart, to the extent that we humble ourselves before God for lacking it. We should be more conscious of this evil than the absence of peace and comfort. Many people, when they find their hearts down and not adequately prepared for service, feel troubled by it. However, this is because their hearts are down, leading to doubts about their condition and hindering their peace and comfort. They are not troubled as much by their unserviceableness and the lack of hearts fitted for duty, which is the reason why their hearts remain down. Therefore, our concern should be to be more aware of the unserviceableness of our hearts than the lack of peace.

Secondly, we should observe where the strength of our spirit is directed and strive to redirect our hearts from that. For example, if the strength of a person's spirit is not directed towards God, it is directed towards something else. It is always working in one way or another. If it is not directed towards a specific object, it is scattered and divided among various objects. So, if our strength is not directed

towards God, we should examine our hearts and ask: Where is the strength of my heart going? Which way is it flowing? If it can be discerned that the strength of our heart is directed towards a creature or a lust, our focus should be on redirecting it away from those things.

Thirdly, when you come to participate in God's ordinances, come with hearts longing for strength. Before engaging in the Word, prayer, or sacraments, prepare yourselves by thinking, "I come before the Lord to have my dull heart quickened in this particular area. I acknowledge that my heart is unserviceable in this aspect. Now, as my heart presents itself before God, it earnestly desires to be equipped for service in this specific area." Much can be accomplished when we come into God's presence, yearning for His help in these specific matters.

Fourthly, pay attention to the initial signs of God's work in your hearts, acknowledge them, improve upon them, and follow them. Many times, God begins to work in the heart, but because He does not fully manifest Himself at first, people disregard these initial stirrings and fail to embrace and cultivate them. There have been numerous sparks that have fallen upon your hearts, and if you had gathered them together, they could have become a flame by now. However, because God did not come in with a blazing fire all at once, you paid no attention. You thought, "What can a spark do for my heart?" If you had nurtured and developed even the smallest spark, you might have had more by now.

Fifthly, make an effort to recall all the soul-quickenings that you have ever experienced working in your hearts. Remember the times when God's truth entered your heart and had a powerful

impact. Strive to bring those truths to mind and present them fresh before your hearts with as much force as possible. Keep them constantly in view and meditate upon them, allowing them to penetrate your heart. Although the flesh may feel numb, with rubbing and exercise, strength will come. In the same way, if you present those soul-quickenings truths before your heart again and meditate on them, they will infuse some strength and vitality into your heart.

Lastly, examine your current condition and engage in the appropriate duties that align with your present circumstances.

## **Chapter 19:**

The Fifth Use - Recognising the Misery of Always Being Unfit for Service and the Sixth Use - Cultivating a Longing for Heaven.

Now, moving on to the next point: If God's people experience such a difference within themselves, where sometimes their spiritual state is far from ideal, then it becomes evident how wretched it is to be constantly downcast and unfit for service. This is not typically the condition of God's servants. Although there are times when their hearts may be low compared to other times, to be consistently downcast and unserviceable is a sad and miserable state. It is as if you have never felt the power of God upon your hearts, never experienced the breath of the Holy Spirit, and never sensed the stirring of God's grace within you. You come and listen to the Word,

encountering soul-quickenings and warming truths that stir others, yet your heart remains motionless like a log submerged in water for seven years without being stirred. It is akin to a vessel in a house that lies unused, decaying and deteriorating, never being employed or made ready for any service. Can such vessels be considered vessels of honor? In 2 Timothy 2:21, the Scripture speaks of vessels in a great house designated as vessels of honor. It describes them as cleansed, prepared for the master's use, and ready for every good work. Now, if a vessel continually decays and deteriorates, never being put to use, it is destined for the fire and not for use. Likewise, hearts that perpetually decay and deteriorate, never being fit for service, should fear that they are vessels of dishonor and destined for the fire.

Objection: Some may say, "I fear that I am a vessel for the fire because I cannot recall a time when my heart was fit for any service that God called me to."

Answer: Firstly, a heart that is aware of its unfitness and humbles itself before God because of it does not possess the unfitness that would designate it for the fire.

Secondly, it may be your ingratitude that leads you to claim that you are never fit for service because you are not fit to the extent you desire. You fail to recognize the work of God's grace in the present.

Thirdly, it could be that you are currently being shaped and prepared for service. If you are undergoing a process of fitting and preparing, it is a sign that you are not destined for the fire. If a vessel is designated for the fire, there is no attempt to mend it. However, if the master of the house calls for a vessel, orders it to be cleansed and washed, and engages in some work concerning it, it is an indication

that it is not destined for the fire. Similarly, perhaps God is fitting and preparing you for service.

Fourthly, it is possible that you are misunderstanding your work. You do not comprehend the specific work to which God is calling you. You may consider yourself unfit for certain tasks, but that may not be the work God is calling you to in the present. God may be summoning you to a work of humility, dependence on Him, seeking His face, and exercising patience. Do not conclude that you are unfit for the Master's use simply because you are not suited for a particular task. Perhaps the time has not yet come for the specific work that God intends for you to engage in.

USE 6.

Finally, if there is such a disparity between the hearts of God's people, it should inspire us to long for heaven. In heaven, our hearts will always be uplifted, and the difference from our current state will surpass our imagination. Moreover, there will be no fear of losing that elevated state. Mr. Brightman makes an observation on Revelation 19:11, comparing it with Revelation 4. In Revelation 4:1, it is mentioned that a door was opened in heaven, whereas in Revelation 19:11, it states that heaven itself was opened. Here on earth, the condition of God's people varies. Sometimes they experience a glimpse of heaven through a small door, and at other times, the heavens open up to them. However, there will come a time when the heavens will not only be opened for them, but they will be filled with the saints. The greatest glory of heaven will be the presence of the saints, and in that state, we will not need to exert effort to keep our hearts uplifted. It would be ideal if our hearts were always uplifted, even if it required great effort. In that future time,



our hearts will naturally incline towards God, just as the sun naturally shines. Therefore, let us find comfort in the knowledge that there will come a time when our hearts will be uplifted, and we will no longer need to exert any effort.

## **Chapter 20**

Showing the power of Faith to overcome the most difficult tasks.

Question: What does Faith offer to the soul? Answered in four points. 1. It establishes the heart on the firmest foundation, which is God's call and promises. 2. It brings in the greatest strength. 3. It provides the highest encouragements. 4. Faith, by its very nature, is a tremendously powerful principle. The most remarkable manifestation of Faith. Thirteen notable aspects of Faith and the challenges it overcomes.

Now, let us focus on one more aspect from these words. We have witnessed the Faith of Moses in overcoming the obstacle of fear in his work. The great hindrance was his fear of the king's wrath, but through Faith, that fear was removed.

Now, Moses proceeds with the work and departs from Egypt boldly and confidently. From this, we derive the following point:

Doctrine: Faith will enable the hearts of God's people to navigate through difficult tasks and services.

Despite the difficulties and numerous obstacles, Faith will carry them through.

I recall discussing the role of Faith in enduring suffering earlier in this discourse. Now, the argument is that Faith will also guide individuals through challenging tasks, such as Moses' undertaking of leaving Egypt. It was indeed a difficult task for him in many aspects.

Firstly, Moses had to abandon his own country. Egypt was Moses' homeland, and he could have easily lived a prosperous life there. The Egyptians held him in high regard. Thus, for him to forsake his own country was a significant decision.

Secondly, Moses had to lead a multitude of impoverished people into the wilderness, without weapons or provisions. He did not know what their fate would be. Flesh and blood would reason, "Why should I lead these people into the wilderness? What provisions will they have? They only carry a small amount of dough, and if that runs out, what will happen to them?"

Thirdly, Moses might have thought, "Pharaoh is such a formidable man, there is no way to hold him back. What if he follows us with his army and cuts us off? Furthermore, if we go to the wilderness, the surrounding nations may come and attack us." Despite all these difficulties, Moses pressed on.

Faith has the power to carry a Christian through works that are highly challenging. Faith has achieved mighty things in the world and continues to prevail wherever it is present. No difficulty can withstand it. Faith breaks through all obstacles, overcomes resistance, and conquers whatever it sets out to accomplish. All strength is rendered weak before it. We need no further evidence of

the great feats that faith has accomplished in carrying out difficult tasks than what is written in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. Therefore, we need not look elsewhere in Scripture for examples.

Now, you may ask, what is it about faith that aids the soul and enables a Christian to persevere through the most difficult works and services?

There are several factors.

Firstly, faith accomplishes this by grounding the heart on a solid foundation. If a person is firmly rooted on a stable and unmovable ground, they can achieve great things. Similarly, faith sets the heart upon the sure ground of God's call. Faith not only reveals a Christian's duty and what God calls them to do (which can be known through mere knowledge), but it also establishes the heart on God's promises. It brings the authority, majesty, and sovereignty of God in His call to the forefront, and this exerts a significant influence on the heart, enabling it to persevere through difficulties.

Secondly, faith draws upon the greatest strength and infuses it into the soul. It not only makes God's strength available to the believer but also taps into the magnificent strength of God, the pinnacle of His power (using human language to convey the concept). If there is anything particularly glorious in God's strength, faith accesses it to strengthen the soul for God's service. We find support for this in Ephesians 1:19, which speaks not only of the power of God in working faith but also of the power of God that operates in the soul after faith has been established.

Firstly, it is the power of God.

Secondly, it is the mighty power of God.

Thirdly, it is the working of His mighty power.

Fourthly, it is the greatness of the working of His mighty power.

Fifthly, it is the exceeding greatness of the working of His mighty power.

Sixthly, it is the same power that raised Christ from the dead. This is what generates faith in the soul.

Now, this power is what a believer, once they have become a believer, can access and utilise.

Another significant text in this context is Ephesians 3:16, which says, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." What the Apostle prays for is something that a believer, through faith, can acquire and make their own.

Firstly, there is strength in the inner man, surpassing that of the outward. Secondly, it is strength by the Spirit, and the Spirit is a word used to denote strength, and it is strength by God's Spirit. Thirdly, it is strength by the Spirit with might. One might think it sufficient to say "strengthened by the Spirit of God," which already brings in might. However, it is "with might by the Spirit in the inner man." Fourthly, this strength is in accordance with God's glory. It is such a strength, such a might of God's Spirit that God is glorious in it. It embodies the glory of the might of the Spirit of God in the inner man. And yet, there is an even more elevated expression. Fifthly, it is in accordance with the riches of His glory. Whose glory? The riches

of the glory of the might of the Spirit of God. Whose God? The God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family of Heaven and Earth is named.

Surely, this strength must enable one to accomplish mighty things, and this strength belongs to the believer, working for them and assisting them in any service. How shameful it is for any Christian to complain about lacking strength in the performance of their duties when such strength is made available to them, and they can access it through faith, employ it, and utilise it as their own?

Another passage that demonstrates the strength brought in by faith is found in Colossians 1:11: "Being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience." If you want to exhibit what is characteristic of a Christian in your life, you must engage in actions that manifest the glorious power of God. What have you done, or are currently doing, in your entire life that demonstrates the glorious power of God? This showcases the glory of a Christian, such that all who witness it may say, "The power of nature could not achieve this, the power of grace could not achieve this, and the power of all creatures in heaven and earth could not achieve this. It is more than an ordinary power of God; it is a glorious power of God that enables them to do this." However, although the power of God is glorious, it is not always exerted to enable people to perform great deeds; sometimes it is displayed in enabling them to exhibit patience in enduring what is placed upon them. Therefore, you must not only be patient like an ordinary person, but be patient in a way that demonstrates you possess a glorious power of God that makes you patient. Perhaps you have experienced hardships and prolonged afflictions, and you have shown patience. But have you demonstrated

patience to the extent that it manifests the glorious power of God within you? Have you exhibited such long-suffering towards those who have opposed you as to reveal the glorious power of God? Faith fetches in strength to empower you to accomplish this. And that is the second aspect of what faith does to carry you through difficult services—it brings in the greatest strength.

Thirdly, in enabling the soul for any difficult work, faith provides the soul with the highest encouragements imaginable—the encouraging promises of God and the uplifting expressions found in the Scriptures. These can breathe life into even the most lifeless spirit in the world. The encouragements found in the Scripture may appear lifeless to the heart, not because there is no life in them, but due to the deadness of the heart. However, faith comes and infuses life into them. In this 11th chapter of Hebrews, faith is commended for raising the dead to life. Similarly, faith receives commendation when it revives a dead promise or encouragement, infusing life into it. We may have read a promise or an encouragement twenty times before, but it remained lifeless. Yet, faith arrives and breathes life into it. The soul can then draw near to it, pressing its face against its face, its mouth against its mouth, and its eyes against its eyes. It becomes a powerful source of revival, enabling the soul for any service.

Fourthly, faith enables the soul to persevere in works that God calls for because faith itself is a powerful and strong principle. It is the most magnificent work that any creature in this world can accomplish. Even the angels in heaven have never been able to perform a more glorious work of its kind than a believing soul does in the essential work of faith. If faith, in its essential act, is the most glorious and challenging work ever done by any creature in heaven

or earth, then it undoubtedly possesses great power to enable the soul to engage in the most difficult and glorious services.

Question: You may ask, what is that essential work of faith that is the most glorious and challenging work ever performed?

Answer: For a creature who, by its very nature, perceives itself as an enemy of God, a wretched and defiled being due to sin, standing guilty in the presence of God, with God's wrath kindled against it, God's justice demanding satisfaction, and God's law pronouncing an eternal curse upon it—for such a soul to recognize and be aware of this condition, and yet, in this state, to raise itself up, lay hold of the perfect righteousness of a mediator who is both God and man, and to venture its eternal destiny upon that righteousness, offering up that righteousness to God by faith as a complete satisfaction to His justice and sufficient to avert His wrath; and despite the pollution of its own nature, to unite itself with the divinity in the closest union that any creature has ever been united to the divinity, except for the personal union of Christ with the divine nature—this is a glorious work. It is no wonder that such glorious power of God is found in faith. A faith that can accomplish this can do anything. As Christ said, "If you can believe, all things are possible." Therefore, I say to anyone who has low thoughts of faith and considers it a trivial matter, "If you can believe, all things are possible." Truly believing is a greater feat than working miracles. A person can perform miracles and still be damned, but justifying faith unites the soul with God in such a way that it is impossible for the soul to be damned. Hence, it is a greater miracle than any other that has ever been accomplished. Though God enables angels to perform great things, He has never enabled them to do such a glorious work as this. Moreover, although people

may perceive faith as an easy matter, it is, in fact, the most challenging work in the world.

Firstly, it is challenging due to the impediments it faces. No work encounters greater impediments than faith. The soul sees the enmity between itself and God, recognizes its own impurity, comprehends the strictness of God's law, and understands that God's justice must be satisfied. The soul witnesses God's wrath burning against it and realizes it has nothing within itself to appease God. Nevertheless, faith surpasses all these obstacles. If faith can overcome these hurdles, then surely it can overcome anything. For no obstacle to any service that God calls for can be greater than the impediments faced in the act of believing. Therefore, let us not be deterred by any difficulty or obstacle that lies in our path to any work because no mountain can obstruct us from any work as the mountain that hindered us from believing did, and if faith could break through those impediments, it is capable of breaking through all other hindrances.

Secondly, faith is difficult not only because of the impediments but also because it is the highest duty of all. Just as reaching high is painful to the body, the lofty actions of the soul are challenging to the soul itself. Faith is elevated—the object is high, the act is high, and the end is high. The object is the highest object: the perfect righteousness of a mediator who is both God and man. The act is of the highest nature: it is an act of uniting the soul with the divinity. Just as the soul departed from God through sin, by faith the soul is made one with God. And the end is high—it is for the satisfaction of infinite justice, the appeasement of infinite wrath, and the acceptance from infinite holiness. No matter how holy God may be, infinitely more than we can conceive, faith procures acceptance for



such a polluted and filthy creature as man from the infinite holiness of God.

Thirdly, faith is difficult because it receives the least assistance from any principle of nature. Other virtues such as patience, justice, and sobriety receive some support from principles of reason and nature, but faith receives no help from any principles of reason or nature. Therefore, it is certainly difficult. And if it is the most glorious and difficult thing, it will surely enable the soul to perform the most glorious and difficult works.

Fourthly, faith proves to be a strong force in carrying the soul through any service because it enables the soul to engage in a gracious manner in any service that God calls for. This facilitates the work. One main reason our services are difficult is our clumsiness and confusion in carrying them out. We do not conduct ourselves graciously and smoothly. In any outward work, carrying it out in the right manner greatly aids the work. Similarly, if we approached the work God sets before us in the right way, it would help us overcome difficulties. We have ourselves to blame for going about our work untowardly. Just as an apprentice who handles tools awkwardly works with as much strength as another but ends up hacking and ruining the work, a mason or carpenter who follows the proper rules and works in the correct manner completes their work with ease. Even if there is a challenging part, they know how to handle it because of their skill. On the other hand, those lacking the grace of faith to guide them by the right principles, when they engage in any religious work, complain about the difficulty and how it tires them. It is no wonder they become tired when they do not know the right principles. However, faith, which is generated by the word and nourished by the word, keeps the heart anchored to the word and

gives the soul the ability to apply itself to the rule. Therefore, even though the work may be hard, for someone with faith it becomes comparatively easy and helps them overcome many difficulties that would otherwise hinder them.

Fifthly, faith enables the believer to carry out difficult works because through faith the believer is deeply connected to God, the supreme cause of all things. By faith, the significant tasks undertaken by the believer are conducted between God and them. The main difficulties in any work often lie in dealing with secondary causes, but if there is clarity between the supreme cause and the agent undertaking the work, it can proceed with ease. Just as in the affairs of a country, if one has to navigate through numerous lower-ranking officers, the work can become quite challenging, but if the business is conducted directly with the king and everything is clear, it can be accomplished smoothly. Similarly, all the business of a believer is transacted between God and them, and faith keeps the soul connected to the supreme cause, facilitating the work. This naturally brings about ease in service because the supreme cause does not depend on any inferior causes, whereas all inferiors depend on it. The supreme cause is fully capable of working without any intermediaries, and no inferior cause can resist its working. In fact, it is a remarkable aspect of the glory of the supreme cause to work above and beyond all inferior causes. Faith, having to deal with the supreme cause, is not as intimidated by difficulties as others might be.

Sixthly, faith further helps overcome great difficulties by removing and addressing the internal obstacles within the spirits of individuals. If these internal difficulties are resolved, external difficulties lose much of their power. We often complain about many external difficulties in a work, but the truth is that the greatest

difficulties lie within our hearts. Faith possesses a unique efficacy in removing and addressing these internal obstacles. Unruly passions, distracting fears, the reasoning of flesh and blood, spiritual lethargy, sluggishness, misguided intentions, foolish presumptions, false confidences, reliance on unreliable supports—these and other internal difficulties can be effectively dealt with by faith. By addressing and removing them, faith easily overcomes any external difficulty. Therefore, when faced with a challenging task, focus not only on removing the external difficulties but also on addressing the internal ones.

Seventhly, the eighth aspect of the power of faith is that it aligns the work assigned by God with the believer's spirit. Regardless of the nature of the work, if it is a work of godliness, faith has the power to align the heart with that work, creating harmony between the disposition of the heart and the task set by God. When this alignment occurs, the work progresses smoothly. If someone is assigned a task that does not resonate with their principles, they will struggle to carry it out efficiently. However, when a person is assigned work that aligns with their principles, they can approach it with joy and complete it readily. As mentioned in Nehemiah 4:6, the work progressed because the people had the right mindset for the task, despite its difficulty.

Eighthly, Another power of faith is this: faith has the ability to utilize difficulties to further the work, and therefore it possesses even greater power to overcome difficulties. Faith can bring forth water from a rock; it can turn the mountains that stand in the way into advantages to uplift the heart. We have a remarkable passage in Hebrews 11:3-4, where it is stated, "Out of weakness they were made strong." It means that they were not made strong while being weak,

but that their weakness itself was used by faith to strengthen them. Thus, faith is not only capable of strengthening the weak but also of taking advantage of weakness to provide strength. It can transform hindrances into opportunities. As God has promised that all things shall turn out for good, faith can seize hold of that promise and turn every hindrance into a means of advancement. Faith possesses an alchemical skill; those who possess such a skill can extract gold from stones or iron. Similarly, faith can extract gold from iron and stones, from things that appear to be the most adverse and contrary. It can draw assistance from them.

Ninethly, Faith aids against difficulty because it operates through love, and love possesses a great deal of power to carry through difficulties. As Bernard of Clairvaux said, "Much water cannot quench love." The force of love is powerful. The Apostle also declared in 1 Thessalonians 1:3, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love." Love is strenuous; it can compel one to overcome difficulty. Therefore, since faith makes extensive use of love and ignites it, it possesses significant power against difficulty.

Tenthly, another aspect in which the power of faith lies is that before we embark on the work, it assures us of certain success. When we know beforehand that the outcome will be good and certain, it helps us overcome any difficulty, no matter how challenging the work may be. It is the lack of hope in success that dampens the spirit. However, this must not be misunderstood. Faith does not always guarantee specific success. If we insist on guaranteeing specific success beyond what the promise entails, it will hinder faith. Instead, faith assures us of success in a general sense.

Eleventhly, faith also assures us of the reward. As stated in 2 Chronicles 15:7, "But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded." Faith, with the assurance of this reward, strengthens an individual, even when God calls them to undertake difficult tasks. Just as mariners, in anticipation of a good reward, are willing to venture into storms, tempests, and perils at sea, and as a soldier, if offered an additional month or two of pay, will risk their life.

Twelfthly, faith quickens and stirs up all graces, calling upon the assistance of every grace. Many hands can accomplish great works, and when all graces work together, much can be achieved. This concludes the explanation of the work of faith in carrying out services that entail great difficulty. As for its practical application,

## **Chapter 21**

### Uses of the Doctrine

USE 1: Firstly, let no one think that God is a harsh Master when He assigns them difficult tasks, because He provides them with a principle to carry them through. Secondly, to believers, they should anticipate being faced with challenging tasks. Four considerations are presented to counter discouragement. Difficulties should not be regarded as afflictions for four reasons.

USE 2: Thirdly, it is demonstrated that hindrances should not be a conclusive argument against undertaking a work. Fourthly, when

believers have been able to accomplish difficult tasks, they should reflect on what supported them.

USE 1: Now, no one should perceive God as a harsh Master for assigning His servants difficult tasks. Although He does present them with challenges, He equips them with a principle to accomplish those tasks. Thus, it becomes as if the tasks were easier. Carnal hearts are prone to complain about the arduousness and difficulty of God's ways, and they may view God as a harsh Master. But why are these ways considered hard and tedious? They are hard and tedious for those lacking the necessary principle to carry them out. However, for a Christian, they are not hard. It was indeed cruel and harsh for Pharaoh to force the Israelites into hard labor and take away their straw. But when God assigns His servants difficult tasks, He grants them the means to accomplish them. As stated in Daniel 10:19, "O Lord, you have strengthened me." A godly person can also say, "Truly, Lord, I have no strength in myself to undertake this difficult task, but since you have strengthened me, providing me with this strong principle to some extent, now Lord, speak! Command as you will."

USE 2: A second use is as follows: Therefore, all believers who have evidence within themselves that they are indeed believers or have any hope that God has worked faith in them, should expect to be entrusted with difficult tasks. This is because God has instilled in them a principle that enables them to overcome challenges. God delights in developing the capacities of His creatures according to the powers they possess. He will bring forth and enhance every natural ability at some point. If God delights in developing natural abilities, how much more so the power of grace, which is the special and chosen power that He imparts to any creature in the world. In fact, it

is the most precious gift He will ever bestow upon any creature throughout eternity. Therefore, if you have not yet encountered difficult tasks, expect them and consider that your faith should be activated. Faith is the most glorious grace, capable of achieving the most extraordinary things that any creature can accomplish. And do you possess it for nothing? Is faith only meant to keep you in the ordinary way that the principles of nature can sustain? If God has given you faith, He has given it to you to accomplish great things. Therefore, expect difficult tasks.

And yet, expect difficult tasks, but

- First, do not be discouraged.
- Secondly, do not consider it an affliction.

First, do not be discouraged. Some may think, "I can hardly accomplish ordinary tasks, so how will I be able to do such hard things?"

1. If you have faith, even if you are called to difficult tasks, you cannot be called to a more difficult work than what you have already done. This is a great encouragement for faith. The weakest believer in the world has already done a work as difficult as any they will ever be called to. That work is the work of believing at the beginning when we regarded ourselves as enemies of God. For God to justify the ungodly is a more difficult task than anything He will call you to. Therefore, if God has brought you through the difficulties in the matter of justification, do not fear any difficulties that may come later. If you are called to a hard task, console yourself with the thought that it is not harder than what you have already done, namely

the work of faith in embracing Christ in the matter of justification.

2. Even though you know God will call you to difficult tasks, He has promised that whenever a temptation befalls you, you will be given corresponding strength.
3. When you are called to something, God does not expect you to accomplish it in your own strength. He calls you to do it in the strength He will provide. Yet, He rewards it as if you have done it in your own strength. Indeed, when we consider how little strength we possess, we may be discouraged. However, when God calls us to a task, He does not expect us to rely on our own strength. Yet, He rewards it as if it were our own, as stated in Psalm 60:12, "Through God we shall do valiantly, for it is He who will tread down our enemies." It is God who defeats our enemies; how do we do valiantly? It is God who acts valiantly; we do nothing. Yet, the text declares, "Through God we shall do valiantly, for it is He who will tread down our enemies." So, although the strength by which God expects us to accomplish any task is not our own, God considers it as our own, and Christians can attribute it as their own while giving God the glory for it.
4. Furthermore, do not be discouraged or afraid of any difficult task you may be called to, because every work of a Christian, as it expends strength, also gives strength. It gives more than it consumes; in the process of spending, it replenishes. A person will not fear the cold when engaged in work that generates more heat than cold. The sluggard refused to plow because it was cold, as mentioned in Proverbs 20:4. But if he had plowed, his labour



would have generated warmth. Therefore, it is lazy reasoning to think, "Should I do such a difficult task when I have so little strength?" The work itself will yield strength. It's akin to saying, "I feel cold inside the house, so how much colder will I be in the field? How much colder when I grasp the cold plow and touch the cold earth?" Indeed, if the work did not produce any warmth, we might have reason to say so. However, the work generates more heat than there is coldness in the air. So, people may believe that they have insufficient strength for their current work, but if a more difficult task awaits, what then? If it is more challenging and yet brings in more strength, it would be even better than it is now.

Secondly, do not consider it an affliction. Do not complain as if your situation is worse than that of others because God has entrusted you with difficult tasks and works that He has not given to others. You do not know what you are doing when you complain about the difficulty of your work.

1. Understand that a difficult task is a great honour. Just as a captain would not summon every base individual but only his best soldiers for a great and important task, and they would consider it an honour to be called upon, so it is with you. Likewise, if a master of defence has a difficult task to be accomplished, he would not select the least skilled student but rather the most skilled, and it would be an honour for that student. If you were called upon to do only ordinary things while others were entrusted with great tasks, it would be a dishonour to you. In fact, it could be considered an affliction for God to assign you only ordinary tasks.

2. It is a tremendous opportunity for the exercise of grace. As the Scripture says in 1 Peter 1:7, "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold." Grace is meant to be exercised and tested, and the exercise itself is more valuable than the grace itself. If grace is precious in its state of being, it is even more precious in its exercise. You should regard each exercise of grace as more excellent than the entire world. People value grace in its state of being, desiring God to bestow grace upon them. But they do not place a high value on each act of grace. However, come to this understanding: place a high value on every act of grace, just as you do on grace itself in its state of being. Then, you will not complain about difficult tasks.
3. The more challenging tasks you are called to, the greater opportunity you have to honour God. Thus far, you have accomplished very little, and most of your time has been spent in vain. If God grants you the chance to achieve a great deal in a short period, will you complain and consider it an affliction?
4. Difficult works are meant to enhance your graces. Consider this analogy: If a person possesses a sum of money, and though it has seen some growth, it has not been fully utilised or taken advantage of. Now, if that person discovers a way to maximise every penny of their wealth and obtain the utmost benefit from it, would they perceive it as an affliction? No, they would view it as an advantage. Who becomes wealthy? It is those who fully capitalise on their resources. People regard it as a misfortune to have money lying idle, not generating profit. So why would you not consider it a misfortune to possess grace without exercising it? Would you not consider it a blessing if God were to show you a way to fully develop and utilise your inner grace?

USE, 3.

The third use is as follows: If faith enables us to carry out difficult tasks, then the occurrence of hindrances in the work cannot be a conclusive argument against it being the work of God. Faith only carries us through that which is the work of God, and if it can overcome hindrances and obstacles, then such obstacles in the way cannot be a conclusive argument against it being God's work. Our weakness lies in the fact that we often question whether a work is God's before we even begin. We consult with God and His people, and once we determine it to be God's work, we commence with it. However, as soon as we encounter any hindrance that slows us down, we start to doubt whether it was truly God's work or not.

Indeed, when we encounter hindrances in our work, it is appropriate to reflect upon our calling and ensure its correctness. Furthermore, it should lead us to humble ourselves before God, removing any hindrances He may have placed as a result of His displeasure. While God may at times introduce hindrances to enhance our graces, sometimes hindrances may serve as a form of chastisement. Therefore, it is beneficial to humble ourselves before God, seeking assurance that nothing stands between Him and us, and that our hindrances do not stem from His displeasure. The hindrances we encounter should also prompt us to adhere more closely to the rule, for faith only supports us to the extent that we align with the rule. Thus, we should utilise hindrances to stir up our faith. However, considering hindrances and difficult circumstances as evidence that a work is not from God is a grave error.

To illustrate this point, let us consider God's dealings with Jacob in the work when He called him to leave Laban and return to his own country. You may read the full story at your leisure. God called Jacob

from Heaven to embark on that journey, and it was indeed the work of God. Jacob may have thought that since it was God's work, he would face no hardships. However, if you read the story, you will discover that it was one of the most arduous journeys he ever undertook in his life, as evidenced by the following six aspects.

Firstly, Laban followed Jacob after he left, intending to harm him, but God intervened and prevented him. Jacob faced some danger, but God delivered him from it.

Secondly, Jacob's wife's nurse, who provided great support to his wife, passed away. God took away even this valuable help from his wife.

Thirdly, Jacob's wife herself died during the journey. This was a significant tragedy, and Jacob might have thought that God was intentionally opposing him.

Fourthly, Jacob's daughter Dinah was violated.

Fifthly, Jacob's two sons, Simeon and Levi, committed a terrible act of violence, murdering innocent people.

Sixthly, Jacob's brother Esau approached him with rage and fury, intending to destroy him. Jacob was filled with great fear of Esau. These events may provide reassurance to those embarking on a journey. First, they should ensure they have received a clear call from God, and then they should proceed regardless of what may occur. Rather than seeing obstacles as signs that God is blocking their path, they should view them as tests of their faith. Furthermore, those who are weak and have friends undertaking difficult tasks or journeys may think that their friends can proceed before danger arises.

However, if danger does arise, they may question whether it is the right path. If this is their only argument, they must understand that it stems from weakness. They should abandon this weakness and refrain from disturbing themselves and their friends by doubting whether it is God's way due to such hindrances. This concludes the third use.

USE, 4. Fourthly, if faith is the principle that enables us to carry out such difficult tasks, then those who have been carried through such works should reflect upon what God has brought them through. Consider the works to which God called you, perhaps like Moses, to leave your own country. You did so, not out of external necessity, but out of pure obedience to God. You may have encountered numerous hindrances and inconveniences. You could have remained and lived comfortably with abundant resources if you were willing to compromise like others. Leaving behind those things posed certain hardships, and the example of others made the work difficult. However, through God's mercy, you undertook and completed the work. Now, upon reflection, what is it that carried you through? Was it your own natural resolutions or the strength of your own determination? Did you receive assistance from friends or any help from any creature that we can imagine? Upon reviewing it, can't you, in the presence of God, say that you do not know what in the world carried you through except for God giving you a heart to rely on Him throughout the journey?

In what way did God work on your heart? Did He first prepare your heart through a work of humility, leading you to seek Him and make peace with Him? Once that was done, did God then detach your heart from all reliance on creatures, creature confidences, and dependencies? After that, did God implant His word and promise in

you, and by His Spirit powerfully draw your heart to embrace and hold fast to it? Did God enable you to exercise faith in His wisdom, faithfulness, and power to carry you through, even when you saw no strength in yourself and did not know what would become of you? Were you willing to fully entrust yourself to God and submit to His disposal? Were your motives pure and right in this work? Did you discover that there was a principle within you driving you beyond your own thoughts and beyond any strength you could possibly conceive of, bringing the work to a conclusion beyond your expectations? Surely, there was faith in this, and if there was faith in this, consider what I have to say to you.

Firstly, know that this work is wonderfully pleasing to God. God views such works of faith as beautiful, just as Jesus loved the young man who came to Him, as mentioned in Mark 10:21. But if it is a work of faith, God not only regards it but also accepts it. As the scripture says, "These all obtained a good report through faith" (Hebrews 11:39). They truly received a commendation, not just from people but from God Himself.

Secondly, since it is a work of faith, you can experience abundant peace and joy in it. We never go through difficulties without finding pleasure in them. If we embark on a voyage and overcome challenges, weathering storms and tempests, we value it. Like the water that David longed for and obtained with great difficulty, he considered it too precious to drink and poured it out before the Lord (2 Samuel 23:16-17). Just as Jacob speaks of the portion he acquired from the Amorite through his sword and bow (Genesis 48:22), anything we obtain through hardship is all the more cherished. Therefore, when we navigate difficulties by our faith, we should highly value and rejoice in them.

Thirdly, if your faith has carried you through difficulty, let this encourage you for all time to come. Surely, no difficulty will be able to withstand you. If difficulties have already begun to crumble, they will continue to fall and will be unable to stand before you. You can reason as Haman's friends did, "If you begin to fall before Mordecai, you will surely fall" (Esther 6:13). Therefore, you can label this work by the same name David gave to the place where his enemies began to fall before him—Baal-perazim—because God had made a breach upon his enemies (2 Samuel 5:20). Consider it as a pledge from God that He will cause all your enemies to fall before you. So, if God has caused some difficulties to fall before you, then all difficulties will fall.

Fourthly, Give all the glory to God, neither to yourself nor to the means. When we act by faith, God is the one at work, not ourselves or anything else. Boasting is excluded, as the Apostle says in Romans 3:27. Is it by the law of faith or by the law of works? It is by the law of faith, and therefore anything done by faith excludes all boasting from ourselves and gives glory to God.

1. Faith, of all the graces, has the least reliance on ourselves. Justice, temperance, patience, and love receive some assistance from our nature, but faith receives nothing at all. Thus, God deserves the greatest glory for it.
2. Among all the graces, faith has the least influence on what it accomplishes, even though it falls under the category of efficient causes. It is merely an instrumental cause, and while an instrument can be efficient, it is the least efficient of all. Therefore, the glory belongs to God.

3. Faith is the most humbling grace of all. It leads a creature out of itself towards another. Therefore, whatever we do by faith, we must give glory to God.
4. Attribute nothing to the means. Though you may use means, whatever was done by faith was done above and beyond the means. It could have been done without them.
5. Has God carried you through any difficult work? If so, consider this: Labour to value the word of God upon which your faith was built, and nurture and increase this joy.
6. If you have experienced that your faith has carried you through great challenges, be careful that your faith does not fail you in smaller matters; that would be a shame. It's like a mariner who has faced severe storms and tempests and has overcome them, but then perishes in the calm waters or in an ordinary tempest due to a lack of skill. That would grieve them even more. Similarly, a soldier who has fought in desperate battles and then gets defeated by a weaker opponent loses their honour. It is possible for a Christian to be carried through incredibly difficult situations by their faith and yet later fail in smaller things. Just as someone may escape great dangers and achieve great success, only to succumb to a common illness. Those whom God has carried through great things may fail in smaller ones, but it is a tremendous shame. Pay attention to yourselves in this regard.

As David speaks concerning Saul in 2 Samuel 1:21, "The shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, as though he had not been anointed with oil." God has given you faith as a shield, and it was the shield of the mighty. But now it is cast away as if it were of little value. When an ordinary temptation arises, you falter as if you had not been anointed



with oil. When God carried you through difficult works, you were anointed with oil. Yet now, your faith fails you in the ordinary matters of ordering your business and affairs, and you fail miserably in every ordinary interaction with others. In your dealings with your family, what a shameful thing it is that someone who had the power to face their enemies and testify for the truth before them now fails disgracefully in dealing with a servant, child, or spouse. When it comes to interacting with your brethren, you don't know how to conduct yourself, as if you were never anointed with oil, as if you never had faith. You rely solely on your natural tendencies, full of stubbornness, irritability, and outward disturbances, just like those who have never experienced faith. Moreover, your faith has carried you through great difficulties, enabling you to deny yourself and attend religious services, but when you are there, it fails to assist you in making use of them and giving glory to God. Instead, you defile and spoil them. How shameful is this? Feel ashamed and embarrassed in your own thoughts, and stir up your faith.

## **CHAPTER 22**

Question: How can we know if faith will carry us through difficult works? Answered in several particulars:

1. Faith operates on spiritual grounds, motives, and ends.
2. It makes people concerned and diligent in seeking the presence of God.

3. It causes individuals to conduct themselves in a gracious manner.
4. It fosters a high esteem for the name of God.
5. It leads to carefulness, ensuring that one's purpose is not frustrated.
6. It cultivates contentment with God alone.
7. Faith is a continuous work. The same faith that brought you out will carry you through.

Question: It is true that faith carries us through difficult works, including the act of forsaking one's own country. There is much that we leave behind in forsaking our country, and we truly need faith to carry us through this. Indeed, a Christian should regard the entire world as their country, for they walk on no ground but that which belongs to their Father. Socrates used to call himself a citizen of the world, and when he was banished, he did not consider it as such, for the world was his country, and as a human being, he was a citizen of it. Certainly, God has given the saints the world. The promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that they would be heirs of the world. And just as it was said of the children of Israel, "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours," it can be said of the saints that whatever ground they tread upon is their own for use. Moreover, although the world belongs to them, they live above the world, and therefore, they do not care in which part of the world they find themselves. Tertullian, writing to encourage the martyrs who were forced to leave their own country, said, "It doesn't matter in which part of the world you are, for you are separated from the world." Nevertheless, leaving one's country presents significant challenges, and one truly needs faith to carry them through. But how can we know if it is faith that carries us through? After all, there may be other underlying motives at play.

Answer:

First, faith operates on spiritual grounds, motives, and ends. Faith is a spiritual grace, and its workings are profoundly spiritual. The reasonings of faith surpass those of flesh and blood. To determine if you forsook your country out of faith, consider your motives, grounds, and ends. It's possible that you left your country due to vexation, discontent, the influence of others, novelty, carnal fears, or vain hopes. Many factors can lead people on such a path, especially novelty, example, and discontent. However, if it was truly by faith, the grounds and ends will be spiritual—for God and out of obedience to God. A notable example is Moses. When he pleaded with Pharaoh to let the people go, he didn't argue based on their bondage or mistreatment. Instead, in Exodus 4:23, he said, "The Lord has commanded us to go into the wilderness to worship Him." That was his plea, ground, and end—spiritual in nature. When people forsake their country, outward circumstances may play a subordinate role to higher things. There may be faith in ordering the heart in relation to those circumstances, but faith must rise above them. Can your conscience testify, in the presence of God, that your longing desire was to enjoy God in His ordinances and to keep your soul from defilement? If so, this indicates faith.

Secondly, if faith is what led you to leave your country, above all things, you will be highly solicitous and careful to experience God's presence with you. While you may have a subordinate responsibility to provide for your family and consider how to live, the primary concern of your soul is to enjoy the presence of God. This was Moses' argument in Exodus 33:15: "If Your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here." If your departure was marked by the care to carry God and His gracious presence with you, if you would rather

endure anything, even imprisonment and decay, than go without God's presence, then this is an indication of faith.

Thirdly, Moses, when he left his own country and departed from Egypt, conducted himself in a gracious manner. When he approached Pharaoh, despite the people's vexation and distress due to increased bondage, he did not fall into exclaiming against Pharaoh. Instead, he displayed submission as far as he could. He did not act rashly, headstrong, foolishly, or self-confidently like many do, revealing pride and stubbornness of spirit. Rather, he conducted himself with sobriety, gravity, humility, meekness, and wisdom. This is the manner in which faith operates in every action. Therefore, consider the manner in which you forsook your country. Did you seek God, discern His will, and depart with a quiet and humble spirit, guided by wisdom? If so, this is another indication that it was an act of faith.

Fourthly, when Moses left his country, above all else, the name of God was precious to him. Especially because their departure from Egypt proclaimed the name of God, he was greatly concerned that this name, which was proclaimed in their departure, would not be defiled. Whenever he faced danger, he immediately turned to God and asked, "Lord, what will become of your great name?" He pleaded not so much for the people as for the sake of God's name. Similarly, if faith has brought you from your country, the name of God is significant in it. By professing that you left your country for the sake of God's ordinances and the greater purity of worship, how dear would the name of God be to you? You have forsaken friends, wealth, and country for this reason. If it was done out of faith, the name of God, proclaimed in your profession, would hold great value. When you come here and there are divisions and nothing but tearing and

fighting among yourselves, consider what will happen to the great name of God. Just as Moses reasoned, "What will the heathen say, that you brought the people here to destroy them?" Others will say that you left your own country only to tear each other apart and engage in conflict. Let the name that is proclaimed in your profession be precious to you. Use it as an argument to restrain passion and to govern your dealings with one another.

Fifthly, Moses was extremely concerned about not being frustrated in his end. He left Egypt to reach Canaan, and whenever there was a danger of being frustrated in this goal, it deeply troubled him. It weighed heavily on his heart, and he cried out to God to let him see that good land. Similarly, if you have come from your country out of faith, you will have great care to not be frustrated in your end. Why did you come? Was it not to enjoy God, to have deeper communion with Him, to walk with Him in a closer way than before? Are you attentive to attaining your end? Does it trouble your souls when you perceive any danger of being frustrated in your end? Does it affect you when you realize that, for the present, you have achieved so little of your end? Those who come for other purposes may disregard this, but if you come in faith, you will be immensely careful to reach the end for which you came. The work done in faith will exert powerful influence toward the intended end and will never cease working until it achieves that end.

Sixthly, if indeed you left your country by faith, your souls will find satisfaction in God alone. The call and promise of God will be your constant recourse for the satisfaction of your souls. Just as Moses, when he was in distress, immediately turned to God's call and promise to bring His people out of Egypt, and that satisfied him.

Seventhly, just as faith brought you out, it will carry you through all difficulties. Now you encounter many difficulties, some of which you did not anticipate. If you came out in faith and if that faith is a continuous work, it will carry you through the challenges you face. Do you find that your hearts sink upon encountering difficulties? You may fear that it was not faith that initially brought you out. I do not want anyone to draw unfavourable conclusions from what has been said, as if we are making comparisons between our country and Egypt. No, we give thanks to God for the good we received in our own country, and we desire its well-being as much as we can. We only use the example of Moses forsaking Egypt to illustrate a point. However, among those who came from Egypt, there was a mixed company, and this mixed company was a continual trouble and disturbance to the true Israelites. In Numbers 11:4, it is stated, "And the mixed multitude that was among them fell to lusting, and the children of Israel also wept again and said, 'Who shall give us flesh to eat?'" The mixed multitude started the sin, and the children of Israel followed them. Similarly, in these countries, many people of God, who came out in faith, have arrived. However, there are also many from the mixed multitude, people with broken lives who do not know how to live. When they come together, the people of God are troubled by them. They are the greatest despisers of godly ways. They may receive kindness from the people of the country, but they bring trouble to the true believers. This is especially true when some of these individuals infiltrate the Church and become members. As for those who come from their country in faith, we hope to enjoy a comfortable communion with all such individuals. This concludes the fourth point of discussion.

## Chapter 23

Exploring additional uses of the point.

Use 5: Revealing the reason for our failures in any endeavor; it is due to a lack of faith. Use 6: Strive to cultivate a sense of righteous anger against your unbelief. Use 7: Reflect on the significance of failing in a work that impacts your eternal destiny.

USE, 5.

Fifthly, if it is indeed faith that carries us through difficulties, then we can understand why we fail in anything we do—it is due to a lack of faith. The hindrance is not external; no, it is the unbelieving heart. Perhaps you embarked on a task with the determination of your own heart, thinking that you could accomplish it in the strength of your own spirit, but that was not enough. As the Apostle says in Hebrews 11:29, "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned." So, by faith, certain individuals accomplished great works to the glory of God. But others, at different times, attempted to do those same works relying on their own resolutions, and they failed and were defeated. It is true that determination can achieve great things, but when it comes to guiding a soul in a gracious manner through any difficulty, it will fall short. Therefore, recognize where the cause of your failure lies, place your hand on the right spot, and acknowledge your unbelieving heart.

USE, 6.

And with that understanding, strive to rise in indignation against

your unbelieving heart. Just imagine, if a person had been engaged in a significant task and someone hindered them to the point of ruining their work, their heart would be filled with anger towards that person. They would say, "I was making good progress, and then someone came and spoiled my work." In the same way, look upon your unbelieving heart and say, "I was engaged in a work that God had entrusted to me, but my unbelieving heart hindered me. God's name lost its glory, and my own soul was wounded."

USE, 7:

Furthermore, does your heart fail you? If my unbelieving heart causes me to fail in this work, what would happen if I were to fail due to unbelief in that great work which pertains to my eternal salvation? What would become of me then? Hardly a task do I undertake without my unbelieving heart leading me astray; now there is a work of immeasurable significance, and nothing but faith can carry me through it. If my unbelieving heart were to hinder me in that, it would have been better if I had never been born. It has caused me enough harm in various matters, and I must be cautious that it does not ruin me in that essential work. It is as if someone were to say, "There are certain matters in which I have failed, and I have suffered great loss because of them, but there are certain other works in which if I fail, I am undone—it is as much as my life is worth. Therefore, I must be vigilant and avoid the hindrances that have impeded me in my other tasks." Thus, if unbelief has caused you harm in these works, be cautious that it does not hinder you in the primary work.

And a word to those who are weak, who are prone to discouragement and think they will fail: Know that God has a special care for all His people, no matter how weak they may be, to prevent hindrances in



that primary work. Although God may allow them to fail in other works and His name may be somewhat dishonoured by it, He will ensure they do not fail in the primary work. And were we not certain of this—that God will take care that our unbelieving hearts do not ruin us in that primary work concerning our eternal salvation—we could never find comfort. The covenant does not permit this; the covenant allows for God to let our faith fail in some works, but it does not allow for God to permit even the slightest degree of faith to fail in that work which concerns the eternal well-being of the soul. Christ is called the mighty Counsellor, and His main work is to guide the soul in matters pertaining to its eternal salvation. Despite all our unworthiness, He will provide guidance to the extent that we do not fail in that great endeavour. Yet, Christ does not always offer His guidance in every particular action. Just as God deals with us in the way of His counsel, so too in the way of His power. Though He may withdraw His strength in such a way as to not assist our faith in certain specific actions, in the primary and significant work that concerns our eternal salvation, we will not lack the necessary strength. Just as a father who walks alongside his child may traverse paths where the child is in danger of many falls, knocks, and bruises, and the father will caution the child to be careful and watchful, but when they come to a path where a fall would mean the loss of the child's life, the father will not be satisfied with mere words of caution. Instead, he will hold onto the child until they have passed that perilous place. Likewise, in all our ordinary affairs, God tells us to be mindful of our faith, to exercise it, yet despite this, we still experience many falls and setbacks. But then there may come another work, one that concerns our eternal salvation, and if we were to fail in that, we would be undone forever. In that moment, God firmly grasps the soul and ensures they do not falter, which is an

infinite mercy bestowed upon us by God. And were we not certain of God's mercy in that regard, knowing our own unbelieving hearts, we might fear, and even conclude, that we would fail.

## **Chapter 24**

Helps to cultivate Faith in any undertaking:

1. Look to the example of your great leader, Jesus Christ.
2. Prepare yourself for the work of Faith through humility.
3. Renew your Faith in the Covenant of Grace.
4. In difficult times, engage your Faith to purify your heart.
5. Be cautious of shifting ways and dependencies.
6. Let go of your own personal interests.
7. Entrust yourselves to the word of God.
8. Pray and plead the word with God.
9. Do not reject any means that God provides.
10. Do not approach the task with a servile spirit.
11. Do not be discouraged by past failures.
12. Be cautious of being driven by passionate emotions in your work.
13. Recognise the interdependence between different tasks.
14. Do not listen to temptations.
15. Beware of distorted reasoning.
16. Avoid disorderly conduct in four instances.
17. Display resolution and courage.
18. Regard yourselves as instruments of God.

19. Remain steadfast even if you do not see immediate results.
20. Do not worsen the difficulty through your behaviour.
21. Focus on your encouragements.
22. Do not use the difficulty as a reason to argue against the work.
23. Strive to strengthen yourselves through faith against all difficulties.

Now, if God calls you to a service or work that presents difficulties, you can see what will assist you. David, by his Faith in Psalm 18:29, declares that he can break through a troop, leap over a wall, and shatter a bow of steel. Paul also testifies that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him. Just as Christ spoke about the power of miraculous faith, the same can be said about justifying faith. Even if you had faith as small as a mustard seed, you could command mountains to move and trees to uproot themselves and be planted in the sea, and they would obey you. Similarly, if your faith confronts a deeply rooted sin, it can uproot it and move mountains. There is nothing weaker and more useless than a superficial and groundless faith, which is merely an opinion and baseless hope. However, true faith is incredibly strong and beneficial, as it contains the essence of all graces. Just as the root of a plant possesses the virtue and essence of its fruits and branches, faith encompasses the essence of all grace, and therefore, it can accomplish great things. It was said of Luther, who had great faith, that he could do whatever he wanted. The same can be said of faith itself, as the Scripture affirms. Great faith allows individuals to have their desires fulfilled, as Jesus told the woman, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you desire" (Matthew 15:28). However, it is crucial to exercise faith actively rather than merely possessing it as a dormant quality. Therefore, to cultivate and activate your faith...

1. Let us look to the example of our great leader, the Lord Jesus Christ. You are aware of the difficult works Christ undertook for the salvation of mankind. These were works that even the angels in heaven and all creatures in the world would have faltered under, but Christ persevered through them. Although his faith was not the same as ours, justifying faith, he had a faith and trust in his Father that helped him overcome great and difficult tasks. In Hebrews 2:12-13, Christ is presented as an example to us, saying, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." Christ praised God in his own person and also sang praises in the hearts of his people. Therefore, take this as a comforting note that encourages us in our public duties. While we are praising God, Christ is also praising God. When we sing psalms to God in a gracious manner, Christ is praising God the Father. Furthermore, Christ not only trusted in the Father in his own person but also trusted in the hearts of his people, so that they could be carried through their difficult works.
2. When faced with a challenging task, strive to prepare for the work of faith through humility before undertaking it. Depending on the nature of the difficult service, there should be a corresponding level of humility before embarking on that work. Therefore, when God calls us to extraordinary works, it is common for His people to prepare for their faith through extraordinary humility. Examples such as Nehemiah, Ezra, and Esther, who were entrusted with great works that required faith, made preparations through extraordinary humility beforehand. Just as humility was a preparation for faith in the beginning, it is also a preparation for engaging in a new act of faith after we have initially received it.

3. Whenever you are faced with a difficult task, make sure to frequently renew your faith in the great covenant of grace. Don't limit your exercise of faith to that particular work alone, but focus on renewing your faith in the overarching covenant. When the great charter is renewed, the lesser grants will follow. This is how God dealt with Abraham. Whenever Abraham encountered a great challenge, God renewed His covenant with him, affirming, "I am God Almighty." God saw this as a special means to help Abraham persevere. If you have renewed the covenant (which includes all the promises), it greatly aids your faith. Shall not God, who has given us His Son, also give us all other things? The soul can reason powerfully in this way.
4. Faith must be actively engaged when undertaking a difficult task in order to purify the heart. Although you believe that God will be with you and strengthen you in the work, unless you use faith to purify your heart alongside belief, you may fail in the task. If there is any sin that lies close to the heart, you will not be capable of accomplishing great things. Sin not only defiles but also weakens. To possess a spirit of power, you must have a sound mind. In Nehemiah 13:3, when they faced a great work, they separated themselves from the mixed company. Similarly, when you embark on any great work, exercise faith to cleanse your hearts from corruption. As David says in Psalm 18:32, "It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure." Strength and a perfect way go hand in hand. Therefore, strive for perfection and purity in your relationship with God, and then He will strengthen you.
5. In times of difficulty, strive to exercise faith and detach yourself from all shifting ways and dependencies on worldly things. It is

observed that when working with metals, such as gold, to make the work easier, they mix other metals with it, like lead and tin. Although this makes the process smoother, the end result is of lesser quality. Similarly, many Christians who lack skill in the ways of God, when facing challenging actions that require effort, mix in their own carnal strategies and shifting methods to make the task easier. However, even though it becomes easier to accomplish, the end result is worse than if they had put in more effort. Labour to exercise faith and detach yourself from dependencies on worldly things. If your heart is devoted to God alone through faith, you can achieve mighty things. If you try to have a backup plan or rely on other means in case one fails, you will never accomplish anything significant. Therefore, when God intends to use His people to do great things, He first removes their reliance on worldly help they had before. This is illustrated in the story of Moses. In Acts 7:22, it is said that Moses was an eloquent man and powerful in speech. However, if you read Exodus 4:10, Moses himself complains that he is slow of speech and not eloquent. The explanation is that Moses was indeed capable of powerful words, but when God assigned him this task, He diminished Moses' eloquence so that he would depend on God even more than before. I cannot confirm the truth of this observation, but it is certainly God's way to remove creaturely helps from individuals in order for them to rely solely on faith. When creatures are relied upon, it often diminishes the honour due to God. Therefore, when Gideon had too many soldiers, God said it was too large a multitude to deliver His people.

6. Faith must also detach us from our own ends and involve God in the task as much as possible. Let God be evident in the work, even if we are not seen. Let God receive the glory, even if the one

who accomplished the difficult work remains unknown. Great things are achieved when God is involved in the task. It is a special work of faith to divert our focus from our own ends. If, when approaching a great work, you intend to exercise faith but fail to be detached from your own ends, faith loses its virtue and power.

7. When faced with a difficult task, let us strive to exercise faith by placing ourselves upon the Word. Find a promise and rely on it, entrusting ourselves and the power of our work to that word. For instance, if the task is to subdue a particular sin, consider the word in Romans 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Esteem the word more highly than all your efforts to combat sin. If the challenge is to free yourself from the guilt of conscience and escape its terror, remember the word in Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." If the work involves fulfilling a calling, meditate on the word that virtually contains a promise: "He works all our works in us and for us" (Isaiah 26:12). If you face opposition, hold on to the word given to Joshua, "I will be with you and will not leave you" (Joshua 1:5). Exercise faith to grasp a word and rest your souls upon it.
8. Take this word and present it to God in prayer when you encounter a difficulty. Show God His own bond, so to speak. Though God binds Himself, He waits for the creature to come and present His promises. Upon seeing and pleading the bond with God, He is inclined to come to our aid. God is greatly pleased when His servants, in times of difficulty, approach Him and plead His promises. The conversion of promises into prayer, the infusion of faith into prayer, is a powerful approach to God.

Just as there are certain physical substances that possess great effects but only work when distilled or taken with specific substances, faith, when distilled and intermingled with prayer, works effectively. If a physician asks, "How did you take such a thing?" and you respond, "I swallowed it," the physician may say, "You should have taken it with such and such substance, then it would have worked." Similarly, you may believe that God will help you, but have you distilled your faith into prayer? Have you taken it in the act of pleading with God to fulfill His word? This is a significant means of accomplishing great things.

9. Faith must not reject any means. If God presents any means in your path, accept them gratefully and use them faithfully, diligently, and carefully, as if they were the only means available. Idleness and presumption are contrary to faith. Therefore, be faithful in employing the means. As observed, God stated that He brought the people into Canaan by His mighty power and outstretched arm. However, there were also numerous valiant soldiers and a mighty host of people. Despite the presence of means, faith knows how to attribute the glory to God's outstretched arm, understanding that all secondary causes operate through the power of the First.
10. Let us be cautious that when we undertake any task, we do not approach it with a servile spirit, merely compelled to do it. Instead, let us view every duty as a work of the Gospel. Those who perform duties out of a slavish spirit will never persevere. By faith, we are to regard all duties as works of the Gospel, not as works of the Covenant of Works, but as works of the Covenant of Grace. This is evident in the case of Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4. God declares that mountains will be made plain before



Zerubbabel, and how is this accomplished? In verse 7, it is said that at the laying of the cornerstones, they shall cry, "Grace, grace," magnifying the grace of God. They look beyond Zerubbabel's strength and rely on the grace of God. By adopting a spiritual mindset and exclaiming "Grace, grace," they are enabled to overcome difficulties and make the path smooth. Therefore, when you embark on any significant work, when you lay the foundation, cry out, "Grace, grace." Recognise that this is a work in which you must depend on the free grace of God for assistance, acceptance, blessing, and guidance. The more you exalt the grace of God in any work, the more empowered you will be to complete it.

11. You must not be discouraged by past failures. If you have undertaken a task and failed in it, and now believe that you have sinned against God to such an extent that you can no longer expect His help, let me tell you that you should not reason based on past failures. Even if you have failed twenty times before, if you now set your heart right for the work and seek wisdom to carry you through, God will not reproach you or say, "Why do you ask for wisdom to do that work when you have attempted it before and ruined it due to the pride and laziness of your heart? Away with you!" Yes, be humbled for past failures, but do not be discouraged by them, whether in that specific work or any other. Even if you have begun the work and failed initially, do not be disheartened. Many works have experienced setbacks at the start but ultimately achieved a glorious outcome, especially when failures are due to weakness. Just as Jacob wrestled with the Angel and was struck lame, yet still prevailed, there may be failings and weaknesses in our work, but in the end, there can be

victory. Therefore, do not hinder your faith by being discouraged by previous failures.

12. Be mindful of the disruptive influence of passion when performing your work. Tasks done in a state of anger, stubbornness, or irritation are seldom done well. If you have a servant who is always busy and doing something, but does it with anger, it would be better if they did nothing at all. It is those who possess quiet and meek spirits who can carry out a task smoothly and successfully. Therefore, when engaging in any work that God assigns to us, let us approach it with calm spirits. "Your strength shall be to sit still," says the Lord in Isaiah 50:7. The greatest strength of our hearts in performing any task is to remain still and composed. "Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," as stated in Exodus 14:13. This stillness is not opposed to effort but rather to restlessness and the tumultuousness of our unruly emotions. If you desire the salvation of the Lord and His help in a particular work, why do you not remain still? As long as you are in such a state of disturbance, you are not in a position to receive the salvation of the Lord. Many fail in their work in this manner. It is similar to foolish and ignorant people in a boat. When the boat rocks, they frantically run back and forth, refusing to be still, and as a result, they end up drowning. However, those with skill in the boat will say, "Just sit still, and you will be safe enough." But these individuals believe they need to be hasty in helping themselves, so they run around and capsize the boat upon themselves. Similarly, the unruly passions in the hearts of people arise when they are engaged in a work and perceive danger. Their emotions become stirred, and they think it is necessary for them to be active in an unruly manner, but in doing so, they bring about

their own downfall. Take note of Moses as an example. Moses was entrusted with the great task of leading the people out of Egypt, and he possessed a very calm spirit for a long time. However, it was the disturbance of his passion that ultimately caused him to fail in the work. When he struck the rock to obtain water for the people, he did it in a fit of anger instead of sanctifying the name of God. This was the reason for his failure, as described in Psalm 106:32-33. "They angered him also at the waters of Meribah, so that it went ill with Moses for their sake." You may have carried out some works and experienced God's strengthening, but now you face a more difficult task that unsettles your hearts. Be cautious not to fail at this point. It is a remarkable feat to carry out a difficult task well while maintaining composure. Disquietude and passion hinder progress, as was the case with the people of Israel at the beginning of Exodus. When Moses came to them, they could not listen to him because of their anguish of heart and the weight of their bondage. To apply this spiritually, you may be aware of the severe bondage under certain corruptions, and you may experience great anguish in your spirit as you struggle to overcome these corruptions. However, be careful not to let this turmoil in your heart prevent you from hearkening to the Lord's word and understanding His will correctly. Do not let it hinder you from knowing how to conduct yourself in the right manner. This was the situation for the Israelites, and it is indeed the case for many people. They are so troubled by the bondage they are in under their corruptions that their hearts are in such turmoil and chaos that they cannot listen to anything that could guide them in this work.

13. Another guideline for directing your Faith to help you in difficult tasks is to observe the dependencies that one task has on another. Many people see a task that God wants them to do and immediately set out to accomplish it, without considering its dependencies on other matters, and as a result, they fail. Let's say a mariner or someone else is assigned the task of pulling a particular cable or rope. They go to the place where they can see that rope and start pulling, but there might be another line holding it in a different location, and they can pull with all their might and still not move the thing they intended. Similarly, many individuals strive, labour, and exert themselves in various duties, but they fail to recognize the secret entanglements that these duties are dependent on, and as a result, they are unable to accomplish their work. Someone may complain about the difficulty of directing their heart towards God in prayer, saying, "God knows I have been in prayer and have exerted all my strength to lift up my heart as if in the presence of God, but I struggle and strive, and it seems impossible to elevate my heart." While they strive and make efforts, they may think of certain promises and even exercise faith, but there might be a corruption that seems unrelated to their struggle in prayer, yet it is the very thing that creates the difficulty. In such a case, they should put their faith into action to deliver themselves from that particular corruption, and then their prayer will be more successful. For instance, if you have been struggling to direct your heart to God in prayer, upon closer examination, you may find that it is the stubbornness, peevishness, and anger in your relationships with your family, servants, or spouse that hinders your heart from rising when you come into God's presence. In such a situation, you should have first put your faith into action

to address and resolve those issues. By doing so, you would have been able to lift up your heart. Many people overlook various corruptions and focus on distant duties, striving and exerting themselves, but if they possessed true Christian wisdom, they would consider the difficulties and hindrances that lie between them and the desired duty, and they would strive to remove those obstacles. The same applies to faith. If you find it challenging to believe in God and His promises, there might be a sluggishness of heart in your specific calling, even if you think there is little connection between that and your faith. Similarly, in times of affliction, when you desire your heart to be patient, there might be a sense of dullness and drowsiness within your heart and spirit. Therefore, pay close attention to the corruptions, even if they seem distant, and set your heart against all of them, one as much as another.

14. Additionally, be cautious of listening to temptation. When you are engaged in a difficult task, there will be plenty of temptations. Thoughts may arise, saying, "Why do you bother with this work? Others stronger than you have failed. You're just a weak individual. It's a daunting task." If it is truly the work of the Lord, approach it with a sincere and upright heart. If I fail, so be it, and do not pay attention to temptations. An interesting example is found in Nehemiah 6:3. When Nehemiah was undertaking the great work of God, adversaries tried to lure him away with a false invitation. However, observe his response: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?" Likewise, say to temptation, "Temptation desires my attention, but I am engaged in the work of the Lord. Why should the work cease while I waste my time and energy reasoning with you?"

15. Another guideline for strengthening your faith is to beware of twisted reasoning. For example, when God calls you to a service, you might think, "If only I were capable of doing this and that, then I could believe. But with my current heart, so incapable of accomplishing anything and overcoming any corruption, how can I believe?" What perverse reasoning! Instead, you should reason, "I must believe so that I can do this." It's like saying, "If I had strength, I hope I would be able to work." Well, you need strength to perform your work. Or if someone were to say, "If I were at my destination, I could start my journey." But in reality, you must embark on the journey in order to reach your destination. Similarly, if you were to say, "If I could do such a thing, then I could believe." But how will strength come unless you believe? Will you wait for strength before believing? That's like saying, "I will wait to board the ship until I am already across the sea." Boarding the ship is the means to cross the sea, just as believing is the way to receive strength. Therefore, do not reason from your lack of strength to hinder faith; instead, reason from your lack of strength to further faith.

16. Furthermore, when you embark on a difficult task, be cautious of any disorderly workings of your heart concerning that work. Disorderly workings of the heart can be identified in two or three aspects.

Firstly, be careful not to focus primarily on the outcome. It is the duty itself that should be the primary focus, rather than obsessing over the outcome. Placing more importance on the outcome than on the duty is a mistake and hinders the work of faith.

Secondly, even if you consider the outcome, avoid fixating on specific results. Although faith assures us of general success, it does not always guarantee specific outcomes.

Thirdly, do not judge the final outcome based on initial hindrances in the work. Many people make the mistake of judging the ultimate result solely based on the difficulties encountered at the beginning.

Fourthly, above all, be cautious of pre-determining that you will have no success. You may think, "I can attempt the work, but it will never progress or thrive." This is akin to a stubborn servant saying, "Well, I can attempt the work, but nothing good will come out of it." Many people undertake the work that God assigns to them, but they have already determined that it will amount to nothing. This is a sinful boldness. Who do you think you are, man or woman, to be so audacious with God? Can you determine the course of God's plans? You may acknowledge that you deserve no success in what you do, but when it comes to determination, it is boldness and sinfulness against God. Should I determine, being so wretched, that God will bring success to any work I undertake? You may argue that, being so wretched, you deserve God to thwart all your efforts. But do not determine that you will never overcome your hard heart or develop a patient spirit. This is what the prophet condemns in Hosea 7:13: "Though I have redeemed them, yet they speak lies against me." Even though God has redeemed people and shown them mercy, they speak lies against God, claiming they will never receive the specific mercy they are laboring for. When God is in the process of redeeming you and stirring your hearts, saying that there will never be success or help is to speak lies against God. Be humbled for your past guilt and be cautious of determining the outcome in the future. Certainly,

regardless of the unworthiness you perceive in yourselves, know that it is a temptation of the Devil and a provoking sin.

17. Furthermore, it is important that alongside our faith, we approach our tasks with resolution and courage. As the Psalmist says in Psalm 31:24, "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart." So, when you face any difficult task, put on your faith with as much determination as possible. Natural resolution greatly assists in overcoming difficulties. Seneca makes a notable statement: "The mind of man accomplishes whatever it commands itself. If it sets a command and charges upon itself, it can achieve it." Natural resolution is a powerful aid in overcoming difficulties. A person can accomplish more than they initially thought possible. However, when combined with faith, if we can harness our faith and then impose a necessity on the work, saying, "It must be done no matter what happens, for it is the command of God," this greatly propels the work forward.

18. Another rule is that in all the services that God calls you to, consider yourselves as instruments in God's hands, and view the work as God's task assigned by Him and done for Him, not for your own sake. I am nothing but an instrument, like an axe used in building a house. The work is hard and challenging, and it is not mine but God's. I am not the main force behind it, but merely the instrument in the hand of a skilled worker. In His own work, even a weak instrument in the hands of a skilled workman can accomplish great things.

19. Furthermore, whatever work God calls you to do, engage in it and continue doing it, even if you see no immediate results.



Expect God to intervene while you are working, and do not say, "If God were to intervene, then I would have encouragement to continue working." No, work while expecting God to intervene. Even if you have been working for many years without seeing any results, if God does intervene, it will be while you are working. Just as David said to his son Solomon, "Arise and be doing, and the Lord will be with you" (1 Chronicles 22:16). Therefore, do not say, "What am I to do without the Lord?" Instead, be doing, and the Lord will be with you.

20. Additionally, let us be cautious not to increase the difficulty through our disorderly conduct. We are often guilty of this, that when God assigns us a task and there is some hardship involved, we make it even more difficult through our uncooperative behaviour. It is like a person who is in shackles and, by pulling and tugging, ends up tearing the skin off their legs, thereby making it harder to bear the restraints than it was initially. Similarly, the Israelites who left Egypt and journeyed through the wilderness to reach Canaan made their journey much more arduous due to their conduct. The distance from Egypt to the border of Palestine was only seventy miles, and to Jerusalem, it was merely a hundred miles. Yet, through their improper conduct, they turned it into a forty-year ordeal. Therefore, even though we may indeed have to traverse a wilderness and undertake a difficult work, we should be cautious not to make it more challenging through our complaints. Often, we complain about the difficulty of things when, in reality, they are not inherently difficult. It is the sluggishness of people's spirits and their tendency to complain about the work that makes it seem more difficult.

21. Furthermore, do not solely dwell on the difficulty and focus on those things that are hard, which may discourage you in the work that God has assigned to you. Instead, also consider those things that may encourage you. Whenever there is hardness in a task, people tend to fixate on it and fail to see any sources of comfort. It is as if they keep touching a sore spot on their body, even though it worsens the sore and prevents it from healing. Similarly, many individuals, when faced with something challenging in their work, constantly dwell on it. Difficulties in any task are like bitter pills that God asks us to swallow. But how childish it would be for someone with bitter pills to chew on them! No wonder they spit them out instead of swallowing them. They should swallow the pills without chewing them. Likewise, when God presents us with bitter pills, we should not continuously chew on them in our thoughts. Instead, we should obey God's command and continue with our work, striving to swallow difficulties as much as possible. We have a relevant passage in Psalm 86:4-5: "Rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee." Let us apply it this way: The reason why many people feel dejected in their journey and lack joy and comfort in any aspect of their lives is because they constantly look downward in the dark. Just as a person at the bottom of a deep pit would never see light if they always looked downward, they must look upward to the sun to see the light. Observe David's approach: "Rejoice the soul of thy servant, for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." If David had allowed his heart to continually sink downward, he would never have experienced joy in his journey. But when he desired joy, he lifted up his

heart. Similarly, if there is a difficult task before you and your heart is troubled, if you seek something that will bring you joy, lift up your soul to God and consider the encouraging ways that He presents to you. "For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy." Here is a way to obtain mercy: lifting up one's soul and viewing God as good, ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy. I ask you, when did you lift up your soul and look up to God as plenteous in mercy? You have always looked downward into the depths, seeing only the darkness of God's justice ready to seize upon you. Instead, lift up your soul to God and look towards the sun. We should not continually pore over the things that are difficult but focus on the things that are encouraging.

22. Do not use the difficulties you encounter as a reason to argue against your work or to make yourself disheartened with it, but rather use them to reason against your own hearts. Yes, the work may be challenging, but it is due to my own wretched and sluggish heart, and because I fail to make use of the means and abilities that God has provided. Many others who have fewer resources and assistance than I do can successfully complete even harder tasks. Therefore, strive to reason against your own hearts, not against the work itself. Many people, when they find the work difficult, start to reason against the work itself. They say, "The Lord knows I strive and do what I can, but I face so many obstacles. God does not come in with His grace to help me, and I can do nothing without God. Why is nothing being accomplished?" But is it because the work is hard, or is it because you are not utilizing the power that God has given you? The safer approach is to reason against yourselves, acknowledging that you have not done everything you can.

Rather than absolving yourselves of any guilt and justifying your inaction, recognize that the real reason nothing is being done lies not so much in the difficulty of the work but in the improper disposition of your hearts. It is crucial to focus on reasoning against your hearts rather than against the work simply because it is difficult.

And to conclude, this is what I say: we should strive to strengthen ourselves through our faith against all difficulties. Just as unbelief is a hardening sin in one way, so faith is a hardening grace in another way. Acts 19:9 says, "But when some were hardened and did not believe." They were hardened because they did not believe. Faith has the opposite effect and can do just as much in what is good as unbelief can do in what is evil. Just as unbelief can make a person so hardened as to be like iron against what is good, faith can make a person as iron against what is evil. Therefore, the Prophet Jeremiah is compared to iron and steel in Jeremiah 15:12, "Can iron break the iron from the north, or the bronze?" God revealed Himself to Jeremiah graciously, and he was hardened by it. Now, of all graces, especially faith, makes the heart as iron for God, just as unbelief makes the heart as iron to resist God. That is why the Apostle exhorts in 2 Peter 1:5, "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue." The word "virtue" comes from strength because every virtue displays strength. So it is as if he is saying, add strength to your faith, exert it powerfully, so that it may help you against strong difficulties with a warrior-like power. Virtue has the power to oppose enemies. Therefore, add virtue to your faith. And if we do so, know that it will be a very honourable thing. It is an honour to God and an honour to us to go through difficult things. It is an honour to God, just as David's men, who endured so much and broke through an army to bring him water, brought honour to him. Likewise, for us

to do difficult things for God brings honour to Him, and it is honourable for us. Those who have gone through difficult works are esteemed by others. As some observe from Song of Solomon 8:9, "If she is a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver." If she stands as a wall against opposition and temptation, we will build upon her a magnificent palace. She will be made honourable and glorious. Similarly, every Christian, if your heart is like a wall, standing against opposition, difficulty, and hindrances in the way of God, a palace of silver will be built upon you. You will be honoured in the eyes of God and all His saints. Going through difficulty greatly strengthens grace, and the more difficulty one goes through, the more grace is strengthened. It is a rule that anything that opposes another, if it does not overcome it, strengthens it. For example, fire and water, if you pour water onto the fire that it can overcome, the fire gathers strength to overcome the water that opposes it, and it burns better. The same applies to all opposition and even sin. If a person is opposed in their sinful ways by the Word but the Word does not overcome their lust, their lust grows stronger. Similarly, in grace, if any lust, sin, temptation, or anything opposes grace or any gracious act, and if they do not overcome grace but grace overcomes them, grace becomes stronger. Therefore, let us continue in the way of God, no matter what difficulties may arise from it.

## **Chapter 25**

Containing a Second consideration of the Text, namely, an Allegorical interpretation of Moses forsaking Egypt by Faith.

Warrant for Allegorical interpretations. Forsaking this world, renouncing our natural state, a difficult work. Fourteen reasons for it.

Now that we have completed the point in the Literal sense, which is the journey Moses was set upon by God, let us briefly discuss the Allegorical Sense. Although it may not be the main focus, we know that many times the Holy Spirit uses Scripture in an allegorical way. Before delving into it, I will mention a few scriptures to establish a basis for my handling of this scripture in an allegorical manner.

The Holy Spirit uses Scripture not only according to the primary sense but also the metaphorical and allegorical sense. For example, in Psalm 19:3-4 it is written, "There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." This passage is clearly referring to the sun and its movements in the heavens. The heavens, the motions within them, and the powerful demonstration of God's might are likened to a language and a voice. The message conveyed by these celestial phenomena reaches the whole earth. However, note how the Apostle applies this passage in a different sense in Romans 10:18. He says, "But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.'" Here, he is referring to the preaching of the Gospel and the mission of the Apostles.

Another example is found in Matthew 2:15. When Christ was taken to Egypt, it was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my Son." This quotation is from the prophecy in Hosea 11:1, which originally referred to God calling His people out of Egypt. However, in Matthew's account, it is applied to Christ. Thus, we see

that the Holy Spirit not only uses Scripture according to its primary sense but also allegorically and typologically, and we have the liberty to do the same.

And now we shall discuss this Text in an Allegorical sense in two ways:

1. In terms of the bondage we experience by nature under sin and Satan, similar to how the Israelites were in Egypt under Pharaoh. Just as Moses, by faith, forsook Egypt, we too must be delivered from this spiritual Egypt and the bondage we are in by nature under sin and Satan, through faith.
2. The Scripture compares the power of Antichrist and the bondage that people are in under Antichrist to Egypt. In Romans 11:8, it is referred to as spiritual Sodom and spiritual Egypt. Just as the Israelites were delivered from their bondage in Egypt by faith, faith also delivers people from the bondage of Antichrist.

Firstly, for the forsaking of Egypt, we are all naturally enslaved to sin and Satan, just as the Israelites were enslaved to the Egyptians. Canaan served as a type of Heaven, and God's promise to bring them to Canaan portrayed the condition of His people and how they would be led to heaven. All of God's dealings with the Israelites in this work were typological, foreshadowing future events. Therefore, by faith, we forsake this Egypt, and the souls of God's people are guided to Canaan, through the wilderness of this world, towards heaven. Faith is what carries us through this arduous journey.

This is the most difficult task of all works; the bondage is the greatest form of enslavement. If we consider:

1. The carnal reasoning that arises in people's hearts against God's work of bringing them out of their natural state.
2. The self-confidence that people possess, being assured of their own condition and oblivious to their bondage.
3. The vain hopes that reside in people's hearts concerning God's mercy.
4. The dangerous misconceptions that people have, misunderstanding the way of God and the path of life, mistakenly believing they are on the path to life when they are actually on the path to death.
5. The inherent prejudice that people hold against God's way by nature.
6. The strong attachments that keep people from returning to God.
7. The multitude of lusts within the heart that can only be overcome by the power of the Almighty.
8. If we consider the strong accusations and terrors that plague the consciences of both men and women when they are awakened.
9. If we consider the distressing temptations of Satan that follow and intimidate the soul when it seeks to leave this Egypt, just as Pharaoh pursued the Israelites.
10. If we consider the overwhelming discouragement people experience when they reflect on themselves and see their inability to do anything good or resist anything evil.



11. If we consider the influence of the world from the outside, when they begin to forsake this spiritual Egypt.
12. If we consider how often God Himself seems to act in opposition to them when they are leaving Egypt.
13. If we consider the difficulty of the religious path at its outset and the lengthy journey the soul must endure through this wilderness before reaching Canaan.
14. If we consider the tremendous risk the soul must take, venturing its eternal destiny and all its goods on the path revealed by God.

These and many other factors could be mentioned and expounded upon, all contributing to the arduous nature of this task.

## **Chapter 26:**

### How Faith Guides the Soul in Forsaking Egypt

But even though it is a challenging task, faith carries the soul through and leads it away from this spiritual Egypt. It is solely through faith that this is accomplished. The law may play a role in revealing one's bondage, and the spirit of bondage may make them aware of their state, but they cannot bring about deliverance. Just as the children of Israel, when in bondage, cried out but were not freed, it was by faith that they departed from Egypt. Therefore, no matter the preparation involved, it is faith alone that brings deliverance.

Question: How does faith achieve this?

Answer: Firstly, I will explain how faith accomplishes it.

Secondly, I will address whether someone can appear to be delivered by other means.

There are three works of faith that lead us to forsake this spiritual Egypt:

1. The discovering work.
2. The relying work.
3. The surrendering work.

Firstly, the discovering work: It is through faith that the great mysteries of the Gospel are clearly and powerfully revealed. These mysteries display the glory of God, who has provided a way to reconcile lost humanity to Himself. It is a glorious means of mediation that satisfies His justice and repairs the breach between God and humankind. Only faith can reveal the excellence and beauty of God as seen in the Gospel. It fully displays the goodness that God intends to bestow upon humanity through this mediation.

Secondly, the discovering work of faith involves presenting to the soul not only the glory, excellence, and certainty of the work of mediation in Christ, but also revealing the riches of the freeness of God's grace in Christ. Faith must convince the soul that deliverance comes solely from free grace, that God justifies the ungodly, and that it is not due to anything in the creature.

Secondly, there is a relying work of faith. Once the soul has discovered the glory, power, and reality of these things, faith

embraces them and casts itself upon the glorious, rich, and free grace of God. It ventures itself and all its good upon it.

Thirdly, having thus ventured upon the free grace of God, the soul surrenders itself to Christ, uniting itself with Him. It not only desires to draw Christ to itself and be made His own, but also gives itself up to Jesus Christ, to be His. In this union, it is not merely the bringing of Christ to the soul, but the surrendering of the soul to Christ: to be in Him, with Him, for Him, and to be satisfied with Him. When faith powerfully reveals the glory and reality of the great mysteries of the Gospel, enabling the soul to fully trust and surrender itself to Christ, this is the work of faith that delivers from spiritual Egypt.

Question: Can natural conscience help people through the difficulties of being delivered from spiritual Egypt? Many may see their bondage to sin and appear to be delivered, but it might be due to the strength of natural conscience rather than faith.

Answer: It is acknowledged that natural conscience can to some extent free people from certain aspects of bondage to sin and the power of their sin. It may help them abstain from sin and engage in various duties, giving the impression that they have been delivered. However, it is important to note the following differences.

Firstly, natural conscience may assist individuals in refraining from sin and performing duties out of a sense of necessity rather than an inward principle that approves and appreciates the duties performed or disapproves of the sins abstained from. They are compelled out of Egypt. On the other hand, faith not only leads people to abstain from sin but also provides them with a principle that opposes sin. It not only fulfils duties but does so with a heart that is inclined towards those duties, finding them agreeable and suitable.

Secondly, when relying solely on natural conscience to navigate through difficulties, it enables individuals to do outward actions and refrain from certain outward actions, but there is little inward change of the heart. It may prevent them from certain actions even in secret, when no one else is aware, but there is no genuine transformation within the heart.

Thirdly, when guided by natural conscience, peace is desired for the sake of peace itself. However, when guided by grace, the soul desires peace for the advancement of grace.

USE 1:

To apply this a little:

Is it faith that delivers from this spiritual Egypt? Hence, let us understand the reason behind the failures of most people in their attempts to be delivered from spiritual Egypt. Many individuals, through the preaching of the Word and the ministry of the Law, come to recognize their bondage and wretched state, and their consciences are greatly troubled. However, they ultimately fail, and it becomes evident that they were never truly delivered from the bondage of Egypt. They lived and died in Egypt, perishing eternally. They may have come close to Canaan, but they perished without ever entering it because they were not delivered by faith. They were unfamiliar with the mysteries of the Gospel and the covenant of grace. Their approach was limited to abstaining from sin, such as no longer being drunkards, swearers, adulterers, or Sabbath breakers. They refrained from these actions, and their religious practices were merely natural works. They found solace in this, thinking they were delivered. However, the glorious work of God through faith did not exert its mighty and powerful influence on their hearts, drawing their

hearts to God in Christ through the Gospel and revealing the mysteries of the Gospel. Consequently, they were not truly delivered.

2. Hence, here is a guiding principle for those who are seeking deliverance from this spiritual Egypt. Are there any individuals who, by God's grace, have become aware of their woeful bondage and desire to free their souls from that spiritual enslavement? Is this the work you are currently engaged in? If anything can accomplish it, it must be the work of faith. You may find some temporary calm and relief through other means, but genuine deliverance can only be obtained through faith. Therefore, do not settle for mere reformation, thinking that things are better than before. Do not rest until you have experienced the work of faith. And to encourage your soul to believe that it can be delivered through faith from the bondage it is aware of and currently fighting against, know the following:

First, if you are aware of your spiritual bondage, know that it is the great work that God prioritizes above all other works in the world: to deliver souls from this spiritual bondage. Many individuals who are conscious of their spiritual bondage may wonder, "I am in such a state. Will God ever pay attention to me in this condition?" Will He pay attention to you? Yes, understand that the greatest desire of God's heart, and the highest task He undertakes, is to deliver those who are aware of their spiritual bondage in this spiritual Egypt. And although you may not be certain whether He will do it for you, this is a significant encouragement.

Object: But though God may deliver others, I am so vile that despite seeing my sin, I have still persisted. Therefore, He will not do it for me.

Answer: Secondly, know that the primary purpose of God in this work is not only to demonstrate His power, but also to reveal the richness and glory of His free grace to men and angels for all eternity. Therefore, your objections of unworthiness can be dismissed. You must understand that God does not intend to deal with you based on retribution or distributive justice. He does not say that if you do this, He will do that in return. Instead, He works in a way that magnifies His free grace. Whoever He delivers, He does so to show men and angels what the power of His infinite free grace is capable of. This is a great encouragement.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ has already resolved all the differences between God the Father and your soul. The obstacles that create such a vast and dreadful distance between God and your soul are God's wrath, His justice, and the curse of the law. Now, it was the work of Christ to remove all these obstacles. When you look up and see your sin against an infinitely holy and just God, and you see the curse of the law upon you, you may think these are great difficulties. How is it possible for you to overcome them? Know that it is the work of Christ, the great Savior of the world, to remove these difficulties. If He had not undertaken this task, it would have been impossible for any soul to approach God. But He has done it, and therefore you have the freedom to come to God. If you have the courage to rely on His free grace, you need not worry about who will roll away the stone, as the women did. Who will remove the difficulties of the curse of the law? Who will appease the wrath of God burning against me because of my sin? If you believe that Christ has accomplished this, you need not wait for anything else.

Fourthly, Christ has not only resolved the difficulties between God the Father and your soul, but there are numerous gracious promises

in the Gospel that you have just as much right to claim as anyone in the world who has ever been delivered by Christ. Whatever grounds others had to claim these promises before applying them, you have the same grounds. The greatest hindrance within you is a hard heart and a stubborn spirit. But listen to what is said: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth.'" (Luke 3:4-6) Now, who has the right to lay hold of these promises? Applying them grants you the right. Do you find that your heart is proud and cannot be humbled? The Lord says, "Every mountain shall be brought low." Do you say, "I have a heart of unbelief; I do not know how to believe God's word, and my heart sinks in unbelief like a valley"? "Every valley shall be filled in." Do you have a crooked heart? "Every crooked road shall become straight." Do you have a rough, stubborn heart? "Every rough way shall become smooth." Christ has not only made things clear between God and you but also within your own soul.

Object: But this clarity is not for everyone.

Answer: You have just as much reason to believe as anyone else had before they believed. God says, "I will remove your stubborn heart." This is revealed to all, and therefore you are meant to make use of these promises. Those who have benefitted from them could not see any more interest in them than you can.

USE 3.

A third use is this: If faith is what delivers from this spiritual Egypt, then those who have been delivered should recognize what has brought them out and magnify the work of God. Stand in awe of

God's grace in delivering you from all difficulties and carrying you through when you were so poor and weak. Know that it was not your own efforts but the work of faith and God within you. Faith operates by a power external to us, not by our own power. And God delivers the soul from this spiritual Egypt through faith because He desires the glory of it. Therefore, if it has been the work of faith, let this exhortation influence you: Strive to exercise your faith in journeying through the wilderness to Canaan. There was a time when you were in bondage to sin, Satan, and the law. Now that you have been delivered from the law and brought into grace, if it is faith that has accomplished this, let that same faith be employed to carry you through the wilderness to Canaan. The rules I will give you are derived from the Israelites' journey through the wilderness to Canaan after being delivered from Egypt.

**Direction 1:**

First, they were not to move unless directed by God when the cloud and pillar of fire went before them. Similarly, in your journey, adhere closely to God's guidance. Let your faith cling to His word, not to the directions of your own heart.

**Direction 2:**

Secondly, when they were delivered, a great evil among them was murmuring due to the hardships they encountered. Be cautious not to be guilty of this. Do not let your heart run wild and complain against God's ways when you face difficulties. Remember that God, with His outstretched arm and mighty hand, has delivered you. God forbid that you should murmur at every difficulty.

**Direction 3:**

Thirdly, be careful not to restrict the Holy One of Israel. God was



angry with the Israelites because they limited Him, as stated in Psalm 78:19: "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?" Similarly, many individuals, when on the path to heaven and faced with challenges, question if God can help someone like them. Beware of placing limitations on God. Do not set boundaries on what God can do, nor on what He will do.

#### Direction 4:

Fourthly, be cautious not to belittle anything that God gives you, as the Israelites did when they were delivered and received manna. They asked, "What is this manna?" (Exodus 16:15; Numbers 11:6). Beware of falling into the same attitude of spiritual indifference. When God provides for you with spiritual nourishment, you dismiss it as mere husks. And when God bestows His grace upon you, you say it is something that even hypocrites can have, treating it with disdain.

#### Direction 5:

Fifthly, guard against having harsh thoughts about God. Just as when the Israelites entered the wilderness and the Scripture states in Deuteronomy 1:27 that they believed God brought them there out of hatred and with the intention to destroy them. Likewise, many, from the stubbornness of their hearts (and it pains me to speak of it), when God, in His graciousness, does good to them and brings them closer to Himself in the face of every difficulty, they are prone to say that God does all this to further condemn them and because He hates them. They claim that their condemnation would have been less severe if they had not known as much, if they had not been so convicted in their consciences and prayed so fervently. This is a horrendous abuse of God's grace, akin to the Israelites' belief that

God hates them and intends to destroy them. Let us not entertain such harsh thoughts about God.

Direction 6:

Sixthly, observe their journey in the wilderness and be careful not to be discouraged by any hardships you encounter along the way. Just as the Israelites said in Numbers 13:27-28, the land was good, but there were Anakim and giants inhabiting it, and they believed they would never overcome them. Similarly, many reason that heaven is a blessed place, but there are strong oppositions, the "children of Anak," represented by powerful lusts and corruptions, that they will never conquer. They view these giant-like, Anakim-like corruptions and think, "One day I will be defeated by my lusts."

Direction 7:

Seventhly, beware of passionately giving up on everything, as the Israelites did when they heard about the Anakim and the opposition they would face. In Numbers 14:4, they exclaimed, "Let us choose a captain and go back to Egypt." Similarly, when individuals are on their way from Egypt to Canaan, they encounter strong opposition from within and without, and they may be tempted to cast everything aside and return. Be cautious of impulsively discarding everything.

Direction 8:

Eighthly, be cautious not to give any opportunity for your heart to lust after former corruptions. Just as in Exodus 16:3-4, the Israelites would long for their onions and fleshpots in Egypt, which made them prone to sin. Similarly, when God is working His grace in your life, you may be inclined to think about what you had before and feel some cravings for past lusts. Even if you do not explicitly decide to go

and commit those sins, your heart and thoughts may still have lingering desires for them. Beware of that.

**Direction 9:**

Ninthly, be careful not to forget God's dealings with you, just as the Israelites did when they were on their way to Canaan. Despite God doing great things for them, Psalm 106:13 states that they quickly forgot His gracious acts. In the same way, God has done much for you, and it is unbecoming to forget His gracious dealings. God takes that very seriously.

**Direction 10:**

Tenthly, beware of relying solely on means, just as the Israelites did when Moses was absent. In Exodus 32:1, they said, "We do not know what has become of this Moses," and they resorted to making other gods. Many people depend on certain means, thinking that if those means fail, they will not be able to move forward. Be cautious not to place all your trust in means.

**Direction 11:**

Eleventhly, do not be too quick to apply comfort beyond what God allows, but rather wait upon God and rely on His promises. You cannot be too eager to believe and rest in His promises, but desiring comfort prematurely may be excessive. In Numbers 14:40 and onwards, when God instructed them not to enter Canaan, they insisted on going and were defeated by their enemies. Therefore, wait upon God and discern His will for you. Wait for comfort to be given by God in His timing.

**Direction 12:**

Lastly, do not be discouraged because the means at your disposal may seem weak. When the Israelites came to the great city of

Jericho, what did they have to conquer it? Joshua 6:4-5 tells us that the priests were to go with ram's horns and blow them seven times around the city, and the walls would fall down. It may appear to be a feeble and inadequate means. They might have questioned, "After forty years in the wilderness, we have reached this fortified city, and all we have are ram's horns?" Yet, this was God's way. If we reason with our human understanding and solely rely on means when faced with difficulties, we may be tempted to turn back. Instead, look beyond the means and place your trust in faith. The same faith that brought you out of Egypt will carry you forward. And with this, we have concluded the first allegory.

## **Chapter 27:**

### **Exploring the Second Allegorical Meaning: Antichrist and the Bondage of Christians**

The second allegory pertains to the bondage under Antichrist, and it is through faith that one can be liberated from that bondage, from the figurative Egypt, which represents the seat of Antichrist. The scriptural reference to this bondage is found in Revelation 11:8, where it states, "And their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt." Some Papists argue that this refers to Jerusalem due to the mention of our Lord being crucified there. However, this passage is not meant to be taken literally in terms of the place, but rather in a spiritual sense, where the chief seat of Antichrist is metaphorically identified as

Sodom and Egypt. Therefore, Rome, particularly in relation to its treatment of Christ's followers, is where Christ is spiritually crucified the most. Comparatively, Rome can also be considered as the place where Christ was literally crucified due to the Roman power and authority involved. By examining this passage in conjunction with other verses in Revelation, it becomes evident that Rome is symbolically referred to as Sodom and Egypt. We could delve into numerous comparisons between the abominable wickedness of Sodom and Egypt and the practices prevalent in that place.

Firstly, Antichrist resembles Egypt in terms of gross idolatry. Egypt was renowned for its extreme idolatrous practices. They worshipped not only the sun, moon, and stars like other nations, but also cats, onions, and other unworthy creatures. Similarly, the Papists engage in the worship of stocks, stones, and various holy relics, including even the hair that supposedly came from the tail of the beast on which Christ rode. Their worship involves the veneration of base and vile objects that are too debasing to describe in detail.

Secondly, Antichrist is compared to Egypt in relation to the cruelty exhibited by the Church of Rome. Egypt was infamous for its extreme cruelty, and likewise, those under the influence of Antichrist manifest even greater cruelty, as if they were messengers sent from hell to showcase the power of malevolent spirits. Hence, they are described as being "drunken with blood," with their garments stained scarlet from the blood of the saints (Revelation 17:4-6). However, my main focus here is to highlight the bondage in which Christians find themselves under Antichrist and the role of faith in delivering them from it.

The bondage under Antichrist can be described in two ways:

1. Outwardly, it affects people's estates and lives. Antichrist claims power over kings and princes, freeing people from loyalty to their rulers. If it weren't for the delusion upon the hearts of the powerful on Earth, it would be impossible for them to submit to such a base form of bondage. Many accuse the godly of being disloyal subjects who reject government, but what about the Papists? They teach the liberation of subjects from their loyalty. A Papist expressed that the Pope, their head, is the shepherd while kings and princes are dogs. If the dogs behave as they should, they must obey their master, but if they are lazy and disobedient, the shepherd must remove them. As for their estates, countries suffer greatly. Bonner mentioned in a preface to Gardener's Treatise that the Pope extracted nearly as much wealth from England annually as the crown's revenues. Innocent IV, a Pope, referred to England as his pleasant garden and a well that never ran dry, where many things grew abundantly. Thus, under Antichrist's rule, people's estates, lives, and liberties are in great bondage.
2. More significantly, there is soul bondage. Revelation 18:13 mentions that the merchandise involved in this bondage includes slaves and souls of men. Those under Antichrist are slaves, and if people possessed a true heroic spirit, they would not allow themselves to be subjected to such slavery. Despite their outward appearance of bravery, they remain slaves under Antichrist. The souls of men are treated as merchandise. This soul bondage is deplorable.

Firstly, this soul bondage is degrading because Antichrist claims the authority to dictate articles of faith, which individuals are bound in conscience, under the threat of damnation, to believe. It is an

abhorrent bondage when we consider the horrendous individuals who have occupied that position of power, yet believers are compelled, on the pain of damnation, to accept whatever they proclaim as infallible.

Secondly, regardless of the lack of biblical foundation, people are obligated, under the threat of damnation, to obey Antichrist's decrees. Thus, even if they were to obey all of God's commandments, they could still be damned for failing to obey one of Antichrist's commands. This creates a wretched bondage where individuals are held accountable not only to God's laws but also to the whims of Antichrist. The potential for damnation increases exponentially, far surpassing the consequences of sinning against God's commandments.

Thirdly, those who are under Antichrist experience significant bondage as they are kept from the rule of life, which is the Scriptures. The Scriptures reveal God's will and counsel concerning their eternal destiny. Slaves are kept in a state of danger and are denied the privileges of both subjects and children. Similarly, Antichrist keeps all under his rule in a base form of slavery by depriving them of the privilege of being children who can know the mind of their Father and the profound matters concerning their eternal destiny. What person who understands the importance of such matters would willingly submit to such slavery? Yet, if we had remained under the bondage of Antichrist, we would have been deprived of this privilege.

Fourthly, if they hear anything from the Word, they are obligated to accept no interpretation other than that provided by the Church and the priests, no matter how absurd it may be. To bind people's consciences in this manner is a detestable form of bondage. And

what vile interpretations are imposed? If it is blasphemous for the devil to claim that he will ascend and be like the highest, it is no less blasphemous to make God descend to be like the prince of darkness or to stamp the king's seal upon counterfeit coins. To bind people's consciences to the wicked interpretations of Scripture is an abhorrent form of bondage.

Fifthly, a great bondage is imposed by Antichrist as no ordinance can be administered except by his authority or those to whom he grants power. This restriction severely limits the Church in its access to God's ordinances. These ordinances, particularly prayer, are the Church's privileges. The spirit of prayer and supplication is one of the special privileges of the Church. Galatians 4:6 states, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" Here, the liberty of God's people as His children and the fruit of their sonship is emphasized. Therefore, for the Church to be constrained in their liberty to pray only as the Pope permits and to have access to ordinances only through his authority is an abominable form of bondage. Those who truly understand Christian liberty would never willingly submit to such bondage.

Sixthly, Antichrist claims the power to absolve and bind, keeping individuals under the guilt of sin and releasing them from it at his own discretion. All manner of villainy is committed through this power over people's consciences.

Seventhly, the most significant form of bondage is that Antichrist keeps people under the strictness and curse of the Law by diverting them from Christ and teaching justification through works of the Law. By doing so, he subjects them to the bondage of the Law, its



severity, and its curse. Consequently, all those under his influence are prevented from experiencing the precious liberty that Christ obtained through His blood, which delivers us from the Law. This form of bondage is even more burdensome than the others and poses a damnable threat to eternal destruction. The other forms of bondage are not as perilous in comparison.

Eighthly, he completely restricts Christian liberty concerning the use of created things, imposing limitations on their use, as well as on time and place.

Ninthly, the bondage of human ceremonies is well known to be oppressive. The bondage imposed by the ceremonies of the Law was significant, as the Apostle stated in Acts 15:10 that it was a yoke that neither they nor their ancestors could bear. However, the yoke of the Papists is even heavier. If we had to choose between being under all the ceremonies of the Law, which the Jews were under and which the Apostle acknowledged as an unbearable yoke, and being under the ceremonies of the Papists, if we were to choose wisely, we would rather opt to be under all the ceremonies of the Jews. Yet, in reading Galatians 4, we can see that it was a great privilege to be delivered from them. If we were under the authority of anyone to prescribe religious ceremonies in the Church, we would not benefit from Christ's redemption that delivered us from the ceremonial law. It is far better and easier to be under the ceremonies of the Law than to have any person prescribe ceremonies, for several reasons.

1. the ceremonies of the Law were divinely instituted, whereas human ceremonies are merely human. Any person would rather be under the authority of God in appointing ceremonies than under the power of men. Just as you would prefer to be under

the rule of princes rather than under minor officials, it is better to be under the authority of God than under the authority of man. However, in Colossians 2, these human ceremonies are referred to as beggarly elements.

2. there is much doubt and uncertainty regarding human ceremonies. Even if we were to yield to human ceremonies based on certain distinctions, it is not without doubt and uncertainty. On the other hand, under the Law, there was no doubt or uncertainty. It is better to be under a hundred circumstances where there is no doubt than under one where doubts and uncertainties arise.
3. the ceremonies of the Law were symbolic, and the presence of God could be experienced through them, with a spiritual efficacy expected. However, with human ceremonies, no such thing can be expected. It is evident that the Jews, under the ceremonies of the Law, were in a better condition than Christians would be now if they were under the authority of anyone to prescribe ceremonies. Therefore, being under the authority of those who appoint ceremonies is a wretched form of bondage.

Tenthly, another form of bondage they are subjected to is being forced into idolatry and sinful practices through violence, without considering the weakness of anyone or seeking to inform them. They disregard the words of Ezekiel 34:4, where God complains that they ruled His people with cruelty. If anyone is weak and desires to be informed, they are mocked and told that imprisonment, fire, or execution by burning will be their means of instruction. Many other abominable and vile aspects of this bondage could be mentioned, but when considering both the outward and inward bondage, being

under the control of individuals with such base and vile spirits is strongly opposed to the spirit of an honourable person. Moreover, for a church of God, with numerous congregations, to be under the power of a base, filthy, and abominable whoremonger, known to be so, causing trouble whenever he pleases, is an incredibly dreadful bondage. Similarly, for any congregation, which may consist of thousands of souls, to be under the authority of a tavern keeper, hostler, or any lowly individual, is a great bondage. For instance, if a wealthy person passes away and their despicable and lowly relative inherits their land, gaining control over the appointment of a priest for the area, they may summon a priest who resembles themselves, even if they are a blasphemer, base individual, and swearer. Since the congregation is unaware of their true character and has no grounds to reject them, they are unable to prevent their appointment. It is a severe bondage for such a person, however wild they may be, to possess the power to assign any drunkard or whoremonger as a priest over the congregation, with the people relying on them to administer the ordinances of God. Bondslaves are fed only with chaff and bran, but what kind of chaff and husks are those who are under Antichrist fed with? Many people are reluctant to submit to the true government of Christ and the genuine ministers of the Gospel. When these ministers point out their sins, their hearts rebel and swell, and they refuse to yield. Yet, they willingly submit to the officers of Antichrist, allowing them to rule over them and do as they please. As Saint Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:20, "For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face." You can tolerate other false teachers, but you cannot tolerate the true apostles. If someone comes in their own name, you receive them, but if I come in my Father's name, you reject me," says Christ in John 5:43. Many people

complain about the ministers of God, claiming that they assume too much authority and refusing to yield to their words. Yet, under Popery, they must submit to every base priest and accept whatever he says as their faith, risking their souls without questioning it, and they must not show any rejection. It is evident that people would rather yield to anything other than God, considering subjection to God as bondage, while regarding subjection to Antichrist as freedom. They would rather be servants of Antichrist than servants of God. I emphasize this point to highlight the reason we have to thank God for our deliverance from this bondage and to learn how to properly use our freedoms.

This bondage is worse than the bondage of Egypt.

1. It is worse because it is soul bondage, whereas the bondage in Egypt was only on the body. We do not read that Pharaoh or the Egyptians forced the Israelites into idolatry.
2. The bodily bondage in Egypt was not as severe. They imposed heavy burdens on them but did not put them to death, unlike Antichrist who does so if they refuse to submit.
3. Being under the bondage of Egypt was their misfortune, not their sin. However, it is a sin to be under the bondage of Antichrist. There is as much difference between misery and sin as there is between their bondage and the bondage of Antichrist.
4. They were subject to the bondage of Egypt, but they were not subject to the plagues of Egypt. They were free from them. However, those who are under the bondage of Antichrist are susceptible to the plagues that will come upon Antichrist.

But it is faith that must deliver from this bondage. It is a difficult task, just as it was challenging to be delivered from Egypt. Therefore, it is a difficult task (that cannot be accomplished without faith) to be delivered from this bondage.

1. We are aware that a significant portion of the Christian world is educated, and the principles instilled in them are Antichristian principles.
2. Although it is a form of bondage, their idolatrous worship involves a great deal of outward grandeur and glory, which appeals to sensual individuals who live by their senses. They refuse to worship God in a simple manner like others, instead seeking pomp and a lavish display.
3. Despite being a bondage for the soul, they allow for indulgence of the flesh. While they may occasionally undergo penance and impose some hardships on the flesh, those who are wealthy can freely indulge their desires and live as they please, as they can easily obtain absolution with a small sum of money.
4. Moreover, there are numerous examples of influential and learned individuals, including some who are godly, yielding to a significant portion of these burdens. Their examples exert a powerful influence on others.
5. Furthermore, if anyone shows signs of resistance, they are immediately met with severe afflictions and persecutions. Excommunications are thundered upon them, accompanied by the loss of their possessions and exposure to various dangers.

6. Additionally, it is challenging because Christ's government is entrusted to a few humble individuals. Surrendering to their authority is difficult for human nature, and it requires substantial self-denial. Many perceive this as the greatest form of bondage, especially considering the potential for misconduct and scandals among the godly who profess to follow the ways, ordinances, and liberties of Christ. Without a gracious heart, submitting to this government is highly challenging, and people are often at a loss as to what they should do, ultimately succumbing to their bondage.
  
7. Furthermore, being under this bondage is a consequence of the curse. Not everyone under this bondage is under the eternal curse, but it is a manifestation of the curse to be under the bondage of Antichrist without striving to escape from it. I am not suggesting that all sick and weak individuals are cursed, but being under this bondage is a part of the curse. It signifies that God will allow them to believe lies. Even if someone possesses extensive knowledge and understanding, if God's curse is upon them, their intellect and understanding are of no avail. No matter how great their abilities may be, they cannot deliver themselves from this bondage. It is the work of faith to bring about deliverance.

Question: What is the work of Faith in delivering people from this bondage?

Answer: Faith plays a crucial role in delivering individuals from the bondage under Antichrist, and there are six or seven things that faith accomplishes in this process:

1. Faith reveals to the soul the spiritual nature of Christ's government, and without this understanding, true deliverance from the bondage of Antichrist is impossible.
2. Faith presents to the soul the comprehensive fulfilment of all Christ's roles as Priest, Prophet, and King. Until the soul grasps this truth, it remains under the dominion of Antichrist and is not transferred to the government of Christ.
3. Faith uncovers the fullness and glory that exist in the Word, which serves as our guide for all aspects of life.
4. Faith acknowledges the necessity of a divine rule for spiritual efficacy and recognizes that no human invention can produce such efficacy. Only through faith can this principle be firmly established.
5. Another work of faith is to unveil the beauty and glory present in the administration of Christ's ordinances. A carnal eye can only perceive the true splendour and magnificence of divine ordinances when there is some external earthly excellence associated with them. However, it is through the eye of faith that the naked beauty of Christ's ordinances is revealed. Until individuals are willing to come out from under the power of Antichrist, they will not appreciate this revelation.
6. Faith discloses to the soul the reality and certainty of the marvellous and glorious promises found in the Gospel, specifically those made to the true Church of God. These promises include the glorious presence of God with His people and the assurance of abundant spiritual blessings. While it would take time to enumerate the excellent promises made to

the Church, which a carnal eye cannot perceive, faith recognizes their abundance of certainty and reality. When individuals see these promises through faith, it empowers them to overcome any difficulties in order to partake in them.

7. Moreover, faith reveals the dreadful threats against those who follow Antichrist, such as those who secretly receive the mark of the Beast in their hand (Revelation 14:9-10). They will face eternal punishment in the burning lake and be cast out from the presence of the Lord. When people read these threats without faith, they disregard them. However, when they read them with faith, their souls tremble and fear, driving them to escape from that bondage. They hear a continuous voice crying out to them: "Come out from among them, O my people, lest you share in their sins and receive of their plagues" (Revelation 18:4). Faith, by revealing these things, frees the heart from Antichristian bondage.

Question: Can't people reject the yoke of Antichrist for reasons other than faith?

Answer: Sometimes a spirit of contradiction may lead individuals to reject the yoke of Antichrist, although one good cannot be opposed to another good, one evil may be opposed to another evil. Many people may oppose the government of Antichrist based on their own evil inclinations, but if it is not based on the principle of faith, it is not right and may stem from other motives.

Question: How can we know if we have forsaken the bondage of Antichrist through faith?



Answer: I will provide you with some signs to identify those who have been delivered from this Egypt by faith and those who only seem to have been delivered based on other grounds.

1. Those who are delivered by faith are firmly grounded in the doctrinal and fundamental aspects of religion. Faith cannot free the soul from the government and ceremonies of Antichrist unless it is well-rooted in the doctrine and principles of religion. If I see individuals loudly denouncing Antichrist and the Antichristian government, but it becomes evident that they lack sufficient knowledge in the foundations of religion and principles of faith, they should be regarded with suspicion. Many may discuss church government at length, but when it comes to examining their knowledge of religious principles, they appear foolish and ignorant. If they are not well-grounded in these principles, it indicates that their liberation is not the work of faith.
2. If it is a work of faith, it involves much humility and prayer. Were there times when you were under the power and bondage of Antichrist? How did you come out of it? Did God reveal its evil to you? Did you seek God with much humility and prayer, asking Him to turn your heart away from it and show you His good way? Did you find your heart turning away as a result? If so, it is a strong indication that it was the work of faith. But for many, their consciences tell them that it was not through humility and prayer that their hearts turned away, and they are to be feared.
3. If it is a work of faith, it always brings in light. Take, for example, the matter of Christ's government. Many people cry

out against the Antichristian government, but when you examine them further, they have no additional light, arguments, or understanding beyond a bitter spirit against it. If a person grows bitter against things they once submitted to, they need to have more light. However, if they become exceedingly bitter without gaining any further light or understanding, it is an indication of a heart condition rather than anything else. Therefore, suddenly casting off everything is very suspicious. When it is a work of faith, God gradually reveals light. It is said of Luther during his reformation that he first saw the evil in one thing, then in another, and gradually recognized the evil in all. Similarly, those who forsake the bondage of Antichrist by faith first begin to suspect their path, realizing that there must be a better way. Then they engage in prayer, humility, and examination, gradually uncovering the evil in one aspect after another. Light enters their hearts step by step, and their hearts rise against those things. If, according to the measure of the light you have, your heart turns away, it is a good sign.

4. If you break away from Antichrist by faith, it will separate you not only from them but also from the world. Many people separate themselves from anything even remotely associated with Antichristian government, but they conform themselves to the ways of the world, blending in without any noticeable difference in their loose lifestyles. A person who conforms to the world is not truly a non-conformist to Antichrist by faith.
5. If faith takes you away from the bondage under Antichrist, it will also free you from the bondage under any sinful desire. A person who lacks the power of faith to turn them away from any lust is not truly delivered from the bondage of Antichrist by faith. If

faith delivers you from the bondage under Antichrist, it will also deliver you from the bondage under sin and Satan. Therefore, even if people cry out against the bondage of Antichrist, if they continue to live under the bondage of any sinful desire, it is not a work of faith.

6. A soul that is delivered from the power of Antichrist by faith becomes subject to the power and government of Christ and His Word. If faith takes a person away from one, it places them under the other. The Word alone can be the foundation of faith. When faith delivers a soul from the bondage of Antichrist, that soul experiences the divine power and majesty of the Word upon their heart. It humbles the heart before the power and majesty of the Word, and they dare not go against it in any matter. If you advocate for the Word in certain things but do not yield to its power in other areas, it is very suspicious. Those who are brought by faith from the power of Antichrist have their hearts deeply affected by the power of the Word, and they tremble in the presence of its majesty and authority.
7. If it is faith that brings you out, you will not be satisfied with being freed from Antichristian government alone; you will seek to encounter Christ in the ordinances. You will not settle for mere outward performances of religion, making church discipline and constitution the entirety of your faith. Having the ordinances alone is not enough; you will long for union and communion with Christ Jesus through this way of church government. If you continue year after year merely going through the motions of outward religious practices without panting after union with Christ, it is not a work of faith. I do not speak against these practices themselves, but I want to highlight

that if people do not yearn for union with Christ, if they are not aware of their need for it and do not strive to experience it, then it is not a work of faith.

8. If it is faith that leads you away from this path, you will undoubtedly grow more spiritual. Your heart will long for Christ, and your soul will become more spiritual in the ways of Christ because you draw closer to the rule. There is a difference between religious actions and civil actions. Civil actions governed by civil rules do not always yield success, but spiritual actions guided by the rule of faith have a spiritual impact, even if there may not be immediate external success. They make the heart increasingly spiritual. However, if people have been freed from the yoke of Antichrist and yet remain as spiritually lifeless as before, showing no more godliness in their interactions and associations, those who knew them previously can say, "They used to exhibit much more spiritual and godly qualities than they do now." This is a dangerous state.
9. Furthermore, if it is a work of faith, such a person will give all the glory to God for their deliverance. They will walk humbly before God, acknowledging their previous disobedience and wretchedness. They recognize that they should have continued in that way, but by God's grace and power, He turned their hearts away from it. They magnify the grace of God and do not exalt themselves or look down upon others, thinking they possess more wisdom and understanding. Instead, they attribute their deliverance to God's grace. They do not criticize others but pray for them, recognizing that no amount of arguments can convince them, as they themselves had sufficient arguments that proved ineffective until God, by His grace,

placed them upon their hearts. Therefore, they have compassion for others and pray for them. They show reverence for the grace that is evident in others, even if they are not on the same path. They do not immediately dismiss them, saying that they have no grace or godliness. Such an attitude would indicate a proud spirit. Those who have experienced God's grace know that there was a time when they walked in that same way, not going against their understanding but being willing to grasp God's will. Yet, until God intervened, their hearts were not turned away. Therefore, they learn to have positive thoughts about those who are godly but may differ in other ways.

But above all, if it was truly through faith that you were delivered from this Antichristian bondage, it will not leave within you the spirit of Antichrist. Many may no longer be under the bondage of Antichrist, yet they still possess an Antichristian spirit—a spirit of pride, domination, crookedness, and perversity. This is a great evil, that in the path of Christ, an Antichristian spirit should be manifested. It is a matter to be mourned with tears of blood. If any trace of an Antichristian spirit governs someone, even if they have been freed from Antichristian rule, it is to be suspected that their liberation was not the result of faith, but of something else. We should have the spirit of Christ within us—the spirit of love, humility, gentleness, and peace. If we truly claim to have been liberated from the yoke of Antichrist by faith, then let us demonstrate the Spirit of Christ. Just as faith freed us from Antichristian power, we should continue to walk in the ways of Christ, as befits those who have been delivered from Antichristian power.

FINIS.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions February 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn Or 97068