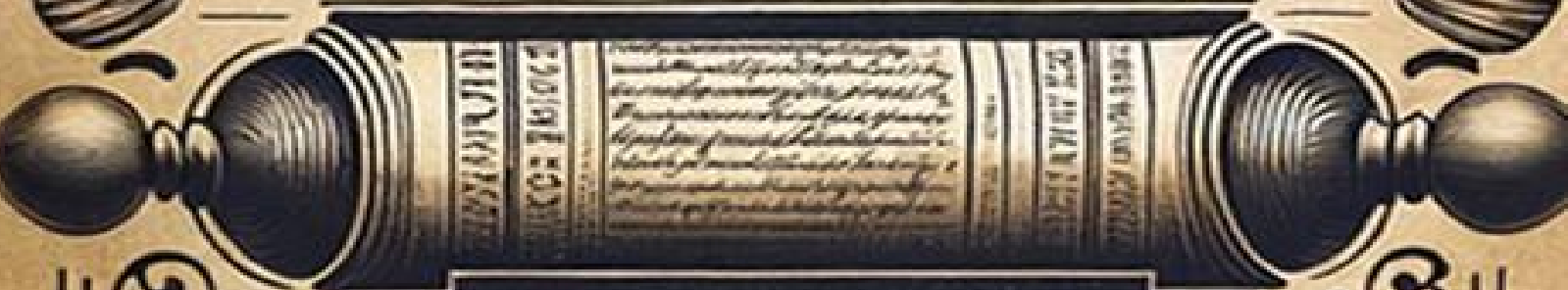




A TREATISE OF
FAITH

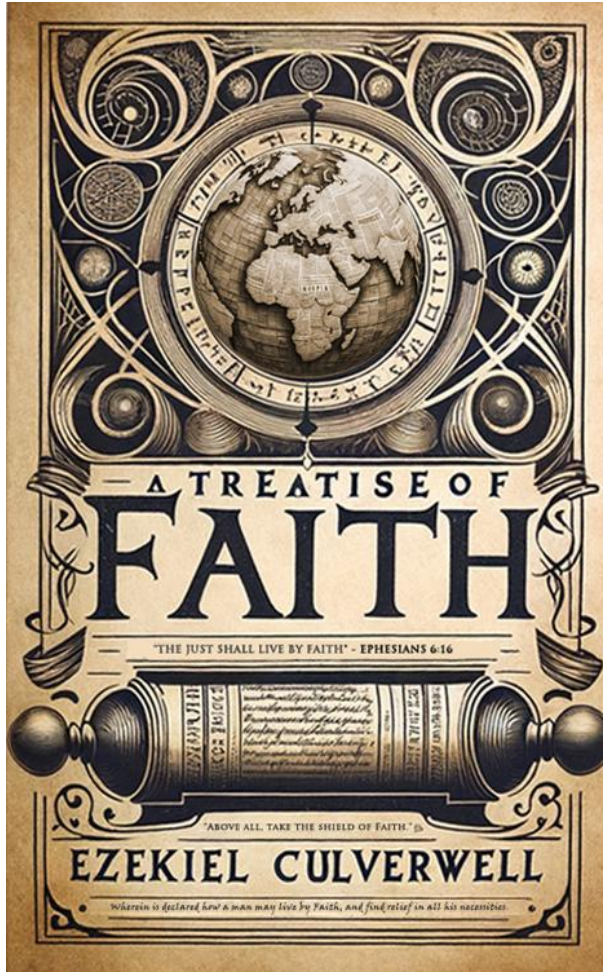
"THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH" - EPHESIANS 6:16



"ABOVE ALL, TAKE THE SHIELD OF FAITH."

EZEKIEL CULVERWELL

Wherein is declared how a man may live by Faith, and find relief in all his necessities.



A TREATISE OF
FAITH

THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH - EPHESIANS 6:16



ABOVE ALL, TAKE THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

EZEKIEL CULVERWELL

Wherein is declared how a man may live by Faith, and find relief in all his necessities.

A Treatise of Faith

Wherein is declared how a man may live by Faith, and find relief in all his necessities.

By Ezekiel Culverwell

Applied Especially to the Benefit of the Weakest Christians

"The Just Shall Live by Faith."

Ephesians 6:16

"Above all, take the shield of Faith."

Romans 15:4

London, Printed by I. L. for William Sheffard, and available for purchase at his shop, located at the entrance of Popeshead Alley, off Lombard Street. 1623.

Table of Contents

[To All of God's People Who Have Benefited from My Ministry.](#)

[To the Christian Reader by Richard Sibbes](#)

[To the Christian Reader by William Gouge](#)

[The First Part: A Treatise on Faith](#)

[The Second Part of this Treatise: Containing a direction on how to apply God's promises to our particular occasions.](#)

The Second General Head.

The Third General Head: Of living by faith concerns holy duties.

The Fourth General Head: Of Living by Faith Concerning Afflictions

The Fifth General Head: Of Living by Faith, is for Earthly Blessings

The Sixth and Last General Head: Of living by Faith, is for Perseverance.

To All of God's People

Who Have Benefited from My Ministry, Especially Under My
Pastoral Care

Dear Beloved in the Lord,

Although I cannot help but be aware of my many shortcomings in fulfilling my duties as required by God towards you (which I humbly implore the Lord and you to pardon), it has been, is, and I hope shall be, until the end of my days, a source of comfort to me that my labor among you has not been in vain. The fruit of my labors and the success thereof, I leave to the conscience of those of you who are still living, for you know that not a few are now resting with the Lord, and their holy lives and blessed endings bear witness to this fact. But to

leave these matters for the consideration of those to whom they may concern, and to provide a just account of my efforts to all who read these words, I must confess that for many years, I have been deeply concerned about the fundamental aspect of faith. It is through faith alone that we receive all saving grace, and without it, none can be saved. Through lengthy experience and conversations with people of various backgrounds, I have discovered that very few truly grasp the knowledge or the proper application of faith, either in obtaining assurance of salvation or in guiding their conduct.

Setting aside the professed Protestants who merely put on a façade of godliness, outwardly displaying it while denying its power by indulging in their own desires, I have observed that many, who genuinely seek salvation, often build their faith upon the weak foundation of abandoning their sins. This misguided approach prevents them from achieving the certainty of salvation or the constancy of a righteous life that true faith would provide. I have also seen others who, deeply aware of their wretchedness and the need for Christ's intervention, desire nothing more than to be delivered and restored by Him. However, lacking proper guidance on how to attain faith – the means by which they receive Christ and all His blessings – they spend many unfruitful and unproductive years in their pursuit. There are also those who convince themselves that they possess faith, finding temporary relief from the fear of condemnation. Still, they lack the vitality and power of faith, failing to honor God and their profession and finding themselves lacking peace and comfort when faced with trials, which a vibrant faith would undoubtedly provide.

All of these observations underscore how few have truly grasped the genuine essence of faith – what it is, how it is acquired and strengthened, and how to live by it. The realization of this distressing

reality, witnessing so many people misinformed in such a crucial matter, has driven me to dedicate my thoughts to finding a solution. To address this grave issue, I began to delve deeper into how it could be rectified. I soon recognized that since faith is grounded solely in God's truth as revealed in His Word, the key to acquiring and nurturing faith lies in becoming well-acquainted with His Word. In this endeavor, I cannot help but marvel at God's wisdom and love in providing an abundance of heavenly comforts to aid us in all our times of need. If only we had the knowledge and proper application of these comforts, we would then grasp the essence of living by faith and the blessed state of a believer in this world, surpassing all other conditions, however excellent they may be.

With this realization, I committed myself to searching the Scriptures to discover the heavenly comforts that God has so generously provided for our relief in times of need. This involved a significant amount of effort in gathering promises from both the Old and New Testaments, which, when compiled, formed a substantial treasure trove of heavenly blessings. Any person of understanding would be greatly moved and delighted upon merely reading them. However, I also recognized that merely listing these promises would not be sufficient to guide everyone in their correct use and application for the development of faith. Therefore, I endeavored to categorize them under various headings, which, in my opinion, encompass all our needs. This way, even the weakest among us may more easily apply them to their specific circumstances and, through faith, find comfort when all other sources fail them.

If, in my efforts, I have not fully met the expectations of the most discerning readers, I must console myself with the knowledge that I have strived to assist those in need to the best of my abilities, according to the measure of grace I have received. I have diligently

avoided engaging in controversies surrounding faith, instead, I have presented the truth plainly as I have understood it from the Scriptures. In this regard, I can offer the defense that I have undertaken this work without guidance from others, as I have not seen anyone preceding me in this endeavor. I, therefore, beseech my esteemed colleagues in the ministry, whose abilities far surpass mine, to further develop this work. As for myself, I shall continue to pray that it may be as beneficial to others as it has been toilsome for me. May the Lord grant this for the sake of His Christ.

Ezekiel Culverwell

To the Christian Reader,

The pursuit of a happy life, which is the focus of this Treatise, is a desire shared by all. However, it is only God's truth that reveals and faith that truly enjoys it. In the time of the first Adam, our happiness rested within our own control. Yet, when he turned away from God to the creation, he experienced the frailty of his nature, being a creature brought forth from nothing and lacking the sustaining power of Him in whom all things have their being. Adam became subject to a state even worse than nothing. Thus, God, in His infinite power and boundless goodness, with the intention of showcasing His mercy, did not entrust the happiness of humanity to man's keeping. Instead, He ordained that it would be secured and established in the person of a second Adam. Through Him, we regain a better estate than the one we lost in the first Adam.

While Adam's soul was initially united to God, this union depended on his own will, which was subject to change and contingency. In contrast, we are brought to God through an everlasting covenant of mercy by having faith in Christ. By taking on human nature into His divine person, Christ became a public figure, the Author of eternal salvation for all who receive Him. He gathers those who had become separated from God into one head and leads them back to God through a different path than the one they fell from – by cleaving to God through faith, the opposite of the distrust that caused their fall.

Faith is a fitting grace for those in a state of grace, as it attributes all glory to God, empties the soul of self-sufficiency, and opens it up to freely receive what is accomplished and offered by another. Through this process, we find comfort, and God receives the glory of His mercy, which motivated Him to use all His attributes to bring us happiness. Out of the depths of His mercy, He not only chose us for eternal salvation in Christ but also graciously provides all things necessary for life and godliness. Just as God's love grants us heaven and equips us with what we need for our journey, faith also lays hold of promises concerning assistance, comfort, provision, and protection. Faith performs this role throughout various stages of life until it leads us to enjoy Him in whose presence there is fullness of joy and eternal pleasure.

Just as parents' love leads them to provide an inheritance for their children, it also compels them to care for and nurture them, ensuring they experience their fatherly care. In a similar way, our first and best Father, besides the main promise of salvation, has given us many other rich and precious promises. These promises allow us to taste His goodness and truth, ultimately surrendering our souls to Him with greater confidence and growing in faith as we continue to live. As the aged Saint Paul said, "I know whom I have trusted."

However, we often know so little of His ways because we do not observe Him fulfilling His word to us. All His ways are filled with mercy and truth, and every word He speaks is proven true.

To better aid God's people in understanding their portion in these blessings, which their Father not only reserves for their future but also bestows upon them in the present as His wisdom sees fit, this reverent and godly man has compiled this Treatise. In it, he exposes the promises hidden within the Scriptures, making them accessible to every Christian. He organizes them methodically, revealing their individual value and usefulness for living a holy life, which, if left unpracticed, may not be as readily apparent.

For those seeking to benefit from this Treatise, it is essential to note four things. Firstly, it presupposes that the reader already possesses a foundational knowledge of the nature and attributes of God, the role of Christ and His offices, and the covenant of grace, among other fundamental theological concepts. Just as one stone supports another in an arch, there is a connectedness in theological concepts, with one strengthening the understanding of another. Faith, for instance, derives its efficacy from being a requirement in the covenant to lay hold of the free promise. The promises, in turn, draw their strength from the unchanging nature of Jehovah, who breathes life into His Word and reconciles with us through the all-sufficient sacrifice of the Mediator of the new covenant.

Words derive their validity from the authority of the speaker. If faith were not founded on the Word of an infinite God, completely satisfied, the soul would falter in severe temptations. Instead, even mountains vanish before a believing soul. To whom is everything subject but to Christ, who has the power to subdue all things to Himself? Therefore, we are now, by faith, safer than Adam was in

Paradise because we possess a promise that he did not. It is safer to be as low as hell with a promise than as high in Paradise without one because faith, empowered by God's strength on whom it rests, accomplishes miraculous wonders.

However, even though an understanding of these matters supports the argument at hand, it should not be expected that an extensive discussion of things that are merely coincidental and should be known in advance will be provided. I mention this because some, with less discernment of the proper scope of treatises, may anticipate a more extensive treatment of certain topics. The author's primary goal, however, has been to enrich the current discussion without burdening it unnecessarily.

Secondly, it is essential to recognize that the benefits of these matters pertain to those who are in Christ, in whom all promises find their confirmation and fulfillment. Those who have been born again by the imperishable seed of the Word and the Spirit have a rightful claim to what they have been born into. To clarify, there are three degrees of promises: one concerning salvation through absolute and personal obedience, which, due to the frailty of the flesh, drives us to despair in ourselves and leads us to the second promise of life through Christ. The second promise requires nothing but acceptance through faith, a faith that is granted to those given to Christ. When grace is offered, the Spirit empowers the words with hidden and potent strength, making them effective. When these individuals are called to believe, their hearts are opened to faith. This book primarily addresses these two types of promises, especially the latter.

Thirdly, it is crucial to emphasize that those who intend to benefit from this work must be willing to submit to Christ's authority and be led by the Spirit into all revealed truth. Wisdom is readily accessible

to those who are willing, and victory is nearly secured when the will is freed from enslavement to base desires and is determined to be guided. Such a heart is receptive to God's gracious work, and the Spirit readily engages with a spirit that does not resist stubbornly.

Nevertheless, it is essential, in the fourth place, to understand that even when we are at our best, we will still find ourselves in a state of conflict, longing for the glorious liberty of the children of God, even after we have completed the work God has assigned to us. God intends to maintain a distinction between heaven and earth and to intensify our longing for the coming of His kingdom. These inner struggles, particularly during times of outward prosperity, contribute significantly to this longing. However, this should not diminish our claim to happiness, as we are continually compelled to renew our reliance on the promise of forgiveness and live by faith until every impurity is purged. These bitter experiences help us appreciate Christ all the more.

Moreover, even though our efforts in this life may fall short of our desires, and we always aspire to a higher standard than we can achieve, we can, by stirring up the graces that have begun within us and relying on God's promises of His Spirit and grace, make progress. By doing so, we can elevate the profession of our faith to be a source of glory and attractiveness to others and a source of comfort to ourselves, shining brighter than others. Why then do we not, through the use of all sanctified means, implore God to fulfill the promises in which He has caused us to trust? If we desire health and strength for the well-being of our bodies and to fulfill our civil duties, should we not, with even greater fervor (if the life of God is within us), seek spiritual health and vitality, as well as the anointing of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to do and endure all things, thereby drawing others to appreciate our ways? Satan indeed strives to keep us in

unbelief regarding specific promises and discourages us from renewing our covenant, confident that God will bring to completion the work He has initiated and will not change His mind regarding His earnest promises. As long as we nurture such distrust, we remain vulnerable to Satan's influence. Strengthening faith strengthens everything else. Therefore, let us commit ourselves to all the required duties at once, cherish a love for a holy life above all other lives, and place our trust in God's mercy and truth. Through experience, we will be able to vindicate all God's ways to the extent that we would not exchange our state for all the world. What greater encouragement can we desire than the continual victory over our corruptions by the Spirit, enabling us to do all things through Christ who empowers us?

To elucidate these ways of God for our understanding, this effort has been undertaken by this devout man. Not to diminish the efforts of other pious individuals, but as far as I can discern, there is nothing of this kind written with greater clarity, insight, and depth, with a more evident manifestation of a Spirit convinced of the goodness and truth of what it presents. Though I acknowledge the Treatise deserves much respect, it should receive even greater acceptance, particularly from those who are spiritual novices and young believers in Christ. It is written by a highly esteemed and venerable Father in the Church, one who has imparted these principles to many others. Just as we can trust an experienced physician for our physical bodies, we can similarly rely on a seasoned guide for our souls. I commend this work to you, having experienced its beneficial influence on my own life.

May the Lord, through His Spirit, implant these truths deep within your heart. As you experience the positive impact of this work in your soul, remember to pray that God may continue to bring forth even more fruit through the author in his later years, until he completes

his journey with honor to the Gospel and the confident hope of a blessed reward.

Gray's Inn,

Richard Sibbs

To the Christian Reader,

If any grace, and if not grace, what else, deserves commendation among the people of God to inflame their desire for it until their desire is satisfied, surely, among and above all other graces, faith deserves such commendation. Faith, I say, which is to the soul as the soul is to the body—its life, and to the small world as the sun is to the large world—its light. It warms, quickens, comforts, and encourages the person in whom it resides. Does it not then warrant the diligent efforts of the most discerning and industrious theologians to expound it? Considerable effort has been devoted to this subject by men of good repute. So much has been written and published on this topic since the later stages of the Gospel that adding more may seem redundant. However, without diminishing the contributions of others, it is worth noting, to the praise of God's grace in the author of this treatise, that no one has exerted such diligent effort on the foundation of faith as he has. The true and proper foundation of faith is God's promise. Whatever is promised can be believed safely; whatever is believed without a promise is presumed. Just as faith is the life of the soul, so God's promise is the life of faith. If you desire faith, pay attention to God's promises. If you wish for your faith to

shine like the light in the Lord's Sanctuary and never go out, acquaint your soul with God's promises. Know them, meditate on them, discuss them; let them be continually in your mind, memory, heart, and speech. If you find it too challenging to discover them, arrange them in order, and make appropriate use of them (which indeed is a daunting task), behold, God has sent Ezekiel Culverwell, much like He sent Ezekiel the prophet, to expound on God's promises more extensively and pertinently than ever before. He does this to nurture faith where it is lacking, to strengthen it where it is weak, to stabilize it where it wavers, to restore it where it decays, and to apply it appropriately to every need. He highlights its unique role in matters temporal, spiritual, and eternal. The subject matter of this treatise is suitable for someone well-versed in the Holy Scriptures and familiar with human disposition towards these promises. The author possesses these qualifications and has employed them to gather a multitude of promises and arrange them sensibly. I can vouch for his qualifications, as I have known him since my childhood, and I was instructed under his ministry during my formative years. He is at least twenty-two years my senior. Let me share some of his practices as an example for others. His approach to his pastoral charge is known to those under his care. He found very few, if any, prepared to receive the Holy Communion when he first arrived. This compelled him to spend many months, from morning to night, every day of the week, instructing everyone under his charge individually and in groups on the foundational principles of God's Word. His efforts were so successful that few were unable to articulate the basis for their hope of salvation, and they were subsequently admitted to the Lord's Table. From that point onward, as long as he served there, he conducted weekly meetings in his church for people of all backgrounds. On different days, he catechized them in the fundamentals of the Christian faith. I am convinced that these meetings did more good than his preaching,

which was also very powerful and not in vain. As the labor of both himself and his hearers in teaching and learning flourished, God produced corresponding fruits in obedience to His Word. The Lord's Day was devoutly observed, and the prevalent sins to which untaught people typically succumb were abandoned. Contentions among neighbors ceased, and they visited each other's homes in harmony. Although there were many poor among them and none were greatly wealthy, none of the poor had to beg for food outside their homes. They were provided for within their community. I will share one particularly noteworthy and commendable evidence of God's Word's power among them. During a time of severe food scarcity, public authorities ordered every household to forgo one meal each week and contribute its equivalent value to the collectors for the poor on the Lord's Day. This was faithfully adhered to by all, and the funds collected were used to purchase good grain, which cost 8 or 9 shillings per bushel. This grain was then sold to the poor for 12 pence per peck, with enough left to employ the poor in productive work. Such were the good works performed under his ministry, who never missed an opportunity to emphasize the doctrine of faith. Thus, preaching faith does not hinder the practice of good works. This treatise serves as evident proof of that fact. Make good use of his efforts, and your efforts will not be in vain.

William Gouge

A Treatise on Faith

Wherein it is explained how a person can live by faith and find relief
in all their necessities.

It is a matter much to be lamented that in this clear light of the Gospel, so few attain to the right end of the Gospel, which is to live by faith, as we shall see further laid open for those who consider.

To say nothing of all unregenerate men who never felt any work of faith for their true conversion and, therefore, could never find any sound comfort in their salvation.

The matter I complain of is this: many of God's children, who have some true faith and hope to be saved by Christ (as they profess, and others in charity are so to conceive of them), do not enjoy that sweet life and blessed estate in this world that God their Father has provided for them, and they could well attain it if the fault were not in themselves.

The truth of this may appear in two things especially.

Firstly, that so few hold fast that joy in the Holy Spirit which might comfort them over all the discouragements of this life, whether in forgoing the sweet delights of this world or in patiently bearing the manifold troubles of this life, which usually are their portion.

Secondly, that so few exhibit such a sweet savor of holy conversation as might make those who dwell under their shadow (as the Prophet speaks) give a scent like the wine of Lebanon.

In simpler terms, not many, even among those who profess Christianity, have attained the certainty of their salvation and the constancy in holy behavior that could abundantly comfort themselves and inspire others to desire and strive to be like them.

To prove this is not difficult; the lives and actions of most of our professors daily bear witness to the truth of this.

The consideration of these has often and long moved me to seek how this great evil might be redressed and to make known by God's word how all God's children may enjoy this large allowance of their Father, to live comfortably and to die happily, so far as in this vale of misery it may be attained, notwithstanding whatever shall be said or done to the contrary by any adversary.

This seems to me to be notably set out for us in that one sentence, "The just shall live by Faith," which, for the excellency thereof, is often repeated both in the old and New Testament and confirmed by the examples of God's worthy servants in all ages, as is abundantly seen in Hebrews 11. The true meaning of this is that the man who is now accounted just and righteous before God, being justified and sanctified by Christ, as he was first made alive by the Holy Ghost through Faith, receiving Christ, so likewise by the same faith he is to receive in and from Christ the continuance of this life, both in all comfort that he shall receive all necessary blessings, and in all good conscience to yield unto God all required obedience. In this, two main pillars of our holy profession are laid down.

One is that all grace which we lack is found only in Christ and is to be received by us from Him that it may be ours.

The other is that all this grace which is in Christ for us is made ours only by faith. Therefore, this leads to our principal conclusion, intended in this Treatise, that the only way to attain all comfort in God's favor and the conscience to live a godly life, by which alone our life and death are happy, is to get, keep, and increase this precious gift of Faith, whereby alone we receive Christ and in Him all things pertaining to life and godliness.

Now, to come to a more full explanation and so to a more plentiful use of these heavenly matters, especially for those who most need help herein, this must be laid as the foundation of all this building:

That man, being created by God perfectly holy and happy, and having by his disobedience utterly lost both, and cast himself and all his posterity into the contrary misery of sin and damnation, so that neither he himself nor any other creature was able to deliver him out of this misery and restore him to his former happiness.

It pleased the divine Majesty to ordain that the second person in the Trinity, the only begotten Son of the Father, should assume and take to his divine nature the nature of Man so that He might become a suitable Mediator between God and Man. To this end, the divine Nature sanctified the human nature which He took and filled it with all grace for us. In this way, He was made Jesus Christ our Lord, so that we might receive grace for grace from His fullness. That is, instead of the grace which God gave man by creation, and which he lost by disobedience, and which God long before promised and foreshadowed in the Ceremonial law and required in the Moral law, we now have in Christ fully and truly all the grace needed for our salvation, and He brings us to a far more excellent estate than we lost by our transgression.

All of these points are most sufficiently drawn by the Apostle into four heads.

But you are of Him in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption. In this Scripture, I desire more to be observed, especially these two things as most pertaining to our purpose.

1. First, that the Wisdom, Justification, Sanctification, and Redemption, whereby any sinner naturally foolish, guilty, defiled, and in bondage, is made wise, justified, sanctified, and redeemed, is all and alone in Christ, who is made of God unto us all of these; that is, He Himself wrought all these things for us and gives them freely to us, and no other way can any man have any of these, but from and in Christ, as is expressly said in the first words of this verse, where it is said that you are of Him, that is of God in Christ Jesus: that is made by God one with Christ, set into Him (by faith,) as shall be shown in the second general point.

The other special point, which I think should be observed in this aforementioned Scripture, is this:

Whereas all who look to be saved by Christ in all the accusations of their conscience for any sin run to Christ alone for pardon of their sin, yet many of them, being overcome by their corrupt nature and thus falling into sin, pray to God for more grace to mortify the same and purpose and strive to master it (both of which must be done). But these men, not clearly seeing that all power to mortify all sin and to practice all good duties lies only in Christ and must be received from Him by us; therefore, they may labor in vain, and in a long time, achieve little victory; rather, their corruptions gain strength over them.

The chief remedy for this evil I take to be this: as we obtain pardon of sin and are justified by applying Christ to ourselves, so we in like manner must apply Christ to ourselves for our sanctification, being no more able to purify ourselves than to justify ourselves.

This is vividly represented to us by the parable of the Vine and the branches, just as the branch receives all sap whereby it is fruitful

from the Vine, so do we from Christ; therefore, He Himself says, "Without Me, you can do nothing," and to the same effect, the Apostle speaks plainly, "Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."

The reason for this is as manifest as man's nature is wholly corrupted, having no inclination, much less the ability to do God's will. Christ, taking man's nature, has sanctified it in His own person, making it able to please God perfectly. This purity of His nature, being in some measure communicated to us sinners, changes us into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The Apostle Peter calls this being partakers of the Divine nature. By all these and the like, it is evident that as all our comfort for our full and free justification must be had from and in Christ alone, so all the power whereby we may mortify our corruptions and perform all holy duties lies in Christ alone and must be had in and from Him. And thus much for the former general point, that all grace we want is in Christ.

Now for the second point, that Christ, and all grace in Him, is received by faith, we are to weigh the nature of this faith, what it is, and how it is obtained and kept so that we may live by it. In this, it is to be remembered that we have nothing to do with anything but true saving faith, which is usually termed a Justifying faith, not because it does properly, by any worthiness in itself or by any efficacy in it, make us righteous, but only because, as a weak hand, it receives Christ our righteousness, who has fully wrought all righteousness for us and freely bestowed it on all those who receive Him by this hand of Faith. Now, to say what this Justifying Faith is, however, many learned Divines have differently defined or described it; I conceive the whole nature of it may thus be sufficiently set forth to us.

Justifying Faith is a belief of the Gospel, whereby I receive Christ offered to me in the same.

This is plainly to be seen in this Scripture, among many others, John 1. 12. "But as many as received him, to them he gave power to be the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." Which I desire may be well considered, for that so many be deceived in this matter of Faith and that diversely: who all by the light of truth may be drawn into the right way, and so find that sweet and precious fruit of Faith, which so few attain unto. For the better understanding whereof, we are to observe two special points pertaining to the nature of this Justifying Faith.

1. First, what it hath in common with all other kinds of faith.
2. Secondly what, in special, whereby it differeth from them all.

For the former, I call it a belief, which is a giving credit to that which is spoken, whereby a man is assured that it is true which is spoken; which assurance may be more or less, according to the persuasion we have of the truth of the speaker.

Now, the matter to be believed is here said to be the Gospel.

That is, the glad tidings of reconciliation made by Christ Jesus between God and man, which though it be diversely, and in sundry speeches set out unto us in holy Scriptures, yet all is most sufficiently contained in this one sentence delivered by Christ himself, John. 3. 16. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Wherein this is evident that the matter to be believed unto salvation is this.

That God the father, moved by nothing but his free love to mankind lost, hath made a deed of gift and grant of his Son Christ Jesus unto mankind, that whosoever of all mankind shall receive this gift by a true and lively faith, he shall not perish, but have everlasting life, which the same Apostle expressly saith, 1. John. 5. 11. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," meaning, that this it is, which God hath witnessed for us to believe, which he that doth not, makes God a liar; and shall most justly be condemned; therefore this then is the first thing in true faith to be considered, that every soul to whom God sendeth this message of the Gospel do truly believe and give credit unto it to be true, that God hath made a grant of Christ to sinners, so that if he accept this grant, he shall be saved. This is that faith which in schools is called historical, because it goeth no further than to give assent and credit to the story of that which God speaketh to be true, which one may believe for another; and therefore this cannot be true justifying faith, and this may be in those that know they are bidden to the wedding, yet refuse to come. So that though this be necessary to true justifying faith, yet it is not sufficient: therefore in justifying faith there is required another and more special work; namely, to receive Christ, and life in him offered in the Gospel, which was the second general point to be considered in the nature of this justifying faith. Namely, that beside the assent of the mind and judgment to the truth of the Gospel, we give consent with our heart and will, and so willingly and gladly accept God's gift of Christ, whereby indeed he is become ours, and we his: and so we in him be made partakers of all things pertaining to life and godliness, as the Apostle Peter speaketh, where I would have this specially to be marked, that he saith, this is by the knowledge or acknowledging of him, which I understand to be by true faith, whereby we know and acknowledge Christ to be ours.

This I the rather observe, for that I see some honestly minded, herein beguiled, to imagine that a man may be a true member of Christ, and so be justified, before he thus actually believes, and thereby apprehends Christ. I deny not but that some weak in faith may fear that they do not believe, and that they have not apprehended Christ when in deed they have apprehended him, though they feel it not; who may be discerned partly by their heaviness for want of sense of faith, but especially by their love they bear to God shown manifold ways, whereof we shall hear more in the trial of faith.

But that he who never apprehended Christ by believing should ordinarily be a member of Christ, I cannot see; sure I am, the Scripture constantly speaks otherwise, as John 12. "As many as received him, to them he gave power to be the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." And to a like effect often, that we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, that we live by faith of the Son of God, that Christ dwelleth in our hearts by faith.

In which and the like many, it is evident that faith is the instrument whereby we receive Christ our righteousness and life. And this is the constant opinion of all sound Divines so far as I know.

Thus then we see that the very nature of faith consists in the true acceptance of Christ proclaimed in the Gospel.

Now follows to be considered how this faith is to be obtained and increased, that so we may live by it, wherein we have these two points to be observed.

1. First, what is the ground of faith?
2. Secondly, how faith is hereon built.

But before, this block (at which so many stumble) is to be removed, that we yet speak not how a man that hath faith may know it to be so (whereof more in his place) but how one that indeed hath not apprehended Christ by faith may attain unto it. So that here only we seek the causes which beget this faith, not the effects of faith, which only prove we have it.

Many not discerning this difference do much mistake, and being asked what caused them to believe, they say, because they have truly repented, and changed their course of life, which if it proceed not from faith, is not so much as a sound proof of faith, much less can it be any cause to draw them to believe.

By which mistaking it comes to pass that such persons building their faith upon their life (which is subject to many changes) can never have sound and steadfast faith, but a staggering and unconstant opinion at the best. We have need therefore to look for a more sure ground whereon to build our faith, which must stand against so many and mighty storms wherewith it is so usually assaulted.

The only firm ground of this saving faith is God's truth revealed in his word, as is plainly taught, Rom. 10. 17. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And so likewise it is said of the Ephesians, 1. 13. "That they by hearing the word of truth, the Gospel of salvation believed," which is as manifest to reason, in that there is not anything in heaven or in earth, which can testify to us such goodwill in God to save us; but we must have God's own word to witness this unto us, and all little enough. It is a matter so incredible that the holy and just God who cannot abide any iniquity, but will certainly give to every sin his due punishment, yet of his own free mercy hath given and granted to poor sinners eternal life.

Therefore hath the Lord so often, and so evidently spoken no less, that he might thereby move us to believe, as 1. John. 5. 11. expressly affirming. "This is that which is testified, That God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his son." For our further confirmation wherein, it is said, verse. 7. that this is witnessed both by three witnesses in heaven. The first, the father; the second, the word: that is, the son of God, the second person in Trinity; the third, the holy Ghost which three be one divine nature, and testify the same things; as also by three witnesses on earth, all which be in every true believer, and none else. The first, the spirit; the second, the water; the third, the blood which agree in one, witnessing the same things, whereby are meant. By the first, our spirit; by the second, our sanctification; and by the third, our justification, that in the mouth of so many witnesses, this truth which of all others is the greatest (yet most hardly received) may stand sure for the consolation of all believers, and conviction of all unbelievers, etc.

To which is further added, verse. 10. "He that believeth in the Son of God, hath the witness in himself, he that believeth not, God hath made him a liar, because he believed not the record which God witnesseth of his son."

The selfsame word of life is in sundry other Scriptures published unto us; because the Lord knoweth we have need to hear of it continually; we are so full of doubting in time of temptation: therefore our Savior himself proclaimeth this glad tidings. John. 3. 16. "For God so loved the world; that he hath given his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and verse 17. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

So likewise John. 12 47. "I came not to condemn the world, but to save the world."

Again, John. 2. 2. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the father Jesus Christ the Just," verse. 3. "And he is the reconciliation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

And John. 1. 29. "Behold the lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world."

So the Apostle saith. 2. Cor. 5. 19. "For God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their sins unto them, and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation."

In all of which and many other Scriptures, it is manifest that God in His Word has made a general offer of salvation in Christ and invites all (to whom He sends His servants, the preachers of His Gospel) to come to Christ so that they might be saved. This is evident in the parable of the wedding, Mat. 22. 1., which is therefore called the Gospel, that is good news, because it brings forth this glad tidings of great joy that shall be to all people, as the Angels of the Lord told the shepherds of the birth of Christ, Luk. 2. 10.

And this is the same message that our Lord Jesus Himself gave after completing His work of man's redemption on earth and ascending to His Father to prepare a place for all His members. He commanded His Apostles and, consequently, commissioned all their successors, the preachers of the Gospel, to proclaim and publish this Gospel to every creature, meaning every man and woman. This way, every soul who hears the Gospel has sufficient ground on which to build their faith and be saved, or they will be left without excuse for neglecting such great salvation. This salvation "at the first began to be preached

by the Lord, and afterward was confirmed by us that heard Him," Heb. 2. 3. Therefore, this is the only foundation upon which saving faith is built.

Namely, this general pardon proclaimed in the Gospel to poor sinners. I have very thoroughly proven this, yet many who desire to believe often neglect to consider it. They pine away with grief for not seeing any evidence that might embolden them, being so lowly in their own eyes, to believe that God loves them enough to give Christ to them.

Others, more dangerously, presume upon God's favor without any such foundation for their conviction, relying solely on the outward change in their lives, which is often deceptive, as was previously explained.

Now, we must consider how a poor sinner, devoid of saving grace and finding nothing in himself to make him bold to believe, may build upon this foundation. This will enable him to attain to true faith, requiring three essential considerations:

First, what is said.

Secondly, to whom is it said?

Thirdly, by whom is it said? This way, he will have good warrant to believe that he shall enjoy this offered mercy.

For the first point, the poor distressed sinner is to consider that in this Gospel and the glad tidings of salvation, forgiveness of sins through Christ is proclaimed and freely offered, as demonstrated by the Apostle Paul in his preaching at Antioch (Acts 13:38): "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man

is preached unto you forgiveness of sins." In many other Scriptures, Christ and all His benefits for our justification, sanctification, and full glorification are offered. Since these are the very things that every humbled sinner desires, it is indeed welcome news to hear that such blessings are available. However, the sinner often confronts his own unworthiness, causing him to doubt that these benefits are meant for someone like him. This doubt can linger for a long time, preventing him from believing in the provision of such benefits.

To address this issue, the sinner should deeply contemplate the incredible mercy of God, who freely offers this immense benefit of Christ and His merits not to the righteous but to sinners, without exception, to whom the Gospel is proclaimed, as seen in the previous Scriptures. This is the foundation of faith. Because those who are most aware of their sins may be the most fearful and hesitant to believe that these blessings are offered to them, they are specifically called, as evident in Matthew 11:28.

In this passage, Christ proclaims that all things are delivered to Him by His Father, signifying that He possesses all power and is perfectly capable of saving all who come to God through Him. He invites all who labor and are heavy-laden to come to Him, promising to provide rest. Every poor sinner who recognizes his wretched state due to sin and the impending curse of God over his head can be certain that he is the one Christ calls to come to Him. This offer of Christ and salvation in Him is freely extended to him, providing a glimmer of hope that he will eventually receive these blessings.

To encourage anyone who desires to believe, it is important to understand that there is no grace within oneself that warrants such favor from God. God's mercy in preparing and offering His Son as redemption for sinners is entirely free and undeserved. Conversely,

no sin should hinder anyone from accepting the freely offered pardon; instead, the enormity of one's sin should hasten the sinner to seek Christ, the Physician who can heal all diseases. The heinousness of sin should not deter anyone from coming to Christ, who is willing and able to heal all who approach Him. Christ will receive greater glory in pardoning great offenders, and He will receive more love from those who have been pardoned. Just as a physician gains more credit for curing severe illnesses than minor ones, Christ is to be sought eagerly, especially when one's sin is great. Thus, the main factor motivating a poor sinner to come to Christ for relief is God's free mercy, offering Christ without exception to anyone who is burdened and seeks relief. Each person must apply this to themselves, recognizing that God has graciously sent these good tidings, calling, commanding, and entreating them to accept this offered grace. Therefore, they need not fear but can confidently believe and receive Christ, as we shall further discuss shortly.

In the third point, it is essential to consider who makes this great offer to us miserable sinners. It is none other than God Himself, who is both 1. able, 2. willing, and 3. faithful to fulfill His promises. These attributes are so evident that they require no further proof for their truth.

But we have a need to set them before us often for our benefit, to strengthen our faith and make us rely more boldly on Christ.

To this end, the testimonies of God's power, mercy, and truth are repeated so frequently in the Scriptures. They are there to be constantly before us, to support us against our doubts and fears, which are inherent in our nature. While no one will deny God's almighty power in general, throughout history, not only the wicked but even God's children have at times doubted His power, as seen in

the Israelites' frequent murmuring and distrust of God's ability in the wilderness. They asked, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" For this reason, the Lord was often compelled to assert His almighty power in response to their doubt.

For instance, when Sarah laughed, thinking it impossible for her to have a child, the Lord said to Abraham, "Is anything hard or impossible for God?" Similarly, when Moses questioned whether all the fish in the sea could be gathered to feed Israel in the wilderness, the Lord responded, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? You shall see whether my words shall come to pass or not." This reveals that looking too much at the apparent impossibilities and not considering God's power can be a significant cause of unbelief. This is most evident in the case of afflicted consciences, whose primary fears and doubts are that their sins are too great to be forgiven, deeming it impossible for someone as wretched as themselves to be saved.

Now, if these afflicted souls, by God's own Word, understand that salvation in Christ is freely offered and proclaimed to them, no matter how vile or unworthy they feel, by God Himself – who possesses all power in heaven and earth, capable of doing anything, and for whom nothing is impossible – this knowledge may lead the afflicted and despairing sinner to at least think, "Then it may be that God will be merciful unto me." In this, we may find some true faith in grasping the offered mercy, even though it may be weak and imperceptible to the believer. I would consider this to be the lowest degree of faith.

To further strengthen this faith, it is beneficial for those who have not yet experienced it and for every weak believer to focus on the extraordinary mercy and goodness of God. It is God's mercy that makes Him unwilling to cast away any poor sinner and eager to save

even His enemies and high traitors against His Majesty. This is the perfect place for Scriptures that emphasize God's mercy toward sinners, encouraging them to believe. For instance, Ezekiel 33:11, where the Lord swears by Himself, saying, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Similarly, St. Peter teaches that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. These Scriptures and many others should not be understood as expressing God's determining will and decree but rather His revealed and approving will, which He wants us to know and believe. Through this, we can be drawn to rely on Him for salvation. Whoever, even the greatest sinner, does so will not perish but have everlasting life.

This, then, is the sure foundation of faith on which all true believers build: the rich and free mercy of God revealed in the Gospel. It leads all those who will be saved to gratefully accept this freely offered mercy, while they are spiritually dead in their sins and devoid of all saving grace. Therefore, all those who, upon looking into themselves and finding nothing to draw them but all things to drive them from hope of life, should set before them this unspeakable and invaluable mercy of Almighty God. They should see it as not only preparing a remedy for all our misery but also making such a free grant of it in the Gospel to all sinners without exception. Furthermore, in presenting it to them, they should boldly accept this mercy in Christ, offered by a God who is so able and willing to bestow Christ even upon His enemies. If one thing is added to this, I do not see what could be lacking to embolden the sinner to lay hold upon Christ and His merits, which are so freely offered by a God who is both able and willing to grant Christ even to His enemies.

This one thing I mean is God's truth and faithfulness in fulfilling whatever He speaks. As David and Solomon often professed, even though everyone acknowledges that God is faithful and just in all His promises, it is common during times of trial to doubt and fear that God will not keep His word. We don't need to look for proof of this, as it is well-documented in the lives of even the most devout servants of God, who are otherwise highly praised for their faith. Anyone who examines themselves can recognize this tendency within, how readily we question God's truth when He delays the help we expected.

To focus on our current topic, why is it that so few of those who are truly humbled by their misery, who know and desire Christ, and who have heard and generally believed the Gospel – which proclaims glad tidings of salvation and invites all who are burdened to come to Christ for relief – why is it that so few of these individuals truly grasp God's word to believe and be assured of their salvation in Christ?

I can think of no better answer than this: when it comes to ourselves, we struggle to believe that God will fulfill His word to us. Unbelieving hearts raise objections, giving us reasons not to believe. Against all these doubts, we have no defense but God's truth. As Psalm 91:4 puts it, "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler," and this truth is such that God cannot lie or deceive. This is why God is known as the God of truth, Christ as the faithful and true witness, the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, and the Gospel as the word of truth. When our faith falters and we doubt whether God will fulfill His promises, we can anchor ourselves to this unchanging truth – God is faithful.

It is often repeated in Scripture to strengthen our weak faith. Therefore, for those whose faith is weak, the key is to remember that whenever doubts arise regarding their salvation in Christ – whether God truly loves them enough to give His only begotten Son, so that

by believing, they might not perish but have eternal life – they have no other means to convince themselves but to trust that God, who cannot lie, has declared it. They may and should believe that Christ and all His benefits belong to them. Moreover, they must consider the great sin of unbelief, tantamount to making God a liar, as the Apostle John explicitly states, and the dire punishment it incurs – a certain and irremediable condemnation, as our Savior Himself warned.

Through these and similar considerations, true faith is initially begotten and subsequently strengthened in all those who will be saved. I have expounded on this matter in greater detail, not only because it is the most important aspect of genuine saving faith – namely, how those who lack it may attain it – but also because it is often the least understood and sought after, yet the hardest to attain. I have observed many people who seek marks of faith but remain unaware of anything that could truly lead them to believe.

Therefore, to conclude this discussion on the right and orderly path by which an unbeliever comes to true and saving faith, my advice to all who find their faith weak and consequently their lives out of order is to first carefully consider the foundation of their faith. It should rest solely on God's mercy and truth revealed in the Gospel, which are unchanging and provide a firm foundation. Do not build it on your own changes, which are often deceptive and at best, variable. Our personal changes are merely a result and fruit of faith, revealing the strength and weakness of our faith, and they can never be a cause of faith.

Thus, we have discussed what this faith is by which the righteous live and how it is obtained.

Now, in order to prevent anyone from concluding, based on the previous discussion, that a person can, through their own efforts and by using these means, attain faith, I think it is important to add that although it is God's will and commandment for all to believe and receive Christ when He is offered to them through the Gospel, and therefore it is the duty of everyone to do so, and it is their sin and will be their condemnation if they do not, as previously mentioned; yet, due to the corruption of all humanity resulting from Adam's fall, no one has the will or power to receive this grace in Christ offered to them. "For God has shut up all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all, and so many believed as were ordained to eternal life, and faith is the gift of God, and none can come to Christ except the Father draws him." This is wisely arranged by God so that no one can boast in themselves, but rather, the glory of human salvation may be attributed to God. Consequently, apart from this common offer of salvation in Christ presented to all through the Gospel, and besides the common gifts of the Spirit bestowed upon many who have never received Christ by faith, such as knowledge of man's misery and the remedy, sorrow for one and desire for the other, God grants His Holy Spirit to all who will be saved. He inwardly draws and inclines their hearts to believe in God's free and gracious promises, and thus accept Christ offered to them with gratitude. Through this, they indeed become true partakers of Christ and all His benefits, and are justified and sanctified, and will ultimately be fully and eternally glorified.

In this manner, a poor sinner is made the child of God and an heir of glory. Before we move on to our main purpose, to show how this justified individual may live by faith, it is worth considering how one can know that they possess this true faith, and how every true believer can prove it. This certain and infallible knowledge that a

person has true faith arises from both the causes and effects of faith, rather than either one alone, as we shall explain.

Under the causes, I include all the work of God by which He produces faith in a person, which involves these three primary aspects:

1. God, through His Word and Spirit, first enlightens the understanding to truly grasp the doctrine of humanity's misery and its complete recovery through Christ.
2. Secondly, by the same means, He works in the heart a deep sense of sorrow for one's misery and a fervent desire for Christ, the remedy, which leaves the individual restless until they possess Christ.
3. Thirdly, God reveals His love by freely offering Christ with all His benefits to a poor sinner, drawing them to place their trust in God's offer in such a way that they gladly accept Christ when offered to them.

For anyone who finds these three works of God have been accomplished in themselves, they can be certain that they possess faith. However, without these works, no matter how much a change in life may be perceived, there can be no certainty of faith. Therefore, I advise once more that these aspects be closely examined, as they are the primary indicators of genuine faith.

For the first aspect of enlightening, there should be no doubt.

Regarding the second aspect of sorrow, since the causes for sorrow, namely corruption and affliction, still persist, this sorrow must continue until the end of one's life, albeit in a different manner, now

mixed with comfort, unlike the previous sorrow that existed before faith.

Whereas, on the other side, the sorrow that completely dries up was never genuine. This can be observed in many individuals who, once deeply afflicted and in great distress over their miserable condition, later find some comfort and become so secure and apathetic that they have no true remorse or grief for their daily shortcomings. They content themselves with the memory of their past sorrow. Their lives are often marked by flaws, and their ends are frequently fearful, senseless, or uncomfortable. It is perilous to quench the spirit in any aspect of one's life.

Furthermore, as a test of our desires for Christ to ensure they are not fleeting impulses, a certain indicator of sincerity is that the more we taste of Christ, the more we long for Him. This holy hunger for righteousness, to which our Lord Jesus promises blessedness, is often misunderstood as a desire that precedes faith and does not have a promise of blessedness. There is good reason for true believers to increasingly hunger for Christ because, while we live in this world, we receive only the first fruits and an earnest deposit of the fullness that awaits us. Therefore, we cannot be fully satisfied with what we have received but continue to desire more.

Lastly, to ascertain the third work of God by which He works faith, so that anyone may know that God has truly and genuinely worked in them, and not in mere conceit or opinion (wherein many are deceived), I consider the following as most infallible, even in the weakest believers who may know they have faith: although they may be temporarily driven from their faith during temptations, they subsequently return to their rest and find God's Holy Spirit drawing them to believe in God because of His Word. Although their faith

may be weak, it is genuine faith, not the wavering kind that lacks faith altogether.

To illustrate this for those for whom I am writing, particularly weak believers, consider the following analogy: In a pair of empty gold weights, both balances will hang in a wavering fashion without settling on either side. However, if a grain is placed in one of the weights above the other, it will tip the balance down, though it can still be lifted by the wind or a gentle nudge. Yet, if left undisturbed, the grain will weigh it down and keep it steady. Similarly, weak faith may waver, and there may be a degree of uncertainty after temptations. However, when there is any reliance and resting upon God's Word after such trials, there is genuine faith. Conversely, where there is nothing but indecision and uncertainty, that is wavering, which cannot expect to obtain anything, as the Apostle James explains. Therefore, everyone should examine themselves using these criteria to determine whether genuine faith has been wrought in them. These are more certain proofs, though not always as easily discernible.

Now, let's move on to proofs based on the effects and fruits of faith, which are more apparent but not as certain unless it is also evident that they stem from faith.

To clarify this for those for whom I am writing, particularly weak believers: the primary effects of faith are joy and love. Joy in the benefit and love for God, the author of the benefit. These are traits that individuals can readily observe within themselves to determine whether they possess them or not. However, even if someone claims to have joy in their salvation and love for God because of it, these alone do not prove the presence of faith unless it can also be shown that they are the fruit of faith. Otherwise, these traits, along with

several other supposed fruits of faith, are mere counterfeit fruits and natural affections. They can exist in a natural, unregenerate person who is merely enlightened and influenced by a kind of Spirit's working that may also be found in a reprobate individual. Thus, these traits and any other changes in one's life can only serve as evidence of faith if it is clear that they originate from faith.

The ignorance of this deceives many who build their faith on these external signs, whereas true fruits grow from genuine Faith.

To assess our faith by its effects, though they are numerous, they can all be encompassed under this one: receiving the Spirit, not as a temporary visitor to perform a task and then depart, but as a permanent Inhabitant who dwells within us forever. Therefore, this is presented as the unmistakable mark of truly receiving Christ, which is only accomplished through Faith. This is evident in the Epistle of John, "Hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us because he has given us of his Spirit." Similarly, in Galatians, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father." This is also apparent in Galatians 3:2. All experiences confirm this: when God effectively calls someone to embrace Christ, He immediately sends His Holy Spirit upon them. Initially, this may happen in an extraordinary manner, as seen in the Acts of the Apostles, but later, it occurs in an ordinary manner, as in the case of the Ephesians, where it is written that after they believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Therefore, anyone seeking to prove that they have truly believed must be able to demonstrate that they have been sealed in this way with the Holy Spirit, as promised to all believers.

The Spirit is recognized through His work, which, although diverse, can be summarized under two categories: Joy and Love (as previously mentioned). In this regard, the grace of the Spirit is aptly compared to fire, which possesses two properties: light and heat. While these qualities are inseparable so that wherever there is fire, both are present, they are not always equally noticeable. Often, the heat of a fire can be felt when no light is visible. Similarly, in the case of Joy and Love, especially in weak believers, their faith may be so obscured by their corruptions that they cannot consistently experience the sight of it, which would produce joy and comfort regarding their salvation. Nevertheless, their love for God can never be extinguished to the point where they feel no warmth in it. If they truly examine their hearts towards God, it becomes evident that they possess a loving affection for Him, approving of everything He does as right and just. They may even feel remorse for offending Him and a strong desire to please Him. All these qualities, among others, are clear indications of their genuine love for God. Through this, they can demonstrate that they hold some conviction of God's love toward them, which cannot exist without true faith, even though the faith itself, much less the joy within it, may not be visible. I believe this to be the most distinct evidence that a weak believer can have of possessing faith, and I emphasize its importance because in my experience, nothing has provided greater comfort to a truly afflicted conscience—a heart burdened with sorrow for recognizing its misery and desiring Christ as the only remedy but still struggling to believe or at least not being able to perceive that it believes.

Returning to the effects of God's Spirit, by which it is made apparent who has the Spirit of God dwelling in them: each individual must examine their own heart to determine the extent of the genuine joy and comfort they derive from their salvation in Christ and the true love they bear towards God because of it. These two elements are like

the two main branches of the Tree of Life from which all other branches of a godly life emerge.

From the first element, which is the joy of faith, arises all the comfort we anticipate receiving from God in due time and measure, including all necessary blessings. From love emanates a conscientious commitment to offer God cheerful obedience, both in our duties towards God and our duties towards our neighbor. Anyone who lacks participation in these elements can recognize that they have not yet received God's Spirit. Conversely, if anyone finds these qualities within themselves, and their heart does not deceive them, they can have confidence that they are truly living members of Christ. However, it is common for many to be deceived on both sides: some, particularly those who are more pious, mistrust themselves, suspecting that these elements do not genuinely reside within them. Consequently, they fear that they have not truly received the Spirit and are therefore not part of Christ. In reality, these individuals do possess these elements, even if they are unaware of it, and their condition is favorable, although they may not perceive it and consequently remain disheartened.

Others, especially those who are more prominent and of worse character, deceive themselves by believing they possess these and other fruits of the Spirit, thereby having true faith in Christ and salvation. However, in reality, they lack these qualities and only possess empty imitations of them.

It is crucial to establish clear and infallible markers of genuineness, allowing everyone to discern their spiritual state accurately, whether they have truly received God's grace. By doing so, the sincere-hearted, even if they are weak and filled with doubts, can find peace, if not comfort, while hypocrites and presumptuous professors can be

exposed and disheartened. Care must be taken to ensure that the gate is neither too wide, admitting libertines and those who live loosely, nor too narrow, excluding the poorest and weakest believers.

One particular sign of a sincere heart that I have observed, primarily in young Christians and weak believers, is a godly fear of being deceived by false faith, joy, and love. This fear drives them to self-examination and a willingness to be scrutinized by others. They earnestly request God to test them, revealing any falsehood or weakness in their hearts, so that they may be reformed. Conversely, an insincere heart resists examination and flatters itself, believing that all is well, taking offense at any suspicion from others.

Another indicator that the grace we have received is genuine and not counterfeit is the presence of some sorrow for our weaknesses, a desire to be cleansed by Christ, some faith and hope in this cleansing, along with some joy and love for God's grace. However, we should also recognize our poverty in all these areas, which leads us to frequently lament our deficiencies and have a low opinion of ourselves. We highly value God's graces in others and aspire to nothing more than an increase in these virtues within ourselves. These humble thoughts and desires are characteristic of those who have truly experienced God's grace.

In contrast, those who consider every minor affliction a deep wound, view worldly sorrow as genuine godly sorrow, interpret passing desires as fervent ones, and mistake their fantasies for faith, live in self-deception and complacency. They are quick to judge others while elevating themselves. They become slothful in their holy exercises, especially in private, once they perceive themselves as spiritually full. Such individuals are far from true regeneration and, if

not blinded, would recognize the danger of their condition, more perilous than that of those who have never seen the light.

A third mark of a genuine believer, resembling Nathaniel in whom there was no deceit, may be found in their consistency—what they are inwardly matches what they appear to be outwardly. As the Apostle speaks of the Jew and circumcision, we can likewise apply it to a Christian and baptism. It should not be merely an external display but a sincere commitment from the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter. Their praise should come from God, not from men. Thus, anyone who outwardly displays faith and love while lacking these qualities within is a clear hypocrite, far from happiness and sincerity.

Lastly, to conclude this point, strong evidence of the sincerity of our profession can be seen in our obedience to God's commandments, both in terms of the substance and the manner of our obedience. In either case, a marked difference becomes apparent between a child of God and someone who merely pretends.

Regarding the substance, a true child of God genuinely despises all sin that they recognize as sin. They especially detest the sins that trouble them the most and those to which their corrupt nature is most inclined. Conversely, they earnestly desire to please God in all things and exert significant effort to obey Him in the very duties they are naturally averse to. Thus, they effectively mortify the flesh when it seeks to exert its dominion.

The carnal Protestant, on the other hand, will always have some sin that they find sweet, hiding it like sugar-candy under their tongue. They cannot let it go, and they must be tolerated in sins that are most pleasing to their nature, such as the proud person reveling in their pride, the indulgent one in their pleasures, and the covetous one in their sinful gain. This reveals that their hearts are insincere, as they

hold onto certain sins for self-serving reasons. If they truly hated sin because it offends God, they would detest all sins equally.

Similarly, someone who claims to have a conscience about certain commanded duties but willfully neglects others that they know God requires of them, refusing to perform them, has an insincere heart. They prioritize their own comfort, gain, and reputation over God's honor or favor. For instance, someone who refuses to forgive an offense or debt and does not show mercy or provide help through giving and lending when they know they should, or someone who neglects religious practices in private and with their family that they acknowledge they should engage in or fails to sanctify the Sabbath as God commands—these individuals cannot find solid evidence or comfort in believing they have truly been regenerated.

I do not refer to moments of frailty when believers neglect the good that is commanded or commit the evil that is forbidden. Both can occur even in the lives of God's true children, whose will is to do God's will, but who may stumble due to the strength of corruption and the weakness of grace. Instead, I speak of those who purposefully set their hearts on sin, as described in the Psalms, and who resist such duties, refusing to be bound by what they consider as enslavement. These are hollow-hearted hypocrites, regardless of any appearances to the contrary in certain situations.

Regarding the other aspect of true obedience—the right manner thereof—those who conscientiously seek to please God understand that they should not be content with the mere performance of deeds, such as hearing God's word, praying, giving alms, and the like. They strive to carry out these actions in a holy manner, especially with the right inward affections, as God requires. Therefore, they are as deeply humbled for their shortcomings in this regard as if they had

not performed these duties at all. In contrast, the hollow-hearted hypocrite contentedly rests in the outward deed and even boasts of it. They feel wronged if God does not approve of them or if they are not commended by others. They focus solely on the external work, cleaning only the outside of the cup, while neglecting to examine their hearts and the manner in which they perform these and all other holy duties.

In conclusion, we have discussed specific criteria by which every individual professing the name of a Christian may examine themselves and determine whether their heart is upright and their conversion sound. Without these criteria, there can be no true comfort. Those who find these marks of Christ's sheep upon themselves, even if not as clearly as others may, can confidently approach God and assure themselves that they have genuinely received the grace of God's Spirit.

Therefore, to summarize this point, in order for anyone to know with certainty, based on the causes and effects genuinely wrought in them, that they possess true faith and are a genuine member of Christ, a child of God, and an heir of eternal life, they should carefully consider the whole work taken together. Evaluating their entire spiritual condition is the only reliable way to determine if they are a dwelling place or temple for the Holy Spirit.

This I add for their sakes who dangerously hazard their hope of happiness upon some of these works of God's Spirit or more, which may be in those that perish, who have many of these. (I say not in a sanctified manner, but in a common sort, as has been shown already,) whereas this among all is one infallible mark of God's regenerating and sanctifying Spirit, that where he begins, he perfects his work; whom he unites to Christ by faith, he quickens and purges:

so that faith without fruits is a dead stock, and all fruits not growing out of faith are but as wild and bitter grapes unacceptable to God and unprofitable to man.

Having hitherto shown what true faith is, how it is wrought, and how any man may know that this is truly wrought in him by God's Spirit:

Now it follows to consider how he that indeed has this precious faith may live thereby; which is the principal matter intended by me in this Treatise. For the better understanding and practice thereof, we are wisely to weigh these two things.

The first thing is what it is to live by faith.

The second is how this is attained.

For the former, to live by faith is this: God, having made promises of all good things more than we could ask or think, that no good thing shall be wanting, and whatever comes shall be for our good. We are to believe so strongly that we are as well satisfied when we have no means of help as if we had all that our hearts could desire. This applies to both earthly and spiritual matters. For example, if a man falls into a grievous calamity, such as a dangerous disease, and sees no way of help, yet if he believes that God will surely help him, this will make him so contented and comforted as if he had all the help imaginable. Similarly, in spiritual matters, if someone falls into sin with no hope of pardon or amendment, but believes and rests upon God's promise for both, and is comforted, this is living by faith. The practice of both is evident in scripture and in the lives of God's faithful servants.

Notable is that of Abraham, mentioned in Genesis, which the Apostle cites in Romans 4:18, affirming that he "above hope believed in hope,

that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be." In this, it is evident that Abraham, seeing no possibility in natural reason for him to have a son, considering his old age and his wife's barrenness, did not weaken in faith. He did not consider his own body, now dead at about a hundred years old, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver in unbelief but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was also able to perform.

The same faith is evident in the honorable company of those worthy servants of God in all ages, mentioned in Hebrews 11. They are brought in as a cloud of witnesses testifying to the truth that "The just shall live by faith." In all these examples, it appears that whatever situation or adversity they faced, they lived by faith, and nothing could dismay them, much less overthrow them. If we make the right use of their example, we can learn that regardless of the circumstances, we should rest on God's word and promise for all necessary help. In the greatest conflicts, we should be more than conquerors, as the Apostle speaks. What a blessed state this would be, it is not hard to imagine. We will explore this further once we have better learned how to attain to living by faith, which was the second thing I intended to discuss in this point.

For the attaining of this, two things are carefully to be performed:

First, to call to mind God's promises.

Secondly, to apply them.

For the former, in all times of need (that is, whenever God brings us into any difficulty where we see no way of escaping or means for our relief, and we start sinking into fears and anxiety), we should inquire

if there is any good word from the Lord spoken for our comfort. By doing so, we can call these promises to mind and raise hope of help in due time, which can calm and content us until we receive the expected help. This, I believe, is the foundation of all our faith, which enables us to live by faith, be maintained, and upheld in all our trials. This was discussed in more detail earlier when I explained how anyone initially attains saving faith. The goal here is not the daily increase of faith for living by faith but the continuation of the same means, namely, recalling and contemplating God's gracious promises made to comfort His people in all their needs. This brings comfort and patience as we await God's help, which will not be lacking in the time, manner, and measure that He deems most appropriate.

This being the foundation of our faith, God's promises, which are like legacies bequeathed to us by our heavenly Father through His Son Jesus Christ in His last will and testament, what could be more beneficial for us than to search this will and testament for all legacies that concern us? And since there are many promises, we should, in one way or another, commit the most principal of them to memory so that we have them readily available for use in all circumstances, providing comfort as if we had the best help present that we could desire. The true gain of this practice, I would rather we discover through experience than hear from reports. I hope that when we are more specifically directed to put this instruction into practice, we will find it to be true. Nevertheless, for encouragement, I will say this much, and no more than is true: anyone who makes an effort to practice this instruction will find their entire profession, whether in times of prosperity or adversity, easier and more comfortable.

For those with weak memory or limited familiarity with the Scriptures, who may not be able to readily recall such promises of God that are most fitting for their needs, I suggest that they collect

and gather from the holy Scriptures specific promises they believe may be most relevant and helpful to strengthen their faith as needed.

For those who may not be able to adequately help themselves in this manner, my next effort shall be to compile some special promises, which I believe are most useful in our ordinary lives and daily activities, and provide references for them so that they can be easily accessed on all occasions. I will also explain how these promises can be applied to various needs, strengthening our faith and enabling us to live by it. We will explore all this in more detail in their respective places.

Now, let's proceed with what I have in hand, to explain how this invaluable benefit of living by faith may be attained:

1. The first requirement, as previously explained, is to heed the words of the Prophet: "I will hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints." This means that we must call to mind the comforting promises God has made to His children when we find ourselves in any particular condition or situation. By doing this, we can build our faith and live by it. To this end, the next step is essential to achieve the grace of living by our faith:
2. Wisely apply these promises to both our persons, ensuring that we truly are the beneficiaries of them, and to our present condition, ensuring that it aligns with the specific promise God has made for such circumstances, if applicable.

For we shall see that there are general promises which apply to all and should be claimed by everyone.

To better practice this duty, which will increase our faith and enable us to live by it, we must use meditation and prayer. Not just casual or infrequent practices but regular, earnest, wise, and conscientious ones. All of this is necessary to keep our faith alive so that it alone can sustain us when nothing else can. Under this meditation, we should consider God's promises in a way that reveals His good will and care for our well-being. We must recognize His fatherly concern for our welfare and His willingness and ability to help us. To avoid being discouraged by our unworthiness, we must also understand that God's favor is freely given and not earned by any merit of our own. He shows mercy for the sake of His name, which is often stated and always understood.

Or secondly, for that some of those promises are made to certain special individuals, such as Abraham, David, and Saul, and do not appear to belong to us, we should remember that whatever God promises to any of His children, not in any special or personal sense, but as a common favor for all of God's children, every child of God may and should apply to himself as if God had spoken the promise directly to him.

An evident example of this can be found in the promise made to Joshua that God would never leave him or forsake him. The author of the book of Hebrews is bold to apply this promise to those to whom he is writing, exhorting them to let their conversation be without covetousness and to be content with what they have. He reasons that since God had promised not to leave them or forsake them, they should find comfort in that promise. Thus, he applies a promise made to Joshua to all the faithful. We should do the same with all promises made to any of the faithful, as long as there is no special limitation that prevents them from applying to others.

Furthermore, we have the Apostle's statement that "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." This underscores the applicability of promises to all believers. Additionally, all the promises are affirmed in Christ, meaning they are offered and bestowed in a constant and unchangeable manner. Therefore, anyone who has Christ has an interest and right to all the promises of this life and the life to come. Therefore, every faithful soul may boldly apply all the promises to themselves as if they were personally made to them.

Now, for the second part of applying the promises more closely to our present state and condition, we must acknowledge that the Lord has accommodated His promises to our weaknesses. He has not only made general promises to all His children but has also descended to our individual situations and needs, both physical and spiritual. In whatever condition we find ourselves, and whatever work we undertake in His name, He has made promises to His children: to be with them, to provide help and support, to ensure no evil harms them, to ensure no good thing is lacking, and that whatever comes their way will ultimately work for their good.

God often attaches His promises to specific conditions, such as being humble, meek, hungry, afflicted, or in various situations like being fatherless or widowed. He also attaches promises to our prayers, hearing His word, and all other holy exercises, as well as to obedience to His commandments.

It is our wisdom and duty to carefully consider how these promises pertain to us, especially when we possess the qualifications and are in the conditions to which the Lord has made His promises. In such cases, we can confidently apply His promises to ourselves, believing

and expecting His all-sufficient help at the appropriate time. This brings great comfort to those in distress, and the benefits of such an approach cannot be denied or doubted. This is the right way to apply God's promises by meditating on and wisely considering them, so we may derive true benefit from them.

But yet all this is not sufficient, considering our great frailty. We are not only blind and unable to search and see these promises, but we are also forgetful, as mentioned in Hebrews 12:5, where it says, "They had forgotten the consolations." Furthermore, we are slow of heart to believe what God promises to us, as seen in the two disciples in Luke 24:25. We cannot believe more than what God, by His Spirit, works in us, as is evident both from Scripture and daily experience. We are full of doubts, especially when we see no means of hope and despair begins to set in. Therefore, our only refuge is to turn to God and fervently pray that His Spirit would reveal these precious promises from His holy Word and grant us the wisdom to understand and apply them correctly in every situation we find ourselves in. We should also pray for the grace to believe these promises so that we may confidently expect and patiently wait for God's all-sufficient and faithful help, as He has promised.

This duty is often weakly performed, even by those who have received true and saving grace. Therefore, it is essential that those who desire to live by faith consider the great benefits obtained through this practice and the harm caused by neglecting it. They should make it a priority to seek this grace from God, especially in times of necessity, persistently asking until their request is fulfilled.

If anyone combines fervent prayers with diligent meditation on God's promises, I have no doubt that, according to the Lord's own word, they will stand when others fall and rejoice when others cry in

sorrow. The promise in Isaiah 65:13 applies to such individuals, as well as the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:7: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Those who trust in the Lord in this way will be like Mount Zion, which shall never be moved.

Before concluding this discussion on living by faith, I want to emphasize the tremendous benefits that come from it. I have previously mentioned these benefits in general terms but reserved a more detailed explanation for this context, so that those who desire these sweet comforts may be motivated to follow the prescribed means to attain them. However, I must also warn of a potential danger: while the labor of living by faith is neither tedious nor unpleasant and certainly not unbearable, our corrupt nature may resist undertaking it initially and prove challenging to maintain consistently. As a result, few may experience the promised fruit of this practice. Satan employs a cunning strategy to hinder our growth in faith, knowing that our strength to resist him lies in Christ and that our access to Christ is primarily through faith. Therefore, we are exhorted in 1 Peter 5:9 to "resist the devil steadfast in faith." We must strive to preserve the faith once given to the saints, as encouraged by the Apostle Jude. Above all, we should take up the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the Devil, which are the dreadful terrors of an afflicted conscience resulting from the sense of God's wrath.

To motivate us to be especially vigilant in this regard, let us consider the immeasurable benefits that follow from living by faith, so that we may find comfort in enjoying them. When contemplating these benefits, it reminds me of the Apostle's response to the question, "What is the profit of circumcision?" His answer was, "Much every way."

To speak the truth, there is no good thing that God has prepared for the sons of men or promised to any of His children that they can obtain in any way other than through faith. The Scriptures abundantly demonstrate this, especially in the remarkable chapter of Hebrews 11. Additionally, verse 2 states that the elders obtained a good report through faith. I interpret this as follows: No act deserving true praise can ever be done except through faith. For whatever is not done in faith must necessarily be sinful and cannot please God. Conversely, where true faith exists, according to its measure, it accomplishes such marvelous effects that clearly reveal the presence of God's power and His primary role therein. This can be deduced from what the Apostle prays for the Ephesians: that they might know the exceeding greatness of God's power in us who believe, which excellently extols the magnificence of faith.

Now, instead of staying in generalities, I will uncover some of the great treasures enjoyed by faith. I could simply refer those who desire to behold and attain these benefits to the excellent treatise on the privileges of true Christians written by Master Rogers (which I wish were better regarded). In that work, one can find a full exposition of the special favors and benefits God has provided for His children, both in this life and in the life to come. All of these, being God's free gifts and legacies bequeathed to us in Christ, are received solely through faith and serve as strong incentives to encourage us to stand firm in the faith and do everything necessary to maintain it.

However, since many may not have access to that book and others may lack the time or inclination to read lengthy treatises, I will highlight some of the principal benefits that should persuade us not to spare any effort in becoming partakers of these great blessings. First and foremost, it should be noted that although very few attain

the blessed state described in Romans 5:1-5, those who are justified by faith enjoy all of these benefits.

First, there is peace towards God. Every soul, by nature, is a child of wrath and therefore engaged in mortal conflict with God. Such a soul is a servant of sin and Satan, God's sworn enemy, and is consequently outside of God's favor and subject to His fearful wrath. Now, for such a person to be absolved of their trespasses and punishment, and to be reconciled to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, resulting in an everlasting peace between God and them where there will be no more strife or displeasure—this cannot be considered a small blessing. If this were a reconciliation between a rebel and their king, it would require a great price. However, it is much more than that, for it is a far higher favor for a traitor not only to be pardoned and delivered from the king's wrath, thereby achieving full reconciliation, but also to be taken into the king's special grace. They become one whom the king greatly loves and admits to his inner circle, granting them free access to the king's presence, where the king cannot deny them anything. In essence, they are elevated to a position similar to Joseph in Pharaoh's court or Mordecai in Ahasuerus's court—such is the favor extended by God. Furthermore, to transition from being an enemy to becoming a son and heir, even a coheir with Christ, is an unimaginable favor. Yet this is the addition to the former blessing: those who are justified by faith have access through faith into this grace in which they stand. I understand this to mean that we are not only fully and freely acquitted of all God's just displeasure due to our sins, resulting in complete peace between God and us, but we are also elevated to the high dignity of being called the sons of God, as stated in John 1:12. This is the grace in which we now stand. Through this grace, we can boldly cry out, "Abba, Father," and we have the freedom to enter His presence to request whatever we desire, with the assurance that it

will be granted to us, as promised by Christ Himself in John 15:7. All other blessings flow from this as the fruits and effects of the grace and favor to which we have been admitted.

Among these benefits, one principal follows in this Scripture: that we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. In other words, no matter how contemptible our state may be in this world (which is often quite bleak), we have hope of such a glorious future with God in His kingdom that not only makes us rejoice inwardly but also leads us to express this joy in both words and actions. In words, we boast in a heavenly manner about the honors we will receive with God when we are received into His kingdom, as we see the Apostle Paul did on numerous occasions (2 Timothy 4:7-8). In deeds, we openly demonstrate that we are willing to forgo the fleeting worldly advantages that worldly people highly esteem, even exchanging them for heavenly treasures. A worthy example of this is Moses, as described in Hebrews 11:24. When he had come of age, he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. He considered the reproach of Christ to be of greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had regard for the reward. On the other hand, when we are willing to do as our Lord and Master Christ did—enduring the cross and despising the shame for the joy set before Him—we demonstrate that we are ready to suffer with Christ in order to reign with Him. We count the sufferings of this present time as unworthy of comparison with the glory that will be revealed. In this way, we truly glory in the hope of the glory of God. In fact, he who possesses this hope cannot help but consider all things as worthless compared to Christ and being glorified with Him. Although it is absolutely true that the glory of God is beyond human comprehension—eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive of its excellence—God has granted His beloved a glimpse of this glory.

Peter, James, and John had such a glimpse on the Mount of Transfiguration, where they believed that their lowly bodies would be transformed to be like the glorious body of Christ. They believed their souls would be cleansed from all blemishes and adorned with the perfect righteousness of Christ. They anticipated being like Christ in both soul and body, thus being glorified with Him. In this way, Christ will be glorified in them, and they will sit with Him on His throne. Furthermore, they will have such a union with Christ that they will become one with God the Father, just as Christ and His Father are one—a profound truth for which our Savior prayed to His Father. All of this, which far surpasses the limited understanding of our feeble minds, is sufficient reason for those who are assured by faith that they will certainly and fully enjoy this glory when they shed their earthly tabernacle to rejoice and glory in the hope of the glory of God. The immense benefit of this hope is immeasurable, and though it cannot be fully assessed, anyone with their faculties exercised to discern both good and evil can easily recognize it as something exceedingly valuable. Therefore, there is ample reason for everyone who knows of it to spare no expense or effort to attain it.

In the following words, the Apostle, not content with explaining the unique benefits experienced through a life of faith, adds another great aspect to this experience. He states that believers do not only rejoice in the hope of God's glory in a holy manner but also glory in tribulation. This is because they understand that tribulation produces patience (verse 4), patience leads to experience, and experience strengthens hope (verse 5). Hope does not disappoint us, because the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who is given to us. This means that faith has such a powerful effect when it is alive that it brings comfort and peace to God's children in their most humble circumstances. They not only rejoice in the hope of the coming glory, which is the best part of their

condition, but they also find reasons for outward joy even in the worst part of their condition—tribulations and afflictions of all kinds. This is more remarkable still. When they rejoice in these tribulations, it does not merely mean that they endure them with faith and patience but that they genuinely glory in them and find joy in suffering for the sake of Christ. Indeed, while these tribulations are extremely unwelcome to the natural man and diminish his comfort and joy, it is a remarkable blessing for believers to not only overcome them through faith and patience but also to glory in them and find joy in being considered worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name. These afflictions, however numerous and severe they may be, will not harm God's children; instead, they will work for their good in various ways. Therefore, God's children have ample cause for joy and thanksgiving—not for the pain and distress that are bitter, but for the gain that is sweet (Hebrews 12:11).

Because this concept is not readily accepted, the Apostle, in this Scripture (Romans 5:3, etc.), undertakes to provide sufficient reasons for it. Namely, that the firm believer knows that tribulation works patience, patience produces experience, and experience leads to hope, etc. In all of this, he illustrates certain special fruits that God's children harvest through afflictions. Specifically, that whereas all of us, by nature, are like untamed heifers unaccustomed to the yoke, who, by bearing the yoke, become gentle and willing to put their necks under it and quietly bear it, so God's children, not being familiar with afflictions, are greatly disquieted by them at first. However, through further experience with various tribulations, they become more familiar with and willing to endure them, which is true patience—not to be furious or senseless but meekly to endure under God's hand and hold their peace because God, who cannot err, has ordained it. The value of this can be seen in how few have truly learned this Christian patience.

From this arises another special fruit: experience. Just as sailors, when first going to sea and observing the great waves and the tossing of the ship, constantly expect to be swallowed up and perish. Yet, by enduring many of these storms, they gain experience of God's power in preserving them. As a result, they no longer fear perishing as much as before but endure these trials more cheerfully. Similarly, the faithful, though initially dismayed by the multitude of troubles they encounter, both internal corruptions and external afflictions (reproaches and injuries from people of the world, not the least among them), find, through patient endurance, that God has enabled them to bear these burdens and graciously delivered them. Consequently, they become like trained soldiers, better equipped to endure and benefit from such trials, and they eagerly await a favorable outcome from them. This is the next benefit mentioned: hope. Regarding this, it is said, "Experience works hope," signifying that in all kinds of difficulties, people who have frequently found help and relief gather hope of similar assistance in the future. Likewise, the repeated proof and experience of God's mighty power and ready help in all their trials and troubles, both in sustaining them under heavy burdens and ultimately relieving them, leads the faithful to hope for similar help in times of need. The soothing relief this brings to a weary heart can be seen in the common and true proverb: "If it were not for hope, the heart would break."

To go no further, the next words make this evident, where it is said, "Hope does not put us to shame." That is, when we are severely distressed and see no apparent means of escape or deliverance, we naturally begin to despair, to be confounded within ourselves, and to hide our heads in shame, feeling unable to endure the reproachful remarks that usually accompany such discouragement. A clear example of this can be seen in the case of Job. However, if there is a true hope grounded in God's faithful promise of help at the right

time, embraced by faith, then we will be able to lift up our heads boldly and declare, like faithful Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." For this reason, the grace of hope is appropriately likened to a helmet, with which an armed person dares to hold their head high and look their enemy in the face.

This is the benefit that the believer has in all extremities, which no others can enjoy. For those who, if not senseless, either struggle like wild beasts in a net or sink down in despair without any comfort.

If this is indeed the case, then let it be acknowledged as no ordinary blessing to live by faith, which, in addition to many others, brings such patience, experience, hope, and confidence in all our troubles. The true cause of all this, as the Apostle explains, is that "the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." This means that just as the love of a friend is best tested and seen in times of greatest need, God's love for His children is most evident in their greatest tribulations.

For whereas at other times God gives to His children some sweet tastes of His fatherly love, in all their troubles, He is so troubled, and His compassion so stirred, that, like a tender mother, He as if cradles them in His lap and speaks to them so kindly. Not only does He console them, but He helps them in every way as needed. Now they clearly see how tenderly He loves them. This grace is wrought in them by the Holy Ghost, given to all believers. All of this highlights God's great favor toward these individuals and their most fortunate condition, which is reserved for those who live by faith. All of this is contained in a single scripture, Romans 5:7, which I have only begun to explain and have not fully expounded upon all that it contains.

Now, if this one box of spikenard contains such a wealth of sweet consolations, what may we think can be drawn from all the other

scriptures? I dare say it amounts to a large volume. It is worth noting that although the Lord, in His great wisdom and love, considering our frailty, who are more reluctant to read much than inclined to remember what we read, has conveyed His will in inimitable brevity, He is exceedingly generous in presenting His exceedingly great and precious promises, as Saint Peter calls them. All of these promises contain the earthly and spiritual blessings, for this life and the life to come, which God has prepared for all true believers, who alone are the rightful recipients of these blessings. I believe this sufficiently demonstrates what I intend: the benefits of living by faith. This can be more clearly seen in the Apostle's own words in the scripture, where he intentionally sets out the blessed state of those justified by faith and introduces all these unique benefits we have mentioned. He also adds that it is by faith that we have access into this grace in which we stand.

In truth, as has been stated earlier, neither these nor any other saving grace or true blessing is obtained except by faith. Therefore, I may conclude that anyone looking to find comfort in this life and to nurture hope for a better one should make it their primary endeavor to live by faith. It is through faith alone that all these blessings and everything one may desire are enjoyed.

And thus, I would leave this point to be proved more by experience than by argument and come to what I chiefly aim at, to bring this doctrine into practice. As I promised earlier, I will collect some special promises and show how they are to be applied particularly to every person and condition to whom they belong.

But first, I remember there is one other singular use of faith that we stand in great need of, yet it is very weakly attained because it is so little sought after. And this is how, by faith, we might better master

our greatest corruptions and discharge those duties wherein we most fail. To emphasize the importance of this, I must express my deep concern at the sight of so many individuals who, I have good hope, have truly received the grace of God, yet neither themselves can feel nor others discern any apparent growth in true sanctification. They struggle to subdue their chiefest infirmities or walk in a manner that befits their condition. Instead, there is a general conformity to the corruptions of the times, deadness of spirit in all holy exercises, gross and continual neglect or common abuse of spiritual practices such as private reading, meditation, prayer, instruction, wise family governance, and holy conversations in their brotherly meetings.

On the other side, there is excessive indulgence in sinful merry-making, worldly pursuits, and pleasure, along with an undue focus on material possessions, appearance, and the adornment of their children. They seem to set their minds and affections on things below, rather than being risen with Christ. I could say the same about their lack of mercy and their impatience in the face of adversity. All these blemishes in their holy profession and failings in their spiritual comforts are observed, and I have seen and heard that the deaths of many brought little cause for rejoicing. This is not surprising, given their lack of effort to glorify God in their lives, win others to Christ, or make their calling and election sure. It is just with God that their deaths lacked the glory and comfort enjoyed by others of God's children who live by faith and have learned to bridle their unruly affections and walk wisely for the honor of God, the edification of others, and the peace of their own consciences. All of this is achieved by faith, and not without it, as previously mentioned and will be further demonstrated.

The Apostle in Romans 7:14, speaking of himself as now regenerated, says, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold

under sin." He goes on to explain in the subsequent verses that even in those who have true faith and are genuinely regenerated, a corrupt nature remains that keeps them from many good duties and leads them into various sinful actions. This corrupt nature can have such a strong hold on them at times that they have no power to resist, let alone overcome it. This captivity to their corruptions is analogous to a poor soldier taken prisoner by the enemy and held in captivity until rescued by his captain. Similarly, God's children are often held captive by their corruptions, and they lack the power to resist or overcome them until they are delivered by the power of Christ. This captivity is evident in various aspects of their lives, as mentioned earlier.

For example, a Christian may be so consumed by the love of worldly wealth that, despite desiring and intending to be more merciful to God's needy saints, they cannot overcome themselves to give as they ought. The same applies to lending, fair buying and selling, and other matters related to profit and pleasure. Those in captivity to their lusts often succumb to vanity in apparel, attending plays, engaging in card games, dice, and other forms of gambling. Their inability to control their desires is also evident in their thoughts of revenge and uncharitable thoughts toward those who wrong them. These individuals find it extremely difficult to restrain their lusts, and often it is seemingly impossible to offer a kind word or a pleasant countenance to those who offend them. Those who can discern their own corrupt nature can easily see the great difficulty in controlling their lusts and, at times, how impossible it is to offer goodwill to those who wrong them.

By all of these and many similar examples, it becomes evident that many of God's children are held in captivity to their corruptions to the extent that, by their own strength alone, they cannot break free.

Without deliverance by Christ, they will be utterly overcome. The Apostle himself expresses this in the same passage, where he laments the difficulty of the struggle but does not despair. He cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He answers his own question, saying, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This means that even though he saw no power within himself or in any other creature to free him from the corruption of nature, which leads to death if not subdued, he found such help in Christ that he joyfully thanked God for it. This illustrates a valuable practice that I aim to draw believers toward, which is learning how to master their strongest corruptions through faith. In this passage, the Apostle, unable to find sufficient power outside of Christ to deliver him from the captivity of sin and death, seizes Christ by faith. He is assured, based on Christ's promise, that His grace would be sufficient for him and that Christ's power would be magnified in his weakness. Thus, he believes that he will not be left in the hands of his enemies but will, in due time, be set free to serve the Lord more fully. I recommend this practice to every true believer: when they feel their corruptions overwhelming them and all their efforts failing, they should turn to Christ and, through genuine faith, apply His promises to mortify sin. By doing so, they can receive power from Christ to crucify the old man along with its sinful desires.

To facilitate this practice, I will briefly outline the most direct and reliable way I know to mortify any sin. It involves diligent adherence to the following four rules:

Firstly, recognizing that we are all naturally blind to our sins and filled with pride and self-love, thinking more highly of ourselves than we should, everyone seeking to mortify their sin must make every effort to identify their most grievous sins, those most displeasing to God.

These means include:

1. A thorough examination of ourselves in light of every commandment.
2. A vigilant observation of all our actions, much like tracking footprints in the snow, to discern our steps in times of temptation. For instance, we must examine our impatience when provoked, as well as other sins like pride and covetousness.
3. Seeking and accepting admonition from those who observe our weaknesses.
4. Fervently praying to God to reveal our most significant imperfections. By faithfully employing these methods and similar ones, we will uncover our areas most in need of reform. Armed with this awareness, we can more effectively apply our efforts towards recovery.

The second rule is that once we have identified our sin, we must make our hearts weary of it and willing to be cured. We can achieve this by considering the great harm it brings us, both in withholding good things from us and in bringing numerous evils upon our souls and bodies, as well as upon those connected to us. It would be possible to enumerate these in detail, but it would divert me from my intended focus. It suffices to remember that all our woes result from our sins, as both Scripture and reason, along with continuous experience, attest. If we were to weigh this carefully, we would become more weary of our sin than of our sickness or other afflictions. This would engender in us fervent desires for deliverance. Therefore, we should continually contemplate the bitter fruits produced by our sins and understand that all the sorrows we encounter originate from them.

The third and most crucial rule is that, given our weakness, when we have gained a true awareness of our principal corruptions and have developed a revulsion towards them with a strong desire to be free from them, we still lack the ability within ourselves to mortify them. All our sufficiency is of God, and without Christ, we can do nothing, as is often mentioned but not sufficiently heeded. Therefore, our ability to mortify sin primarily depends on drawing power and virtue from Christ through faith. This power and virtue transform our stubborn and unyielding nature into something pleasing and agreeable to the Lord our God. This is what I chiefly aim to persuade those who earnestly desire to gain mastery over their powerful corruptions and unruly affections: do as the woman did in the Gospel who had suffered from an issue of blood for twelve years, and after many failed attempts by physicians and much spent on seeking healing, she heard of Jesus. She came up behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment, saying to herself, "If I may but touch Him, I shall be whole." Instantly, the fountain of her blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Likewise, all who have struggled with many foul issues of sin such as pride, hypocrisy, security, presumption, anger, impurity, worldliness, and many others, and have expended great effort, finding no improvement but rather worsening of their condition, must do the same. They must come to Christ, touch Him with true faith, and experience the virtue flowing from Him to dry up the fountain of their corruptions.

I wish this approach could be more thoroughly tested. What would be the difference between this and all other methods for mortifying the flesh, which, without this, are insufficient and can even be deceptive? Where can the power to overcome sin in our nature be found, if not in Christ, who shares our nature? Can man's reason, will, or determination enable him to forsake sins that he finds

pleasurable and profitable? Even if they could help in some outward actions, particularly in the eyes of men, they cannot please God inwardly. This is a work exclusively accomplished by the Spirit of God in true believers. The method for achieving this has already been explained. Here, I only advocate for the use of living by faith, as there is no true mortification of any sin without it. By employing faith, we shall assuredly gain power over our oldest and strongest corruptions in our nature.

If one more thing is added, there would be nothing lacking for the mortification of all our sins, or at least in a measure acceptable to God, and from which we may derive comfort. This fourth rule, which I intend to present, is that once we have acquired: 1. a true awareness of our sin, 2. a willingness to be cured of it, and 3. the power from Christ to subdue it, we must then engage in the battle with good courage and resist all the attacks of Satan, the enticements of this world, and the evil lusts of our own hearts. We must not give the devil a foothold but resist him vigorously, steadfast in faith, as we are often exhorted. We are assured that he will flee from us. This is the same advice the Apostle offers, urging us to put on the whole armor of God so that we can stand against the wiles of the devil. He also encourages us to fight the good fight of faith, to quit ourselves like men, and to be strong. All these exhortations and many others demand that all who have received Christ by faith, along with all the necessary grace from Him to withstand all spiritual adversaries, should courageously engage in the Lord's battles. They should not shrink back due to slothfulness, but they must not be cowardly and yield to their enemies, which would lead to their defeat, as daily experience demonstrates. Many fail in this regard. On the other hand, many recklessly rush into battle without proper armor and are soundly defeated. This is the common mistake of those who lack faith and resolve to forsake sins that terrify them before God and

cause shame before men. They also bind themselves in various ways, such as swearing off bad company, gambling, card-playing, drinking, and worse habits. Yet, often they do not succeed. Even when they do, it is far from true mortification, and they do not attain true comfort. Therefore, it is essential for all who hope for victory in this spiritual battle to first acquire this armor and then engage in the fight. Thus, I have presented the best method I know for overcoming various corruptions and all other spiritual enemies. Since this method cannot be accomplished without faith, which is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith, it thoroughly proves the point I aim to make. It underscores the value of this precious gift of faith, which anyone who has experienced or fears the wounds of sin and has tasted or desires the joy of a good conscience, as mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:12, will have ample reason to prioritize and embrace repeatedly, as the word implies.

The shield of faith: The same may be said for the other part of sanctification, namely, that all our ability to lead a godly life and comfortably perform all good duties to God and man is attained no other way than by faith, as has been already explained and could be more abundantly proven by Scriptures and experience if necessary. But I will only add this to assist those who are weaker in faith, showing them how, by using the previous rules appropriately, they may, to some extent, practice all holy duties, especially those in which they struggle the most.

First, everyone should inquire and, by all means available, learn what specific duties God requires of them in their general calling as Christians or in their particular roles where God has placed them. They should also recognize the gifts and graces in which they are weakest so that they can labor more earnestly to acquire them. This knowledge will serve as a guiding light on the path to heaven.

Without it, people remain in darkness and can never lead a godly life. While they may desire to improve, their ignorance blinds them, making it impossible to find the way. This is a significant reason why the lives of many professing religion appear barren, with little more than the outward appearance of faith.

Most people believe it is sufficient to avoid gross offenses and to practice the common duties of religion and righteousness. To understand how to please God in all things is often considered too precise or unnecessary. Yet the best of God's children, recognizing their blindness, frequently seek God for knowledge and understanding of His will, as exemplified by David's prayers. Despite having extensive knowledge of his duties, he still implored God to teach him His ways and give him understanding.

The necessity and usefulness of this knowledge regarding what God expects from us in our roles and in our various states of prosperity and adversity can be easily recognized by those who genuinely desire to please God. They often find themselves unsure about many things, both what to do and how to conduct themselves. Therefore, I advise everyone who seeks the comfort of a holy life to examine themselves carefully regarding which duties they fail in the most, whether by neglecting them or performing them improperly. To help with this, one can follow the approach described in the first rule of mortification for identifying their chief sins. Likewise, here, one must learn what the primary work is that God requires and how it should be done. This knowledge should serve as a constant light to guide us in the right path ordained by God.

This is the first rule to be observed for the proper ordering of our entire life, which, though essential, is not sufficient.

In the next step, we must strive to make our hearts willing and eager to perform the good deeds that we know God requires of us. We are not only ignorant of what God wants us to do and how to do it, but we are also often unwilling to do either, as our daily actions demonstrate. This reluctance is especially evident when it comes to doing more than the bare minimum, a deficiency the Lord knows is poorly addressed. To illustrate, consider the carnal Protestant and hypocrite, who only do things superficially and for show. However, this issue can also be found among those who have some genuine faith. While they may be conscientious about certain duties, they are reluctant to engage in others that require more effort or go against their corrupt nature, especially those that affect their reputation, profit, or pleasure.

As a result, many are negligent or apathetic about reading, private prayer, meditation, family instruction, and keeping the Sabbath holy. They are resistant to practices like sobriety and true generosity. Above all, how rarely can most of us be persuaded to humble ourselves through fasting and prayer, even when there are numerous legitimate reasons to do so, both for ourselves and for others, in public and private. These examples and others like them highlight the need for this rule—to make our hearts more willing for every known duty.

The way to accomplish this is through frequent and deliberate reflection on the great benefits that come from faithfully fulfilling the duties assigned to us. These duties bring glory to God, benefit others, and provide peace to our own souls. These benefits are often acknowledged in words but are not consistently experienced by many true believers.

Of this gain, the Apostle spoke well in 1 Timothy 6:6, saying, "Godliness with contentment is great gain," and in chapter 4:8, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." To the same purpose, the Prophet said, "In keeping of them," meaning God's commandments, "there is great reward." No one with any grace will deny these truths. However, many, not remembering or not believing them, and being drawn away by other more desired gains, despise this greatest gain and neglect the means that bring it about.

The true practice of this rule, then, is that when we feel a reluctance to any duty that we know God requires, we should stir up our hearts by considering how our obedience will honor God and our profession, draw and inspire others to similar obedience, silence critics, bring us much peace, comfort, and respect among God's servants, and even draw down all necessary blessings while averting the harsh rebukes of a guilty conscience, reproaches in the world, and severe chastisements that God inflicts on His children for their neglect of the duties He requires. If these considerations were remembered and valued as they should be, they would, at the very least, make us willing to do our utmost to please God. However, willingness alone is not enough to enable us to do as we desire. For, as Paul speaks of himself, we find much more in ourselves than that which we would do. The decay caused by Adam's fall has left us with no knowledge of God's will to guide our lives until He reveals it, and no willingness to obey it until God makes us willing. Thus, even when we have both knowledge and willingness, we still lack the ability to do good.

Therefore, a third rule is needed to direct us on how to acquire the ability to perform the good we know and desire to do. Since all our ability to do any good thought, word, or work is from God, as

previously discussed, and we can do nothing without Christ, as has been shown on another occasion, it is clear that our strength for any duty that is pleasing to God lies in Christ. It must be communicated to us by Him so that, through it, we may be capable of doing God's will. We have already heard that the only way to apply Christ to us and draw grace and virtue from Him to perform any good work is through faith. By faith, we are united to Him, and we receive all the necessary grace to enable us to obey God to the extent that He will accept from us. Therefore, whenever we have a true desire to do God's will in any matter, such as forgiving our enemies, being more patient under adversity, humbling ourselves before God in fasting, praying fervently with fruitful results, and listening to God's word with a more conscientious ear, our practice should be, as before, for mortification and now for new obedience, to turn to Christ and lay hold of Him with true faith. Through Him, we will be able to do all things and receive all the necessary grace for living a godly life. This is a special part of the great benefit we gain by faith—that, even though we are inherently weak when it comes to every good work, faith in Christ strengthens us in grace. Thus, we can serve God in such a way that pleases Him with reverence and godly fear. In this regard, I commend to our daily practice that, by living in faith, our lives may bring more glory to God, set a good example and profit our brethren, and provide sweet comfort to our own souls both in life and death.

To better practice this, a fourth rule must also be observed. With this knowledge, desire, and faith, we must engage in the duties in which we most frequently fail and exert all our strength to do God's will in all things. We must do so in a manner that is most acceptable through Christ. This is why we find many exhortations to holy living in the Scriptures, both in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets. We are called to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and

more. Although these are justly required of all, they cannot truly be performed without faith. This is why they are rarely obeyed or only superficially obeyed. Some may attempt holy duties in their own strength without drawing on the virtue of Christ through faith, and their efforts are in vain. On the other hand, many idle professors deceive themselves by saying they hope in Christ for the power and strength to lead a better life. Yet they negligently avoid the labors that God commands, which could help them attain more grace and better obedience. Thus, all these rules are necessary, and not one of them can be omitted. Anyone who seeks the comfort of a good conscience, either in overcoming their specific sins or conscientiously practicing their special duties, must consistently follow these rules. By doing so, their gain will undoubtedly justify their efforts, to say the least.

And thus, I have, as briefly and plainly as I can (as previously mentioned), shown how a true believer can attain to the great grace of leading a godly life in both its parts—dying to all sin and living to all righteousness. This is a privilege that no one else can possibly attain, and not all who believe in salvation through Christ enjoy this benefit. While they may be renewed in part and mortify the flesh to some extent, and they may conscientiously practice some duties of holiness and righteousness, without which they could not prove their saving faith, they either do not understand how to live by faith in a way that allows them to shine as lights in the dark world or do not put this knowledge into practice. Consequently, they not only remain dim lights but also set a bad example and live in offensive ways that bring reproach upon their profession, cause grief to the godly, and provide little peace or comfort to their own consciences. All of these problems could be avoided, and the opposite blessings enjoyed, if living by faith became a daily practice.

By considering all the previous benefits of living by faith together, I hope it is abundantly clear that there is no life comparable to a life of faith. In fact, there is none to be desired besides it. Only a life of faith has all the promises for both this present life and the life to come. Therefore, to conclude this first part of the Treatise, in which I have explained what true faith is, how it is acquired, and how one may know if they possess true faith, as well as what it means to live by faith, how this is achieved through a wise application of God's promises, and the manifold and exceptional benefits that result from it—I earnestly beseech all those who have genuine faith in Christ and desire to adorn it with a holy life. If, upon closer examination of their ways, they find that their profession has been of little use to others and has brought them little comfort (not to mention the offensive aspects of their lives mentioned earlier), I entreat all such individuals to put my advice to the test. Learn to live by faith, follow the guidance outlined here until you are better equipped to guide yourselves. Thus, my hope and prayer are that God will reveal such fruit from your labor that it brings you daily comfort greater than that experienced in many days, and to some, more than in any day of their past lives. I humbly beseech the Lord to grant this not only to myself but also to all who read these words, for His sake, Christ.

The Second Part of this Treatise

Containing a direction on how to apply God's promises to our particular occasions.

For a better understanding and practice of the duty of the particular application of God's promises to our specific needs, so that we may live by faith (which is the primary focus of this Treatise), we should carefully consider the nature and types of these promises, which form the foundation of our faith. This will enable us to apply them more effectively to our various situations and needs.

By God's promises, I mean, in general, all those declarations of God's will found in His Word, wherein He offers us any good thing to enjoy. Conversely, by threats, I mean those declarations of His will wherein He warns of potential harm or consequences for sin. Both promises and threats are abundantly presented in the Holy Scriptures. Promises are meant to allure and draw us to believe and obey God's will, while threats are meant to deter us from sin. God communicates His will in two ways: absolutely and conditionally.

Absolutely, God declares what He will certainly do, without regard to any opposing factors. For example, "There shall be no more waters of a flood to destroy all flesh," or "At this time, I will come, and Sarah shall have a son." These are considered words of promise, as confirmed by the Apostle. Such promises include those concerning salvation made to the elect, which cannot be nullified by any means whatsoever.

The other manner in which God reveals His will is not absolute but conditional. In conditional promises, God declares what He will do if

we fulfill our part; otherwise, the promise is not valid. A proper understanding of conditional promises is essential, as misunderstanding them can distort the nature of the free and gracious promise of the Gospel. It can also blur the distinction between the Covenant of works (where God promised life on the condition of complete obedience to the law, without which He did not covenant to grant life) and the Covenant of grace. In the Covenant of grace, God freely promised not only life but also the grace to receive this life. For instance, in Jeremiah 31:31-35 and Ezekiel 36:24 and onwards, there is no requirement on our part; God Himself makes those whom He pleases capable of receiving this grace. I will explain how these are to be applied by us later on.

Since many, if not most, of the free gracious promises of the Gospel come with some condition—either explicitly stated or necessarily implied—we must carefully consider them. For example, in many promises, the condition or required duty is explicitly expressed, as seen in John 3:15, "Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Secondly, in others, the duty required for attaining the thing promised is necessarily understood. For example, "The Son of Man is come to save that which is lost," or "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," and many others. In all these cases, faith is necessarily implied as the means to obtain the promised benefit. However, in these instances, faith is not a condition in the sense of moving God to promise life. It may be called a condition because the promise of life is made to individuals qualified by faith. Faith itself is part of the promised blessing, and no one can believe unless it is granted to them. Therefore, it is an impossible condition to be fulfilled by our own efforts. It should be noted that faith applies the fruit and benefit of the promise to the

believer, who alone will enjoy the promised blessing. Faith does not restrict the offer of grace, which is extended generally to all who hear the Gospel. People do not possess faith before hearing the promise, and after hearing it, if they do not believe, they will be condemned for their unbelief, as stated in John 3:18. Thus, in conditional promises, God freely offers mercy in any form, requiring some obedience on our part to obtain it. First, we must believe, then obey, and finally, enjoy the promised blessing. Therefore, faith is not a condition to believe, but rather the condition to enjoy what is promised. For instance, "If you forgive, you shall be forgiven." God freely offers forgiveness and requires that we, believing, show mercy to others, as illustrated in the parable found in Matthew 18:32. Thus, the one who believes in receiving mercy is moved to show mercy, and those who do not show mercy do not receive it.

Additionally, there is another consideration regarding God's promises, which involves the diverse quality of the things promised. Some promises are wholly necessary for our salvation and are offered without restraint. These promises, such as faith and repentance, must be believed without hesitation. However, other things, although good in themselves, are not always necessary for our salvation. We may be saved without them, and in some cases, it may be better to lack them than to possess them. Examples of such things include health, wealth, peace, and all earthly blessings, as well as many common spiritual gifts or graces, at least in terms of the extent of those gifts. These are promised with limitations, to the extent that they are good for us. Therefore, we should desire and believe in them only to that extent.

Another important consideration regarding God's promises, to aid in our proper application of them, is that God proclaims in the Gospel that His Son, Christ, and all His benefits are offered generally to

every soul who hears the Gospel. Thus, anyone who hears the Gospel should believe. Even if they cannot believe without special grace, their unbelief becomes their sin and will lead to their condemnation for rejecting the offered mercy. Therefore, everyone who desires not to perish must believe in God's mercy as He offers it and trust that God is able, willing, and faithful to fulfill His promises. Believing in this way, they can enjoy the benefits that they would otherwise deprive themselves of. This is a warning so that people do not exclude themselves and bring upon themselves a just condemnation, as expressed in John 3:18, "He that believes not is condemned already," and in verse 19, "This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, etc."

There are also many specific promises made to specific individuals who perform certain duties, such as faith and trust in God, confession of sin, prayer, and obedience. For every duty, there is a corresponding reward, even if not always explicitly mentioned. While the prospect of a reward may motivate the heart to desire it, it cannot generate faith. Faith arises from believing in the truth of the promiser, and belief in receiving the desired reward motivates obedience. Therefore, when individuals hear about such rewards promised, they should be moved to believe and subsequently obey, as previously mentioned. These considerations will help guide those who are weaker in faith to apply and make proper use of all the promises in Scripture that concern them.

Now, because these promises are numerous, we must organize them in a clear and concise manner, to prevent overwhelming the memories of those with weaker faculties and to avoid confusing their understanding with numerous divisions, as is often observed. I cannot think of a simpler way to teach the complete use of our faith in every aspect of our lives than to elucidate the most essential

matters in which we are most prone to doubt and fear. By identifying our ailments, we may more aptly apply the remedy.

Examining the entire course of life, I observe six distinct occasions of doubt, during which we require the most relief through faith:

1. First and foremost, we often doubt whether we are in a state of grace and, therefore, among those who will be saved by Christ.
2. Secondly, we wonder how we will conquer our powerful corruptions and temptations.
3. Thirdly, we seek guidance on how to obtain the grace to pray, hear the Word, and perform all duties to God and man in faith, in a manner that God will accept.
4. Fourthly, we contemplate how to endure and benefit from all afflictions and persecutions.
5. Fifthly, we consider how we will be provided for with all necessary things for this earthly life.
6. Sixthly, we ponder how we will persevere until the end.

All of these can be categorized into two main aspects: first, for our spiritual life, and second, for our physical life. If we were strengthened in faith to rely on God for all sufficient relief in both aspects, I see no reason why we wouldn't rejoice continually in the Lord. I am confident that no other state in this life can compare to it. Let us, therefore, proceed to examine each of these concerns individually and see how we can derive strength of faith from God's Word, providing comfort to our souls. This will better equip us to finish our spiritual journey in this life and give us greater assurance of our ultimate victory and glory through our Lord Jesus.

To begin, we shall address the foremost matter, which, as it comes first in order, is also paramount in importance: being certain of our salvation through Christ. This includes our justification, by which we are made children of God. As we have already learned, all of this is found solely in Christ and can only become ours through faith, not through any works of righteousness we may perform. While we have discussed this matter to some extent in the previous part of this treatise, demonstrating how this faith is acquired, I believe it is worthwhile to gather a collection of promises from the Scriptures, as the Lord has provided us with numerous promises (especially in the New Testament, where Christ, previously concealed in types, is more clearly revealed). My primary objective is to instruct weak believers on how they can daily nurture their faith through these promises, particularly during times of temptation. I hope that this effort to compile a selection of these promises and elucidate their proper use will not be in vain.

To proceed with the practice of this first point, which involves coming to a daily certainty that we are reconciled to God and are His adopted children and heirs of salvation, we must remember that there are two types of certainty or assurance of God's favor. The first is the certainty that comes through faith alone, and its sole foundation is God's Word. The second is the certainty of the senses when we experience some spiritual feeling of God's favor, manifested through His abundant graces bestowed upon us. These graces serve as signs and testimonies of His fatherly love. An illustration of this can be found in what Joab said to David: "Today your servant knows that I have found grace in your sight, my Lord, O King, in that the King has fulfilled the request of his servant." In this, we see that Joab was more assured of the King's favor because his request was granted. Both of these assurances are explicitly connected in the words of the Apostle John: "And hereby we do know that we know

him if we keep his commandments," signifying that a conscientious effort to keep God's commandments leads to the certain knowledge that we genuinely believe and possess the true assurance of faith in our salvation through Christ. The Lord provides various promises to strengthen us in both of these assurances.

In all these promises, we usually find two key elements.

First, they reveal the excellent benefits and unfathomable riches brought to us by Christ. These benefits are presented to us at times in a general sense, promising that He will save us, and at other times more specifically, assuring us that He will forgive and cleanse us. All of this is designed to lift our earthly minds and affections, causing us to hunger and thirst for them in a way that we can never be at rest until we somewhat enjoy them.

Secondly, the promises specify the recipients of these blessings in the Gospel proclamation. This allows every individual to apply them to themselves through faith and be assured that they belong to them. Both of these aspects will be better elucidated in the specific promises.

To begin with Christ and the benefits He brings, we may start with the first promise made to humanity, which serves as the foundation for all others. After pronouncing His judgment against the Serpent (the instrument of the devil in seducing mankind), the Lord declared, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." Among many other things, the central message here is that Christ, the promised seed of the woman, would ultimately defeat Satan and his entire kingdom, despite Satan's continuous harassment of the seed of the woman until his complete defeat.

The same concept is more explicitly explained in Hebrews 2:14, where it is revealed that Christ took on our nature so that "through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." This alone, if God had made no other promise, would be sufficient to convince every soul who hears it to not only desire and seek this deliverance through Christ but also believe that they will enjoy it since God has faithfully declared it. To further solidify the faith of God's people in this matter, the Lord repeatedly renewed the promise of sending Christ, the promised seed, throughout history. Immediately after the flood, Noah, through prophetic blessing upon his two sons, declared, "May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem," signifying that we Gentiles would be called to be united with the Jews in Christ. Similarly, this promise was reiterated to Abraham, who was told, "In your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Acts 3:25). The same promise was given to Isaac and Jacob, with Christ being the true seed in whom all families are blessed. This pattern continued in all subsequent generations, with Moses and all the prophets in their respective times foretelling the coming of Christ, as recorded in Acts 3:24 and Acts 10:43. Thus, it is unnecessary to list all the scriptures related to this topic.

All this serves to strengthen the faith of all who will believe in God. Seeing that the Lord nourished the faith of His Church from Adam to Christ with promises of salvation through Christ, the promised seed, we may boldly rely on these promises. Moreover, under the Gospel, we have the fulfillment of everything they foresaw in the former Testament, which we now clearly behold as in a mirror, revealing the glory of the Lord. There are so many promises in the New Testament that portray Christ and His benefits that merely listing them, without further elaboration, would create a substantial volume, likely longer

than any of our idle professors would be willing to read. Therefore, I intend to categorize these promises and select key ones from each category to demonstrate how we can utilize the rest of the promises of the same kind.

Now, all these promises related to the first point, aimed at strengthening our faith in the assurance of salvation through Christ, are presented either generally or more specifically, as mentioned before.

Generally, in terms of the promised content, such as the assurance that Christ will save us, and generally applicable to all mankind as the recipients of these promises. Most of the time, the content of the promise and its intended audience are intertwined. Therefore, to maintain brevity and avoid the need to repeatedly reference the same scriptures for various purposes, I will address these aspects together. Let us begin with the names attributed to our redeemer, Jesus Christ, throughout the New Testament. These names carry significant weight in confirming our faith.

When the angel Gabriel was dispatched from God to the Virgin Mary, delivering the heavenly salutation, he declared that she would conceive in her womb and bring forth a Son, instructing her to name Him Jesus. The Evangelist Matthew provides the reason for this naming, "for he will save his people from their sins." This theme repeats itself frequently, as seen in phrases like "All flesh will see the salvation of God." When Christ encountered Zacchaeus, He proclaimed, "Today salvation has come to this house because he also is a son of Abraham." He emphasized that "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Christ Himself asserted, "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved." Furthermore, He

stated, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." Without belaboring this point further, Christ is frequently referred to as our Savior in the Scriptures.

From these references, we should reason as follows: Since the eternal Son of God assumed human nature as Immanuel, "God with us," for the purpose of saving us when we were lost, and not to condemn the world but to save it, we must unquestionably believe that salvation for us sinners is found in Jesus Christ alone. "For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." Moreover, if we do not disregard this remarkable act of God in sending His Son and Christ's mission to the world, which was not to condemn us but to save us when we were lost, we must accept this mercy with genuine faith. The same can be said of the name "Christ," which signifies "Anointed," corresponding to the Hebrew word "Messiah." Both names imply that the Son of God, in taking on our nature, was filled with the Holy Spirit far beyond other holy individuals. This was prophesied in Psalm 45:7: "You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." The Evangelist John explicitly confirms this: "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure." This truth was evident at Christ's baptism, where the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and a voice from heaven declared, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." This anointing signified that, just as prophets, priests, and kings under the Law were consecrated to their roles through anointing with holy oil, Christ was consecrated for His mediatorial offices. These offices include:

1. Prophet, who reveals God's complete will for our salvation.

2. High Priest, who offers Himself as a full and sufficient sacrifice for the redemption of sinners and intercedes on our behalf.
3. King, who governs and rules His people, subduing all His enemies.

These aspects are comprehensively expounded in the epistle to the Hebrews, which, due to its length, I encourage the Christian reader to study attentively for this purpose.

Another compelling reason to believe can be derived from this: Since God the Father has anointed His Son in our human nature and called Him Christ, filling Him with the Holy Spirit without measure so that He could accomplish everything necessary for our salvation, we can confidently approach Him and firmly rely on Him for our salvation. Conversely, those who, upon hearing this, are not drawn to believe in Christ for their salvation either deny the truth of these facts (thus making God a liar) or disregard their own salvation, which has been prepared and offered to them. Such disregard will lead to their just condemnation. These two names, Jesus and Christ, which rightfully belong to our Savior, should sufficiently persuade a discerning person to place their trust in Christ for salvation.

However, since the Lord knows how difficult it can be to attain this assurance of salvation through faith in Christ, He has provided extensive information in the small volume of the New Testament regarding Christ and the benefits He has brought us. This wealth of information is meant to encourage us to seek and embrace Him as our Savior. Before delving into specifics, let us consider and marvel at the multitude of heavenly treasures offered to sinners through Christ.

The first of these treasures is that Christ is sent to save sinners, a topic we have discussed in relation to the name Jesus, and hence, we

need not dwell on it further.

The next treasure is Christ being referred to as "a light to the Gentiles," a prophecy that Isaiah repeated many times, such as, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned." This prophecy is applied to Christ by the Evangelist Matthew, signifying that He brings the light of the Gospel to a spiritually blind and ignorant people. The Apostle Paul also cites this prophecy as his warrant for preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. Similarly, Christ is often referred to as "the light of the world," a title He claimed for Himself when He declared, "I am the light of the world." The Evangelist John adds that Christ is "the true light, which gives light to everyone" who comes into the world, indicating that He offers the light of the Gospel to all nations, even though many remain spiritually blind and do not perceive this light. This theme of light encompasses various benefits brought by Christ, including the light of knowledge, the light of grace and holy living, and the light of eternal life and glory. These benefits are contained in the previously mentioned scriptures and several others. Scriptures portraying Christ as our life, such as John 6:33, 51, 10:10, and 14:6, also fall under this category.

From all this, we should understand that since God has established His Son, Jesus Christ, through the ministry of the Gospel, to enlighten and bring life to every person who hears it, those who do not merely have the opportunity but are also obligated to embrace this light through genuine faith. This way, they become children of the light, or else they risk condemnation, as our Savior Himself declared: "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light."

Another compelling basis for our faith is the event at Christ's baptism, where God the Father sent His Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, descending upon Him, accompanied by a voice from heaven declaring, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." This proclamation signifies not only God's love and approval of His Son (with whom He could never be displeased, given His sinlessness) but more importantly, it indicates that, while God was greatly offended by all of humanity, He was now fully appeased by Christ. For Christ's sake, God was ready to receive into His favor all those who would receive Him through faith, accepting Him as their representative and themselves in Him. This corresponds to the statement that "God has made us accepted in His beloved." Furthermore, it is said that "Christ gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." This suggests that, while all of humanity has become odious to God due to sin, so that neither their persons nor their deeds are acceptable to Him, those who lay hold of Christ by faith and apply His sacrifice to themselves will be accepted by God, and their obedience will be pleasing to Him, as it is covered by Christ's perfect obedience.

Which alone is a sufficient means, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, to draw anyone who hears and understands this to cast themselves wholly upon Christ and seek God's favor and all its fruits only in this sacrifice of Christ.

In addition to these, there are many other Scriptures that generally describe Christ and His benefits to us. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that they are contained within these general categories. For example, when Christ compares Himself to a Vine, He teaches that just as a branch derives its entire life from the stock, we receive our entire life from Him. He also refers to Himself as the bread of life and is described as the head of the body. He is

said to be full of grace and truth. Moreover, passages like "He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" and "I will give you the sure mercies of David" encompass all the good things promised in Christ, who is the seed of David.

In all these passages, among many others, the Holy Ghost's intention was to present us with a comprehensive view of all the good that Christ has brought to us. When we contemplate these blessings, we should be filled with wonder at God's immeasurable mercy in providing so many and such great blessings in Christ for us, even though we were His enemies. This contemplation should lead us to diligently seek to become partakers of these blessings by every possible means.

This should suffice for discussing some of the general promises and their use in strengthening our faith.

I would like to add one more thing regarding these general promises. If, at any time, in our moments of doubt and fear, especially during particular distress, we cannot readily recall a specific promise that would offer us comfort, we can safely turn to one of these general promises, which encompass all the specifics. We can apply such a promise to our current need. For instance, if a troubled soul is plagued by doubts about God's favor due to a heavy affliction or an unconquerable sin and cannot think of a specific promise to find comfort, they can confidently grasp one of these general promises and find solace in the following manner: "O Lord, you have said in your holy word (which is the word of truth) that the Son of man has come to save that which is lost. Lord, I am lost and see nothing in myself to help me. Therefore, I wholly rest upon Christ and look for help only through Him." This same approach can be applied to all

the general promises, each of which contains ample material to support us in all our fears, provided we can aptly apply them.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize to anyone desiring to believe in God and live by their faith, above all, to deny themselves and not seek any reason within themselves to believe. This has been observed as a significant obstacle to true belief. Instead, direct all your thoughts towards God. First, consider how merciful He is to provide such help for poor sinners in Christ and freely offer it to them in His Word. Secondly, reflect on how faithful He is to fulfill all that He has promised. By doing this, the poor sinner may be moved to believe in God, trusting that He will surely provide succor and comfort in due season and measure.

I would like to move on from discussing these general promises, but I have concerns that I may not have sufficiently clarified one point regarding these general promises—namely, the persons to whom God preaches and proclaims these mercies, so that they may believe. I am not referring here to who will enjoy these benefits (those who are believers and their descendants), but rather to those to whom these mercies are offered. Many individuals struggle with doubts about their salvation because they do not know if they are among those to whom God truly offers these mercies. This is not surprising because, just as a rebel against a sovereign cannot believe they will be pardoned unless they are certain they are included in the ruler's pardon, likewise, a sinner cannot believe in forgiveness until they know they are among those to whom the pardon is proclaimed by God in the Gospel. To determine this, there must either be a specific distinguishing mark that reveals to whom the pardon is offered and to whom it is not, or the offer must be universal to all. However, there is no such distinct and certain difference among sinners before faith that allows one to know whether the pardon is granted to them

and to others like them. If there were, some might know themselves to be under God's special favor, that is, elected, even before they believe, which is impossible through ordinary means. Therefore, the only way for anyone to know that they are included in the pardon is to hear that God, in His Gospel, proclaims forgiveness of sins in Christ to all sinners without exception. Whoever hears and believes will be saved, while those who do not believe will be condemned for rejecting this offered mercy. I have sufficiently proven this point in the earlier part of this treatise using many Scriptures. Mark 16:15, in particular, explicitly demonstrates that Christ and all His benefits are freely offered without exception to all humanity.

I would advise anyone who is hindered from believing because they do not know if they are included in the pardon to focus on God's revealed will in His Word. Do not concern yourself with God's secret will but pay attention to His revealed will. In His Word, it is expressly stated that God desires that no one should perish but that all should come to repentance. He does not desire the death of sinners. This should motivate you to seek and hope for the mercy that God is so willing to bestow upon you. If the impediment to your belief lies within yourself, as it did with the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, of whom our Savior lamented, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not," then consider this clear willingness in God to save sinners. It is evident in His gracious invitation to the unworthy to come to the wedding of His Son. Furthermore, God beseeches sinners to be reconciled to Him and uses many weighty arguments to persuade people to believe. He offers great rewards—earthly, spiritual, temporal, and eternal—to all believers. He also warns of dire consequences that will befall unbelievers, both in this life and the next, as abundantly detailed throughout the Scriptures.

From all this, it seems to me that a distressed sinner might encourage themselves to believe as follows: If it is certain that God does not want me to perish but is very willing to save me, and He has provided all sufficient means to bring me to salvation and issued a general pardon that assures me I am included, and since I now know I am invited and called to come to Christ and beseeched to be reconciled with God, then I can confidently approach and believe that I will be welcomed. Furthermore, if I am not willing to forego all these rich rewards that are offered to me and bring upon myself the just woes that God has threatened against those who despise His mercies, then I must gladly accept the mercy God offers to me. If I find my unbelieving heart wavering, I should earnestly and persistently pray to the Lord to draw me to Christ by His Spirit so that I may rest upon Him for my salvation. This should suffice for the general promises, both regarding the matters promised and the individuals to whom they are proclaimed, so that anyone who hears them may claim their share.

Now, let us turn to the special benefits we receive in Christ, which relate to the first point—how our faith is to be strengthened in the assurance of our salvation through Christ. I intend to discuss these in two categories: 1. Our Justification and 2. The immediate fruits that flow from it. I derive the latter from the Apostle Paul's words in Romans 5:1, which I categorize as follows: 1. Reconciliation, 2. Adoption, and 3. Hope of Glory.

Regarding Justification, it is evident from Scripture that our entire salvation depends on it. Whoever is to be saved must be justified, and consequently, anyone who is not justified must be condemned. Therefore, it is imperative for everyone who seeks salvation to understand what it means to be justified in the sight of God and to make sure that they attain it. Furthermore, they should also know

that they are justified because without this assurance, there can be no comfort or hope of happiness.

To be justified before God is to be made righteous, which means not only being free from all sin but also possessing the righteousness that God's holy law demands, as stated in Romans 2:13. Adam and Eve were created righteous by God, and Christ Himself possessed such righteousness, as seen in the description of Him as a high priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

However, apart from Adam, Eve, and Christ, none of the rest of humanity, young or old, is or ever will be righteous in this world. Instead, every soul is devoid of this righteousness and filled with unrighteousness, as declared in Romans 3:20. Therefore, no one can be justified in God's sight by keeping the law. Consequently, all those who will be saved must be justified in a different way—by having the perfect righteousness found only in Christ imputed to them as if it were their own.

I do not intend to delve further into this topic, as it has been addressed in numerous treatises on this subject. Our primary concern should be to obtain this grace in Christ, which assures our salvation. The Scripture is unequivocal that this is attained through faith and no other means. The Apostle Paul thoroughly and abundantly proves this in Romans 3 and Galatians 3. I encourage you to read those passages, where you will find not only the truth of the doctrine but also many incentives to believe and embrace this grace that Christ has worked for us and freely offers to us for our comfort.

In this context, consider Romans 3:21-22, which states, "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed

by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe." Continue reading to the end of the chapter, where you will find it chiefly emphasized that only believers partake in the benefit of justification in Christ. Since only those who know that God freely and faithfully offers it to them can believe to receive it, it is clearly revealed in Scripture that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It should be noted that this does not mean that everyone receives the mercy of justification purchased by Christ but rather that God offers it impartially to all through the Gospel, as further clarified in verse 25: "Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed."

The application of these truths, and similar ones, to strengthen our faith in the assurance of our salvation through Christ, is as follows: Every person who desires to believe should consider, on one hand, their own sinfulness and cursedness, recognizing that they are utterly incapable of making any satisfaction for their deliverance. On the other hand, they should acknowledge that Christ has made a complete satisfaction to His Father on behalf of miserable sinners and freely offers it to them. If they believe this, it will be accepted on their behalf, and they will be saved. This realization should lead them to renounce all hope in themselves and rely entirely on Christ for their justification and salvation.

This shall become more evident when considering the aspects of Justification, particularly forgiveness of sins, and the imputation of righteousness. The emphasis lies especially in the forgiveness of sins, which, inseparably linked to the imputation of righteousness, is stressed in Scripture. For this reason, both the Prophet David and

the Apostle Paul rightly place blessedness in this context, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not sin." This should lead every person to look beyond themselves for happiness, as God justifies the ungodly (verse 5), drawing all who will be saved to seek salvation only in God's free mercy, which forgives their iniquity, covers their sin, and does not impute their transgressions to them. Within these statements lies the method and means by which the righteous God, who will not let any sin go unpunished or uncondemned, still liberates poor sinners from their sins and penalties—solely through the satisfaction that Christ has made for them by bearing their punishment. When God is satisfied through this atonement, He freely forgives all those who, through faith, accept this offered mercy.

Throughout the Scriptures, this great benefit of forgiveness of sin through Christ is abundantly proclaimed to us, miserable sinners. I will cite a few examples, though there are many more. When John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Christ, upon seeing Christ approach, he exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." After His resurrection, Jesus Himself, appearing to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus, explained the Scriptures to them and said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Similarly, the Apostle Paul, while preaching to the Jews in their synagogues at Antioch, declared, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (meaning Christ) is preached unto you forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." The Scriptures repeatedly state that Christ was delivered to death for

our sins, gave Himself to redeem us from all iniquity, bore our sins on the tree, loved us, and washed us from our sins. To conclude, consider the profound words of Saint John, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

In all these passages, the intent is clear: God provides a means to save us sinners. Therefore, anyone who feels the weight of their sin and fears God's wrath may confidently approach Christ and firmly believe that, for Christ's sake, God will forgive them and remember their sins no more. Moreover, anyone to whom the Gospel proclaims this message of pardon should lay claim to this forgiveness, pleasing God and saving their own soul. Otherwise, the magnitude of their sin will correspond to the severity of their damnation.

I therefore urge every struggling soul, eager to believe, not to magnify their sin beyond God's mercy. Christ has already borne the punishment for their sin, fully appeased God's wrath on their behalf, and explicitly calls them, proclaiming this pardon to them. Therefore, they should commit themselves to Christ, glorifying God by believing that through Christ, their debt is discharged, and they are freed from condemnation. Neither God, nor the devil, nor their own conscience will be able to accuse them, and nothing could be more comforting to a distressed sinner.

This might content us if we were not so full of unbelief. However, the Lord, both knowing and pitying our distrustful hearts, has said much more to persuade us of our salvation in and through our Lord Christ Jesus. We have learned that for the justification of a sinner, not only must his sin and punishment be entirely removed, but he must possess perfect righteousness, without which there can be no life.

These two aspects, though inseparable, are distinct and both required in one who is justified in God's sight. The Lord has graciously provided a means by which we, who have lost our original righteousness since the fall of our first parents and are unable to attain the righteousness God justly demands, can recover our loss and become perfectly righteous, to a degree acceptable to God and for which He will, in His justice, grant eternal life. As Paul boldly professed before his departure, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." This one Scripture alone should suffice to persuade us to seek this righteousness and eternal life, which, by due debt, are made ours through God's mercy and the merit of Christ. But since it is not easily seen, much less believed, that individuals such as us will ever attain such a high status, the Lord has revealed His goodwill towards us sinners in this regard. He has prepared a perfect righteousness for us and made a faithful and free grant of it to us, enabling us to make it our own through faith. This is most evident in the heavenly comparison between the first Adam and the second Adam, Christ Jesus, as elaborated in Romans 5:12 and onward. The essence of this comparison is that the benefit we have in Christ surpasses all the harm we suffered through Adam, as the Apostle himself proclaims, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Here we see that just as sin, through God's justice, brought death, so God's mercy, through the righteousness of Christ, brings us eternal life. As verse 19 explicitly states, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." It is clear that just as Christ,

through His obedience, was perfectly righteous, so through faith, many (that is, all) who receive Christ become righteous in God's sight. Christ is also referred to as "The Lord our righteousness," and He is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believes. The Sacraments are said to be seals of the righteousness of faith, among other things. In all of this, the Lord clearly and abundantly presents this perfect righteousness, and the life that comes with it through Christ, to be made ours. If anyone neglects and passes by this offer, refusing to accept it, how can they escape just condemnation? We read in Hebrews 2:3, speaking on the same matter, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" This should persuade anyone who desires salvation to eagerly receive this great gift of Christ's righteousness, on which their eternal happiness so certainly depends. Those who hear of this great goodness of God, prepared in Christ and offered through the Gospel, yet do not accept it, are justly condemned. I can say no more to persuade you, but I beseech the Lord to persuade you, and may you not cease to petition the Lord until, by His Spirit, He draws you to embrace this benefit, to your everlasting comfort. Now, let us turn to the fruits of Justification, which are the many effects of God's grace that accompany and follow our Justification: Reconciliation, Adoption, and Hope of Glory. I am aware that these are differently ordered by various theologians, which is not of great importance, as all agree that they are special benefits that Christ has obtained for us through His death and obedience. These benefits significantly contribute to the assurance of our salvation, whereas ignorance or doubt regarding them can cause great discomfort, particularly during times of temptation and at the hour of death. However, since these depend so heavily on the former aspect of Justification, where the justified person cannot lack these benefits, and without justification, one can never enjoy them, it is essential to secure our Justification in the

manner previously explained to obtain assurance of these subsequent benefits.

Seeing that the Scriptures frequently mention that God has prepared and offered these blessings to us in Christ, it will be comforting to recognize them and strive to use them correctly. I have previously discussed the effects of our faith from Romans 5:1 and onwards in the earlier part of this treatise, highlighting the significant and precious fruits obtained through faith to encourage greater efforts in acquiring faith. I can now be more concise, especially since the Scripture does not emphasize these as much as the previous ones.

Regarding the first of these effects, Reconciliation, I understand that prior to being in Christ, we were enemies of God due to sin. Now, through Christ, we have been reconciled and made friends, as stated in Romans 5:10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." This is also powerfully depicted in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20: "All things are of God, who hath reconciled the world unto himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given us the ministry of Reconciliation. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their sins unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of Reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." From these Scriptures, I observe two important points for our consideration: first, that we were once hostile to God because of our sin, but through Christ's full satisfaction, especially His death, reconciliation between God the Father and mankind has been achieved, yet it is only those who willingly accept it that benefit from it. Second, given that no one could have known about this, let alone had the authority to believe in it, the Apostle, as a faithful messenger of God's secrets, clearly

affirms and repeats that this reconciliation was accomplished for the world, meaning all of humanity (though, as I've said before, only believers enjoy it). To further persuade us, the Apostle reveals that God has given His ministers the commission to preach and proclaim this remarkable news of reconciliation achieved by Christ between God and humanity. Astonishingly, he states that God, through His ambassadors, entreats people to be reconciled to Him, implying that they should accept this unprecedented mercy offered to them.

Reflecting on these things, I cannot help but marvel at God's incredible mercy in seeking to save us, His enemies, and our ungratefulness in devaluing it, our senseless neglect of our greatest good, and our destructive unbelief, which robs us of such an invaluable treasure freely offered to us. I cannot think of anything more compelling to soften our hardened hearts, whether to desire or accept such great grace. However, one thing is certain: those who live within the Church and either despise or so distrust this gift from the Lord that they do not receive it will have a more severe judgment than Turks and Pagans on the Day of Judgment.

As for those who prioritize worldly possessions over this incomparable mercy or carelessly neglect it, like swine trampling precious pearls underfoot, I say no more. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still" (Revelation 22:11). But for those humble souls who highly value the favor of being reconciled to God and are hindered only by distrustful fears, deeming themselves unworthy, I beseech them in the Lord to ponder deeply what has been said to encourage belief and to consider the example of God's dealings with the Ephesians, as the Apostle testifies that when they were dead in trespasses and sins, they were quickened in Christ. Similarly, the Colossians, who were strangers and enemies due to their evil works and minds, were reconciled to God. In truth, this is the case for all

who are converted, as Paul attests about himself and all other believers before their effectual calling, that they conducted themselves in times past according to the desires of their flesh, fulfilling the will of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath just like everyone else. If a poor sinner considers that others in as bad or even worse a state as them were received with mercy, and that God freely offers this unheard-of mercy to them just as to others, and that He remains faithful to His promises, this doubtlessly will lead them to expect similar mercy from God. They should patiently await the Lord's timing and never cease to earnestly supplicate God, seeking to be drawn closer by His Spirit, along with daily meditation on God's mercy.

With this, I will leave this point, having said more than originally intended. I only request that you consider that under this reconciliation, I include the peace that Christ establishes between God and us, as mentioned in Romans 5:1, Ephesians 2:17, and many other passages, which can be related to this topic.

Now we come to the second fruit of our Justification, which is Adoption, whereby I understand that high favor of God, whereby he makes those who are justified by Christ, and so reconciled, his own children and heirs of all his blessings. If David thought it no small privilege to be a son-in-law to King Saul, what may be thought of this? Therefore, the Apostle John calls all to marvel at the unspeakable love of God in calling us to be the sons of God.

In considering this, we should not only reflect on the excellence of this status but also its certainty, without which we could derive no comfort from it. This certainty is evident in that God has called all true believers to be his sons, as well as in the next verse where he states, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet

appear what we shall be." Additionally, the gracious promise cited by the Apostle from the Prophet Hosea supports this: "And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there shall they be called the children of the living God." Furthermore, when the Lord promises to those who separate themselves from the wicked, saying, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Also, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." These promises should engender our faith, and our faith should inspire our obedience, as previously mentioned. Thus, it is rightly said, "Ye are all the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

However, even more relevant to our current discussion is the excellent passage found in Galatians 4:4-7, which offers much to strengthen our faith regarding the assurance of our salvation. Therefore, I will recite it in its entirety: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

If this is true (as even the devil himself cannot deny), who can sufficiently admire and extol God's generosity and love towards humanity? He purchased so lofty a dignity for us at such a high price (as the Apostle John calls it) that we should be counted as the sons of God and share in all the glory of His Father's kingdom alongside Christ.

However, I can almost hear someone saying, "It is true that this is a most blessed state, if one could be assured that it belongs to them. But considering that the Scriptures often testify that only a few attain this favor, how can I, who am so unworthy, so full of sin, and lacking in grace, ever hope to partake in it?"

This objection is a significant one and quite common, deterring many from believing, and thus it requires a proper response. It consists of two parts: first, the contention that only a few become God's children. To this, I respond that the fault does not lie with God, who has so openly proclaimed life in the Gospel to every sinner, as I have repeatedly mentioned. Furthermore, if a valuable gift were thrown among many, and only a few could obtain it, there would be fierce competition to acquire it. I have a recent anecdote to share as evidence against all the wicked and lazy servants, as our Savior calls them. They hear that only a few will be saved and let others strive for it, being content to go without it themselves. This, in fact, amounts to despising the mercy offered to them by the Lord. In London, there was a wealthy woman who, at her death, left a charity of six pence for the poor gathered at Leaden Hall. The scramble to obtain this charity was so intense that many were trampled to death. How will these people rise in judgment against our delicate, idle, ambitious, covetous, and voluptuous individuals who, each in their own way, fervently pursue their desires in the world but make no effort to secure their salvation? To leave these considerations behind and address the second part of the objection, which concerns those who are better and closer to salvation yet are held back by their unworthiness. I pity them for their discomfort, but I also blame their ignorance. After so many years of Gospel preaching, wherein all of God's mercies are proclaimed and lavished upon sinners (as I previously explained), these individuals still cling to the mire of their

natural pride, seeking some worthiness in themselves to be made God's sons.

In conclusion, since God is a generous giver of this high favor of Adoption and not a seller of it, and since He freely offers it to you in Christ, be cautious not to deprive yourself of it due to idleness or proud ignorance. Rather, gratefully accept it, and you shall be saved.

The last special benefit we receive from Christ, as a fruit of our justification, serving to strengthen our faith in the assurance of our salvation, is the Hope of Glory. By this, I understand that God has prepared for us sinners a unique comfort. This hope allows us to experience, in this life, an expectation of everlasting glory. Such a hope inwardly cheers our hearts, encourages us to profess it outwardly for the glory of God, the encouragement of fellow faithful believers, the astonishment of the wicked, and our own strengthening to persevere against all discouragements. The fact that God has provided this support to sustain us through all the changes of life is evident in Hebrews 6:17-19, a Scripture passage of great strength for strengthening our faith in the certainty of our salvation, as we shall see.

God, willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath. He did this so that by two immutable things, in which it was not possible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation. We who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us have this hope as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and it enters into that which is within the veil. This is where the forerunner, even Jesus, has entered for us, being made a high Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Within these verses, there are heavenly truths contained, which I will now elucidate, emphasizing those that are most relevant to our

current intention in order to make us more certain of the grace of the hope of glory.

1. God's decree and eternal counsel concerning our salvation are unchangeable.
2. It pleased God to make this exceedingly clear.
3. The individuals to whom God would manifest His counsel in this manner are the heirs of promise.
4. The means by which God would make His counsel known was by binding His promises with an oath.
5. These two pieces of evidence for God's counsel are sure and unchangeable.
6. It is impossible for God to lie in these matters.
7. Through these, we can obtain strong consolation.
8. Those who will have strong consolation must make hope their refuge, firmly holding onto it.
9. This hope is set before them as something to grasp.
10. In times of temptation, this hope is to our souls as an anchor is to a ship during storms.
11. This anchor, which will hold, is sure and steadfast.
12. It has entered upward into heaven, much like an earthly anchor cast downward.
13. Christ, our forerunner, has gone to heaven on our behalf.

14. Christ is our eternal high Priest.

Behold what a wealth of heavenly matters is contained here. When I closely considered these truths, so intricately woven together and contributing to the point at hand, I was compelled to expound upon them. Among all these, one stands out for our purpose: Almighty God, as a loving Father, having provided a good estate for His children, took great care to make it certain for them. Therefore, He has given two such irrefutable pieces of evidence that cannot deceive: His promise and His oath. By being persuaded through these, we can cast our hope upon His faithfulness in all our fears, and thus we shall be safe, finding strong consolation. In this, we see the exceptional use of hope for eternal life. This hope makes us unashamed, as the Apostle speaks, and the Prophet David expresses often as well. We are saved by this hope, meaning we are so assured of our salvation that it feels as if we possess it already, and thus we patiently await its fulfillment.

Much in this Scripture serves this purpose: just as the whole creation groans and labors in pain, earnestly expecting the manifestation of the sons of God, when they will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, so do all true believers, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly, waiting for adoption—the redemption of their bodies. This means waiting for full glorification of both soul and body. We see this in the lives and deaths of God's faithful servants, who, for the sake of this hope of glory after enduring temporary suffering, willingly endured great and severe persecutions. This is evident in the life of our Savior Himself and of Moses, who chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect to the recompense of reward. The same is evident in

the honorable company mentioned in Hebrews 11 and in the countless holy martyrs throughout the ages. What was it that made them willingly endure severe persecutions? It was the hope of glory, the assurance that after a brief period of suffering, they would attain great reward.

I could delve into this topic at length, as the Scripture has much to say on it. It encourages us to rejoice in hope and declares hope to be the end of our calling and regeneration. God has called us to His kingdom and glory, and according to His mercy, He has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This hope leads to an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away, reserved in heaven for us, and so forth, all of which is worth reading and carefully considering. These passages serve to comfort the children of God greatly.

From all of this, I gather that since this hope of glory is such a secure anchor in all storms and a strong helmet in all our battles, we ought to diligently seek this grace for ourselves. Furthermore, God has generously provided it for us, accompanied by numerous promises and exhortations to rejoice in the hope of glory. All of this should compel us to hold firmly to the profession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful, as the Apostle exhorts. Otherwise, we will question God's truth and faithfulness, which is a high degree of tempting God and an offense that provokes His displeasure. On the contrary, by anchoring ourselves to this hope during any storm, we will be certain to avoid shipwreck and eventually reach our desired haven of everlasting salvation.

In summary, I have shown, as briefly and clearly as I could, how anyone troubled by unbelief regarding the certainty of their salvation can overcome this doubt. They can have assurance that there is no

condemnation for them, that their sins are forgiven, and that they are accepted as righteous in God's sight. This assurance includes being reconciled to God, adopted as His children, and having the joyful hope of sharing in His glory. Such assurance is a great comfort to troubled consciences, and I encourage all who struggle with doubts to carefully study the Scriptures, which offer Christ and salvation to poor sinners. Do not reject these promises based on self-perceived unworthiness, but rather, in awe of God's incredible goodness, mercy, and compassion toward unworthy wretches, accept this freely offered mercy with belief and thanksgiving. By doing so, you may see a true change in your heart and life, which will lead to unfeigned love for God, a sincere desire to glorify Him, and the chief elements of a holy life—sure proofs of saving faith. Saving faith cannot exist without these proofs, just as true fire cannot be without heat, although many carnal Gospel hearers mistakenly believe otherwise and thereby perish.

Having thus seen how we can acquire and increase our assurance through God's promises by faith, that we are His children, it now follows that we consider the marks of God's children, which further assure us of our status. Among these marks, faith itself is the first and surest proof that we are God's children. Many precious promises are made to those who already believe, just as the former promises were made to generate and strengthen faith. It is fitting that we take a closer look at these promises, not to bolster our faith, but so that by our faith, whether small or great, we may have a tangible assurance of our salvation.

In this context, it is worth noting that those who believe in Christ are often described as blessed. Our Savior said to Thomas, "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." He also said to His disciples, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see," and to Peter, "Blessed

are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven." Similar sentiments are found in many passages. Moreover, the Scriptures declare that "he who believes shall be saved" and that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." Again, it is stated, "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." Similarly, "Whoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life" and "has passed from death to life." In addition, Jesus proclaimed, "I am come a light into the world, that whoever believes in me shall not abide in darkness; even though he were dead, yet shall he live and never die." The same assurance is implied in the promises of forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and justification to believers found in Acts 10:45, Romans 10:4, Acts 13:30, Romans 4:5, and Romans 5:1. It is also stated, "We are made the children of God by faith," and "As many as received him, to them he gave power to be the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." Lastly, "Christ shall come to be glorified in his Saints and be made marvelous in all them that believe," and so on. In all these promises and many similar ones, made to true believers in Christ, it is evident that anyone who knows and can prove themselves to be in the faith, as the Apostle says, can be infallibly assured of their salvation.

Since the majority of professing Christians are deceived, claiming to have faith when they truly do not, it is of the utmost importance for those seeking greater comfort to be cautious that their hearts do not deceive them in this matter. They should diligently strive to make their calling and election sure so that they may know that Christ dwells in them. Otherwise, they will not be able to convince themselves or others that they are in a state of grace.

This much pertains to faith itself, by which we can certainly know that we are God's children, heirs of salvation, and cannot perish. Now, we shall explore some special fruits of our faith, which are the effects of God's Spirit in all true believers. These fruits serve as marks by which they recognize themselves and are recognized by others as God's sheep. They provide further evidence and assurance that they are God's children and will be saved.

In this regard, the gift of God's Spirit to believers is referred to as a seal, as mentioned in Ephesians 1:13. The Apostle, when describing the conversion of the Ephesians, presents two key pieces of evidence: first, their faith, and second, the gift of the Spirit. He states, "In whom ye also (have obtained inheritance) after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; wherein also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." We can observe that the Lord deals with us in a manner similar to human transactions involving land conveyances. In such cases, people not only provide written documentation to declare their grants but also use seals to secure their documents. Moreover, they may give a piece of the land to guarantee possession. Similarly, the Lord, having given us His Word and writings for salvation in Christ to inspire belief, also grants His Spirit to work in us so evidently that we gain greater assurance that Christ is ours and that we will inherit eternal glory. This is why it is stated that they were sealed with the Spirit of promise, which was promised to all believers. The Spirit is like an earnest payment, ensuring that we will enjoy the full inheritance of perfect happiness in God's Kingdom. In this context, the Apostle's words are relevant when he says that although some who made a fair profession have fallen away from the faith, the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal: the Lord knows them that are His. Furthermore, let

everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Here, the Apostle identifies God's election as the foundation of our salvation, and holiness of life, which includes departing from iniquity, as the seal or mark by which we are known as God's children.

In general, the gift of the sanctifying Spirit, the primary and foremost fruit of faith and the foundation of other graces essential for salvation, is a sure evidence that we are children of God and heirs of salvation through Christ. This assurance should be sufficient for anyone to conclude that their state is indeed very good, provided they are not deceived but are certain that they have received this sanctifying Spirit. In this context, the Apostle John's reasoning in 1 John 4:13 is relevant: "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us because he hath given us of his Spirit." This has been discussed in more detail in the previous part of this treatise and will now be further elaborated upon, focusing on the principal effects of this indwelling Spirit.

Among these effects, it is appropriate to begin with that which is most general and encompasses the rest: the observance of God's commandments. In several places, keeping God's commandments is presented as a reliable mark of saving grace. This is evident in the divine Epistle of John, which was primarily written to provide various signs by which one can recognize true children of God and distinguish them from others. Among these signs is the keeping of God's commandments, as stated in 1 John 2:3: "And hereby we know that we know him if we keep his commandments." This means that conscientiously striving to align our lives with God's revealed will in His word is a highly certain indicator that we are genuine believers and, consequently, true children of God and heirs of glory. This is reiterated in 1 John 3:22, where keeping God's commandments is

clearly associated with being in God's favor: "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him." Additionally, in verse 24, it is stated, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him." There is no need to provide an exhaustive list of such arguments, as the Scriptures abound with promises made to the righteous, the obedient, those who walk in God's way, those who hearken to His voice, those who bear much fruit, those who are new creatures, and others of similar nature. All of these point to the same truth: leading a godly life. Whoever genuinely does so, even with many weaknesses, can indeed be assured of their salvation.

It would be greatly comforting for many troubled souls, who earnestly seek to please God out of love for His mercy but are plagued by doubts stemming from their weaknesses, to consider this perspective. Such individuals often question their standing with God due to their infirmities, which God allows for valid reasons in His beloved children. Therefore, this message is specifically addressed to them. I earnestly implore them to act justly with God and their own souls, refraining from robbing God of His honor and themselves of their comfort by doubting His favor. Instead, they should recognize the gracious work of God in renewing them through His Spirit. While they may bear the burden of their infirmities, they must realize that, by nature, they had no inclination to please God and lacked a conscience of obedience. Yet now, God and their own consciences bear witness that their utmost endeavor is to please God in all things, and their greatest sorrow is to offend Him. They can confidently conclude from this that they are in a state of grace, even as they groan under the weight of their infirmities and often yearn to be released and to be with Christ.

It seems to me that this should be more than sufficient to confirm the well-being of any truly converted souls. Despite the numerous fierce

battles and blows they may endure from their corruptions, these corruptions do not dwell in them nor do they reign over them.

However, considering that the Lord foresaw how difficult it would be for us to maintain this assurance of our safety, especially when our enemies appear to have the upper hand, He has made numerous promises of salvation. These promises extend not only to general obedience but also to nearly all particulars. This means that even if we cannot always find comfort from certain duties and fruits of our faith, we can find it in others. We need not lack true evidence of our faith and happiness. It would be beneficial to outline some of the chief indicators, directing diligent readers of the Scriptures to use these as a model to observe and apply the rest as best as they can.

First and foremost among these indicators is the fruit of Faith, which is love for God, for all who belong to Him, for Christ, and for all His members. All of these are inseparably connected and all originate from God's love for us, as stated in 1 John 4:19: "We love him, because he loved us first." Therefore, we can confidently conclude that just as God's love is the cause of our love for Him, our love for God is a certain proof that we are loved by God and will be blessed and saved eternally by Him. This is expressed by the Apostle James when he mentions God's promise of the crown of life and, in another place, the kingdom for those who love Him. The same idea is also conveyed in the Apostle's statement: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." Furthermore, the passage "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" conveys a similar message. Similarly, it is stated that "But if any man love God, the same is known of him." In all these and many other passages, our love for God is presented as a certain proof of being in

God's favor and as heirs of His kingdom. The same applies to our love for Christ, as He Himself proclaims: "And he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father." Our love for Christ is not the cause but the effect of God's love for us, as explained a little later: "If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Likewise, our love for one another as brethren and members of the body of Christ is an infallible mark of our belonging to Christ, as He told His Disciples: "By this shall all men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another." To further substantiate this point, we need only turn to the first Epistle of John, where brotherly love is frequently cited as a sure sign of being in a blessed state. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him," is one example. Another verse reads, "We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the Brethren." In another passage: "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Just a little earlier in the same chapter: "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and everyone that loveth is born of God." Furthermore, verse 17 of the same chapter states, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we have boldness in the day of Judgment." Additionally, our Savior teaches that the love of our enemies is evidence that we are the children of God, as reported by both the Evangelists Matthew and Luke.

From all these passages, we can see how anyone who questions whether they have true faith or are in a state of grace can assure themselves through the grace of love that they possess true faith and are therefore saved. However, we must be cautious not to deceive ourselves with a vain, carnal love, as many do. To discern the authenticity of our love, especially whether it arises from faith and leads to true obedience, is crucial. If our love meets these two

criteria, it is genuine and serves as a reliable proof of saving grace. Otherwise, if either of these aspects is lacking, our love at best is merely natural and cannot serve as evidence of true happiness. To further demonstrate the authenticity of our love and, consequently, our faith and safety, we need only examine the fruits that result from it. In numerous passages, the Scriptures attribute love as the root of all godly virtues and consider it the fulfillment of the Law and the bond of perfection. Thus, if our love bears fruit in holiness toward God and righteousness toward others, it will unequivocally affirm our status as true children of God.

Herein, in the first place, we may well consider the fear of God, which, if it does not arise from love and is not tempered with it, is merely a servile fear and not the holy fear that serves as a distinguishing mark of God's children. They are often called "those who fear God," such as "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, and greatly delighteth in his Commandments." Additionally, "He will bless them that fear the Lord, both small and great," and similar passages. What we ought to focus on here is the high praise given to this fruit of Faith, the fear of God. By examining these Scriptures, one who possesses this grace may ascertain that they are genuinely converted and destined for salvation. This can be observed in all those passages where those who fear the Lord are declared blessed, such as the previously mentioned verses and Psalm 128:1,4, which implies that those who fear the Lord are and will be blessed in every way. Similarly, other Scriptures emphasize the greatness and perpetuity of God's mercy towards those who fear Him, as seen in Psalm 103:11,17 and Luke 1:50. For instance, "O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!" and "The Sun of righteousness shall rise up to these, and the reward of eternal life shall be given them" (Revelation 11:18). If this is not sufficient, I

know not what could persuade someone who discovers this true fear of God in their heart that they are and shall be blessed forever.

Therefore, it is necessary for all those who desire this comfort to ensure that they have this holy fear of God in their hearts, and through it, they can rest assured of God's love.

I would conclude this point here, but I am concerned that some tender consciences may ask, "How can I know if I possess this holy fear?" To them, I might refer to the brief distinction I provided earlier, which, in my opinion, is the best way to differentiate between good and bad fear. The holy and child-like fear arises from the love of God, whereas the other form of fear, at best, arises from self-love. This self-love may go far, yet it can never compare to the holy fear because it lacks the root of Faith and Love. Moreover, it falls short in the fruit of sincere obedience, which the Holy Ghost attributes to the fear of God, as seen in "Fear God and keep his Commandments." Therefore, the person who feels God's rich mercy upon them, who has been called out of their miserable state to some hope of salvation through Christ, experiences a love for God that stems from this mercy. This love, in turn, makes them afraid to displease and offend such a gracious Father. They find that this fear prompts them to avoid what God dislikes, even when it is pleasing to their corrupt nature, and it makes them willing to do God's will, even when it goes against their corrupted desires. Such a person need not doubt that they possess the true fear of God, which is an unquestionable mark of God's favor and eternal happiness.

God's children should take this to heart. We can see how the faithful can be confirmed in the assurance of their salvation through these two specific fruits of their faith: love and fear.

The same principle applies to all the other traits that Scripture recognizes as testimonies of saving grace and happiness for those who possess them. These include being "poor in spirit," "those who mourn," "the humble," "the meek," "those who hunger after righteousness," "the merciful," "the pure in heart," "peace-makers," and "those persecuted for righteousness' sake." All of these qualities are gathered together in this context by our Savior, Jesus Christ, to challenge the worldly misconception and to demonstrate that those whom the world regards as the most miserable are, in fact, the truly and solely blessed ones.

Likewise, in other places, He emphasizes that denying ourselves, taking up the Cross, following Him, forsaking all for Him and for the Gospel are sure signs of belonging to Him. Those who exhibit these traits will receive a hundredfold in this world and, in the world to come, life everlasting. To conclude this entire matter of assurance of salvation, there are many other fruits of Faith that prove the same, such as confession of sin, mortification of sin, overcoming, and perseverance, all of which are often cited as certain proofs of happiness. The primary purpose of all these is to serve as a source of comfort when God's children, especially those with weak faith and tender consciences, experience great fears and doubts about their salvation. At such times, they may find solace in recognizing some of these fruits of their faith, even when their grace seems to be at its lowest ebb. These fruits can reassure them that though they are very sick and weak spiritually, they are not entirely spiritually dead. For their benefit, I will add an observation based on my own experience, which has brought comfort to many who were troubled because they couldn't perceive their faith, as they believed they had none.

I have observed four infallible proofs in such cases. First, when Faith exists but is not felt, the person in whom it resides grieves due to the

lack of perception and cannot find peace, mourning as if they had no faith. This is often the condition of those genuinely afflicted in conscience, who earnestly desire to believe but cannot do so in their own awareness. In my experience, however, I have never known anyone in this state, who had any understanding of the doctrine of faith, who truly lacked faith, although they were unable to perceive it.

This becomes more evident through the next effect of this imperceptible faith, which is that those who possess faith yet do not feel it are diligent in employing all good means, both publicly and privately, alone and with others, that could lead them to attain this precious gift of faith. They would hardly do so if they did not experience some taste of the sweetness of faith, which stirs their hearts to earnestly seek it. Consequently, I consider this constant pursuit of faith to be a sign that they already possess some measure of it.

A third and more significant effect of faith in such individuals is that even though they cannot perceive God's fatherly love towards them, they refuse to harbor ill thoughts about God. Instead, they place all blame on themselves for not having more grace. Moreover, they commend God's mercy to others and cannot tolerate any dishonor to God. Their deep love for God reveals that they are indeed loved by Him and that they have, through faith, apprehended this truth, even though they cannot see it and may fear they lack it.

The fourth proof of faith, when it remains unseen, is that those who possess it have tender consciences, avoiding minor sins that others boldly commit and diligently striving to please God in every way. Many who are not troubled by these matters tend to be more careless. Therefore, if there are any souls who cannot perceive their faith but can observe any of these effects of faith in themselves, they

should know, to their great comfort, that they truly have faith and will be saved.

In conclusion, I have shared what I believe is relevant to this first point: how we can continually gain more assurance that we are now in God's favor and will lack nothing good in this life, ultimately reaching everlasting life. I once again urge everyone who seeks blessings from God, whether in this life or the one to come, to strive above all for this assurance. Without this confidence in God's favor, how can we expect any blessings from God, whether they be earthly or spiritual, temporal or eternal? In contrast, by being assured of this, we can confidently anticipate all other blessings necessary for our present comfort and eternal happiness.

Regarding all these matters, since the Lord (who well knows the frailty of His own children and how prone they are to doubt His help on every occasion) has so abundantly recorded in the Scriptures both generally His fatherly care for their welfare and, more specifically, the help they can expect from Him in their particular needs, I have no doubt that it will be worth our effort to consider both of them. It is essential to find comfort in our greatest times of need, and we will start with the general promises, which encompass all good things that God has prepared and promised to His children.

First and foremost among them is the promise that God will be our God and the God of our descendants after us, as He said to Abraham, the Father of the faithful. This promise belongs to all believers, as the Apostle shows in Romans 4:11, 16. This same promise was reiterated to Abraham's descendants in all generations to serve as a staff of comfort to them at all times. That is why it is often said that God is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. God also declared to the people of Israel, "I will take you to be my people, and

I will be your God." Notably, when the Lord gave His Law to the people of Israel, He bound His people to obedience through these two bonds: His great Majesty and His special favor, saying, "I am the Lord your God." It would be tedious and unnecessary to cite more of these promises, as they were given to the faithful by the Prophets and Apostles in all ages, assuring them that God would be their God and that they would be His people. This meant that they would certainly receive from Him whatever was good for them and offer Him all the obedience He required. If we could steadfastly believe and rely on this single promise, we would find more true comfort than in all the world besides. Therefore, I encourage all who lack comfort to ponder this.

Similarly, all these gracious promises that God is our portion, meaning all we need to sustain us in this world, and that we are His portion, signifying the most valuable possession in His eyes, His treasure, His chosen people, the lot of His inheritance, His delight, and many similar phrases found abundantly in the Scriptures all emphasize how dear God's people are to Him. Through these promises, His people can be assured that they will not lack, just as the Prophet David concluded from meditating on the Lord being his shepherd. Therefore, God is said to be a Father to the fatherless, a helper to the widow, to provide for and supply them with all necessary blessings, both spiritual and physical. Psalm 84:11 also brings great comfort: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly." This means that God is even more beneficial to us than the sun is to the earth.

Oh, if only we had hearts to consider and believe these promises! Then we could confidently say and sing with joy in our hearts, as David did: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I

fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1). Similarly, Psalm 28:7-8 exclaims, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him. The Lord is the strength of his people; he is the saving refuge of his anointed." Since the Lord has deemed it necessary to repeatedly testify to His goodness toward us, there is no reason for us to hesitate in recalling these promises for our benefit. The Prophet David never grew weary of meditating on these promises, and this, I believe, made him so wholehearted toward God and more excellent than others in all holy conduct, as he himself professed to God in Psalm 26:3: "For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in your faithfulness." Also, in Psalm 31:19 and elsewhere, he professed that God was his hope, his help, his health, his rock, his refuge, and many other similar expressions. All these should lead us to confidently rely on God for all necessary things.

Furthermore, the Lord promises numerous times throughout the Scriptures that He will dwell among His people, never forsake them, provide for them, protect them, bless them, and ensure that everything goes well for them. God has even promised to grant their heart's desires and be their reward. These promises, along with many others that speak of God's favor and provident care over His people, are repeated so frequently in the Scriptures that, no matter what condition we find ourselves in, we should have an abundance of help readily available to strengthen our faith that God will never abandon us. He will provide all the necessary help for our souls and bodies, both in this life and the life to come, according to His perfect timing and measure. I therefore commend to all those who have profited from the previous promises related to the assurance of salvation and have found some comfort in them, the task of paying close attention to these generous legacies that the Lord has bequeathed to all His

children in both the Old and New Testaments. They are privileges belonging to believers, which no other person in the world, no matter how highly esteemed in human eyes, can ever partake in. As a result, we should not be discouraged by any setbacks we encounter but rather rejoice and take pride in our blessed condition. We should also strive to live lives worthy of these privileges, honoring God our Father and the exalted position to which He has raised us. Furthermore, we should inspire many others to seek to share in this blessed condition with us. I could readily express my grievance against many who possess good hope but spend most of their days either in security or discomfort, not experiencing the joy of the Lord as their strength and not walking in the light of God's favor as cheerfully as they could if they would more deeply contemplate these gracious promises made to them. However, this is not my intent, so I will conclude this point here.

The Second General Head.

Now we come to the second general matter wherein we are to live by faith, namely, how we may be able to mortify our corrupt nature and overcome our special sins, which most prevail over us. That this cannot be without faith has been sufficiently proved in the former part of this Treatise, and how this power is obtained by faith from Christ.

Here, we only need to consider what promises God has made to us in the Scriptures to strengthen our faith in this, that whereas we are full

of doubting how we, who are so full of sin, yea, naturally sold under sin and often held captive under some strong corruptions, should possibly overcome these; yet we may hear such comfortable promises from God as may assure us that no sin shall have dominion over us, but we shall daily master it and in the end obtain a full victory over it. For this purpose, I cannot begin with any Scripture more effectual than this very one, where the Apostle does not only show the absolute necessity of forsaking sin by all those who are members of Christ, but thereupon he exhorts them all, saying: "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lust thereof," and shows the way how this may be attained by not yielding unto sin their minds and hearts (which are principal members of the old man and weapons of unrighteousness) but rather yielding themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God. And whereas this might justly be objected, "Alas, how shall we, who by nature are so unable to resist so mighty a Tyrant as sin is, who has overcome all mankind, Christ only excepted, ever be able to withstand sin?" For an answer to this, the Apostle brings a most comfortable promise unto all that are not under the Law but under grace (that is, who are not still under the condemnation and tyranny of the Law, whereby it reigns over all unregenerate, but by true receiving of Christ by faith are now delivered from that bondage, and so brought into the liberty of God's children, which he says is to be under grace, whereof the Apostle speaks more fully in Rom. 6.1). Of these, he says, "That sin shall not have dominion over them," meaning that although these still carry sin, that is, corruption of nature, which continually fights against the grace of God in them, yet the corruption and sinful nature shall never again reign as in times past it did and so have the full victory over them. But they, by the grace of God's Spirit reigning in them, shall daily more and more overcome this their sinful nature and in the end get a glorious conquest over it and all other their spiritual enemies.

This one Scripture, if there were no more, is sufficient, if it is truly weighed and believed, to comfort every child of God over all his sins; that though they be never so many or never so great, and of long continuance, yet being here assured the root of sin shall be killed, he may then quietly rest his soul in peace, that all the fruits and branches shall in time quite wither; for certainty whereof this is twice repeated.

But the Lord, knowing how hardly we are brought to be persuaded hereof, especially when we are under the captivity of any sin, such as unbelief, pride, anger, worldliness, and the like, has labored much in His word to comfort us herein: that though the battle be sore and our strength small, yet His grace shall be sufficient for us, and His power shall be made perfect in weakness, as was said to Paul in his wrestling against some privy corruption, which he felt a prick in his flesh to be sent as a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of revelations. Which, though spoken to him, yet indeed belongs to all in his case, and therefore every poor soul who feels his sin too hard for him, that when he would do well, evil is present with him; he is to lay hold on this promise, that God's grace shall be sufficient for him, and God's strength shall be made perfect in his weakness. That, so complaining with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" he may comfortably cheer up his heart with him, saying: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, that through the power of the Spirit of Christ, He shall subdue that body of sin, which otherwise would carry him headlong to death and destruction, both of body and soul forever."

The Prophet Micah notably expresses this when he highly magnifies the mercy of God in pardoning iniquity and passing by the transgression of his people. He adds, "He will turn again, he will have

compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities," etc. The Apostle also lays out this matter at length, explaining how the Christian soldier, armed with the whole armor of God, may be able to stand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand. That is, being furnished with those excellent graces of the Spirit which he later names, he may bravely fight the Lord's battle against sin and Satan and thus endure to the end of the battle, standing up as a conqueror when sin and Satan fall as vanquished.

Behold the encouragements the Lord provides against all our fearfulness in our spiritual battle. If we could remember these, they would put more spirit into us to fight against our sins like men and not to faint or flee like cowards. Yet these are not even a tenth of the gracious promises the Lord has made to encourage us not to faint when we see the force of the enemy.

Among these promises are all those Scriptures that set out the rich benefits we receive in Christ, including our sanctification by Him. By sanctification, it is meant that Christ, having taken our human nature and sanctified it by His Holy Spirit, and we being made one with Him, receive the same Spirit (though in measure) to sanctify us, that is, to make us holy. This involves two necessary aspects: first, the killing of all sin in us, and secondly, the quickening of us to newness of life. Regarding the former, it is often repeated that Christ shall save His people from their sin, which is true both in the matter of our justification for the forgiveness of our sin and in our sanctification, for delivering us from the power of sin. All those general statements like "Christ is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," or "He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood," or "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all our sin," or "God sent His Son Jesus to bless us, in turning everyone from our iniquities," all contain the idea that a great benefit we enjoy

through Christ is that we, as members of Him, are cleansed from the guiltiness and filthiness of sin, and it shall not prevail over us.

This grace of mortification is expressly promised in various places. For instance, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Likewise, the Apostle John joins together both our justification and sanctification, saying, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Similarly, the Apostle Paul, in his letter to Titus, after showing that the grace of God, which brings salvation, also teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, adds that Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

This is what the Prophets foretold in their time, that God would purge and cleanse His Church. Isaiah often speaks of God purely purging their dross and taking away all their tin, meaning their sins. In another place, he plainly states, "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the Spirit of judgment, and by the Spirit of burning." Similarly, Ezekiel prophesied, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will cleanse you." There are many more testimonies from these and other Prophets speaking of this grace given by Christ to all the members of His Church, the cleansing of them from all their filthiness, which David expresses as "healing all our diseases." With the matter being so clear and the testimonies so abundant, I believe it would be too tedious to provide more examples.

It shall be more profitable for us to carefully consider these promises and similar ones when we read them. When we feel our hearts discouraged by the little strength we find to master our special corruptions, we can then apply one of these promises to ourselves. In these promises, the Lord Himself undertakes the work that is too hard for us: He will subdue our iniquities; He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness; His grace shall be sufficient for us, and His power shall be made perfect in our weakness. If we believe this, how can we fear or be faint-hearted to enter into this spiritual battle against our sins? Indeed, this will make us bold to resist and able to overcome our strongest sins, which have previously prevailed over us.

For further encouragement, we have examples of all the faithful who were once servants, even bondslaves, to their vile lusts. For instance, Zacchaeus to oppression, Mary Magdalene to whoredom, and Paul to persecution. Also, consider the famous Churches to whom the Apostles wrote, who were idolaters and lived in all abominable sins before their conversion. After being converted, they turned from their idols and their former vain and vile conduct to serve the living God, as seen in the holy Epistles written to them and in the history of the Acts. This transformation was foretold by the Prophets, who spoke of the wolf dwelling with the Lamb, etc., indicating that those who were once cruel and beastly would be changed by the Gospel. Their cruel and beastly qualities would be abated, and they would become like God's children, having holy communion with them.

Therefore, let no one who feels any degree of mortification in themselves, even if they cannot yet overcome all their sins or control their unruly affections, say in their heart, "I will never overcome such and such sins, but I will perish by them." To think this way is not only to mistrust one's strength (which is understandable) but also to question God's power, goodness, and truth. Such doubts would be a

great disservice to both God and one's own soul. Instead, let us do as Jehoshaphat did when he saw a great army gathered against him and felt powerless to withstand them. He cast himself wholly upon the Lord, saying, "O our God, will you not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us, neither do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." Let us be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. With the holy armor of His Spirit, let us fight valiantly, and we may be sure of victory.

In this way, God's children can be certain that no sin shall have dominion over them, and they will ultimately overcome all their sins and their spiritual enemies (who can only harm them through sin). It is lamentable that so few enjoy this benefit and its sweet comfort.

This can be seen in the many and serious flaws among various professors, such as their open pride, impatience, worldliness, and spiritual deadness in all religious duties. These sins, though they should have been long before mortified, continue to exist, grow, and bring reproach to them before others, while offering little peace and comfort to their own hearts. A significant cause of this may be that those who are content with their religious state, considering themselves diligent in public religious exercises (though many are negligent in private, especially when alone), and free from the gross sins of the wicked, either do not see or do not lament their own sins. Therefore, they do not seek after, and consequently do not enjoy, these precious promises and the fruit thereof.

Another group to be pitied more are those who bear the burden of their weaknesses and make great efforts to be relieved. Yet, over time, finding little improvement, they become discouraged, fearing they will never overcome the corruptions that trouble them the most. I cannot think of anything that would be a greater cause of

discouragement for these individuals than either ignorance, forgetfulness, or disbelief in these promises. These promises assure us that He who has begun the good work in us will perfect it until the day of Christ. Just as God often promised to His people going to conquer the land of Canaan that no enemy would be able to stand against them, He has equally assured these individuals that no sin shall have dominion over them.

It remains, therefore, that those who desire to conquer their corrupt nature and unruly lusts must frequently set before themselves these promises. Considering that He is faithful who has promised, they should confidently look for victory and steadfastly fight until they obtain it.

I hope this may suffice in this regard to calm the minds of all troubled by doubts about how to gain mastery over their greatest corruptions.

If anyone should require specific promises for particular sins, they should know that while the Lord sometimes addresses specifics, like cleansing them from idols or taking away a stony heart, it is not necessary for every sin. When God speaks generally, stating that He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness and heal all our diseases (as seen in the previously mentioned passages), who could ask for more? Therefore, let us learn to apply these general promises to our specific needs. I have no doubt that they will comfort us sufficiently, just as if the Lord had explicitly said He would conquer our pride, unbelief, hypocrisy, and other sins.

Let us familiarize ourselves with these promises as needed and meditate upon them often, as we will have daily use for them. In addition, let us fervently pray that the Lord, through His Spirit,

persuades us to rely on His promise for help in our greatest need. Then we will courageously confront our greatest sins, progressively gaining victory over them all. This will bring honor to God and our holy profession, serve as a good example and encouragement to our brethren, and provide present comfort and salvation to our own souls, etc.

The Third General Head

Of living by faith concerns holy duties.

Having seen how we are to draw daily greater certainty of our salvation from God's promises, both by faith and its principal fruits, and how we may daily grow more assured of a complete victory over all our corruptions, so that they shall never overcome us but we shall overcome them (which undoubtedly brings much comfort to all poor distressed souls who groan under their burden until they find relief),

We must now proceed to the third general point we have proposed, wherein we are to employ our faith against the many doubts that arise in our hearts. We must address how, being so full of frailty and weak in grace, we can still perform all the duties that God requires of us. These duties pertain both to His majesty in the first table of the Ten Commandments and to our interactions with fellow human beings, ourselves, and others in the second table. We must perform these duties in a manner that pleases Him.

For even though many carnal professors (who are little better than hypocrites) imagine that leading a godly life is not so difficult, contenting themselves with common duties that maintain a mere appearance of true religion, such as attending public assemblies, praying in their homes, and living honestly among their neighbors, all of which must indeed be done (and many do not even reach this point), those who have genuinely tasted God's mercy in their redemption through Christ know that God deserves better service from them. He requires more of them. Specifically, He calls them to be holy in all aspects of their conduct, just as He who has called them is holy. Their chief endeavor should be to add to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.

Moreover, the manner of their service should be as follows: 1. It should be without fear, not servile and constrained, but willing and cheerful. 2. It should be universal in holiness (towards God) and in righteousness (towards others). 3. It should be carried out before Him, as if performed in His sight. 4. It should be done sincerely and with constancy throughout all the days of their life. This is how they are to please God in all things.

The faithful people of God understand that this is the life that God's word demands of them, and it is what they earnestly desire and strive to live out. However, they find themselves surrounded by sin and often taken captive by the power of their corrupt nature. Consequently, when they intend to do good, evil is present with them. As a result, even the strongest Christians find it beyond their ability to lead such lives, and many of the weaker ones are often discouraged by how weakly they perform their Christian duties.

And no marvel, for seeing the regenerate themselves have not received such a measure of grace that they may willingly, thoroughly, sincerely, and constantly serve God with the reverence and godly fear He deserves (as witnessed by the slips and falls of the most worthy servants of God), but all our sufficiency is from God, and His grace must be sufficient for us. His power must be magnified in our weakness, and without Christ, we can do nothing. From all of this, we can understand the need we have for faith to enable us to lead a life that pleases God and find comfort for our souls.

This need becomes even more apparent when we consider what is necessarily required of us, sinners, to please God in any duty we undertake. I believe there are three requirements:

1. First, a conscientious effort to do the will of God as commanded in His word.
2. Second, genuine sorrow for our many failings in both deed and manner of doing.
3. Third, a belief that God, for Christ's sake, will assist us and accept our weak obedience.

These requirements are evident in the Scriptures, frequently mentioned, and they are also reasonable. Since God's will is the standard of all equity, anything that deviates from it, no matter how slight, must be unjust and displeasing to God. Conversely, since all our righteousness is like a stained or defiled garment that God's pure eyes cannot endure, it is necessary that those who wish to be acceptable to God must come to Him through Christ. They must seek both strength to fulfill what God requires and favor for God to accept the satisfaction made by Christ for the forgiveness of their shortcomings in their best efforts. They must also seek God's approval of their obedience as pleasing in His sight.

Therefore, anyone who intends to lead a godly life that pleases God must achieve this through faith. Without faith, everything we do is sinful, as Scripture clearly states: "Without faith, it is impossible to please God."

Yet, how few are those who have acquired this grace to lead a godly life by faith and draw from Christ continual spiritual strength to better fulfill all holy obedience and gain daily assurance that their obedience will be acceptable to God!

In this context, we have two important aspects to consider: How can we attain this grace to lead a godly life, and how can we have assurance that it will be accepted?

For the former purpose, which is to understand our inability to perform all holy obedience on our own and to be more willing to embrace the remedy, I encourage everyone to carefully examine themselves according to God's Law to see how greatly they fall short in each commandment.

1. For example, in the first commandment: Many fail by not walking with God, not relying on Him for relief in all their necessities, not delighting in Him to the extent of considering nothing too dear for Him, and by not fearing to displease God more than anyone else in the world.
2. In the second commandment: Consider how lax and casual one is in all forms of worship, both private and public. Private prayer, which is often the most common form of worship, is sometimes neglected. Reading the Scriptures and other godly books, meditation alone, and engaging in conversations with others about spiritual matters may be infrequent. Similarly, in

public worship, there may be careless and unfruitful listening, praying, singing, and receiving of the sacraments.

3. In the third commandment: Reflect on how reluctant you are to lift up the name of God and how you might, through your behavior, bring greater esteem to God among those you interact with.
4. In the fourth commandment: Consider the challenges you face in fully dedicating yourself to the sanctification of the Lord's Sabbath.

If anyone conscientiously evaluates their actions in these areas, they will likely see a significant need for faith, through which they can receive power from Christ and His Spirit to more effectively perform all these holy duties to God.

A similar deficiency can be found upon thorough examination in all the duties of righteousness in the second table, which God requires both concerning ourselves and our neighbors.

5. In the fifth commandment: Consider how inadequately you fulfill your duties in your specific roles, whether in the family, church, or commonwealth, whether as someone in authority or someone under authority. Governors and the governed alike should reflect on their need for faith to enable them to better fulfill their required duties.
6. In the sixth commandment: Evaluate how careful you are in avoiding things that harm the physical and spiritual life and health of both yourself and others, as well as your efforts to preserve them. Additionally, consider your ability to forgive wrongs, love your enemies, and respond to evil with goodness.

7. In the seventh commandment: Reflect on the measures you take to maintain both body and soul in chastity, avoiding all temptations to impurity while using your senses and their delights with sobriety.
8. In the eighth commandment: Examine your diligence in obtaining your possessions justly and using them for God's honor, mercifully for your neighbor's relief, and wisely for your own well-being, both in body and soul.
9. In the ninth commandment: Evaluate your attentiveness in avoiding any harm to your own reputation or that of your neighbor and your efforts to preserve and restore them using the means appointed by God when they are damaged.
10. In the tenth commandment: Consider how difficult it may be to truly love your neighbor as yourself, to be as unwilling to harm them as yourself, and to seek their well-being as fervently as your own.

Thus, I have briefly outlined some of the chief duties derived from the Commandments. We cannot deny that we are obligated to perform these duties and desire to do so, yet we often fall short in practicing them. It is impossible to do better until we receive grace from Christ to enable us to fulfill them.

These duties are so evident, and I hope I don't need to say more to persuade any true Christian to strive for an increase in the precious gift of faith. Through faith, we gain the power from Christ to better obey God in all that He requires of us. Now, I want to focus on another aspect of this matter: how we can do all our works in faith, believing that God will accept them. This is as important, if not more so, than the former aspect, as both reason and experience will show.

A natural person, devoid of saving grace, may be motivated by self-love or fear of impending danger to perform many good deeds, as seen in examples like Herod, Jehu, and Amaziah, who did what was right in the sight of the Lord but not with a perfect heart. However, to be firmly persuaded, on solid grounds, that God will accept our weak and sinful obedience as if it were faultless requires true grace, even more than some weak believers can attain.

This leads to the discouragement faced by many sincere Christians, who are conscientious in their conduct but find little comfort in their actions due to the infirmities in their best efforts. As a result, they may lose much, if not all, of the fruit of their great labor. It is crucial for them to learn how they can be assured that their weak obedience will be pleasing to God as if it were faultless.

In both of these aspects, I will do my best to draw from the Scriptures, the wells of salvation, such sweet promises that will abundantly satisfy the thirsty soul seeking grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Let me begin with the first aspect: assuring ourselves that we will not lack any necessary grace for living a godly life. The Lord explicitly affirms this in Psalm 84:11, which states, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." While this promise is general, I have no doubt that it includes the grace of holiness among others. The Lord also promises to sanctify and make His people holy in numerous places in the Bible, such as Exodus 19:6, 31:13, Leviticus 20:8, 21:8, 22:32, Deuteronomy 22:8-9, Isaiah 4:3, 35:8, and Joel 3:17. The words of these promises are readily available for those who wish to read them. Furthermore, God promises to make His people fruitful and likens Himself to a good husbandman, as seen in John

15:1-2 and Isaiah 27:2-3. Additionally, Psalm 92:14 states, "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."

This is also meant when the Lord, as a good shepherd, says that He will feed His people so that they may become "fat," signifying abounding in grace, as found in Psalms 23, Ezekiel 34:13-15, and Psalms 36:8, which states, "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures," and so on.

This grace from God to lead a godly life is also intended in many other promises. For example, when it is said that God will give strength to His people, it may apply both to facing physical or spiritual enemies as well as to walking in the ways of the Lord. Scriptures such as Isaiah 45:24, Zechariah 10:12, and others confirm this. There are promises where God declares that He has worked all our works in us, like in Isaiah 26:12 and Philippians 4:13, which states, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

However, most relevant to this purpose are those promises where God says He will circumcise our hearts and the hearts of our descendants to love the Lord our God with all our hearts and souls so that we may live, as in Deuteronomy 30:6. Similar promises can be found in Hosea 3:5, 14:7, Jeremiah 24:7, and Ezekiel 11:19-20, 36:27, and 37:24. These promises assure us that God, recognizing the frailty of His children in obeying His will and believing that they can attain it, has given many precious promises for their comfort. These promises, in general, encompass all the necessary grace for leading a godly life, which every child of God can confidently apply to themselves. Therefore, we may boldly assure ourselves that, even if we are weak, through Christ, we shall be able to do all things, for He

has worked and will continue to work all our works, and His grace shall be sufficient for us.

We can echo the words of Isaiah 45:24, saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

If we were to remember what God has spoken for our comfort in this regard, it would embolden us to undertake any duty that the Lord requires from us. We would do so with confidence that we can perform it in a manner that He will approve, saying, "It is well done, good and faithful servant." On the contrary, if we focus only on the difficulty of the task and our own inadequacy, we would lack the motivation to begin it or would approach it unproductively and joylessly, as is the case for most people. This, in turn, brings little honor to God and provides little comfort in one's profession.

This might suffice to encourage us cheerfully to embark on a godly life in all its aspects if we were not so reluctant within ourselves and did not face discouragement from others, coupled with an abundance of unbelief towards God. Nevertheless, due to all these factors, the Lord, out of love, is compelled to put in more effort with us. Not only does He promise His help in a general sense, but He also descends to particulars. Where He sees us being most mistrustful, there He offers more specific promises of assistance, so that we might willingly serve Him.

First and foremost, we must acknowledge that, despite our regeneration, we remain ignorant in many things regarding God's will and how to perform the things He requires. This has been a longstanding complaint among the godly, and it continues to be so. They frequently and fervently pray to God for guidance, as evidenced in the Book of Psalms, particularly in Psalm 119 where this prayer is repeated.

For these reasons, it is often mentioned that the Lord will teach His people. This is evident in the well-known prophecy of the Gospel days, where the zeal and faith of God's people are foretold. They encourage one another to attend public assemblies on the grounds that God will teach them His ways, and they will walk in His paths (Isaiah 2:3, Micah 4:2). Other passages, like Psalm 25:8-9, Isaiah 54:13, and 1 John 2:27, emphasize God's promise to teach and lead His people into all truth.

From these promises, we can conclude that since Christ invites us to come to Him and apply eye-salve to our eyes for spiritual sight, and God has made numerous promises to teach us through His Spirit, we shall not lack spiritual knowledge, no matter how great our ignorance or limited our capacity. Therefore, we can confidently approach God for spiritual knowledge, use the means He has appointed, and not be disappointed.

As for the ability to live according to our knowledge, enough has been said in the general sense. We have learned that God will give His people a new heart, which is the source of all obedience. This should provide comfort to those who are well-acquainted with the reluctance of their hearts towards holy duties, especially specific ones. They often doubt their ability to have a good heart and keep it. For their comfort, they can rely on the promises where God has declared that He will change their hearts. This has been mentioned earlier, emphasizing that God will make His people capable of obeying His statutes and commandments, which is impossible without a new heart. No one can acquire a new heart except from God, as it is not within man's power to set his heart aright; this is a gift from God. This truth is evident in Jeremiah 31:33, where the Prophet speaks of the New Covenant under the Gospel, saying, "I will put my Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts," a

passage repeated twice in Hebrews 8:10 and 10:16. Acts 15:9 mentions God purifying the hearts of the Gentiles through faith, and in the following chapter, it states that the Lord opened Lydia's heart. Additionally, various Scriptures speak of God giving the earnest of His Spirit in our hearts, shining into our hearts, comforting, keeping, establishing, and directing our hearts, among other expressions.

From this, we can confidently conclude that even if our hearts are corrupt, hardened, darkened, distressed, inclined in the wrong direction, weak, and prone to wander from the right path, God, as promised, will surely come to our aid in all these aspects. He will set and maintain our hearts in the right condition, making them suitable for whatever services the Lord assigns to us.

I have no doubt that this will be comforting news to all sincere believers who acknowledge their wicked and unbelieving hearts. They can take solace in the assurance that God, through His Holy Spirit, will guide their hearts, enabling them to be of service to Him.

Now, since the Lord does not limit Himself to our hearts in general but also attends to the proper ordering of our affections – such as joy, love, fear, trust, and others – it would be beneficial for us to apply these promises to alleviate our doubts concerning these affections. These affections serve as the hands and feet of our souls, through which we engage in every duty. With a well-furnished heart in these aspects, we become more apt and ready for every good work.

Among these affections, none are more profitable than faith, trust, and hope. Though they have distinct characteristics, they are often intertwined, contained within one another. Let us consider these three together. Scripture frequently testifies that God grants these to all whom He intends to save. For example, Jude 1:3 mentions that

faith was once given to the saints, and Ephesians 2:8 speaks of faith as a gift. In Hebrews 12:2, Christ is called the Author and Finisher of our faith, and His apostles prayed for increased faith (Luke 17:5). Romans 12:3 states that God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Regarding trust and confidence in God, it is said of His people that they shall trust in Him (Isaiah 14:32), that the poor of His people will trust in Him (Isaiah 14:32), and that people will look to their Maker and have respect for the Holy One of Israel (Isaiah 17:7). Jeremiah 3:19 mentions calling God "my Father" without turning away from Him, and Zephaniah 3:12 speaks of hoping in God.

Regarding hope, David often professes that God is his hope and trust, even from his youth. God made him hope from his mother's womb, and God is declared to be the hope of all the ends of the earth.

If we were to consider on one side how much we need these three graces throughout our lives, as evidenced in this entire treatise, and on the other side, how greatly we fall short of them during times of trial, we would eagerly embrace these promises wherein God gives and, by His Word and Spirit, works these graces in the hearts of all His children. Therefore, whenever we feel our hearts faltering, let us take comfort in the Lord, as David did, saying, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever" (Psalm 73:26). Since the Lord Jesus is both the Author and Finisher of our faith, let us trust that He who initiated the good work of faith in our hearts will complete it. We can pray with the Apostle that God will fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.

Now let us turn our attention to the next grace in the heart, the first fruit of our faith, which is Joy – spiritual joy, specifically called joy in

the Lord and joy in the Holy Spirit. When I contemplate this grace, I cannot help but wonder at the disparity between what God has promised and how little we seem to experience. While it cannot be denied that many in these times of peace have plenty of joy, often too much, this joy is often found to be carnal and fleeting rather than the spiritual and enduring joy that God bestows upon those He loves.

It becomes evident through God's Word that just as a loving father desires his children to live joyfully, so does God. Therefore, He frequently calls upon us to rejoice, as seen abundantly in the Psalms, Prophets, and Apostles. To mention one passage that serves as an example: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). If there were no other verses, this one alone would reveal God's desire for us not to rejoice occasionally or only when things are going well (as hypocrites may do) but to rejoice always, even in afflictions. The Apostle James also exhorts, "My brethren, count it all joy, when ye fall into diverse temptations" (James 1:2), not for the afflictions themselves but for the good that they will assuredly bring to us, as Romans 8:28 assures us that all things work together for our good.

However, it is a rare few who attain this blessed state of rejoicing always in the Lord, as anyone can discern by reflecting on how seldom their hearts are moved by the wonder of God's goodness toward them – a goodness they acknowledge as undeserved. This joy should stir their souls to praise the Lord, as true gratitude is absent where this joy does not exist. Moreover, they may observe how often their hearts are troubled when circumstances oppose their will and desires. This would not be the case if their hearts were filled with the spiritual joy that transforms bitterness into sweetness.

Therefore, it is our wisdom to heed God's Word, where we will discover how abundantly the Lord has prepared this delightful fruit of the Spirit and promised it to all the true members of Christ. This is beautifully exemplified in the book of Psalms. For instance, in Psalm 19:8, it is stated, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart." Psalm 23:4 declares, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psalm 36:8-9 proclaims, "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasure; for with thee is the fountain of Life, and in thy light shall we see light." Psalm 89:15-16 states, "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Similarly, Psalm 45:15, speaking of the members of the Church, says, "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace." Psalm 64:10 affirms, "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in the Lord, and all the upright in heart shall glory." Psalm 68:3 encourages, "But let the righteous be glad, let them rejoice before God; yea, let them exceedingly rejoice." Psalm 97:11-12 proclaims, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness." Psalm 118:15 declares, "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacle of the righteous; the right hand of the Lord doth valiantly." And Psalm 126:5-6 reassures us, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." In Psalm 132:16, God promises, "I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her Saints shall shout aloud for joy." These are but a few examples from the Psalms, and many more could be gathered.

The books of the Prophets are also full of such promises. Notable is the sweet song from Isaiah 12:2-3: "Behold, God is my salvation, I

will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song, he is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw waters out of the wells of salvation." In Isaiah 24:14, it is written: "They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the Majesty of the Lord." Isaiah 29:19 proclaims, "The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the holy one of Israel." Isaiah 35 is filled with heavenly comforts for us Gentiles, as in verse 1: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." Isaiah 56:7 says, "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer." Isaiah 62:13-14 adds, "Behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed. Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit." The last chapters of Isaiah also contain many sweet consolations, such as in Isaiah 66:10: "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her all ye that love her; rejoice with joy for her all that mourn for her." The passage continues with comforting words until verse 14. Even our Savior spoke to His disciples, assuring them that their hearts should rejoice, and no one could take their joy away from them.

Jeremiah, too, offers similar promises in chapter 31:12-13: "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord." He foretells that both the young and old will rejoice, and their mourning will be turned into joy. In Zechariah 8:18-19, it is proclaimed, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the fast of the fourth month, etc., shall be to the house of Judah, joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts." To conclude, Romans 14:17 teaches us that "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Here, I have gathered an abundance of promises in which the Lord pledges to bestow joy and gladness upon His people. However, I

believe I have collected not even half as many as could be drawn from the scriptures, as I have not delved into the numerous exhortations to this duty, the many examples of it, or the prayers for it—all of which emphasize the necessity of joy.

The main point I aim to make is that all those who find themselves lacking this holy joy in the Lord (resulting in an uncomfortable life) should recognize that God has provided it for them. The only obstacle is their unbelieving hearts. Since true faith is the source of this joy, it is no wonder that so few attain this excellent grace when faith itself is often weak or lacking.

I encourage all who feel the absence of this holy rejoicing to contemplate what the Lord intends by making so many promises regarding this one thing. It is twofold: firstly, to demonstrate that there can be no enduring in the Christian journey without this joy, and secondly, to illustrate that, due to the many trials in life, it is very challenging, and therefore rare, to acquire, let alone maintain, this joy. These realizations should motivate us to strive for the joy of the Holy Spirit. Through it, we can comprehend the excellence of this state compared to all other conditions in the world. Instead of envying the prosperity of the wicked, we will pity them, for they foolishly forfeit such treasure for mere trinkets and baubles.

The way to attain this joy includes fervent prayer to God for it, as well as meditation. We should meditate not only on the many just reasons God has given to all believers to rejoice but also on the excellent promises in which God has bound Himself to work this grace in us through His Holy Spirit. When we carefully consider these promises, we will realize that the Lord's intention is not only to provide us with reasons for rejoicing (since often those who should rejoice and have good cause to do so are weighed down by the

burden of corruption or affliction, unable to lift their hands in joy, but instead, waste their days in sorrow). God's work is also to open our eyes to see, move our hearts, and draw us by His Spirit to be affected by His favors. Then, like the Prophet David, we will find more joy in the light of God's countenance than the wicked find in all their prosperity. This concludes my discussion on how a true believer may attain the blessed state of rejoicing always, regardless of circumstances, which, though highly desired, is pursued by only a few who follow the right path to obtain it.

The next grace of the heart that God requires from all those whom He has adopted in Christ to be His children is that they should love Him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their might. The fact that we should love God in this manner is not denied by anyone except atheists, those who live without God. However, even among those who acknowledge this requirement, there are generally two categories of people.

The first group deceives themselves into thinking that they love God well when, in reality, they do not truly and wholeheartedly love Him. They may only claim to love Him, or if they do, it is in a superficial and worldly manner because everything is going well for them. These individuals should be convinced by their loose lives and their lack of conscientiousness in keeping God's commandments that they do not truly love God as they claim. They especially need to be reminded of the many commandments in God's Word that call for sincere and fervent love for Him. They should also be moved by the weighty arguments found abundantly in the Holy Scriptures that earnestly persuade us to love God genuinely.

The second group comprises those who examine their lives and find many infirmities and shortcomings in their duties to God and others.

They conclude that they do not possess the love of God within them. This realization often keeps them down, hindering them from experiencing the comfort and confidence that their holy profession should bring.

It is primarily this second group of individuals that I am addressing. They need to be encouraged, firstly by recognizing that the sight of their lack of love for God, which causes heartfelt grief in them, is clear evidence that there is some genuine love for God within them. Otherwise, they would not be so troubled by their deficiency in love for God.

Secondly, they should find comfort in the fact that the One who has given them the will and desire for this grace will also grant them the ability to love Him. He who has initiated the good work will also bring it to completion, as promised. In fact, God has assured us that "the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." This promise, even if it stands alone without any others, is sufficient to persuade those who believe in God's word that God, who understands the impurity and incapacity of our hearts to love Him as we ought, will purify and sanctify our hearts. Through His grace, we will be capable of loving Him in a way that pleases Him.

It is only unbelief that keeps us from the holy boldness that allowed Paul to declare, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

While I do not find any other promise explicitly stating that God will make us love Him, it is certain that the manifestation of God's love to us will naturally engender love in return, just as kindling a fire produces heat. Therefore, all the abundant testimonies that God

provides of His love toward us should serve as numerous reasons for us to love Him. As it is written, "We love Him because He first loved us." Let us, therefore, gather as many reminders of God's love toward us as possible. Do not doubt that these reminders will ignite a corresponding love for Him within our hearts.

Furthermore, all the rich rewards promised throughout Scripture to those who love God serve as numerous incentives to fulfill this duty. This concludes this discussion on the matter.

The next grace of the heart that God requires from all those whom He has adopted in Christ to be His children is the fear of God. By this, I mean the holy affection that makes us stand in awe of God, making us very unwilling to displease Him and very ready to please Him, both by avoiding evil and doing good. The excellence of this grace, its significance in our entire lives, the frequent and earnest commands to possess it, the practice of it by God's righteous servants, and its deficiency in many believers and its weakness in others—all of these aspects deserve thoughtful consideration. However, they would lead me too far from my intended focus, so I will address those who are aware of all these matters. These individuals feel and acknowledge their lack of this grace, desire it, and diligently seek it through prayer and other holy means. Yet, due to their weak faith, they cannot attain to the level of fear that would prevent them from doing what God forbids or neglecting what He commands.

To those individuals, I implore you to pay attention to the promises that God has made to His people regarding this grace. God knows that naturally, there is no fear of Him in the eyes of men, but He has declared that He will implant His fear in their hearts. As Jeremiah 32:39-40 states: "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that

they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from me." If we could believe this promise, it would assure us that we will not lack this saving grace. Instead, God will certainly bestow it upon us in His own time and measure.

For further confirmation, the Lord frequently repeats this promise, as seen in Deuteronomy 4:10, where a specific means by which this fear is developed is mentioned: "Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children." Similarly, Proverbs 2:5 states that those who seek wisdom will understand the fear of God. Deuteronomy 6:1-2 and 17:19 emphasize the importance of the king's role in this matter, while Deuteronomy 32:12 speaks more generally about all. The Prophet David, in Psalm 40:3, reveals another means by which God stirs up this grace in His people—the contemplation of God's mercy toward others. He states, "And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God, many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord." In the same vein, David, having been instructed by God, invites others, saying, "Come ye children, hearken to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Psalms 34:11). These verses confirm the enduring nature of this fear, as Psalm 72:5 and Psalm 102:16 attest. Isaiah 29:23 also mentions the sanctification of God's name and the fear of the God of Israel. Jeremiah, speaking of God's special mercies, promises in Jeremiah 33:9, "And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good I do unto them; and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." Hosea 3:5 prophesies that "the people of Israel shall return

and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."

These examples should suffice; citing all of them would be extensive.

The right use of these promises, and similar ones, is to recall them whenever we find our hearts condemning us for lacking this fear and doubting whether we will ever attain it to a good extent. In such moments, we should remember these promises, which although given specifically to some of God's children, truly belong to all of them. Therefore, every child of God may and should apply these promises to themselves, firmly believing that God will fulfill His word to them. By patiently waiting for the Lord's appointed time, they will not be disappointed in their hope but will undoubtedly enjoy the fruit of their desire. This concludes the discussion on this matter.

I see that this third point, about how we can be sure of grace to lead a godly life that will be accepted, is quite extensive. It's no wonder because it covers all the duties required in both the moral and ethical aspects of life. Therefore, I won't delve into every detail but will instead focus on selected areas, particularly those where I believe Christians often struggle and find the least comfort in their performance.

One such area concerns our spiritual services to God, including our prayers and engagement with His Word and sacraments. I've heard many hopeful Christians lamenting their lack of comfort in these practices because they perceive their performance as weak and filled with sin. A significant reason for this is that they tend to place all their comfort in the flawless execution of their duty. When they inevitably fall short (which they frequently do), they become disheartened. This indicates that their faith isn't playing a significant

role in these duties because faith should provide comfort even in our greatest failures, just as it does in our smallest ones.

To clarify this further (which I fear may not be apparent to many struggling souls who diligently serve God yet rarely find comfort, given that their service, though sincere, is riddled with imperfections), it must be acknowledged that while we live on this earth, the actions of God's children are a mixture of both flesh and spirit. Even their most earnest prayers are tainted with some level of fleshly corruption. However, I believe that there is still an operation of the Spirit present in their weakest actions, and when these are offered in faith, they are undoubtedly acceptable to God. In such cases, God's children should find genuine comfort not in themselves or their work but in God's forgiveness of all their shortcomings and His acceptance of their obedience through the perfect satisfaction of Christ. Conversely, if someone prays fervently with a great outpouring of the Spirit and becomes conceited about it, failing to humble themselves for the imperfections in their best prayer, and if they expect favor because of the excellence of their prayer rather than looking for mercy solely on account of Christ's merit (although this may not be common, it still occurs), then I dare say that the sleepy prayer offered in faith is accepted while the tearful prayer devoid of faith is rejected.

Let it be clear that I do not intend to endorse lethargy or any other gross corruption in prayer, nor do I seek to diminish the value of zeal or the gifts of the Spirit in prayer. My purpose is to expose a common yet subtle and perilous corruption in our prayers and other holy exercises. Often, when we perform these actions to our satisfaction, we become content and believe that God will accept them. I do not deny that we can rejoice in the assistance of God's Spirit during such times. However, the issue I observe is that during these moments,

our faith diminishes. Because we do not acknowledge the blemishes in our best services to God, we fail to humble ourselves for our imperfections and do not turn to Christ to seek favor. As a result, we tarnish our best duties due to a lack of faith.

This becomes more evident when, on the contrary, those who pray, hear, read, meditate, or partake in the sacraments while burdened by their conscience have no assurance that such duties will be accepted. This lack of comfort undoubtedly arises from a deficiency in faith. If, during their weakest prayers (for which they feel the most humble), they were to approach God in Christ seeking pardon and believing that their imperfections would be covered by Christ's full and perfect satisfaction, they could find comfort in their weakest acts of obedience. This would further encourage them in their service to God.

Therefore, I would like to persuade all who seek to find genuine and enduring comfort in their prayers and other holy exercises, even in their best duties, to be cautious of pride that often accompanies these actions. They should continually reflect on their failings, allowing them to humble themselves and draw near to Christ. In this way, they can offer their sacrifices in faith, knowing that God will accept them. Conversely, when they are most downcast, they should be wary of despair, doubt, and discouragement, which are common companions when we recognize our shortcomings. Instead, they should seek comfort through faith in Christ, knowing that He is both able and willing to heal great infirmities just as readily as minor ones. Christ is ready to pardon our most grievous falls as well as our lesser stumbles.

In all of this, we can clearly see the importance of being fortified and strengthened by faith so that we may find comfort in our prayers and

other holy exercises. I am aware that many true-hearted Christians lack this, and it is for their sake, in particular, that I write. I will now provide some precious promises from God our Father, which are found in His Word for the express purpose of encouraging His children to come confidently to Him in all their needs.

Upon examining these promises, I find that the majority of them specifically assure us that God will accept our prayers and grant our desires. However, they do not always expressly assure us that God will assist us and enable us to pray, although several promises do address this aspect. Therefore, I will gather promises that explicitly promise God's help to teach us how to pray because we often doubt our ability to pray correctly just as we doubt God's willingness to hear our feeble prayers.

One promise that comes to mind is especially significant and could serve as a source of assurance for all if we could hold onto it firmly. The Apostle, in his effort to comfort the hearts of God's children amidst their corruptions and afflictions, answers a common objection raised by heavy hearts: "I am often so distressed that I am unable to pray, so how can I expect any help from God?" Many of God's children, including some of the stronger ones, experience times when their hearts are so burdened that all they can do is sigh and groan, unable to properly direct their hearts in prayer to God. We read of Hezekiah, who, like a crane or swallow, chattered and mourned like a dove, unable to express his grief to God. Similarly, we often encounter instances in the life of David where he roared in grief but struggled to articulate his anguish to God. Many worthy Christians also express this common complaint to their friends during times of extremity, saying, "Help me, I cannot pray."

To this severe temptation, the Apostle provides an answer, saying, "Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered: And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the Saints according to the will of God." In this response, he freely acknowledges that he and all God's children know from painful experience that, in such situations, they do not know how to pray as they should. Nevertheless, God has not left them comfortless; He has given them His own Spirit to aid and assist them, as if to bear a portion of the burden that is too heavy for them to bear alone. When they cannot pray as they should, the Spirit empowers them to pray with such feeling, faith, and fervency that no words can adequately express it. God, who knows and regards the secret desires of the heart, beholding the work of His Spirit, graciously accepts and approves of these prayers offered by His children.

I have no doubt that this is the Apostle's intent in this passage. Even if there were nothing more, it would be sufficient to comfort any afflicted soul against the temptation that they cannot pray. God has given us His Spirit to assist us, and our feeble prayers are referred to as the prayers of God's Spirit within us, which God cannot deny.

I believe that this is why we are urged elsewhere to pray in the Spirit and in the Holy Ghost, meaning to pray as the Spirit teaches us, not relying on any natural ability.

Where I note a special difference between true prayer and counterfeit prayer, it becomes evident that while the latter may excel in eloquence, it lacks the divine breath of God's Spirit. Such counterfeit

prayers are but lifeless sacrifices, displeasing to God and unprofitable for those who offer them.

Therefore, I advise all those who seek comfort through their prayers to labor more for the Spirit's presence than for eloquence in their prayers. With this, I conclude my remarks on this particular scripture passage, on which I have lingered longer due to its significance. However, since the Lord, knowing our weakness, has consistently comforted His people throughout the ages with similar promises, let us explore more of these sweet assurances.

To this end, consider what one of Job's friends said in an attempt to comfort him (although it may have been misapplied). After offering some sound advice, he also shared numerous gracious promises. Among these promises, he added, "For thou shalt have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face to God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows," and so on. Another of Job's friends likewise asserted, "He shall pray unto the Lord, and he will be favorable to him." David, in his time, proclaimed, "For this shall everyone that is godly pray unto thee, in the time when thou mayest be found." The Prophet Isaiah made similar promises to the people of his era: "Then shalt thou call and the Lord will answer, thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am." Jeremiah declared, "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken to you." He continued, "And ye shall seek me and find me when you shall search for me with all your heart." Hosea prophesied, "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them, I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a strait way wherein they shall not stumble, for I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn." Furthermore, Zechariah prophesied in his time that God would pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication upon the house of David and the

inhabitants of Jerusalem. "They shall call upon my name, and I will hear them," he foretold. "I will say, 'It is my people,' and they shall say, 'The Lord is my God.'"

During His earthly ministry, our Lord Jesus Christ comforted His disciples, assuring them that they should not solely rely on Him, but instead, boldly pray to the Father in His name and receive whatever they asked for. Undoubtedly, more passages to this effect could be cited.

The primary purpose of all these passages is not merely to emphasize our duty to seek the Lord and call upon Him, although many Scriptures do indeed require this. Rather, their main intent is to encourage those who are willing to call upon God according to His will but find themselves lacking the ability to pray as they wish. In such cases, many become discouraged. The message of these passages is to persuade them to believe that God, through His Spirit, will teach them to pray in a manner that He will hear. The certainty of this does not depend on our worthiness as individuals or the merit of our prayers. Instead, it rests solely on God's mercy in His promises and His faithfulness in fulfilling those promises. To deny this is to diminish God's supreme glory. Therefore, we must believe that God, through His Spirit, will enable us to pray in such a way that He will accept our prayers. In all our doubts and fears regarding this matter, our refuge must be these promises, in which we place our trust, confidently seeking help from God when we find none within ourselves.

This concludes my message regarding our comfort in the knowledge that God will assist us through His Spirit in our prayers. Such assurance should suffice to convince us that He will also accept our

prayers, for acceptance is implied in most of these promises and is an essential aspect of all of them.

Seeing that the Lord, who better understands our needs than we do ourselves, has made numerous promises that He will accept our humble services, even when they are weak, if they are offered in truth (which will bring welcome news to many humble hearts), I must not withhold these comforts but lay them open for their use. I earnestly beseech the Lord to make them profitable for all who sincerely desire it.

When Moses, under God's guidance, sharply proclaimed fearful judgments against Israel for their sins, including the scattering of the people among the heathen, he added this comforting promise: "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." He continued with more words of assurance.

This promise can be especially comforting to a troubled soul who is burdened by the sense of a grievous fall, as it reveals God's willingness to receive any repentant sinner who approaches Him. A similar promise was made to Solomon after his prayer: "Mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attend to the prayer in this place." Throughout Scripture, we repeatedly read of God promising His people that they will find Him if they seek Him. As the Prophet Asa was told by the Prophet Azariah in 2 Chronicles 15:2, "The Lord is with you while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you." Jeremiah 29:13 echoes this sentiment. Furthermore, David expressed his confidence in Psalm 34:10, "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." The same assurance can be gathered from the Psalms and various other passages in Scripture, where the faithful either

declare that God has heard their prayers or express their faith and confidence in God's willingness to hear them, all based on His promises to do so.

There are numerous such passages, both in the Psalms and other Scriptures, that confirm this truth. However, since my goal is to encourage belief, I trust that it will not be too tedious for anyone to read and consider these passages, as it was not burdensome for me to compile them. I can honestly say that I have often read them with great comfort, as different passages may resonate more with one person than another. Therefore, I will not hesitate to add more passages in this vein.

For instance, Psalm 34:15 proclaims, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." Verse 17 adds, "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." This theme is reiterated in Psalm 107:6, 13, 19, and 28. Psalm 50:15 states, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." Psalm 86:5-7 affirms, "For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee," and so on. Psalm 102:17 assures us, "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer," extending this promise to the groaning of prisoners and those appointed to death (verses 20-21). The Lord's nearness to those who call upon Him in truth is affirmed in Psalm 145:18-19: "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them." Proverbs 15:8 emphasizes, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight," and verse 29 adds, "The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous." Similarly, Proverbs 15:29 asserts, "The Lord is far from

the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous." Isaiah 30:19 declares, "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee." Joel 2:32 prophesies, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered," a promise reiterated in Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13.

Thus, we see how abundantly the promise of God hearing the prayers of His people has been renewed throughout all ages of His Church until Christ. Christ Himself, knowing our great need to pray and be comforted by the assurance that God will hear our prayers, has given us many encouragements to pray in faith. He said, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find: knock and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, shall it be opened." This promise is reiterated in Luke 11:9-13, where it is also said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Furthermore, our Savior said to the woman of Samaria, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee the living water."

In His final words to His disciples, Christ repeated these promises frequently, saying, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son: If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." Similar assurances are found in John 15:7, 16, 23, and 24, where it is stated, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." The Apostle James also affirms in James 5:15-16, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sin, it shall be forgiven him," and "the effectual prayer of the righteous availeth much." The

Apostle John adds his voice to these promises, saying, "And whatsoever we ask of him, we receive," and "if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." He also emphasizes the importance of praying for others, saying, "If any see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life," and so on.

We have a wealth of such promises in which the Lord binds Himself to hear our prayers and grant our requests. The purpose of all these promises is to heal the deep-seated ailment of our nature: our tendency towards distrust and disbelief in God's acceptance of our prayers, given our weakness and unworthiness. To remedy this, we should become intimately familiar with these promises, selecting those that are most comforting to us personally, and meditating on them before we pray. Through this practice, we can be assured that God will graciously forgive our failings and accept our feeble efforts, all through the perfect satisfaction made by Christ on our behalf. This would result in a greater delight in the holy duty of prayer and render our prayers more effective in obtaining all good things from God. On the contrary, neglecting this practice of meditating on these promises will cripple our ability to engage in prayer joyfully and render us guilty of both contempt for God's generosity in making such promises and the greater impiety of calling the holy and true God a liar due to our unbelief in His words. Therefore, to avoid these severe pitfalls and reap the vast benefits, let us highly value these promises and make them our own, using them rightly, especially in times of need.

Everything said about God's gracious acceptance of our prayers applies equally to all other holy exercises of religion and services to God. In each of these, the Lord is ready to enable us for the work and

to be pleased with our sincere efforts, provided we offer them to God with faith in the mediation of Christ Jesus.

Yet, in addition to these promises, we have many assurances that God will be pleased with our sacrifices, which can be understood as applying to all acts of devotion. One such promise is found in Psalm 51:19: "Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness." Moses blessed the tribe of Zebulun with these same words. The Apostle Peter, when speaking of all the faithful, declared that they are a spiritual house, a holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Similarly, the Apostle Paul, in writing to the Philippians, referred to their charitable gifts as "an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well pleasing to God." In Romans 12:1, he urged the brethren to present their bodies as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," which he described as their reasonable service.

Throughout the Old Testament, God often assured His people that if they offered the sacrifices as He commanded, they would be accepted (Leviticus 1:4, 22, 21:23, 26:11). In Malachi 3:4, it is prophesied that the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasant to the Lord as in days of old. The promise is also evident when God told the Israelites that if they brought their sacrifices to the door of the Tabernacle, He would meet with them there, sanctify the Tabernacle with His glory, and dwell among them as their God to hear and help them. Isaiah 60:7 foreshadowed this by stating, "They shall come with acceptance."

Furthermore, many blessings are promised to the Lord's people for their obedience, which is seen as an acceptable sacrifice to God when offered through Christ. For instance, the Lord said to Cain, "If thou do well, shalt thou not be accepted?" He similarly encouraged the

Israelites to obey His voice and keep His covenant, promising to make them a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. Leviticus 26:3-14 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14 contain numerous blessings promised to the people for hearkening to God's voice and obeying His commandments. To conclude, Psalm 84:11 offers a beautiful promise: "For the Lord God is a Sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

From these promises and others like them, we can confidently affirm that although, due to our inherent corruption, we can never offer sacrifices to God without blemish and spot, when we offer them in the name of Christ, they shall be accepted and rewarded.

If we were truly persuaded of this truth, it would invigorate our devotion and prompt us to perform all holy duties much more cheerfully and consistently. Often, due to a lack of this faith, we perform these duties less comfortably. I leave the deeper contemplation of both these aspects to the conscience of each individual who wishes to examine themselves: first, the limited comfort one finds in their spiritual services, and second, the comfort that would arise if they were assured that God would both assist and accept them. Since God has bound Himself so firmly by promise that it would be a great sin to doubt this, a sin against both God and one's own soul, I exhort all who recognize their weakness in this regard to take special notice of these promises and apply them personally in times of need. By doing so, they will approach their holy duties with greater joy, perform them more conscientiously for the glory of God, and find comfort for themselves, thereby encouraging others as well.

Everything discussed here, specifically regarding prayer and generally concerning all our sacrifices, can be equally applied to the

Word and Sacraments, as well as to all private acts of devotion, and even to acts of mercy, since they are all sacrifices commanded by God and promised to be accepted at our hands.

Yet, sadly, woeful experience reveals that far too many people, including those who are not the worst of sinners, find little comfort in the regular ministry of the Word and the reception of the holy Sacraments. I will make every effort to address this grave issue and demonstrate how those who are willing to be guided by God's Word can approach these sacred duties with greater joy, thereby reaping more fruit and comfort from them.

I am not oblivious to the fact that there are numerous reasons for this lack of spiritual fruitfulness and comfort in these divine services, both on the part of ministers and the congregation. This problem is particularly pronounced in the preaching of the Word when ministers fail to adapt their message to the understanding and edification of their listeners. There are many shortcomings in this regard, including the failure to convict the conscience of the hearers, compelling them to acknowledge their guilt and strive for better obedience to the teachings they receive.

Among the people, there is a great deal of carelessness in preparing themselves before attending these services. Many experience dullness and wandering of the mind during the sermon, and they neglect to meditate on what they have heard. All of these factors contribute to the unfruitfulness of the Word.

However, addressing these issues is beyond the scope of my current discussion, as my primary aim is to assist those who genuinely desire to benefit from God's holy ordinances but are discouraged by their own weaknesses in practicing them. These individuals may find little

comfort in these services and might even contemplate avoiding them altogether.

One of the main reasons for this lack of comfort, as I have observed, is that they are overly focused on their own inadequacies (which prevent them from doing what they wish) and not sufficiently focused on God, in whom all their help is found. Consequently, they fail to experience the fruit and comfort in God's service that they desire.

To remedy this situation, I can think of no better solution than becoming familiar with God's promises made to those who heed His Word and partake in the holy Sacraments, which are the seals of the Word. By embracing these promises, they can be assured that God will bless His own ordinances for their edification and salvation.

For those who come to hear the Word, the Prophet Isaiah's words should be more than sufficient to convince them of the value of listening to God's Word. The passage is truly noteworthy: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

In this Scripture, we must observe several important points, relevant to our purpose. First, notice how freely the Lord offers His saving grace to those who possess nothing, and who cannot purchase it with anything of their own. Second, consider the pathway to obtaining this grace: it involves diligent listening and faith in God's Word.

Third, we find the most comforting promises that their souls shall live, implying that they shall be spiritually revived in Christ, the Seed of David, and become recipients of enduring mercies. With such encouragement, any humble soul may eagerly heed God's Word, knowing with certainty that through it, they will attain salvation and receive all necessary graces for this life.

This truth is notably confirmed by various Scriptures that testify to the power of the Word to save souls. For instance, in James 1:21, we read: "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." The Apostle Paul, in his exhortation to Timothy, emphasizes the importance of both personal conduct and adherence to doctrine, asserting that by doing so, Timothy would save himself and those who heard him. Similarly, when addressing the Elders of the Church of Ephesus, Paul commends them to God and to the word of His grace, which is capable of building them up and bestowing an inheritance among the sanctified. Furthermore, to the Corinthians, Paul states that God chose the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe.

All these Scriptures, along with many others of similar import, unmistakably affirm that salvation is inseparable from the preaching of the Word. Therefore, anyone who conscientiously attends to the Word can be assured of salvation. Such a belief, if held, would undoubtedly inspire individuals to approach the Word with great enthusiasm, leading them to find much comfort in it.

To further this point, the Scriptures are replete with commendations of the Word, particularly in the books of Psalms and Proverbs. While it is impossible to cite them all, they serve the purpose of nurturing a greater love for the Word, which brings unparalleled benefits. For

instance, Psalm 19:7 and onward extols the Law of the Lord as perfect, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord as sure, making the simple wise, and the statutes of the Lord as right, rejoicing the heart. The entire Psalm 119 is dedicated to praising the Word's excellence from various angles, emphasizing its profound effects and fruits when embraced genuinely. It is often noted by learned Divines that among its 176 verses, scarcely four or five do not contain some commendation of the Word, aiming to rouse all of God's people to hold it in higher regard and attend to it more diligently, so they may enjoy its fruits in all times and circumstances. For this reason, I urge every true Christian to become intimately familiar with this Psalm, making it readily available for use in their times of need.

The book of Proverbs similarly offers commendations of heavenly instructions, emphasizing their value. For instance, it urges readers to "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go: Keep her, for she is thy life." Such a statement leaves no room for doubt that instruction is synonymous with life itself, signifying that it leads to the attainment of all that pertains to the comfort of both this life and the life to come.

While I could delve into specific details, discussing how instruction helps individuals avoid numerous evils, sins, and punishments and enjoy countless blessings, both physical and spiritual, I leave further consideration to each individual's personal reflection. Without a doubt, when David declared, "Great peace (is, and shall be) to them that love thy Law: and nothing shall offend them," he intended to convey the same truth. Who would not highly value the Word, which imparts wisdom to people of all backgrounds, whether learned or unlearned, wise or simple, old or young? The book of Proverbs alone attests to this universal wisdom, particularly in its first nine chapters,

extolling the heavenly instructions that God, as a Father through His servants, imparts to His children. A few verses illustrate this point, urging us to "Take fast hold of instruction, let her not go: Keep her, for she is thy life."

In light of these truths, anyone with a good heart should be motivated to immerse themselves in the hearing, reading, and meditation of God's Word. To further inspire you in this endeavor, I will provide references to relevant passages, inviting all who are interested to explore this topic more deeply. By doing so, you will find abundant encouragement to embrace the duty of engaging with God's Word wholeheartedly. The references include: Proverbs 1:9, 1:23, 2:1-13, 3:1-4, 3:13-24, 4:1-13, 4:20-24, 6:20-24, 7:1-5, and the entire chapter of Proverbs 8.

In these and many other places in the Old and New Testament, the Lord, knowing our extreme reluctance in truly receiving and preserving His Word (which is nevertheless so essential that there is no salvation without it), has made numerous precious promises. I do not know whether there are promises to anything more precious. At least by some of these promises, those of us who are so full of doubt about how to make proper use of the Word may find greater encouragement for conscientious and consistent engagement with it, thereby reaping its sweet fruit in due time.

So, the responsibility and effort of anyone who lacks this comforting use of God's Word but earnestly desires it should be to familiarize themselves with these promises. They should select some of the most significant ones, those that seem especially relevant to them, and commit them to memory. Whenever they approach the Word, they can then meditate on these promises, allowing them to strengthen

their resolve to attend to God's Word with the expectation of His blessing upon their efforts.

The lack of meditation on God's promises when we come to the Word is a chief cause of unfruitful hearing, resulting in limited growth in grace, which is evident among ordinary attendees of public ministry. This parallels the Apostle's report about the Hebrews, for whom the preached Word did not profit because it was not mingled with faith in those who heard it.

Building upon what has been said about the Word in general (which can be applied to all its various exercises, whether public or private, as many of these promises pertain to each of them), we can also derive comfort in the use of the Sacraments. The Sacraments are rightly referred to as a visible Word because what is spoken in the Word to the ear is represented to our eyes through visible signs and sealed in our hearts. This enhances our assurance that these blessings are truly ours. Therefore, even if we did not have specific promises expressly related to the Sacraments, we could still find adequate encouragement to expect their benefits, which include participation in Christ and His life, the essence of all that is promised in the Word.

However, since the Lord has instituted these holy signs and seals of His Testament in all ages of His Church, wherein He bequeathed Christ and all His benefits to true believers and their offspring, knowing our great weakness of faith in receiving these seals, He has made significant efforts to assure us. Thus, if we consider this carefully for our comfort, we will realize that we can be as sure that Christ and all His merits are ours through the Sacraments as we are sure of the outward signs we see with our eyes and touch with our hands. Our certainty in this regard relies on God's truth and

faithfulness, both in His Word and in the seals of His Word. He truly gives that which He promises and seals, just as freely as He gives any promise or seal.

We rightly consider someone dishonest if they do not keep their word, and even more so if they seal a covenant and fail to fulfill it.

Be it far from any Christian, then, to attribute this to God: that He gives empty words and seals, and does not as truly give that which He promises and seals.

The sole reason why many who come to the Word and Sacraments do not partake of Christ, who is truly offered by God in them, is this: they do not inwardly, through faith, receive that which is promised and sealed, even as they do outwardly receive the Word and its seals.

Our wisdom, then, whenever we approach the Word and Sacraments, should be to strive for faith, especially that we may as truly receive Christ in them as He is offered, just as we outwardly receive the Word and its seals.

We have discussed enough about the reception of the Word.

Now, as for our Sacraments, I cannot sufficiently lament their widespread misuse, which is so grievous that, although God has lovingly given them to His Church as special means to further their salvation, many become more guilty of condemnation due to their unworthy reception of them. This happens not only because of the gross irreverence displayed by all carnal Protestants who attend the Sacraments solely out of custom, obligation, or social standing, without any knowledge or conscience.

But even among those of a better sort who have some concern for their souls, there is either such ignorance or negligence that they have never truly received the holy sacramental seals, and therefore have never experienced the sweet fruits of them.

Moreover, and more lamentably, this may also be found in not a few individuals who possess genuine grace and are truly God's children, to whom these seals rightly belong. Yet they seldom or never derive the comfort from the holy Sacraments that they ought and could, were it not for their own shortcomings.

To support this claim, I invite everyone who wishes to validate this concern to examine themselves by answering the question: What tangible benefits have they received from their Baptism? For my part, I have posed this question to many respected members of the Church, and they had little to say on this matter. I have no doubt that similar situations can be found in others who are perplexed by this issue, far from enjoying the great benefits that could be obtained from it. These benefits, in particular, include two aspects: firstly, that through our baptism, we are more assured of our salvation in Christ, and secondly, that it helps us to lead a godly life. Both of these are undoubtedly the fruits of true baptism.

The same can be said for the Lord's Supper, which, among other things, serves to strengthen our confidence in our growth in grace and our perseverance. How few, however, leave the communion table as assured of Christ and all His benefits being theirs as a woman married in the Church returns home confident that the man she has married and all that is his will be hers for her use and comfort? Yet, I must say that it is so, and it cannot be otherwise when approached in such a manner.

If I were asked about the primary reason why it is not so, I would point to the lack of faith. This lack arises in many cases from a lack of clear understanding to perceive God's intention in instituting these Sacraments. In some instances, people trivialize these Sacraments and hold them in low regard.

And among the best of these, they are burdened by their own sense of unworthiness, which leads them to fear that they cannot partake in so great a benefit. It is for the sake of such individuals that I write these words, to strengthen their feeble faith so that they may experience this benefit.

To achieve this purpose, it is important to consider what was previously mentioned regarding God's intention in instituting these holy signs and seals, which we call Sacraments. His intention was to strengthen our weak faith. While the Lord, through His Word, has made numerous promises of grace in Christ to us sinners, which should be sufficient to sustain our faith in their assurance (if not for our own shortcomings), He has observed our hesitance to believe His Word. Therefore, for the confirmation of our faith, He has given us these outward and visible tokens of His love. By them, we may know Him to be faithful, be more assured, and have no doubt that we will certainly partake of Christ Himself and all His merits, just as we partake of the outward signs of His covenant.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that what properly belongs to the things sealed is often ascribed to the outward seal, underscoring that on God's part, they are never separated. This is why the Lord's people were commanded to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts, and the Lord promised to circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their descendants (Deut. 30:6).

Similar principles apply to Baptism, where we are said to be buried with Christ through Baptism, and it is referred to as Baptism for the remission of sins. Our sins are declared to be washed away, and Baptism is said to save us, all of which pertains to the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7), signifying His sufferings that cleanse and justify us from our sins.

Likewise, when our Lord Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He referred to the bread as His body and the wine as His blood of the New Testament, signifying that these outward signs and seals are trustworthy pledges of His body and blood, which He genuinely imparts as spiritual nourishment to every believer, just as He gives bread and wine as physical sustenance.

In the same vein, the Apostle mentions, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the body of Christ?" This signifies that we genuinely partake in the body and blood of Christ, that is, the entirety of Christ and all His merits, in the Sacrament, just as we partake in the bread and wine along with the rest of God's people. To conclude, the Apostle states in 1 Corinthians 12:13, speaking of both Sacraments, "For by one Spirit, we, all are baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit." In all of these examples, we see that true grace is given in connection with the outward seals. It is not by the mere act itself, by the work performed, that the outward reception of the signs imparts grace, which is proper to Christ and His merits sealed by the outward signs. Instead, it is to teach and persuade us that God, on His part, indissolubly joins these graces with the signs and genuinely imparts both the one and the other.

The purpose of this is to ensure that what God has joined together, we do not separate. We should be convinced by all these witnesses that when we receive these holy Sacraments according to God's appointment, we will as surely have Christ and all His benefits as ours as we have the outward signs. If we were persuaded in this manner, we would approach the Sacraments with greater enthusiasm, prepare ourselves more diligently to be worthy participants, and would reap more spiritual fruit from them than is usually the case for most people.

Therefore, the effort of all those who seek to enjoy the benefits and comfort of God's holy Sacraments when they approach them should be to keep in mind both the mercy of God in instituting them to strengthen our faith and His faithfulness in freely bestowing upon us that which He offers and seals to us through these outward signs. That is, Christ and all His benefits are ours for our present comfort, encouragement, and strength, as well as for our eternal salvation. This concludes the discussion of the third general point, which is how we can joyfully serve the Lord in all the good duties He requires of us, being assured by faith that He will assist us by His Spirit to perform them according to His will, and also accept our humble and feeble obedience offered to Him in the name of His Son, Christ Jesus.

The Fourth General Head

Of Living by Faith Concerning Afflictions

We have now come to the fourth topic, which is afflictions. Afflictions are the portion of God's children, and they are often heavy burdens to bear, causing discomfort for many souls. If we are not encouraged to endure them with patience and tranquility, we will never be able to maintain our Christian journey to the end with comfort for ourselves or as a good example to others. Throughout history, we have seen evidence of this unfortunate reality. Many who professed their faith during times of peace and prosperity later abandoned their faith when faced with troubles and persecutions. They turned away, just like Demas, and embraced the allure of this world. It was a common complaint that many good Christians who served God faithfully and cheerfully in times of health and tranquility became agitated and unsettled when sickness and other trials befell them. They struggled to persevere as they did in times of peace. There may be valid reasons for this phenomenon. While afflictions, especially for the children of God, are intended to make them better in every way, natural human weakness is averse to suffering and finds it difficult to bear any affliction. As a result, afflictions may prevent our minds and hearts from being prepared for Christian duties, even prayer, as they have been during times of peace. Instead, afflictions can provoke us to fret, impatience, murmuring, and even despair. In the most extreme circumstances, people might resort to unlawful means to escape their troubles. These are some of the harmful consequences of afflictions when we are not well-equipped to endure them and do not know how to make proper use of them.

From all of this, we can see the importance of being strengthened against the discouragements and hindrances we encounter in afflictions. We will discover that faith is the only means by which we can attain such strength. Through faith, we can confidently rely on God for His guidance and assistance in bearing and benefiting from all types of afflictions. This is what I intend to explain: how we can

live by faith in all afflictions so that they do not hinder our Christian journey but rather help us until we reach our destination in God's kingdom. I will keep my explanations concise, as I have come across a treatise by Mr. Byfield titled "The Promises." In this treatise, he plainly and soundly explains how a godly Christian can find comfort for their heart against all distress caused by afflictions or temptations in this life. I recommend this treatise to anyone seeking further understanding on this topic. However, since I have already gathered numerous promises from the Scriptures regarding afflictions before I encountered Mr. Byfield's book, I will continue to show how faith can be applied to all kinds of outward afflictions pertaining to our natural life, enabling us to bear them patiently and derive benefit from them. I have already addressed inward and spiritual troubles of the mind, which arise from doubts about God's favor and our salvation through Christ, as well as grief caused by our infirmities, such as our inability to mortify our sins or our weak performance of holy duties, in the previous three general heads of this treatise. Therefore, in this section, I will solely focus on extracting comforting passages from the Scriptures that God has provided to help us endure all outward trials we may face while living in this world of tears.

In setting down these grounds of comfort, I will maintain some order to better aid our understanding and application of them. Our first source of comfort arises from the fact that all our afflictions come directly from God, by whatever means. The second source of comfort is to observe how the Lord afflicts us, with great wisdom in all respects and utmost love. The third is to understand the purposes behind these afflictions, namely, God's glory, setting an example for others, and our own benefit. Lastly, we have the assurance that God will assist us during these trials and bring about a good outcome.

As for the first point, that all our afflictions come from God, as the supreme judge and orchestrator of them, there is no need for extensive proof; rather, it requires thoughtful consideration to fully grasp its significance for our well-being. It is stated by the Prophet that, "Shall there be evil in a City, and the Lord hath not done it?" referring to the evil of affliction and not sin. Furthermore, the Prophet Hosea declares, "Come let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." The concept is evident in the common expression, "the chastening of the Lord," frequently used, especially in Hebrews 12:5 and onwards. This single scripture contains many specific consolations against various afflictions, which we will explore individually. At this point, I will connect this notion with the previous one: that just as all the afflictions experienced by God's children come from His hand, He does not spare any of them. As stated in verse 6 of Hebrews 12, "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," and in verse 7, "What son is he, whom the father correcteth not?" Both of these affirmations, that all our afflictions originate from God and that He deals similarly with all His children, can provide great comfort in our afflictions. First, knowing that whatever God does must be good, no matter how evil and bitter it may seem to us, we should hold our peace, recognizing that He has done it. Even when we cannot discern the reason for our suffering, we can be confident that the Lord never corrects His children without just cause. As the Prophet David openly acknowledges, "I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." Moreover, recognizing that God, who corrects us, is our Father, we can take even greater comfort in the knowledge that He will never send us any trial that is not for our good. As we will see later, this is the same experience that befalls all of God's children, as affirmed by the Apostle Peter, who says, "Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your

brethren that are in the world." Furthermore, seeing that God did not spare His own Son, but allowed Him to become "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," "smitten of God and afflicted" (Isaiah 53:3,4), we should be even more willing to bear our own crosses, particularly when we understand that this is the path to glory, as we shall see later.

However, this source of comfort will be even more effective if we carefully consider how God deals with His children when He corrects them. Although divine wisdom and love are inseparably intertwined in all of God's dealings with His children, examining them separately will enhance our comfort. First, let us contemplate how wisely God orchestrates matters in all His chastisements upon His own children.

This wisdom in God's discipline is evident in two aspects. Firstly, God chastises His children with the most appropriate corrections, and secondly, He does so with just measure. The appropriateness of God's correction lies in His perfect knowledge of all circumstances, knowing precisely when and how to chastise His children. He administers this spiritual medicine in a manner that is most suitable for the patient's benefit and the nature of the ailment. We can gather this wisdom from the comparison made by the Holy Spirit between our earthly parents and our heavenly Father in disciplining their children. It is said, "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits and live? For they verily, for a few days chastised us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." In this comparison, it is evident that earthly parents often correct their children according to their own desires, seeking to satisfy their own will, without considering what might be truly best for them. However, our heavenly Father, in His great wisdom, considers

precisely how and when to chastise His children for their maximum benefit. This includes the ultimate benefit of restoring His image of holiness within them, which is a primary purpose of all afflictions, as we shall see later. This divine wisdom in chastising His children is clearly evident throughout the history of the Church.

A memorable example comes from the story of Jacob's sons, who, driven by envy, sold their brother Joseph into Egypt and deceived their aged father into thinking that Joseph had been devoured by a wild beast. The Lord remained silent on this matter for many years, and all seemed well. However, the Lord chose a suitable time and means to make them recognize their sin. This was achieved through their brother Joseph, who, though unrecognized by them, treated them harshly, accused them of being spies, cast them into prison, and subjected them to various forms of distress. At this point, their guilty consciences compelled them to confess their wrongdoing, saying, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us." On another occasion, Judah confessed to Joseph, saying, "What shall we say unto my Lord? What shall we speak? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." Similarly, the Lord corrected David for his grievous sins in the matter of Uriah. This correction involved the death of the child born out of adultery and the rebellion of Absalom, who not only sought to drive David out of his kingdom but also openly defiled his wives and concubines before all of Israel, as foretold by the prophet Nathan. Likewise, the Lord addressed David's pride in numbering the people through a severe plague that claimed the lives of seventy thousand. The Lord's judgment was also proclaimed against His own people, as seen in Deuteronomy 28:47, "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies, which the Lord

shall send against thee, in hunger and in thirst, etc." The prophets of their time often foretold similar chastisements for the people's transgressions. For example, Haggai and Malachi prophesied about a great dearth and scarcity sent by the Lord due to the people's extravagance in their own homes while neglecting the Lord's house. For their contempt of His word, God threatened to send a famine of the word, as stated in Amos 8:11. We can also observe God's dealings with ourselves if we pay attention to them. Whenever our affections become too attached to anything, diverting our hearts from God, whether those attachments involve individuals, material possessions, pleasures, or profits, it is customary for the Lord to either remove them from us or make them bitter to us. This serves to diminish their importance in our eyes and free our hearts for better things.

The comfort we derive from God's wise dealings with us lies in recognizing that all afflictions endured by God's children are medicinal, intended to cure their corruptions. We must understand that this medicine is administered by a skilled and infallible Physician who always provides such remedies at precisely the right time and in the right measure to bring about our good. This understanding should not only lead us to bear our afflictions with patience but also to be thankful to God for them and to strive for personal improvement through them.

But this will become even more apparent if we carefully consider God's wisdom in moderating all His chastisements, both in terms of their measure and duration. God administers His corrections in a manner that is most suitable for the strength of the patient and the nature of the ailment. This wisdom is evident in all the afflictions that God places upon His children. Although He may chastise some more severely and for a longer duration than others, it is always done with perfect wisdom. Some may have provoked the Lord less, or they

may not be as able to bear the weight of the Lord's hand. The Apostle Paul addresses this, saying, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." In this single sentence, we find several reasons to take courage when facing the afflictions that God, our heavenly Father, allows to come our way. Firstly, we learn that God deals with us no differently than He does with others, even among His own children (as mentioned earlier). Secondly, we understand that God never burdens us beyond our capacity but wisely adjusts the load according to our strength. This adjustment is made faithfully in accordance with His promises. Furthermore, God will assist us through His Spirit to endure and bear our trials, ensuring that we will ultimately experience a favorable outcome and deliverance. Even if this were the only source of encouragement, it would be sufficient to keep us from despairing in any trial, no matter how severe. However, because the Lord knows how challenging it is for us to believe this and because we often believe our burdens to be too heavy, He frequently reinforces this truth in our minds and memories. This is what Elihu told Job, emphasizing that God will not impose more upon man than is fitting, preventing anyone from entering into judgment with God. The Apostle Peter also intended to convey this message when he stated that believers greatly rejoiced in their salvation through Christ, even though they experienced temporary heaviness due to various trials. He added the phrase "if need be," indicating that trials are only permitted when God deems them necessary in all respects. This is why the Prophet Isaiah skillfully illustrates God's wise dealings with His people in contrast to the wicked. He compares the wicked to thorns and briars that God will burn together. However, His people are likened to a vineyard that the Lord diligently tends and waters at all times to prevent any harm. Concerning the briars and thorns, the

Lord asks if He has smitten them as He has smitten those who opposed Him, or if they have been slain like those who opposed Him. The Lord says, "In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it, etc." This indicates that while God will uproot and burn the wicked like thorns by the roots, He will only prune and trim His Church like a vineyard to enable it to bear more fruit, as explicitly mentioned by our Savior in John 15:2. Jeremiah 46:28 and 30:11 also express this distinction. "Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord, for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations, whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet I will not leave thee wholly unpunished." In these verses, we witness a significant difference in how God deals with His children versus the wicked, whom He utterly consumes. God's wise moderation of His children's corrections enables them to bear and benefit from these trials, which, when well-considered, significantly diminishes their severity. Surely, this was what the Prophet David and Jeremiah earnestly prayed for when they beseeched God not to correct them in His anger or chasten them in His hot displeasure but rather to exercise His judgment with wisdom, taking into account their ability to endure, lest they be consumed and brought to nothing.

This wisdom of God in chastening His children manifests itself not only in the measure of the burden laid upon them but also in moderating the duration of it. God ensures that it is not overly prolonged, preventing His children from becoming faint and giving up. King David had significant experience in this regard, as he often professed in the Psalms. In Psalm 30:5, he wrote, "For his anger endureth but a moment, in his favor is life, weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Similarly, in Psalm 103:9, he stated, "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever." Psalm 129:3 also emphasizes that the rod of the wicked

shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put forth their hands to iniquity.

The Prophet Isaiah conveyed a similar message on behalf of the Lord. In Isaiah 10:25, he prophesied, "For yet a very little while and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction." In Isaiah 26:20, the Lord invited His people to enter their chambers and hide until the indignation passed. In Isaiah 54:7-8, God reassured His people that His temporary hiding of His face was accompanied by the promise of everlasting kindness and mercy. Isaiah 57:16 affirmed that God would not contend forever or be always wrathful, for fear that the spirit and souls He had made would fail.

The Prophet Jeremiah, speaking in the name of the Lord, echoed these sentiments, emphasizing God's mercy and His unwillingness to keep anger forever. Similarly, in Ezekiel 16:42, God declared that He would make His fury rest and His jealousy depart from His people.

Micah 7:18 celebrated God's pardoning of iniquity and passing over transgressions, emphasizing His delight in mercy. Lastly, the Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 4:17, referred to afflictions as "light" and "but for a moment," affirming that they work for believers a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Thus, we can clearly see God's wise dealings with His children in all His chastisements, as He selects the most appropriate timing and measure—both for the quantity of correction and its duration. This approach aligns with the strength of the patient and the nature of the ailment. Believing in this wisdom of God should increase our contentment in bearing the Lord's hand. We should neither fret nor faint under any affliction, knowing that the Lord orders them with great wisdom for our ultimate good. Therefore, whenever we find an

affliction weighing heavily upon us, either due to its magnitude or prolonged duration, we should turn to these promises in which the Lord assures us that He will not burden us beyond our capacity and will not allow affliction to linger longer than necessary for our benefit. By resting upon God's word and trusting His timing, we can find ease and complete deliverance.

For our better understanding of this, we need to consider God's loving and tender care for His children in all their afflictions. The Scriptures provide numerous comparisons, explicit testimonies, and examples to assure us of God's compassion and to prevent us from despairing when afflictions seem overwhelming or prolonged. It's essential to recognize that even in our most challenging moments, God neither forgets us nor lacks compassion for us. He is described as a Father to the fatherless and a Judge of widows. Psalm 103:13 beautifully captures this sentiment, stating, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust."

The Prophet Isaiah, in Isaiah 49:13 and beyond, vividly illustrates God's compassion toward His afflicted people. He calls on the heavens, the earth, and the mountains to rejoice because God comforts His people and shows mercy to the afflicted. Even when Zion felt forsaken and forgotten, God's love remained unshaken. Isaiah draws a poignant comparison, asking if a woman could forsake her nursing child or have no compassion on her own offspring. He acknowledges that while human beings may forget, God will never forget His children.

King David also expressed his confidence in God's compassionate care for the needy and the poor. In Psalm 9:18, he affirmed that the needy would not be forgotten, and the expectation of the poor would

not perish forever. David's words in Psalm 31:7 reflect his gratitude for God's consideration of his troubles and knowledge of his soul in adversity. In Psalm 38:9, he acknowledged that his desires and groans were known to God.

Psalm 56:8 paints a touching picture of God's compassion, describing how He takes note of our wanderings and collects our tears in His bottle, recording them in His book. Each tear is so precious to God that He preserves them for a time when He can bring comfort and relief to His children. Psalm 116:15 attests to the Lord's high regard for the deaths of His saints, emphasizing their value in His sight.

Isaiah 63:9 further illustrates God's compassionate nature. It declares that in all their affliction, He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them. His love and pity led to their redemption, and He bore them and carried them throughout the days of old.

These passages, along with many others in Scripture, reveal God's incredible compassion towards His children in their afflictions. Just as a tender-hearted mother is moved with compassion when she sees her child in danger, the Lord is similarly troubled by His children's extremities. His pity and readiness to provide help are as genuine as a mother's concern for her child. This compassion was genuinely expressed in our Savior Christ during His earthly ministry, as attested to in the Gospels. Reflecting on God's compassion should comfort us even in the midst of fiery trials, as we know we have such a tender-hearted Father who sympathizes with us. Therefore, we must keep these promises, which highlight God's loving and compassionate dealings with His children, in our hearts and minds. They serve as a source of comfort, reminding us that we can find favor and relief from our loving Father during times of need. This

concludes the discussion of the second ground of comfort in afflictions, derived from the manner of God's dealings with His children—marked by wisdom and love.

We are now, in the third place, to consider the worthy purposes for which God exercises His children to bear the cross throughout their lives, from youth to old age. These purposes can be broadly categorized into three: first, to bring glory to God; second, to set an example for others; and third, for our own benefit. These reasons should strongly motivate us not only to refrain from complaining about our afflictions but to rejoice and be glad, as our Savior exhorted His disciples, and as stated by the Apostle James in James 1:2. This rejoicing in affliction was often practiced by the holy servants of God, as seen in Acts 5:41 when the apostles rejoiced after being flogged, and in the example of Paul and Silas, who sang praises to God in prison.

The Apostle Paul himself took pleasure in infirmities, particularly bodily ones, as he explained, along with reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for the sake of Christ. In all of these, it is undeniable that the primary reason for rejoicing in afflictions was that their suffering contributed to God's glory and the well-being of God's Church. The Church was greatly strengthened in the truth, emboldened to profess it, and ready to endure suffering for it. Additionally, the afflicted servants of God themselves reaped manifold benefits through their trials.

While it is tempting to delve into how God is glorified by the afflictions of His children, as well as how these afflictions benefit others, it is more compelling to explore the chief benefits that God promises and imparts to His children through afflictions. Among these benefits, the most prevalent is the blessing that comes to those

whom the Lord corrects, as mentioned in Job 5:17: "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty." Similar sentiments are found in Proverbs 3:11-12, Psalm 94:12, and Hebrews 12:5-6. They underscore that God's correction is a mark of His love and is meant for our good. King David also acknowledged the goodness of affliction, saying, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes."

In these verses, it is clear that, despite the bitterness of affliction to our senses, they are profoundly beneficial for God's children. They serve as a means of happiness, special expressions of God's paternal love, and are to be valued and received with gratitude. This principle also applies to the sufferings endured by God's children for the sake of righteousness. Though these trials differ from chastisements for sin, they can be bitter and afflict us. Hence, we need encouragement to endure them and guidance on how to utilize them correctly. Consequently, the Lord pronounces those who suffer for righteousness blessed, as has been witnessed throughout the history of the Church, inspiring faithful believers to endure trials patiently and cheerfully for the sake of righteousness, thus glorifying God in their generations.

To further encourage us, let us consider some specific benefits that God's children obtain through afflictions. These benefits can be conveniently grouped under three headings, as indicated by the Prophet Daniel in Daniel 11. While Daniel was foretelling the afflictions that would befall God's faithful people, he noted that they would face various challenges, such as falling by the sword, experiencing flames, captivity, and spoil for many days. However, in verse 35, he added that "some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white." This suggests

that these were the three primary purposes for which God sent afflictions upon His own children.

First, these trials serve as tests to reveal the dross of corruption and the pure metal of grace within God's children.

Secondly, they aim to purge out the remaining corruption found in them.

The third purpose is to make them more beautiful and shining in grace. All of these purposes ultimately result in bringing glory to God, setting a good example for others, and providing comfort to the individuals themselves.

Regarding the first purpose, trials test our strength and weakness, examining our faith, patience, love for God, and the ways in which we grow through them. This concept is frequently illustrated in Scripture through the analogy of gold and silver being refined by fire. For instance, in Zechariah 13:9, when speaking of the remnant of God's people who will be preserved, it is said, "And I will bring the third part through the fire and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." The outcome of this refining process is that they will call upon God's name, and He will answer them, acknowledging them as His people. Similarly, in Jeremiah 17:10, while addressing the deceitfulness and wickedness of the heart, it is stated, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." This concept is reinforced in Proverbs 17:3, which says, "The fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, but the Lord trieth the hearts."

A particularly relevant passage is found in 1 Peter 1:6-7, where the Apostle Peter explains that the purpose of various trials, which

temporarily cause sorrow among God's children, is to test their faith and prove it to be more precious than gold that perishes. This testing results in praise, honor, and glory when Jesus Christ is revealed. Peter continues to encourage them to not be surprised by the fiery trial but to rejoice, as they share in Christ's sufferings and will share in His glory when it is revealed. Similarly, James 1:2-3 encourages believers to consider it a joy when facing various trials because the testing of their faith produces endurance.

In all of these passages, it is evident that one significant benefit of God's children enduring afflictions is to manifest, both to themselves and to others, the presence of sin and the purity of grace within them. While God already knows their hearts perfectly, these trials serve to reveal the spiritual condition of individuals, allowing them to grow in faith and godliness. God uses these trials not only for His glory but also for the well-being of His children and as a powerful example for others. This is further supported by Deuteronomy 8:16, where Moses speaks of God's providence in the wilderness and how He provided for His people to humble and test them, ultimately for their good in the end.

We daily experience how foolishly many deceive themselves. Some, often the worse sort, promise themselves more strength of faith, patience, love, and other graces than they actually possess. When they come to be tested, they find it to be far different from what they had presumed. This results in their just shame, yet it can lead to their improvement if they belong to God.

Others, indeed better (although they may not realize it due to a lack of experience), have much mistrust in themselves. However, when brought to the trial, they prove to have sound faith and other good graces. Throughout the history of the Church, there are numerous

memorable examples of this. One such example is found in the Book of Martyrs, the story of Mr. Lawrence Saunders. At the beginning of Queen Mary's reign, upon witnessing the change in religion, he expressed his fear of suffering martyrdom to Dr. Penington. Dr. Penington, a large and stout man, confidently stated that he would see every drop of his own fat melted before he would renounce the truth. Nevertheless, Mr. Saunders remained steadfast in his commitment to the truth and faced martyrdom with great cheerfulness, while Dr. Penington ultimately shamefully yielded.

Through these trials, the faithful come to know themselves better, which is beneficial. Conversely, it is common for God's people to be underestimated and, by many worldly individuals, regarded as no better than themselves. Just as Satan accused Job, insinuating that he served God only for material gain and would curse God if he were afflicted, critics often say that these believers, whom they refer to as "professors" in a derogatory manner, would be just as impatient and resort to negative measures to save themselves if they were in dire circumstances. However, when God calls His children to severe trials, particularly martyrdom, and they endure these trials with patience and even rejoicing, the world is compelled to acknowledge them as righteous individuals, much like the centurion's confession about Christ. Therefore, one significant source of comfort in afflictions is that through these trials, God receives glory for the graces He has bestowed upon us, we gain a stronger and more comforting assurance of these graces, and others are compelled to hold us in higher regard. In light of this, we are obligated to endure these trials with greater patience and to give thanks to God for them.

Another special benefit that we derive from all forms of afflictions is that, through God's blessing, they become effective means to purge the sinful corruption that resides in our nature. If this corruption is

not purged daily through afflictions and similar means, it continues to grow. Afflictions are aptly likened to medicines, as they serve as sovereign means to eradicate spiritual diseases. They prompt individuals to examine their sins more thoroughly, to grow weary of them, to seek forgiveness, and to strive to overcome them. All of these are worthy fruits of affliction, which are abundantly outlined in Scripture through both precepts and examples of the faithful. It is common for God to call His people to repentance through judgments, whether threatened or executed.

While it is undeniable that this ought to be the case, there is often doubt that we will be truly purified through our afflictions. Therefore, we do not find as much comfort in afflictions as we should, even though we could be assured of this fruit. Yet there is perhaps nothing greater than what the Apostle Paul states in Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." In this single sentence, he conveys all that we could desire or imagine. He assures us that all afflictions, specifically those he is speaking of, no matter how numerous or severe they may be, will, by God's blessing and the means He has appointed, lead to our greatest good. This includes the welfare and happiness of our souls, a primary aspect of which is the purification of our souls from sin—the root cause of all our misery. This benefit of afflictions, though most excellent, is equally certain. This certainty is evident in the Apostle's own words when he says, "And we know," meaning not only he and his readers but all faithful people of God have substantial proof of this through daily experience. Therefore, there is no reason to doubt that all our afflictions will ultimately work for our good, even though this may be hard to believe in the midst of severe trials.

I will make it manifest by one undeniable reason that it cannot be otherwise than that whatever befalls God's children shall certainly work for their good. The reason is this: since God, of His own good will, chose them to be heirs of glory from all eternity and ordained that all things happening to them should serve that end, then whatever occurs to them shall turn towards their chief good. Otherwise, God would have to change His will or prove unable to accomplish what He determined to do. Neither of these can be said of God in any way. Therefore, it is impossible for any affliction upon God's children to turn to their detriment; all of them must necessarily turn to their benefit. This single Scripture, if there were no other, should sufficiently assure us of this fact and persuade us to bear them more contentedly.

However, while this generally outlines the fruit of afflictions, other places in Scripture more specifically emphasize the purging of our sinfulness. For example, in Daniel 12:10, similar to what was mentioned in Daniel 11:35, it is stated, "Many shall be purified, made white, and tried." In Isaiah 1:25, when the Prophet denounces God's judgments against the wicked rebellious Jews, he adds that it will be a blessing for the Church, saying, "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy sin," referring to their sinful impurities that corrupted the purer metal of grace. Similarly, in Isaiah 27:9, which depicts God's contrasting treatment of His beloved and their wicked enemies during their afflictions, it is mentioned, "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin." This idea is also present in John 15:2, where it is said of our Savior Christ, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Moreover, without the chastisement of our sins, which is the

sole cause of condemnation, how can God's chastising us prevent us from being condemned?

I will spare additional references, but there are many more Scriptures that support this point. I will provide a few examples for illustration. One notable example is that of Manasseh, who exceeded in sin beyond what I have ever heard of anyone being saved from. Yet, it is said that when he was afflicted, he sought the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. He prayed earnestly to God, and God was entreated by him and heard his supplication. Afterward, he made significant reforms. This serves as a powerful example of the fruit of afflictions and should inspire us to expect similar results. The same transformation can be seen in the life of the Prophet David, particularly in Psalm 32 and elsewhere.

However, rather than focusing solely on individual cases where afflictions led to repentance, it is important to note that it is a common practice among God's people to turn to Him in prayer and repentance during their afflictions. Solomon's prayer to God serves as an example, as well as Isaiah 26:16, where the people are described as visiting the Lord in times of trouble and pouring out prayers during chastenings. Even God Himself acknowledges that in Hosea 5:15, He will withdraw until His people acknowledge their offense, seek His face, and turn to Him in their affliction.

Thus, we have sufficiently demonstrated that afflictions are a means to purge us from sin, and for this reason, they should be welcomed rather than unkindly received, as is often the case.

Before delving further into the third benefit of afflictions, namely, to make us "white" (beautiful and shining in grace) as the Prophet puts it, it is important to note that this benefit is never separated from the previous one. If one of these benefits is genuinely present, the other

accompanies it. However, I will briefly demonstrate the truth of the third benefit and show how afflictions, through God's blessing, serve as a means to stir and quicken God's graces in His children.

This truth is explicitly stated in Hebrews 12:10, where it is explained that while our earthly parents may chasten us according to their own pleasure, God our heavenly Father chastens us for our profit, that we may partake in His holiness. King David also attests to this in Psalm 119:67, saying, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy Word." In verse 71 of the same Psalm, he adds, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes." Isaiah 26:9 declares, "When thy judgments are upon the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness."

As it is true in general that the faithful are made better and more fruitful by afflictions, this is most apparent in the case of faith and patience. Both of these virtues are most exercised by afflictions, and their worth is more clearly revealed and magnified.

Regarding faith, the Apostle Peter excellently elaborates on it in his first epistle, chapter 1, verses 6 and 7. In the former verse, he extols the exceeding mercies of God towards all the faithful, emphasizing the hope that they have as God's children, a hope obtained through Christ's mediation, especially His resurrection. The believers are promised an inheritance, not an earthly one with imperfections and changes, but a heavenly inheritance that is perfect and enduring forever. This inheritance is secured for them in heaven, and they are kept safe by God's power, applied through faith, until they receive the salvation prepared for them.

It is challenging to express adequately the desire and joy one should feel in response to these promises, as well as the gratitude owed to God for them. Yet, the Apostle speaks of these believers rejoicing

greatly, even though they experience heaviness due to manifold temptations. These trials serve to test their faith, which is more precious than perishable gold, and the tested faith results in praise, honor, and glory when Christ appears. This Scripture clearly demonstrates that the value of faith is made evident through the fiery trials of afflictions, and faith is elevated by afflictions just as gold is refined by fire.

This should suffice to illustrate the common practice of the faithful in all ages, whose faith has been made famous by afflictions. Consider the entire 11th chapter of Hebrews as an example, where it extensively portrays how the faith of God's people throughout history was gloriously displayed through afflictions. The lives of Job and David further exemplify this truth. Notably, the Apostle Paul, a worthy servant of God, experienced numerous afflictions throughout his life after his conversion, yet he possessed exceptional faith. Thus, afflictions commend the faith of genuine Christians, just as great battles reveal the valor of a worthy captain or soldier, great storms test the quality of a ship and its anchor, and afflictions commend the faith of true believers.

Regarding patience, it is closely linked to faith and is its inseparable companion. This relationship is well-expressed in Romans 5:3, where it is stated that tribulation works patience. Similarly, James 1:2-3 encourages believers to count it all joy when they face various trials because the trying of their faith produces patience.

I will limit my discussion to these two witnesses, though many more could be provided to support this point. Patience is indeed the daughter and an inseparable companion of faith.

Now, to address how afflictions are a special means to increase patience, there is no need for extensive elaboration, as patience is

inherently linked to faith. I will cite Romans 5:3 and James 1:2-3 as sufficient evidence.

To conclude, afflictions have three primary benefits: they are sent by God as trials to reveal the strength of grace and sin within us to ourselves and others, they serve as effective purgations to weaken the corruptions that hinder our spiritual well-being, and they quicken all saving graces within us, ultimately making us better to glorify God in this life and be glorified by Him in the life to come.

The least of all these fruits of afflictions, though it stands alone (if its profit and comfort are valued rightly), would move any good heart (if it were lawful) to desire afflictions, or at least to be glad when the Lord, our loving Father and wise Physician, sends them to us. How much more should we rejoice and bless God when all these benefits are combined? There is no good Christian who does not earnestly desire to be more humbled in light of their numerous sins and to experience the comforting presence of God's graces within them. Furthermore, they desire to be purged from spiritual corruptions that sap their spiritual vitality, rendering them incapable of spiritual nourishment and service as their calling requires. Above all, they crave spiritual graces that enable them to shine in godly living, bringing honor to their profession, winning others to Christ, and securing their calling and election. All of these graces are procured through afflictions, and hardly, if ever, without them (as evidenced by 1 Peter 4:18, "And if the righteous be scarcely saved"). This is the chief reason why none of God's children are exempt from afflictions, as Hebrews 12:6-8 makes clear. Therefore, there is ample reason why we should be thankful to God for afflictions and seek to reap their fruits. We can echo the sentiment expressed in the psalms (as beautifully rendered in the Metrical Psalter): "O happy time may I well say, when thou didst me correct: For as a guide to learn thy laws,

thy rod did me direct." God's children have little cause to consider their condition miserable because of afflictions. If we believe and practice what the Apostle Paul professed and lived out, we must, in a holy manner, boast of our afflictions as a soldier boasts of the scars he earned in battle. As we have seen, the Word of God, when faithfully applied through faith, provides great comfort for bearing all types of afflictions.

Many other fruits of afflictions could be gathered, as some have done. However, upon careful consideration, they can be categorized into one of the three mentioned earlier. Therefore, having discussed these three grounds of comfort in afflictions, I will proceed to the fourth and final one. This ground entails understanding the help that God has promised us in all our troubles, enabling us to bear them and ensuring a good outcome. It is worth noting that the Lord, knowing our weakness in bearing the cross and our tendency to doubt that He will help us sufficiently (both of which are evident in the lives of His faithful servants throughout history), has abundantly provided all-sufficient help to sustain us. He has made numerous promises to be with us in our trials and to succor us in all extremities, ensuring that we will not perish but ultimately find a good end and resolution to our troubles, to His glory and our eternal comfort.

Having considered these promises and gathered them from Scripture, I can confidently say that they far outnumber the previous grounds of comfort. Listing them all would be too lengthy, so I will select some of the most significant promises for our use in times of need.

Among these promises, Romans 8:26 stands out as a source of profound comfort. In this chapter, the Apostle addresses two

hindrances to the happiness of those in Christ: corruption and affliction. He first addresses corruption from verses 1 to 27 and then moves on to affliction from verses 28 to 31. When it might be objected that, despite the benefits of afflictions, they can become so heavy that we are unable to cry out to God for help as we should, the Apostle responds by emphasizing that the Spirit helps us in our infirmities. In moments when we begin to falter and cannot bear the burden, God's Spirit extends His hand to support us. This support comes in the form of strengthening our faith and patience, enabling us to wait for God's help, either for deliverance from afflictions or for the grace to bear them with peace, as long as His heavenly wisdom deems fit to continue them. This is why our Savior, Christ, foretelling His disciples of the many afflictions they would face in the world, repeatedly assured them that He would send them the Holy Spirit as their Comforter, who would be stronger within them than all their adversaries. He encouraged them by saying, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The Apostle Paul, too, referred to God as the God of all comfort in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, as he sought to strengthen the Corinthians to endure all troubles. God comforts His children in all their tribulations so that they may be equipped to comfort others facing similar trials. Similar encouragement to endure afflictions patiently is found in almost all the holy epistles, highlighting the consistent theme of the saints being fortified for suffering.

To continue, there are numerous passages in which God promises to be a reliable and swift help to His people in all their troubles, always ready to be found when needed. David had a profound experience of this, as evidenced in the book of Psalms, which is filled with declarations such as "God is my rock," "my tower," "my refuge," "my shield and buckler," "my health and strength," and many more. These expressions all point to the fact that whatever help a person in danger may find through earthly means, God is even more so to all

His people in all their physical and spiritual needs. Because the faithful in all ages have required this comfort, these promises are frequently reiterated, allowing us in our generation to expect similar assistance in our times of need. Many other similar declarations serve the same purpose: that God will enlighten our darkness, keep the feet of His saints, not forsake or forget their complaints, prevent them from being confounded, hide them in times of trouble, have His angels encamp around them, heal them, remove sickness from them, and ensure they do not fear their enemies. Instead, God will make their enemies afraid of them, avenge them against their adversaries, and even repent of the evil pronounced against them. These assurances extend to situations involving warfare, pestilence, and more.

In summary, no matter what calamity or distress God's children may face, even if it appears that the Lord has temporarily abandoned them, He will be with them through His Spirit to provide assistance so that they do not utterly perish. Rather, they will have the endurance to withstand their trials until God grants them a happy resolution and delivers them. This has been evident in God's dealings with His beloved throughout all ages and requires no further proof. Notable figures like John, David, and Paul serve as witnesses to how God was wonderfully present with them in all their trials.

The second aspect of this final ground of comfort is that the Lord will not only assist His people under the weight of their afflictions, providing them with all necessary help to bear these trials, but He will also, in due time, deliver them from all of them. Although this may be challenging to believe, especially during severe afflictions, the Lord has frequently reaffirmed His promise to rescue His people from all their troubles. While most of these promises share the same essence, using similar language, a few examples should suffice.

David, having experienced this firsthand, penned an excellent Psalm, Psalm 34, where he not only magnifies God's mercy for a great deliverance but also extols God's goodness to all the faithful. He declares in verse 7, "The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him and delivers them." Verse 17 emphasizes the righteousness of those who cry out to the Lord, stating that He hears and delivers them from all their troubles. Verse 19 reaffirms that though the righteous face many afflictions, the Lord delivers them from all of them. Similarly, Psalm 37:39-40 asserts, "But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, is their strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked and save them because they trust in Him."

These examples should suffice in illustrating such a clear point, as anyone with even a modest level of familiarity with the Scriptures can find similar testimonies and proofs of this truth, even if not always expressed in identical words. It is entirely in the same vein when the Apostle comforts the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:13, among other arguments, by assuring them that God will provide a way to escape temptation so that they can bear it. Similarly, Jeremiah 29:11 conveys the same message: "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace; to give you an expected end." Through these verses and many others like them, it becomes evident that God's consistent favor toward His children includes leading them through trials for various just reasons, often leaving them in difficult situations for a prolonged period. However, He never ultimately forsakes them. When the time for mercy arrives, the Lord unfailingly comes to the aid of all His children, delivering them in ways that will best glorify Him and benefit all His people.

The certainty of this truth is unmistakable: no matter how numerous or protracted the afflictions experienced by God's children may be, the Lord will never abandon or forsake them. Instead, He will be an immediate source of help in times of need, offering all necessary comforts, both outward aids and inner graces, to sustain them. Ultimately, He will set them free and fully deliver them from all their fears and troubles, one way or another. Therefore, we have no substantial reason to be disheartened by our afflictions, complain about them, or become distressed by them. On the contrary, we have ample justification to rejoice in them, offer thanks to God for them, and strive both to endure them and to derive spiritual growth from them. In doing so, we allow God to be glorified, we personally benefit from these experiences, and others can learn from our example. With all this in mind, considering everything that has been discussed regarding afflictions, we find that they are not hindrances but rather significant aids to godliness in this life and to eternal happiness in the life to come. This concludes our discussion on how to live by faith in all afflictions, regardless of their nature.

The Fifth General Head

Of Living by Faith, is for Earthly Blessings

Thus, we have addressed four key points on how God has generously provided us with all the essential spiritual blessings, assuring us that whatever our circumstances may be, we can always find comfort in God. He has made promises, and He is faithful to fulfill them, ensuring that we will lack nothing that is good. No matter what may

befall us, even if it appears harmful in itself, it will ultimately turn to our benefit.

Now, we turn to the fifth general aspect of this treatise on living by faith, which concerns earthly blessings. We will explore how we can obtain all the necessities for our natural lives. These earthly provisions are crucial, as we naturally depend on them, and they often consume our thoughts and hearts, hindering our spiritual life.

The Lord our God, being fully aware of this, has graciously provided and promised us all the essential blessings needed for this earthly life. If we were wise enough to recognize and embrace the Lord's generosity in this regard, we would not only be freed from numerous cares and troubles that burden most people, leaving them no time or energy to seek the things of eternal life, but we would also find that contentment with these earthly blessings would greatly enhance our enthusiasm for living out our Christian faith and fulfilling our spiritual duties.

Let us, therefore, heed and contemplate what the Lord tells us in this regard. To begin, let's consider those general earthly blessings that encompass all the specific blessings of this life. It becomes evident that God's gracious intention is to support our weaknesses. Although we enjoy many blessings for this earthly life, such as health, wealth, food, clothing, and more, if we were lacking in just one of these areas, it would greatly distress us and diminish our comfort and joy in His service. Therefore, as a loving Father, desiring the well-being of His beloved children, God instructs us to be obedient and promises that we shall not lack anything good. This is expressly stated in Psalm 34, where David, having experienced God's deliverance from a great danger, composes a Psalm of thanksgiving. In it, he encourages all faithful servants of God to praise Him and

consider this bounty of the Lord. David writes, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Blessed is the man that trusteth in him." Furthermore, he reminds us, "O fear the Lord ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him." David even addresses the mighty oppressors of the world, comparing them to devouring beasts that prey on God's poor people. He assures us, "The Lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." These sentiments are echoed throughout the Psalm, and you can read more in it. The Lord God is like a Sun and shield, and He will not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly.

Again, recognizing how much it troubled God's children to witness the prosperity of the wicked in this world while the godly were often distressed, the psalmist intentionally composed Psalm 37 to encourage the righteous against this significant temptation. This temptation has troubled God's people throughout the ages, as evidenced by the complaints of Job, Jeremiah, and many others.

In Psalm 37, the psalmist thoroughly addresses the point that the condition of the godly is far better in this life than that of the wicked, in addition to the infinite difference in the life to come. He extensively describes the fleeting prosperity of the wicked while elaborating on the blessed condition of the godly in matters pertaining to this life. For instance, in verse 3, he says, "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." In verse 4, he encourages, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desires of thine heart." Verse 5 instructs, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." Verse 11 affirms, "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Moreover, in verse 16, he asserts, "A little that a righteous man hath is better

than the riches of many wicked," and he provides many similar passages throughout the same Psalm.

Similarly, Psalm 73 serves the same purpose, commencing with, "Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." Undoubtedly, many other Psalms were written to comfort the faithful in this life, assuring them that God would be their portion and provide for all their needs. For instance, Psalm 16:5-6 and Psalm 23 address these themes, with the latter proclaiming, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." The Psalms are replete with such comforting verses, and anyone familiar with the Scriptures can attest to their abundance. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" is a phrase often reiterated in the Scriptures. This sentiment must also be inferred from passages extolling the Lord's goodness, such as Psalm 31:19, "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men," and Psalm 145:9, "The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works." There is no need to cite more of these common verses in which God's goodness, loving-kindness, and mercy, particularly regarding earthly blessings, are extolled. Since godliness has the promises of both this life and the life to come, there is no doubt that all necessary blessings for this earthly life are encompassed within these general promises. Therefore, the proper use of these promises is to turn to them whenever we find ourselves in need. By doing so and considering the abundant relief contained within them, we can calm and content our minds. We can be assured that, since He is faithful who has made these promises, we shall not lack any earthly blessing when it is good for us, in the time and measure that God deems fit. It is essential to pay particular attention to these general promises when reading the Scriptures and to commit the most important ones to memory. This

way, they will be readily available for use in times of need, as they are more numerous and frequently repeated in Scripture than specific promises. Moreover, we cannot always have the specific promises tailored to our individual needs at our disposal when we require them most.

And this might be sufficient to have spoken of this point for the strengthening of our faith, ensuring that we shall not lack any earthly blessing that is needful for us.

However, since the Lord has graciously accommodated His promises to our specific needs, it will be comforting to acknowledge these promises so that we can use them as required in times of necessity.

Among all earthly blessings, life itself is paramount, for all other blessings depend on it. Even the Devil himself, who is well-acquainted with our weaknesses, has said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." For this reason, the Lord, in His desire to encourage us toward obedience, has made numerous promises of long life and many days. This is evident in the fifth commandment, which the Apostle calls the first commandment with a promise. In this commandment, children are instructed to honor their father and mother, with the promise that their days may be long in the land. This promise is reiterated in Deuteronomy 5:33, which states, "You shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess." Similar promises are found in Deuteronomy 25:15 and 30:20.

In the book of Proverbs, this theme is frequently repeated. In Proverbs 3:1-2, Solomon, speaking in God's name as a father, exhorts his son not to forget his law but to let his heart keep His commandments. He adds the promise, "For length of days, and long

life, and peace shall they add to thee." Proverbs 3:16 declares, "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor." The same chapter in Proverbs further emphasizes the blessings of wisdom. In Proverbs 4:5-14, promises of life and various other blessings pertaining to this life are mentioned. While I will refrain from listing them all (finding the act of writing more tedious than before), I encourage you to read the passage, along with Proverbs 8:35, 9:11, 10:25, 10:27, 11:19, 11:30, 11:14, 30:21, 21:22, and 21:24. These promises were also extended to Solomon personally, as stated in 1 Kings 3:14. Furthermore, the Bible contains general promises of long life, such as that the prince who detests covetousness will prolong his days.

We can see, then, how abundantly the Lord has promised long life to those who obey Him. Conversely, the wicked shall not live out half their days but will be quickly cut off. God intended these promises to be strong incentives for us to obey Him. We should be moved by these promises to believe them and, in turn, be stirred to walk more diligently before God.

However, my primary intention is to strengthen our faith in the assurance that we shall not lack any earthly blessings. Therefore, we should make use of these promises concerning long life in times of peril in this earthly life, whether caused by sickness, war, famine, thieves, witches, or any wicked enemy. We should call to mind these promises and rest securely in the belief that none of these adversities or any other circumstances shall shorten our days more than what is ultimately for our greater good. Moreover, since the Lord has made long life such a significant encouragement to fear and serve Him, we should highly value and desire it, just as many faithful servants of God have throughout the ages, including Hezekiah and David. Many of them enjoyed this blessing, as recorded in the holy Scriptures as

evidence of God's favor upon them. This is particularly noteworthy because some godly and learned theologians have preached and written about the weariness of life and the desire for death. Such sentiments directly contradict God's wisdom and goodness in promising long life to His faithful servants as a primary reward for their faithful service. Therefore, let us cherish and desire long life as a precious blessing, as it enhances the value and utility of all other blessings in this life, benefiting both God and humanity, ourselves, and others. Conversely, the lack of long life diminishes the utility and joy of health, wealth, strength, courage, learning, and all other excellent gifts of the mind and body. If these blessings are cut short prematurely and do not reach their full potential and duration, they lose much of their value and purpose. Therefore, we should accept these promises in such a way that, in times of need, we may anchor our faith in them and find comfort even when tempted to believe otherwise.

This being the first and chief blessing of this life—long life—I mean, if it were not accompanied by health, wealth, peace, and similar blessings, it would make long life more wearisome than welcome to our frail nature.

For this reason, God does not spare in making promises of these and all other comforts for this natural life, including bodily health and strength, which enable us to better enjoy and make use of these earthly comforts.

This is what the Lord promised to His people of Israel immediately after they crossed the Red Sea. It is said that the Lord tested them and said, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God; and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to

his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I put upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." (Exodus 15:26) Additionally, in Exodus 23:25, it is stated, "I will take sickness from the midst of thee." Job 5:18 speaks of God's ability to wound and heal, emphasizing His goodness in preserving His people from various troubles and providing them with all necessary blessings for this life. More can be found on this subject in Psalm 41:1 and onwards, where David extols God's goodness to those who show mercy to the poor in their distress, including promises of divine assistance during sickness. Solomon, in Proverbs 3:7, exhorts us to fear the Lord and depart from evil, promising that it will bring health to our navel and marrow to our bones, signifying overall physical well-being. A similar sentiment is expressed in Proverbs 4:22, where it is said that the true receiving of instruction brings life and health to the whole body. The Prophet Isaiah, while elaborating on the manifold blessings of this life promised to those who walk uprightly, declares in Isaiah 33:24, "And the inhabitant thereof shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

Bodily strength is likewise frequently promised in the Scriptures. Job 17:9 states, "The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." Psalm 29:11 declares, "The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace." Psalm 103:5 mentions the renewal of youth and strength as one of God's mercies, saying, "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle." Elihu, speaking of God's mercy to a truly converted sinner in Job 33:25, adds, "His flesh shall be fresher than a child's; he shall return to the days of his youth." Psalm 84:7 attests to the growth of strength in those who seek God.

These are just a few of the promises God has made concerning bodily health and strength, which enable us to fulfill our duties in our roles and callings and more comfortably enjoy all the other blessings of this life. Our daily experiences confirm the great and essential value of these blessings, as well as our need for them. Not only do these promises reflect God's fatherly affection for His children in providing and guaranteeing these blessings, but they should also offer us particular comfort in times of bodily infirmity and severe illness. Whenever the Lord visits us with sickness and weakness, hindering us from many duties toward both God and man (which He only does when necessary and for our greater good), we can recall these promises and cling to them in faith. In doing so, we will not lose heart or complain as if we were without hope but will find solace in the assurance that the Lord will, in due time, restore us to health and strengthen us to serve Him with increased vigilance and cheerfulness.

Those who have never or seldom felt the want of the blessing of health cannot appreciate it or be as thankful for it as they should be. However, those whom God has greatly tested with prolonged pains and bodily infirmities will hold health in high esteem. They will value it even above wealth and honor, which are often highly regarded. These are the ones who will truly value the promises and, by believing them, patiently await their fulfillment. They shall reap the benefits of these promises, finding more comfort and conviction to maintain their holy profession to the end.

I have been well-known to those who have lived with me over the past ten years (at least). During this time, I have experienced my share of bodily infirmities. As far as my experience may be of use to others in similar situations, I acknowledge, to the praise of God, that I have received good evidence of the truth of what I have written. I

continue to expect more evidence for my comfort and strength to persevere to the end. So much for the blessing of health, which God has promised to His obedient children.

The next blessing is wealth, signifying an abundance of earthly goods necessary for a more comfortable life in this world. Since there are many such goods that we need and desire, the Lord is generous in promising them. He does so to win our hearts to more joyful obedience. For this purpose, the passages in Leviticus 26 (from verse 3 to 14) and Deuteronomy 28 (from verse 2 to 15, 7, 12 to 17) should suffice. Those who desire to see these passages can read them directly. Similarly, Psalm 128 and Psalm 23 contain much about this topic, and they provide more than enough reason for belief.

If we truly believed that by heeding the voice of the Lord, observing His commandments, and doing His will, we would be abundantly blessed in every way, it would make us all the more afraid to offend such a generous Father. We would be more careful to please Him in all things. To provide a few examples, Proverbs 3:9-10 says, "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Proverbs 3:16 emphasizes that wisdom brings riches and honor. Proverbs 8:18-19 declares, "Riches and honor are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver." Proverbs 10:22 states, "The blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." Job 22:23-24 promises, "If thou return to the Almighty, then thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brook."

Notable is the promise of these earthly blessings to the people of Israel upon their return in Jeremiah 31:12: "Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock, and of the herd, and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow anymore at all." Malachi 3:10 urges the bringing of tithes into the storehouse, with the promise that God will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing too great to contain. The Apostle encourages generosity to the poor saints in 2 Corinthians 9:6, stating, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." Verse 8 adds, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work."

I find myself growing weary in writing out these promises, and I fear that many readers may become even more fatigued in perusing them than any of us would tire of receiving and enjoying these promised blessings. Nevertheless, I can confidently assert that I have not transcribed even a quarter of the promises I have gathered from the Scriptures. How often does the Lord promise abundance, that the land shall yield its fruit, that He will give them rain in due season, that there should be no barrenness, but He would increase their substance, both in terms of land and cattle? He promises that they shall eat from their old stores, that threshing shall extend to the vintage, and many similar blessings, as those well-versed in the Scriptures can attest.

What could the Lord's purpose be in multiplying these promises so frequently, if not to mercifully accommodate our weakness? We are often so impatient in our desires for these blessings, and our discouragement and hindrance in all our duties result from their

absence. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to acknowledge with profound gratitude this bounty of the Lord and to make these promises our own through true faith. In times of scarcity of any of these blessings, which often afflict us sorely, we should turn to some of these promises and find comfort in the assurance that we will surely receive relief in God's chosen time and measure, according to what is most conducive to our well-being.

Until now, I have not discussed the love and favor from God and man, peace, joy, good success, prosperity, safety, and freedom from all adversities or other judgments that befall the wicked. All of these, along with other similar blessings, are included under our well-being and are no less promised than the previously mentioned blessings. Here are just one or two examples of each for reference:

For the first, Love and Favor: Proverbs 3:4 states, "So shalt thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man."

Regarding Peace, Leviticus 26:6 says, "And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid, &c."

For joy and rejoicing, Isaiah 65:13-14 proclaims, "Behold my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed. Behold my servants shall sing for joy of heart: but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart."

Concerning good success and prosperity, Psalm 122:6-7 states, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."

Regarding safety, Proverbs 3:23 says, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble." Proverbs 18:10 adds, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runneth unto it and is safe."

For preservation from evil, Proverbs 1:33 asserts, "But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and be quiet from the fear of evil." Job 5:19-21 reads, "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh, &c."

How welcome these blessings, or any of them, would be to us when we feel the want of them cannot be doubted. Yet, it is a pity that so few people reap the fruit of these promises to sustain them in their greatest times of need. This deficiency primarily results from a lack of faith. Many desire these blessings, and some even know that they are promised in the Scriptures. However, they either doubt that they belong to them, assuming they are not among God's children (who are the sole heirs of all the promises), or, if they are in that number, they either forget the consolation offered or, through mistrust, fail to apply them to their immediate necessities. Consequently, they languish in their extremities without comfort.

It becomes evident from this that there is a pressing need to live by faith for these earthly blessings. If we did, we would not only be free from many severe vexations that torment the ungodly in their distress but also have peaceful minds during the greatest storms. In due season, we would find such relief as is most expedient. If this were duly considered, it would inspire many to labor more earnestly for the precious gift of faith, which so abundantly supplies all our earthly needs, of which we are acutely aware, and which often distract us.

Several other earthly blessings are provided, promised, and bestowed in abundance upon the faithful as needed. I will mention just two

more: a good name and posterity. A good name is better than precious ointment and is to be chosen above great riches. God has made numerous promises concerning this, assuring that He will honor those who honor Him, bring forth their righteousness like the light, and their judgment like the noonday. Even if they are falsely accused by the ungodly, God will clear their innocence and vindicate them from the reproach of those who defame them. Similar assurances can be found in Proverbs 4:18: "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Solomon frequently emphasizes that wisdom will bring honor to those who embrace it, as seen in Proverbs 4:8: "Exalt her and she shall promote thee, she shall bring thee to honor when thou doest embrace her." Similar sentiments are expressed in Proverbs 3:22, Proverbs 3:35, Proverbs 13:18, Deuteronomy 28:1, Isaiah 58:14, and Psalm 132:18.

All these passages convey that, although the godly may be despised and held in low esteem by the wicked, the Lord not only highly values them Himself but will also bestow honor upon them in the world, even among those who lack saving grace themselves. This can be seen in Acts 5:13: "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them," and Revelation 3:9: "Behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, &c."

Considering the sweetness and comfort that comes from being well esteemed, especially by the better sort, and the bitterness of ill fame, which makes many weary of their lives, we must recognize God's tender care for His children in preserving their good name. He not only highly values them Himself but also ensures that they are honored, meaning they are held in good esteem, not only among the saints but even among natural people. When they behold the good works of the godly, they may glorify God in the day of visitation, as

the Apostle Peter says. Therefore, we should not only take care to silence the ignorance of the foolish by doing good but also find comfort in these promises when we are wrongfully defamed, even by our brethren. Such promises will uphold us in the face of the greatest storms that may arise from this source.

A worthy pattern to follow in this regard is the Prophet David. Despite being frequently subjected to the scourge of the tongue, as he laments in many of his Psalms, he defended himself with the shield of faith and anchored his hope, preventing himself from sinking. For example, in Psalm 3, from verse 11 to the end, and in Psalm 69, he seems to have written specifically for this purpose. Moreover, throughout Psalm 119, he both complains and finds comfort in his God. Job, too, suffered greatly from wrongful accusations, even by his friends, yet he nobly upheld himself, stating that if his adversary had written a book, he would take it upon his shoulder and bind it as a crown unto himself. While there are many more examples, these suffice to illustrate this point.

We have now seen the excellent blessings God has provided for His children in this bodily life, and all these belong to them.

In conclusion, God has also made promises to His children concerning their posterity. He has promised:

1. Abundant increase of offspring.
2. Blessings in every way for them.

Both of these blessings are greatly desired, and many find little comfort in their lives due to a lack of posterity. Therefore, let us take comfort in these promises.

In the past, barrenness was considered a heavy punishment and a source of reproach, as many Scriptures attest. For example, in Genesis 30:23, Rachel said, upon conceiving and bearing a son, "God hath taken away my reproach." Similarly, in Luke 1:25, the same sentiment is expressed regarding Elizabeth. In 1 Samuel 1:10, Hannah was in bitterness of soul due to her barrenness, and she prayed to the Lord with great sorrow. Given this context, being fruitful and bearing many children was considered a great blessing. Consequently, the Lord promised this to His people in all ages as a sign of His favor.

I will mention just a few examples out of many from the Books of Moses and the Prophets. Leviticus 26:9 states, "For I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, and establish my covenant with you." Deuteronomy 7:13 assures, "And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee, he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep," and so on. Similar promises can be found in Deuteronomy 6:3, Genesis 49:25, Job 5:25, and Psalm 115:14. Psalm 127:3 proclaims, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward." Psalm 128:3 adds, "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house."

These examples should sufficiently reassure any believing individual who is afflicted by grief due to a lack of children that God will indeed grant their desire if it is good for them. If this assurance does not suffice, one should consider the matter more deeply and seek further understanding.

The other promises concerning posterity are that God, under which all good things belonging to them are contained, can be found in

many of the previously mentioned Scriptures. To add a few more examples:

Genesis 17:7 indicates this when it says, "I will be the God of thy seed." Psalm 112 beautifully portrays the happy condition of those who truly fear God, and among their blessings, it highlights, "His seed shall be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright shall be blessed." In Psalm 37:25, David shares his experience, saying, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful and lendeth, and his seed is blessed."

Proverbs 20:7 states, "The just man walketh in his integrity, his children are blessed after him." Isaiah 44:3 declares, "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring. And they shall spring up among the grass as Willows by the water courses."

Isaiah 61:9 proclaims, "And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." Similarly, Isaiah 65:23 speaks of this blessing.

Jeremiah 32:39 delivers the same message, "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever for the good of them and of their children."

Apart from these general promises of blessing to the posterity of the faithful, there are more specific ones as well. Psalm 102:28 reassures, "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." Proverbs 11:21 states, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished, but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered," and this message is echoed in Proverbs 14:26. Isaiah 54:13 affirms, "All thy children shall be taught of the

Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Proverbs 13:22 beautifully expresses, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children, and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just," among many other similar promises.

Parents, take note of the blessings that God has stored up for your children after you. Just as those who fear the Lord are blessed with all necessary blessings themselves, they will also witness God's blessings upon their children, even upon their children's children for many generations. This is clearly promised in the Second Commandment, where God declares His mercy to thousands of those who love Him and keep His Commandments, encompassing all essential blessings.

The practical use of these blessings promised to the posterity of the faithful is to provide comfort for godly parents. Parents often find themselves comforted by their own faith but filled with concerns about the future of their children, especially during perilous times. However, this should reassure their minds that God will be the God of their descendants, and they shall not lack anything that is good.

If anyone lacks this comfort, the fault lies with themselves, as they may not know or may not fully understand the sweet promises made to the posterity of the faithful. The only remedy for this fear is to acquaint oneself with these promises. In times of temptation and doubt, meditate on these promises, pray to God, and trust in His mercy to bless not only yourselves but also your children. By doing so, you can attain full contentment in earthly blessings, which are highly desired and unwelcome to our nature when lacking.

In conclusion, I have shown how one can live by faith to ensure the abundance of earthly blessings, both for themselves and their posterity. When added to all the previous points, it becomes evident

that there is no life comparable to a life lived by faith. Therefore, this should be diligently pursued by all who desire true comfort in this life and the hope of an even better life to come.

The Sixth and Last General Head

Of living by Faith, is for Perseverance.

There is now but one thing wanting (as far as I can see) to complete the full comfort of the true believer, as much as can be attained in this life. Namely, how can someone, being so frail in every way, with so many strong enemies, be sure that they will hold out to the end and, in overcoming, receive the end of their faith, which is the salvation of their soul? This matter is of great difficulty and rarely achieved. There are many who flatly deny the certainty of perseverance, and many more who mistrust themselves in this regard, which weakens the comfort of their life considerably.

Therefore, it shall be highly necessary to add this aspect to the previous discussions: how a true believer can attain certainty through faith that, despite their own weaknesses and the strength and malice of their spiritual enemies, they will persevere to the end.

I do not intend to write a treatise on the topic of the perseverance of the Saints, either to prove the truth of the doctrine or to refute the opposing error, as this has already been done soundly, both through argument and examples, by ancient and modern theologians.

Just as in the previous points, I have primarily aimed to strengthen the faith of God's children, encouraging them to rely on God with hope and patience for help in all their spiritual and earthly needs. In this matter, my only purpose will be to establish our hearts in the confidence that the One who has initiated a good work in us will carry it to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. This was the Apostle's confidence for believers in his time, and it should be ours in all subsequent ages until the end of the world. We possess the same promises on which to build our faith as they did, promises that the Lord made to His people of old.

Let us now consider these promises and derive our application from them. There is no doubt that this was intended in the first promise God made, that the seed of the Woman would bruise the head of the Serpent. Likewise, in the promise made to Abraham that God would establish His covenant with him as an everlasting covenant, which is repeatedly affirmed. Since there are many more clear promises concerning this, we will not dwell on these initial ones.

This was explicitly promised by God to David concerning Solomon, and it was subsequently fulfilled. God said, "I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men. But my steadfast love will not depart from him" (Psalm 89:28), and similar assurances can be found in other passages.

This is more generally spoken of the blessed man, as in Psalm 1:3, "His leaf also shall not wither." The book of Psalms is filled with these comforting promises. Psalm 9:10 says, "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Verse 18 of the same chapter continues, "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor

shall not perish forever." Psalm 15:5 states, "He that doeth these things shall never be moved," and Psalm 112:6 and 125:1 also echo this sentiment. Proverbs 10:30 and 12:3 affirm the same.

In Psalm 23:6, we find the assurance, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Psalm 48:14 declares, "For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death." Psalm 73:24 says, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and shalt receive me unto glory," and verse 26 adds, "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Psalm 103:17 reminds us, "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him."

In the writings of the Prophets, we can find many promises regarding perseverance. Isaiah 54:8 assures us, "But with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." Isaiah 55:3 states, "Hear and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Similar promises are found in Ezekiel 16:60 and 37:26, the latter being a special promise that God will put His fear into their hearts so that they shall not depart from Him. Many more such promises can be gathered from the Old Testament, although some might consider them too numerous. Those who ponder the excellence of these promises and their own reluctance to believe them in times of need will find that they are insufficient to combat their fears of falling away.

Now, let us explore the comforts for our perseverance delivered in the New Testament, which are clearer than the former promises. I believe this is especially important for our time, as we are in the last age of the world. The devil knows his time is short and is full of wrath against God's people, seeking their overthrow.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, provided much comfort to His disciples and all believers when He promised to be with them until the end of the world. He told them not to fear, saying, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). He assured them that He had overcome the world and, therefore, they would never be overcome but would hold out until they received glory. To further assure them, He confidently declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). Thus, those who believe in Him can never perish or fall away. In John 13:1, it is noted, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

What greater assurance can we desire than the promise that God, who is faithful, called us and will preserve our whole spirit, soul, and body blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23)? This promise is repeated in 1 Corinthians 1:9 and 10. For our better remembrance and use, it is emphasized in this way. To reinforce this, it is stated that the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Timothy 2:19). This means that those whom God chose and ordained for salvation before the foundation of the world cannot possibly perish. As stated in Matthew 24:24, "If it were possible," it emphasizes that it is not possible, signifying that God cannot change His decree or lack the power to accomplish His purpose. Both of these notions are blasphemous to think of God. For this reason, Christ told His disciples to rejoice that their names were written in heaven (Luke 10:20). Moreover, 2 Timothy 2:13 says, "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." Additionally, Ephesians 1:13 asserts that after believers believed, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.

In both cases, it is meant that the work of true sanctification, which the Holy Spirit accomplishes in every genuine believer, serves as an infallible mark that we are true believers who have been effectually called and elected to salvation by Christ. Therefore, we can be certain that we cannot perish but will persevere and be saved. This is notably stated in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22: "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of his spirit in our hearts." Just as honest individuals use seals and earnest payments to secure their agreements and covenants, with the earnest being a part of the promised payment that guarantees the entire sum, God, the most faithful, assures us through these first fruits of the spirit of sanctification that we will never fall away from grace but will be fully sanctified by His Holy Spirit at the appointed time. The Apostle Peter, in 2 Peter 1:10, encourages the faithful to make their calling and election sure.

Furthermore, if this assurance is still insufficient, how often does the Lord promise us that His Spirit will abide in us forever? An exemplary passage is Isaiah 59:21, where the Lord declares, "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever."

Our Savior, Jesus Christ, greatly emphasized this point to comfort His disciples, who were sorrowful about His impending departure. In John 14:16, He promised, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." He spoke of the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive but whom believers know because He dwells in them and will be in them.

John 15:16 further affirms, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." Additionally, in John 16:22, Jesus assured them, "Your joy no man taketh from you," and there are similar promises throughout the Bible, such as John 10:28-29: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

The beloved Apostle John wrote his first Epistle primarily to strengthen the faith of believers in the certainty of their salvation, ensuring that they would not fall away as many hypocrites did then and continue to do. In this context, he provided various marks by which they could confirm their state of grace and numerous comforting promises that they would persevere and endure eternally. One example is 1 John 2:27: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." Chapter 3:2 also states, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Verse 9 continues, "His seed remaineth in him." Many more similar passages can be found throughout John's writings.

To conclude this point, a principal reason for our certainty of perseverance is expressed by the Apostle Peter, who states that our inheritance is reserved in heaven and that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Likewise, in the closing of his Epistle, the Apostle Jude declares that God is able to keep us from falling and to preserve us faultless before His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Savior be glory and majesty, dominion and power, now and ever, Amen.

Thus, I have gathered, as you may see, a good store of these comforting promises that God has made to His Church throughout all ages. These promises are meant to strengthen our faith, assuring us that since He has freely loved, chosen, and called us to be His own, nothing and no one will ever be able to snatch us from His hand. Therefore, let us be persuaded, as the Apostle Paul proclaims in Romans 8:38-39: "that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come: Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Whenever we find ourselves tempted with thoughts like, "I will never be able to hold out," or "I feel my corruption is so strong," or "If I were to face such fiery trials as those during Queen Mary's days, I might fall away and deny the truth, as many did," let us combat these temptations by recalling the multitude of promises the Lord has made to us. He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, to keep us by His power unto salvation, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against us, among many others that have been mentioned. By carefully weighing these promises and considering the faithfulness of the One who made them, we can find comfort in the assurance that He who initiated the work of grace in us will bring it to completion. He is both the author and finisher of our faith, and His strength surpasses all, ensuring that none can pluck us out of His hand.

Take heart, you poor soul, if you sense the work of grace beginning in you. Even though you may feel your own weaknesses and frequently face severe temptations, and even if you hear about the falls of many prominent believers, rest assured that you will not perish or lose the faith and grace that has been initiated in you. You cannot sin unto

death (as understood by the Apostle in 1 John 5:16) because this immortal seed remains within you.

For the comfort of those troubled by these fears—fears of not persevering until the end—I will add that I have never known or heard of such individuals falling away. Those who ultimately fall away are typically those who are secure and presumptuous about God's mercy, thinking they will stand when others fall. Remember that we are often strongest when we feel the weakest. When we recognize our own weaknesses and distrust ourselves, we run to God and rely on Him in all our needs. This has been my primary goal in this treatise: to encourage living a life of faith, which will be our chief comfort in both life and death.

Considering the lives and deaths of most professing Christians, it is evident that few attain the comfort of salvation or maintain a conscience of holy conduct, which God has prepared for true believers. My main objective has been to address this significant issue, demonstrating that this blessedness can only be experienced by living through faith. I have explained what saving faith is, how it is obtained, and how we can recognize its presence through its causes and effects. To help those who may be deceived on either side—some presuming too much and others mistrusting—I have provided clear signs of genuine faith that everyone can use to examine themselves.

Next, I have taught how to live by faith, emphasizing the importance of serious meditation and prayer as necessary elements for obtaining this faith. Sadly, few are as fervent in prayer as they ought to be in this regard. I have extensively explored the great benefits of living by faith, both for consolation and for the reformation of our lives. I have also outlined four rules that are of excellent use in this pursuit.

The second part of this treatise provides guidance on how to apply God's promises to our specific needs. Since these promises come in various forms—absolute or conditional, essential or with limitations, general or special—they are categorized into six main areas for ease of reference and use.

[1] The first category focuses on the assurance of our salvation through Christ. It includes general promises that encompass all the benefits brought by Christ. This section also delves into how we can have a stronger faith in our justification, covering forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness. Furthermore, it addresses the fruits of these aspects, such as reconciliation, adoption, and hope of glory. To confirm our status as God's children, we can rely on sensory evidence, observing the Spirit of God working within us to produce graces that can only be present in those destined for salvation. Faith itself is the most prominent among these graces. The gift of the Spirit, sincere obedience, and promises made to various specific virtues, like the love of God and our neighbor and the fear of God, are discussed as well. In cases where believers may have a weak yet genuine faith without feeling it, four marks of true faith are outlined. Additional promises from God regarding His favor are presented to strengthen our faith further.

[2] The second category of promises centers on the mortification of our corrupt nature. Given the weakness of our faith in this area, these promises provide encouragement for us to believe in ultimate victory. General promises assuring us of cleansing from all unrighteousness should suffice for all specific struggles.

[3] The third category of promises is dedicated to ensuring that we receive all the necessary grace to lead a godly life. It discusses how to

obtain this grace and assures us that our feeble obedience will be accepted.

Specific duties where we often fall short in keeping each Commandment are identified, and general promises are provided to ensure that we will not lack any saving grace, provided we use them correctly. Furthermore, God has made numerous promises of particular graces, including His promise to teach us, set our hearts in the right disposition, and grant us faith, trust, hope, joy, love, and fear of Him. When it comes to holy exercises where we often falter, such as prayer, God promises to assist us and accept our efforts when they are made in faith.

This category also addresses all spiritual sacrifices and emphasizes the importance of applying God's promises, particularly when engaging in these duties. The abuse of the sacraments is discussed as well, with a reminder to consider God's faithfulness in the administration of these seals.

[4] The fourth category of promises pertains to afflictions, which often lead to discouragement. In such times, faith is our only source of solace. Four grounds for comfort are provided: 1. All afflictions come from God and affect all of His children. 2. God's manner of afflicting His children is both wise and loving, characterized by the appropriateness, justness, and duration of the correction. 3. Afflictions have excellent purposes and yields, with general blessedness as a common outcome and specific benefits like trials of strength and weaknesses, purification from corruption, and the quickening of God's graces within us, especially faith and patience. These benefits should cause us to rejoice in afflictions. 4. In times of affliction, we can find comfort in the knowledge that God will help and deliver us.

The fifth category pertains to the assurance that we will not lack any necessary earthly blessings. This section covers general promises and specific ones, including promises related to long life, health, wealth, welfare, a good name, and blessings for our posterity, including God's promise to increase and abundantly bless them.

The sixth and final category of promises for living by faith is centered on Perseverance. This topic has been a subject of doubt and denial, but God has provided much comfort and assurance. We are encouraged to meditate on these promises to help us endure to the end and, in doing so, obtain the rich promises mentioned in the second and third chapters of the Revelation.

In summary, I have presented the essence of what I have expounded upon in this treatise, to the best of my ability. I leave it to the judgment of Him who knows both my intentions and actions. The benefits of this work to God's people will be evident through its effects.

I would like to emphasize that if I had not seen the potential for good in this work, I would not have spent so many years on it. Moreover, the encouragement and endorsement of respected individuals within our Church, who urged me to share my labors instead of keeping them hidden, have given me confidence. My own modest opinion of myself and my work would have otherwise kept them from public view and scrutiny.

To conclude, I earnestly implore every soul that truly laments their lack of comfort in God's favor, their inadequacy in times of need, and their weakness in obedience to heed the Apostle's exhortation (Ephesians 6:16) to strive for and maintain the precious grace of saving faith. The means and methods for attaining this grace have been outlined in this treatise.

For a more effective pursuit of this goal, personal experience will demonstrate the importance of daily practice—meditating on God's promises, especially those relevant to one's current situation. It is advisable to memorize one or two key promises for each purpose, as I have provided, or to identify them independently, ensuring they are readily available for use.

For instance, when preparing for prayer, one can contemplate the promise from Romans 8:26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Verse 27 further reassures us that God understands the Spirit's intercession and responds according to His will. Alternatively, James 1:5 can be considered: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." There is no doubt that contemplating what God has said in either of these promises will inspire any Christian heart to engage more comfortably in this sacred duty.

Similarly, when embarking on our daily vocations, Psalm 121:8 offers a source of assurance: "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

So when any cross befalls us, remember that invaluable promise from Romans 8:29: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Also, consider 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may

be able to bear it." Similar encouragement can be found in the rest of the promises, as has been discussed in more detail.

To achieve this goal, I recommend that everyone allocate some time each day (if no legitimate hindrance exists) for the duty of nourishing their faith through prayer and meditation on God's promises. While I fear this practice is rarely observed, I confidently commend it as of admirable benefit for all aspects of Christian life and holy practices. This is true not only during times of prosperity but even more so in times of adversity.

I would like to share from my own experience, both in my personal life and in observing many others, that while there can be no genuine comfort in any aspect of our lives without faith, maintaining true faith in life is a challenge. This is the primary reason why so few people experience the assurance of their salvation, comfort in afflictions, power over their corruptions, and growth in grace. However, they could enjoy these blessings to a fuller extent if the fault did not lie within themselves. If only they would make it a daily practice to examine themselves, as the Apostle exhorts, to determine whether they are in the faith. By recognizing their weakness, they would be motivated to strive diligently for the preservation of their faith, which they will find essential for their daily needs. Without faith, there can be no progress, only a daily decline in all aspects of Christianity.

Considering all this, I conclude with this final appeal to all who desire to experience the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living: please try this duty of daily nourishing and increasing your faith. If you approach it with care, knowledge, and conscientiousness, I have no doubt that you will find at least enough encouragement to press on, until you are further satisfied. We must

entrust to God both the timing and the measure of His wisdom's bestowal upon us.

As for my part, I will not cease to pray to God on behalf of all, that He may fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power. So be it.

FINIS.

MONERGISM BOOKS

A Treatise of Faith by Ezekiel Culverwell, Copyright © 2024

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. By payment of the required fees, you have been granted the non-exclusive, non-transferable right to access and read the text of this e-book on-screen. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, decompiled, reverse engineered, or stored in or introduced into any information storage and retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the express written permission of Monergism Books.

ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions January 2024 Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, Oregon, 97068

