

M

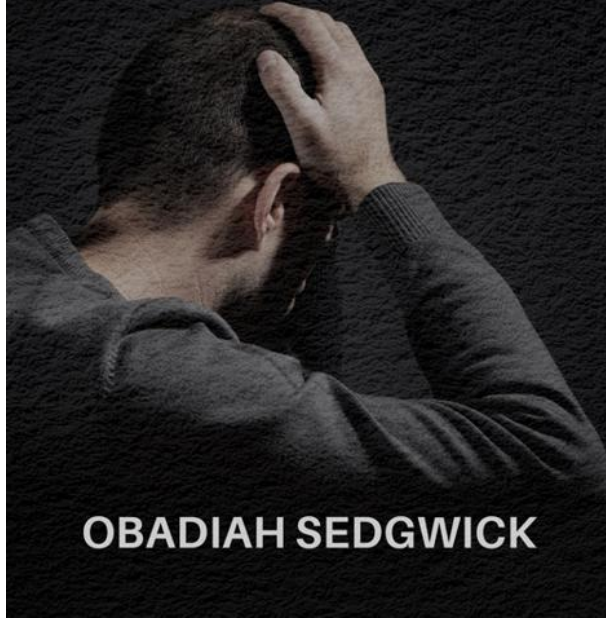
# THE DOUBTING BELIEVER



OBADIAH SEDGWICK

M

# THE DOUBTING BELIEVER



OBADIAH SEDGWICK

Copyright ©Monergism Books

# The Doubting Believer

by Obadiah Sedgwick

OR, A TREATISE CONTAINING

1. The Nature
2. The Kinds
3. The Springs
4. The Remedies of Doubtings, incident to weak Believers.

BY OBADIAH SEDGWICK, Bachelor in Divinity, and Minister of  
Coggeshall in Essex.

LONDON, Printed by M. F. for Thomas Nicols and are to be sold at  
his shop in Popes-head Alley at the sign of the Bible. 1641.

## Table of Contents

[TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE, ROBERT, Earl of Warwick](#)

[To the Christian Reader](#)

[A Treatise of Doubtings from Matthew 14:31](#)

[Chapter. I. The Nature of Doubtings.](#)

[Chapter II. The Kinds and Diversities of Them.](#)

Chapter III. Of Their Possible Consistency with Faith.

Chapter IV. Springs, Causes, and Occasions of doubting are or may be these.

Chapter V: The Cures and Remedies of Doubting

An Addition of four other causes of Doubtings, with a brief resolution of them.

**TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,  
ROBERT, Earl of Warwick,**

Baron of Leez, &c. My Noble Lord, and generous Patron.

MY LORD,

A RENEWED heart is like a miniature Heaven within our world, and Faith acts as the sole Sun in that Heaven. The sinner only becomes precious when he becomes pious; and the worth of that piety increases, commensurate with the measure of true faith, much like the gem's significance enhances with the presence of the Diamond. I cannot conceive of a more concise method for consistent and complete blessings in the life of any Christian than this: To attain faith, and to consistently employ it: The result or outcome of which

would be this, Grace and Glory, both in this life and the afterlife, belong to us.

Satan is well aware of the influential role Faith plays in all our endeavors, be it for our own spiritual journey towards righteous actions, or for God's abundant providence to reach us with His blessings: and therefore there is no Grace that he challenges and contends against as vehemently as faith: Should we weaken or destabilize the foundation of faith, its repercussions are felt throughout the entire edifice of the soul: A Christian's faith cannot be undermined without affecting the entirety of the spiritual structure, causing a sense of wrong and loss.

In my limited understanding, it would be a wise decision to secure that which, once secured, safeguards everything else. Nothing falters where faith flourishes. My Lord, This humble Treatise, which I have taken the liberty to associate with your name, is akin to Aaron and Hur, who upheld the hands of Moses; Likewise, this Treatise strives to bolster the hand of faith in a weak Believer, who possesses a vast estate both on the shores and inland; however, the waves of doubt (as they assail him) often cause him to retreat and falter: Consequently, a great misfortune ensues, where his faith, which could have been employed in numerous precious comforts, is (throughout much of his life) primarily used to counter fears and uncertainties. I respectfully offer the ensuing Work for your Lordship's personal perusal and public support. I beseech you (when you have the opportunity) to examine it, and accept it as a token of my gratitude to Your Honour, for the benefice which you generously and warmly bestowed upon me, wherein I aim to serve Your Lordship and my Lord with utmost fidelity.

Now may the Almighty God and the blessed Father generously enrich your noble heart with all redemptive graces, and may He extend your tenure as an instrument for His glory, a source of solace for His Church, and a force for good in our Commonwealth.

Perpetually indebted to Your Honour, Obadiah Sedgwick.

## **To the Christian Reader.**

This Treatise which is now presented to a public audience was (many years ago) the subject of my private Meditations and Sermons. I did not aspire for any further publication of it, other than in the Pulpit; but the insistence of others has compelled it to appear in print: Not because the manner of handling the Subject (here discussed) is excellent or exquisite, but because the content being discussed may be deemed to be of general use and benefit; just as a small star wields influence, though not the glory that belongs to the Sun.

The Scenario put forth and examined here is a scenario commonly experienced: There is no Believer who, at some point or another, won't acknowledge it as their own. The Sun, situated in a celestial orbit, shines with pure and unwavering light, but the candle (though placed and burning within a golden holder) flickers and shows much variability. When Christians are transported and shifted from earth to heaven, then their graces shall become perfections: There are no flaws in heaven, there are no mixtures in heaven, but whatever is pure there, is entirely pure: Yet on earth, it is different, neither the inherent traits of Grace, nor the acts of Grace, are solitary in any

Christian: When I desire to do good, evil is present with me, said Paul: And, I believe, Lord, help my unbelief, said that unfortunate man in the Gospel.

Where is the Believer who doesn't dwell more on their fears than on their faith? and isn't more often lamenting their uncertainties than rejoicing in their certainties? Only Believers possess an interest in Christ; only they have a claim to genuine and enduring peace: And yet, we see the faithful fearful, and the unworthy confident; the finest of individuals still litigating, and the worst of individuals tranquil, as if fully endowed; no one doubts less than those who have the greatest reason to doubt, and no one doubts more than those who have the greatest reason to triumph in Christ. And truly, this is the case while blatant ignorance blinds presumptuous sinners, and misbelief befalls tender spirits.

And isn't Joab's hand at play in this matter as well? Isn't Satan present in all the transgressions of wicked individuals, and in most of the tribulations of the virtuous? Either he entices us to sin, leading to doubt; or he entices us to doubt, leading to sin. Without doubt, it's not the least of his strategies and devices, in religious matters, to keep certain minds wavering; and in matters of a soul's connection to Christ, to keep the heart forever doubting. Doesn't he know that the Christian cannot make the most of Christ, while still striving to demonstrate their entitlement to Christ?

For the more efficient resolution of these soul conflicts, examine (if you please) this ensuing Work, which I acknowledge isn't a garden for everyone to stroll in, but rather medicine for the infirm or weak. It's intended as a Hospital for the limping, solely for a troubled sinner, solely for a feeble believer: And the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion, and the God of all comfort, even



He who establishes us in Christ, may He bless it for His glory, and for the assistance of someone or other.

Yours in Faith, Obadiah Sedgwick.

## **A TREATISE OF DOUBTINGS:**

FROM MATTHEW 14:31.

O thou of little faith, Why didst thou doubt?

These words encapsulate the essence of a Christian's experience in this life, which can be summarized as follows: Though genuinely virtuous, he is still feeble in virtue. In Peter, Christ discerns (despite being a Disciple) an incomplete faith, and then a deficiency in faith: He perceives faith in him, yet it's incomplete. It's characterized as "little faith": There's truth within it, but lacking the level of active strength that could or should be present. Moreover, He identifies a deficiency in Peter's faith, not in terms of its existence, but in terms of its expression—Why did you doubt? These words both acknowledge that he did doubt and offer a rebuke—Why, Why did you doubt? In other words, you did doubt, but it was inappropriate to do so.

Numerous insightful points can be drawn from the Text. I'll mention a few, focusing on one of them:

1. A genuine Believer might also be a feeble Believer, [Thou of little faith!]

2. Christ pays attention to even a frail Believer, [O thou of little faith!]
3. While Christ appreciates belief, He is displeased with doubt, [Why didst thou doubt?]
4. A person can truly possess faith, while still experiencing moments of doubt: Within the same individual, you witness an approval of one and a reproach of the other, which inherently implies the presence of both.

Given this as the subject I intend to address for the betterment of vulnerable Christians, I will expound on five aspects concerning it, specifically:

1. The nature of Doubtings.
2. The varieties and diversities of these doubts.
3. How they can coexist with genuine faith.
4. The reasons, sources, and triggers behind them.
5. The remedies and solutions for them.

## **Chapter I.**

### **The Nature of Doubtings.**

To comprehend this, you must understand that within the depths of the soul's least admirable aspect, several attributes can be discerned, as follows:

1. Infidelity, which is a definite rejection of divine truths, particularly amongst those who profess the Gospel; in this, individuals forsake their own blessings by straightforward disagreements and disregard for the grace-filled message. This is evident in the case of the Pharisees, Luke 7:30, who spurned God's counsel, etc.
2. Despair, which is a clear dissent, not so much concerning the truth of the thing or object (for this is affirmed as true in itself, namely that God is merciful, and Christ did die for sinners), but rather concerning the person or subject. In this, the soul resigns itself as lost, beyond the reach and hopefulness of divine proclamation. It believes there's no possibility of rescue, thus sinking into despair. My intention is to say that such a soul, even though it recognizes in God and Christ the potential for salvation and redemption, disqualifies itself from any claim to God's mercy or the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, thus eternally succumbing to its own despair. This is evident in the cases of Judas and Cain.

Now, Despair, inasmuch as it agrees with Truths, contrasts with Infidelity; and as far as it disagrees with the special goodness within those Truths, it opposes Faith; and to the extent that it concludes impossibility of attaining that good for itself, it contradicts Hope.

3. Anxious notions, which are definite agreements with Truths, yet based solely on probable inducements, leaving the soul with a suspicion that the opposite might be true. These notions are akin to a person on a flimsy plank in a vast river—there they sit, and there they worry, since they're uncertain about how long they'll remain there.

4. Doubtings, which entail the soul's suspension or withholding from any decisive inclinations in either direction. They signify moments of mental pause.

Consider a traveller at a crossroads, where two paths diverge. He contemplates one and leans towards it, deeming it possibly the right choice; then he turns to the other, surmising it might be the correct route; and finally, he gazes at both, reaching a standstill and proceeding with neither. Similarly, it is with spiritual doubtings. Two paths lie ahead, two objects, two courses of action—believing or not believing—each supported by arguments that almost equalize in strength and influence, much like a pair of scales perfectly balanced, rendering both immobile. The Schoolmen rightly assert that *Dubitatio est motus supra utramque partem contradictionis, cum formidine determinandi alteram partem ejus* (Doubt is a motion that inclines towards both sides of contradiction, with the fear of deciding either side).

For you to understand this more vividly, recall:

1. In our minds, there are Affirmations, which constitute the understanding's embrace of acknowledged truths. And there are Dissents, which signify detachment from those truths. In the former, the soul leans in; in the latter, it leans away.
2. Doubtings aptly stand between these two; they're neither clearly one nor the other. If I may be candid, I perceive them as having traces of both; they exist as a middle ground, a hybrid, much like shades that aren't entirely black or white.

The soul desires to unite with Truth, to participate in the perceived goodness; yet it neither attaches nor discards. It's akin to a fish eyeing bait, drawn to it and swiping at it, yet hesitating and circling.

Or imagine a wave (as described in James 1:6), surging towards the shore, then receding. Picture a meteor hovering in midair, neither ascending nor descending. These oscillating, swaying movements of the soul are doubttings; they're a hesitant venture. The soul recognizes reasons for both paths—to move forward or to retreat, to engage or to hold back. It's comparable to a pair of forces in equilibrium, preventing any movement to the right or left. Thus, the person hangs between hope and fear, wanting to but refraining; capable, yet cautious. It's like a chess player trying to advance a piece to capture the king, but then realizing they're in check and must retract. God is my Lord and King, yet perhaps not; He will extend His goodness, yet I fear He won't; He's forgiven my sins, but maybe not; He hears my prayers, though I doubt it; My situation is prosperous and joyful, but I have reservations.

So, a person vacillates, rolls, and resembles someone on unstable ground, lifting one foot from the mire only to see the other sink. The soul remains undecided.

3. Remember one more thing: while the mind doesn't commit to a definite action within spiritual doubttings, it consistently leans towards a specific object. That is, although the doubting Christian can't yet transform these uncertain, wavering motions into a state of stability and positive resolution, their mind inclines towards Christ and the promises. It doesn't entirely reject and abandon hope; it retains two elements that Infidelity and Despair lack.
4. Firstly, it values Christ and the promises, even if it can't fully embrace them.
5. Secondly, it doesn't surrender the situation as hopeless and impossible. Although it can't anchor, it continues to hover

around them.

## Chapter II.

### The Kinds and Diversities of Them.

The second aspect pertains to the types of doubtings, and I must also delve into these.

I speculate that there are four types of doubtings.

1. Some are of wonderment: in these, the mind doesn't outright oppose; on the contrary, it believes, but is only concerned about the concealed manner or means of execution or fulfillment. An example of this kind of doubting is seen in the Virgin Mary's response in Luke 1:34—"How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" As Saint Ambrose says, "Non dubit at esse faciendum, sed quomodo fieri possit, inquit." (She does not doubt that it will be done, but inquires how it will be done.)
2. Others are of affirmation: Where the soul believes, but craves additional assurance to secure and solidify it, to dispel any lingering doubt. This can be observed in Gideon's instance in Judges 6:36-37, 39. These kinds of doubtings are akin to seeking a bit more reassurance from God in matters of extraordinary importance. It's not so much a challenge to the truth itself, but rather an appeal for greater clarity and validation for our own sake, to work more confidently with a clearer foundation.
3. A third type involves denial: This form of skepticism involves a straightforward suspicion of God's faithful promises. It's prevalent among wicked individuals in their general course of life and, among good people, it arises concerning certain specific

actions and situations. A clear instance of this is found in Zechariah's question in Luke 1:18—"Whereby shall I know this?" This question represents a form of doubting, and this doubting, without question, was an instance of unbelief. It didn't embrace the Angel's message; this is confirmed in the subsequent verse, ver. 20—"Thou shalt be dumb, because thou believest not my words."

4. The fourth type is inquisitive, where the mind is in diverse states, yet hasn't settled, similar to a case not yet brought to judgment, hanging in suspense. Presently, we are addressing this kind of doubtings, which can further be categorized into:
  - Real, which queries the fundamentals themselves—whether for truth or goodness—and thus concerns matters of faith. Alternatively, they question actions in terms of legitimacy or unlawfulness, pertaining to matters of fact. In this regard, they're particularly termed "Scruples of conscience," involving some uneasy and tormenting doubts about practical matters. For more details on this, consult the works of Casuists.
  - Personal; Where it's not the things themselves that are questioned, but rather, in relation to us, they are merely questioned, not definitively denied or rejected. For instance, I know and believe that God is a Father, that Christ is a Redeemer, and the Saviour of sinners. Now, I doubt—not whether there's any truth or goodness in these (for these I accept)—but, based on the view of my significant sinfulness and numerous shortcomings, I only question (and this suffices), whether my connection lies within that truth and goodness. What is articulated here concerning a case involving spiritual matters can also be applied to the situation regarding promises



for temporal matters, because such doubting can encompass both.

- Furthermore, within personal doubtings, there are two subtypes.
  1. Some are privative, erasing all presence of faith—see 1 Timothy 2:8 and James 1:6.
  2. Some are contrary, which lessen but don't negate; they weaken and keep faith diminished, yet don't completely negate or extinguish it, as exemplified in our current Text.

## **Chapter III.**

### **Of Their Possible Consistency with Faith.**

And here lies the essence of the matter: Can personal doubtings—meaning doubts regarding an individual's specific connection with God, Christ, and the promises—coexist with personal Faith?

To which I reply: They can, but pay attention, for

1. Doubtings are indeed sinful, as they emanate from corruption.
2. They are not a component of Faith.
3. They cannot coexist simultaneously with acts of faith; for it's inconceivable for faith to inherently doubt. Just as it's

impossible for me to lay a hand on a rock without simultaneously laying my hand on it, or for my eye to see a colour without simultaneously perceiving its hue, or for my hand to receive a gift without simultaneously receiving the actual item. Similarly, it's impossible for the soul to believe and doubt at the same time, since active Faith and active doubt are opposing actions. The soul cannot initiate opposite actions from the same faculty at the same time; while it can successively do so, it can't concurrently. But to believe and to doubt are contradictory; in one, I embrace, in the other, I don't; in one, I find rest, in the other, I don't, and so on.

However, fourthly, actual doubtings may exist in an individual who possesses habitual faith. For this, understand that faith and doubtings are not opposed in the same manner as life and death, where the presence of one definitively signifies the complete absence of the other. Rather, they resemble degrees of cold and heat within a subject—while the nature of cold isn't the same as the nature of heat, and one naturally displaces the other, both can still occupy the same space. Therefore, Faith isn't Doubting, and Doubting isn't Faith. While one expels the other, both can and do coexist within the same individual.

Who, nevertheless, is labelled a Believer due to the most prominent aspect: For just as we accurately refer to certain individuals as beautiful individuals, despite a faulty incongruity in a particular limb due to nature (since what is superior determines or assigns the name), in the same vein, we assert that Christians are genuine believers because they truly possess faith in their souls, even with the presence of many culpable doubtings that they experience and express.

It would indeed be folly for people to believe their fields have no corn because there are numerous noxious weeds, or that a heap has no wheat due to the abundance of chaff, or that a pile has no gold because of an excess of dross, or that a soul lacks faith due to the prevalence of doubtings.

I would nearly say (allow me, I believe it to be true) that there is no one with faith who hasn't encountered their doubtings. Have you ever seen a fire without smoke? Smoke isn't an integral part of fire, yet it emanates from the fuel where fire is kindled. Similarly, this applies to faith and doubtings, and so on.

Moreover, this truth is unequivocally affirmed by several instances in Scripture. Let's take Matthew 14:31 as the first example: "O thou of little faith," Christ said to Peter, "Why didst thou doubt?" Here, even though Christ reproached Peter for doubting, He also implied Peter's faith. Peter possessed faith, albeit limited, and alongside that faith, he had doubtings. Both aspects existed within Peter. He hadn't stepped out without faith, and he hadn't sunk without his doubtings.

Consider Abraham himself, the patriarch of the faithful. Yet, we find him wavering and hesitating, vacillating and doubting on more than one occasion—see Genesis 12 and Genesis 15:2-3, and Genesis 20.

Similarly, David had his moments of trembling, his bouts of weakness, and his suspicions. Not everything within him was faith. He rashly accuses some of being liars, though they spoke only the truth of God. Conversely, in his haste, he was seemingly cut off from God's sight, even though God heard his supplications.

Job too, a man of immense sorrows and great faith, didn't avoid his moments of unease, his periods of doubt, his questions. Indeed, in certain passages, he appears heroic in his faith, triumphing over

adversity with grace and surmounting all challenges. However, in other instances, he reveals himself as both a Man and a Believer; he falters, he fears, he teeters on the brink.

The faithful in Scripture are frequently likened to trees that, despite being well-rooted, can still be shaken; to Noah's Ark, which served as a secure haven yet was tossed; to a house built on a rock, which, although solid and unyielding, might still experience movement; to stars, which, though celestial, twinkle; and, in many ways, to the moon, which, despite its luminance, bears some dark blemishes.

Why should I present further examples? Let your personal experiences and daily complaints serve as sufficient testimony to this reality; let them render their verdict. Some among you have yet to transcend your fears. When God withholds His favour, don't you immediately entertain doubt? When He tightens His grip, don't you likewise doubt? Oh, how we waver, how we roll, how we stagger at every perceptible difficulty! Concerning matters of this life, scarcely an opposing occurrence fails to unsettle us. This tends to be the case for most of us in our early stages and during our initial endeavors. But for those of you who have progressed further, who have matured into a state of assurance, perhaps even full assurance, can you not recall moments of bowing, shaking, quivering, doubting? Or do you anticipate never encountering them again? I have seen the sun shine one day and then be obscured the next; I have known David's mountain to stand firm, but then "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled" (Psalm 30).

Furthermore, take into account the nature and condition of genuine faith in this earthly existence. It must be acknowledged that doubtings may coexist with it, given that no grace attains perfection in this life; rather, it exhibits its contrasting aspects in the same

individual to some degree. Moreover, an essential aspect of faith's function is to continually dispel the doubtings that arise in the mind. This action could not be carried out if these doubts did not indeed exist.

Now, you might ask, [Objection] "When should these doubtings arise? Does God alter His love, His nature, His fidelity? Or do the Promises (which serve as faith's strong support) fluctuate, ebb and flow? Do they undergo changes with respect to their truth or goodness? And as for Christ, the foundation, the bedrock upon which our faith is built—doesn't He remain the same yesterday, today, and forever? If that's the case, then how, why, and whence does it happen that a Believer should doubt?"

To this, I respond, [Solution] that while consistency resides within God, Christ, and the Word, there is not a uniformity within us; the variations in us do not imply any change in them, just as the diverse alterations in the atmosphere do not indicate any diversity in the Sun, which remains constant and unchanging in its essence, even if alterations abound here on earth. Thus, understand that the

## **Chapter IV.**

### **Springs, Causes, and Occasions of doubting are or may be these.**

1. Natural corruption: This is a corrupt root, the seed of all sin, and of unbelief. This is the flesh that lusts against the spirit and

thrusts up numerous impulses and corrupted reasonings, serving as motives to disrupt our faith in its significant task of believing. Thus, when we intend to do good, evil is present with us; and when we aim to believe, unbelief is present with us.

Certainly, upon our conversion, the soul experiences gracious enlargement, and the faculties of reason are curbed. Yet, even so, it remains fettered, still carrying a chain around its leg. While sin has suffered a deadly wound, a certain measure of life yet lingers, enough to interfere with and resist our graces—indeed, if we are not cautious, to hinder and bind them.

Just as a person with a leg injury cannot move in the desired manner or extent, and an injured hand or arm cannot always stretch itself out and grasp, so does corruption affect the best of us, playing its part to disrupt, oppose, and—unless closely watched—even arrest our acts of believing.

Consider the analogy of warfare, where the plans and actions of one side are halted and constrained by the malice, cunning, and power of the adversary. Similarly, numerous underground streams of sweet water might flow, but their course is often obstructed by fallen earth. Oh, this body of sin that, willingly or unwillingly, we still carry with us—how disinclined it is to come to Christ! How sceptical, how fearful it is! It remains unswayed, unpersuaded, incredulous, resistant, unyielding, and unembraceable.

Even the Disciples, who had the presence of Christ before them, who witnessed the Miracles of Christ, who heard the voice of Christ—how frequently did they entertain doubts? How often did they question? "Where shall we find enough bread to feed so many?" "We had hoped he would be the one to redeem Israel." So much so that Christ reproved them more than once: "O you of little faith," "Why do

doubts arise in your hearts?" "See my hands and my feet; it is I myself." Yet Christ offered an excuse for them, saying, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

2. Imperfection of faith; this also contributes to doubting. Why should a child stumble often, whereas an adult does so less frequently? Is it not due to the frailty of nerves, sinews, and lesser vital parts? When a fire is freshly ignited, it is small and produces much smoke. Similarly, with our faith, the more imperfect it is, the more doubts it encounters.

Matthew 14:31, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Little faith and significant doubting often go hand in hand, much like a small heart and heavy mist. Some individuals are still spiritual infants, merely young plants in the garden, or lambs in the fold. Children are prone to fear, plants to tremble, and lambs to lag behind. So too, weak believers are prone to doubt. Just as a small burden on a child's shoulders leaves them unsure, or how showing water to a child leads to cries of fear, the same applies to weak believers. Their strength is not proportionate to uncommon demands. Furthermore, they lack experience and the acumen to swiftly resort to their supports.

And these are significant concerns. First, when a person lacks the strength to contend with their enemy, and second, when they lack experience. Let's delve into this further. In cases where faith is weak or imperfect, three things are often experienced by these believers.

1. They lack the ability to argue their position. Their limited experience results in unsettled judgments, preventing them from maintaining their stance consistently. David, based on prior experiences, remains undaunted by the uncircumcised Philistine, relying on the same God for victory who had previously delivered him from the bear and the lion. Similarly,

Paul reinforces his confidence, "He delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver, in whom we trust that he will still deliver" (2 Corinthians 1:10). However, weak faith has little experience of God's truths, power, methods, and timing.

2. They focus more on their deficiencies and hindrances than their aids and encouragements. Like Elisha's servant, who saw the enemy surrounding the city with horses and chariots, they cry out in despair, "Alas, my Master, how shall we do?" Yet, initially, they fail to see the mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire around Elisha, which could have provided support and assurance.

For new and weak believers, it's akin to the situation of the Israelites hearing about the mighty giants and fortified walls of the city of Canaan. They become greatly perplexed and discouraged by these challenges, failing to focus on the strong and Almighty God who promised to be with them and conquer on their behalf. Similarly, these believers fixate on Satan's temptations and suggestions, the powerful stirrings of remaining corruption, the weight of current trials, their own weaknesses, God's perceived delays, and anything that might hinder them. However, they fail to fix their gaze on the faithful God who fulfills His promises, on Christ who seals the Covenant with His blood, on the mighty spirit of grace within them, and on steadfast Christians who can testify to God's faithfulness and readiness to help those who trust and wait on Him.

3. They can't access the arsenal of faith as adeptly as stronger believers can. They're not yet as familiar with the armory of faith —The Promises. These promises are numerous and tailored to diverse circumstances. Because beginners in faith are not well-acquainted with them, they are less prepared to wield them



during times of change. This leads to the emergence and escalation of doubts. In fact, they may be on the verge of despair.

You'll find many devout individuals who, in certain situations, have admirably held their ground, bolstering their faith by uncovering specific promises, applying them, and utilizing their power to overcome doubts and fears. However, these same individuals might suddenly become confounded, distressed, apprehensive, and doubtful. Their strength wanes, and even that becomes a struggle. Why? Do they not possess faith? They do. Does their faith not function? It might, but they might not perceive its particular efficacy. Why? Because a new type of trouble, a new burden, surfaces—one they've yet to encounter. They can't locate any promise that directly addresses this issue, leading to a surge of fear and doubt that greatly distracts them.

This is indeed found to be very true, particularly in times of distress (regardless of the nature or kind of distress), the soul remains in a state of restless confusion, in an unsettled state, until faith can discover a Promise that addresses the situation, either directly or indirectly. It must work through one of these two avenues in our circumstances, or else our fears intensify.

1. Relying on sensory experience: This is another source of doubting, as seen in the case of Thomas in John 20:25. "Except I shall see in his hand the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." He demands to see and feel, or else his faith remains lacking.

Studying the life of sense entails placing God's intentions and the outcomes of our situations solely on our sensory perceptions and feelings. For example, believing that God is truly my God because I feel Him to be so; thinking He is gracious because my prayers seem

to receive an apparent response; assuming He accepts my worship because I sense emotional affection. Conversely, believing He isn't my God because I don't sense His favour; not feeling the same intensity of affections as before; not receiving immediate answers to my prayers and desires; doubting my state of grace because I don't experience the vigour and growth of grace; questioning my faith because I lack the joy of assurance and the immediate eradication of sin.

This approach leads to constant and limitless doubting because:

1. The soul lacks a consistent foundation to anchor upon; our feelings fluctuate—sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, sometimes absent entirely. While faith may be nurtured by feelings, it's equally valid without them. Just as the soul contributes to sight and hearing in the eyes and ears, it can reside within a person even when these faculties don't perceive. Believing that food doesn't nourish unless it visibly enlarges one's body, or that a father doesn't love unless he's always affectionate, or that seeds are lost without an instantaneous harvest, or that a channel will dry up because the tide has receded—these notions would lead to confusion in one's thoughts. Similarly, drawing conclusions about our souls from sensory experiences and transient circumstances exposes them to daily fears and uncertainties.
2. This approach empowers Satan in his deceitful schemes. The life of sensory experience, like a restless and unsettled sea, is susceptible to every wind and has its inherent instability. Beyond that, it is also susceptible to profound disturbances and turmoil caused by the devil. For Satan, the life of sensory

experience provides the foundation for his despairing syllogism. He can exploit this approach to suggest:

a) Whoever lacks the sensory perception of God's favour, immediate responses from God, and feelings of His grace cannot be in a state of grace and salvation (a proposition rooted in sensory experience).

b) But, he tells the believer, you lack the sensory perception of God's favour, etc.

c) Therefore, he asserts, you are not in a state of grace and salvation.

This is the outcome of relying solely on the life of sense! It's no wonder that the soul struggles to focus on Christ or the promises. Instead, it's tossed to and fro, suspended in a state of extreme uncertainty.

However, thirdly, this way of life significantly disrespects God and hence is exposed to various fears and uncertainties. What does it mean? To evaluate the truths of God through our feelings? To gauge God's grace based on our sensory experiences? Is this not akin to putting God on trial for truth and graciousness? Is this not an attempt to pass judgement on God's intentions and actions that He has reserved to Himself? Is this not an attempt to restrict the Holy One of Israel? Is it not trying to correct His wisdom, as if it's incapable of orchestrating our salvation without us constantly scrutinising His specific intentions and methods with our input?

Although it may seem glorious and remarkable to believe only when it aligns with our feelings, starting with feelings and then moving to faith is a perilous and unfeasible delusion. You can never genuinely

experience the warmth of divine favour that faith lets in if you haven't first believed. Can you truly warm your heart with God's favour that faith did not first allow in?

A fourth cause of doubting arises when we deprive faith of its substance and foundation to operate. How does this happen? When we focus solely on worldly matters rather than seeking guidance from above. Allow me to offer some examples:

1. Consider that the life of grace often includes limited external benefits, while sinful individuals might experience worldly prosperity. A righteous person may face many wants, while an unrighteous person can enjoy worldly riches. When someone looks only at the external appearance, they may see abundance with the wicked, and poverty with the righteous; honour for them, and contempt for these; satisfaction for them, and scarcity for these; joy and freedom for them, and sorrow and constraint for these. When they only see this, and nothing beyond this, suspicions and doubts may well arise, and their spirit may falter. Asaph provides evidence of this in Psalm 73:2: "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." And again in verses 12-14: "These are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches... For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." Observe his lack of trust and his doubts, as if his righteous path had availed him nothing or as if he had served God in vain.

2. A similar thing occurs when considering the sinful state. If one focuses solely on their sins—their nature and severity—what happens? First, they experience profound humility, which is beneficial. Second, they fall into doubt and despair, which is detrimental. Singularly contemplating sin generates fear. David

found it overwhelming: "For mine iniquities are gone over mine head; as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psalm 38:4).

What hope is there in ourselves? What can sinners rely on to support them? A burden does not provide relief for itself. When people observe their sins without using faith, doubt is inevitable. Sin emerges as the source of every fear, while God appears as not just a friend, but an enemy and harsh judge. In such a state, where can the troubled soul find solace or security?

God has blessed humanity with two ears and two eyes. If we utilise only one, our lives will often remain uncertain. We must have ears to hear God's message to a repentant sinner, just as we have ears to heed our conscience as sinners. We need eyes to look at Christ, not just to gaze at our sins. We must set our eyes on the brazen serpent, not just the venomous and fiery serpent. Only then can we escape our doubts and break free from our sins, which are the root cause of those doubts.

3. In situations where bodily distractions and unforeseen events place us in a difficult situation, if we solely focus on the immediate circumstances and our own abilities, it will be like David, worn out and nearly defeated by Saul's relentless pursuits: "I shall surely one day fall by the hand of Saul." Similarly, it's akin to Peter, who, when he gazed at the waves instead of fixing his eyes on Christ, began to sink and cried out, "Lord, save me!" Or, likened to Jehoshaphat, who, while contemplating the vast enemy armies, declared, "We know not what to do." Not too long ago, this was evident when the Churches abroad faced distress. We fixated on their devastation, their weakness, and humanity's limitations. We didn't focus on

God, and thus, our ship was flooded, our spirits wavered, and doubts and fears overwhelmed us. Even now, we hear of an externally disproportionate enemy strength, numerous in number, united, plotting a great scheme. I feel the resurgence of fears and doubts. Indeed, as long as we look downward and not upward, as long as we attribute events and outcomes to human agency, and as long as we fail to grant faith the freedom to rise and work upon the God who can save through a few as well as through many, we will remain trapped in a cycle of doubting.

This same principle applies to personal circumstances. As long as we solely focus on the challenges we encounter and rely solely on our own strength, it's akin to a house without pillars, swaying in the wind with every gust. It's like a ship without an anchor, tossed about by every wave. Every trial seems insurmountable for us, even though none can be insurmountable for God.

4. The same holds true for temptations. Our doubts arise because our faith doesn't rise. We often say, "We're unable to endure, to resist, to overcome; the temptations are powerful and unending." Suppose that's the case; what do we do then? We're quick to give in, handing victory to Satan, without considering that God equips His soldiers with armour. We overlook the fact that the battle is the Lord's; He's the one engaged in the fight for His own cause. We assume that God only observes, failing to grasp how much He restrains Satan and upholds us. We act as if Satan can act without restraint while God leaves us to grapple alone. In reality, the Lord displays His strength in our weakness, His grace is sufficient, and He will soon crush Satan beneath our feet.

5. A fifth cause of doubting could be specific and significant sins after conversion. These are like drops of water falling onto a candle, causing it to burn dimly with a blackened wick at the top, flickering and struggling for stability. They resemble a salty fluid falling into the eyes, obscuring vision and causing momentary blindness. Likewise, our specific sins after conversion dim and cloud the soul, inducing tremors and anxieties, as seen in David after his grave transgressions of adultery and murder. These sins severely weakened his spiritual state and wiped away all his consolations.

Beloved, these sins, they must necessarily be a potent source of doubting if we simply consider,

1. It is inherent to their nature to distance us from safety and security. You're aware that a ship at rest in the harbour or close to the shore, when cast out to sea, is rocked once more. Similarly, in the case of known sins that wound the conscience (after conversion), we release the anchor and venture forth. The promises and Christ (on which our assurance was anchored) now seem to give way, leaving us adrift, as if they will abandon us.

Suppose, even if their tangible efficacy doesn't wane (though it does), we still can't attach ourselves. The very disposition of the soul is impaired; our spirit is wounded. You understand that even if a staff remains in the same place and state, if my hand is wounded, I can't grip it or use it as before.

Now, consider, shouldn't the soul indeed be consumed by fears and doubts for having distanced itself from such a gracious haven, represented by God's mercies, loving-kindness, and the sweet and blessed promises? Could it not echo David's sentiments: "I

remembered God and was troubled?" It's understandable for you to be troubled after forsaking such a God over such a sin.

2. God does, in reality, view these sins very unfavourably from those whom He has blessed with His love's fruits. A truth emerges that, in the case of offences, love and bounty intensify the gravity of the situation. For example, consider David's case in 2 Samuel 12:7-9: "I anointed you King over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. And I gave you your master's house and the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto you such and such things. Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in His sight, etc."

Observe how the Lord contends and magnifies the matter with David. When a child recognises that they've done wrong (particularly against a direct parental instruction, "Do not do this"), and simultaneously knows that the parent is fully aware of the transgression, fear and doubt tend to creep into the child's heart. The child is hesitant to approach, torn between staying away and coming in, well-aware that their parent is displeased.

Likewise, after our particular sins, we know that God detests them (not on a personal level, but in a general sense; not against a specific individual, but against any individual). Their nature contradicts His nature. It's akin to how we abhor poison in itself, whether it's in a toad or a precious gem, our aversion remains constant. When we commit such sins that displease a gracious God, what significant fears, what strange misgivings, what overwhelming dread invades the heart?

The offending child questions, "Where is my father?" One may reply, "He's inside," and the child runs away. Alternatively, "He's outside,"



and the child sits down, crying and lamenting their loss, thinking they'll never regain their father's favour.

Likewise, after our specific sins, if God appears to approach us, we're prone to flee. Adam stated, "I heard Your voice and I was afraid, so I hid myself." If God does not approach, we sit down, torment ourselves, and utter many deep sighs, "Ah, what have I done? Woe is me! I've angered my God and I'm fearful to approach Him."

3. God doesn't easily grant His favour to those who misuse it in this manner. There was a free connection between God and the soul before, but now the door, once open, is shut, and God Himself holds the key, preventing any means or methods from reaching us until He wills it. Recall how David distanced himself from Absalom due to his misconduct, keeping him away for a prolonged period, preventing him from seeing the king's face. Likewise, David himself, due to his sins against his father, couldn't (without earnest supplications) see God's face as he once did, as seen in Psalm 51.

Considering these factors, isn't it reasonable that the soul should be riddled with doubt? Undoubtedly, when significant desires are delayed and postponed, great fears ensue. They also give rise to distinct suspicions: "Perhaps I will always be deferred. Will the Lord cast me off forever? Will He not be merciful anymore?" (Psalm 77:7-9).

4. Furthermore, the soul, now enlightened and having considered all circumstances, can and does offer itself many arguments and reasons to resist. It's inclined to turn inward and suppress any inclination it detects towards surrendering to God or Christ.

It takes some time for faith to identify a way to reconcile with this offending soul and find a suitable means through which it can seek God's pardon and favour. And when faith has identified this path, our hesitant hearts discourage us. Just as children might pull down a soaring bird with a string, our feeble hearts pull back our faith as it advances towards heaven by the agency of Jesus Christ's blood on our behalf.

The more we grasp the gravity of our sins, the more wariness and fear envelop us. Rarely does the soul regain its former grip and the former close connection with God until it has undergone corresponding humiliation and periods of steadfast reformation. Between these stages and the profound revelation of distinct and renewed assurance, the heart confronts numerous challenges, many sorrowful days, and frequent rises of fear and potent doubts.

Therefore, you observe that specific sins after conversion indeed lead to significant doubts in the soul, for they create discord, inflict wounds, place barriers between us and God, elevate God's position while diminishing faith's influence, and unleash a torrent of discouragement and fear. They effectively cause the soul to stall, often leaving the gates of heaven with extraordinary misgivings and heaviness.

6. A sixth source of doubt could be the lack of readiness for or engagement in spiritual obligations. When our spiritual fervour seems to be extinguished, when our bodies appear to lack vitality, and when our emotions seem detached from our worship, we find ourselves praying without fervency, listening without attentiveness, and undertaking duties without enthusiasm, joy, or the appropriate spirit.

At times, there's an unusual lethargy, a kind of flat dullness or drowsiness that makes it difficult to engage in our duties. Much like the disciples, the soul becomes so burdened that watching and praying become arduous tasks.

Out of these types of slumbering, the hearts of Christians typically awaken with doubts, especially in regard to two particular matters.

1. One concern pertains to the authenticity and existence of Grace: Just as Gideon questioned in another instance (Judges 6:13), "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" Similarly here, if the truth of Grace truly resides within me, why do I experience these dispositions of lethargy, dullness, and lifelessness? Where the Spirit of Christ is present, there is liberty, yet I feel as though I am bound. Where true Grace is ignited, a holy fire warms the heart during worship; "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:14) and "with my whole heart have I sought thee," as David said. "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16), declared Jeremiah, and the Prophet Isaiah (56:7) proclaimed that God will bring joy to His people in His house of Prayer. Moreover, we are instructed to serve the Lord with gladness (Psalm 100:2).

As a result, the soul becomes apprehensive, wondering how its condition can be favourable when it contrasts so starkly with the hidden and vibrant qualities of Grace. How can it be favourable when it diverges so greatly from the vigour promised and experienced by God's people? How can I be considered worthy when I am so sluggish, awkward, and slow in actions that are considered good? &c.

2. However, even if the soul manages to alleviate this apprehension (by understanding that fire may exist even without continuous

flames, and that the root may remain alive even when the branches do not always flourish, and by recognizing comparable lethargy in some prominent figures like David, who often prayed for renewal), another doubt arises from our sluggishness and indisposition - a fear of acceptance. The Lord, it is assumed, will not find these efforts acceptable because they are so lacklustre; they will have no impact. Even if I might be considered righteous, my services are lacking and will not garner favour with God. Thus, the soul is often deeply troubled due to its dispositions, as though it were wholly flawed or God intended to grant it little good due to its lack of vitality and enthusiasm in its offered services. It can greatly trouble a tender and sincere heart to perceive such lacklustre views of God and Christ within itself and to witness its own ineptitude in performing acts that it desires and has reasons to execute with the best of its strength, might, and emotions.

3. A seventh source or cause of doubting may be unproductive efforts. I term them as such because we perceive them this way. What are these efforts? They occur when we identify shortcomings in our specific virtues and in particular duties, or when certain effects of specific corruptions are observed. We have then approached God in prayer and in his ordinances, praying for an extended period for the strengthening and expansion of our feeble faith, love, sorrow, joy, and assurance, and praying against the hardness, emotional outbursts, or whatever form of sinfulness we've detected in our hearts. Nevertheless, it seems that we remain where we were; we continue with the same deficiencies in grace and move forward with the same burdens of sinful inclinations and tendencies. At this point, the soul becomes heavy with sorrow and reaches mournful conclusions. It assumes that further attempts are

futile, recalling the fate predicted for Moab in Isaiah 16:12: "He shall come unto his Sanctuary, and shall not prevail." I have sought him for a long time and have not prevailed; I will never overcome these struggles. If God intended to bless me, it would have already occurred.

The belief in ineffectiveness inevitably leads to doubting because:

1. God appears to be in contention with the soul. The heart speculates that something is awry preventing it from obtaining an audience; something is not right and harmonious between God and itself.
2. The very foundations of duty appear to crumble beneath us. You understand that the Promises provide the chief encouragement for all our efforts, and we have nothing to bind God except his own Promises, by which he has bound himself. He has declared that he will listen and respond. Confident in his assurance, we approached and prayed, yet gained nothing, even when pressing God based on his own promise. Consequently, the soul becomes uncertain. If God won't honour his own word, how can he honour me?
3. At this point, we suspect not the content of our petitions but our own standing, fearing that we have been misled in our journey towards heaven. God would have treated us as his own, hearing our prayers, had we served him with a pure heart. After all, God does not hear sinners (John 9:31), but if anyone worships God and does his will, he hears him. Consequently, the soul vigorously debates with itself. My heart is sinful, or else my prayers would have been fruitful. I harbour iniquity in my heart, and therefore the Lord does not hear me (Psalm 66:18).

Beloved, those of you who rely on observation and experience can acknowledge

1. That there are intervals between our prayers and God's responses: God heeds what David utters, and David must heed what God will declare. Prayer serves as our angle, our bait, our dove, our messenger; it doesn't always yield results immediately, providing neither a swift harvest nor a prompt return. It arrives sooner or sometimes later, awaiting the timing of the master.
2. God is wise in orchestrating these intervals; he has distinct purposes, both for his own glorification and for the enhancement of our Graces.

But thirdly, corruption exploits this situation, and Satan capitalizes on his envious spite as well: Similar to backbiters, slanderers, and contentious individuals who delight in sowing discord among faithful friends, seizing upon even the slightest opportunity—a sidelong glance, a misplaced word, an unintentional neglect, a postponement of a desired service—the backbiting, envious, malevolent, contentious spirit seizes on it. "Look," it says, "you see his lack of affection, his reluctance, his disregard for you," and so on.

In this manner, our corrupt hearts and Satan collaborate: "See now," they proclaim, "how unnecessary and fruitless all the care and devotion to God is. Alas, he is indifferent to you, he pays no heed to your prayers. If he had loved you, if he had intended to benefit you, could this be? Would he have persevered after so many prayers, so many tears, so many pleadings, so many appeals through his mercies, through Christ, through his promises? No, no. You are not in God's favour; his mercies and promises do not belong to you," and so they continue.

8. An eighth source may be the weakness of judgment concerning the essentials of salvation. Undoubtedly, this is the primary origin of doubting. An erroneous mind serves as the forge that shapes all our suspicions; it is the womb that conceives and nurtures all our fears. If it doesn't find knots, it creates them for us.

Just as someone might remark about a straightforward passage of Scripture, "This verse would have been simple if commentators hadn't made it so convoluted," the same could be said about a Christian's condition: "It is gracious, joyful, clear, and certain if not for the disruption, distress, and uncertainty caused by erroneous judgments." Indeed, a feeble judgment and a sensitive conscience are seldom without fear and doubt. You can observe this in the Romans concerning practical matters, prompting the Apostle to urge the stronger believers not to engage in doubtful disputes with the weaker ones. Additionally, if some have a specific conviction, they are advised to keep it to themselves, recognizing how feeble judgments, like delicate plants, are easily stirred and shaken.

A similar phenomenon is apparent in the Ephesians regarding doctrinal matters. For when Paul imparts a caution to them to counteract their immaturity in Ephesians 4:14, he further explains it as a state in which people are tossed back and forth, swayed by every wind, etc.

Two things are characteristic of shallow judgments (by virtue of which they are easily subject to doubting):

1. One is that they have not engaged with the full range of Truths; there are some Truths that they have yet to encounter, and they lack all their anchors and firmness.

2. Novel Doctrines conflicting with established Truths are not so readily mastered by their understanding; they either foster disbelief or disrupt their true belief. Rarely do we encounter new ideas introduced without also witnessing many individuals startled, as if their faith has been in vain thus far. Tender consciences are prone to believe the most and consequently sometimes embrace false doctrines.

Shall I provide examples from our own context? 1. One is the notion of equal humility prior to conversion: as though no one could genuinely be converted unless they matched the greatest penitent in the highest degrees of contrition and distress. Hence, many distressed, bowed, and broken souls labour excessively to torment themselves and fall into the abyss of dreadful fears, hoping to thereby assure themselves of a favourable condition. However, 1. All Christians do not undergo equal preparations. 2. No one's spiritual state can be wholly determined by legal humility.

2. A full assurance from the start, or none at all: as though Jacob's ladder had no steps, and the Sun, upon its initial appearance, reached the zenith of the sky; or that a student must be immediately placed in the highest form upon entering school. Such inconsiderate expressions as these trouble the faith of many (as the Apostle speaks of in 2 Tim. 2:18). If faith cannot exist without full assurance, then I am not a believer, says David, for I have had my moments of doubt. Nor am I, says Peter, for Christ himself confirms that I had my uncertainties.

It is a futile and perilous approach for any theologian or ordinary Christian to impose rules and present something as an authoritative and universal truth based solely on personal observations or specific experiences. The Holy Spirit imparts the same essential framework



of grace to all of God's chosen ones, but the culmination and expression of these vary. Just as one must not claim to have no soul because they do not experience the specific processes of reason and desire that another does, similarly, one must not hastily conclude that another is devoid of grace if there is not a complete correspondence between the two in every aspect and measure of working grace.

Therefore, allow me to offer a caution here, particularly to those who are seasoned Christians: Remember that there are individuals who are weak yet genuine members of the same spiritual community. Do not recklessly dwell only on your personal experiences, especially in specific matters, in every gathering. Just because you may have ascended to greater spiritual heights, it does not mean that those below you are entirely wrong. Refer to the Scriptures and convey what they direct and substantiate. You are not yet fully aware of the susceptibility of tender consciences to lower themselves and to seize upon elements and arguments that cause trouble. You may have sent away from your company a burdened and troubled heart, burdened with a bitter and bewildering belief that it possesses no faith, even though it approached you with both weak and strong desires for stronger faith.

Weak judgments (as I previously mentioned) cannot tolerate everything and, like some people's digestive systems, are quickly overwhelmed by unfamiliar foods. When we mistakenly take an error for truth, it can have the same impact on the soul as mistaking poison for medicine, leading to troublesome and dangerous consequences.

9. Ignorance of the Doctrine of Justification: This is another cause of doubt.

The Doctrine of Justification is a Doctrine of Life (Romans 5:18). The free gift has come upon all people for the justification of life. It is also a Doctrine of Peace (Romans 5:1). Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God, etc. Therefore, ignorance of this doctrine is bound to cause fear and doubt.

Here, consider four aspects.

1. The Christian condition is susceptible to numerous palpable impressions: We are seldom without assault or conflict; and those that wound us most are the ones that our conscience hurls at us. A person can bear any wound with more ease than the one inflicted upon oneself. When the Law powerfully reveals and the Conscience closely applies the guilt of our nature and lives, it becomes a somber and weighty time. Job cries out in the experience of this sting, Chapter 13, verse 26. "You write bitter things against me, and make me possess the iniquities of my youth." Solomon informs us that a wounded spirit is difficult to sustain, Proverbs 18:14. David is nearly consumed by his groaning, and worn away by the pain of it. And Paul exclaims as if a man on the brink of despair, Romans 7.
2. The soul seeks at such moments for some refuge and aid: It searches for a place to lay its burden and find something to alleviate and deliver. A sick soul is akin to an ailing body, which shifts from one side to the other, from one part of the bed to another, and seeks help from this friend and that one, desiring relief from anyone, but may receive none from all.

"Here is sin," says the individual, "here is a sinful soul, and there is a righteous Law violated, and a righteous God offended, who must and will be appeased: He summons me and has arrested my Conscience; Now, my Lord, what should I do? I have nothing to offer that can

bring satisfaction." "How can I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Should I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?" "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Should I give my first-born for my transgression? The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" In other words, these are insufficient, they cannot accomplish anything; my sins are numerous, grave, profound; my righteousness is either nonexistent or too feeble to atone for my unrighteousness. All the good I possess or can perform cannot expiate the evil I have committed or rectify the good I should have done. "Here is some sorrow, but what does that amount to? It's merely a drop in the ocean of guilt that weighs upon me. Here is some virtue, but how significant is it? It is flawed in itself and does not amend the many thousands of transgressions I have committed."

3. The soul cannot rely on itself: God demands satisfaction; the soul responds, "I do not possess it." God insists on satisfaction: "Lord! What shall I do now?" The Conscience works on us and reminds us that God is just, and if these sins are not pardoned, and a righteousness is not found and presented, we are lost. At this point, the soul comes to a halt and seriously and solemnly reflects, "What do I possess?" Nothing but sin, yet sin cannot atone for sin. Perhaps some imperfect holiness, but that cannot constitute a perfect satisfaction.

"My brethren! Our blood and spirits must naturally ebb and flow when we are under arrest and no one steps forward to post bail for us; when the ship is shattered, and no rock is within reach to rescue us; when the death sentence is pronounced against us, and no one is present to pardon us; when the Avenger of blood is chasing us, and no city of refuge opens its doors to shelter us. Unrighteousness,

incapacity, Conscience, and God converge, and yet nothing has been discovered to stand in our stead or pacify us."

4. Beyond ourselves, there exists something capable of sustaining us, yet the soul remains unaware of it, continuing to be perplexed. It cannot put an end to its fears, scruples, and doubts.

What is that?

I respond, Justification is the anchor, and thus the soul is unavoidably burdened when unfamiliar with it. As follows:

1. Until we comprehend where to lay down our burdens of sin, we are bound to be troubled. If a perplexed soul could discover someone to whom it could transfer its debts, someone who would bear and settle them on its behalf, then it might find relief. Now, in Justification, Christ takes upon Himself our guilt. Just as Paul said to Philemon concerning his servant Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." Similarly, Christ addresses the broken and burdened sinner, "If you carry any guilt and sinful debts to answer for before God, transfer them onto my account. If you have wronged my Father, I will restore equilibrium; anticipate your discharge and clearance through me. For I was made sin for you, so that you might be made the righteousness of God in me," 2 Corinthians 5:21. And in 2 Corinthians 5:19, "God was in me, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Furthermore, 1 John 2:1 states, "If any man sin, he hath an Advocate with the Father."
2. Until we grasp our justifying righteousness, we cannot help but be troubled. The righteousness that justifies us does not reside

within us. Only a righteousness that is fully and entirely perfect can justify, and this righteousness resides in Christ, not in us. As Romans 5:19 says, "By the obedience of one, many shall be made righteous." When a sinner must stand before God for acceptance and life, they stand not in their own tatters but in the robe of their eldest Brother. They cannot say, "Lord, within me is a righteousness that has fulfilled your Law; within me is a righteousness against which you can find no objection; within me is a righteousness for which you must account and declare me just." However, they can say, "Lord, even though I lack a flawless righteousness to present to you, your Son possesses it on my behalf. He has become for me, from you, my righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Corinthians 1:30. Being justified by faith in Him, one can have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 5:19.

Brethren, no one can escape strong fears and doubts if they expect to be acquitted or condemned based on their inherent qualities. If someone entertains this notion — "The Lord will or does enter into judgment with me, and I find nothing within me to satisfy Him. All the powers of my heart and my virtues are insufficient, and therefore there is no hope except that I will be cast out and condemned" — you see the basis for doubting. However, if one can shift their focus outward and acknowledge that their righteousness is to be found in Christ, and that God has ordained that I am to be justified solely by that righteousness, then the soul may find an anchor to rest upon. "Still, my Savior's righteousness was flawless, was accepted, and He belongs to me; His righteousness is mine."

3. Until we comprehend the disposition of God concerning our justification, doubts are likely to arise. A person may reason as follows: "I have committed grave sins that now trouble me, and I

detest them. I have abandoned them, but I am uncertain how they can be pardoned." Such thoughts naturally lead to doubts. Until we understand that God, for the sake of Christ, will justify us from great sins as well as minor ones (1 Corinthians 6:8-9), and that He wipes away not only the thin cloud but also the dense cloud (Isaiah 44:22), we will continue to doubt. Isaiah 44:22 states, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." We also observe that expiatory sacrifices existed not only for frailties but also for enormities, all of which typified the efficacy of Christ's blood, which justifies from great sins, etc.

But I have nothing to persuade [Ob.] God to pardon them.

However, pardoning is an act of grace: God forgives sins not because of your merit, but for His own sake. Isaiah 43:25 states, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." Also, for the sake of Christ, Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins."

But I fear God will summon me [Ob.] to account again in the future, even though He appears to be merciful for the time being.

No, the Lord in His new Covenant [Sol.] of Grace affirms the opposite: Jeremiah 31:34 declares, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." This clearly reveals how the lack of understanding regarding our Justification leads to significant doubts, as:

1. A person doesn't know where to place their burdens.
2. They are unsure where to locate their righteousness.
3. They lack knowledge of the power, completeness, love, graciousness, faithfulness, and unchangeableness of God in justifying a sinner through Christ.

10. A tenth reason for doubting is the contestation of the Promises: As you've heard previously, ignorance of the Promises triggers doubt. Now, I am to demonstrate that the soul's arguments against them also contribute to doubt.

However, you might ask, Does anyone [Ob.] dare to argue against God's Promises?

I respond, The Promises can be considered in two ways: 1. In terms of their absolute truth and goodness. In this context, they are not contested, except by atheists and outright unbelievers, like those mockers in 2 Peter 3:4 who asked, "Where is the promise of his coming?"

2. In terms of their application and extent. In this aspect, many weak believers are prone to arguing against them. They don't question whether the Promises are genuine and merciful, or whether righteousness and peace are contained within them. Rather, they question whether these Promises extend to them and can be personally applied. Moreover, they often unjustly push the Promises away from themselves.

And now the soul must be overwhelmed with fears and doubts if the condition is perceptible, because

1. The Promises are to faith what the ground is to an anchor; cast out an anchor, and if it doesn't find ground to hold onto, the ship keeps rolling. This is the truth: If faith can't find stability, the soul can't be calm and steady. David once used the comparison of a bird that hastens to God as a bird to its nest. While the bird is in the air, it's fluttering, flying, and restless; similarly, the soul is in turmoil until faith can settle it beneath the wings of a Promise.

Moreover, the Promises are often referred to as the breasts of comfort. When a child is hungry and troubled, only the breasts can pacify it. Certainly, if the Promises don't bring solace to the soul, nothing else can.

When a person wanders from the foundation of faith, when they reject their rest, when they deny themselves the consoling power of the Promises, it's no wonder their soul is plagued with doubts and fears. This is akin to a lame person discarding their crutches, or a weak person forsaking their staff, or a sick person forsaking their remedies, or a sinking person letting go of the branch that supports them.

David found his strength in the goodness of the Lord (promised to him), and likewise, all of God's people have found support and strength in God's Word. Therefore, a person filled with doubts is inevitable when they turn away from such a foundation and rock, on which they should lean and find rest.

2. This is essentially self-centredness, which is always accompanied by unrest. Why do you hesitate to apply the Promises that God has made? Is it not because you want more goodness first? Or less unbelief first? Isn't this a self-seeking attitude, and in a way, an attempt to stand by yourself? What a peculiar and inappropriate way of worshipping God! Lord, my grace is weak, and you've promised to strengthen, perfect, and complete it, but I won't believe your Promise applies to me until my grace is greatly increased. Or like this, Lord, I notice inconsistency in my duties, and you've promised to give your Spirit to guide me in your ways, but I won't believe this Promise until I am more proficient in my duties. Or like this, Lord, I acknowledge the sinfulness within me, and you've promised to



change and purify my heart, and to subdue sin, but I won't believe this Promise until I see my sins conquered. It's as if I would demand to see the blood in my veins before they are opened or wash my hands before I turn the tap to release water.

3. A person is still held captive by the power of their corruptions. And wherever corruptions or deficiencies linger as before, the sensitive soul will inevitably experience doubt and fear.

Even if a person dedicates themselves to hearing, praying, or discussing extensively, if they have the skill of shunning the Promises, they will remain unchanged. For instance, if a person is ill and a panel of physicians is summoned, they analyze the situation and recommend the most suitable treatments and vitalizing remedies. Yet, if the patient rejects their prescriptions, insisting that they don't apply to them, will their condition improve?

Likewise, when we listen, read, or converse, and numerous Promises come to our aid, but we push them aside, we keep nurturing our sinfulness and our weaknesses. As a result, we uphold our doubts and lack of trust.

However, you might argue, Not all Promises [Ob.] are applicable to all individuals in every situation, so there's good reason for us to be reserved.

To which (briefly), [Sol.] this can be said: Although not all Promises can be applied by everyone simultaneously, certain Promises can be embraced by a humbled and sensitive sinner at some point or another. For example,

Suppose you feel the power of sin stirring in its motions and activities, and (as Paul complains) leading you captive; even though

not every Promise can be applied right now, you're still wrong in not seizing onto the Promises of Mortification, which are intended for the purpose of aiding the sensible and weary sinner in subduing their sins.

Similarly, if you find a weakness in your Grace (that you can't do the good you desire to do), is it right for you to dismiss the Promises of assistance and strengthening by saying, "What does that have to do with me? Even if God has said that He will uphold and strengthen, and that His grace is sufficient, and His power will be evident in weakness?"

Again, if you sense the guilt of sin piercing and afflicting your conscience, and God has promised to forgive iniquities, transgressions, and sins, and to love freely, and to receive graciously, is it wise or sensible for you to push away the pardoning Promises and say, "What relevance do they have for someone like me?" If a beggar were to say, "What does it matter to me if there are generous alms at the wealthy man's gate?" Or a criminal, "What does it matter to me if the Prince pardons Traitors?" Or a sensitive sinner, "What does it matter to me if Christ died for sins, and God will show mercy to repenting sinners?" and so forth.

11. An eleventh cause of doubting may be the withholding of divine favour: When God withholds the radiance of His countenance, the light from entering the heart, so that a Christian no longer experiences the same closeness as before, nor feels the sense of God's loving favour, the soul may (perhaps) fall into unique uncertainties and fears. We see this in David's experience, as in Psalm 30:7: "Lord, by Your favour You have made my mountain stand strong; You hid Your face, and I was troubled." A Christian's life, in some aspects, is like that of a courtier close to

a prince, where all their comforts or discomforts hinge on the prince's countenance or withholding of it. We can say of such a person what Mary said when she lost Jesus in Luke 2:48: "Behold, your father and I have sought you sorrowing" – with heavy hearts. The same applies here.

How is it that this [Ob.] withholding of divine favour leads to our doubting?

Consider this:

1. God's favour is the highest good; "Your favour is life," as expressed in Psalm 30:5. He equates God's favour with the most desirable good. Furthermore, "Your favour is better than life," says Psalm 63:3. David exclaims in Psalm 36:7, "How excellent is Your lovingkindness!" and prays in verse 10, "Oh, continue [unspec 10] Your lovingkindness." Psalm 106:4 also pleads, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour You have toward Your people... that I may see [unspec 5] the benefit of Your chosen ones," and so on.

Therefore, the tangible absence of the greatest good undoubtedly elicits the deepest fears, suspicions, and troubles, as David's experience in Psalm 77:3, 7, and so on shows. In such moments, it seems that the glory has departed from Israel.

2. Moreover, during these times, nothing can comfort or stabilise the soul without considerable effort. Even our very graces find it difficult to uphold us. Just as when a king clouds his countenance, any conferred dignities won't suffice, nor will possessions and wealth bring cheer; likewise, when God withdraws His loving countenance, our riches, gifts, graces, and services won't delight us. They do so when we perceive God's

love shining upon us through them, but if that love wanes, they all become inadequate. For David, everything becomes meaningless under the question, "Will the Lord show favour no more?" in Psalm 77:7.

3. God rarely withholds His favour without reason on our part; usually, our sins are the clouds veiling His face from us, creating a wall of separation. Perhaps it's due to a significant sin, as with David; perhaps it's due to slight disregard for Him speaking in His ordinances; or perhaps it's a casual neglect of His secret promptings and counsel. Like the church in Song of Solomon 5:2, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled," how does the church respond to Christ's voice? Verse 3, "I have taken off my robe; how can I put it on? At length, [unspec 3] though ver. 6. I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn Himself and was gone; my soul failed," and so on.

Can the soul be anything but deeply troubled when it turns its day into night, extinguishing the light it once enjoyed for comfort and solace? Christ asked Mary, "Woman, why are you weeping?" in John 20:15, to which she replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." Similarly, we have reason to weep when our sins strip away God's comforting favour from us, making it hard to regain and find Him.

4. Times of divine favour suspension usually coincide with periods of trial. God often subjects the Christian to notable struggles and exercises of faith during such times, which provoke corruptions and temptations. It's no surprise if these periods are marked by doubts and uncertainties.
12. Another source of doubting arises from believing Satan's assessment of our condition. When we rely on his judgment and

view our situations through his information, doubts creep in.

Objects can be presented to the eye in different ways. Sometimes directly, in their true nature, like seeing a green colour as it is. Other times indirectly, through other objects, like seeing a green colour through a red glass. In this case, the native colour doesn't appear, but rather the likeness of the medium through which it's viewed. The same principle applies to our spiritual condition.

At times, it's represented to us as it truly exists. This happens when we assess it according to God's Word. But occasionally, it's portrayed not as it is, but through corrupt and deceptive testimonies and reports. Just as Joseph's chastity seemed like abominable uncleanness to his master when his wicked wife falsely testified against him, our most innocent and sincere state will appear as base hypocrisy if we base our judgment on Satan's accounts. Satan has a way of masking the true condition of sinful bondage, keeping the real image or deformity hidden. He also deludes us by obscuring the true strengths of sincere devotion and amplifying our present weaknesses and past wrongs. He completely occupies our minds with this, making it difficult to see any inherent goodness. Even if we do, we perceive so much corruption and imperfection that it almost outweighs the good.

The cunning enemy doesn't stop there. Taking advantage of a sensitive conscience, he magnifies the vast difference between our current state and what God commands and expects, comparing it with the righteousness displayed by some of His faithful servants. He's not shy about highlighting their piety to make us doubt our condition and believe his reports.

Once we fall into this trap, what a predicament we find ourselves in! What fears and doubts ensue! We can't trust any Promise without

him reminding us of our emptiness; we can't engage in any ordinance or duty without him planting doubts that it's all in vain and God won't bless it. In those ordinances, if any discomfort is mentioned, he points it at us and declares, "This is your lot."

When our condition relies on a deceitful informant, when we view things as Satan portrays them, when we evaluate sin as he presents it, perceive God's love for us through his lens, interpret God's Promises as he dictates, and judge our own Graces and holiness as he clarifies them, the heart becomes filled with nothing but suspicions, fears, distractions, and perpetual doubts.

13. Another source of doubting could be the resurgence of old sins after repentance, even after we've received a clear assurance of their pardon.

David touches on this (I believe) in Psalm 25:7 when he prays, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." Job also expresses this sentiment in Job 13:26, saying, "You write bitter things against me and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth."

It would be unsettling to witness someone rise from their grave (after a long period of burial) and haunt us. Similarly, when sins we committed long ago, repented of, and renounced, for which we sought forgiveness through humbling ourselves, suddenly reemerge – akin to an adversary brandishing a sword – with guilt on their faces, it bewilders the soul. It shocks and startles, leading us to sigh and question why this is happening.

Two things will now come under scrutiny.

1. The reality of pardon: When God says He pardons sin, He also says He will remember it no more. But it seems that He does

remember it (otherwise, how does it weigh on me like an unpaid debt, like an uncleared guilt?). If He does recall it against me, I fear that perhaps the Book isn't marked with a cross, and this sin isn't forgiven. This might lead to another concern: If this sin isn't forgiven, perhaps none of the others are either. If this one has resurfaced, who's to say the rest won't regroup and launch a fresh assault on my conscience?

2. The reality of Repentance: When God calls for genuine repentance (as in Isaiah 1:16, "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean, put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes, cease to do evil"), He promises (verse 18) that "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." These words indicate a clear transformation in the sinful state; our sins won't be the same as before.

At this point, the soul becomes uncertain: God will keep His promise if I have fulfilled my part. If I had truly abandoned my sins, they would be fully forgiven. But now, I feel them resurfacing with their guilt, which makes me deeply concerned that I never truly rid myself of them through repentance. If Christ had eradicated them with His blood or if my genuine sorrow and repentance had drowned them, they wouldn't be reviving with their guilt. This makes me apprehensive that I merely covered these wounds, which are now breaking open, or that I only put them to sleep without truly killing them. If that's the case, then I've been living in a long, fruitless display of hypocrisy. Instead of nearing the end of my journey, it seems I have to start from the beginning.

Beloved, this is a hidden and penetrating wellspring of intense fears and doubts, especially when sins resurface and attack us anew after a

period of humility and a sense of their pardon. Yet, this is the experience of many Christians during times of great losses, sickness, or even the approach of death.

14. Another cause or occasion may be extended periods of silence in the conscience.

God has placed within us our Lawgiver, Judge, and Witness. Conscience should fulfil all these roles: on uncertain days, it should clarify our condition and bear witness against Satan's testimony and our own apprehensions. Hence, God has vested conscience with the power to excuse and console, as seen in Romans 2:15, "Their thoughts excusing or accusing one another," and in 2 Corinthians 1:12, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity..."

Here, consider some specifics:

1. Regarding Testimony.
2. Regarding our Condition.
3. There is a threefold testimony about our situation: 1. One comes from the Spirit, which illuminates the renewed heart with an indescribable light, revealing the things given by God and thereby confirming and bearing witness to the truth and goodness of our individual connections with God and Christ, in accordance with the word of God. 2. Another emanates from faith, which testifies to the soul's participation in the happiness revealed in the Word. What faith believes directly in the Word, it can affirm to the individual through a reflexive act. 3. A third arises from Conscience, which, when observing the purity and godly sincerity of the heart, testifies to it (against all opposition)



that this blessed disposition resides within the soul. Since this testimony aligns with that of the Word, the soul is greatly reassured, as the following is known: a sincere nature is blessed. With Conscience thus vindicating that nature, the soul is considerably uplifted.

4. Our condition can be understood in a threefold manner.
5. Sometimes it is under Conscience's accusations: Conscience speaks and testifies, either that our hearts are completely debased, sinful, and corrupt, or that in certain particulars, our hearts are not right, not perfect, but rather sinful and deteriorating.
6. Sometimes it falls under Conscience's excuses: Conscience testifies, acquits, and brings about peace, whether concerning the disposition of the heart or the correctness of certain actions and conduct.
7. Sometimes it assumes a neutral stance or a passive role: Conscience speaks to a person without expressing a judgment, neither good nor bad. It neither accuses nor excuses; it does not induce terror, nor does it bestow peace; it does not attribute specific guilt, nor does it provide a particular absolution.

Now, this is a time of fears and doubts. I will elucidate why:

1. A negative state doesn't satisfy a sensitive Christian. It doesn't suffice for a tender soul that God appears not as an enemy unless He also appears as a friend. Sometimes, we find it distressing that in our freedom from troubles, we still lack a Peacemaker.

2. It raises suspicion of a neutral state: Conscience seems to behave neutrally, neither against us nor for us. By a neutral state, I mean one that isn't profoundly evil; it contains some goodness and performs some good, but it isn't sufficiently good to be considered gracious. Therefore, the civil state is neutral; it doesn't fall to the level of the worst nor rise to the level of the best individuals. In absolute terms, this state is negative; it is a bad state, one in which if a person lives and dies (without progressing beyond it), salvation cannot be attained.
3. It might foster anticipation of a more adverse Conscience testimony. Withdrawal sometimes precedes bitter intentions. Things went awry for Saul when God withdrew from him. So, when Conscience becomes silent, perhaps it has found grounds against me. As it currently doesn't speak peace, it might soon utter harsh judgments.
4. Moreover, Conscience is God's representative, acting as His Deputy. Hence, in its silences and withdrawals, we speculate and fear God's disposition towards us. Often, servants reflect their master's notions, inclinations, and sentiments. Indeed, when we observe a guilty conscience, we usually perceive an angry God; likewise, a cheerful conscience corresponds to a gracious God. Consequently, a quiet conscience might evoke suspicions of an uncertain God. Typically, we gauge God's stance towards us by how Conscience treats us. This mirror reflects His favour or disapproval.

These are the sources of Doubting, which I have expounded in their elucidation. There might be more than these (I could also provide additional insights on the temporal state, but that's not within our

present scope). What remains is to delve into the remedies and solutions for these Doubtings, as I will now address.

## **Chapter V:**

### **The Cures and Remedies of Doubting**

Here lies our next and most significant task: Just as physicians are more cautious in prescribing things that are most suitable in their qualities and most appropriate in their proportions, so must we be in addressing and alleviating the spiritual disorders of the soul. In pursuit of this work, I shall, with the hope of God's grace to assist and bless, present to you: 1. Specific cures that correspond to each of the individual sources of doubting mentioned earlier. Then 2. General cures and remedies that can provide assistance for all or most of our doubts, if time and opportunity permit.

#### **Specific Cures:**

1. Natural corruption was the initial source of doubting, and Mortification is the primary aid and remedy. This is the ailment, and that is the cure. I can apply to our faith what the Apostle states about our persons in Romans 8:13: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." The more our sins wither within us, the more our faith will flourish. We are infirm beings, even in our best state. Consider that the weaker a disease becomes, the stronger our health prevails. In this analogy, we are akin to a

garden with many plants and various weeds. As the weeds diminish, as they are uprooted and eradicated, our plants thrive all the more.

The Apostle's exhortation in Hebrews 10:22 instructs believers to draw near to God with a genuine heart in full assurance of faith. He encourages them to dispel their doubts in their approach to God, urging them to come with firm conviction, even being fully persuaded of God's acceptance. Approaching with a mindset of "maybe I will be accepted, maybe I won't" is an uncertain approach. Notice what follows this instruction. The subsequent words emphasize the importance of "Having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." As long as our hearts remain tainted, as long as Conscience can accuse us of harbouring evil, we will waver and doubt. However, if our hearts are cleansed, if the stain of sin is removed from them, we can come with unwavering assurance of faith. In this state, faith can confidently persuade us to approach God, as it can't do so effectively if Conscience can still rightfully accuse and condemn.

Thus, as stated by S. John, "If our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God." When sin is mortified, when Conscience discovers no sin harboured but rather condemned, and it cannot indict us for failing to condemn our sins, then we gain confidence towards God. In such a state, when we come before God in prayer and ask anything in the name of Christ, faith can securely trust that God hears and will answer. "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him," as stated in verse 22.

There are two effects of our sins.

1. They suppress our faith. "I am so troubled" (says David) "that I cannot look up." Refer to Psalms 40:12. "For innumerable evils

have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me." Here, we see that his sins caused his heart to falter, to lose confidence. Like a heavy mist, they clouded his vision, making it difficult to raise his gaze. They hinder faith, for our innate tendencies act as a great burden on the spirit of faith. When faith seeks to work on our behalf, it often injects doubts, raises objections, and spawns hesitations against the truths and promises of God.

2. They complicate the encouragement of faith; they obstruct the things that would sharpen and invigorate our faith. As Peter exclaimed in another context, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." In a similar vein, the heart may declare, "God will or has departed from me because of my sinfulness. He will not heed my prayers due to my sins, nor will He show mercy to me on account of my sins. I dare not lay claim to His promises, burdened as I am by my sins."

Now, consider this: if that which restrains faith in terms of its inherent inclinations (since faith naturally tends upwards) and in terms of its operation (as it cannot operate uninterrupted) were lifted, would not faith soar higher? If the chains and barriers were removed, if the mist cleared, would we not walk and see more clearly? Moreover, if the encouragements of faith were closely linked to faith, if faith could perceive and dwell upon them, would not our doubts diminish? It is, therefore, abundantly clear that our doubts would subside if our innate corruption abated, if our sinful desires, which foster these disabilities, interruptions, and constant challenges to our faith, were curtailed. Faith would ascend if its opposing force diminished. Just as Sarah urged Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be

heir with my son," I similarly assert: cast out this bondwoman and her son; cast out inherent corruption and disbelief. Let Isaac be alone, let faith be (to the greatest extent possible) unencumbered, and it will then claim the promises (and the soul as well) with greater tranquility.

However, the soul counters, [Objection] "No doubt doubting would subside if sinful corruption waned. If the source wanes, so too do the effects. But alas, 1. Who can mortify their sinful nature? 2. What manner of mortification is required? 3. What approach can achieve it?"

I will briefly address each of these queries. [Solution]

1. To the first query, "Who can mortify their sinful nature?" I respond, of their own accord, no one can; inherently, they lack both the will and the capacity to do so. Yet, as Chrysostom stated concerning Repentance, "Thou canst not turn thyself, but thy God can turn thee." I echo this sentiment in relation to mortification: "Thou canst not mortify thy sins, but God can." He can accomplish it on your behalf, even if you cannot do so for yourself. Despite the fact that your inherent corruption is a pervasive leprosy, He can heal it. In the face of this potent affliction, He can provide a remedy. God has endowed Christ with ample power to save a sinner, and thus to heal a sinner. Remember this crucial aspect: in every command, the duty is yours, and the power is God's. The one commanding you to mortify sin is amply equipped with the power required to achieve it, provided you seek His intervention.

Moreover, observe in passing that mortification can be accomplished in two ways: 1. Passively, as the Lord infuses holy principles of grace that counteract the nature and power of sin, gradually expelling

sinful corruption. 2. Actively, when the regenerated and converted soul employs faith to progressively apply and draw upon the crucifying virtues of Jesus Christ. While a mere natural individual can do naught to mortify sin, a regenerated individual, having received grace from God, can, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, rouse the grace within them, particularly their faith, to rely on Jesus Christ for further suppression and crucifixion of their sinful nature.

2. But now, addressing the second query: What type of mortification is most necessary to liberate the heart from doubts? In brief, make sure that the mortification is:
3. Radical: Strike at the root. Just as all graces flourish when their sources are revitalised, all sins wither when their roots are mortified. Corrupt actions will decline rapidly if a corrupt heart is further sanctified. The strength of sin is internal; those are the strongholds that require demolition. Establish a crucified Christ within your bosom.
4. Impartial: Indeed, one sin may disturb you more than another, yet it is wise to confront all sin. Sins are intertwined, just as graces are. One sin supports another, and the neglected sin might unexpectedly wound you and cause you to falter. The entirety of sin within every aspect of your being should be the focus of your mortification. This demonstrates the authenticity of the received grace and the sincerity of your conscience. Consequently, it eradicates many grounds for fears and doubts.
5. Daily: A continuous effort. Perhaps you are fervent in this endeavour at times (when conscience or afflictions prod you), but then you become negligent, and sin regains its strength. Just as you should live by faith daily, you should also die to sin daily. Monitor your spirit, resist its urges, rely on divine promises,

access the strength of Christ each day. You should continue believing as if you have never had enough of Christ and live as if this might be your final day. You should mortify sin as you did when God first looked upon you.

6. Specific: If you aim to strengthen any aspect of your battle, focus on combating unbelief and anything that supports or contributes to it. It is acknowledged that the fundamental source of your doubts is original sin, but the immediate cause is lingering unbelief. From it spring all your uncertainties, hesitations, queries, and doubts. Weak believer, it is unbelief that obstructs your comprehension of the Covenant, of Christ, of the Promises, and of your rightful place. It misleads your judgement with cunning reasoning, either blurring your perception of the complete truth of God's Promises or preventing you from seeing compelling reasons to convince yourself that they apply to you.

Therefore, your primary concern and effort should be aimed at combatting unbelief. Humble yourself greatly for it, implore the Lord to heal you more and more of it, to eliminate the ignorance of the Covenant within you, and to dismantle worldly and arrogant reasoning that contradicts God's path of free and complete Grace. These false notions demand you to be self-sufficient and independent, something you can never be without Christ. They require you to accomplish and bring forth what God never placed upon you to do or produce. He has made it abundantly clear that the execution of this lies within Himself alone, and He is truly and generously willing to bestow it upon you.

3. Regarding the third query—how you may go about the mortification of all this sin—I respond:



4. In general, concerning all of it, simply continue in the paths you have already embarked upon. Did any virtue in Christ's death (grasped by faith) help you against sin in the past? It will continue to do so. Did your love for God assist you in hating sin? It will keep doing so. Did the assurance of a reconciled God in Christ, generously and freely forgiving you, weaken sin within you? It will continue to do so. Did sincere confessions of sin, self-judgment, and heartfelt remorse aid you in conquering sin? They will continue to be effective. Did your humble engagement with the Ordinances of Jesus Christ (through which He unveils His power) provide strength against your sins? It will still help. Did holy fear, a tender conscience, avoiding occasions of sin, fervent wrestling with God in prayer, earnest meditation, close fellowship with fellow believers, pursuing further holiness, frequently reviewing your condition, renewing your Covenant with God in His strength, vigilant watchfulness, resisting the initial impulses of sin—did any of these, or all of these, or any other spiritual practices, lead you to view your sinfulness with disgust, abhorrence, cast it down in your judgment, cast it out of your affections, cast it away from your life? Continue with these, and sin will increasingly be mortified, and doubts will be weakened. The more your conscience is cleansed from lifeless deeds, the more you'll be able to approach God with faith's assurance.
5. Specifically, for the mortification of lingering unbelief, do three things:
6. Thoroughly study the Covenant of Grace, its Author, foundation, contents, and all the qualities of graciousness, appropriateness, fullness, faithfulness, etc. associated with it.

7. Delve deeply into the understanding of JESUS CHRIST: comprehend Him distinctly in His role as Mediator, His offices, effects, and works.
8. Engage in fervent prayer while meditating on these aspects, beseeching God to enable you, through faith, to personally affirm them. More on this will be covered when addressing other causes of doubting.
9. The second source was weakness and imperfection in faith. The remedy for this is to enhance and fortify your faith. Infuse more strength, growth, and maturity into your faith, and your doubts will diminish. Just as a fire with purer flames produces less smoke, and the fewest clouds and misty vapours occur during the sun's greatest radiance and warmth.

Faith and doubts are like a pair of scales—when the weight of one increases, the other decreases. I recall that the Disciples prayed, "Lord, increase our faith," and so did the individual mentioned in Mark 9, "Lord, help my unbelief."

You might object, asserting that nobody can [Ob.] deny that stronger faith results in fewer doubts in the heart. However, you may question how that can be accomplished and how faith can be fortified.

I respond, [Sol.]

1. God, who granted faith, can fortify it. Every grace relies on Him not only for its inception but also for its development. His strength should lead us from one level to another, from strength to strength, from faith to faith. He who is the Originator is also the Perfector of it. Therefore, if you desire a robust faith, you should approach a mighty God and implore, "Lord, enhance my

faith. My understanding is dim—brighten that light. Open my eyes even further that I may perceive Your truths. Many times, my convictions waver, but may You establish and confirm my heart in Your truths. My grasp, my application—often shaky, broken, and interrupted—guide my gaze towards my Saviour. Enable my hand to lay hold of Him. Enable my will and affections to embrace all the goodness within You, Your Christ, and Your Word."

God's method is to initially bestow weak faith, encouraging us to seek greater faith and giving Him honour in the process. If we possessed strong faith from the outset, we might neglect Him. He distributes it gradually so that His strength might be glorified in all our acquisitions and triumphs over doubts, etc. Thus, approach God and express, "Lord, I desire more faith. You desire me to perfect it, yet all perfection resides in You. By my own strength, I cannot hasten the maturation of Your gift. However, You can water what You plant. Though it is sown as a frail body, You can cause it to emerge strong. Although faith may initially resemble a mustard seed, You can make it flourish and expand abundantly. Therefore, since You alone can achieve it, do so for Your weak servant. You must oversee Your own graces, and if You grant my faith more strength, my belief will bring You even greater glory, etc."

2. Devoting more time to studying Christ and the Promises will bolster and refine faith. Just as scholars amass greater knowledge by focusing on the subjects of study, a Christian's faith becomes more comprehensive by immersing themselves in matters of faith.

Hence, the Apostle prayed for the Ephesians in Chapter 3, verse 19, that they might comprehend the magnitude of Christ's love and be

filled with God's fullness. And in verse 17, he prayed that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith, enabling them to grasp with all saints the breadth, length, depth, and height.

To address fainting and doubting, we might say what the Prophet said about perishing: "My people suffer due to lack of knowledge." If we understood our Redeemer better—how holy, compassionate, and supportive He is; if we comprehended the absolute authority of our Saviour in expunging our guilt, overcoming our weaknesses, paving the way to the Father, and facilitating our supplications; if we truly recognised His complete advocacy for us, His sacrificial death, His intercession, His readiness for greater communion and possession—we would believe more and doubt less. What the Psalmist stated about God applies equally to Christ: "Those who know Your name will trust in You."

However, exercise caution when studying Christ—do so as God reveals Him, or your doubts will persist. Just as a person who examines their sins in their own way cannot perceive them accurately or free themselves from them, studying Christ in one's own way—viewing Him according to fearful thoughts rather than as God has unveiled Him—will lead to misunderstandings and continued uncertainty.

3. Engage in strengthening practices. There are ways in which God displays His power. His strength empowers us, and He unveils His strength through His ordinances, for God calls, changes, strengthens, and saves us through means.

The one who deems the ordinances insignificant will remain weak in faith. Just as an infant, unable to stand on its own, can feed through breastfeeding, a weak person without strength, if they fail to partake, will grow weaker and eventually lose life itself. Remember this truth:

A new Christian may be full of fervour initially, but a full-fledged Christian is frequently weak. Our spiritual life mirrors our natural life—both depend on external factors to flourish.

What the disabled person stated in John 5:11, "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk," applies to God's Ordinances. Those very means that transformed us into good can further enhance us. They brought life to us, and they can enable us to walk. They bestowed faith upon us and brought the hand that nurtured the seed. They can enlarge faith and bring forth the showers that water that seed. For they not only reveal Christ more clearly but also unravel and expound the Promises (which anchor our faith) more profoundly.

Furthermore, they weaken and scatter the foundations of our fears and doubts, greatly suppressing the logic and influence of unbelief.

They illuminate the understanding, thus keeping the pathway open for faith towards God and Christ.

They possess a secret and magnetic power, inspiring, invigorating, and persuading. Therefore.

Fourthly, when faith comprehends its privileges, it will undoubtedly grow stronger. Faith could achieve more if it fully grasped its potential. Indeed, our confidence would be greater if we understood our rights.

Believers hold a higher position before God than even the closest servants do before a Prince. All subjects of a Prince enjoy certain privileges, yet the most significant are granted to those in the closest service. None are closer to God than Believers. As seen in 1 Peter 2:9, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a

peculiar people." Moreover, in 2 Corinthians 6:18, "You shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." These individuals enjoy privileges that even the servants do not. If those descending from Abraham's lineage had exceptional privileges, shouldn't those who are descendants of Christ's blood possess even greater privileges? The priests of the Old Law held distinct exemptions, and kings enjoy the highest privileges among all. Do you believe that Believers fall short when they are not just profane or civil priests, but royal priests? Not just priests or kings, but both kings and priests—a royal priesthood. They are a holy nation, a distinct people, a treasure-bearing people through whom God gains.

"Oh," say many weak Believers, [Ob.] "The Lord neither respects nor loves us."

Is it not true that God loves [Sol.] those whom He has chosen out of His pure love? Does He not hold affection for the lineage and lineage of Christ, for those who stem from His blood? Surely, those who are born of Christ and of God are beloved by God.

But the world, all of humanity, disregards [Ob.] us and pays us no heed.

In God's estimation, you are Kings, [Sol.] anointed with the royal oil—God's Spirit of Grace. You are clothed in the royal attire—Christ's righteousness. You enjoy royal attendance—God's angels ministering unto you. You possess a Kingdom characterised by righteousness, peace, and joy, as stated in Romans 14:17. Can this not invigorate faith?

We often fear to [Ob.] approach God, fearing access.

Aren't you Believers? And [Sol.] aren't Believers God's Priests? Aren't Priests entitled by their calling to come before God? The Priests had permission to enter when others couldn't. Isn't Jesus Christ the Altar on which we offer our sacrifices and services to God? Doesn't the Altar sanctify the offering? Matthew 23:19. The Apostle states in Galatians 5:1 that Christ has granted us liberty, and in Ephesians 2:13 that we are brought near by Christ's blood. In Hebrews 10:19, it's affirmed that we can confidently enter the holiest through the blood of Jesus.

Thus, if we fully comprehend the privileges of the first-born, the sons of God, the lineage of Christ, the Priests of God, and those redeemed by Christ, if we comprehend the favour, free access, and unique acceptance with God through Christ, how might we subdue our fears and doubts and greatly encourage our faith to run, wholeheartedly embracing our God, our Christ, and our Promises?

There are other means to perfect faith, such as Experiences, Observation, etc., which I've mentioned earlier. Our Divines have extensively addressed these matters, so I'll refrain from further elaboration.

3. The third source of doubts was an excessive focus on the life of the senses. The remedy is to keep this tendency under control: If you wish to fend off doubts, you must subdue your reliance on sense and feeling. Blessed, as Christ told Thomas in John 20:29, are those who have not seen yet have believed.

If someone thinks, "Christ is not mine unless I handle Him; God is not mine unless I see Him; grace is not mine unless I feel it," they will be perpetually plagued by doubts and fears.

To aid in this, consider the following:

1. Sense is not a reliable judge of our state; it can only assess our condition based on what it perceives. However, our spiritual condition is not always subject to feeling. If sense were the ultimate judge, we might find ourselves alternating between being righteous and sinful, secure and lost, joyful and sorrowful, within the span of a day, even an hour.

Beloved, reflect on this: Can sense truly comprehend times of desertion, periods of need, moments of spiritual inertia, times when faith only operates through pure and clear acts grounded solely on the Promises? During these abstracted times, Sense finds no grounds to speak to us, to bear evidence for us. God withholds, His grip slackens, and dullness prevails. We are left only with a promise (as all other things seem to falter and forsake) to sustain and uphold us.

2. The path of spirituality often contradicts our senses, thus requiring suppression of sense. Remember Abraham, who against hope believed in hope (Romans 4:18). Faith and sense frequently conflict; faith embraces what sense does not perceive, and rejects what our sense perceives. Though afflictions slay me, yet will I trust in Him, declares Job. Abraham believed in his son's safety even while preparing to sacrifice him. Similarly, we believe in our immortality despite facing death and corruption. It's certain that when we feel corruptions thriving, faith believes them to be waning; when we are troubled, faith believes in our comfort and deliverance. Faith often (not always) embraces the opposite of what our senses perceive.

For sense follows our way, while faith follows God's way. Sense abides by its timeline, while faith accepts God's timing. Sense operates based on appearances, whereas faith relies on the yet-unseen. Sense looks downward, while faith looks upward. Sense



sustains itself through internal factors, while faith is upheld by external factors. Psalms 27:3, Habakkuk 3:17-18, and Isaiah 8:17 all illustrate this. Isaiah 50:10 states, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

3. Sense or feeling is not the means of belief but a result of faith. [i.e. It is not the basis for belief but rather an outcome of faith.] For example, consider assurance, joy, and peace—these are not preconditions for faith but rather its consequences. Feeling, in its most elevated forms such as assurance, joy, and peace, follows faith; it is not the other way around. Feeling isn't the cause; it's the effect of faith.

Why don't you believe? [Quest.]

If I had the certainty that God was my God, Christ was my Christ, and the Promises were mine, I would. But tell me, is the Word or your Assurance the foundation of faith? Do you desire the fruit before the tree, or safety before you lay a hand on the rock? If you seek assurance, you must then believe; for the sweetness of assurance flows from the faith that feeds on Christ through believing. Similarly, if you desire joy, believe; as true joy doesn't precede but accompanies belief.

We are often troubled by our own pride and folly. God provides a way to believe, yet we follow our own path. He gives us His Promise as the foundation for our belief, but we insist on relying on our senses as the foundation. I dare say that Abraham's words to Dives, who wanted someone to be sent from the dead to convince his brothers to believe, hold true. Abraham responded, "If they hear not

Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

So I say, if people won't believe because God has promised, they won't believe even if their senses stand up and speak. We have more reason to doubt our own testimony than to distrust God's invitation and promise.

You might counter that this testimony [Ob.] of sense in Assurance is God's own response, and therefore having it would further establish our faith.

I respond:

1. God's testimonies do indeed [Sol.] possess a stabilizing and calming power, whether they evidence our present connection with Him or provide specific answers to our current desires.
2. However, you must first apply your seal and hand of faith before He delivers the confirming Evidences. I've never known a Christian who could be satisfied without faith or who found comfort in something they didn't yet believe. Although the comfort comes from God's favour, it doesn't truly comfort unless faith has already embraced that favour.

But aren't past experiences [Ob.] (which are nothing but tangible feelings) a basis for future belief? Didn't David recall days of old?

I answer, Yes, Experiences are [Sol.] encouraging for future acts of faith, yet the Word of God remains the foundation of faith. They are not intrinsic foundations but external motivations.

You can contemplate the experiences, whether in the things granted and fulfilled or in the manner of their fulfilment. You've experienced

God's favour and received answers, but how did you obtain them? Was it not through believing? Was it not by waiting on a good Word of Promise? Your enjoyment of them didn't precede your belief in the Word of Promise; rather, the belief in that Word of Promise allowed that sweet and gracious experience to enter and touch your soul. Hence, your experience wasn't the foundation before, nor is it now; it only serves as a significant aid to faith. It assures you that the God you previously believed in, and from whom (through believing) you received such gracious help and answers, will once again (since He is eternal and His Promises are dependable) renew His kind goodness and merciful favour to your soul through further belief in His Word.

4. A fourth source was the inhibition of faith, its suppression in its function and in moments of need. Now, the solution to this is to give way to faith; allow it room, let it fulfill its entire purpose. Just as the Apostle said about patience in James 1:4, "Let patience have her perfect work," similarly, allow faith to do so. Do not restrain it, and then you will find stability, you will be liberated. The actions of one contrary restrict the other.

Hence, Christ reprimands his Disciples for their anxieties, for their worries and concerns, and encourages them to let their faith roam free, trusting in a Father who provides (Matthew 6:32). They faced poverty or the fear of it; their needs and losses accumulated, along with their fears and thoughts. But how could they dispel these worries? Like this: If faith believed in provisions as well as impatience found deficiencies; if they allowed faith to trust in God's providence as much as their senses saw the world's limitations and decline, their minds wouldn't have been so preoccupied. "Shall he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?" (verse 30).

For further assistance in this matter, consider the following:

1. In any circumstance, Faith can be our agent; it can intercede for us because: 1. Our temporal life relies on faith; 2. The temporal Promises that encompass all external conditions form the foundation of faith. Hence, it is stated in Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by his faith." When we have no other recourse, faith can still be our support; when we have no other sustenance, faith can be our nourishment. It can act on behalf of the soul, can mediate with God, and offer unparalleled solace and sustenance based on His promises.

Consider a situation where a person's resources begin to dwindle, their situation becomes precarious, and they are on the brink of need. At such times, this individual can quell doubts and distressing thoughts by allowing faith to operate. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). Here is a Promise at hand, and there is more than enough substance for faith. If faith can be given the space to function perfectly, it will uphold you against all uncertainties.

"I will be abandoned," you might say. [Ob.]

"You will not," declares Faith. [Sol.]

"Perhaps not now, for I [Ob.] still have something."

"Nay, never," asserts faith, "because [Sol.] you have an eternal God, and He has promised perpetual assistance. If faith remains unswerving, you will be liberated, for faith uplifts your heart and God upholds your faith."

Similarly, for any affliction and hardship, there is no burden too heavy that faith cannot share it. As long as there is a Promise to support faith, faith will muster the strength to alleviate the restlessness caused by our troubles.

"I know not what to do," says [Ob.] the person.

"Indeed?" responds Faith, "Is not [Sol.] the Lord good, a strong refuge in times of trouble, and doesn't He know those who trust in Him?" (Nahum 1:7).

"But troubles persist and recur, and although I was delivered before, I now fear."

"Fear?" asserts faith, "There is no [Sol.] reason for that. Refer to a remarkable passage, Job 5:17, 'Happy is the man whom God correcteth.' If a person has wounds, a healing salve is beneficial; if someone has a full stomach, a potion may be helpful; and if one's spirits are tainted, bloodletting can be advantageous. Similarly, etc."

18 For he causes pain, and [unspec 18] binds up; he wounds, and his hands make whole.

19 He shall deliver you in [unspec 19] six troubles, yes, in seven no evil shall touch you.

There is nothing new or difficult for God. Though our troubles may be grievous to us, their deliverance is easy for God, and faith can find a refuge for every storm. If faith is given its space, it will deduce present assistance from previous deliverances. The escape from old troubles will strengthen faith in facing new ones. He who has delivered, does, and will continue to deliver (2 Corinthians 1).

God remains unchanged in His truth, goodness, and power, despite our changing circumstances. Temptations and afflictions may be new, but God remains the same, and so do the Promises. Faith can use the same God to overcome numerous temptations and the same Promise to endure multiple afflictions.

2. In every circumstance, there is a providence, and outcomes depend on it. Whether Satan tempts us or afflictions, crosses, losses, or insults befall us, there is a Providence permitting, directing, and restraining them. If faith is allowed to operate within that Providence, we wouldn't be so plagued by doubts.
3. Concerning Satan, he indeed tempts and suggests, but he cannot do so at will. He must seek permission from God to afflict Job in any way. Furthermore, when he does tempt, the outcome does not hinge on his malevolence. The Lord observes and provides extraordinary strength, inspiring His servants to pray fervently, listen attentively, and apply His Promises, all in preparation for deliverance.

We tend to focus on Satan rather than God. We magnify powerful temptations while overlooking mighty assistance. We contemplate our own weakness but neglect God's omnipotence. We ponder our inadequacy but not God's ability. We fail to see deliverance and deny faith its complete role in believing that God will find a path to victory for us. If faith could rest on God's providence, recognizing how He allows Satan to buffet us, how His grace is sufficient, how His power is displayed in weakness, how He has delivered us and continues to do so as we resist, and how He has promised to crush Satan under our feet, then we would not doubt. We would not fuel Satan with fears of succumbing but would instead steadfastly resist by finding encouragement in our God.

2. Concerning our challenges and losses, there is Providence in them. God is present in all our troubles and needs. His wisdom and goodness are there. How will I be delivered? How? Allow faith to work, and it will provide the answer. Why should I be so troubled? Why? Let faith work, and it will explain: "It is in very

faithfulness," as David says. "It is good for me that I was afflicted." No child of God would deny this. Allow faith to work, and it will clarify everything: that a good condition is not exempt from afflictions, and that while God had one Son without sin, He had no Son without sorrow.

3. Our encouragements outweigh our discouragements, and our aids surpass our challenges. Therefore, faith should not be constrained.

The Prophet alleviated his servant's doubts, as in 2 Kings 6:16: "Fear not, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

Similarly, Christ consoled His perplexed and doubting Disciples regarding the challenges and dangers they faced: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a Kingdom." In essence, He urged them not to be disquieted or anxious about their lives and safety. Despite being a small flock among many wolves, they were assured of a Kingdom. Place this against their difficulties, and there is no need for doubt or fear.

Likewise, 1 John 4:4 by S. John states, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."

Once again, S. Paul in Romans 5:20 asserts, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," and in verse 21, "As sin reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Similarly, for external troubles, Isaiah 41:14 states, "Fear not, you worm Jacob" (meaning you are frail and lowly, like a worm), "for I

will help you, says the Lord." Although Jacob is weak, the God of Jacob is strong.

So, in the case of outward losses, 2 Chronicles 25:9, Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the Army of Israel?" The man of God answered, "The Lord is able to give you much more than this."

From all this, we can see that Faith has stronger grounds to rely on; there are more forces aligned with faith than against it. Only evil creatures can be against it, and the One who is for it is the mighty Creator. His power, goodness, Christ, Spirit, and Word of Truth are all for it. He is greater than all, so faith can have abundant material to work with in all situations.

Faith is on the better and larger side, the side that will triumph and overcome the opposite forces.

Satan is against me.

But greater is He (the Spirit of Christ) in me than he who is in the world.

Sin is against me.

But greater is Christ who is for me than sin that is in me. Grace has abounded much more.

Men in their power are against me.

But greater is the Almighty God, before whom the Nations are like a drop in a bucket, lighter than a speck of dust on a balance.

Troubles are upon me.



But my comforts surpass my sorrows, and the glory I expect far outweighs the trouble I endure.

Needs are upon me.

But my provisions are abundant; I have a provident Father. Though I may lack a substantial portion on Earth, I possess a certain Kingdom in Heaven.

Beloved, if we often consider that faith is always on the better and more certain side, we would let go of all doubts. We wouldn't fear what man or Satan could do to us. Our weaknesses and afflictions wouldn't disable us. Faith consistently aligns with the surest party. So, give it space. Faith does not rely on weak causes, feeble aids, or unstable supports. It anchors itself in the Name of the God of Jacob.

Oh, how could faith confront the greatest oppositions, trample all over affronts, losses, and doubts, if we allowed it to tap into its encouragements! Could we come to be truly persuaded that those who are for us are greater than those against us, faith would thrive.

Brothers and sisters, in our spiritual battles, we possess the better cause and the stronger strength. We have all the assistance that Heaven can provide. Therefore, in our distresses, let's encourage ourselves and embolden our faith. Let's, as Jehu did in a different context, look up and say, "Who is on my side, who?" Then, like the Psalmist in Psalm 124:1-2, we can say, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side... Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare... Our help is in the Name of the Lord."

5. A fifth source of doubt is specific sins committed after conversion. These sins, like a potent ailment, shake the very heart and spirit of the Christian, causing them to waver on all

sides. Like a cloud, they obscure our joyful communion with God, and like a dead fly, they taint all our acts of worship. Committing such sins can greatly disrupt our approach to God and our confidence in Him.

The remedy for this source of doubt is to:

1. Renew our sorrows by going to the source: After committing grievous sins, both David and Peter did so. David poured out his heart's anguish, and his tears were his sustenance day and night. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Bitter sorrow (as found in Zechariah 12:10) signifies an agonizing of the spirit. Just as David lamented for Jonathan, "My soul is distressed for you," the fallen Christian is anguished for sinning against God in this way, for losing God. It often results in the soul being torn apart.

It also denotes a keen awareness of grief. Just as Joseph was moved with compassion and his heart could no longer contain his emotions upon hearing Judah's speech, the fallen Christian is filled with holy tenderness. Their heart feels as though it could shatter, much like a brimming vessel seeking release.

The fallen Christian must often reflect on this grievous sin and approach the Lord in solitude to pour out their heavy heart. In the presence of God, they humble themselves, confess their treacherous and unworthy conduct against God, and experience a deep sense of shame and humiliation.

There exists, as you know, a natural sorrow, such as that over the loss of children, and a national sorrow, as seen in the lament for the righteous King Josiah. Then there is a spiritual sorrow, which

pertains to our sins. This sorrow must be greatly renewed, and you can amplify it by contemplating mercy. "O Lord, what have I done? Why have I acted in this way? You showed me mercy by opening my eyes, changing my heart, calling me to holiness, and forgiving past sins. Yet, after all this, I have sinned against you. I have wounded my heart, dishonoured your Name, abused your grace, lost your favour, shattered my peace, injured my Christ, grieved your Spirit, turned away your ear, given Satan an advantage, and deserved to be cast into darkness forever." Beloved, if your hearts remain unbroken, they will also remain unbelieving.

Because, aside from the fact that great sins are severe provocations to our gracious God, they are also (until we humble ourselves for them) significant barriers to faith. Faith cannot function on our behalf, provide support, or bring comforting Promises to our hearts until our hearts are humbled for our sins. God consoles only those who mourn, and faith cannot align with God until our hearts break away from ourselves.

Here, be cautious not to be hasty or superficial. If you are, your doubts will resurface. God rarely grants quick and easy peace after a great sin. If you merely patch up a wound, it will reopen. Unless your sorrows are deep and genuine, your fears will remain fresh and multiplied. Yet, if your sorrows are sincere and profound, your soul will, over time, recover itself. You will be able to plead with God, experience His mercy, and respond to all the doubtful thoughts that arise against faith in its usual communions and applications.

However, you might say, "Even if we sorrow in this way, we might still doubt God's mercy and favour."

I respond, [Sol.]

1. You now have a response to your doubts. True, I did sin in this manner, but I have genuinely grieved for this sin. And even though I couldn't apply mercy because I sinned, I can do so now because I am remorseful.
2. Observe God's attitude towards Ephraim in Jeremiah 31:18: "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." In verse 19, Ephraim says, "I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I bore the reproach of my youth." Yet, in verse 20, God asks, "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have mercy upon him," declares the Lord.

Though God is offended by our sins, He delights in our sorrows. Nothing touches Him more than seeing us approach Him in a state of brokenness. The mournful behaviour of Joseph's brothers moved him, and the returning Prodigal's humble posture and cries deeply affected him. David's pleas for God to "Regard my tears that fall," "Are not my tears registered?" and "Put thou my tears into thy bottle" illustrate how melting tears affect a compassionate God and Father.

2. To renew our repentance; this includes both detestation and abandonment. These sins must become intensely repugnant to the soul. You must eliminate all traces of their allure and appeal. In fact, you should regard them as utterly detestable. This is expressed in phrases like "loathing your abominations" in Ezekiel 36.

In Revelation 2:5, S. John advises the diminished Ephesus to "remember from whence she was fallen, and to repent." Beloved, remaining in this state is not viable. If you remain submerged in this

water, drowning is a possibility. However, if you rise out of your sins, your doubts will diminish. It's similar to water in a pot: without fire beneath it, water is calm. But when fire is kindled, the water boils and bubbles, causing unrest. Similarly, while conscience may be calm when free of notable sin, introducing significant sin ignites it, leading to turmoil, fears, and doubts.

The way to quell this turmoil is to remove the fire. Once the fire is extinguished, you'll witness the water's return to tranquillity, gradually ceasing its bubbling. Similarly, our souls will regain peace and stability if our sins are eliminated. Leave the sins, and typically, the doubts will leave the sinner.

Just as sin creates turmoil in our souls, repentance provides a safe haven. Any unrepented known sin continues to fuel doubt within us. But repentance extracts the venom and the frenzy. A child who reforms returns to their father, and a penitent Christian can be confident.

3. Seek out a specific assurance: Examining David's disposition after his special sins reveals that a general pardon wouldn't suffice. For specific sins, you must earnestly seek a distinct assurance of forgiveness.

Your conscience will never find peace otherwise. A general awareness that sins are pardonable, that they don't exclude you from God's proclamation, won't placate you. You'll remain restless until God proclaims peace, placing His seal on your exoneration from particular sins.

Sin will resurface and dominate your thoughts, causing distress, especially during serious moments, until you repent and obtain your pardon. Therefore, earnestly implore the Lord for forgiveness, a

specific exoneration. If the Lord Jesus were to seal His blood upon your heart, your doubts would cease.

But you may argue, "There is [Ob.] no hope now. Despite our grief, our repentance, and our supplications for mercy, there's no hope. These are sins committed after conversion, and they're significant. Moreover, we don't find any specific promise to alleviate our souls."

Let me address this doubt [Sol.] in its entirety, for it contains multiple aspects. Consider, therefore,

1. The promise of pardon is open-ended with respect to repentance, and I implore you to take note of this point: God does not simply declare, "I will pardon sins," but states that if people repent and forsake their sins, they shall receive mercy. Similarly, in promising pardon to Repentance, He does not offer it conditionally or with limitations, but absolutely and completely.

What does this mean? It means that God does not say, "If you repent of such and such sins, then you shall be pardoned." Instead, He asserts simply and absolutely, "If you repent." Thus, regardless of the enormity or quantity of sins, if they are sins for which you now genuinely repent, they are unquestionably forgiven. Isaiah 55:7 reinforces this: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." This verse affirms the assurance of abundant pardon for the penitent; if one abandons his sinful ways and thoughts, the Lord will pardon and show mercy.

Furthermore, since pardon is promised to actual repentance indefinitely, it follows that regardless of the sinner's condition—

whether previously unconverted or already converted—when one genuinely initiates true repentance, or when the other renews his true repentance, they shall both be pardoned. This is because God does not pardon sin in such a state; rather, He promises to pardon sin that is repented of. Hence, if a wicked person, whose life has been a series of sins, repents and forsakes their sins, they shall receive mercy. Similarly, if a righteous person inadvertently succumbs to sin, they can confidently invoke God's promises of pardon upon their repentance. Proverbs 28:14 conveys this: "Blessed is the man who fears always: but he that hardens his heart shall fall into mischief." Ezekiel 18:32 echoes the same sentiment: "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God: therefore turn yourselves, and live."

From this, we can infer that if God forgives His enemies, then, based on the same repentance, He will also forgive His children. If a King pardons a returning Traitor, will He not likewise embrace a returning son? The words of S. Chrysostom are worth contemplating: "If God promises grace to us when we are sinning, what will He confer on us when we are repenting?"

2. Christ's power remains potent; He is as capable of absolving sins after conversion as before. This is why He is referred to as "the same, yesterday, today, and forever." The Apostle reasons in Romans: "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved by His life?"

We should not conceive of Christ's pacification, atonement, propitiation, and satisfaction as limited to any specific sin or state. Instead, we should view them in terms of their sufficiency, encompassing both states and all sins within them. What does this

mean? It implies that the death of the Lord Jesus wasn't solely intended to cover sins committed before conversion. You are not required to satisfy for the rest of your sins in your converted state through your own efforts. This echoes the Popish notion of self-justification and human satisfaction. Isn't this an attempt to divide salvation between Christ and ourselves? Isn't this a restriction on either the sufficiency or the efficacy of His death?

No, with regard to sins before and after conversion, Christ is for us like the pillar of cloud and fire that guided the Israelites. Jesus Christ is a cloud by day (for the time of conversion) to conceal our sins upon repentance, and a pillar of fire by night (for the times of previous darkness) to consume our sins upon repentance, and so forth.

The contrast between our states does not diminish the strength and potency of His death in any way. His blood can still speak as powerfully now as it did in the past. It is equally efficacious in securing forgiveness for our stumbles along the way as it was for our sins when we were not on the right path. This is evident in the sins of Paul before his conversion and the sins of David and Peter after their conversion. Christ remains our perpetual Mediator and eternal Intercessor.

But you might object, these [Ob.] sins sever all our ties to Christ and all relationships, leaving us with no hope.

I respond, even though the comforting connection is temporarily severed (until true repentance), the fundamental connection is not. Just as a leprous individual was prohibited from using their house (until they were cleansed), their ownership and rights to the house remained intact. Therefore, upon your repentance, you can appeal to the Lord for the forgiveness of these sins through the blood of your Savior.



3. The Lord continues to show mercy to those who repent: In Psalm 136, His mercy is reiterated 26 times with the attribute of everlastingness, "His mercy endures forever." Psalm 86:5 states, "For you, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon you." Similarly, verse 13 states, "For great is your mercy towards me," and verse 15 proclaims, "But you, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in mercy and truth." Micah 7:18 declares, "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea."

Mercy is not unfamiliar to God; it is inherent to His nature, a source of delight. Repentance will not escape His notice if it is not concealed within our hearts. He calls us to repent and enables us to do so, that He might demonstrate His mercy and the enduring nature of His mercy.

6. A sixth source of doubt arises from reluctance toward or indifference about spiritual duties. Consequently, we fear the genuineness of grace, which is vibrant and active, and question our acceptance with God due to our lack of fervor and enthusiasm.

To address this, consider,

1. Spiritual apathy during sacred duties can affect genuinely sanctified individuals. Understand that there's a notable difference between a dead heart and a sluggish heart. A heart is deemed dead when it lacks a vital spring, rendering it averse to spiritual obligations. It not only exhibits indifference towards

fulfilling these tasks but harbors a determined aversion and negative inclination toward them. This is evident in the manner in which wicked individuals find reasons to avoid strict and spiritual duties.

Conversely, a heart is termed dull when it possesses a living spring but lacks active engagement. The Spirit may be willing, as Christ indicated, indicating an open spring; yet the flesh is weak, signifying limited action. A Christian might echo David, saying, "My heart, O Lord, is steadfast; my heart is steadfast." Paul similarly expresses, "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." The Galatians also experience this struggle between the flesh and spirit, which are contrary to each other, resulting in an inability to consistently carry out desired actions. The will exists, but limitations and challenges arise.

A vessel with a narrow neck cannot release water as swiftly or abundantly, much like an able-bodied person burdened by a chain hindering their movement. Similarly, devout individuals might encounter obstacles. Although their hearts and intentions are aligned with prayer and worship, limitations stemming from spiritual weakness and the presence of flesh impede their actions and hinder the execution of their intentions and desires.

Hence, let us be cautious not to deny or conclude the absence of grace based on the limitations in our actions. Just as David prayed for renewal and vitality, so can we while remaining alive in grace. Distinguishing between life and vibrancy is crucial; the latter may be lacking even when the former is present. This is especially true when spiritual weakness affects not only the vitality of one's nature but also of grace itself, often influenced by melancholy.

2. He may not so seriously meditate and dwell upon the ways and motives of livelihood, he may have but remiss, and unpiercing, or unapplying thoughts of God's great love and mercy, of Christ's blood and intercession, of the Promises's goodness and fullness; and therefore his spirit may be dull.

3. He may not have such an actual aid and special influence from the Spirit of Christ to excite his spiritual frame and temper; and then if that wind be more slack, our ship will move on with less forwardness.

Or lastly, perhaps he may have over-lashed, he hath been (improvidently or accidentally) in the dulling ways; he hath been surfeiting upon some sin, or too greedily embracing the heavy world, or been idle in his particular calling. But,

Whatsoever the cause may be, this is certain, that Indisposition is not fundamental; it is not such a case, which nullifies the estate of Grace: For as in our most lively times there is more duty then we can thoroughly do; so in our dullest times there is not more duty then we would do.

And this know, that the Christian condition keeps up for truth of being, notwithstanding the many pauses, the many eclipses, the many indispositions which may, and do accompany it.

But yet again, secondly, be informed of this, that God observes the bent of the heart in the duty, and accordingly accepts of it. You know that place in the Chronicles, how that the good Lord did pardon everyone who prepared his heart to seek him, though he were not cleansed according to the purification of the Sanctuary.

The greatest actions managed from a corrupt heart are not accepted with God: (All the superfluous and abundant gifts of the Pharisees were worthless, yet the Widows mite found acceptance) The meanest duties set forth with a perfect heart are acknowledged by God; he will take notice of them; for God looks to the heart: He eyes not so much thy behavior, he listens not so much to thy words, but (through these) he considers thy heart; if that come with life, though thy body come with dullness, though thy tongue be not so fluent, yet if there be life and truth in the heart, he will find duty and accept of it.

You remember that Simile of the Goldsmith, who hath a skillful eye to find out the smaller and neglected ways of gold, though covered with much dross; and many times there is much fire and much gold, when both are hidden with dust and cole: So is it with the Lord, he can sent out the secrets of our desires, and what we would do is observed and taken with him for well done, notwithstanding the many indispositions which cover our Altar.

Therefore it is David's counsel to Solomon his son, Know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: If thou seek him, he will be found of thee, &c.

Beloved, we are mistaken about duty; we judge it not to be duty, unless the tongue can speak much, and our behaviours be fresh, &c. as if a man were not a man, and did no work in course clothes: But know we, that the sealing of spiritual service with integrity of heart, is duty.

And that is it which God considers, and unto which he hath made many promises of acceptance, and audience, and grant.

This is something to stay [Ob.] us, will you say: But now we stick at this, Whether the bent of our hearts be entire, notwithstanding our indispositions and dulnesses?

That may easily be discerned: [Sol.] You may know that the bent of the heart is right and even in duties,

1. By not contenting yourselves with this heavy manner of performing duties. You will have enough vitality to be dissatisfied with yourselves, even if you lack the ability to enhance your services.

There are certain individuals (and they possess wicked hearts) who will try to find excuses for their lethargic and sluggish worship of God based on what has been mentioned.

Oh, they might say, even though we can't [Ob.] do what others do, our hearts are as pure and willing. God knows the heart and takes it into account.

Indeed, He does, and He knows [Sol.] this about your heart – that it provides Him with lacklustre service and does not despise itself for it. However, a true Christian is not content with God merely accepting a feeble heart; rather, it desires to offer a better heart as a result.

At times, it reproaches itself for its own sluggishness. "Why are you so downcast, my soul?" it questions, "Why are you so disheartened within me? You are serving a living God, so why aren't you serving Him with greater vitality?" It suddenly breaks out, saying, "Well, Lord, if I had a more devoted heart, I would give it to You; if I could summon more affections, I would dedicate them to You."

Consequently,

2. It seeks ways to invigorate itself and strives for spiritual revival. It refuses to settle for this lack of enthusiasm and endeavors to improve itself, and this clearly demonstrates its inclination.

Just as a weak individual will muster the strength for one more attempt, or a diligent scholar will write one more sentence, or an eager archer will take one more shot, likewise a sincere heart will attempt further in its duty. It might think, "Perhaps the frequency of performing duties could ignite fervency in my devotion. Similar to how walking can generate warmth, or rubbing can revive numbed parts, reading more or hearing more could potentially enkindle my prayer." Or it might reason, "I seem sluggish in my prayers, so I'll read more; perhaps reading will inspire me to pray with more zeal. Alternatively, if I find myself dull in listening, I'll pray more. Perhaps God will heed my prayers, which will then enable me to listen to His word more attentively, with greater delight, and for greater benefit." This often happens: our reluctance is more pronounced in particular duties, which are singularly dispelled through small efforts, but remain in other duties.

Or if none of this brings improvement, the sincere heart declares, "I will still go to God's ordinances and come before Him. I will approach Him with my soul in this condition, hoping that He might invigorate me through His Word, or uplift me through His Sacrament. Who knows, perhaps He might bless me, and He might guide His power towards me to stir my heart, to dispel my sluggishness, and rekindle my Graces, and arouse my affections?"

So, if you perceive your own dullness, if it troubles and displeases you, if you refuse to remain in this state, and if you actively seek remedies, then be assured your heart is sincere. God sees that your

intent is genuine, that you're truly willing. Take solace in this: if it's truly the case, God currently accepts your efforts, and in due time, you will overcome these accompanying dull dispositions in your worship. God will dispel this slumber from your eyes and the birds from your sacrifice. However, do remember this,

3. The reason for acceptance lies in Christ: hence, don't doubt that God will reject your services due to your lethargy; rather, believe that He will accept your genuine efforts, all because of Christ. Beloved, it's important to consider all aspects of worship. A sincere heart initiates it, a gracious God receives it, and a powerful Redeemer and Intercessor presents it. Christ presents to His Father what we present to Christ. The duty is our responsibility, but the reason for its acceptance lies not within the petitioner, but within the Intercessor. God accepts us not due to our fullness, not because of our vitality, but due to the worthiness of His Son, because of His merits. He lives to intercede for us; He offers the prayers of the Saints along with the fragrance and aroma of His righteousness.

Are your prayers fervent? They are not accepted because of their inherent strength. Are they feeble? They are not rejected due to their weakness. Is your heart sincere? Then understand that Christ possesses abundant merits to cover your (self-condemned) shortcomings and gain acceptance for your weakest (yet sincere) efforts.

Therefore, in cases of disliked spiritual dullness, it's wise not to place acceptance in ourselves, but rather in Christ. Even if expressions of devotion vary among us, there remains a consistent intercession by Christ on our behalf. Sometimes we approach with more fullness, sometimes with more emptiness; sometimes we sprint, at other

times we can only shuffle. Our emotions might be intense, our discernment keen, our expressions fluent, our petitions fervent, our hearings respectful and delightful, or sometimes our devotion might be dampened, emotions less lively, thoughts barren, words hesitant, petitions lacking flame, and we simply listen, understand, and remember it without much fervour. Here, we see various aspects of our holy services in terms of our perspective, but there's no such variability in Christ.

This leads to the conclusion that if our services found favour with God due to their accidental vigour in our performance, all our weaker efforts would be utterly in vain. Moreover, in the case of more spirited services, Christ would be lost, since the reason for their acceptance would rest in themselves.

However, Christ is necessary to complete both our duties and our beings. He must be a Mediator for our actions and an Intercessor for us. The talents are different; while our services may vary, there's a constant merit and a continual offering of the same through the prayers of all Saints. As a result, these services are accepted, not due to their inherent value, but due to His Name.

7. A seventh source of doubt was a perception of ineffectiveness in duty. We have prayed extensively for the growth of certain virtues, the conquest of particular weaknesses, or the establishment in certain duties and practices, yet no visible progress has been made. We remain where we were, and thus doubt our own goodness or even God's intentions towards us.

This source of doubt can be countered with the following considerations:



1. The responsibility for engaging in service and making progress in duties lies with us, while the rewards and compensations belong to God. "I have prayed to God for a long time," you might say. That's true, and you are obligated to continue praying. "I have been attentive in my hearing for a long time," you might add. That's true, and you are obligated to continue listening. You are merely fulfilling your obligations. Just as it is the farmer's duty to plow and sow the land, and it is God's role to bring forth the harvest, so it is with us. As the Apostle says, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Remember that God is a God who hears prayers, and He will be found by those who seek Him and will not abandon them.
2. God is a benevolent Master. Job did not serve Him in vain. David proclaimed, "I called upon the Lord, and He answered me." In another place, he declared, "He has heard my voice and my supplications, and He inclined His ear to me; therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live." Not one of the servants who engaged with the talents could complain that their Master was severe. When the people in the book of Malachi accused God of neglecting and not rewarding their service, He responded with concern, "Your words have been harsh against Me." How? "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord?'" Consequently, the Lord quickly revealed His gracious and caring disposition towards those who served Him and remembered His name. He said, "They shall be Mine," and "when I make up My jewels, I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. Then you shall return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves

God and one who does not." In this way, you will realize that serving Him is not in vain.

3. Petitioners must await an answer as well as present their requests. Therefore, understand that faith, when it comes to seeking God, has a dual function:
4. First, it entails presenting our needs in Christ's name, as God has promised to provide in His Word.
5. Second, it involves expecting and waiting for the provisions that God has promised. Hence, David declares, "As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us."

This waiting distinguishes between desires born out of fleeting whims and those stemming from a poverty of spirit. In fleeting desires, we give up quickly, akin to brief visits to someone's house: we knock on the door, and if there's no response, we depart, as our purpose was insignificant. Conversely, in desires arising from a poverty of spirit, individuals possess faith to believe that God is present and the patience to await His response.

Like a destitute beggar (imagine someone like Lazarus), who persists at a gate, knocking repeatedly, and waits for alms or crumbs from tables, humble Christians—those genuinely poor in spirit—will stand at the gates of heaven, submitting request after request and anticipating the fulfilment of those requests from the throne of grace and mercy, day after day.

But we cannot wait.

You can't? And that's why you miss out on your answers. If beggars won't wait, they miss out on their alms, and if Christians won't wait, they miss out on their blessings.

Yet, I won't easily dismiss this concern, for within it lies the most valuable part of the solution. If only we could wait on God, then undoubtedly we would realise that we have no reason to complain about fruitlessness in our seeking.

How can we learn to wait?

Like this.

1. You can be certain of a response. Certainty of an answer will lead to consistency in seeking. Certain of a response? How can we be certain of that? This is how:
2. Understand it through Promises, and then you can be certain.
3. Observe it through fulfilment, and again, you can be certain.

As for Promises, you know, they carry certainty; we have no way to discern God's intentions of doing us good other than through His Promises, and in them, we can find that certainty. Just as the words of a person convey their thoughts, the Promises of God reveal His intentions and purposes. Now, consider what God has promised to those who wait:

Habakkuk 2:3. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Here is the duty—wait; and here is the Promise—delivered, reiterated, trebled: "It shall speak," "It will come," "It will surely come." Nay, reiterated once more: "It shall not lie," "It will not tarry." It's as if God is saying, Just wait, and you will

be delivered—repeatedly. Oh, the rhetoric of God! Oh, the certainty of His Promises!

Psalm 27:14. "Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart."

Isaiah 40:31. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

Micah 7:7. "I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me."

Would you now like to see certainty in actions? Then read Psalm 40:1. "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." Waiting was done, and assuredly, there was a positive outcome.

You might say, but he was just one person.

Then consider Hebrews 6:12. "Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the Promises." They indeed inherited the Promises—extracted all the good from them—by patiently waiting. If we are God's children, let us learn to wait, and then we, too, will become heirs of the Promises. Their blessings will become our possession.

Also, see Isaiah 25:9 and Isaiah 49:23. "None shall be ashamed who wait upon me." From all these, we can conclude that if God has given us secure Promises and has consistently fulfilled those Promises for those who wait on Him, then, if we wait, we will undoubtedly experience success, and so on.

2. The things you desire are significant and well worth the wait. Imagine someone who wouldn't wait for the King to seal the pardon he promised. It's astonishing that when God promises us forgiveness of sins, we lack the patience to seek and wait for its confirmation. Yet, forgiveness of sins is of such importance that our very life depends on it.

Similarly, isn't grace a unique blessing? Isn't the mortification of sin a remarkable achievement? Shouldn't the Lord's requirement for us to seek and pray more frequently for these exceptional gifts and grants be seen as a small task? These gifts are lofty in their nature, astonishing in their utility, and redemptive in their outcome. Can you find a more meaningful use of your time?

3. The answers will sweeten and amply compensate for all the times and efforts spent in seeking. Once the child is born, the pains of childbirth are forgotten; the joy overshadows the pain. If God simply shines His favour upon you, it will answer and repay all the prayers you've ever made in your life. "I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him..."
4. Doubling your efforts often leads to doubled blessings. When God readies the heart, He inclines His ear; and when He plans a great mercy, He first enlarges the heart's desire and earnestness in seeking. Every sincere seeking of God expands the heart and adds to its capacity. The more prayers we entrust to God, the more abundant the response tends to be. After a prolonged period of supplication, God (usually) answers with more than what we ask for. So, He not only responds to our prayers but also repays the time we've invested.
5. We will receive the best things at the most appropriate times. Hence, we shouldn't dismiss our efforts as wasted, for God will

answer them. However, it will be in the best matters and at the most suitable moments.

You might wonder, "Isn't it high time I had more grace and greater control over sin?"

I respond, "Perhaps not." God knows that you have a tendency toward pride. When you experience growth, you might become haughty and prone to arrogance. You could begin to look down on others and develop grand notions of yourself. Therefore, He might not immediately grant you victory over sin; instead, He allows it to challenge you. You'll find reasons to stay humble when you still feel traces and impulses of corruption. Nonetheless, God empowers you to resist, and as your heart becomes more humble, you'll eventually achieve victory.

Furthermore, even if you pray against your sins, you might still engage in actions or situations that provoke sin. Consequently, the Lord might rightly withhold His intervention, since you don't exercise restraint. His silence during these times teaches you to practise forbearance, just as He practices forbearance toward you. Then, when you pray again with vigilance and a proactive avoidance of temptations, He will grant you greater strength to overcome your sinful tendencies.

Therefore, let's not lose heart during times of delay. God delays His grants until you're prepared to receive them and until it's appropriate for Him to bestow them.

Do you desire to conquer sin? Seek His power to subdue it, and at the same time, avoid situations that might lead to sin, whether initiated by you or others. Then God will answer your prayers. You're now prepared, and it's the right time for God's help. But if you continue to

pray against the inclination while still engaging in tempting situations, God won't answer you.

If you seek grace and consistency in your duties, you must exercise the grace you've already received and remain steadfast in humility, diligence, and reverence for the means. Then God will supply all your needs. Until your heart becomes more humble and dedicated, you're not ready for additional grace. James says that God gives more grace to the humble.

Rest assured, He will give you more grace. You'll have enough for your circumstances and enough for your salvation, even if your measure isn't equal to others who God intends for more significant public roles and service than you.

5. God's patience shouldn't lead to cessation but to increased earnestness. He isn't quiet so that we become speechless; He does this to ignite more fervour in our desires.

You're aware that a skilled angler doesn't reel in the bait to discourage the fish from biting, but to make the fish more eagerly chase after it.

Similarly, a loving mother steps aside not because she wants her child to stop seeking her, but because she wants the child to long for her even more.

In the same way, God often seems to withdraw and step aside, like the words of the Prophet Jeremiah describe, becoming like a stranger or a wayfarer. As David says, He appears as one who is sleeping. But why? Is it because He doesn't recognise us? No. Is it because He doesn't hear us? No. Is it because He won't grant us what we seek? No.

Then why? Surely it's because: 1. He takes pleasure in this melody; He senses a sweet fragrance and essence in our humble offerings. He delights in the contrite heart.

2. He loves the idea of us contending with Him for His blessings (as seen in Romans 15:30), wrestling with Him like Jacob, and thus prevailing over Him. He desires that we should give Him no rest (Isaiah 62:7) until He satisfies our souls with mercy and establishes them with His grace.
3. He aims to elevate the value of the things we desire, making us wear His answers with greater gratitude towards Himself, with more comfort for us, and with greater benefits for others.
4. The eighth source of doubt arises from a weak understanding of the essentials of salvation, which inevitably leads to doubt due to suspicions, errors, and misunderstandings that arise. Additionally, the conscience tends to be scrupulous when the judgement is weak.

The solution to this issue involves the following aspects:

1. Acquire a clear comprehension of Fundamentals: The void in our understanding often leads us to embark on misguided searches. Many a Christian gets lost in a sea of opinions before they've aligned themselves with the foundational aspects of Religion.

Remember that the primary truths uphold and sustain the rest, like the cornerstone supports the entire building, and they act as the original Will, settling many legal uncertainties. This is why some individuals doubt specific conclusions because they lack a grasp of the general principles. If these principles were well understood, the



falsehood of any conclusion would be more apparent. It's commonplace for people to engage in debates about Original Sin, Predestination, Redemption, Faith and Justification, Assurance and Obedience, the levels of grace and duty, the direct and absolute paths of life, etc. These debates often involve individuals who lack a clear understanding of the nature of these concepts.

Paul's approach was to establish a foundation of repentance from dead works and faith towards God. If Paul deemed it necessary to teach these foundational truths, then it's equally important for us to learn them. A ship is most stable when its foundation is solid, and a house experiences the least shaking when its foundation is well-laid. Similarly, a Christian is least prone to doubt when they are well-grounded in the fundamental aspects of their faith. Furthermore, these foundational truths not only guide all other truths but also expose errors, heresies, opinions, and arguments that attempt to lead the mind astray. Without a doubt, when the mind gains clarity through one truth regarding another, as well as the falseness of errors contradicting it, it faces less uncertainty. Doubts typically emerge from errors or misunderstandings in the mind.

2. Attain a clear distinction between Fundamentals and Accessories. Not every part of the house is the cornerstone or the pillars: Many components can be removed, and yet the house will remain standing. Even if you take away the adornments, music, or certain ceilings and attached posts, the house will still stand.

Likewise, a Christian's salvation remains intact even if they lack knowledge of numerous accessory truths, or if they misunderstand them, or even deny them, as long as this denial doesn't stem from stubborn arrogance but arises solely from a lack of clarity and ability.

There are three things about which it would benefit Christians to possess a discerning knowledge:

1. Fundamentals.
2. Consequences.
3. Indifferents. By Fundamentals, I mean those Truths that form the foundation and path of salvation, such as the teachings about sin, Christ, faith, and repentance. These are the essentials without which no one can be saved.

Consequences, I refer to the deductions or inferences that stem from the primary truths. They may arise naturally from the nature of the matter, like a stream flowing from a fountain, or they may stem from the intellect, such as a conclusion drawn by someone's speculative opinion to originate from a certain principle or text.

Indifferents, I label actions that in themselves are neither virtuous nor wicked. These are actions that God has neither explicitly commanded nor prohibited. When considered absolutely, performing them won't lead to salvation, nor refraining from them to damnation. They don't define a Christian any more than a garment defines a person; whether worn or not, a person remains a person.

This discerning knowledge significantly alleviates the doubting heart, which often wavers concerning the permissibility of indifferents, etc.

3. Subordinate all speculations and subsequent truths to the primary truth: It's the counsel of the Apostle in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "Prove all things." Isaiah the Prophet also advises, "To the law and to the testimony" (Isaiah 8:20).

Saint Augustine had a wise response to Manicheus, who clamoured for attention: "Hear me, hear me," said Manicheus. Augustine

replied, "I do not deny you, nor do you deny me, but let us both listen to the Apostle, who says, 'I know not sin...'" (referring to 1 Corinthians 4:4).

Beloved, our fragility becomes evident when truths present themselves to us and we find ourselves in the position of judges. How we stumble! Various opinions imprint distinct marks on them—various distinctions, limitations, qualifications! Each of us ensures that we address the question in a manner that aligns with our own desires, gains, aims, and goals. Many times, we discuss and determine truths for personal reasons.

Yet, when you bring them back to the foundational truths, how our vacuous and conflicting opinions and notions crumble into dust! They bow before the word of God, just as Dagon fell before the Ark of God. Scripture serves as the touchstone that can readily differentiate counterfeit interpretations and errors from authentic truths. Genuine truths are akin to young eagles that can gaze at the sunlight with open eyes, whereas erroneous interpretations and opinions are like sore eyes that cannot withstand the sun without blinking, watering, and closing.

By the way, note that if a truth is genuinely from God, it serves these three purposes:

- To magnify His abundant grace (Ephesians 1:12).
- To establish peace in the conscience (Romans 5:1).
- To subdue sin (Titus 2:12).

4. Ground the mind in affirmed truths. "Beware," says the Apostle Peter, "seeing ye know these things, lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Peter 3:17).

It's not unfamiliar that some (like peddlers) roam about, making a livelihood from their errors. They are crafty, with the cunning to bring about their own confusion. They possess a cleverness to gloss over sins and errors and weaken the strength of truths and the path to heaven. They're like children of Satan, tirelessly distorting the right ways of the Lord. Yet they artfully display their wares, adorning them with the veneer of reason and carnal recklessness, leading many weak-minded Christians to swallow their baits, imbibe their cups, and follow their tumultuous paths. The truths, on the other hand, are clear, explicit; anyone can easily understand them.

Devote yourself most earnestly to these truths. Strive to be a good person and a good master, a good man and a good servant, and so on. Immerse yourself in understanding what is relevant to you, and then pray yourself into practising that understanding. This is a wise, settled approach that frees you from futile anxieties and many perplexing doubts.

6. Illuminate the conscience with the nature of a Christian and salvific condition. Some things are prerequisites for salvation, while others are necessary for attaining salvation. Certain factors establish a person's existence as a Christian, while others contribute to a contented existence as one. If someone possessed a specific and distinct understanding of all these factors, they could move more peacefully without fears and uncertainties. Shall I provide a few specifics? Remember these propositions:

7. Preparations for Grace vary and are unequal: Not all individuals are prepared to receive Christ in the same way or to the same degree. Conviction of one's natural state, contrition, anguish, and other legal operations are all forms of preparation. People must recognize their sinful state and experience a spirit of

bondage, heaviness, and weariness before they can truly grasp hold of Christ.

These legal impressions differ. Every believer (of mature age) has experienced them to some extent, though not all can describe them similarly. Every child experiences something during their birth, yet some are born with greater pains and difficulties than others. Lydia was speedily delivered, while Paul laboured for several days. Some can echo David in another context: "Sorrow may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning." Others might relate to David's words: "For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me."

The Lord, in His sovereignty over both the substance and manner of our spiritual transformation, may select particular individuals and lay their sins heavily upon their consciences. He subjects them to unique terrors, embedding His arrows and their own sins so closely that they lose their bearings. He grinds them almost to powder, casting them into the dust of extreme amazement and turmoil. Yet, like a skilful artisan who breaks a mass into pieces, places them in the fire, melts them, and fashions them into a beautiful, precious, and useful vessel, the Lord often follows a similar pattern with some individuals. After a period of deep conviction and dreadful bondage, He graciously forms the Lord Jesus within their hearts, renewing His image of grace. They become vessels of glory, most pleasing to Him.

However, the Lord may not deal with others to such an intense degree. He does indeed apprehend them with the Law but doesn't so imprison and shackle them. He does not keep them imprisoned, but upon their humble submission, He is willing to release them from guilt and fears, transferring them from the dominion of darkness into the marvellous liberty of God's children.

Understand, then, that when God has achieved His purpose, He ceases the operation of the Law in this manner.

[Quest.] What is his purpose? Will you inquire.

[Sol.] I respond, his intention lies in these legal preparations:

1. To reveal to a person the wickedness of his heart and life.
2. To convince him of complete unworthiness.
3. To foster deep aversion to sin, a detestable thing.
4. To make a person willing, based on God's own terms, to accept and receive Christ.

These are the goals that, accomplished at different times for different individuals, lead the Lord to cease the work of preparation.

You understand that if a piece of stone or wood is on the brink of breaking with one or two strikes, we spare further effort. Similarly, if a block yields after a day of firing, we end the process. Likewise, if the stubbornness is severe and resistance prolonged, knotty wood requires repeated blows, and unyielding metal demands a more intense fire.

From all of this, the doubting heart might find reassurance regarding its state of grace. Ask yourself, "Do you love God?" I do. "Do you serve Him with all your might in all your ways?" I do. "Do you rely on Jesus Christ?" I do. "Do you fight against sin?" I do. Yet, I fear something is amiss. Why? Because I've never experienced the same terrors as others. Now, enlighten your hesitant judgement. If God has revealed your sinfulness to you, if He has humbled and emptied you of self, if you are now at odds with sin, if you have willingly received Christ on His terms and conditions, even if your legal preparations were not as intense or prolonged as others', your

situation is good and secure. Humiliation accompanied by these outcomes is truly blessed and comforting. If medicine removes the ailment even without causing severe illness, it's beneficial. And although a man lacks a storm to drive him to the shore, he's sufficiently safe if he reaches land with a gentler breeze and tide.

2. The workings of Grace also differ and are uneven, despite Christians sharing a common principle and the same external means of grace. Please pay heed to this.
3. There is a single, shared (specific) seed of regenerative grace in all Christians—the same spirit of holiness, faith, repentance, love, etc. All Christians are founded and rooted in the same way when it comes to the fundamental aspects of Grace.
4. Numerous Christians may live under identical means of Grace, just as people live under the same sunlight and warmth from the Sun, or children under the same parents.
5. The manifestations of their graces may still differ, just as children attending the same school may sit in different classrooms or, while having the same meals, demonstrate distinct abilities and talents.

Likewise, Christians, who share the same principles of belief, repentance, prayer, and action, and who have access to the same ministry and common support, may still vary and diverge in the active aspects of graces and duties. One person might possess more knowledge than another; one might lean more on God's Promises; one might pray with greater fervency; one might excel in other aspects of duty, etc. Yet all these individuals can possess genuine grace and find salvation.

Therefore, be aware that inequality in holy actions does not arise from a lack or falsehood of Grace, but rather, it originates from varying specific circumstances, intentions, and assistance. Not every Christian experiences the same,

1. Compelling situations that test their faith and patience.
2. Divine intention for unique ends and services; some are fashioned by enhancing and utilising their graces for greater purposes.
3. Access to an equal spiritual illumination, stimulation, and attraction. I could also add,
4. Every Christian does not always rouse their gifts and graces; they do not consistently make the most of their resources on every occasion and prompting.
5. Nor does every individual possess the same disposition and temperament, which greatly influences the actions of the soul.
6. Every calling does not permit each Christian the same intervals, opportunities, breaks, or vacations to cultivate their heavenly disposition and course.

True Christians resemble true individuals; each person possesses a soul, faculties stemming from that soul, and actions arising from those faculties. Yet not every person demonstrates equality in the expressive aspects of their nature. Similarly, with Christians, while all share the same genuine grace, the exercise of that grace differs on a personal level.

3. Just as actions vary, so do the degrees of Grace: If you compare Christian with Christian, it's like comparing one branch or limb



of a tree with another. Although all spring from a common root, their specific measures vary. It's akin to comparing stars in the sky; while all are connected to the heavenly bodies, they differ in size and radiance.

"You are the body of Christ," says the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:27, "and members in particular." This is a splendid and gracious condition. However, verse 29 follows, "Are all Apostles? Are all Prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all speak with tongues?" Moreover, Ephesians 4:11 affirms, "He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers."

This principle is equally applicable to varying degrees of individual gifts for edification, as well as in specific graces for sanctification. Just as not all members of Christ's body share the same roles, not all members possess identical graces. Just as not every member is an Apostle or a Prophet, not every Christian has the same gifts and graces. This applies not only to spiritual gifts but also to various forms of grace. Not all are strong, mature Christians; there are young ones and babes in Christ as well. In Hebrews 5:13 and 1 John 2:12-13, we see a recognition of various stages in Christian growth—little children, young men, and fathers—each with their distinct experiences and knowledge of the Father and forgiveness of sins.

Brethren, how greatly do we trouble ourselves with doubts here? Many individuals, due to a weakness of judgment (I refrain from saying more), fall into dissatisfaction with their state and condition. They afflict their hearts, shut themselves off, suspect, and foolishly reason the nullity of a gracious condition from the imperfections they observe in their graces, their shortcomings in faith, zeal, sorrow, etc. Ah, ignorant people! Who earnestly strive for greater measures of

Grace and yet fail to quiet their fears and doubts with these understandings:

1. Such earnest yearnings, disturbances, and insatiable feelings must undoubtedly arise from genuine grace.
2. Where true grace exists, even if in its lowest measure, the soul holds an interest in Christ, all the Promises, God, heaven, everything.

Remember this, he who possesses the least in grace does not have what he desires; and he who has the most in grace still lacks what he should have. Yet anyone with a true measure of grace possesses enough to change their heart and save their soul. I would believe in that fullness of assurance and reliance as you do, and if I cannot, I will still believe to the best of my ability. He who said, "O woman, great is thy faith," also said to another, with less strength, "Thy faith hath saved thee." No one misses heaven due to the extent of their grace, but rather due to its authenticity. Our comfort often rests in the comparative degree, yet our salvation is in the positive: Abundance of grace provides us with a heavenly existence here, and any true grace will grant us heaven in the future.

4. The distinct manifestations of true grace differ not only when comparing one Christian to another but also when comparing the same Christian at different times and circumstances.
5. When comparing Christians in terms of comfort, it can be night for one while day for another. One may tread heavily, burdened, walking in darkness, as Isaiah 50:10 phrases it. They lack that palpable light of divine favor. "Thou hidst thy face," as David said, "and I was troubled" (Psalm 30:7). They lack the felt joy or testimony of their gracious condition, praying as David did,

"Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (Psalm 51:12). In Zion, how many mourners there are—many lamenting the absence of favour, joy, and peace.

Yet there are others who believe and rejoice in their faith. They hold Christ in their arms, knowing in whom they have believed, rejoicing with an indescribable and glorious joy (1 Peter 1:8).

2. When comparing the same Christian with themselves, for our day of grace is like the changing weather. For the cure and remedy of these doubts, please consider some specific propositions I will present to clarify the matter and bring comfort regarding Justification to repentant believers; for it is to them alone that I direct my discourse.
3. In Justification, our debts are imputed to Christ: they are put on his account. You understand that in sin, there is its sinful and defiling nature, and then there is its resulting guilt, which obliges the sinner to face God's judgment seat and answer for their sin.

Now this guilt, which constitutes our debt, is imputed to Christ: Hence the Apostle says, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Also, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." You know in the law, a wife's debts are attributed to her husband; and if the debtor is incapacitated, then the creditor pursues the guarantor. In law, the surety and debtor are considered as one entity. Now Christ is our Surety; He is made sin for us, as the Apostle says. For us, in our place, standing in our stead. He is a surety for us, one who takes our scores onto his account, our burdens upon his shoulders. Thus the Prophet Isaiah states, "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." How? He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for

our iniquities—in our stead, assuming the responsibility for our sins, satisfying our debts, clearing our guilt. This is why he was bruised.

You remember the scapegoat, upon which the iniquities of the children of Israel, along with all their transgressions and sins, were confessed and placed.

And the goat did bear upon him all their iniquities, etc. What is the meaning of this? Surely, Jesus Christ, upon whom our sins were laid, and who alone died for the ungodly, bearing our burdens away. Therefore, the Believer, in a sense of guilt, should turn to Christ and present his blood to the Father, saying, "Lord, it is true, I owe you so much. Yet, Father, forgive me, and remember that your own Son was my ransom. His blood was the price, he was my surety, and he undertook to answer for my sins. I beseech you, accept his atonement, for he is my Surety, my Redemption. You must be satisfied, and Christ has satisfied you. Not for himself—what sins did he have of his own? But for me, gracious Father, they were my debts for which he satisfied. Examine your records, and you shall find it so, for you have said he was made sin for us, and he was wounded for our transgressions.

This is a great source of support and comfort—that we do not have to reconcile our accounts ourselves, but that Christ has settled matters between us and God. This is why Ephesians 1:7 says that in his blood, we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins.

2. In Justification, the repentant believer receives a universal discharge. What does that mean? When a person is in Christ, a true believer, they do not receive a specific pardon for particular sins, but a general release from all the sins they have committed. You are familiar with the promise in Jeremiah 33:8: "I will pardon all their iniquities whereby they have sinned, and

whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and honour, etc."

Therefore, when David speaks of God's fullness and breadth of forgiving and remitting mercy, he says in Psalm 85:2: "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah." This covering of all sin corresponds in sense with the Apostle's assertion of not imputing sin in Romans 4 and 2 Corinthians 5.

This is a true principle: "Peccata non minuunt justificationem." Although sins may differ, they do not lessen justification. When the Lord God justifies a person, the various qualities and circumstances of past sins do not hinder their pardon and discharge. Just as a pen can strike through a large sum as well as a small one, a King can issue a pardon not just for minor offences, but also for rebellions and treasons, as is often done. Thus, it is noteworthy in Scripture that hardly any kind of sin is exempt from being erased for a believing and repentant individual, such as:

Original sin, which was the great deluge of our nature and the first fire that ignited the world of mankind. Yet this sin was forgiven to Adam.

Drunkenness, another sin that the Apostle elevates to the height of eternal separation (1 Corinthians 6:8). Yet it was forgiven to Noah, a repentant believer.

Lying, a sin that is inherently a barrier to heaven (Revelation 22:15). Yet it was forgiven to Abraham, the father of the faithful.

Incest, that unnatural transgression, yet forgiven to Lot.

Murder, a grievous sin, and adultery, a dreadful sin, both forgiven to a repentant and believing David.

Idolatry, a sin that provokes and angers, unseating God and creating a god. Yet forgiven to Solomon.

Shall I continue? Impatience, a sin, yet forgiven to Job.

Anger, a sin, yet forgiven to Jonah.

Denial of Christ, against knowledge and resolution, a serious sin. Yet, graciously forgiven to Peter.

Persecution of the Gospel of Christ, blasphemy, and compelling others to blaspheme—opposing Jesus Christ, his word, his followers—how grievous a sin! Yet forgiven to Paul, who obtained mercy.

Oppression and covetousness, which drain the lifeblood of others, yet forgiven to Zacchaeus.

Nay, yet once more, as you can see pardon in Justification releasing all sorts of debts, you shall find it releasing all sorts of debtors. Take one example for all, in Leviticus 4, where the Lord addresses various kinds and categories of sinners, appoints offerings for them all, and proclaims pardon for them all. First, the Priests in verse 3. Then, secondly, the entire congregation in verses 13 and 20. Then, thirdly, a Ruler in verses 22 and 26. Then, fourthly, any one of the common people in verses 27, 28, 31, etc.

Through these four ranks, he encompasses all sorts and conditions of people, and not only prescribes a sin-offering for them all but also accepts the same. What else can this mean but the power and effectiveness of the blood of Christ, through which all sorts of sins are pardoned for all kinds of repentant and believing sinners?

"Ah Lord!" many may cry out. "Why? What's the matter? Why are you so burdened?" "Well, such and such a sin in the past..."

I respond, "Is there not justification?" "Yes." "Then how are sins pardoned?" "Is it not by the blood of Christ?" "Yes." "But these were major sins. Did Christ only die to expiate minor sins? Did he only satisfy for weaknesses and not enormities as well? Would Christ indeed leave the greatest debts for us to settle? Can't faith receive the discharge of great sins, just as it can for unintentional sins? Wasn't the sin-offering for all kinds of people? And haven't all kinds of sins come under the Proclamation? No, no, my brethren, without a doubt, Justification crosses out the accounts. 'You are a debtor,' says God. 'Yes, Lord,' says the repentant one. 'I acknowledge my sins and am sorry for my transgressions, but I intend to stop running up this debt.' 'You are a debtor,' says God. 'Yes, Lord,' says the Believer. 'And you have said, If any man sin, he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for sins. I believe in him, Lord. I take him as my sin offering, and I seek pardon and redemption from all my sins in his blood only. This is the way to sustain ourselves against our numerous and strong doubts about the pardon of sins. The Lord knows that I have repented of them, and I believe in Jesus Christ for their pardon. I hear and know that he is the Mediator of the New Testament, and his blood satisfies for all kinds of debtors and debts too. Though one sin may differ from another, his merit and satisfaction do not vary; they are all-sufficient. Therefore, I acknowledge the debt and rely on his blood for a full discharge."

3. Discharges in Justification are not revoked; they are not called back. "Peccata non redeunt," i.e., subsequent sins and falls do not nullify and retract previous grants and pardons. This is because 1. Pardon of sin originates from special love and mercy,

which do not change their established actions. 2. It is founded on an unchangeable, absolute, and constant satisfaction. Sin is not pardoned due to any merit in the person pardoned. There is no reason or cause for pardon in the person; it is in the blood of Christ, which remains unaltered and undiminished, even though our behaviour may change.

Hence, pardon of sin in Justification is described as the blotting out of the hand-writing in Colossians 2:14. If a writing is slightly smeared and somewhat blotted, it may still be read. But if it is completely obliterated, it becomes illegible. Who can be held accountable when the writings have been obliterated? The same terminology is used in Isaiah 44:22: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." Here, something else brings comfort. It is God himself who blots out. While an underling erasing an indictment might not help, when the King does it, who is the Chief Judge, the indictment cannot be resurrected.

Similarly, there is another expression in Micah 7:19: "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." If something were cast into a river that could be fathomed, it might be retrieved. Even if it were cast into the sea alone, it might still be detected and reclaimed. But when it is cast into the depths, the bottom of the sea, it can never be fathomed up again.

This metaphor is used to convey the powerful impact of pardoning mercy—that our sins will never rise against us again. God will clear them so that, once forgiven, they will not come up for consideration again. He will drown their guilt, ensuring that it will not resurface before Him a second time.

Therefore, when Paul discusses Justification in Romans 4, he employs another phrase to express this point in verse 7: "Blessed are



they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." Covered: To cover is an action that contrasts with exposure and judicial evidence. To be covered is to be concealed and closed in a way that it does not appear with a judicial guilt.

In Justification, the Lord is said to cover sin: What does that mean? It signifies that the Lord will no longer regard those sins with a judicial perspective; he will not call them to account any longer; that is the essence of the phrase.

Just as when a Prince reviews many Treasons and encounters those he has pardoned, he continues to read, passes over them, does not acknowledge them, and is unmoved, not pursuing those he has pardoned. This is akin to how God covers sin; he refrains from viewing the pardoned sin with a judicial eye. It is not, as some vacuous and slow-witted minds imagine, that God does not see sin at all and cannot. Among all the opinions in the world, this is the most ludicrous and childish, especially to those who believe in an All-seeing God. To cover sin does not mean God does not see it, but rather that he overlooks it and does not dwell on it with a judicial eye. In other words, he does not hold pardoned sins accountable any longer.

Hence, in the New Covenant, when God promises to justify or pardon sin, he does not only say, "I will forgive their iniquity," but he adds, "I will remember their sin no more," as in Jeremiah 31:34. What does that mean? It signifies that if he forgives their sin once, he will not forgive it again; there will be no need to forgive it again. One instance will suffice; he will remember it no more. This means it will be completely forgotten; he will no longer argue over what he has pardoned.

I admit that the sense, outcome, and assurance of a pardoned sin can fluctuate; it can be lost and regained, and so can the acts of faith regarding the particular pardon of a specific sin. However, God's justifying act, his pardoning act, is a free and consistent act. Otherwise, if he pardoned sins conditionally based on an absolute cessation from sin, no one on Earth could be justified.

Discharges in Justification extend not only to the guilt but also to the consequences of guilt. This is a true principle: Justification removes penal consequences. Hence, the Apostle says in Romans 8:1, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." When the body falls, so does the accompanying shadow. If the debt is forgiven, so is the prison. Through the blood of Christ, we obtain the forgiveness of our sins and therefore the remission of all satisfying punishments. Why else does the Apostle say in Galatians 3:13, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us"? Just as Christ is said to be made sin for us in 2 Corinthians 5, here he is said to be made a curse for us. He is made sin for us by assuming the guilt of our sins; he is made a curse for us by bearing the wrath and punishment that was due to us because of our sins.

Nay, allow me to speak a bold truth: To have sin forgiven and yet remain subject to punishment (I refer solely to satisfying punishment) cannot coexist with God's unblemished justice. No one is justly punished except due to unsatisfied guilt (as Aquinas aptly put it). Now, if Christ has fully and completely satisfied the guilt, then punishment has no basis, unless we wish to say that God will punish for what is already satisfied, or that Christ's satisfaction is not total but partial (i.e., he satisfied for a portion and left some aspects of satisfying punishment for us). This is the view of the Papists with their human satisfactions.

To summarise: What a comforting support it is for a distressed soul to find everything in Christ! When a person, brought to a true sense of sin, abhorring and forsaking it, giving themselves up to Christ, observes their numerous past guilt, sees it placed upon Christ, indeed discharged by Christ, to the extent that it will never be charged against them again, and all the consequences of guilt removed, so that Christ has liberated them, made them free, even against all of Satan's accusations. They can hold up the blood of Christ, which will answer all. "I am a sinner," they say, "but Christ was made sin for me. I deserve damnation, but Christ was made a curse for me." If believers understood the nature, extent, and efficacy of remission through the blood of Christ, if they comprehended this aspect of Justification and embraced it more, their faith and comfort would be fortified, and their doubts and fears would diminish. Take heart, your sins are forgiven you.

5. Another point, which I had nearly forgotten, is worth mentioning: The core aspect of Justification is the same for all Believers. What is that? It is this: God, on account of the blood of Christ, not only attributes the sins of strong believers to Christ but also the sins of weak believers. Not only the sins of the discharged, but also the sins of the still burdened. True faith in any degree can access all the benefits of Justification. Just as Justification does not allow for degrees, it is not assigned to degrees, but to the genuineness of faith. Therefore, not only Abraham, the father of the faithful, who had strong faith, but also the father of the child who cried out with tears, "I believe, help my unbelief," has the very same real share in the blood of Christ.

You understand that the arm does not have a share in the head and its influences because it is large or strong, but because it is a

member. Thus, even the smallest finger and the weakest member have a claim and share. In the same way, because every Believer through true faith becomes a member of Christ, they consequently share in the blood of Christ and in the Justification procured by Christ.

Hence, it is a weak argument for weak believers to deny or doubt their discharge by Christ.

They may say, "True, Christ is a strong Savior, and his merits are mighty. Through him, there is pardon for sin, and by his Name, a person is justified. However, this is only for those with stronger faith than mine."

Do not deceive yourself or needlessly torment yourself. Christ has done great things for great sinners, and weak faith is a co-owner, though no faith can be a co-purchaser of the remission of sins.

So, I have briefly shared some insights about the part of Justification that pertains to our sins. There is yet another aspect that concerns our virtues and duties. Many doubts arise from the weakness and mixture of these, and such doubts cannot be dispelled by anything within us; they can only be answered through the doctrine of Justification.

"Oh," says the humbled sinner, speaking from experience, "what a fractured condition is here! What an imperfect display of holiness! My light is even faint, and in all my duties, there remains a lack of duty. My righteousness is flawed, my faith is burdened with disbelief, my prayers are tinged with coldness, irreverence, and distraction. Even when I have mourned for my sins, I find myself mourning for not mourning more, and I may dislike myself for not being able to hate my sins differently. How can I stand before God, whose eyes are

purser than to behold sin? Will the Lord accept someone like me, with such shortcomings in performing duties?"

Allow me to address this lament and put an end to these doubts with a little more elaboration on the doctrine of Justification. Therefore, remember:

1. Our identities are not presented before God in our own righteousness, nor are our acts of service carried out in our own strength. Indeed, the Lord demands holiness in our very beings and holy deeds from us. We are his children, we are his people, therefore we should be holy just as our Father is holy. The people of his pasture ought to serve him. An unholy Believer would be an anomaly on Earth, and a disobedient child is essentially an unbeliever. While Christ did die for those who were once rebellious, he does not die for anyone to make them licentious. Hence, inherent grace and holiness are indispensable for salvation.

For salvation I affirm,

But for Justification, absolutely not. What does that mean? It signifies that while a person cannot be saved without inherent holiness, they are not justified by it. When they come to be judged by God, they should not say, "Lord, look, here I stand. Examine whether there is any sin in me or deficiency in my holiness. I have not offended you, I do not need any help, any mercy. My heart is completely pure, and my duties are performed at all times, fully meeting your requirements in both substance and manner. If you wish, judge me based on my own holiness."

2. However, in the righteousness of Christ, I aspire to be found. As Paul says, "not having my own righteousness, which is from the

Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ—the righteousness which is from God by faith." (Philippians 3:9) Further references can be found in Romans 5:19, 1 Corinthians 1:30, and 2 Corinthians 5:21.

There exists the concept of the righteousness of faith; it is none other than the righteousness of Christ. (We tend to underestimate it, and we underutilise it; there is a touch of Popery in all of us; we often place too much emphasis on our righteousness for Justification.) When the time comes to be declared just and righteous, when either we or our acts of service anticipate acceptance, it is through and by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Hence, two things arise to dispel doubts and fears:

1. Although our holiness might be feeble, Christ's is robust. The righteousness that justifies is complete. When we examine ourselves, we might say, "Oh Lord! How can we stand before God? How will he receive us? We are such poor, weak, sinful, inadequate individuals!" I reply, Christ's righteousness is complete; his garment was seamless. Ours might be stitched together and oddly shaped, but his righteousness is whole. He has become our righteousness, and it is from God. (1 Corinthians 1:30) God has designated him to be our righteousness, and he justifies us through it.
2. Even if our acts of service are feeble, we are justified by Christ's righteousness. Aaron was to bear the iniquity of the holy offerings (Exodus 28:38). These holy offerings had some impurities mixed in. However, Aaron was to bear them—meaning he was to remove the iniquities from them and make the offerings acceptable.

Christ is like this Aaron; through his righteousness, he conceals all flaws and compensates for all the weaknesses in holy duties.

Hence, my brethren, in all our approaches to God, we should not entertain doubt. The Apostle employs this argument in Hebrews 10:21: "Having such a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." (Hebrews 10:22) And verse 23 continues: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering..." It's as if the Apostle is saying, if people truly understood the nature of the Christ they possess, the complete righteousness within him, how he uses it, how he justifies their persons, and validates their services, intercedes for them, embellishes them, and endears them to the Father, they would not doubt as much as they do. They would have greater confidence in God when they come and pray to him.

I recall the Apostle using an excellent metaphor in Hebrews 9:24, where Christ is depicted as appearing on our behalf. It's an analogy from the realm of law: If someone has a legal case, they approach their lawyer, presenting all the details and requesting their representation for the entire matter. Upon entrusting the case to the lawyer, they appear for the plaintiff, present the case, and argue on their behalf before the judge. Thus, the case progresses. Similarly, with Christ, he appears for us. When a struggling sinner or a weak believer comes to him, sharing their condition and needs, Christ takes on the task, advocates for them (he lives forever to intercede), approaches the Father on their behalf, brings forward his righteousness, his blood, his merits, and what he did and suffered for them. This is how Christ acts for every specific service, duty, and prayer for those who believe in him.

The tenth cause of doubts was disputing against the Promises.

"Oh," exclaims the troubled and anxious soul, "all these promises that you present and apply to my situation, they do not apply to me; they are not for me. Yes, they are indeed good and true, remarkably fitting my situation, but I am not entitled to grasp them. It would be like presuming to take the bread meant for children, not for dogs, not for someone as sinful as I am."

Dear Christian, take a closer look at your own spirit, or the spirit of anyone distressed in conscience. You'll find that this is often the final stronghold of unbelief—arguing against God's Promises. This reasoning sometimes stems from the soul's sensitivity. When the soul possesses compelling arguments, showing its present incapacity for the good God has promised, it refrains from seizing the Promises until these barriers are removed. However, sometimes there is a reasoned opposition to the Promises due to a stubborn spirit. Even when a doubting sinner's arguments are clearly resolved and answered by God's explicit words, the person persists in opposing the Promises instead of honouring God by believing in them. This latter form of reasoning is irrational and unworthy of our support. I would think that such a Christian's doubts might arise more from entrenched and heavy melancholy than from any other particular cause. Still, to assist the other type of Christian who argues and reasons against the Promises out of tenderness and fear regarding their right and claim, I would offer a few considerations for their reflection.

1. Keeping the soul and God's Promises separate does not promote spiritual good or weaken evil. Consider seriously: Is not all our help for soul and body (in its entirety) contained in God's Promises? Are they not our fountains of salvation, sources of comfort, our sun and shield? What vessel does a poor sinner have to draw from these wells? What mouth does one have to



suckle from these breasts except faith? It is faith that connects the Promises with our conditions; it is faith that brings them together. Until the Promises meet (with their virtue and influence) your current state of being, they will never aid or improve you. A plaster will never aid or heal unless it covers the wound. You will remain as you were, and the Promise will stay where it was—it will not benefit you until you apply it.

2. It is belief that clears our title. "Oh," says the Christian, "if I knew that the Promises belonged to me, then I would believe." My response:

First, this approach is illogical and impossible, as if one could possess a well-founded conviction of ownership before having any such ownership. No, personal conviction is a subsequent action; it cannot precede or lead. You must purchase the lands before you can be convinced that they are yours.

Secondly, if you ever wish to establish your ownership of the Promises, you must first believe. Faith is what grants you that entitlement and possession. Just as the Apostle referred to a significant benefit, "After you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13), so it is in this situation: if you desire to be convinced that God seals his Promises for you, then you must first place your seal upon the Promises—believe, and then you will see the good in them becoming your good.

3. The basis for a Christian's belief in God's Promises must not be within the person who is to apply them, but solely within the One who makes them. Oh, this is the source of our confusion and continual distress, that we establish the grounds of faith within ourselves rather than in God. We are reluctant to admit

that the exclusive foundation for belief is to be found in the God who makes the promises.

Regarding Abraham, when God pledged him a child in his old age, it is said that he, through faith, brought glory to God. But how did he manage this? The passage explains that he did not contemplate his own body, already deceased since he was about one hundred years old, nor the barrenness of Sarah's womb. Rather, he focused on the One who had promised, being convinced that what had been promised, He was also capable of achieving. Why? This approach is correct for drawing forth our faith. We must not reflect on ourselves but on the One who promises. Our rationale for believing must solely rest in Him in whom we are to believe.

Therefore, I implore you to remember that God's Promises are not solely the objects of faith; they also serve as the foundation for believing. They do not merely hold wonderful benefits for us; they also offer the incentives to believe in that goodness. In addition to the goodness within them, which directly addresses our circumstances and the presentation of that goodness to us as a gift, they also encompass all the reasons that together move our hearts to grasp them:

1. A graciousness, signifying that the Lord will bestow all that good upon us freely and for His own sake.
2. A fidelity, affirming that the Lord, who has kindly promised, will also steadfastly fulfil.
3. An ample sufficiency of power in God to bring to fruition every word of goodness that proceeds from His lips.

From all of these aspects, even amid all his doubts, a Christian can discern grounds to believe in God's Promises. This is because:

1. The Promises are the Declarations of God for our benefit.
2. They are benevolent Declarations, originating solely from the good intentions of our God.
3. He bestows the good within them freely upon sinners, without any merit or deserving on their part.
4. No good is promised that God is not willing or capable of making good.

In conclusion, let anyone place their faith in these Promises, and they will acknowledge that the God who promised is indeed faithful, and the God who has promised cannot lie.

But now, on the contrary, if you seek grounds for believing within yourselves, it is impossible that your hearts would ever be free from doubts. If you base your belief on your own worthiness, you shall never come to believe. This approach would not be about receiving goodness from God, but rather about trying to buy and acquire it. This goes against the nature of free promises and also contradicts the disposition of true faith, which empties us of ourselves and recognizes that the cause of all our goodness lies solely in Him who is All-goodness.

Or if you believe that you must first discover the goodness within yourselves before you can extract it from the Promises, then you cannot believe; you will inevitably continue to doubt. This is because it is impossible for a sinner or a needy Christian to draw their help from within themselves or to anticipate the promises of God. Just as

they cannot deserve any goodness from a promising God, they also cannot contribute any goodness to God's promises. "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," says the Prophet, "and he that hath no money: Come ye, buy and eat. Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." If you are thirsty, all provision is freely available for you.

4. Another recommendation I would give to doubting Christians in this situation is this: Make a sincere effort to clarify your entrance into a Covenant with God. By doing so, you will establish your claim to all specific promises as needed.

There is a gracious Covenant mentioned in Scripture between God and His people. He adopts us as His people, and we accept Him as our God. When this Covenant is established between God and an individual, when there is mutual acceptance, the Lord grants that person access to all specific promises. Just as when a woman and a man enter into the marriage covenant, everything is settled for her, and she gains sufficient rights.

In the same way, when the Lord God and a sinner are spiritually united, when they enter into a Covenant—when the person says, "Thou art my God, and none else; my heart is thine; my life shall be thine"—the Lord responds to such an individual, "And I am thine; all my mercy is thine; my Christ is thine; my Promises are thine. If you require any good for your soul or body, all good is yours."

I assure you, O Christian, that if you were certain that you and God had entered into a Covenant, you would not doubt your claim or question your right to apply any specific promise to any situation of need in which you find yourself. "All are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:22, 23).

5. Lastly, carefully consider whether there is anything in Christ that might not be able to counteract your disputes against applying the Promises. I recall that in his Commentary on Genesis, Luther provides tempted individuals with a very succinct method to counter all forms of temptation: whenever Satan, the world, or sin comes your way, answer with this simple affirmation, "Christianus sum—I am a Christian." And surely, I think this could also be a concise way to address the doubts of a Christian: "Christum habeo—I have Christ." O Christian, if you focused more on your Christ, you might find it easier to focus on the Promises. When will you remember that just as looking to God without Christ offers no comfort, so too, looking confidently to the Promises of God without Christ is impossible?

Christ Jesus is your Jacob's ladder; your prayers ascend through Him, and God's Promises descend through Him. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20).

There was a Book in the Revelation that none of the Elders and Worthies could open, yet the Lamb could open it. The Promises are a precious Book, every page exudes myrrh and mercy; however, the weak Christian cannot open it, and indeed, they might be afraid to do so—to read their portion therein. Nonetheless, your Christ can open the Promises for you. Just as through your Christ you might find a way to heaven hereafter, you can also discover a path to your comfort now.

And why, may Christ reply to the doubting Christian, are you afraid to believe? To believe my Father's word and your Father's word? Has He ever failed anyone who trusted in Him? Is He not willing to give, having been willing to promise? Would His glory diminish if you

were to receive His grace? Or would your comfort decrease if you were to believe in His promise? Do you not care for His goodness? Why then are you troubled? Or in all seriousness, do you desire to enjoy that goodness? Then why do you not believe? You see the value of the commodity but hesitate at the price. Did my Father ever sell grace or mercy to anyone based on their own worthiness? How can you imagine that He would treat you in a way contrary to justice when He is dealing with you through promises? And if worthiness must be found, tell me, Who am I? Is a Christ of no worthiness to you? Or is He of no value to His Father and yours? I have died for your soul, I have reconciled your person, I have made God Himself to be yours, and therefore His Promises are yours.

If you think that God will deviate from His word, O you are mistaken. His Promise is made with Goodness, sealed with Truth, and ratified with my blood.

If you think it is an implacable and deaf ear to your prayers, consider this: it is always an open and responsive ear to my merits. Come then, I once gave myself for you, and since then, I have given myself to you. Do not be afraid, O you of little faith. Look at me, and through me, unto a God, and you will see Him full of grace and mercy, extending the golden Sceptre towards you. Look at me and through me, unto the Promises, and you will see them as my acquisition and your portion. Grasp them with faith and enrich yourself with them. In doing so, you will please my Father, gratify yourself, and honour your Saviour.

11. The eleventh source of doubting was the suspension of divine favour. "You hid your face, and I was troubled," said David. Oh, the concealment of God's favour is more significant than the obscuring of the sun, or than David's separation from Absalom.

It is indeed a time of weakness, the seclusion of our souls and life. "Your favour is life," David said again.

Here, consider:

1. During these times of isolation, a person has legitimate cause for distress. It's natural to be troubled when you can't perceive your God in His graciousness as before, in His love, in the light of His countenance. Indeed, there isn't a genuinely perceptive Christian of divine favour who wouldn't be as much disturbed by its clouding as they were moved and gladdened by its rise and manifestation.

Beloved, it isn't well with the person who can bear the absence of God's favour with the same equanimity as its perceived presence, who possesses such a tough and unfeeling disposition as not to console their soul in discovering God's graciousness or be significantly disconcerted when the customary manifestations of His loving favour are not apparent. How utterly distressed is the Church in the Canticles when her Beloved withdraws! And David, in the intensity of his turmoil and anxiety, (whether culpably, I'm uncertain) strongly accuses God (certainly with a heavy heart) that He had forgotten to be gracious.

2. Nevertheless, in times of such suspension, it is an error – a dangerous, fruitless error – to absolutely conclude against our God or against ourselves regarding any present or hopeful interest in His blessed favour. Therefore, remember these specifics.
3. Pay attention to the circumstances and occasions of the interception of divine favour. It is certain that God always has a special purpose in veiling His countenance; and we often give

Him just cause and reason to do so. From the Scriptures, we can generally identify two situations on our part:

4. Gross sins, which indeed create a dense cloud obstructing the blessed light of God's countenance, for He is of purer eyes than to behold sin. These acts become a barrier, closing the door and drawing the curtains; they resemble a thick mist falling over the eye, rendering it incapable of enjoying the comforting light. We can observe this in the case of David's two significant sins: Adultery and Murder. They interrupted the presence – the comforting presence – of God and suppressed the joy of His salvation, which he fervently desired to be restored (Psalm 51:11-12).
5. Neglect and indifference in our regard and affections towards Him in His Ordinances. When Christians become moderate, when their spiritual fervour cools, when they grow less attentive to God, and their performance of holy services and duties becomes more lacklustre, the Lord then withholds His manifest light. Just as a father changes his expression towards a child who is heedless of his affection and diminishes the diligence of his rightful observance and duties.

We can see this illustrated in Song of Solomon 5:2. Christ says, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." This is a gracious entreaty, filled with affectionate appellations. But what does the Church do? She hesitates, she delays, she offers excuses. In verse 3, she responds, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" What is this? She displays carelessness, negligence, and a flurry of excuses. The phrases "putting off the coat" signify carelessness, for wearing clothes indicates vigilance, and removing them indicates a readiness for



sleep or rest. Moreover, "washing her feet" is another sign of her lethargic and negligent state. In those hot countries where people usually went barefoot, washing feet after travelling was a preparatory step for rest. The essence of all this is that she manufactures numerous excuses and delays, all arising from an acquired sluggishness and negligence of spirit.

Now consider the outcome. Although the Church did not promptly rise to open the door, Christ, in verse 4, puts His hand through the hole of the door. Though she had neglected Him in His ministry, He imparts a significant message through His Spirit, and her emotions are stirred for Him. Why? What happened? She rises in verse 5 and opens the door in verse 6, but her Beloved had withdrawn Himself, gone away. She sought Him but could not find Him; she called to Him but received no answer.

Here, we witness that carelessness in performing duties results in the absence of favour. When individuals are negligent in their engagement with the means of grace, God, with just wisdom, withdraws the tangible presence of His gracious favour.

2. Observe the means of regaining God's favour that has been suspended from us: What are these means, you might ask?

I answer,

1. Be deeply affected by the loss: every instance of God's countenance being withdrawn should trouble us, but the loss of His favour, that should distress us. So it was with the Church, as we read in Song of Solomon 5:4. "My bowels were troubled for him." In other words, her innermost being was profoundly agitated, signifying a deep disquiet and heartfelt sorrow due to such a significant loss, which originated from such a substantial

laxity. This disquiet is markedly intense; the mention of "bowels" implies an elevated degree, whether it is compassion, as seen in God's sentiment towards Ephraim (Jeremiah 31:20), or a special kind of love and affection, as a mother for her child, or a deeply sorrowful affliction, as seen here.

In fact, the sorrow and lamentation were so immense that in verse 6, it is said, "My soul failed when he spake." Her soul, in a sense, departed due to the absence of Christ's loving favour. Just as the heart is said to "go forth" when one is startled by fear, the soul is described as "going away" when one is overwhelmed by grief and sorrow. This indicates that the Church was almost overwhelmed due to her negligence and folly, which led to Christ's withdrawal.

Certainly, if the lackadaisical and inattentive reception of God, Christ, or His Word – actions that cause the cessation of favour – are so significantly bewailed with deep emotions and fainting, then how much greater should the depth of emotion be, and the measure of sorrow and repentance be increased, when the suspension of God's love and favour is caused by our wrongful handling of His blessed Spirit, by resisting His promptings, and presumptuously defying His guiding and convicting light, thereby dishonouring Him with grievous transgressions.

Nevertheless, if we can humbly and truly lament our loss and repent of our sins, we shall once again witness the Lord's mercy and love. David could not help but display a countenance of favour towards Absalom, despite being an unruly son. If the clouds disperse, the sun will shine again; for God will not only bestow but restore comfort to His mourners.

2. Renew your integrity, and then God will renew His favour. A virtuous person, as Solomon states in Proverbs 12:2, "obtaineth

favour of the Lord." This refers to an upright person, someone whose heart is sincere – as opposed to a person with many ulterior motives. Such an individual, whose heart is genuine and straightforward in their dealings with God, will undoubtedly gain favour from the Lord.

David confirms this in Psalm 5:12, "For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." Moreover, David's words in Psalm 36:9 are worth noting, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." In other words, he acknowledges that God possesses an abundance of comfort and favour. God's favour is indeed life – the very source of it. And through the illumination of His ways, people will perceive the radiance of His favour.

Indeed, we cannot perceive light amidst darkness; light can only be perceived by light. Anything contrary to light obstructs the ability to see. God's favour cannot be seen through anything that contradicts God's nature. Twisted hearts and crooked paths, insincere hearts and duplicitous ways, a life marked by sin and approval – these are hated and abhorred by the Lord. This is because God is always consistent in His dealings with people: either they will receive mercy or they will not, as He delights in the simplicity of Christians. If they deal candidly with Him, give Him their utmost devotion, and direct their affection solely towards Him, even if they cannot immediately perceive it, they can be assured of His favour through His steadfast promise.

The Lord will respond to them, as stated in Isaiah 64:5, "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways." If you walk in uprightness towards God, He will walk towards you with consolation. If you are His child, He

will be your Father. Give Him your heart, and He will reveal His countenance to you.

Therefore, let us not only focus on our general approach, but also on the services rendered within our specific callings and relationships. If the Lord witnesses our integrity in our conduct, we will undoubtedly experience His gracious favour shining upon our souls.

3. Earnestly seek God's favour.

4. Seek it through seeking in the observances of His favour. "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?" inquired the Church in her loss, as in Song of Solomon 3:3, to the watchmen. Just as Mary, weeping in John 20:13, said, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," and in verse 15, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." What resulted from this? See verse 16, "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." It was just one word, yet enough to make her turn and say, "Rabboni." Similarly, it often occurs in our pursuit of God's favour; the Lord encounters us and reveals Himself through His loving presence in His Ordinances. For these Ordinances of God act as the divine Exchange, the celestial transaction between God and His people, where they offer Him their duty, and He bestows upon them His grace and favour. As a result, those who come with sighs – "Oh, that God would be my God!" – return with joyful Psalms, proclaiming, "The Lord is my God and my Father; I will praise thee, O Lord my God."

5. Seek it through prayers. How abundantly does David exemplify this? In Psalm 106:4, he implores, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation." He continues in verse 5, "That I may see the good of thy chosen." Similarly, in Psalm 31:16, he pleads, "Make thy face

to shine upon thy servant." And in Psalm 4:6, he entreats, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Since God has promised His favour, His people have the right to seek it. In fact, He has commanded His people to seek His favour, so they ought to pursue it. As expressed in Psalm 27:8, "When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." In times of the suspension of God's favour, it is an unwise folly to sever our relationship and distance ourselves, effectively denying the grace and spiritual connection between us and God. This is not the way to regain favour; when we dissolve our childlike relationship, we exclude ourselves from the expectation of favour. On the contrary, the wisest and most certain approach is to seek the restoration of God's loving presence, echoing David's sentiment: "Lord, thou hast hidden thy face, and I am troubled, yet thou hast bid me to seek thy face, and Thy face, Lord, will I seek." In truth, I do seek it, for Thy favour is life – better than life itself. I value it and recognise it as my life. Therefore, I earnestly desire it: "Make thy face to shine, and look upon me once more, just as thou beholdest thy people with thy timeless favour. O visit me with thy salvation, and allow me to experience the radiance of thy countenance."

Here, consider two more helpful pieces of advice:

1. When you seek the illumination of God's countenance, do not close your eyes. Always remember that a person who shuts their eyes will rarely find what they're looking for. And nothing can perceive God's favour except the eye of faith. It is only in Christ Jesus that we can truly see and recognise Him as our gracious God and Father. Therefore, keep that eye open. Through the direct workings of faith, we can always behold God, and through reflection, we will eventually see Him as "my God." As you

approach Him with these words, "Lord, I need, value, and desire your favour and presence. You have promised it, but you will not fulfil your promise; you will never again show the light of your countenance to my soul." Even though we seek fervently, it's no wonder we don't witness the heavens opening. You must use the key just as much as your hands, if you wish to enter and explore the chambers. The key of faith must accompany the hands of prayer if we want to unlock the countenance of God towards us. Faith is what grants us sight of God and Christ.

2. Do not judge the outcome based on what you feel, but rather on what God promises. In cases where God does not immediately or easily reveal His former love to you, knock again and motivate your heart to out-believe all the fears and corruption.

As David in Psalm 42:11 asks, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the help of my countenance, and my God."

He declares in verse 6 of the same Psalm, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me," undoubtedly due to the absence of God's favour. In verse 7 he says, "My rock, why hast thou forgotten me?" Despite this, he resolves, "therefore will I remember thee." Remember, David? What prompts you to do so? Your Rock seems to have forgotten you, and its waves and billows have swept over you. You find yourself in a tumultuous and forsaken state, yet you say, "I will remember thee." Consider verse 8, "Yet the Lord will command his loving kindness in the day time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

In essence, though these afflictions and sorrows afflict me and God appears to forget me for now, I will remember Him. I am aware that

He thinks of me, and He possesses loving kindness that He can bestow at His will. I will undoubtedly receive it – perhaps during the day, perhaps during the night. Hence, I will diligently seek Him for His loving kindness; I will remember Him.

But how can one find [Ob.] solace during this period of divine favour's suspension? Can someone be virtuous despite feeling this way? Does God intend any good or view favourably those in such a state?

I reply, you can find [Sol.] solace through these means:

1. By recollecting the past days. Psalm 77:7 inquires, "Will the Lord cast off forever? And will he be favourable no more?" In verse 9, "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? This is mine infirmity." In other words, concluding that God will not be favourable and gracious to me merely due to my lack of perception is a sign of my weakness and sinful misunderstanding. But how can you then console yourself? Refer to verse 10, "I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High." Also, verse 11, "I will remember thy wonders of old." Undoubtedly, recalling what God has accomplished can provide the confidence to anticipate His forthcoming actions.

When we reminisce about past days, God's prior actions and conduct towards us, we will recognise and comfort ourselves that His withdrawal was either necessary or expedient. His loving countenance will inevitably shine again after a night of sorrow, following a day of seeking.

For the suspension of His favour is temporary, whereas His truths are eternal. As Christ says, "I will come again." And in Song of

Solomon 3:4, the Church utters, "It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth."

2. You possess favour even if you don't feel it. Although comfort often accompanies feeling God's favour, your happiness exists in its very presence. You are saved because God loves you, not because you perceive that love.

2 Timothy 2:19 states, "The foundation of God standeth sure, the Lord knoweth who are his." God knows this due to His free election and His unchanging affection. He knows them consistently, even if they may not always be aware of Him. In Jeremiah 31:20, He questions, "Is Ephraim my dear son?" In essence, He is, even if Ephraim doubts His sentiments.

Sometimes, the child holds onto the parent, and at other times, the parent holds onto the child. Safety lies in both scenarios. As long as I am held or am holding on, I am secure. Similarly, with God and us, there are moments when we grasp onto Him through faith, and always, He holds onto us through His love. Our salvation lies in the fact that we belong to God, and He belongs to us. He possesses our hearts, and we hold His love, even if we don't always perceive it.

3. You shall have favour, though it may currently be concealed. He will see your upright heart, and you shall joyfully behold His face. Isaiah 54:8 states, "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

Therefore, the Church elegantly expresses in Micah 7:8, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness." Remember this:



upright and believing individuals always have a favourable God, even if they don't always sense His favour. Even when Satan testifies otherwise – which is the next source of doubt to be addressed – a distressed Christian should not heed it, as it will only perpetuate inner unrest and turmoil.

12. The twelfth source of doubt arises from crediting Satan's testimony regarding our spiritual state and relationship with God and Christ. If any distressed Christian listens to and gives heed to Satan's voice, they will remain trapped in mental unease and turmoil, as Satan's testimony always opposes the truth and comfort of our spiritual condition.

To remedy and address this source, consider the following conclusions earnestly:

1. The ultimate judgment of our eternal state belongs solely to the Heavenly Court. The search for truth pertains to us, but the final verdict rests with God. We must examine ourselves, but no person has the immediate authority to declare their own spiritual state, whether for acquittal or condemnation. This responsibility lies with God's Word – the revealed Word that commands and forbids, and thus absolves or binds.

No individual possesses this authority to release or bind themselves; it is the exclusive prerogative of the King. While it is true that if the Word condemns us, our conscience might follow suit, and similarly, if the Word absolves us, our conscience may as well. Yet this is by the authority of the Word, not by the power of conscience alone.

From this, two key principles emerge:

1. Satan's judgment of our spiritual state is unwarranted; it is not his role to pass judgment on our souls. It's akin to the principle that the same individual cannot act as both witness and judge. We can rightfully say to Satan, echoing the Pharisees in their confrontation with Christ, "By what authority do you do these things?" or like Moses was questioned, "Who made you a judge over us?" Surely, the enemy of our salvation should not be entrusted with deciding our eternal fate, given his malicious opposition to our well-being. Though Satan may attempt to judge Christians, as David declared in another context, "Thou Lord wilt not leave the righteous when he is judged." Satan's judgment against believers will one day be judged, for he has overstepped by arrogating the role of judge, as he has even been accused of falsely testifying against Job before God.
2. No testimony that contradicts the Word's judgment should be accepted. As 1 John 4:1 advises, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." The Word will ultimately judge us, and thus it should judge us now.

Satan's judgment is illegitimate, and our own judgments can often be fallible, particularly in the case of wicked and presumptuous sinners who may make favourable judgments to ensure their own safety, despite God's proclamation of woes against them.

Furthermore, our judgments are often skewed during times of distress, marked by suspicion and haste. We do not assess ourselves with clear and well-informed judgments, guided by the Word, about our complete spiritual condition. Instead, our judgments become clouded by emotion, as seen in David's case when he proclaimed in the midst of his turmoil, "I am cast out of thy presence," even though

God had not cast him off. It was David's disordered judgment that led him to that conclusion.

2. Maintain the judgement of the Word, in spite of all other judgements: When a person has thoroughly examined and scrutinised the depths of their heart and actions under the enlightening guidance of God's blessed Spirit; when they separate their flesh and spirit, that is, their sins, weaknesses, graces, and tendencies, and lay these, along with their complete self-awareness, before the Lord in genuine sincerity; when they would dare to stake the eternal salvation of their soul with their God, knowing they hold nothing back, neither what is inherently theirs nor what is divinely bestowed through grace – if, at this point, the Word confirms for them that their state is heavenly, their heart is sincere, and their connection with Christ is genuine, such a person ought to uphold this decisive Word as the paramount declaration of their eternal salvation. In case an opposing verdict or testimony arises, there should be no vexing oneself with arguments and doubts. Instead, the authority of God's testimony must be upheld by believing and maintaining an upright walk with God, manifesting itself through devoted acts of duty.

Two sources of doubt still need to be addressed, and then I shall conclude this topic.

13. The thirteenth source of doubt arises from the resurgence of past sins. As I mentioned earlier, this occurrence can't help but astound the soul, seeing the dead resurrected from the grave and the debt appearing uncrossed. It greatly unsettles us regarding our spiritual state. Now, consider this:

14. There are five occasions when we confront our sins.

15. The first is during our days of legal humiliation, when the Law, like potent medicine, penetrates deep within, stirs up the sickness, thrusts our sins before our very eyes, arranges them in a sequence, and convicts and horrifies us with undeniable force.
16. Another is the time of intense affliction, when the Lord sends His messengers of wrath, severing us from our pleasures, snatching away our joys, obstructing our pursuits, and when we see God taking away our friends, our children, and our earthly delights. Indeed, dire adversities often lead us to acknowledge our sinful transgressions. We often become aware of our faults through our sufferings. This is exemplified in the case of Pharaoh, who recognized his wrongdoing during the plagues and said, "I have sinned by not letting the people go." Balaam similarly realised his error when he saw the Angel and heard his warning, exclaiming, "I will return." The children of Israel also acknowledged their murmuring and stubbornness when God sent evil Angels among them – messengers of His wrath and displeasure.
17. The third instance is during times of dreadful and widespread calamities, whether they affect individuals or nations sharing the same guilt of sin as ourselves. Such occasions are like a general fire, which rages and spreads, causing people to retreat into their private chambers and reveal their concealed possessions. Extraordinary calamities prompt us to reflect on our own concealed sins, which we fear might attract the fire of divine judgement upon us. During the height of the Great Plague, it is beyond doubt that many hidden iniquities emerged, driven by the dread that the plague's judgement might infiltrate their bodies and homes.

18. The fourth juncture is the moment of death. While sin and a sinner coexist throughout one's life, the sense of sin and a sinner does not always converge until the moment of death. Death serves as an inescapable summons to give an account, compelling the unjust steward to contemplate how to answer their most just Lord and Master.

This moment of convergence becomes evident through personal experience. Though we may have indulged our sins during times of health and vitality, we often encounter the effects of those sins only when plagued by sickness and frailty.

5. Another occasion of confrontation occurs on the Day of Judgement; this is an unquestionably certain and infallible instance. While one can evade the legal encounter through conviction, and the wretched encounter through afflictions, judgements, and even death itself (for some die as foolishly as Nabal, living wretchedly and dying senselessly), there is no avoiding the meeting of individuals and their sins on the Day of Judgement. During this time, the secrets of all hearts will be unveiled, and God's righteous judgement will be evident to the entire world. This is why, on this day of reckoning, people will cry out to the mountains and rocks, imploring them to conceal them (though in vain) from the wrath of the One seated on the throne.

6. Numerous factors contribute to the resurgence of sin: some are attributed to God, some to us, and others to Satan.

7. As for God's role: He often causes our past sins to resurface through the potency of His divine Spirit in the ministry of His Word. Whereas the sinner might attempt to lull fears, sorrows, and conscience to sleep, the Lord intervenes. He rubs the

wound, provokes the conscience, making it acutely aware of guilt and injury. He wields the two-edged sword of His Word, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, discerning the very thoughts and intents of the heart. The Lord frequently confronts the individual, many years after the commission of the sins, deliberately stirring and recalling those acts in full detail – circumstances that the sinning individual might have attempted to bury in silence and oblivion.

8. As for our role: This gives rise to a twofold occurrence of old sins reemerging, one of which is positive, and the other negative.
9. A renewed commission of former sins resurrects the sting of prior guilt. Relapses into the ailment cause the burden and pain to resurface. If you cut your finger anew, it will smart anew; if you fall into the same fever again, you will shiver anew. Relapses bear this verdict: they produce a new wound and make the old one bleed afresh. As in certain wells, there are two buckets – lower one down and draw the other up – so revisiting the same sin renews the old burden.
10. Renewed acts of humility lead us to look back on our previous accounts, enabling us to humbly plead for complete absolution. Although we may not recommit the same sin, we can still shed tears of repentance over it repeatedly. Though the actual sinning may cease, the lamenting should remain constant.
11. As for Satan's role, he, like an envious and malicious individual, ceaselessly brings our errors and shortcomings to the fore, even after they've been rectified with genuine reform. Satan, the prime instigator of sin, persists even after true repentance, aiming to distress, sadden, and if possible, drive us to despair by reintroducing the memory of past and forsaken sins. Rarely do

we seize a blessed promise or bask in the comforting favour of God or relish the tranquillity of conscience without his interference. He interjects, rebukes, and troubles us with recollections of earlier transgressions. Perhaps he causes us to relinquish our gracious hold through fears, suspicions, and the accusations of previous guilt.

12. Considering the array of reasons for the resurgence of former guilt, we shall now present various aids and remedies.

Consider, therefore, that from God's perspective, there are various purposes concerning distinct individuals as to why He brings their sins to the fore again.

1. To deepen and fortify the foundation: Often, we underestimate the extent of our wounds; we sin extensively and soil ourselves deeply, yet believe a bit of cleansing will suffice. Oh, the undertaking of self-examination, the action of striking at the root of the tree, delving into the hidden aspects of sin, applying caustics to the core and essence of our natures – this is disconcerting. We quickly grow weary of it.

Indeed, we acknowledge that some discomfort and bitterness are fitting, but to continually accuse ourselves before God, to perpetually chastise and wound our hearts for having wounded God – ah, this, this we find unsettling.

You may observe individuals occasionally becoming acutely aware of their infirm bodies. "Ah, some medicine would do well now," they say, detecting aches and ailments. Some medicine is taken, causing extreme sickness, and then, it's discarded – no more medicine. But eventually, the ailment resurfaces, and the doctor prescribes more medicine, even that which targets the root of the ailment. Although it

induces further sickness, it ultimately secures their well-being and better health.

Beloved, perhaps God allows individuals more time to grapple with their sins; they make amends swiftly after grievous sins, assuming they can make amends with God instantly. Yet, the Lord knows that skimming the surface will lead to ruin. Therefore, after a brief period, He returns their sins to them, causing Conscience to recoil at the guilt once more. He deals with us as a skilful surgeon would treat a person with a broken and improperly set leg – breaking it anew to ensure it's properly aligned.

In the same way, the Lord fractures our souls anew with the guilt of sins. He desires us to present Him with more contrite hearts. We shall fully comprehend what it means to sin against Him, and we won't achieve genuine and lasting peace without a profound and substantial humility.

Truly, His wisdom is greatly merciful in operating this way. Through this, He lays our foundation low and secure. It also precludes future disturbances and clears a path for more assured and pleasant experiences of His love in Christ. You are well aware that a wise schoolmaster, when a student skips from a difficult lesson to an easier one, sends them back to repeat the challenging one repeatedly before moving forward. People may think they are grasping at Christ, even though they love to offload their burdens onto Him and heap their vile burdens upon Him. However, perhaps they've never truly weighed the gravity of their sinful acts and their dishonour towards God. The Lord will redirect such presumptuous individuals, requiring them to relearn their initial lessons better. He will make them more conscious of their wretched hearts, ways, and deeds. They won't detach from their cursed transgressions as easily. The Lord will



present the comforting responses of His favours and the sweet experiences of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will compel them to sit in bitter sorrow once more – sorrow for having pierced the Lord Christ, for having shed His blood, for having grieved His Spirit. This is all to further humble them, to genuinely prepare them for Christ.

2. To foster greater humility: I assure you that often, our very triumphs lead to pride. Even the grace that should humble us, on occasion and inadvertently, becomes a source of self-inflation. We frequently elevate ourselves excessively, beyond measure. Hence, just as a sting was given to Paul to keep him humble and prevent him from being excessively exalted, the Lord sometimes reinstates the tangible sting of significant guilt for many Christians. This serves to humble their hearts and remind them of their inherent limitations.

The reawakening of past guilt exposes our base and deceitful natures, revealing the fruits of our hearts. "Ah!" a person may say, "This heart, this nature of mine – what was it? What is it, should the Lord abandon it? Behold, the grapes – the sour grapes – of this untamed vine. I have little reason to hold myself in such high regard as long as I see such repulsive qualities and outcomes emanating from within."

Truly, it often compels us to despise ourselves, to abhor ourselves in dust and ashes. This is a major objective and use the Lord makes of past sins: to maintain the heart in a profoundly humble state. We must constantly encounter some aspects of our own nature, which will make us aware of our natural foolishness – to use David's expression – and our inherent brutishness, as Solomon would say.

3. To increase our vigilance: The vivid recollection of sin works more profound detestation and more vigilant attentiveness within a devout heart. The fresh contemplations of former sins

often serve as current precautions: forthcoming sins are frequently deterred by the immediate impressions of past sins.

"What? Should I sin thus again?" ponders the humble heart. "Do I not have cause to crush these offspring? To crucify that bitter root, to implore against it, to stand guard against it, to resist it, to deny it? It has been and still is a blade in my conscience."

Consider, however, that the reawakening of sin leads to a dual sense of vigilance.

1. One pertains to its guilt; our care here lies in renewing and expanding our exoneration. Oh, how the Lord, through these resurgences of sin, incites the soul to fervently seek out His grace and favour! It yields many tears, numerous prayers, intense struggles with God, fervent approaches to the promises, earnest supplications to have our pardon and absolution more comprehensively sealed within our consciences, by the blood of Jesus Christ and the testimony of the Spirit.
2. The other pertains to the sins themselves, in their corrupted attributes, inclinations, and motions. This leads to a deeper study against them: stronger resolutions, fortified covenants, reinforced grace, increased circumspection, greater detestation, firmer resistance, or any means by which the forces of sin can be further subdued and vanquished.
3. To engender more gratitude: Perhaps the Lord has pardoned those sins that resurface in your heart. They don't always emerge because God hasn't remitted their guilt, but because you haven't settled your new debt. They arise as a debt to discharge a debt – just as we remind people of their past misfortunes not to make them miserable anew, but to make them thankful. Beloved, to

have past sins forgiven is a mercy – I say, a mercy, indeed a profound mercy, surpassing even the gift of life to a condemned person or liberty to one imprisoned. No mercy compares to the erasure of our sins, the salvation of a soul from hell, and the bestowment of pardon and life.

Such great mercies should be met with profound gratitude. You journeyed with a heavy heart, bitter sighs, and deep distress due to the sense and sting of your guilt. "Oh, if only I had mercy! Oh, this burden! Oh, this wound! Oh, this sin!" And with earnest protestations: "If the Lord pardons it, if He mercifully receives me, if He graciously accepts me, then I will offer the calves of my lips. I will truly love Him, serve Him, praise Him, speak well of His name. I will declare, 'Who is like Him, forgiving iniquities, transgressions, and sins, and overlooking the sins of His people?'"

Indeed, the Lord has demonstrated His true nature, a God exceedingly gracious and merciful. Yet, we might have revealed our own nature – fervent and promising in times of distress, but lukewarm and forgetful in times of exemption. The Lord detests this fickleness and wavering of heart. He desires that mercy be consistently acknowledged as mercy. He wants us to look back as well as up, to express gratitude for the mercy for which, not long ago, we would have traded the entire world and our very souls. Therefore, He presents our accounts to us, revealing what they were and what He has done, so that we may confess our lapse in not responding to immense mercy with profound gratitude.

But perhaps you will inquire, "What if we ourselves, on our part, are the cause of the rekindling of former guilt and the sting of prior sins?"

I answer, if it is done in a manner of humility – seeking pardon, confessing to the God of mercy, and striving for victory over them – this should not in any way discourage us. For this is no more detrimental or harmful to the soul than exposing a wound to a surgeon to cleanse and heal it is detrimental to the wellbeing of the body.

However, if it is done by way of commission, either by falling back into the same sins or by multiplying sins in a different manner – both of which resurrect buried and past guilts – then I know of no means of peace and security, no method to alleviate these renewed accusations and stings, except through renewed sorrow and repentance. Indeed, what I previously conveyed to you about recovering from relapses is the immediate course of action to be taken here: Let us hasten before the Lord with hearts moistened by tears of blood, for old and current wounds. The abundance of sorrow, the bitterness of grief, the practice of self-affliction – I cannot emphasize enough the depth of sorrow, the intensity of hatred, the vehemence of indignation, the severity of retribution, the earnestness of repentance – all of these are essential requirements here, and they must be prolonged. Do whatever you may, attempt to brush it aside, attempt to create a false sense of peace for yourself – you shall never attain it. Your sins will repeatedly and persistently torment, vex, and wound you until you have rekindled the bitterness of the most humbling sorrow for renewing the filthiness and baseness of your audacious transgressions.

But then suppose that Satan, through his malicious craft, revives our former guilt through his accusations to cause greater disruption and disquiet. What should be done now?

I will briefly elucidate two aspects for you:

1. First, how to discern whether the reawakening of past guilt is from Satan or not.
2. Second, what actions are to be taken by us in that case.
3. You can discern that Satan is behind the revival of former guilt based on two outcomes.
4. The first outcome is from the dire consequences of their revival: you can discern whether someone is a friend or a malevolent enemy by how they bring past errors and failings to the surface among people. A friend revives them with the intention of bettering you – either to reform if the matter is flawed, or to be cautious whether the matter is true or false. However, a malicious enemy revives them solely to make you appear odious and detestable. Satan's revival of former sins is always reprehensible, rooted in evil, and its purpose is dire. What is that purpose? It is to lead us to renounce all conceivable claims to mercy, to abandon any hope of pardon and acceptance. Thus, when he revives sins – former sins – he steers the heart towards some present calamity, urging it to forsake all hope of mercy, to contemplate self-destruction, and to embrace such dire consequences. Both of these outcomes are contrary to God's intentions and the desires of a pious heart, which, upon the resurgence of sin, always seeks mercy and improvement for the soul.
5. The second outcome is from the defiling consequences, which are as follows: He revives the sting of sin to encourage us to become bolder and more reckless in sinning. He revives sin to facilitate further sin, suggesting that there is no prospect of mercy or recovery, hence it is as good to persist as not. He influences the heart towards diving into the water, wallowing in

the mire, and eagerly indulging in sinful conduct. He easily instills this disposition in the hearts of wicked individuals by exploiting the temporary alleviation and cessation of the piercing guilt they observe within themselves through the fervent, unceasing, and desensitizing repetition or practice of the same sins.

So, if your hearts are tender and you have been humbled by your former sins, and if you are still upright in your hatred for them, if the revival of past guilt is accompanied by a tendency to forsake all mercy or to now surrender to the same or other sins with licentiousness – in this situation, it is Satan at work, and a different approach is warranted.

The course then is this, and I beseech you to pay close attention:

1. Strengthen your heart with a stronger detestation of the sins. The more he revives the accusations of guilt, the more you should revive your upright detestations. Just as he pours out malice to disturb your conscience, pour out your resolve to overcome it. If he vexes you, go and vex your sins.
2. Do not believe a malicious accuser. Satan often presents a writ in the King's name without the King's seal. He forgives where God does not, and he binds where God has released. Remember, "It is God who justifies, who then shall condemn?" If the King himself has pardoned you, how unjust for a subordinate officer to arrest and accuse?
3. In case of frequent disturbances, when Satan will not be appeased and keeps on accusing, now appeal from him to God. If he brings charges in the Court of Conscience, wisely transfer the case to the higher court of heaven. Let God once again be the

judge and the one who decides. "Now Satan, what have you to say to me? You have sinned before," says Satan, "and your Judge knows the truth of this indictment." "Yes, Satan, I admit it, and my God knows the truth of my sorrow and repentance. Lord, do you not know my tears, my returnings, my self-judgment, my experience of mercy and grace? Lord, you have known it, and you have known my soul through your pardoning and accepting mercy."

4. Rest your soul and anchor it to the blood of Christ, which will always silence the testimonies and clamours of guilt. Nothing but that will satisfy God and defeat Satan. Then, through faith, not only grasp hold of mercy but also maintain the steadfastness of mercy. The King's pardon will remain valid twenty years from now in case of a dispute. Satan may often disturb and question, but God's acceptance of you into mercy will undoubtedly calm and support you.

The last source of doubts was the silence in the conscience, prolonged silence there.

To conclude this source of doubts and the overall subject, consider these points briefly:

1. The communication of conscience – what it entails.
2. The muteness of conscience – its nature and occurrence.
3. How to elicit speech from a silent conscience – the requisites.
4. How to sustain ourselves during periods of silence – feasible actions.

5. The communication of conscience: This involves its testimony in our favour or against us. Conscience is privy to our concealed sentiments, intentions, motives, and actions. Through its inherent enlightenment, it can reveal much; with implanted illumination, more; and with renewed and sanctified illumination, the most of all. Now, conscience's communication in our favour is merely an endorsement of our condition, congruent with the Word, clearing us against all anxieties and objections that we are children of God, truly transformed, genuinely devoted to Him, believers in Christ, and followers of His ways. Indeed, the voice of conscience is akin to the echo of the Word's voice, affirming concerning our individuality what the Word proclaims generally. Its voice is a Summation, while the Word's voice is a Proposition. The Word states what should be, and Conscience echoes, "Here it is." The Word stipulates certain prerequisites for salvation and divine favour, and Conscience brings them forth, vouching for the individual.
  
6. The muteness or silence of conscience refers to the withholding of its decisive and exonerating actions regarding our condition in general or regarding specific uncertainties. Sometimes conscience calls us, and sometimes we summon it. In matters of guiding our actions or abstaining from them, we usually receive an internal word, either "Do not do it" or "You may do it." Amid subsequent doubts, we call on conscience to provide its attestation, proclaiming, "I acted with an upright heart, and my conscience testifies to it."

Among all the instances of conscience's silence, the most profound is the one that occurs during our spiritual conflicts and trials. In these situations, our state of grace is questioned, but resolution eludes us



since conscience remains mute, failing to declare its approval and exoneration. Several factors account for this muteness.

1. At times, it is due to specific misconduct that contradicts conscience's guiding voice. Such transgressions inhibit the exoneration provided by conscience, as it refuses to speak for us when we dare to sin against it.
2. On occasion, it results from negligence towards God's voice through preaching. Conscience is displeased when we disregard what the Word condemns. Therefore, God often employs the silence of conscience to alert us to our negligence in adhering to His Word. When conscience speaks neither positively nor negatively, something is typically awry.
3. Conscience may fall silent to direct our focus to a higher authority than itself, highlighting that we must turn to a higher tribunal for our petitions.
4. Silence in conscience may be intended to reveal the foundation of our faith, prompting us to examine whether we believe because God declares or whether we rejoice because conscience affirms.
5. To rekindle the voice of conscience, what is to be done? We have benefited from its gracious testimonies, which have comforted and sustained us. How can we revive its speech once more?

I answer,

1. Engage in dialogue with God, and then God might engage Conscience, and Conscience will engage you. God exercises greater authority over Conscience than over us. It is akin to the

relationship between a King and his Courtiers. If the King addresses a petitioner kindly, the Courtiers will then receive the petitioner warmly. Likewise, Conscience will reflect God's disposition of love. Therefore, do this: speak to the Lord, firstly, to reveal the cause of Conscience's silence; secondly, to bestow the testimony of His own Spirit, which in turn will elicit Conscience's testimony within you (Rom. 8:16).

2. Direct your attention to your obligations: Ensure that you do not displease Conscience. If you have, repent and cease from actions that displease or silence Conscience.
3. How can we uphold ourselves during periods of silence?

I respond that you may console yourself if:

1. The Word can validate you: The testimony of the Word is perpetually accessible, even if Conscience's testimony is not. Why is this? It's because people can continuously assess and evaluate their conditions. And as an aside, consider this: if the Word (which is always available and speaking) absolves you, then Conscience (though silent for now) will eventually exonerate you whenever it speaks.
2. You have and do endorse the Word: How is this achieved? It pertains to adhering to the Word as your standard, your guiding light. When Conscience eventually speaks, it pronounces judgment based on the Word (by which you live) and your disposition and conduct, which ought to correspond genuinely to the Word's guidance.

# **An Addition of four other causes of Doubtings,**

with a brief resolution of them.

1. Sense of sinful workings. Oh! says a distressed soul, Certainly my condition is thoroughly bad, and I have no entitlement to Christ or any mercy. I cannot believe. Why? Because I've never experienced such vile inner struggles as of late. I perceive a remarkable rebellion within my heart. I can't contemplate any good or engage in any good without encountering a host of evils that oppose and hinder me.

For a soul in such a state, I would recommend these five subsequent considerations to provide assistance.

1. When genuine grace enters, it inevitably brings forth such revelations and stirs that the soul has never encountered before. For grace is a new nature, a new light, and a new active principle. It is infused into the soul for the very purpose of uncovering and exposing sin, and even driving it out. The understanding has never been so convinced before, the conscience has never been so sensitized before, and the will and affections have never been so transformed before. Thus, don't be surprised by these unusual experiences. Just as when a child is conceived in the womb, the woman's state is not as it was before, similarly, when Christ is formed within the soul, the soul's state is no longer the same as it used to be. Something new has entered in, which must cleanse and rule you.

2. If good is being accomplished, evil will also be at work. When Christ was born, all Jerusalem was in turmoil. Similarly, when grace is being worked in, sin will stir. Indeed, if grace entered the soul through a complete and final cessation of sin, where no sin remained within the soul, then you would feel no inner turmoil at all. This will be the case in heaven; there, grace will stand alone. Only holiness will exist, resulting in no conflict, no turmoil. However, on earth, this will never be the case. In some people's hearts, sin may be solitary, but grace is never solitary in anyone's heart in this life. Or if grace entered the soul through a peaceful surrender, if sinful desires were to make a full and unopposed surrender, then you might expect tranquillity, an armistice, and an end to the vile inner turmoil. But oh, Christian, grace and sin, the Spirit and the flesh, stand in opposition to each other, and thus they lust against one another. Fire and water do not remain at peace. Your condition would indeed be sorrowful if you possessed a state of (vain) goodness that no sinful aspect within you resisted.

Every regenerate person possesses a duality within them: the new self and the old self. The former desires to do good, while the latter resists doing good; the former wants to pray, while the latter does not; the former wants to grieve, while the latter refuses; the former wants to believe, while the latter resists.

3. But then, thirdly, you who feel such a rebellious and opposing nature within you, what are you opposing? It's true, you sense an unruly, rebellious nature still residing within you, but which side are you on? "It is not I," said Paul, "but sin that dwelleth in me." Sin within him opposed what was good, but Paul himself approved of what was good, delighted in it, and willed it.

The same Apostle, speaking of the cohabitation and cooperation of flesh and spirit in regenerated individuals, noting that one lusts against the other and that one is contrary to the other, and that because of the rebellion and unruliness of one, we cannot do the good that we desire, still comforts them in this condition in the following words: "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the Law." As if he had said, "Despite all this rebellious opposition from your flesh, if you do not yield to be slaves to it, but instead approve of, incline towards, and follow the promptings and paths of the Spirit in your hearts and actions, the condition is quite good and secure."

Therefore, although the remaining evil within us opposes the good within us, if we ourselves do not oppose the good, our condition may be sound.

4. Fourthly, just as there is evil within you opposing any good, there is also something within you opposing that evil. Do you not condemn that hardness which prevents you from mourning, and shed many tears because you can't mourn? Do you not contend with the Lord through numerous prayers and in the observance of all His ordinances against that unbelieving and rebellious nature of yours? Do you not, like Paul, struggle against it, groan under it, and cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"

Surely, neither the awareness of this, nor the resistance against this, nor the second desires for deliverance from this, can be indicators of an unfavourable condition.

5. Lastly, when facing inner rebellions and workings, your path isn't to nurture doubts, but your duty is to kindle belief.

When Paul experienced that struggle between the law of his members and the law of his mind, he was indeed greatly troubled by it, but he didn't draw a negative conclusion about his state of grace. No, he rather affirmed it, saying (Romans 7:25): "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, though with the flesh the law of sin." He put his faith to work, as in verse 24 he exclaimed, "Who shall deliver me?" and in verse 25, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Observe his practice: This is my situation, I feel rebellious lusts, yes, I find them sometimes ensnaring me. What should I do to be free of them? To overcome them? I grapple with them, but I cannot conquer them on my own. I cannot conquer them; however, Jesus Christ can conquer them and deliver me from them. I will place my trust in Him by faith.

This is what you must do when sensing the inherent rebellion and base operation of your flesh. You must turn to Christ in faith, acknowledging your wretchedness and inadequacy, and also acknowledging His sufficiency. You must elevate Jesus Christ through faith in His role as Mediator, trusting that He, through His Almighty Spirit, will further subdue your sinful flesh and, which was one of His purposes in coming into the world, obliterate the works of sin and Satan.

2. Another cause of doubting in a Christian may arise from a sense of wrath. Such a person might exclaim, "Do you expect me to believe, or do you imagine that I can, considering I feel the very anger of God within my soul, and the terrors of the Almighty piercing me due to my transgressions? How can I possibly believe in mercy for myself when I am experiencing His wrath? Can I truly believe that God will show mercy, when I am so acutely aware of His wrath?"

This is a significant concern, and it requires a careful and circumspect resolution. Nevertheless, I will attempt to alleviate this burden for a troubled soul.

1. There are two categories of individuals who, in this earthly existence, might sense the wrath of God.

Firstly, there are those who are undoubtedly wicked. Some of them feel the wrath of God as the initial stage of their eternal damnation. This wrath inflicted upon them is merely the beginning of the just punishment awaiting them in hell. Judas felt the wrath of God in this way. Additionally, some of these individuals feel the wrath of God as a means for their humiliation and conversion. Those in Acts 2:37, who were "pricked in their hearts" and cried out, "What shall we do?", felt the wrath of God in this sense.

Secondly, there are those who are unquestionably good. Among them, some have felt God's wrath due to periods of spiritual abandonment, like Heman, Ezra, Job, and others. Some have felt God's wrath due to notable corruption or sin, such as David, whose bones were broken and God's face hidden from him, and he experienced spiritual dryness.

2. Furthermore, it's important to distinguish between the effects that manifest in individuals experiencing the sense of divine wrath, as they fall into two categories.
3. Some feel God's wrath and respond either by being enraged against God with blasphemous thoughts or by further indulging in sinful behaviour as a means to escape the awareness of wrath. Others may even descend into complete despair regarding God's mercy, resulting in them refraining from any attempt at repentance due to relinquishing all hope of mercy. When

someone experiences wrath in such a manner, it is indeed a fearful condition in every respect and for all time.

4. Some feel God's wrath and are thereby prompted to either pursue a study of holy reformation of their sinful hearts and ways, or to specifically restore themselves from gross sins into which they have fallen, and for which they are now experiencing the displeasure of an angered Father.

If your condition fits either of these scenarios - where you feel wrath and it has driven you to examine your natural state, humble yourself, and seek the means of deliverance from both your sinfulness and God's wrath, or if this felt wrath has stirred your conscience and led to your repentance from particular sins, prompting you to return to your former, closer walk with God - you can safely believe in God's mercy. Even if you still feel wrath, you can believe in mercy. The reason is that mercy is now your portion; your condition is right in line with the many promises of mercy aimed at pardoning you, for it is a genuinely penitent condition (Isaiah 55:7, Ezekiel 18:21-22, Hosea 14:1-2,4).

3. Nonetheless, even though mercy is your rightful portion, be aware that the sense of wrath will not dissipate until you actually believe in that mercy. It is not the mere promise of mercy that can remove the sense of wrath; rather, it must be mercy applied through faith. Until faith operates within a person's soul, until the soul views God through the lens of faith, God appears not as a merciful but as a wrathful God.

Therefore, if you find yourself in the described condition, you can safely rely on mercy, even while you still feel the weight of wrath (as the aforementioned Saints did). Upon believing, you will eventually experience the sensation of mercy dispelling the sense of wrath. Your



faith will reveal a reconciled God, and you will enjoy a pacified conscience.

3. A third cause of doubting might arise from a condemning conscience. A trembling Christian might express, "My conscience informs me of my sins and the remarkable sinfulness within me. And God is greater than my conscience, which will undoubtedly condemn me. Oh, I cannot bring myself to believe."

This appears to be a complex situation. Allow me to address whether a person can believe in God's forgiveness even while their conscience condemns them. I will share my perspective as follows:

1. First and foremost, you must differentiate between a condemning conscience. Conscience can either condemn:
  2. A person's actions, or
  3. Their very self.

When Conscience condemns a person's actions, it means that, enlightened and informed by the Word of God, Conscience judges those actions to be evil and damnable. These actions are seen as contrary to God's holiness and glory, and therefore they should be abhorred, crucified, and abandoned.

When Conscience condemns a person's self, it's not just about detecting sin within the person but also about recognizing that the person is entangled in sin. This involves not only identifying corruptions in the heart but also acknowledging that the heart approves of, loves, and is determined to persist in those corruptions.

Allow me to present two conclusions in line with these two scenarios:

1. If Conscience condemns your very self, then indeed, you have no grounds to believe in mercy for yourself. If your conscience boldly declares to God that you are entrenched in a sinful and depraved path, if the Word has beckoned you to abandon it, and you have not heeded that call but are determined to continue on that path, then it's true that God is greater than your conscience and will undoubtedly condemn you.
2. If Conscience condemns only your actions, then you can believe in mercy even amidst that condemnation. Here's what I mean: Although your conscience, illuminated by its discerning light, presents a significant degree of sinfulness in your nature and past conduct, and though it labels these aspects as vile and deserving of crucifixion, abhorrence, and abandonment, this condemnation does not impede your right to believe. In fact, no one should truly believe unless their conscience condemns sin within them, not merely highlighting their sins but also affirming that these sins are truly evil and unworthy of their affection, deserving of their utmost detestation and mortification.
3. Secondly, you should consider the timing when Conscience condemns an individual. There are two times for a Christian:
4. Some moments are open and transparent. At such times, one is in touch with oneself and can objectively evaluate both sides of an issue, including arguments in their favour and against them. They consider matters with the impartial scale of God's sanctuary, not Satan's deceptive and cunning scale of suggestions. Under such circumstances, would Conscience condemn your very self? On the contrary, wouldn't the Word of

God, against all apprehensions, vindicate your state as genuinely pious and aligned with reality?

5. At times, some individuals are clouded and obscured due to melancholy, afflictions, or temptations. During these periods, Christians view themselves through a distorted lens (much like a dishonest lawyer fabricates a deceptive title). This distorted perspective doesn't reflect the full truth but only partial aspects - perhaps prior actions and affections or isolated instances, not indicative of one's life trajectory post-conversion, but merely events stemming from surprise or captivity. In such cases, Conscience may indeed condemn, but this verdict is unlawful, a corrupted judgment that can be reversed. God will not assess you as Conscience does in these situations; in fact, He will overturn and annul it.
6. A fourth source of doubt pertains to a fear that one has committed the unforgivable sin against the Holy Spirit. This apprehension often stems from having sinned against clear knowledge, a crucial element in that particular sin. A troubled soul might say, "This is my predicament: I haven't just sinned, but I've sinned against the light emanating from the Ministry and influencing my conscience. Therefore, I am more inclined to conclude rather than question that mercy is not intended for me."

To assist a conscience ensnared in this manner, I would recommend that such an individual:

1. Be enlightened and
2. Be guided.

### 3. The enlightenment that I suggest in this scenario is fourfold.

Firstly, the sin against the Holy Spirit is not any sin committed out of ignorance. Regardless of the nature of the sin or sins committed (for which the person stands guilty), whether they transgress the Law or the Gospel, be it a single grave sin or multiple, if the person is in a state of blindness and unawareness, if they lack knowledge of their actions, if they are oblivious to what they are doing, this lack of knowledge exempts these transgressions from being categorized as the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, the sin against the Holy Spirit is not any sin against the Gospel arising from a misbelief or misperception. Even if the sin involves belittling Evangelical doctrines or even persecuting their followers, if these acts of opposition stem entirely from errors in judgment, from a judgment misinformed, if they believe these doctrines not to be truths, viewing those paths as erroneous, then these misbeliefs prevent such actions from being classified as sins against the Holy Spirit. This sin assumes the presence of light, even to conviction and approval. Refer to Hebrews 6:4-5.

Thirdly, not every instance of sinning with knowledge constitutes the sin against the Holy Spirit. These propositions are not equivalent: every sin with knowledge is against the Holy Spirit, and every sin against knowledge is the sin against the Holy Spirit. The former is true, but the latter is not. Many a converted person sins with knowledge but never commits the sin against the Holy Spirit.

In two circumstances, a person sinning with knowledge does not commit the sin against the Holy Spirit. First, under the sway of a strong and forceful temptation; second, in the grip of a sudden and tumultuous emotion. The same applied to Peter when he denied and forswore his Master. Had Paul possessed Peter's knowledge prior to

his conversion, he would have committed this sin against the Holy Spirit. If, in his denial, Peter had combined Paul's malice with his own knowledge, he would also have committed this sin. Yet, the misbelief before Paul's conversion and the frailty after Peter's preserved them from this sin. Misbelief led one astray, while sudden fear overwhelmed the other.

Fourthly, there are three dreadful acts that accompany the sin against the Holy Spirit, as explicitly conveyed by Scripture (which should be handled with the utmost caution when seeking answers to this dilemma):

1. Total apostasy from the known and experienced truths of Jesus Christ. These truths must be 1. known and comprehended, 2. known and experienced, and approved. 3. Subsequently, the person turns away from these truths. 4. This is not a mere deviation (as is possible for the best), but a complete departure, not a temporary slip, but a fall from the path of truth. Hebrews 6:4 states, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit."
2. The second act is a malicious opposition to the truth once known and experienced, from which the person has now turned away. This is referred to in Hebrews 6:6 as "crucifying the Son of God afresh" and in Hebrews 10:26 as "wilful sinning after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." This is evident in the case of the Pharisees, who acknowledged and comprehended the light but despised and persecuted it to the point of death.
3. The third act is final impenitence. Whoever commits the sin against the Holy Spirit neither repents nor can repent. They are justly and perpetually forsaken by God, abandoned to a

reprobate sense and a conscience rendered callous to the point that they cannot repent. Though they might recognize the wickedness of their actions, it is impossible (as the Apostle says in Hebrews 6:6) to renew them to repentance.

FINIS.

-----

MONERGISM BOOKS

The Doubting Believer, by Obadiah Sedgwick, Copyright © 2023

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 August 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn, OR 97068

