

Condensed Sermon Soup

**Just add the water of your baptism,
and allow the Holy Spirit to stir!**



John Wesley's 44 Standard Sermons Condensed for Today
by Nick Campbell

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. II Timothy 4:1-5

I have heard it many times – it is too hard to read John Wesley. First, there is the matter of “translating” 18th century language into 21st century understandings. Second, Wesley often didn’t just make a point – he hammered it into submission with multiple scripture references, and multiple appeals to reason and experience within the traditions of the Church. Third, the language he used was often blunt, carrying the force of a sharp rap to the side of the head, which sometimes makes it hard to continue listening any further. Fourth, some of the words he used would be considered pejorative today, though when used in his century he was merely being descriptive (I hope!) And all that was before he got around to “preaching” the good news!

Add to this difficulty the stereotype that John Wesley’s strength was in organizing the classes and societies, that he is often considered a “folk theologian” who emphasized a “strangely warmed heart” over dogmatic theology, and that he lived in 18th century England as a loyalist to the king when the colonies that became the United States rebelled, and it is not surprising that Wesley has become the quaint grandfather of the Methodist movement – admired and pointed to, but rarely listened to for insight and direction.

If we take the time, however, Wesley’s sermons practically crackle with the energy of the gospel. Rather than being dry and tedious dissertations, they are the stuff that would rile up parsons to forbid Wesley to preach in their churches, and for the Methodist riots to be readily understood – and for the poor to hear the gospel as truly good news! The sermons recognize that “good people” will be offended by the claim that their good works account for nothing before God, if they are done apart from a faithful relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The sermons recognize that those who count on “faith alone” will also be offended, as “good works” are the evidence of God at work in us. The Wesley brothers recognized that these two strands of Christianity could not stand in competition, but must be woven together, if we are to go on to perfection in love.

This writing is my attempt to take the time for you, by summarizing the sermons in a way that is more readily accessible for today. This is one step we can take together toward reclaiming the power of Wesley’s thought concerning the perfect love of Jesus Christ, revealed in the forms of grace and their necessities.

Part of the power of these sermons is the evidence that John and Charles are not engaging primarily in an intellectual pursuit, but in a confessional witness. See, for example, Sermon 2: The Almost Christian. John ends the first half of the sermon, after describing

an “almost Christian” in fairly harsh terms, with his confession that this is who he was before he received the witness of the Holy Spirit that even his sins were forgiven, and that Christ loved him.

John Wesley numbered the paragraphs of nearly everything he ever wrote. It made referencing the points easier when communicating with others. We see a carryover of this in the United Methodist Book of Discipline and in the United Methodist Hymnal. The format I will use in this presentation is to summarize the main idea and/or points made in each paragraph of the sermons. Originally, I had hoped to do each paragraph with one or two lines, but Wesley’s paragraphs are sometimes so densely packed that a longer summary is often offered!

The sermons we are considering here are those from “Sermons on Several Occasions,” “consisting of forty-four discourses, published in four volumes, in the Years 1746, 1748, 1750 and 1760 (Fourth Edition, 17870).” These are important because these are the sermons “to which reference is made in the Trust-deeds of the Methodist Chapels, as constituting, with Mr. Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament, the standard doctrines of the Methodist Connexion” (from the title page of the collection of sermons.) These are the sermons that, according to the trust-deeds of the Methodist Connection, **form the core of Methodist belief and practice**; or more accurately, form the basis for understanding the sanctified work of a disciple of Jesus Christ going on to perfection in love. The goal was never merely to bring persons into the church, or to revive the commitments of those in church, but to bring persons into a God-dependent, Christ-like, and Spirit-empowered discipleship. The Wesleys, while certainly allowing for some differences among people, would have taken issue with the often-used slur of speculative latitudinarianism that “Methodists can believe anything they want” (see Sermon 34.)

The sermons are intentionally ordered. Wesley begins building his theology on the basic foundation of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ in Sermon 1. This salvation is to be lived out in dependence on God, conformity to Christ, and confidence in the Holy Spirit. The sermons’ progression may be divided according to the forms of grace: the first group of sermons deal with the prevenient grace of God that convicts us of our sin and need for God; the second group of sermons (a series of discourses on the Sermon on the Mount) deal with the justifying grace of Jesus Christ; and the third group of sermons deal with the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit and our response to that power at work in and through us. These forms of grace, of course, are not so neatly divided that they appear independently and separately from the other forms of grace, but will be evident in each section of the sermons.

It is important to start at the beginning and work our way through to the end. For example, the last sermon, “The Use of Money” makes more sense if we understand the first sermon, “Salvation by Faith.” The premises that underlie the last sermon are laid out starting with the first sermon, and are continually introduced as we make our way through the sermons. We see an idea introduced and then built upon, with later sermons building further on that idea. Sermon 1, Paragraph 1, introduces a foundational belief -- “Everything that is, is by God’s grace, so we have nothing to offer God.” Sermon 18,

Part 3, Paragraph 12, takes that belief and applies it briefly to how we use money, which then gets expanded in Sermon 23, as Wesley explains what “laying up treasures on earth” means. By the time you get to Sermon 44, “The Use of Money,” the point is clear and consistent with what Wesley has said previously, even as it stands in contrast to what others in the church would have us believe about the stewardship of our money. Using this format, Wesley presents his understanding of stewardship as not one idea to be chosen from among other equal and competing ideas, but as a scriptural and rational approach that is consistent with going on to perfection in love.

The longest sermon (#35 Christian Perfection) has the longest summary – and that is before we add Charles Wesley’s twenty-four verse hymn on Christian perfection! It is likely the longest because it was this subject that the Wesleys were hardest pressed to defend. The summary is also the longest because some paragraphs, if an editor today were working on the text, could be divided into as many 5 paragraphs. I have kept to Wesley’s numbering of paragraphs, but had to resort to enumerating the many points being made within those paragraphs, because this may still be the hardest belief to defend (if it is not already dismissed out of hand by others.)

It is also important to note that the length of my summary for a paragraph is not an indication of the length of the actual paragraph. Some short paragraphs are so densely packed as to need an almost complete sharing; some long paragraphs repeat the same point with many well-known scriptural evidences, so only the main point may be briefly shared. The shorter summaries tend to be on those points that most Christians (particularly those who would read a book like this) are most familiar with, while the longer summaries tend to be on those points that require more “weaving together” of Scripture, Tradition, Experience and Reason, or when John Wesley’s preaching can be an example for our own in making a point. Sometimes, Wesley turns a phrase or says something that sounds bold and outrageous (if taken out of context) that has to be shared, so I include it. And a few times, I take what Wesley said and present it as a memorable turn of phrase for today. In all places, I have tried to keep the energy and focus of what Wesley was saying in his own language. Of course, these summaries are just that – summaries; and if they intrigue you, I encourage you to go and read the full sermons!

There are, of course, many more sermons that John Wesley published, usually written by him but also including a few by brother Charles. There were sermons delivered on Judgment Day, and on the occasion of the last judgment of those who were condemned. There were sermons delivered on mourning, and on the occasions when specific persons were mourned. There were sermons that commented on the conditions and miseries of the state, and on the conditions and miseries of backsliders. There were sermons that tried to explain how to be a good parent, and how God uses earthquakes to punish sinners. There were sermons that were part of the theological struggle of the era, and that were part of the class struggle of the day. Many of his published sermons picked up themes that were already covered in the forty-four sermons.

There are lessons to be learned from these sermons, as well. They represent examples where Christians of good conscience may disagree with the opinions of the Wesleys,

which they would expect and accept, and still be within the connection. As the “connexion” struggled with what should be authoritative for Methodists, the forty-four sermons were affirmed again as part of the standard. In his published “Fifty Three Sermons,” the additional nine sermons included second sermons on the witness of the Spirit, and the scripture way of salvation; sermons on sin in believers, repentance, the righteousness of Jesus, and stewardship that repeated themes already covered; and special occasions sermons (judgment day for prisoners, the death of Mr. Whitefield, and the reformation of manners) that would not necessarily have application for the itinerant preachers of Methodism.

You may not agree with every point John Wesley makes, especially if you try to make one sermon do more than he intended it to do. Sermon 26, for example, comes dangerously close to works righteousness as we are shown the necessity for choosing the straight way and the narrow gate; but as part of the corpus of sermons, it has the effect of strengthening the point of our response to the gracious work of Jesus Christ. Sermon 33 cautions against bigotry, yet reveals his own bigotry towards the native people of the “new world” and the people of less civilized lands in other parts of the world. When he spoke to “almost” and “asleep” Christians, his language was more exclusive than it was when he spoke about Catholic spirit and life with persons of other faith traditions. His approach for looking at the scripture was usually pastoral, though rarely comfortable – it was what he would consider to be most pastoral for those present, with an eye to their eternal future. If Christianity was nothing more than a cultural birthright to those present, then they needed to be shaken out of their complacency. If the goal was to make persons understand what going on to perfection in love means in their day-to-day living, then the fruits of the Spirit would be emphasized. Often, Wesley would find a way to combine both viewpoints into a seamless whole garment. This genius is particularly seen in his sermon on “The Use of Money.” There is a great pastoral concern shown for the poor who are doing all they can to provide for their families, as well as a calling to a higher accountability for those who certainly would have “anything left over” – and the same principles are applied equally to both! You may not agree with every point, but you will find it difficult to dismiss his arguments out of hand – particularly if it is indeed your desire to “go on to perfection.”

Sermon 1: Salvation by Faith
By grace are ye saved by faith.
Ephesians 2:8

- Paragraph 1 Everything that is, is by God's grace, so we have nothing to offer God
- Paragraph 2 We cannot atone for our sins by either works or righteousness. Either God does the work through us, so we do not gain credit, or we cannot be righteous enough in our fallen state of sin.
- Paragraph 3 Grace is the source of our salvation; faith is the condition of our salvation

Part 1 What faith it is through which we are saved

- Paragraph 1 It is not the faith of a heathen, that God is, and that God is good.
- Paragraph 2 It is not the faith of a devil, who knows that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Paragraph 3 It is not the faith of the apostles, while Jesus was still with them in the flesh.
- Paragraph 4 It is the faith that Jesus was raised from the dead
- Paragraph 5 It is the faith that acknowledges the necessity and merit of Jesus' death, and the power of his resurrection. It is an assent to the whole gospel, with full reliance on the blood of Christ, and trusting in the merits of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

Part 2 What salvation it is, which is through faith

- Paragraph 1 It is a present salvation.
- Paragraph 2 It is salvation from sin, actual and original, past and present, of the flesh and spirit.
- Paragraph 3 It is salvation from the guilt of all past sin.
- Paragraph 4 It is salvation from fear of torment, punishment, and wrath.
- Paragraph 5 I repeat – we are saved from the power of sin, and the guilt of sin!
- Paragraph 6 Those who are born by faith, sin not [are not separated from God] a) by habitual sin, b) willful sin, c) sinful desire, or d) infirmities.
- Paragraph 7 Salvation from sin and its consequences, delivered from guilt and punishment by the atonement of Christ, is actually applied to the soul of

the sinner who now believes, and a deliverance from the power of sin is received, through Christ formed in the heart. This new life is what it means to be “born again.” This new life has as its goal to become a “perfect man.”

Part 3 Objections to this understanding of salvation

- Paragraph 1 Some will object: *Justification by faith is opposed to holiness and good works.* But we answer: faith produces holiness and good works.
- Paragraph 2 As Paul has already pointed out in his letters!
- Paragraph 3 Holiness and good works are no reason for pride or boasting, for it is God at work through us, and not we ourselves.
- Paragraph 4 Some will object: *Justification by faith encourages sinning.* It may, and it will, though the goodness of God will lead one to repentance.
- Paragraph 5 Some will object: *Justification by faith leads to despair, since we can do nothing to save ourselves.* We despair only if we desire to save ourselves by our own good works.
- Paragraph 6 Some will object: *Justification by faith is an uncomfortable doctrine of mercy.* It is uncomfortable only if we forget that we are no more worthy of Christ’s mercy than any one else.
- Paragraph 7 Some will object: *We shouldn’t start our preaching with justification.* Who would you except from this faith? The poor? The unlearned? The young? The sinners? That leaves only the rich, learned, reputable, moral folks, whom we often already except as not needing the gospel. We are commanded to preach the gospel to all.
- Paragraph 8 Justification by faith is the best way to defeat the Roman delusion.
- Paragraph 9 The Adversary rages against this doctrine because it overthrows sin by the power of God, and not by the futile power of mortals.

Sermon 2. The Almost Christian
Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.
Acts 26:28

Part 1 What is implied in being almost

Part 2 What is being altogether, a Christian

Part 1 What is implied in being almost

1. Heathen honesty

Paragraph 1 An almost Christian has a Heathen sense of justice: does not steal, does not oppress the poor, does not cheat or extort, does not defraud, does not (as much as possible) owe another.

Paragraph 2 They have a Heathen regard for the truth, not engaging in libel or slander.

Paragraph 3 They have a Heathen love in giving assistance to others, giving to others what they did not need for themselves.

2. Having the form of godliness

Paragraph 4 This form has the outside of a real Christian, doing nothing the gospel forbids.

Paragraph 5 The almost Christian lives moderately and peaceably with all, following the Golden Rule.

Paragraph 6 They do what the gospel commands to the profit of others.

Paragraph 7 They use the means of grace at all opportunities, approaching them humbly and respectfully.

Paragraph 8 They practice the habits of vital piety with daily seriousness.

3. Sincerity, the real inward principle of religion from whence outward actions flow

Paragraph 9 If we have the form of godliness from fear of punishment, we have not even heathen honesty.

Paragraph 10 Sincerity is necessarily implied in the being of the almost Christian.

Paragraph 11 If we have the form of godliness and sincerity, how can we still be only an almost Christian?

Paragraph 12 Forgive me my boldness towards you in declaring this state to be an almost Christian.

Paragraph 13 I lived for many years with both the form of godliness and true sincerity to please God in all that I did; yet, I was still only almost a Christian.

Part 2 What is an altogether Christian?

Paragraph 1 The first thing implied in being an altogether Christian is the love of God.

Paragraph 2 The second thing implied is the love of our neighbor, as lived out by Christ and witnessed to by Paul.

Paragraph 3 The third thing implied is that they are born of God.

Paragraph 4 A right living faith brings forth repentance and love and all good works.

Paragraph 5 A Christian knows that Scripture and faith are true, having a sure trust and confidence to be saved from damnation by Christ. By the merits of Christ our sins are forgiven, and we are reconciled to the favor of God.

Paragraph 6 Being reconciled, we glory to spend and be spent for all persons as we work by love that reveals Christ.

Paragraph 7 Ask yourself: are you a living witness to these things?

Paragraph 8 If we are honest, we confess that we have not come as far as honest heathens, much less that of almost Christians, in designing to do all in the name of Christ.

Paragraph 9 Good designs and good desires do not make a Christian, only the love of God shed abroad in your heart, having faith in the blood of Christ to take away our sins, and having received the witness of the Spirit that you are indeed a child of God.

Paragraph 10 Awake, then, thou who sleep, and call upon God; do not rest short of the prize of your high calling.

Paragraph 11 May we all experience what it is to be an altogether Christian, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus, knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ; rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit given to us!

Sermon 3. Awake, Thou That Sleepest

Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give thee light.

Ephesians 5:14

Charles Wesley

Part 1 The Sleepers, to whom they are spoken

- Paragraph 1 “Sleep” is the natural state of man, “that supineness, indolence, and stupidity, that insensibility of his real condition” until we are waken by God.
- Paragraph 2 Our natural state is night, utter darkness, about our fallen state. We cannot see the necessity for the one thing needful, our birth from above to regain the image of God within.
- Paragraph 3 We are unaware that we are in bondage to sin, possessed by the devil, on the brink of hell.
- Paragraph 4 A sleeper is one satisfied in their sin, content to remain in sin, ignorant of their disease and of its only cure, ignorant of the consequences of their sin.
- Paragraph 5 If not outwardly vicious, the one most deeply asleep seems to all to be quiet, rational, inoffensive, and good-natured; or if zealous, lives like a Pharisee justifying himself.
- Paragraph 6 A sleeper can have the form of godliness, but without its power or spirit.
- Paragraph 7 Esteemed by people, a sleeper is an abomination before God.
- Paragraph 8 A sleeper abides in death, but doesn’t know he or she is dead.
- Paragraph 9 Only Second Adam/Christ can raise the dead.
- Paragraph 10 Dead sleepers do not have the senses to discern good and evil, to hear God, to taste and see that God is good.
- Paragraph 11 Without any senses, sleepers are unable to receive any gifts of the Spirit, including the assurance of new life, and therefore they deny these gifts as foolishness.
- Paragraph 12 It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convince us of our sinful state.

Part 2 Awake, thou that sleep, and arise from the dead

- Paragraph 1 God speaks through me to call you to awake and rise from the dead.

- Paragraph 2 Awake! and ask what you must do to be saved.
- Paragraph 3 If you think I am speaking to someone else, this message is for you! Flee from the wrath to come, for it is already all around you.
- Paragraph 4 May the Angel of the Lord come upon you, to shine light into your darkness, and to move you to walk with God.
- Paragraph 5 This state you are in is not your home, and you will be restless until you rest in God. Eternity is your home.
- Paragraph 6 If the judgment were now, would you be found clothed in Christ, with righteousness and true holiness?
- Paragraph 7 Do you have grace in your heart to love God completely?
- Paragraph 8 Do you have the witness of the Holy Spirit in you that you are a new creation?
- Paragraph 9 If these questions offend you, then you are neither a Christian nor do you desire to be one.
- Paragraph 10 Have you received the Holy Spirit, and are you anointed with power to participate in the divine nature of God? Is Christ formed in your heart?
- Paragraph 11 Faith working by love is the sign that you are a new creation, so we work out our salvation with fear and trembling that we may enter by the narrow gate.
- Paragraph 12 If we hope in anything other than Christ, it avails us nothing, and we are still asleep
- Paragraph 13 Feel the hammer of the Word that breaks the rocks into pieces! Awake, thou who sleep, and rise from the dead!

Part 3 The Promise made to those who awake

- Paragraph 1 No matter who you are, if you seek God's face, you will arise and shine, for the light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen in you.
- Paragraph 2 God is light, and is given to every awakened sinner, and Christ will dwell within.
- Paragraph 3 We are called to be the habitation of Christ, so that we may be saints here.
- Paragraph 4 The Spirit of Christ is the great gift of God.

- Paragraph 5 We are the living witnesses that we have been forgiven by God through Jesus Christ, and that we will be sanctified.
- Paragraph 6 This “experimental knowledge” is true Christianity, and without this experience of receiving Christ, we are not Christian.
- Paragraph 7 The world cannot receive Christ. He is AntiChrist who denies the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, or who denies that the indwelling Spirit of God is the common privilege of all believers.
- Paragraph 8 To deny the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is to deny the whole Scripture.
- Paragraph 9 The Articles of Faith are full of references to the importance of receiving the Holy Spirit.
- Paragraph 10 The evidence of sin all around us in this “Christian” land is evidence that we have preferred our own wisdom concerning the Spirit to the foolishness of God.
- Paragraph 11 Even those with the form of godliness are nothing more than painted sepulchers, devoid of life in Christ, mere lifeless forms without true faith or true love or true joy.
- Paragraph 12 Even those of us gathered here at Christ Church are in need of being saved, for we are just as corrupt and abominable, and are good for nothing.
- Paragraph 13 We do not know when Christ will return, so there may be little time for your repentance before the Sword of the Lord avenges God.
- Paragraph 14 O God, in the midst of wrath, remember your mercy! Reform us; do not destroy us, so that we may learn righteousness.
- Paragraph 15 It is time to wake up, before the trumpet blows, and the land becomes a field of blood. Help us, deliver us, and let us live for thee, O God. Show the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be whole.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.
Amen!

Sermon 4: Scriptural Christianity

*Whoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning:
if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.*

Ezekiel 33:4

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

Acts 4:31

- Paragraph 1 They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, as on the Day of Pentecost.
- Paragraph 2 We know that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, though there are no visible manifestations of the Spirit, nor are there any extraordinary gifts in evidence.
- Paragraph 3 There is a more excellent purpose for the Spirit than the bestowing of gifts.
- Paragraph 4 It is to give Christians the mind of Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit.
- Paragraph 5 Christianity then is not a set of opinions, but refers to our hearts and lives.

Part 1 As beginning to exist in individuals

- Paragraph 1 An individual can become convinced of their sin, repent, and then believe.
- Paragraph 2 Being justified by faith, the individual has peace with God, and is released from fear of evil tidings, other men, powers of darkness, and death.
- Paragraph 3 The individual now rejoices in God their Savior, that the individual is now a child of God and is filled with hope of the glorious image of God, the renewal of their soul, and the crown of glory.
- Paragraph 4 The individual now has the love of God shed abroad in their heart by the Spirit. This filial love is also a pardoning love, so God is both the joy and desire of their heart.
- Paragraph 5 This love is extended to their neighbor in word, deed, and truth, embracing all people for the sake of God. No exception to love is made; not the unknown, the evil, the unthankful, the enemies of Christ.
- Paragraph 6 This love is humble, long-suffering, gentle, and temperate, since the individual is crucified to the world and saved from passion and pride, lust and vanity, ambition and covetousness.
- Paragraph 7 This love does no harm to their neighbor, whether by cruelty, injustice, or unkind or untrue words.

Paragraph 8 This love is dependent on Christ working through the individual, who constantly attends to the ordinances of God.

Paragraph 9 This love seeks to do good continually, of both the higher kind and the meeting of the physical needs for food, shelter, clothing, and companionship.

Paragraph 10 This is what Christians looked like in the early days, according to the scriptures.

Part 2 As spreading from one to another

Paragraph 1 The candle is lit to give light to the all in the house.

Paragraph 2 This love moves Christians to care for others in their need.

Paragraph 3 They labored to do good unto all (Galatians 6:10), including calling the world to repentance.

Paragraph 4 The gospel was shared with others at a level they could receive, whether asleep, awakened but groaning for fear of God's wrath, or awake and provoked to love and good works.

Paragraph 5 Reputable people opposed this faith, for it diminished their self-importance and convicted them of their sinfulness before God.

Paragraph 6 The heavens grew black with clouds, for the more Christianity spread, the more the world opposed it.

Paragraph 7 The world spoke evil of Christians, and Christians were persecuted.

Paragraph 8 The pillars of hell were shaken, as the opposition to Christianity could not stop its spread, and martyrdom only increased its witness.

Paragraph 9 Even so, the tares appear among the wheat, and there is sin even within the temple of God.

Part 3 As covering the earth

Paragraph 1 If Satan cannot prevail, then Christianity must cover the earth.

Paragraph 2 Even though it hasn't happened yet, the day is coming when all will be saved.

- Paragraph 3 When the fullness of time has come and the prophecies are accomplished, what joy there will be! No more war or destruction, no more civil discord, no more oppression or extortion, no more robbery or wrong-doing.
- Paragraph 4 With righteousness comes mercy for all, and no one will do harm to another. Being filled with peace and joy in believing, we live as one heart and soul, and no one experiences the lack of needful things.
- Paragraph 5 There are no unkind words, no strife, no contention, as all speak with the law of kindness, and God's love is the motivation of all they say.
- Paragraph 6 Since God rules over every heart, which overflows with love and praise, the people are happy.

Part 4 A plain, practical application

- Paragraph 1 Where does this Christianity now exist? We confess we have never seen a Christian country upon earth.
- Paragraph 2 I will say this as plainly as I can, so do not steel yourself against receiving this blessing if I have offended you.
- Paragraph 3 God has better things for you than what we have now, which is the witness of the scriptures, so we are not yet a Christian city.
- Paragraph 4 This is not about our opinions concerning the faith, but our hearts and life.
- Paragraph 5 To our leaders I say: In fear, and before God, ask if you are filled with the Holy Spirit. Does the image of God shine through you? Are your words like the words of God? Do your actions flow from the love of God, and yet are consistent with humility before all?
- Paragraph 6 To our teachers I say: ask if you are filled with the Holy Spirit so that the fruits of the Spirit are in evidence when working with your students. Do you remember that the only rational end of all our studies is to know love and to serve God? Do you teach that only love never ends and never fails?
- Paragraph 7 To the students and scholars I say: ask if you abound in the fruits of the Spirit, in lowliness of mind, in self-denial and mortification, in composure of spirit, in patience, meekness? Do you endeavor good to all in their needs and to bring their souls to God?
- Paragraph 8 To the clergy I say: ask if we are the pattern to others for living in charity, faith, and purity? Do our motives and activities reveal holiness? Do we know God? Do we know Jesus Christ? Are we the servants of all, when

serving God? Do we rejoice when we bear the burden of Christ? Is our zeal the flame of love?

Paragraph 9 To the youth I say: ask if you have the form or the power of Christian godliness. Are you humble, teachable, advisable? Do you attend upon the ordinances of the Church, or do you take license to test the limits of sin?

Paragraph 10 To us all I say: let us not be known as a generation of triflers: triflers with God, one another and our own souls.

Paragraph 11 What is the possibility of scriptural Christianity being in this place, if we do not desire it? And if you desire it, do you have the power to bring this effect in any degree? Will scriptural Christianity be restored by young, unknown, inconsiderable persons, to your shame? Lord, save us or we perish!

Sermon 5. Justification by Faith

*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,
his faith is counted for righteousness.*

Romans 4:5

- Paragraph 1 We have neither peace nor joy while we are not justified before God.
- Paragraph 2 We have confused and false notions of how we are justified, settling for hay and stubble, when we could have gold and silver.
- Paragraph 3 This sermon is to clear up our confused thoughts concerning justification.

Part 1 What is the general ground of this whole doctrine of justification

- Paragraph 1 We were made in the image of God, who is holy, merciful, perfect, love, and pure.
- Paragraph 2 We were given a perfect law that required perfect obedience, which we were capable of, having been made in the image of God.
- Paragraph 3 To the entire law of love was added one other law: do not eat the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden of Eden, lest you die.
- Paragraph 4 We were in Paradise by the free and unmerited love of God, and it was ours forever, if we continued to obey God in all things. Mortality would come only when we disobeyed God.
- Paragraph 5 Man ate the fruit, disobeying God, earning the sentence of death/mortality. Man's soul died, and his body became corruptible. We are dead in spirit, dead to God, dead in sin, liable to death everlasting.
- Paragraph 6 By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, which is passed on to all mortals.
- Paragraph 7 We were in this state when "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that we might not perish but have everlasting life." His Son was a second representative of the whole human race, bearing our griefs and our iniquities, wounded for our transgressions, making a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.
- Paragraph 8 By the death of the Son of God, God has now reconciled the world to Himself, not imputing to them their former sins. We receive this righteousness by only one condition, which He enables us to perform, both to remit our punishment, and to restore our souls to spiritual life.

Paragraph 9 This is the doctrine: by the sin of Adam, we all fall short of the favor of God; and by the sacrifice of Second Adam, God is reconciled to the world and has given us a new covenant; the one condition being fulfilled so that we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

Part 2 What justification is

Paragraph 1 But what does it mean to be justified? It is not the same thing as being made actually just and righteous – that is sanctification, which is the fruit of justification, but still a distinct gift from God of a totally different nature. Justification is what God does *for* us; sanctification is what God does *in* us.

Paragraph 2 Justification is not the clearing us from accusation by Satan.

Paragraph 3 Justification is not the clearing us from accusation by the law.

Paragraph 4 Justification is not the deceiving of God, thinking we are what we are not.

Paragraph 5 The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins.

Part 3 Who they are that are justified

Paragraph 1 The ungodly of every kind and degree, and none but the ungodly.

Paragraph 2 This plain scriptural notion doesn't seem to be considered by those who claim we must be sanctified before we are justified.

Paragraph 3 The Good Shepherd came to seek and save the lost, pardoning those who need his mercy. He saves from the guilt and the power of sin.

Paragraph 4 Those condemned by God, and by their own conscience, are the ones who seek the Physician. We cannot do anything good before we are justified, so we are corrupt, and so is our fruit.

Paragraph 5 Doing “good works” is not the same thing as the works being good in themselves if they are done apart from God.

Paragraph 6 No works are good which are not done as God has willed and commanded; no works done before justification are done as God has willed and commanded (since they must be done in God's love); therefore no works done before justification are good.

Part 4 On what terms they are justified

- Paragraph 1 What is the one condition that makes us justified, and our works good?
Faith in Jesus Christ.
- Paragraph 2 Faith is a divine evidence or conviction of things not seen. Justifying faith is the conviction that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, and that Christ died for my sins, that He loved me, and gave Himself for me. The tree is made good, so the fruit is now good.
- Paragraph 3 The only instrument of salvation is faith, a sure trust and confidence that God both has and will forgive our sins, and we are again in God's favor through the merits of Christ's death and resurrection.
- Paragraph 4 There is no justification without faith, no matter what virtues or good works we may claim.
- Paragraph 5 Faith is the necessary condition of justification, and the only necessary condition.
- Paragraph 6 Faith is the only thing without which none can be justified.
- Paragraph 7 If faith is the only condition required by God, then it does not become us to insist on anything more, or anything else, as a condition for justification
- Paragraph 8 Faith is the only condition because it then hides our pride from making any claims to goodness apart from God
- Paragraph 9 Do not plead your righteousness, but come before God altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed – and you will find favor in God's sight, and be justified. Look to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! Do you feel your ungodliness, both inward and outward – then I want you for the Lord; I challenge you to be a child of God by faith! The Lord needs someone like you to advance His glory!

Sermon 6. The Righteousness of Faith

*Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,
that the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart,

Who shall ascend into heaven (that is, to bring Christ down from above)?

Or, Who shall descend into the deep (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)?

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in they heart:

that is, the word of faith, which we preach.

Romans 10:5-8

- Paragraph 1 The covenant of grace came before the covenant of law, since it was the covenant made with Adam.
- Paragraph 2 If we seek our own righteousness, it must match the righteousness of God, or it leads to death.
- Paragraph 3 By Christ, we have moved from the covenant of “do this, and live,” to “believe, and live.”
- Paragraph 4 There is a difference between the righteousness of the law (which is folly) and the righteousness of faith (which is the way of wisdom).

Part 1 The righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of faith

- Paragraph 1 The righteousness of the law requires an obedience perfect in all its parts as the condition for continuing in holiness and happiness.
- Paragraph 2 This righteousness requires abstaining for every form of evil, and doing every form of good, to be as pure in heart as God, as perfect as God, as loving as God, and as giving as God.
- Paragraph 3 This righteousness requires perfection in every degree, done with all strength, in the highest measure and in the most perfect manner.
- Paragraph 4 This perfection of holiness of heart and life must also continue without any interruption for any reason.
- Paragraph 5 If you can do all these things perfectly, then you shall live with God forever.
- Paragraph 6 The righteousness of faith is established in the new covenant that God has established through Jesus Christ.
- Paragraph 7 Justification is given to sinful man through the merits and mediation of the Son of God.

- Paragraph 8 The new covenant of grace does not require of us “unsinching obedience;” only that we believe in Him who justifies us. Imputed grace does not make us perfect.
- Paragraph 9 “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” is the covenant of forgiveness, unmerited love, and pardoning mercy.
- Paragraph 10 This salvation is available as soon as you confess and believe.
- Paragraph 11 The difference between the two covenants is this: the first supposes we are already holy and happy and perfect; the other supposes that we are sinners.
- Paragraph 12 The covenant of works is for those who may continue in the favor of God; the covenant of grace is for those who need to recover God’s favor.
- Paragraph 13 The covenant of works requires that we pay the price ourselves; in the covenant of grace, we know we have nothing with which to pay, and Christ has paid the price for our sin.
- Paragraph 14 The covenant of works requires “unsinching obedience” from a people who are born in sin; the covenant of grace says only “Fear not, only believe.”

Part 2 Folly and wisdom

- Paragraph 1 It is folly to trust the covenant of works, and wisdom to trust the covenant of grace. “Do this, and live” only works if we are as innocent before God as Adam was before the fall. It is not meant for those who need to recover God’s favor, only for those who could continue in God’s favor.
- Paragraph 2 No one is able to perfectly fulfill the covenant of works, in all things great and small, even as the covenant of law requires it.
- Paragraph 3 No one is able to perfectly fulfill the covenant of works without any excuses.
- Paragraph 4 No one can stand before the judgment of God, claiming the covenant of works, if they have ever sinned at any time in any degree, and expect to be found innocent.
- Paragraph 5 This is the definition of folly, to think that we can stand before God and claim worthiness through the covenant of works! *“What stupidity, what senselessness, must it be for such an unclean, guilty, helpless worm as this, to dream of seeking acceptance by his own righteousness, of living by ‘the righteousness which is of the law’!*

Paragraph 6 This folly proves the wisdom of the covenant of grace through faith. By claiming our unrighteousness before God, we are acting according to the truth, to the real nature of things. There is much in all of us, and any of us, that is sinful.

Paragraph 7 The covenant of grace is wisdom because it is the covenant that God has established, that seems good to God.

Paragraph 8 It is wisdom to accept God's grace, free love, and undeserved mercy with thankfulness, rather than to argue with God about the method of saving us.

Paragraph 9 It is wisdom to aim at the best end by the best means. The best end is happiness in God, and the best and only means under heaven given to us is the righteousness of faith.

Part 3 What must I do

Paragraph 1 If you wish to be forgiven, do not start with what works you must first do, for you cannot establish your own righteousness as the ground for reconciliation with God. First, you must believe in Jesus Christ.

Paragraph 2 Do not say, "I cannot be accepted because I am not good enough," because no one is good enough, or to the point, good at all; and no one ever will be. Also, do not wait until you are bad enough to need grace, for you are there already.

Paragraph 3 Do not say, "I am not contrite enough, or sensible enough of my sins," for even if you were 1000 times more aware, you would still not be as aware as God is of your sin. It may be later that God will make you aware of your sins, and then you can weep much because you are loved much.

Paragraph 4 Do not say, "I must do something more before I come to Christ," so that a later believing may cover more sins. Expect Christ now!

Paragraph 5 Waiting for more sincerity won't make you worthier of being forgiven, as even this is an attempt to establish your own righteousness. God is merciful, not because we are worthy, but because God's compassion never fails; not because we are righteous, but because Jesus has atoned for our sins. If sincerity is a good thing, why would you expect it before you are good?

Paragraph 6 We, who are under the sentence of death because of the covenant of works, find relief as we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe now, just as you are, in this moment, and God will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and God will remember your sins no more.

Sermon 7: The Way to the Kingdom

The kingdom of God is at hand: repent, ye and believe the gospel.

Mark 1:15

Paragraph 1 Consider the nature of true religion, and the way to true religion.

Part 1 The nature of true religion

Paragraph 1 True religion is the kingdom of God.

Paragraph 2 The kingdom of God is not “meat and drink” restrictions of the law.

Paragraph 3 The kingdom of God is not ritual, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 4 The kingdom of God is not rites and ceremonies, helpful as they are for expressing inward truths.

Paragraph 5 While some actions are clearly evil, no outward action is proof of true religion, which resides in the heart.

Paragraph 6 True religion does not consist of orthodoxy or right opinions, since they are based in our understanding, and not the heart.

Paragraph 7 True religion is righteousness, joy, and peace in the Holy Spirit. Righteousness comes when we give God our heart.

Paragraph 8 Righteousness includes our love of neighbors, who are not always lovable.

Paragraph 9 Love is the fulfilling of the law of holiness.

Paragraph 10 True love leads to happiness, grounded in the peace of God.

Paragraph 11 Peace in God leads to joy in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 12 Holiness and happiness joined together is the kingdom of God:
Everlasting life is won, glory is on earth begun.

Paragraph 13 The kingdom of God is near at hand when we preach repentance and people know that God is with us always.

Part 2 The way to true religion

Paragraph 1 To walk in the kingdom, repent; know that you are a sinner at your root.

- Paragraph 2 Our unbelief branches into independence, pride, ambition, covetousness, vanity, lust, anger, hatred, malice, revenge, jealousy, and evil surmising.
- Paragraph 3 From our evil branches come evil fruits: boasting, seeking praise, gluttony, drunkenness, luxury, fornication, uncleanness, and other sins more numerous than the sands of the sea and the drops of water in the ocean.
- Paragraph 4 The wage of sin is death, as we deserve God's wrath.
- Paragraph 5 There is nothing we can do to appease God's wrath for our sins.
- Paragraph 6 Perfect obedience would not appease God for past sins, even if we could keep perfect obedience, which we cannot, for an evil tree can only bear evil fruit.
- Paragraph 7 If we are aware that we are sinners, aware of our guiltiness before God, aware of our inability to atone for our sins, and we add the suitable affections of sorrow, remorse, fear of God, and earnest desire to escape this sentence of death, we are not far off from the kingdom of God. All that is left is to repent and believe the gospel.
- Paragraph 8 The gospel includes the whole revelation made in Jesus Christ: that he came into the world to save sinners because God loves us, he was bruised for our iniquity, and by his stripes we are healed.
- Paragraph 9 Believe this and the kingdom of God is yours to have. Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven! The kingdom comes! And you will have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.
- Paragraph 10 But don't fool yourselves by thinking belief is only an assent to the truth of the Bible. Belief is confidence in a pardoning God, and has the divine evidence that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and has forgiven me, even me; and that I, even I, am reconciled to God.
- Paragraph 11 Those who believe have the peace of God in their heart, no longer doubting the love of God, and rejoicing with a hope full of immortality.
- Paragraph 12 Those who believe have the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, filled with love, peace, and joy, filled with long-suffering, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, meekness, temperance, and all the other fruits of the Spirit.
- Paragraph 13 The world considers this repentance madness and distraction, and will try to convince you of this -- know in whom you believe! And if you do not know Christ, don't let the world scare you away from this joy -- Christ

wants you to receive and believe his grace, so repent today, just as you are and the door to heaven will be opened for you.

Sermon 8: The First Fruits of the Spirit

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,
who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Romans 8:1

Paragraph 1 Those who are in Christ Jesus believe in him. Justified by faith, they have peace with God through Jesus, and they no longer walk after the flesh but are directed by the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 2 There is no condemnation in those who believe, since God has justified them.

Paragraph 3 Who are those in Christ Jesus, and how is there no condemnation in them.

Part 1 Those who are in Christ Jesus

Paragraph 1 Those who are in Christ Jesus believe in Jesus, trusting in the righteousness of Jesus and not their own.

Paragraph 2 Those who abide in Christ “sin not” as the Spirit prevails over the corrupt nature of the flesh.

Paragraph 3 Those who are in Christ have crucified their flesh with its affections and lusts, abstaining from the sins of the flesh: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, envying, murder, drunkenness, reveling, and every word and work that arises out of our corruption.

Paragraph 4 Those who are in Christ walk after the Spirit, who teaches them love of God and love of neighbor, with a love that is a spring of everlasting life, leading to a divine and heavenly temper, and every thought arising out of holiness.

Paragraph 5 Those who are in Christ are led into holiness of conversation, with their words full of grace and love.

Paragraph 6 Filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, they possess in their hearts and show in their lives the genuine fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance, and whatever else is lovely or praiseworthy.

Part 2 How is there no condemnation in them

Paragraph 1 There is no condemnation for past sins.

- Paragraph 2 There is no self-condemnation, as they have the witness of their forgiveness and the peace of God.
- Paragraph 3 If we lose our faith, we can fall back into darkness and condemnation.
- Paragraph 4 There is no condemnation for present sins that are a transgression of the law, since they now live by faith. Law has no force against someone who is righteous.
- Paragraph 5 There is no condemnation for inner sin, even though it remains in those who are babes in the faith.
- Paragraph 6 Even though we feel the evil nature of our flesh, and we are aware of our struggles against this corruption, God is well-pleased with our imperfect obedience knowing that we belong to God.
- Paragraph 7 The consideration of our continuing struggle with sins and imperfect obedience deepens our conviction that we need the blood of Christ, and drives us closer to Christ.
- Paragraph 8 There is no condemnation for our sins of infirmity, our involuntary failings, brought on by our human limitations revealed in our acting and speaking.
- Paragraph 9 There is no condemnation for things that are not in our power to help, whether it is of an inward or outward nature, or a thing done or left undone.
- Paragraph 10 The believer may be grieved because we cannot do what our soul longs for, but we are not condemned when we have no other choice.
- Paragraph 11 The sins that surprise us (a sudden outburst of anger or impatience, for example) may carry with them some guilt, in proportion to its occurrence with our will.
- Paragraph 12 If the surprise of the sin is because of our willful neglect of something we could have done in love, then there may be great condemnation.
- Paragraph 13 Sometimes, though, God may work through a sin of surprise to show us where we still need to grow in love. In this there is no condemnation, if it becomes an opportunity to greater love.

Part 3 Practical advice

- Paragraph 1 There is no need for fear, if there is no condemnation and we walk after the Spirit. Receive the spirit of love!

- Paragraph 2 If there are further sins, it leads us to further repentance, and these sins are again cancelled. Be free from the power of sin, as well as from the guilt and punishment of it, or you place yourself in bondage to sin.
- Paragraph 3 If we still walk after the flesh, and not the Spirit, then we may have deceived ourselves in our repentance, and there is condemnation. A person cannot with any certainty judge the genuineness of another's repentance. Yet, claiming forgiveness once does not give permission to continue sinning without consequence.
- Paragraph 4 There is no condemnation for inward sins, if we do not act on them, for we are still short of the absolute glory of God. As you become aware of these inward sins, pray and humble yourself before God so that God can continue to work in you to cleanse your soul.
- Paragraph 5 There is no condemnation for sins of infirmity or involuntary failings or for those things that we are not able to help, but we still must be aware that these are places where Satan will try to gain an advantage over our hearts. In these events, seek God's strength and healing. If we are fallen, we do not have to continue to lie there!
- Paragraph 6 If we are surprised by a sin, then grieve for the sin and confess all to God, seeking more love from God, which brings more strength against sin.

Sermon 9: The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption

*Ye have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear;
but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.*

Romans 8:15

- Paragraph 1 Christians receive the spirit of adoption as children of God.
- Paragraph 2 The spirit of bondage and fear is widely distant from the loving spirit of adoption.
- Paragraph 3 The bulk of those who consider themselves Christian have neither the fear of God before their eyes nor the love of God in their hearts.
- Paragraph 4 We can remember when God gave us the gift of fear to reveal our sins, and how we then received the gift of love that fills our hearts.
- Paragraph 5 Without fear or love, we are a “natural man;” with a spirit of bondage and fear, we are under the law; and with a spirit of adoption and love we are under grace.

Part 1 The natural man

- Paragraph 1 The scripture represents this as a state of sleep, for our spiritual senses are not awake, and therefore unable to discern spiritual good or evil.
- Paragraph 2 Since he is asleep, he is also at rest. In his blindness he is secure, and so he believes himself to be at peace, totally ignorant of his precarious position in sin.
- Paragraph 3 He is secure because he is ignorant of himself, thinking he can repent sometime before he dies, as he chooses.
- Paragraph 4 Men of learning are often the most ignorant, thinking they can argue and prove their point apart from God’s purposes and will.
- Paragraph 5 From this ignorance can arise a kind of joy, congratulating himself on his own wisdom and goodness, and seeking enjoyment in worldly pleasures.
- Paragraph 6 Under the opiates of flattery and sin, he imagines that he walks in great liberty, free from vulgar errors, prejudice, enthusiasm, superstition, bigotry, and religion.
- Paragraph 7 He is thus the willing servant of sin, even if he does quote scripture and says that God is merciful and Jesus died for our sins.

Paragraph 8 This is the state of the natural man, whether a gross scandalous transgressor or a reputable decent sinner having the form but not the power of godliness.

Part 2 How are we convinced of sin

Paragraph 1 God wakes us from our sleep, sometimes terribly shaken out, sometimes by degrees, as we open our eyes and discern our real state before God.

Paragraph 2 The light of the spiritual law begins to glare upon him, illuminating every darkness within him.

Paragraph 3 The fig leaves of our religious pretension are stripped away and we stand naked before the judgment of God.

Paragraph 4 He feels in himself that he deserves to be cast into the fire that shall never be quenched, deserving death as the wages for his sins.

Paragraph 5 The pleasant dream is ended, and his delusions of rest, peace, and security are gone with the dream.

Paragraph 6 The fumes of the opiates are dispelled, and his soul is in perfect misery: sorrow of heart, remorse, fear of God's wrath, fear of death, fear of the devil, fear of men, fear of everything leading to despair.

Paragraph 7 Desiring to break the bonds of sin, he discovers that he is utterly incapable of conquering it.

Paragraph 8 The more he strives against it, the more he frets about it, the more sin prevails until he can only cry out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Paragraph 9 Paul describes just this struggle with sin in Romans 7.

Paragraph 10 We will remain in this struggle and bondage until the time that God answers our cry, "The grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Part 3 The miserable bondage ended by grace

Paragraph 1 What is the state of the one who has found grace or favor in the sight of God, and has grace reigning in their heart by the Holy Spirit?

Paragraph 2 His eyes are opened in quite another manner to see a loving, gracious God.

- Paragraph 3 Heavenly healing light breaks into his soul, receiving divine evidence of things not seen, particularly the pardoning love of God to those who believe in Jesus Christ.
- Paragraph 4 Here ends both the guilt and the power of sin. Here ends remorse, and sorrow of heart, and anguish, and fear.
- Paragraph 5 A new liberty is received: freedom from sin.
- Paragraph 6 He is now a living witness of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, who have received the spirit of adoption.
- Paragraph 7 This spirit continually works in him both to will and to do what is pleasing to God, with the love of God shed abroad in his heart, revealing love for all mankind.
- Paragraph 8 To sum up: the natural man neither fears nor loves God; one under the law fears God; one under grace loves God. One walks blindly in darkness; the second walks in the terrible light of hell; the third walks in the joyous light of heaven. One has a false peace; the second has no peace; the third has the peace of God filling and ruling his heart. One thinks they have liberty but actually has licentiousness; the awakened have true liberty. One sins willingly; the second sins unwillingly; the third sins not before God. The first neither conquers nor fights; the second fights but cannot conquer; the third fights and conquers sin, and indeed is more than conqueror through Him who loves him.

Part 4 The real divisions of mankind

- Paragraph 1 We are not divided into sincere and insincere; but into natural, legal, and evangelical. We may be sincere in any state, so instead ask if we are in faith.
- Paragraph 2 We often think more highly of ourselves because these states are often mingled together to some degree in each person. We find mixed the natural and the legal, and the legal and the evangelical.
- Paragraph 3 We deceive ourselves because we do not consider how far we may go and yet still be in a natural or legal state. We may be compassionate and benevolent, courteous and generous, meek and patient, avoiding vice and seeking virtue, avoiding evil and doing good, disciplined in piety – but still not know the spirit of fear or the spirit of love, since we have not repented.
- Paragraph 4 Beware that we do not fall short of our high calling by resting in a natural state, or by staying in a legal state seeking the esteem of others. We are

not called to fear and tremble, but to rejoice and love, so let us present ourselves “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.”

Sermon 10: The Witness of the Spirit

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God.

Romans 8:16

Paragraph 1 When we confuse our imagination for the voice of God, we are enthusiasts, in the worst sense of the word. And in our confusion, we are actually resisting God when we claim we are contending for the faith.

Paragraph 2 Some go to the other extreme, and assume that any claim for the voice of God must necessarily be only our imagination, relegating the witness of the Spirit as an extraordinary gift of the apostolic age.

Paragraph 3 There is a middle path that avoids the error of enthusiasm without also denying the gift of God.

Part 1 What is this witness or testimony of our spirit; what is the testimony of God's Spirit; and how does he bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God

Paragraph 1 Paul wrote that we receive the Spirit of adoption, and this same Spirit bears witness to our spirit.

Paragraph 2 Numerous texts in scripture describe the marks of the children of God, and by applying these marks to ourselves, we may know if we are children of God.

Paragraph 3 In John's letter, he wrote "hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (I John 2:3), and by many other verses shows how we are children of God as we are righteous as God is righteous, if we love one another and are of the truth.

Paragraph 4 If John did not despise the marks of a child of God, why should we reject the evidence?

Paragraph 5 How do we know if these marks appear in us? The same way we know if we are in pain or at ease – we are immediately conscious of it. We are directly assured that we love our neighbors, bear the marks of the Spirit, and keep the commandments.

Paragraph 6 This is the testimony of our own spirit, that God has given us to be holy of heart and holy in outward conversation.

Paragraph 7 What is the testimony of God's Spirit? There are no words to adequately express what we experience, but we can say it is an inward expression on the soul, a direct witness to my spirit.

Paragraph 8 This witness comes first, before the witness of our own spirit. We cannot love God, until we know that God loves us. We cannot know God's love until the Spirit witnesses it to our spirit.

Paragraph 9 Only after we receive the witness of the Spirit can we be conscious of the witness of our spirit.

Paragraph 10 The witness of the Spirit is joined by the operation of the Spirit, so that it is God who is at work through us in every manner of good.

Paragraph 11 The soul intimately perceives when it loves, delights, and rejoices in God. It cannot doubt this witness any more than it can doubt its own existence. We have full assurance in the Spirit, as an inward proof that is self-evident.

Paragraph 12 As to how the Spirit manifests this witness, it is too wonderful for me to explain. I don't have to know where the wind comes from, or where it is going, to know that it is blowing!

Part 2 How is this joint testimony of God's Spirit and our own, clearly and solidly distinguished from the presumption of a natural mind, and from the delusion of the devil

Paragraph 1 This is important to those who desire the salvation of God, and deserves our deepest attention, lest we fall into a fatal error.

Paragraph 2 Those who have never been convinced of their sin are always ready to flatter themselves and to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think, and so they assume that they possess this assurance already.

Paragraph 3 The Scripture explains in the plainest manner which go before, which accompany, and which follow, the genuine testimony of the Spirit.

Paragraph 4 Repentance, or the conviction of sin, comes before pardon, and the witness of pardon.

Paragraph 5 Being born of God precedes the witness that we are children of God.

Paragraph 6 A humble joy accompanies the witness of the Spirit. The more confident we are of this witness, the more we are meek, patient, gentle, and long-suffering. If we only suppose we have the witness of the Spirit, we become haughtier and overbearing, incapable of receiving reproof, slow to hear and swift to speak, unready to learn, fiery in temper, and eager in conversation.

- Paragraph 7 Those who keep the commandments in love have received the witness of the Spirit; those who have not received the witness tend to a liberty to disobey and break the commandments. Those who have not, think they are no longer under the law, and therefore no longer obliged to observe it.
- Paragraph 8 Discover yourself, you poor self-deceiver! We have weighed in the balance the evidence and you are found wanting. You are not lowly of heart, or gentle and meek, so you have neither the witness nor the joy of the Lord.
- Paragraph 9 Do you still question how one can know if they have the witness of the Spirit in them? How do you tell day from night? How do you distinguish the difference between the starlight and candlelight, and the light of the noon-day sun? There is an inherent and obvious difference, if your senses are rightly disposed!
- Paragraph 10 To require a philosophical answer, listing criteria in the minutest form, is to make a demand that cannot be met. It is only by experience that we can be assured of an answer.
- Paragraphs 11 We recognize the voice of God because God prepares us to recognize God's voice – it is God's will that we should recognize God's voice.
- Paragraph 12 How do we know if our senses are rightly disposed to recognize God's voice? By the testimony of our own spirit in bearing fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, compassion, humbleness, meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering.
- Paragraph 13 These same fruits distinguish God's voice from that of the devil. If holiness is of God, and sin is of the devil, then the witness is clear.
- Paragraph 14 Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift! Not just with my lips, but also with my life, I will show forth praise and glorify God in my body, seeking to purify myself as God is pure, and to love as God loves, so that it is clear that I am a child of God.

Sermon 11: The Witness of Our Own Spirit

*This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience,
that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God,
we have had our conversation in the world.*

II Corinthians 1:12

- Paragraph 1 True believers, because they abide in faith and love, have reason to rejoice.
- Paragraph 2 What is the nature and ground of Christian joy, but a happy peace and a calm satisfaction of spirit that arises from the testimony of his conscience.
- Paragraph 3 What are we to understand the word *conscience* means, when the Apostle uses it?
- Paragraph 4 We are conscious beings, with an inward perception of things both past and present, relating to our own attitudes and behaviors – but *conscience* means more than that.
- Paragraph 5 As a scriptural word, we may understand conscience as a power or faculty implanted by God in every soul which can perceive what is right or wrong in our own heart, life, attitudes, thoughts, words, and actions.
- Paragraph 6 Right and wrong is determined by the law written on our hearts, which for Christians is the Word of God, which is the light unto our feet. Nothing is good, but what scripture enjoins, either directly or by plain consequence; nothing is evil except what is forbidden there, either in terms or by undeniable inference. If scripture does not forbid or enjoin, it is considered a matter of indifference, neither good nor evil.
- Paragraph 7 A good conscience is 1) a conscience devoid of offense, 2) if we understand scripture and ourselves rightly, 3) there is agreement between what we believe, and what we say and do, and 4) an inward perception that our rule is properly applied.
- Paragraph 8 To be devoid of offense, we must have a good foundation, and only Jesus Christ can be our good foundation; and this foundation is built by a living faith that reveals our new life in Christ.
- Paragraph 9 Our every motion of our heart, tongue, hands, body, words and actions, employment of our powers and faculties, and the use of our talents all speak of our relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Paragraph 10 Our conversation is not only with the godly, but also with the world.

- Paragraph 11 Our conversation with the world is to be carried on in simplicity and godly sincerity. We are to simply keep our heart fixed on God, and with this single intention.
- Paragraph 12 Simplicity regards the intention; sincerity regards the execution of the intention. Our whole conversation with the world calls us to hit the mark in a world that has missed the mark. We must speak and do all to the glory of God in a way that is conducive to the glory of God.
- Paragraph 13 The object and end of our sincerity is God, for if it is only the sincerity of the world, it will sink into sin.
- Paragraph 14 Fleshly wisdom, gained by natural strength, naturally acquired knowledge, good sense, good nature, good breeding, native courage and resolution, philosophy, customs, or the highest human education are inferior to the wisdom of God. We need only look to Paul, with his natural abilities and highest training, acting in sincerity to persecute the Christians; until, by God's grace, he was able to count all his labors as loss in order to gain Christ.
- Paragraph 15 By the grace of God at work through the Holy Spirit, we can order our conversation with the world in the light and power of love, through Christ who strengthens us.
- Paragraph 16 The ground of a Christian's joy is this fullness of the gospel of God's grace, that we are redeemed by unmerited love, made new creatures as children of God, and empowered to live our lives so that our conversation with the world reveals this grace received.
- Paragraph 17 We rejoice always, because our joy is not a natural joy, transient like the things of the world, such as health and wealth, the loss of which gives natural men sorrow and pain but which does not affect the joy of a Christian.
- Paragraph 18 Our joy is not based in ignorance or blindness of conscience, for it arises after we are aware of our sinfulness and after God gives us a good conscience through grace.
- Paragraph 19 Our joy does not arise from any dullness or callousness of conscience that may rejoice even in committing sin, though they may call it liberty under grace.
- Paragraph 20 To conclude: Christian joy is joy in obedience, joy in loving God, and joy in keeping the commandments (but not as a condition for the covenant of works). It is joy in walking according to the covenant of grace, in holy love and happy obedience, so that we have not received this grace in vain

but are instead strengthened to fulfill the law of love. We rejoice through Christ who lives in us, and works through us.

Sermon 12: The Means of Grace

Ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them.

Malachi 3:7

Part 1 Are there any ordinances if we live in the light of Christ?

- Paragraph 1 The apostolic practice agrees that Christ had ordained certain outward means for conveying his grace into the souls of all.
- Paragraph 2 The means are not the end, therefore religion is not the outward works, but still the heart renewed after the image of God.
- Paragraph 3 If we abuse the means by making them the ends, we make ourselves twice as fit for hell, and turn people away from the means of grace.
- Paragraph 4 Some arose to oppose the using of the means as the ends, saying that external worship is lost labor apart from a renewed heart.
- Paragraph 5 It doesn't surprise us that the next step was taken, and the horror over the profaning of the means became a horror of the means, and these outward signs were considered to be absolutely nothing, having no place in the religion of Christ.
- Paragraph 6 Those who tried the means of grace while they were still asleep, and upon waking found their sins a heavy burden, will seek an easier way to happiness. They are easily persuaded that abstaining from the means of grace is wise, since before in their sin they found no pleasure in them.

Part 2 Are there any means of grace?

- Paragraph 1 Means of grace are outward signs, words, or actions ordained by God, and appointed for our use so that God may convey to us preventing, justifying or sanctifying grace. The chief of these are prayer, searching the scriptures, and receiving the Lord's Supper.
- Paragraph 2 These means of grace are nothing if they do not serve the end of religion, or if they are a substitute for true religion.
- Paragraph 3 These means of grace, if separate from the Holy Spirit, cannot profit us at all. There is no power in the outward means of grace if in knowing the scriptures we do not know God. There is no inherent power in prayer or the sacrament; God alone has the power to give us every good thing, and God may give good gifts apart from the practice of the means of grace.
- Paragraph 4 The use of all the means of grace will never atone for even one sin; that is the work of the blood of Christ.

Paragraph 5 The form of godliness, without its power, is destruction to our soul. There is no power if they fondly consider themselves Christians already when they are not, or that they are Christian because the use of these forms merits them the power to be saved.

Paragraph 6 The foundation of Christianity is that we are saved by grace through faith, not by any works or merits; nor by any power, wisdom, or strength.

Paragraph 7 How may we attain the gift and work of God? By believing. How shall we believe? By waiting on God. How shall we wait? By using the means or by laying them aside?

Paragraph 8 The witness of the scripture and of Christ gives us direction in this matter.

Part 3 The witness of scripture and of Christ is that all who desire the grace of God are to wait for it in the means God has ordained

Paragraph 1 We are to wait in prayer, as directed by Jesus: ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.

Paragraph 2 Jesus makes this point: Who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? If we know how to give good gifts, how much more will God give!

Paragraph 3 Prayer is an absolute necessity. Even when we ask for that which we should not receive, that is, mercy for our sins, God answers.

Paragraph 4 Jesus told a parable that we are always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1-5).

Paragraph 5 Jesus told us directly to pray secretly so that our God who hears in secret will reward us openly (Matthew 6:6).

Paragraph 6 In the letter of James, even those who have no wisdom can ask God for blessing; if we have not, it is because we have not asked (James 4:2).

Paragraph 7 We are to wait for grace by searching the Scriptures. Jesus told unbelievers to search the scriptures for testimony concerning Jesus (John 5:30), and the Bereans searched the scriptures daily after hearing Paul (Acts 17:11-12).

Paragraph 8 Paul's letter to Timothy confirms the searching of scripture as a means of grace (II Timothy 3:15-17) since all scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for the end that the disciple may be perfect.

- Paragraph 9 The Scriptures that Paul refers to are the Old Testament, since the New was not yet written.
- Paragraph 10 The searching of scripture is profitable for those who believe, as well as for those who are in darkness.
- Paragraph 11 We are to wait for grace by partaking of the Lord's Supper, which Jesus directed us to do in remembrance of him. Let us examine ourselves to see if we really desire to be made conformable to the death of Christ. Paul repeats this command, using the imperative tense.
- Paragraph 12 Paul states that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace, for the cup and the bread are the communion, or communication, of the blood and body of Christ (I Corinthians 10:16).

Part 4 What are the objections raised by those who are wise in their own eyes, and who see Satan as an angel of light

- Paragraph 1 The first objection is that you cannot use these means without trusting in them. Where is this stated in scripture? How does disobeying God show that I trust in obeying God? Being troubled if we do not partake in the sacrament is not a proof of the objection, for if we are troubled it shows we do trust God, and if we are not troubled it shows we are still in sin. If by trust you mean that we believe that what God has promised, God will be faithful to perform, then I will trust!
- Paragraph 2 The second objection is that this is seeking salvation by works. But seeking salvation by works in the scriptures means either observing the Mosaic law, or expecting salvation for the sake of your own works. This is not the same as waiting in the way God has ordained, and expecting God to meet me there as God has promised.
- Paragraph 3 The third objection is that Christ is the only means of grace. This is merely playing with words. When I say prayer is a means of grace, we understand a channel through which the grace of God is conveyed. When you say Christ is the means of grace, you understand the sole price and purchaser of it, and that no one comes to the Father but through me.
- Paragraph 4 The fourth objection is that scripture tells us to wait for salvation. But how shall we wait? If God has appointed a way, is there a better way of waiting for God?
- Paragraph 5 Some object that the scripture says to "stand still and see the salvation of God." And so they did, when the sea was parted as Moses lifted his rod and the people escaped across the sea; and when after a fast, the people led by Jehosaphat sang praises, as they stood still and saw the salvation of

God protect them from the opposing army. The context of both these verses must be considered.

Paragraph 6 One more objection is raised, that Paul said, “If you are dead with Christ, why are you subject to ordinances?” (Col. 2:20) The ordinances here are not the ordinances of Christ, but clearly refer to Jewish ordinances.

Part 5 How the means of grace to be used

Paragraph 1 We have observed a kind of order. A stupid senseless wretch is convicted of his sin, perhaps by a means of grace or simply by the intervention of the Holy Spirit without any outward means. Awakened, he begins searching the scriptures and listening to those who can share the good news, deepening his conviction. He begins to talk of the things of God, and to talk with God, even if it is with fear and shame. He seeks others who pray, and observes them gathering at the Lord’s table, as Christ said to do. There is a breakthrough that we are to come to the table in obedience, not worthiness, and thus he continues in God’s way: in hearing, reading, meditation, praying, and partaking in the Lord’s supper, until God in a manner that is pleasing to God gives the assurance that their faith has saved them.

Paragraph 2 Conversation is a good place to begin with stupid, careless sinners. To those who are beginning to feel the weight of their sins, we can add the reading of the Word, and to meditate on what he has read, as a means of deeper conviction. When trouble and heaviness overtake him, wouldn’t you advise him to pour out his soul to God in prayer? Would you not then remind him to go with you to the house of the Lord, to pray with the believers, and to eat with them at the Lord’s Table? If he does all this, he will remember the dying words of his Lord.

Paragraph 3 The scripture does not command this order, and God may choose to work in any order, even as these means and orders are combined in thousands of combinations. We should follow the leading of the Spirit, to be guided to use the means as we have opportunity.

Paragraph 4 In using these means, we must first retain a lively sense that God is above all means – we do not limit the Almighty. God can convey grace either with or without the means, as it pleases God. Secondly, we must be impressed that there is no power in the means themselves, nor is there any merit in using the means – we do them simply because God has ordained them for our use. Thirdly, in using all the means, we are to seek God alone, for only God can satisfy your soul. Lastly, do not congratulate yourself on using the means, for if God conveys grace it is because God is pleased to do so and not because of what you have done. Give God all the praise, and be humble before God.

Sermon 13: The Circumcision of the Heart

Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.

Romans 2:29

- Paragraph 1 That there is a difference between the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world only seems like a new doctrine because we have lived away the substance of our faith.
- Paragraph 2 The natural man, who is alive in the world but dead to God, does not want this difference and so redefines the Spirit of Christ as to be meaningless, since he is unable to discern the Spirit of Christ.
- Paragraph 3 Circumcision of the heart is the distinguishing mark of true followers of Christ, since it is a right state of soul, a mind and spirit renewed after the image of God.

Part 1 What does “circumcision of the heart” mean?

- Paragraph 1 It is the habitual disposition of our soul that is termed “holiness,” having been cleansed of sin and endowed with the virtues of Christ, so that we may be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.
- Paragraph 2 It implies humility, faith, hope, and charity.
- Paragraph 3 It is being convinced that, apart from the Spirit, we can do nothing except add to our sin.
- Paragraph 4 The effect of this “circumcision of the heart” is our disregard for human honors, since all the good that can be done is done by God.
- Paragraph 5 Since they do not seek praise for affirmation, they embrace the faith that alone is able to make them whole.
- Paragraph 6 This faith is strong enough to overturn all prejudices of corrupt reason, all the false maxims that people value, all evil customs and habits, all the false wisdom of the world, and every high and noble thing that distracts us from Christ.
- Paragraph 7 This faith in the whole gospel of Jesus Christ has power over the world, enabling the believer to glorify God.
- Paragraph 8 This faith is evidenced by the power to deliver persons from sin, which made them instruments of unrighteousness, so that they can now yield themselves to God as those who are given new life.

- Paragraph 9 Those who are born of God also have hope. They have the witness of the Spirit and their own spirit that they are the children of God. This hope gives them a lively expectation that what they do, where they go, and where they end, are at the direction of God. The believer is not discouraged by the journey, which may be severe, or concerned with the pathway, which may be difficult, for while we do not have the strength to walk this way with Christ, God provides the strength.
- Paragraph 10 In the discipline of this hope, the Christian is prepared to endure hardship, as the works and appetites of darkness are renounced. Those who have this hope purify themselves, even as Christ is pure. It is this daily care, by the grace of God and the blood of the covenant that we are cleansed of lusts, uncleanness, envy, malice, wrath, and the passions of the flesh.
- Paragraph 11 All that we lack, if we have a deep humility, a steadfast faith, a lively hope, and a cleansed heart, is love. If you have all these things, you have “circumcision of the heart” for love is the fulfilling of the law, and the end of the commandment.
- Paragraph 12 This love of God extends to our neighbors, and may extend to any thing that leads us back to our Creator. Whatever you desire or fear, whatever you seek or shun, whatever you think, speak, or do, may it have as its end the love of God, as the source of your being.
- Paragraph 13 Have no other end but God. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life are not from God, and those who seek these things as their end do not have the Spirit of Christ.

Part 2 Reflections that naturally arise from asking about the circumcision of the heart

- Paragraph 1 We have no claim on God, unless our heart is circumcised by humility, recognizing our want of God and our inability to save ourselves in our sin.
- Paragraph 2 No one can obtain the honor of God, unless their heart is circumcised by faith that is dependent on God.
- Paragraph 3 When we are acquainted with this faith, we find our religion grounded on eternal fitness, on the intrinsic excellence and beauty of virtue, on the reasons of good and evil, and the relations we have with each other.
- Paragraph 4 We are not disciples if we do not have faith in Christ, and our good works flow out of our faith. Christ is the Author, and the Spirit the Perfecter, of our faith and good works.

- Paragraph 5 We are not led by the Spirit, unless the Spirit bear witness to our spirit that we are children of God and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. The toil before us is nothing compared to the joy before us!
- Paragraph 6 If you quarrel with the covenant, blaspheme the terms of it, or complain that no one could possibly keep the covenant, then it is high time for you to deal faithfully with your soul, or you will never have the joyful assurance of fulfilling the covenant.
- Paragraph 7 It is blasphemy to hope to fulfill the commands of God without taking any pains at all. We are to agonize over entering the narrow gate, walk in the steps of Jesus to be purified, and to be sanctified with a constant and continued course of general self-denial.
- Paragraph 8 Consider the example of Paul, who ran the good race with certainty, and fought the good fight with purpose.
- Paragraph 9 Fighting the good fight is in vain, unless our heart is circumcised by love. God's love engages the whole person, and without it, we are dead before God.
- Paragraph 10 A heart circumcised by humility, faith, hope, and love has as its end the entire love of God, which is then revealed in our entire love for our neighbors and the creation God has given us as a stewardship.

Sermon 14: The Marks of the New Birth

So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

John 3:8

- Paragraph 1 What is the new birth, when we are born of God?
- Paragraph 2 Even though Scripture does not give us a definition, it does give us marks.

Part 1 The mark of faith

Paragraph 1 In several places the scripture tells us that we are children of God by faith.

Paragraph 2 This is not a speculative faith, or an assent that Jesus is the Christ or to the other tenets of our creeds, for even devils believe this to be true.

Paragraph 3 A true and living faith is *an assent* and *a disposition* of the heart given to us by God. It is a confidence in God that through the merits of Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled to the favor of God. This faith comes after we know we have sinned, and that it is through Christ only that we can be saved.

Paragraph 4 An immediate and constant fruit of this confidence is power over sin, both inward and outward, since we are dead to sin and alive to God through the grace of Jesus Christ.

Paragraph 5 The letters of John affirm this power over sin given to those who are sons of God, though some have tried to moderate John by adding a word not in scripture – that whoever is born of God does not sin *habitually*. This negates the plain meaning, and may bring a plague upon those who would rob the scripture of its godly power.

Paragraph 6 Let John interpret his own words: Whoever abides in Christ sins not, whoever sins has not seen him, neither known him. Let no one deceive you, for many will endeavor to persuade you that you may be unrighteous, that you may commit sin and yet be children of God. He that commits sin is of the devil; whoever is born of God does not commit sin.

Paragraph 7 Another fruit of living faith is peace, which was promised by Jesus, that passes all understanding and stands against all the powers of hell and earth cannot shake.

Part 2 A second scriptural mark of those who are born of God is hope.

Paragraph 1 In Peter's letter, the children of God are greeted with "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope."

Paragraph 2 This hope implies the testimony of our own spirit, that we walk in simplicity and godly sincerity; and the testimony of the Spirit of God that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs.

Paragraph 3 The Spirit bears witness in those who are led by the Spirit to become the sons of God by the spirit of adoption.

Paragraph 4 We receive the Spirit of adoption when we can cry, Abba, Father! We have one Lord, one Spirit, one faith, and therefore one hope.

Paragraph 5 “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted” is fulfilled when we have mourned our sins and repented, receiving then the comfort of being born of God into new life. Jesus promised us the Comforter, the Spirit who makes our joy complete.

Part 3 The third scriptural mark of those who are born of God is love.

Paragraph 1 This is the greatest mark, as the Holy Spirit that is given to us sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts.

Paragraph 2 Since we love the Father, we also have love for the Son, rejoicing in Jesus as our Savior.

Paragraph 3 The necessary fruit of this love of God is the love of our neighbor. This is a love that, like the love of Jesus, makes no exception for enemies and those who spitefully use and persecute us.

Paragraph 4 To keep the commandment to love God and our neighbor is more than an outward service, but also an inner disposition.

Paragraph 5 A second fruit of the love of God is universal obedience to God, and conformity to God’s will, both inwardly and outwardly, which is evidenced by “the hungering and thirsting to do good, in every possible kind, unto all men.”

Part 4 Living faith, hope, and love are the marks of those born of God

Paragraph 1 Be merciful, as God is merciful; be holy, as God is holy; be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Paragraph 2 Those who are born again are born of both water and the Spirit. The question is not “what were you made when you were baptized?” but “what are you now?” Are you now a temple of the Holy Spirit that dwells in you?

- Paragraph 3 “Once baptized” is not the same as “now a child of God.” The consequence of your baptism does not hold if you continue to sin.
- Paragraph 4 Your only hope is to be born again, if you are dead in sins and trespasses. Even if it is the inward sins, and not the outward sins, it is still an abomination before God.
- Paragraph 5 We do not deny that you were born again in baptism once, but if you are children of the devil, you must be born again by the Spirit. You must receive the marks of those who are born in the Spirit to receive the power to become sons of God. Amen, Lord Jesus! Give us again the power to believe in you, to become your child, to know the forgiveness of our sins and the redemption through your blood, that we may be cleansed and led into perfect holiness.

Sermon 15: The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.

I John 3:9

- Paragraph 1 Are “being born of God” and “being justified” different expressions for the same thing?
- Paragraph 2 Even if they occur at the same time, they are easily distinguishable. Justification is a relative change; the new birth is a real change. Justification is what God does for us; the new birth is what God does in us. Justification changes our outward relationship with God; the new birth changes us from sinner to saint. Justification restores God’s favor towards us; the new birth restores God’s image in us. Justification takes away the guilt of sin; the new birth takes away the power of sin.
- Paragraph 3 When we do not discern the differences between justification and new birth, we get confused, particularly when we talk about the great privilege of the children of God; i.e., whoever is born of God does not sin (I John 3:9).
- Paragraph 4 We will consider first, what it means to be born of God; and secondly, in what sense does one born of God not sin.

Part 1 The proper meaning of “Whosoever is born of God”

- Paragraph 1 It does not implied being baptized, or any other outward change; but instead the vast inward change wrought in our soul by the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is a change in our existence, as we live in quite another manner than we did before. We live, as it were, in another world.
- Paragraph 2 This expression is used because our spiritual birth resembles our physical birth.
- Paragraph 3 A child not born has little or no experience of the world the child will be born into, and therefore no knowledge, conception or idea of what life in this world is like, even as the child is dependent upon that world.
- Paragraph 4 This child is a stranger to the visible world, not because this world is far off, but because this world is insensible to the child since a thick veil surrounds the child.
- Paragraph 5 But as soon as the child is born, the child experiences the world in a quite different manner! The child’s eyes are now open to perceive the light. Every sense is now employed to perceive this new world.

Paragraph 6 So it is with one who is born of God. Before the great change is wrought, even though we subsist by God, we are not aware of it. We are not sensible of God. We do not feel or perceive God, even though God is not far from us. Even if we have some small beginnings of spiritual notions, we do not have the spiritual senses capable of discerning spiritual objects.

Paragraph 7 Not having any knowledge of this invisible world, we do not have any intercourse with it. The other world is not far from us, but it is all around us on every side. A thick veil surrounds us in our natural state.

Paragraph 8 When we are born of God, the manner of our existence changes! We are now sensible of the world into which we are born, and our experience of God is sure. We receive the spirit/breath of God and we return it by love, prayer and praise as our own spirit/breath. This spiritual respiration sustains our life, and enables us to increase our spiritual strength.

Paragraph 9 We can now see God and God's exceedingly great power and love towards those who believe. We see the mercy of God towards the sinner who has been reconciled through the Son of God's love. The light of God's person and love shines in the newborn's heart, and the darkness passes away.

Paragraph 10 The newborn can now hear the voice of God calling to them, and in hearing, obeys the voice of the Shepherd. Now sensible to the invisible world, they can learn more and more about this new life, and receive the peace of God, the joy of the Holy Spirit, and the love of God shed abroad in their heart of those who believe in Christ Jesus. The veil is removed!

Part 2 In what sense do we not sin

Paragraph 1 If we are born of God, and continue to receive the spirit/breath of God and return it in love, prayer, and praise, we continue to have life in God, who continually is at work upon our spirit.

Paragraph 2 By sin, I mean outward sin, according to the plain common acceptance of the word – an actual, voluntary transgression of the law of God that is known to the person. As long as it is God's spirit/breath that gives the newborn the life of love, prayer, and praise, they cannot sin.

Paragraph 3 Yet a difficulty immediately occurs, which causes many to deny that those who are born of God cannot sin. It is the fact that we cannot deny that there are those who are truly born of God who not only could, but also did, commit gross outward sin.

- Paragraph 4 David, king of Israel, knew in whom he believed. He was full of love, a man of prayer and praise as evidenced by his psalms. And yet David could and did commit the horrid sins of adultery and murder.
- Paragraph 5 Even after the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to believers in Christ, people born of God sinned. Look at Barnabus, fellow worker with Paul among the Gentiles, who in a disagreement with Paul, left the work and forsook him to who he had been joined by the Holy Spirit.
- Paragraph 6 Consider the sinful doings of Peter, who ate with Gentile Christians, but then denied them when the circumcision party was present. If even Peter sinned after having been born of God, how can John say that those who are born of God cannot sin?
- Paragraph 7 The answer is plain: as long as we keep ourselves steadfast, as we are enabled to do by the grace of God, we cannot sin. If we do not keep ourselves steadfast, then we may sin as any other person. We do not keep ourselves steadfast when we fall away step by step; first into negative inward sin, not praying, not praising, not seeking after the prize of our high calling, and then by positive inward sin, inclining to wickedness of heart, giving way to evil desire or temper. From there, we lose our faith; we lose sight of our pardoning God, and of God's love. In this weakened condition, we are capable of committing even outward sin.
- Paragraph 8 Let us consider David again. He saw God by faith. He loved God in sincerity. He depended on, and desired, God. But then he saw Bathsheba. He felt a temptation, and the Holy Spirit convinced him this was an evil thought. Still, he yielded to the thought, and the temptation prevailed. He could still see God, but more dimly than before. God warned him again of this sin, but David did not listen, and the temptation became lust. David could no longer see God, and his faith and love of God ceased, and he committed the outward sin.
- Paragraph 9 See the progress from grace to sin. 1) Faith remains in him that is born of God; 2) a temptation arises; 3) the Spirit of God gives warning that sin is near; 4) he gives way in some degree to the temptation, which begins to grow pleasing to him; 5) the Holy Spirit is grieved, and his love grows cold; 6) the Spirit reproves him more sharply and calls him again to the way of holiness; 7) he turns away from the painful voice of God and towards the pleasing voice of the tempter; 8) evil desire begins and spreads in his soul, until faith and love vanish. The power of God departed from him, he is now capable of sinning.
- Paragraph 10 This same pattern is evident in Peter before the circumcision party.

Part 3 **Does sin precede or follow the loss of faith? Do we first commit sin and then lose faith, or do we lose faith and then sin?**

Paragraph 1 Some sin of omission must necessarily precede the loss of faith, but the loss of faith must precede the committing of an outward sin. When our eye is fixed on God, temptations have no power over us; if our eye strays, then temptation draws us out of God by our own desire, and that desire brings forth sin, both inward and outward.

Paragraph 2 New life in God continues when we have continual inspiration and respiration of the Spirit, so that all of our life depends on God.

Paragraph 3 God does not continually act upon our soul if we do not respond. God first loves us, but if we do not love God in return, God will gradually withdraw and leave us to the darkness of our own hearts. God cannot continually breathe into us life, if we do not breathe out life.

Paragraph 4 Even if now we stand fast in grace, we should have a healthy respect for the power of sin, lest we slip first into inward sin and wreck our faith. And then how easily will outward sin have dominion over us! Watch always! Listen for the voice of God at all times! Pray without ceasing, so that you may always believe, and love, and not sin.

Sermon 16: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

And seeing the latitudes, He went up into a mountain; and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Discourse 1 - Matthew 5:1-4

- Paragraph 1 A summary of Jesus' ministry before the Sermon on the Mount: going about all of Galilee, teaching in synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing the sick, attracting followers.
- Paragraph 2 Why should we listen to Jesus' sermon? He is Lord of heaven and earth, Lord our governor of the kingdom, the great Lawgiver, and the eternal Wisdom of the Father. He is the one who knows how we stand related to God and each other, and how to make that relationship fulfilling through love and mercy, which is the power of God.
- Paragraph 3 What is Jesus teaching? The true and royal way to heaven – nothing more, nothing less and nothing else.
- Paragraph 4 Whom is Jesus teaching? Not only the Apostles, but also the multitudes that followed him up the mountain; and not just the multitudes physically present, but all people for all times.
- Paragraph 5 How much of what Jesus teaches in this sermon is intended for all people? Since Jesus does not distinguish in his teaching that some of it is for Apostles, some for that generation present on the mountain, and some for all persons, neither will I make that distinction.
- Paragraph 6 A distinction would be reasonable if the discourse is apparently absurd or if it contradicts other scripture. Neither case applies for such a distinction to restrict a teaching of Jesus to the Apostles only, or to a past generation. Not only that, we will see that the teaching of Jesus either all stands together, or it all falls apart.
- Paragraph 7 How does Jesus teach? As no person ever before him – not as the holy men of old, moved by the Spirit; not as the Apostles, wise builders of the Church; not even as himself on other occasions. Here Jesus teaches as one laying out the full prospect of Christianity, a holiness that allows us to see the Lord.
- Paragraph 8 Jesus teaches with amazing love in revealing the will of God. He does not speak as a burning bush, or a thundering voice from heaven, but with the still small voice of his that is addressed to all of us.

Paragraph 9 Jesus teaches with the authority of God, and not as the scribes, or Moses, or Abraham, or the prophets.

Paragraph 10 This Sermon on the Mount is divided into three sections, with the subsequent part building on the previous part. The first contains the sum of all true religion. The second contains the rules for right intentions for our outward actions. The third contains cautions against the main hindrances of religion, closing with an application of the whole.

Part 1 The sum of all true religion in eight particulars (Matthew 5)

Paragraph 1 Some suppose that these particulars are successive stages in the Christian course; others suppose that all these particulars belong at all times to every Christian. I do not find any inconsistency in holding both suppositions to be true. We begin in poverty of spirit, and the other tempers are also present, in greater or lesser degree, in every Christian; and they remain as God calls us to higher gifts.

Paragraph 2 The foundation of all is poverty of spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus may have begun by looking at the temporal poverty of followers and then making the transition to spiritual things, but their temporal poverty is not the issue here.

Paragraph 3 Does “poverty of spirit” mean “love of poverty”? That is, those who are free of the love of money, and free of covetousness? This interpretation seems to be based in the expression of Paul that the love of money is the root of all evil. This verse needs some restriction, for the love of money is certainly not the sole root of evil. This interpretation also doesn’t fit with the design of the sermon, which is to lay out the whole fabric of Christianity, which certainly needs more than to guard against one vice. This can’t be the interpretation, for that would make poverty of spirit coincide with purity of heart, a later particular.

Paragraph 4 The poor in spirit are those who know themselves and are convinced of their sin, to whom God has given the first repentance which is previous to faith in Christ (Prevenient grace).

Paragraph 5 Convinced of their sin, they are poor in spirit because of their guilt and hopelessness apart from God.

Paragraph 6 The poor in spirit know that they are helpless in atoning for their past sins. The poor in spirit also know that even if their past sins were forgiven, they do not have the strength to keep from sinning in the future, and therefore would be no better off than before they received forgiveness.

- Paragraph 7 Poverty of spirit is the first step we take in running the race, which is set before us. It is not humility based in knowing we are condemned.
- Paragraph 8 Paul makes this same case in Romans. We are helpless as well as guilty before God. This is not to teach us humility but to convict us of our sin and need for Jesus.
- Paragraph 9 Christianity begins where heathen morality ends, with the conviction of our sin and not having our own righteousness.
- Paragraph 10 Sinner, awake! And know yourself as a sinner, and cast off any imagination that you can save yourself from the wrath and judgment of God. May you know your only hope in the blood of Jesus Christ, and your renewal by his almighty Spirit! Then you will have the witness, "Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs in the kingdom of God."
- Paragraph 11 This kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, joy, and love in the Holy Spirit, as we are renewed after the image of God.
- Paragraph 12 Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. If God has given you to be poor in spirit, it no longer matters if you are all sinfulness, all unholiness, and all weakness to save yourself. Behold the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ your Advocate who atones for your sins and washes you clean to come before God. Dare to believe!
- Paragraph 13 It is then that you can learn to be lowly of heart, which is true, genuine, Christian humility, which flows from a sense of God's love reconciling us through Jesus Christ. Poverty of spirit begins where a sense of guilt ends, and is a continual sense of our total dependence on God for every good thought, word, and work; as well as a continual sense of our utter inability to do good apart from God. The more we grow in grace, the more we see the desperate wickedness of our heart. The more we advance in the knowledge and love of God through Jesus Christ, the more we discern our alienation from God and the necessity of being entirely renewed in righteousness and true holiness.

Part 2 The continuation of our journey of faith

- Paragraph 1 Jesus knew the triumph of our poverty of spirit does not continue long. Therefore he said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."
- Paragraph 2 This promise does not belong to those who mourn only on some worldly account of trouble or disappointment. It does not belong to those who afflict themselves through fear or other temporal evil; or to those who pine away with anxious care or desire. Let us not think that those who mourn

because of their vanity will receive anything from the Lord for their vanity.

Paragraph 3 Jesus is referring to those who mourn after God, who have known the joy of God's pardon, but who cannot see God now. They see temptation and sin all around them, and the mourning begins because they know themselves to be weak in faith.

Paragraph 4 While this mourning is an affliction for the present, afterwards it brings peaceable fruit to those who have been tested and pass the test, desiring only the comfort of God, and not the comfort of the things of this world. They shall receive the consolation of the Spirit, a fresh manifestation of God's love, and a fuller assurance of faith that swallows up doubt and fear.

Paragraph 5 This understanding is shadowed in Jesus' life, when he tells the disciples that for a little while they will not see him, and then another little while and they will see him again. (John 16:19-22)

Paragraph 6 Even when this mourning has ended, there is still mourning for the sins and miseries of others. They mourn the dishonor shown to God.

Paragraph 7 The wisdom of God is foolishness with the world. Mourning and poverty of spirit seems to the world to be stupidity and dullness, if not moping and melancholy, if not downright lunacy and distraction. But then, they do not know God, so they do not know the consequences of their sin!

Paragraph 8 Let the children of God be mourners in Zion, and not walk in the wisdom of the world. Heaven and hell are open before you. Weep for your self and for the world, and cry out to Jesus who grasps both time and eternity, that you may escape the destruction that comes as a whirlwind and be brought safe through the storms of life and into the safe haven of your Father's house.

Sermon 17: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Discourse 2 - Matthew 5:5-7

Part 1 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Paragraph 1 When winter is past, when the time for singing comes, when the mourners are comforted, when Christ's appearance drives the darkness away, then is this word of Christ fulfilled.

Paragraph 2 Who are the meek? It is not apathy, or ignorance, or insensitivity to the evils of the world.

Paragraph 3 Christian meekness is not being without zeal for God, but keeping our zeal in balance, avoiding the extremes of too little or too much zeal. Grace does not root out our zeal, but regulates us to an even scale with regard to anger, sorrow and fear.

Paragraph 4 This is our meekness. When we apply it towards God, we call it "resignation." When we apply it towards ourselves, we call it "patience" or "contentedness." When we apply it towards our neighbors, it is "mildness" and "gentleness."

Paragraph 5 The meek can both discern evil and suffer it. Their zeal is always guided by knowledge and tempered by love of God and neighbor, so that it may work for God's good. This meekness acts as a wall and bulwark to the soul, so that the wicked one cannot approach to hurt it.

Paragraph 6 It is not enough to be meek, for we must also increase in meekness, as opportunities for testing will come as long as we live. Our prayer is one of resignation, "not as I will, but as God wills." We will need gentleness when dealing with the evil and unthankful if we are to overcome evil with good.

Paragraph 7 Meekness must be applied to both our outward acts and our inward intentions.

Paragraph 8 Jesus ranks anger with murder in this sermon, even if we do not express that anger in any outward manner. Anger makes us obnoxious before God. Is there ever a sufficient cause for anger at persons? No, though we will allow for anger at sin.

Paragraph 9 We are also obnoxious before God when we call names or judge others as fools. Jesus compares the penalty for this to those inflicted for capital punishment.

Paragraph 10 Our works of piety are worthless if they are not also accompanied by works of charity towards those in need. We are not to bring our gift to the altar if there is something we hold against our neighbor, until we are reconciled!

Paragraph 11 Find a way to be in agreement with your adversary as quickly as possible, in keeping with the will of God, lest this be the moment when you come before the judgment of God.

Paragraph 12 The meek shall inherit the earth. The wisdom of the world is that you must take from others to gain for yourself, and others may take what you have as well. They never truly possess anything, for fear of losing it. The meek know that God provided whatever they have, be it more or less, for them, and it is sweetness to their soul. It pleases them because it pleases God for them to have it.

Paragraph 13 The meek also inherit the new earth, as seen in the vision of John in the Revelation.

Part 2 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Paragraph 1 Pride is removed by poverty of spirit. Holy mourning removes levity and thoughtlessness. Meekness removes anger, impatience and discontent. Together, they remove our false cravings and sick appetites, so that we may again hunger and thirst for righteousness, and be filled.

Paragraph 2 Righteousness is the image of God, and the mind that was in Christ, with every temper springing from, and terminating in, the love of God and neighbor.

Paragraph 3 Hunger and thirst are our strongest bodily appetites. So should we hunger and thirst for God. Our hunger and thirst does not go away until it has been satisfied, and only the love of God can satisfy our spiritual hunger.

Paragraph 4 Doing no harm, doing good, and using the means of grace will mark you as religious, but it will not satisfy your hunger and thirst for God. This is only the outside of religion. The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, and being joined with God in one spirit, having fellowship with God and walking with God is true religion.

Paragraph 5 They shall be filled with righteousness and holiness. God will feed us with the bread of heaven, and satisfy us with living water of life.

Paragraph 6 Even as we are satisfied, our hunger and thirst does not cease, so we seek more righteousness and more holiness, and not more things of this world.

Part 3 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

- Paragraph 1 The more we receive the life of God, the more tenderly we will be concerned with those persons who do not have this life. The merciful implies those who are compassionate and tenderhearted who grieve for those that do not hunger for God. The merciful are those who love their neighbors as they love themselves.
- Paragraph 2 This love is vastly important, for without it nothing we do is of any importance before God, as Paul rightly tells us in his letter to the Corinthians.
- Paragraph 3 This love is patient towards all, suffering the weaknesses and errors of the sinful, as well as the malice and wickedness, while still feeding their hunger for God and satisfying their thirst.
- Paragraph 4 In overcoming evil with good, this love is kind.
- Paragraph 5 Because this love desires all good things in this world and the world to come for those in need, this love does not envy whatever blessings others receive.
- Paragraph 6 This love is not rash or hasty in making judgments. All the evidence must be weighed, so that we do not “see a little, presume a great deal, and so jump to the conclusion.”
- Paragraph 7 This love is not puffed up so that we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, humbling our soul to the dust from which we came. The high conceit of pride is destroyed, and we rejoice in being the servant of all.
- Paragraph 8 This love is not rude, or willingly offensive to others. Love is shown in all that is done, to the edification of others.
- Paragraph 9 This love does not seek personal advantage, but only the salvation of other souls. This love does not even seek its own spiritual advantage, as the zeal for the glory of God swallows up even this self-interest.
- Paragraph 10 This love is not provoked, as it triumphs over all. Though, it is clear that we are often provoked, and less than loving, as even the apostles sometimes gave into provocations.
- Paragraph 11 Love prevents a thousand provocations because it does not think evil. Yes, we are aware of evil and see it all around us; but we need not willingly think evil of others, supposing or inferring evil where there is none. This love casts out jealousy, evil surmising, and a readiness to believe evil of others.
- Paragraph 12 This love does not rejoice in iniquity. Only a person of love will not rejoice when their enemy makes a misstep that may bring a personal

advantage to themselves. Only a person of love weeps over the sin or folly of their enemy, taking no pleasure in hearing or in repeating it.

Paragraph 13 This love rejoices in the truth that is after godliness and brings forth its proper fruit of holiness of heart and conversation. This love rejoices when even those who oppose him love God and bring God glory.

Paragraph 14 This love covers all things, for whatever evil the merciful person sees, hears or knows, he conceals lest he become a partaker of their sin. The merciful will not mention it to anyone, except perhaps the one doing the evil, and then only to win back his brother. This love does not allow for tale-bearing, back-biting, whispering, or evil-speaking -- all of which makes one equivalent to a murderer. When the exception is made, it must be for the glory of God or the good of the neighbor, and for the benefit of the innocent, but only when there is a clear goal in mind that is consistent with love and there is no other means available for achieving this goal. The exception is to be used sparingly, like using poison to dispel a greater poison, with fear and trembling that by saying too much he does more harm than in saying nothing at all.

Paragraph 15 This love is willing to believe the best, to think the best, and to put the most favorable construction on every situation. It is ready to believe whatever tends to the advantage of another's character, as well as the innocence and integrity of another. At least, it is ready to believe the sincerity of another's repentance, being quick to forgive and understanding of our human weaknesses.

Paragraph 16 When we can no longer believe, then this love gives us hope that the evil is not related to the person, or that the circumstances were a factor, or that the evil was not as bad as presented, or that the intent was not as evil as perceived. At least, there is hope that God will intervene in a way that brings God glory, and that there will be joy in heaven over the one sinner who repents of this evil.

Paragraph 17 This love endures all things, completing the character of the one who is merciful. Whatever the injustice, the malice or the cruelty of others, the merciful is able to endure it, considering nothing intolerable that might destroy their love for others and for God. The merciful obtain mercy, as God repays this love shown to others to the one who is merciful.

Paragraph 18 The history of the Church is a witness against this merciful love, as we have persecuted others in the name of Christ, and have persecuted even other Christians who differ from us in opinions. Against hope, have hope! It is God's good pleasure to renew the face of the earth and to give us the kingdom. The promises of God will be fulfilled when we love one another as Christ has loved us.

Sermon 18: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are ye, when men revile you, and persecute you,
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake.*

*Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven,
for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Discourse 3 - Matthew 5:8-12

Part 1 God shows us what Christians are to be

- Paragraph 1 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Being pure in heart is the foundation of our love for our neighbor, if it is grounded in our love of God.
- Paragraph 2 The pure in heart are those who have had their heart purified by God, by faith in the blood of Jesus, which cleanses us of every unholy affection. They are purified of pride by poverty of spirit; from anger and turbulent passion by meekness and gentleness; from every desire except that to please and enjoy God as they hunger and thirst for righteousness. This purification enables us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.
- Paragraph 3 False teachers regard purity as little more than abstaining from outward impurities. God searches our heart for impurities, as well!
- Paragraph 4 God admits no excuse for retaining impurities. Jesus taught that if our right eye causes us to sin, we are to pluck it out. If persons as dear to us as our right eye cause us to sin, do not delay in separating from them. If any one seems as necessary to us as our right hand, and they cause us to have impure desires that we would never act upon, cut them off at a stroke and give them over to God. Before cutting someone off, however, see whether fasting and prayer can first drive out the unclean spirit. If this does not deliver you, consult with a wise and faithful mentor who may guide you through this separation faithfully.
- Paragraph 5 Being married is not a pretense of faithfulness, if we divorce to marry another; for as long as your first spouse is living, a subsequent marriage is polygamy and adultery before God. If the divorce was because of adultery, scripture does not forbid remarriage.
- Paragraph 6 Such is the purity of heart that God requires, and works in those who believe in Jesus. Those with a pure heart will see God, who communicates with God's children by the Holy Spirit. The light of God shines on them, revealing God's presence in the creation and in all things.

- Paragraph 7 The pure in heart see God's hand ever over them for good, disposing all the circumstances of their life according to the depth of God's wisdom and mercy.
- Paragraph 8 The pure in heart see God when they worship with the great congregation, and when they pray in secret; when they share in the sacrament, and when they hear the Word of God proclaimed.
- Paragraph 9 We are far from seeing God, however, when we swear in common conversations, even if we avoid swearing by using the Lord's name. God forbids common swearing and false swearing, treating them both as the same heinous consideration. We are not to swear by heaven, or earth, or Jerusalem, or its king, or even the hairs on our head. God alone decides the disposition of all things.
- Paragraph 10 Jesus did not forbid the swearing in judgment and truth, when we are required to do so by a magistrate. Here Jesus is reproving false swearing and common swearing. Paul, whom we think had God's Spirit, swore "God is my witness" before the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Philippians, so it undeniably appears that we may swear before others on weighty occasions even to one another!
- Paragraph 11 The great lesson is that God is in all things, and that we are to see God in the reflection of every creature; that we should see nothing as separate from God (a belief that is a practical atheism!)

Part 2 God shows us what Christians are to do

- Paragraph 1 Inward holiness exerts itself in outward conversation. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.
- Paragraph 2 The word we translate as "peace" implies all manner of good and every blessing that relates to the soul or the body, to time or eternity.
- Paragraph 3 Peacemakers, then, are those who abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention. They work with all their might to either prevent the fire of hell from being kindled; or if it is already kindled, to keep it from spreading; or if it has broken out, from spreading any further. They endeavor to calm the stormy spirits, to quiet their turbulent passions, and to reconcile them to each other. They preserve peace where it is, and restore it where it is not.
- Paragraph 4 Peacemakers are those who do good to all persons, as they have opportunity. This doing good is not limited to family, friends, and those who believe, but is extended also to neighbors, strangers, and enemies. The good that is done is not of one kind only, but good in general, in every possible way, redeeming every moment for God's glory.

- Paragraph 5 Peacemakers do good to the utmost of their power, remembering the words of Jesus, in as much as you did it for the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.
- Paragraph 6 Peacemakers allow God to work through them for the good of another's soul. They prepare the ground, scatter the seed, and water the soil so that God can provide the growth.
- Paragraph 7 Blessed are those who are continually employed in the work of faith and the labor of love, for they shall be called the children of God.

Part 3 God shows us how the world responds to Christians

- Paragraph 1 You would think that someone so full of genuine humility, so mild and gentle, so devoted to God and others would be the darling of humanity. Yet, Jesus knows our sin, and so he said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God."
- Paragraph 2 The testimony of the apostles is consistent that those who are born of the flesh persecute those who are born of the spirit, since the righteous are not of this world.
- Paragraph 3 The world loves its own, and the righteous are not of this world. They see the righteous as if they were of the world. When the world sees poor in spirit, they see mean and dastardly souls. When the world sees mourning, they see "dull, heavy, lumpish creatures" who drag down others, mere "death-heads" that kill mirth and spoil company. When the world sees meekness, they see tame and passive fools fit to be trampled on. When the world sees hungering and thirsting after righteousness, they see "hot-brained enthusiasts" running after raptures and inward feelings. When the world sees mercy, they see lovers of the evil and the unthankful, encouraging all manner of evil and wickedness. When the world sees purity in heart, they see only their own sort, "blasphemous wretches" who pretend to make God a liar so that what they do is not considered sin. When the world sees peacemaking, they see giving comfort to the enemy. The world believes that the more the righteous spread the "mischief" of their religion, the more they deserve to be persecuted, according to the world.
- Paragraph 4 Those who persecute others do not know God, or God's love -- no, they do not even possess the form of godliness. The spirit of the world is opposed to the spirit of God. In the world, the leopard cannot lie down with the kid. In the world, the proud are compelled to persecute the lowly. In the world, the light and airy are compelled to persecute those that mourn. So it is in every kind, that the servants of the devil will persecute the children of God.
- Paragraph 5 How will the world persecute the righteous? In general, in the manner and measure which God sees will be most for God's glory, helping the

righteous to grow in grace and to enlarge God's kingdom. Times of ease and blessing do not strengthen the disciples in the same way that the storms of persecution can, as witnessed by the apostles as they were planting the church, and as witnessed by the church during the persecution by Rome in the second and third centuries. We live in a time of blessing, and see how far from God's righteousness we have strayed!

- Paragraph 6 It is rare that God should allow the storm to rise so high against God's children. More often, we are called to endure the lighter forms of persecution, such as estrangement from friends and family.
- Paragraph 7 The persecution that comes to all God's children is the persecution of being reviled. This is the very badge of our discipleship! The only way to the kingdom passes through both good reports and evil reports about us.
- Paragraph 8 The scandal of the cross does not pass away for Christ's disciples in the world. Though there may be exceptions, when the world is at peace with Christians and uses them. But even during the exception, it is only for the world's purposes, and not God's, that they live in peace for a time.
- Paragraph 9 How are we to behave when we are persecuted? We are not to seek persecution, or to avoid it, without injuring our conscience, and without giving up any part of righteousness.
- Paragraph 10 Though you do not seek persecution, it will find you, unless you consider yourself wiser than your Master. If you escape persecution wholly, you also escape the blessing that comes with persecution, for if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Christ.
- Paragraph 11 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad when you are persecuted, for those who must blacken you in order to excuse themselves for their unrighteousness have marked you. By this mark, you are identified as belonging to Christ, and will therefore receive the reward of those who belong to Christ.
- Paragraph 12 Until you receive your eternal reward, do not let persecution turn you out of the way of lowliness and meekness, the way of love and doing good. Jesus called us to turn the other cheek, not to avenge ourselves. Let your meekness be invincible, and your love suitable to your calling. Take care not to owe anything to others, provide for your household so that they are sustained in life and godliness; and give or lend all that remains so that all is used for the glory of God.
- Paragraph 13 Jesus affirms this meekness and love in further verses: love your enemies, bless them that curse you, return good for evil, pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you, forgive those who repent even seventy times seven times, approve yourself as genuine children of God, if you love only those who love you then you are no different from the publicans, so be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Part 4 The genuine religion of Jesus Christ

Paragraph 1 These beatitudes are the fundamentals of Christianity. Let us watch, and pray, and believe, and love, and strive for mastery, till every part of it shall appear in our soul, engraved by the finger of God, till we are as holy as Jesus is who calls us, and as perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Sermon 19: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

*Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost his savour,
wherewith shall it be salted? It thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out,
and to be trodden under foot of men.*

*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.
Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick;
and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

Discourse 4 - Matthew 5:13-16

Paragraph 1 From the hour that we begin to emerge out of the darkness of sin, the beauty of holiness is revealed in the renewed heart that bears the image of God, and it is greatly desired by those who can begin to discern between spiritual good and evil.

Paragraph 2 No one could object to pursuing this beauty of holiness, if it were the whole of religion. But it seems to the world that this beauty is clogged with things like *doing* and *suffering*, and the vigor of our soul is damped, and we sink again to the ways of the world. Isn't it enough that we worship God as a Spirit, with the spirit of our minds, without also being encumbered with outward things?

Paragraph 3 Many who are eminent make just that recommendation, that we cease from all outward activity and withdraw from the world. Leaving the body behind, they would have us work all virtues in the will as the way more acceptable to God.

Paragraph 4 This masterpiece of wisdom is the fairest device ever devised by Satan to pervert the right ways of the Lord! This grand engine of hell is used against some of the most important truths of God.

Paragraph 5 The armors of proof against Satan are the words of Jesus as he defends in the clearest and strongest manner the active and patient religion. Immediately after telling us about the necessity of suffering, the Lord tells us that we are the salt of the earth. If the salt loses its flavor, it is good for nothing except to be thrown out and trodden under foot! A city on a hill cannot be hid, and a light is not lit to be hidden under a bushel.

Part 1 Christianity is essentially a social religion

Paragraph 1 By Christianity, I mean the method of worshipping God that is revealed to us in Jesus Christ. By social religion, I mean that it cannot subsist at all without society – without living and conversing with other people. We do not condemn solitude or retirement from the community, for we daily have

need to spend time with God in secret. Even longer seasons of retreat can allow us more freedom to commune more freely with God.

- Paragraph 2 Yet we must not allow our solitary time with God to swallow up all our time, for that would destroy, not advance, true religion.
- Paragraph 3 No disposition is more essential to Christianity than meekness, and while this implies resignation to God, or patience in pain and sickness, and may subsist in a hermit's cell, it also implies mildness, gentleness and long-suffering before others. Without others, there is no need for meekness.
- Paragraph 4 Also essential is peacemaking, or doing good. To set this aside, along with being merciful, being pure of heart and all the other fundamentals of this faith, is to insult our Great Master, even as it seems we are calling persons to greater faithfulness. How can we be merciful if we are solitary? How can we do good to all persons if there are no other persons around?
- Paragraph 5 Some make the argument that it is expedient for Christians only to talk with other Christians in order to live in that good society. Paul did advise the Corinthians not to keep company with fornicators, but he did not forbid us to ever talk to them. Instead, we are to treat them not as an enemy, but as a brother in need of admonishing. So there is no need to separate wholly even from the wicked.
- Paragraph 6 Indeed, we need to be engaged with the world, for they are indispensably necessary for our complete exercise of poverty of spirit, mourning, and every other disposition which is part of the true religion of Jesus Christ. Jesus would not tell us to turn the other cheek if there is no one to strike us; nor would he tell us to love our enemies if there were none opposed to us. It is obvious that we are not to limit ourselves to real Christians only!
- Paragraph 7 It is the nature of salt to season whatever is around it. It is the divine nature of the savior in you to spread to whatsoever you touch, to diffuse your faith into the world on every side, to all those we are among. The grace we have received is to be communicated to others, so that we may influence the world. We are a check, in some small measure, on the corruption of the world, so that a small part at least may be saved from the general infection and rendered holy and pure before God.
- Paragraph 8 If we do not "season" others with our salt, if we have grown flat and insipid in our souls and useless to the souls of others, we are good for nothing before God. If God does not abide in us, we do not bear fruit. If we do not bear fruit, we are cut off as a branch and tossed into the fire.

Paragraph 9 There is pity and mercy for those who have never tasted of the good word, but there is justice for those who turn their back on God after they have received the Holy Spirit, renewed again to repentance. Justice is reserved for those who were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, but then fell into absolute total apostasy. A believer may fall, and not fall away, but rise again. When we fall, even into sin, it is dreadful, but not desperate for we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous. Beware of sinking lower and lower, till we fall completely away, for then we will be like salt that has lost its flavor.

Part 2 To turn Christianity into a solitary religion is to destroy it

Paragraph 1 If we are the salt of the earth, shouldn't we season the world in an almost imperceptible manner, so that no one can tell it is being done? Doesn't salt convey its savor without any noise, and without any outward observation?

Paragraph 2 That sounds like plausible reasoning, yet Christ has an answer for it. As long as true religion abides in us, we cannot conceal it. We are the light of the world, and a city set on a hill cannot be hid. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the sky. You cannot hide from the world; neither can you hide in the world. Love cannot be hid, least of all when it shines forth in your actions.

Paragraph 3 Those who love the darkness rather than the light will take all possible pains to prove that the light in you is actually darkness. They will say all manner against you falsely. Your continuance in well-doing, your meek suffering and calm humble joy will shine all the more!

Paragraph 4 Any religion that can be concealed is not the true religion of Jesus Christ. It is not only impossible to conceal true Christianity, but also contrary to the design of God!

Paragraph 5 So Christ tells us: We do not light a candle to put it under a bushel. We are not to hide it when we feel (falsely) that it would be prudent. We are not to hide it in the desert by avoiding people, or in the city by concealing our faith. We are to give light to the whole household of God.

Paragraph 6 Christ has not left the world without a witness in any nation where the gospel has been sounded. These witnesses have been lights shining in the darkness, enlightening some, preserving others, leading the sheep out of the darkness of the world and into the way of peace.

Paragraph 7 How deep are the snares of Satan! Even with these words of our Lord, there are still some who call for a solitary religion, either by retreating from the world or by hiding it in.

Part 3 Answering the objections to a social openly active Christianity

- Paragraph 1 The first objection is that religion does not lie in outward things, but in the heart as union with God. It is not burnt offerings, but a pure and holy heart that God desires. It is true that the root of religion is in the heart. But if the root is truly in the heart, it will put out branches of outward obedience. The branches partake of the same nature as the roots, and have become the more substantial part of religion. Bare outside religion is like branches that have no roots, and therefore will produce no fruit. We make ourselves an acceptable sacrifice by our prayers, our praises and thanksgivings, our goods, and our bodies employed wholly to God's service and glory.
- Paragraph 2 The second objection is that love is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment, without which nothing we do profits us anything. Love is the fulfilling of the law, not by releasing us from the law but by constraining us to obey it. Giving a cup of cold water in the name of Christ will not lose its reward.
- Paragraph 3 The third objection is that Paul told us to follow after charity, the more excellent way. Love is more excellent than the other spiritual gifts, but that does not exclude the other gifts as being excellent before God.
- Paragraph 4 The fourth objection is that God is a Spirit, and we are to worship God in spirit and in truth. Isn't that enough, the objectors ask. It is enough, if we worship in a manner that only spirits are capable of doing. We are to believe God is wise, and holy. We are to know that the eyes of God are too pure to behold iniquity, so in God's mercy we are forgiven and accepted as the beloved. We are to love God, to delight in God, to desire God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. We are to imitate the God we love, by purifying ourselves as God is pure; and to obey God whom we love, in thought, word and deed. The natural consequence of this worshipping God in spirit and truth is that we obey God and keep the outward commandments.
- Paragraph 5 Contemplation is only one way to worship God in spirit and truth. If we give ourselves up to this only, we destroy the other branches of spiritual worship that are acceptable to God and equally profitable for the soul.
- Paragraph 6 The grand objection is this: our experience is that we shine in solitude. We did not profit from outward things. We attended the ordinances and are not better for it. Indeed, we are worse than before, for we fancied ourselves Christians because of the things we did, and did not know what Christianity meant. I will allow that the ordinances can be abused,

mistaking the means for the ends. Remove the abuse, and use them with a constant eye to the renewal of your soul in righteousness and true holiness.

Paragraph 7 They object further: our experience shows that trying to do good is but lost labor. The good people have no need for us, and the evil people will not receive help from us, so there is no point in trying to do good. I answer, whether someone is saved or lost, whatever becomes of them, does not negate the commandment to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. And while it is God who changes the heart of a person, God generally does this by working through us. It is our part to do all that lies in us, as diligently as if we could change them ourselves, and then leaving the change up to God. God has also given us every good gift in order that they may be used to build up God's children, nourishing and strengthening the whole body. And lastly, how are you assured that the people before you are dogs or swine, when Christ forbids us to judge others?

Paragraph 8 They object further: we have tried to reform sinners, and on many we made no impression; and if some were changed their goodness was like the morning dew and they were then as bad or worse than before. They would have been better off if we had left them alone! I will allow that you have tried to do good and did not succeed, and that some reformed and then relapsed. Does this surprise you? Are you the servant greater than your Master? How often did Jesus strive to save sinners, and they would not hear? But he did not desist in doing good; no more than you should desist, whatever your success may be. It is your part to do what God commands. You are not accountable for the results, so leave the results to God who orders all things well. Do good as you would forgive – not seven times but seventy times seven! Be more humbled before God, and more deeply convinced that apart from God you can do nothing.

Part 4 The practical application of letting your light shine

Paragraph 1 Let your lowliness of heart, your gentleness and meekness of wisdom, your weighty concern for the things of eternity, and sorrow for the sins and miseries of the world shine. Let your desire of universal holiness, and full happiness in God shine. Let your tender goodwill towards all people shine. Let your fervent love for God shine. Let it shine through your conversations, your actions, your doing all possible good to all people, and your suffering for righteousness' sake.

Paragraph 2 Let your light shine before people that they may see your good works revealing Jesus Christ. Shine so that it gives light to all. Only do not seek your own praise, or desire any honor for yourself.

Paragraph 3 Be plain, open and undisguised in sharing the fair and disinterested love of Jesus Christ! Let your words be genuine, without darkness or reservedness in your conversations. Let people see grace at work in you.

Paragraph 4 Go out and shine for Christ. Do not be ashamed, even if you must shine alone. Let the light shine in all good works, both of piety and mercy. And in order to enlarge your work, renounce all things superfluous; cut off unnecessary expenses for food, furniture and apparel; and cut off unnecessary expenses of time and useless employments. Be full of faith and love; do good; suffer evil. And then you will know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Sermon 20: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets;

I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

*For verily I say unto you: Till heaven and earth pass,
one joy or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

*Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments,
and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:*

*but whosoever shall do and teach them,
the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

*For I say unto you: That except your righteousness shall exceed
the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,
ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Discourse 5 - Matthew 5:17-20

- Paragraph 1 One of the complaints against Jesus was that he was introducing a new religion, since worshipping God in spirit and truth would seem new to those who only have the form of godliness.
- Paragraph 2 If it is a new religion that Jesus is bringing, people may have hoped that it was an easier way to heaven than the old religion. Jesus refutes the vain hopes of abolishment of the old religion, and the groundless lies of those who seek an easier way.

Part 1 Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets.

- Paragraph 1 The witness of the apostles is that Jesus did come to destroy the *ceremonial* or *ritual* law.
- Paragraph 2 Jesus did not come to take away the moral law, for this is a law that can never be broken as the faithful way to heaven. Ceremonial law is written on stones; moral law is written on the heart. The finger of God wrote these moral laws, though by our sin we have scarred and defaced them.
- Paragraph 3 Jesus said that he came to fulfill the law, which some take to mean only that Jesus was perfectly obedient to the law. In the context of this sermon, however, Jesus seems to mean that he came to establish the moral law in its fullness – its height and depth, its purity and spirituality.
- Paragraph 4 This is not a new religion, but the same religion that was from the beginning. The Law and the Prophets pointed to it, but it took Jesus to fully understand it and to explain it by fulfilling it in his ministry.

Part 2 Till heaven and earth pass away, the law does not pass away.

- Paragraph 1 The law has not passed away because Jesus was able to fulfill it and then establish the gospel. The law continues as long as the creation!
- Paragraph 2 There is nothing contrary between the law and the gospel, since they perfectly agree with each other. The law is a command; the gospel is a

promise. “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all your heart” is a commandment in which is a great promise of life with God!

Paragraph 3 The law makes way for, and points us to, the gospel. The gospel leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. “You shall love your neighbor” is a commandment that points to the gospel; the gospel helps us understand our love of our neighbor through our faith in Jesus Christ.

Paragraph 4 Anyone who claims to change these moral laws by some peculiar direction of the Holy Spirit is a false prophet, for this law does not pass away.

Part 3 Those who teach another to break the law are the least in God’s kingdom

Paragraph 1 If Jesus, who came not to condemn the world but to save the world, preaches that we are to keep the law, who are we to preach otherwise? Dare we instruct the Son of God on the will of God?

Paragraph 2 No allowance then is to be made for not keeping even the least of the commandments. We don’t get to plead with God that our sin is only one, or just a little one. There is no such thing as a little sin, for every sin is a transgression against the holy and perfect law, and an affront to God.

Paragraph 3 Those who teach others to break the law shall be called least in God’s kingdom. By our sins we teach others to sin, and our justifications to sin become justifications for others to keep sinning. We are not called to be advocates for sin; and those who do have no part in the inheritance of God’s children – no peace, or joy, or righteousness, or glory.

Paragraph 4 What sorts of people teach others to sin?

Paragraph 5 There are those who live in willful and habitual sin, even when they know better. These will sink into the bottomless pit, and drag others with them.

Paragraph 6 There are those who are good-natured, who live an easy and harmless life, and who do not trouble themselves with outward sins or with inward holiness, but simply fit in with whatever the neighbors are doing. This soothing presence makes people imagine that they are Christian when they are not – they are asleep, and they will be surprised when they wake up in the fires of hell.

Paragraph 7 The worst are those who proclaim that Jesus has abolished the law, and that we are under no obligation to observe the least or the greatest of the laws, if only we believe in Jesus Christ. This is to stand before Jesus and declare that Jesus did not know what he was talking about! Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing!

Paragraph 8 The surprise is that they believe they are honoring Christ when they overthrow his law. It is no different that Judas declaring, “Hail, Master,” and then betraying him with a kiss. We are not to talk of his blood, and

then take away his crown! We are not to preach faith, and then abandon obedience.

Paragraph 9 We do declare that by grace we are saved by faith; not by works lest any person should boast. We do cry out, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.” Yet we also declare that it is no faith, if it does not work by love. We are not just saved from the guilt of sin, but for the peace and power of holiness to trample sin underfoot. This power enables us to love God and to love our neighbor by patiently continuing in well-doing, fulfilling the law and being called great in heaven.

Part 4 Except your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God

Paragraph 1 The scribes were not lawyers like today, but those who were conversant with Jewish law and proclaimed it.

Paragraph 2 The Pharisees were zealous concerning the law.

Paragraph 3 Jesus tells us about their righteousness. They know and count on their own virtues, but not the design of God for applying those virtues to the law. They take pride in not being like others, who know their own sin.

Paragraph 4 They know and count on their own discipline, fasting twice a week, abstaining from food until the evening sacrifices begin, and using the time to study the scriptures. They have the form of godliness.

Paragraph 5 They know and count on their own generosity, giving a tithe of all that they possessed, being keenly aware of all that they possessed. Some even gave a second tenth to God for the poor.

Paragraph 6 Some may claim that their virtues, discipline and generosity mean nothing because they are all hypocrites, and it is very possible that some of them were. But that is not the sin that Jesus points out – they trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. People like this are not hypocrites, for they are sincere in their belief that these things make them righteous. The Apostle Paul confessed his sincerity as a Pharisee before he became a Christian, and after he became a Christian. Paul was not a hypocrite when he persecuted the Christians because he sincerely believed what he was doing was in God’s service.

Paragraph 7 Does our righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees? In externals, the Pharisee was singularly good, willing to obey God rather than man. Do we obey God, or do we swim with the stream? The Pharisee’s heart does not condemn them. Do we do anything that would condemn our hearts, by taking advantage of another’s ignorance or need?

Paragraph 8 A Pharisee used all the means of grace: fasting, public and private prayer, reading and hearing the scriptures, attending all the worship services. Do we go as far as this in seeking God?

- Paragraph 9 The Pharisees paid tithes and gave alms of all they possessed. Do we give 20%, of both the principal and the increase? When we consider all that the Pharisees did, do we exceed their righteousness?
- Paragraph 10 If we have only equaled it, we have not exceeded it, and we shall not enter into God's kingdom. Where does a Christian's righteousness exceed the Pharisees? In its extent – the Pharisees paid particular attention to keeping the Sabbath day, but they didn't pay as much attention to swearing an oath. Their righteousness was partial; the righteousness of a real Christian is universal, observing all the law, and not just some.
- Paragraph 11 The Christian fulfills the law not just in letter, but also in spirit, exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees. Our righteousness is not just external, but also internal. The Pharisees cleaned only the outside of the cup, while the Christian is clean within. The Pharisees presented God a good life; the Christian, a holy heart. The Pharisees shake off the leaves, and maybe the fruit, of sin; the Christian has laid an axe to its roots. To do no harm, to do good, and to attend upon the ordinances of God (the righteousness of the Pharisees) is all external. To this the Christian adds poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, love of our neighbor, and purity of heart.
- Paragraph 12 First, see that your righteousness does not fall short of the Pharisees, willing to stand against sin, not following in the ways of the world that lead to sin. Second, see that your righteousness does not fall short of the Pharisees in regard to the ordinances, taking every opportunity for worship, prayer, searching the scriptures, and partaking of the sacrament. Third, see that your righteousness does not fall short of the Pharisees in doing good. Are any hungry? Feed them. Are any thirsty? Give them drink. Are any naked? Cover them with clothing.
- Paragraph 13 But don't stop there – exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees! Do not be content to keep the whole law, except for one or two small points. Do all the things Christ commands, with all your might, for Christ will strengthen you, and without Christ you can do nothing. Above all, exceed their righteousness in purity and spirituality, and let your religion be from the heart. Be poor in spirit, humbled at the love of God that is in Christ Jesus! Be serious, letting all your actions flow from the deepest conviction that apart from God we are lost! Be meek, filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, and long-suffering towards all. Love God and love all people! And then you will exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees!

Sermon 21: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them, otherwise ye shall have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth. Thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly.

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for thy love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets; that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when you pray, use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

Be not ye therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Discourse 6 - Matthew 6:1-15

Paragraph 1 In Matthew 5, our Lord described inward religion in its various branches. In this chapter, he shows us how all our actions may be made holy, and good, and acceptable to God, even if they are indifferent in their own nature, by a pure and holy intention.

Paragraph 2 Jesus shows the necessity of the purity of intention for the works of piety, and then the works of mercy. The directions given are to be equally applied to every work.

Part 1 Regarding works of mercy

Paragraph 1 Though Jesus only mentions the giving of alms here, it applies equally to any work of charity, including feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, entertaining or assisting the stranger, visiting the sick or imprisoned, comforting the afflicted, instructing the ignorant, reproving the wicked, and exhorting and encouraging the well-doer.

Paragraph 2 What Jesus forbids is not being seen while doing good, but doing good with the intention of being seen. I say, from this intention only, because there may be times when it is part of our intention that some of our actions may be seen, and still be acceptable to God. We may let our light shine if it brings glory to God, but we must be careful that we do nothing to bring glory to ourselves. The praise from others has no place in doing works of mercy!

Paragraph 3 The Pharisees sounded a trumpet when they gave large gifts, supposedly to call the poor so that they might receive part of the gift, but in actuality the trumpet was sounded to draw the praise of others. Use no ostentation in doing good. Those who receive the praise of people shall have no praise from God.

Paragraph 4 Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. This is a proverbial expression that means do good in as secret a manner as possible and still be able to get it done, omitting no opportunity to do good, in the most effectual manner possible. An exception might be considered if, by revealing the good that is being done, others become excited to also do good. But unless there is a clear reason to make this exception, act in as private and unobserved manner as the nature of the thing will allow. It is enough that God knows what you do, and that God will reward you.

Part 2 Regarding works of piety

Paragraph 1 Hypocrisy or insincerity is the first thing we are to guard against in prayer. Lift up your heart to God, and not words that you do not mean. Only God is to hear your prayer, so do not pray as those wanting others to overhear their piety before God. There is no reward from God for hypocrisy!

Paragraph 2 Purity of intention is destroyed whenever we have an eye to the praise of others, whether it is in prayer, attending worship, or in any of the works of mercy. Any design or motive other than promoting the glory of God and the happiness of others for God's sake makes every action an abomination to God, no matter how much good it may seem to do in human judgment.

Paragraph 3 There are times to pray openly, to glorify God, and to praise God in the great congregation. But when it is just you and God, pray in secret, using all the privacy you can. Pray to God even if you do not have a closet, and even if you do not have privacy. Do not leave prayer undone!

Paragraph 4 Do not use an abundance of words without any meaning, saying the same things over and over again because you think you must. The fruit of your prayer does not depend on the length of your prayer, but upon God! Our prayers should not be long if they are without meaning. They should not

be vain repetitions that become either works righteousness or magic. They should not be offered as if God seeks only to listen to fancy words that roll the longest in God's ears. Let the heathens have those prayers!

Paragraph 5 When you have tasted the grace of God, you are thoroughly convinced that God already knows what you need, before you ask. Do not pray to inform God, but to inform yourself, so that what you need from God is more deeply fixed in your heart. This reinforces the sense of your continual dependence on God who alone is able to supply all your wants of the heart. Prayer is not to move God, who is always more ready to give than we are to receive, but to prepare us to be willing and ready to receive what God has to give.

Part 3 An example that reveals the true nature and end of prayer

Paragraph 1 The Lord's prayer is proposed as a pattern, as the model and standard for all our prayers.

Paragraph 2 This prayer contains all we can reasonably or innocently pray for. First, everything in this prayer is acceptable to bring before God. All that we need from God is in this prayer. Second, prayer is a testing of our desire, and if we desire something not covered in this prayer, it is not for the glory of God. If it is not fit to be our desire, it is not fit to be a prayer. Third, all our duty to God and each other is included in this prayer either expressly or it is implied.

Paragraph 3 There are three parts to the Lord's prayer – the preface, the petitions, and the doxology or conclusion. The preface lays the foundation for an acceptable relationship with God; who God is and who we are before God.

Paragraph 4 "Our Father" tells us that God is loving to God's children, willing to bless, author of our being, unwilling to withhold any good thing from the work of God's hands, and the one who sustains life. Above all, God is Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all who believe in him, so we know that God hears us when we pray.

Paragraph 5 "Our Father" also means not mine alone, but the Father of the spirits of all flesh, of angels and humans, of the universe and all families in heaven and on earth. God does not respect some persons over others, loving all; though God does delight in those who believe, and put their trust in God's mercy. Being loved like this by God, who gave us Jesus so that we might not perish, we love each other.

Paragraph 6 "Which art in heaven" tells us that God is high and lifted up, over all, blessed forever, above all things in heaven and earth, from everlasting to everlasting. It tells us that God is Lord and Ruler of all, ordering all

things, King of kings and Lord of lords, the blessed and only Potentate, the Almighty, strong and powerful to do whatever God pleases. This is a God we should serve in fear and reverence, aware that everything we think, speak and do is continually before the eye of God!

- Paragraph 7 “Hallowed be thy name” is the first of six petitions. The name of God is God Himself, the nature of God as humans can discover it. It is all God’s attributes or perfections: God’s eternity, the Alpha and Omega, the one who was and is and is to come, I AM THAT I AM, God’s omnipresence, God’s omnipotence, the source of being and its power, God’s wisdom, God’s Trinity-in-Unity and Unity-in-Trinity, God’s purity and holiness, and above all else, God’s love. This is a petition that we may know God, and may have proper affections for God based in that knowledge of God.
- Paragraph 8 “Thy kingdom come” is the second petition, closely tied to the first. We cannot hallow God’s name, except as we are part of God’s kingdom, having repented and believed in Jesus Christ. It is then that the kingdom is set up in the believer’s heart, where God may reign. When we who are glad for the Lord’s appearing pray for the kingdom to come, we are praying for that day when Christ rules over every heart and every nation as the kingdom of grace. We are praying for the coming of the everlasting kingdom, the kingdom of glory in heaven. This petition points to the final renovation of all things, by God’s putting an end to misery and sin, to infirmity and death.
- Paragraph 9 “Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” is the necessary and immediate consequence wherever God’s kingdom has come and where Christ reigns in the heart by love. This is not a petition of resignation, even though that is a fine gift from God to be ready and willing to suffer the will of God concerning us. This is a petition for an active conformity to the will of God! The angels do their work willingly, continually, and perfectly, doing all the will of God, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.
- Paragraph 10 When we pray for God’s will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we are seeking that all may do the will of God as willingly as the angels, as continually as the angels, and as perfectly as the angels, so that the God of peace, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, may make us perfect in every good work. We pray that we will do the whole will of God and nothing else that would be unacceptable before God; that we do the whole will of God in the way God wills for us; and that we may do it with pure intention because it is God’s will.
- Paragraph 11 The first three petitions were for all the world. “Give us this day our daily bread” is a petition to God to supply our wants in the whole church of Christ. By bread, we may understand all things needful, whether for our

bodies or our souls, the things pertaining to life and godliness. We seek both the bread for our bodies and the sacramental bread for our souls, which was daily received in the early church, until the love of many waxed cold.

Paragraph 12 “Give us” is the petition because we can claim nothing as ours, but receive everything as a mercy from God. We do not deserve the air we breathe, the earth that produces grain, or the sun that shines on us. All we own is hell, but God loves us freely, so we may ask God to give what we cannot procure for ourselves by any merit. The goodness and power of God, however, is not an excuse to stand idle. It is God’s will that we should use all diligence in all things, as if our success were the natural effect of our own wisdom and strength; and then, as though we had done nothing, we depend on God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. “This day” means that we seek what is sufficient for this day, not worrying about tomorrow. It is the wisdom of God that life is divided into these little portions of time, clearly separated from each other, so that we might receive every day as a fresh gift from God, and devote that gift to God’s glory.

Paragraph 13 “And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Sin hinders the bounty of God flowing forth to every creature. So the removal of sin allows us to more clearly trust God to provide every manner of thing that is good. Every sin is a fresh debt to God, to whom we already owe what we cannot pay. If God chooses to deal with us according to the rigor of God’s law, we are judged and condemned already. We are bound hand and foot by our sins, bound by our wounds, bound by the diseases that bring us down to the grave. Since we have nothing to pay for our sins, we cry out for God to forgive us all! The word we translate as “forgive” implies either to forgive a debt or to unloose a chain. Our debts are forgiven and the chains of our sin fall off our hands. Sin loses its power over those who are under grace.

Paragraph 14 “As we forgive those who trespass against us.” Jesus declares both the condition and degree for our forgiveness in this petition. Our sins are forgiven *if* we forgive and *as* we forgive. We know this point is important because Jesus repeats this in verses 14-15. If we do not offer forgiveness to others, then these words are an open defiance before God – “Do not forgive us at all, for we do not desire any favor from you! Remember our sins and hold us accountable for all of them. May your wrath come upon us!” Do you seriously want this to be your prayer before God? If not, have compassion on others, and forgive!

Paragraph 15 “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” The word “temptation” formerly meant a trial of any kind, though now we understand it as a solicitation to sin. It is used both ways in scripture. The

temptation that concerns us is when we are drawn out and enticed away from God, and into the hands of the evil one. It is by faith that we are delivered out of the hands of Satan and into the hands of God. Satan may fight against us, but he cannot win unless we betray our own souls. Satan may torment for a while, but he cannot destroy those who have God on their side.

Paragraph 16 The doxology is a solemn thanksgiving for the attributes and work of God. “For thine is the kingdom” -- the sovereign right of all things; “and the power” – the executive power to govern all things; “and the glory” – the praise due from every creature, “forever and ever. Amen!”

Sermon 22: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites of a sad countenance, for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.

Verily I say unto you, they have their reward.

But thou, when thou fasts, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which is in secret, shall reward thee openly.

Discourse 7 - Matthew 6:16-18

- Paragraph 1 It is the device of Satan to separate righteousness of the law from the righteousness of faith.
- Paragraph 2 Because of this device, faith and works are set at variance with each other. There are those who have zeal for God who fall into the trap of choosing either faith or works. They are right insofar that works does not produce justification, but they are wrong when they disregard works as the fruit of justification. This is as wrong as insisting that works must be a previous condition for justification.
- Paragraph 3 This same device puts the end and the means of religion at variance with each other. There are some who focus on the means of religion as the whole, neglecting the end of religion, which is both the love of God and their neighbor.
- Paragraph 4 The extreme example of this device is found with fasting. Some insist that it is infallibly connected to the end of religion, while others neglect it all together. The truth lies in between – fasting is not all, nor is it nothing.

Part 1 What is the nature of fasting

- Paragraph 1 In one single sense, fasting means to abstain from food, as the scriptures abundantly witness.
- Paragraph 2 Often joined with fasting, but having no necessary connection, were things like neglect of apparel, laying aside ornaments that are worn, putting on mourning, strewing ashes on the head, or wearing sackcloth next to their skin. There is little mention of these things, however, in the New Testament or by the Christians of a purer age, though some penitents might use some of these as signs of inward humiliation. The more severe demonstrations were avoided, since the contemporary heathen practices included beating and tearing flesh.
- Paragraph 3 There were those who fasted 40 days and 40 nights, such as Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Most frequently mentioned, however, is the fasting of a day, from morning till evening. There were also half-fasts on the 4th and 6th

days of the week throughout the year, when they did not eat from morning until 3 PM when they returned from public service.

Paragraph 4 Nearly related to fasting is what the Church has called abstinence. This is when, for reasons of sickness or bodily weakness, we abstain in part from eating, taking a smaller portion. There is no scriptural support for this, but there is also no condemnation of this.

Paragraph 5 The lowest form of fasting, if we can call it that, is abstaining from pleasant food. This might have its roots in those scriptural instances when men would abstain from meat in order not to be defiled before God.

Paragraph 6 The day of atonement, commanded by God for the Jews in the seventh month, is a day of fasting. Zechariah mentioned other fasts were held in the fourth, fifth, and tenth months, as well. In the ancient Christian church there were also annual and weekly fasts. Before Easter, some fasted 48 hours, some a week, some two weeks, with no eating before sundown. The weekly fasts were held on Wednesdays and Fridays. Epiphanius noted annual fasts for the 40 days of Lent, the Ember days at the four seasons, the Rogation days, and the eves of several solemn vigils; and weekly fasts on all Fridays, excepting Christmas. There were also occasional fasts appointed as circumstances and occasions required for walking humbly and closely with God.

Part 2 What are the reasons, grounds, and ends of fasting

Paragraph 1 The scripture witnesses to times when those under strong emotions had little regard for eating, consumed as they were by their passions. They were impatient at being interrupted, even to eat.

Paragraph 2 This is a natural ground for fasting. When we are under the heavy burden of our sin, see damnation as the consequence of our sin, and behold the horror of hell, our hearts are so filled with sorrow and heaviness that the pleasant things of this life seem loathsome to us, and we cannot eat.

Paragraph 3 Another ground for fasting is that we are sensible of how often we overindulge in the pleasures of eating and drinking, sinning by excess of food by ignoring temperance and sobriety before God. We ignore the deepest concerns for carelessness of spirit, stupefying all our noblest faculties. To remove the effect, we remove the cause.

Paragraph 4 Taking pleasure in our food can lead to a sensuality that takes pleasures in things other than God. We become ripe for indulging in every pleasure of sense, as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Fasting removes the food of lust and sensuality, which withdraws the incentives of foolish and hurtful desires, as well as vile and vain affections.

- Paragraph 5 Another reason, though one we need not stress, is that fasting can be a form of punishing ourselves for having abused the good gifts of God.
- Paragraph 6 A more weighty reason for fasting is that it can aid prayer, by giving us more time for prayer. Fasting can be a means for confirming and increasing chastity, seriousness of spirit, earnestness, sensibility and tenderness of conscience, deadness to the world, love of God, and every holy and heavenly affection.
- Paragraph 7 There is no natural or necessary connection between fasting and the blessings of God. Yet, God has in every age appointed fasting as a means for averting God's wrath and obtaining God's blessings.
- Paragraph 8 Even the people of Nineveh found God's favor when they repented and fasted, and God's wrath was turned away.
- Paragraph 9 Those who fasted also received God's blessing. When we fast in secret, our God who sees in secret rewards us openly with blessings as needed.

Part 3 How do we answer the most plausible objections to fasting

- Paragraph 1 Some say that we are to abstain from sin, not food. Doing one does not justify leaving the other undone, if God requires them both.
- Paragraph 2 The second objection asks if it isn't better to abstain from pride and vanity, from foolishness and hurtful desires, and anger and discontent, than from food? Indeed, it is better, but it still doesn't justify leaving fasting undone. Fasting is the outward means to change our inner affections. This little self-denial is a way that God can bestow that great salvation.
- Paragraph 3 The third objection is that they found fasting to be a hindrance to their faith, increasing their fretfulness and making them hard to bear. That may be indeed the case, yet the fault lies not in the fasting, but in the manner of using it. Fast as God commands it, and you will find a blessing in it.
- Paragraph 4 The fourth objection is that it is superstitious to think that God regards such little things as fasting. Such an objection condemns all the people in the scriptures who fasted as being superstitious! Is that really your judgment on Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Jehosaphat, Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the prophets? Was Jesus superstitious?
- Paragraph 5 The fifth objection is that if fasting is so important, shouldn't we fast always, as we have strength? Let none be discouraged in doing this! Eat plain food, and as little as needed, exercising self-denial at all times as you

have strength. But even this is not scriptural fasting, so we are still called to observe fasts, so that we are not setting aside a command of God.

- Paragraph 6 Habitual abstinence need not interfere with your times of secret fasting; when because of sorrow and woe you need this aid for prayer.
- Paragraph 7 Habitual abstinence would not excuse any one from observing the fast of the Day of Atonement. Do you think habitual abstinence would have kept you from joining the fast called for the community before sending out Barnabus and Saul? Failure to observe those fasts would cut you off from the faith community, and deservedly so!

Part 4 How is fasting to be performed

- Paragraph 1 Our sole intention in fasting is to glorify God, express our sorrow and shame for sin, and to wait humbly for an increase in purifying grace. Fasting is to add seriousness and earnestness to our prayers, to avert the wrath of God, and to obtain all the great and precious promises of Christ. If we do it with any other intention, it is an abomination before God.
- Paragraph 2 In desiring these blessings, we are clear that we do not merit these blessings by our fasting. We are not establishing our own righteousness before God. We fast because this is a way that God has ordained for us while we wait for God's blessings.
- Paragraph 3 The external service of fasting may afflict the body, but it does not afflict the soul. If our fasting is external only, it is not acceptable to God.
- Paragraph 4 We can afflict the body too much, making us unfit for the works of our calling, so we must guard against this extreme. Our health is a good gift from God, so we should preserve it. Yet even in great weakness, we can abstain from pleasing foods, and our seeking God's face is not in vain.
- Paragraph 5 When we fast, let us afflict our souls as well as our bodies. Exercise all those holy affections that are implied in a broken and contrite heart.
- Paragraph 6 Let us join our fasting with fervent prayer, pouring out our whole soul before God, confessing our sins with all their aggravations, humbling ourselves before God, laying open all our wants and all our guiltiness and helplessness. Let us pray for our brethren and for the city of God.
- Paragraph 7 All that remains is to add works of mercy to our fasting. God said, "Is this not the fast that I have chosen? to loosen the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?"

Sermon 23: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt:
and where thieves break through and steal:*

*but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt,
and where thieves do not break through nor steal:*

for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The light of the body is the eye;

if therefore thine eye be single thy whole body shall be full of light.

But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness; how great is that darkness!

Discourse 8 - Matthew 6:19-23

- Paragraph 1 The same purity of intention that is necessary for what we commonly call our religious actions is as indispensably necessary for our ordinary business in life.
- Paragraph 2 The eye is the intention. As the eye is to the body, so the intention is to the soul. The one guides the other. Our eye is to be fixed on one intention: to know God, and Jesus Christ whom God has sent.
- Paragraph 3 If our eye is singly fixed on God, we are filled with light. Experience confirms this! When we seek or desire anything other than God, doubts and fears can again overwhelm us. But when we desire and seek nothing but God, clouds and doubts vanish away.
- Paragraph 4 We may also understand this light as holiness. When we seek God in all things, we will find God in all, as the fountain of holiness continually fills us with God's own likeness. When we look upon Jesus, we are filled with his mind, renewed in his image. Our daily experience becomes "by grace we are saved through faith." By faith our eye is opened and filled with light, filled with love for God and others, filled with meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, and all the fruits of holiness.
- Paragraph 5 We also understand this light as happiness. What could be happier than to see the Sun of righteousness continually shining in our soul? In this we receive the consolations of love, peace, rejoicing in hope.
- Paragraph 6 But if our eye, our intention, is evil, then the whole body is filled with darkness. If we try to look one eye to God and the other to anything else, then our mind and conscience is defiled. We are in sin if our design is anything other than to know and love God, to please and serve God, to enjoy and be happy in God.
- Paragraph 7 Our eye is to be singly fixed on God, or we will be full of darkness, blinded by the god of this world. This blindness leads us into ignorance and error concerning the will of God. This blindness leads to uncertainty

in how to serve God, finding doubts and difficulties on every side and unable to see any way to escape. We become filled with ungodliness and unrighteousness, and our conversation becomes idle, unprofitable, corrupt and grievous to the Spirit of God.

- Paragraph 8 Destruction and unhappiness are the ends of this path. There is no peace to be had, if we do not know God. There is no contentment to be gained when seeking after perishable pleasures instead of eternal joy. This path walks through a palpable shadow that unsettles you even when you sleep. This path is filled with pain, for the only true ease can only be found in God. This darkness is the smoke that ascends from the bottomless pit, the essential night that reigns in the land of the shadow of death.
- Paragraph 9 Laying up treasures on earth is evidence that your eye is not fixed singly on God. Yet the evidence is found around the world that so-called Christians store up treasures at the same rate, or even greater rates, than the Heathens. Even if their work is honest, their concern is only in not breaking Heathen laws against stealing and fraud, not with being singly fixed upon God! Their honesty is a false distinction before God, and those who store up treasures are no different than thieves and robbers.
- Paragraph 10 It is amazing that people who read their Bibles never suspect that their pursuit of wealth condemns them, as much as if they were sacrificing their children to Molech.
- Paragraph 11 What does it mean to “lay up treasures on earth”? And what doesn’t it mean? *First*, we are not forbidden to provide things honest in the sight of others – we are to pay what can justly be demanded of us, so that we owe no one anything. *Second*, we are not forbidden to provide for ourselves those things that are needful for the body – sufficient food and clean clothing, so that we are not a burden to others. *Third*, we are not forbidden to provide for our children and for those of our household the plain necessities of life, and to help them be able to provide for themselves when we are no longer able to do this for them. It is not our duty to provide delicacies and luxuries, or to allow for our children’s idleness. The failure to provide for our children is to deny our faith! *Lastly*, we are not forbidden to lay up from time to time enough to cover our worldly expenses in doing business that enables us to provide what is necessary.
- Paragraph 12 We may now clearly discern what is forbidden, and that is seeking more of the world’s goods than will take of the above needs *by design*. Laboring to increase your wealth beyond what is needful is forbidden. If you have enough food and clothing for your self and your household, owe nothing to others, and have sufficient funds to carry on your worldly business, and yet still seek a greater share, then you are living in an open and habitual denial of the Lord!

- Paragraph 13 Listen up, all that dwell in the world and love the world in which you dwell! You may be highly esteemed by people, but you are an abomination in the sight of God! Laying up treasures on earth is murdering your soul! You may be a living man but you are a dead Christian! For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Your love is placed in things that perish, and you have thrown away the treasure in heaven. You have gained riches and hell-fire!
- Paragraph 14 When this astonished his disciples, Jesus repeated this truth in even stronger terms. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. The applause of the world does not make a person wise; nor does it make them better than the poor. The pleasures dependent on wealth may gratify your flesh, but at the cost of your eternal soul. Only God can save you!
- Paragraph 15 It is the desire to be rich, more than the riches themselves, that is our undoing. Even if you do not succeed in becoming wealthy, the fruit of your desire is still evil. You sell Jesus again for a few coins, even though he is the one who has bought us by his blood. You have entered into a covenant with death and hell, making yourselves meet to partake in the inheritance of devils.
- Paragraph 16 Who will warn these vipers to flee from the wrath to come? Not those who beg to be fed with the crumbs that fall from their table. Not those who are courting their favor for earthly advantages. It will take a Christian who has overcome the world, who desires nothing but God, and who fears none except the One who can destroy both body and soul. Let them speak and sound the trumpet call, to show the people of worldly honor their desperate condition before God. Maybe one in a thousand will listen, and arise from the dust of the earth so that they may lay up treasures in heaven.
- Paragraph 17 If someone of wealth is awakened, and asks, "What must I do to be saved?" how shall we answer them? We will not tell them to sell all that they have, as Jesus told one rich ruler after examining his heart. This is not a general rule for all rich persons for all generations. Christ's first direction is to not be high-minded. God cares not for our wealth or our poverty as a qualification, but looks only for the measure of faith and love in our heart.
- Paragraph 18 Secondly, we would tell them not to put their trust in uncertain riches for help or happiness. Money cannot protect you from the prince of this world. Money won't bring back youth, or keep you from all suffering for sickness, disease and pain come to all people. Money as the answer for suffering is like offering rich food to someone with gout.

Paragraph 19 More than this, all people die, returning to common dust and clay to be mingled together again. Can your money prevent your death? Is this the night when your soul will be required of thee? Can your money return the years that are past, or even a day, an hour, a moment that is past? You came naked into the world, and naked you must return.

Paragraph 20 We would tell them not to trust in their riches for happiness. If our riches cannot prevent our being miserable in our mortality, neither can it bring us happiness. How hard is it to be happy when you have to worry about the decrease in the value of your treasures? Experience is a great teacher and witness, for the wealthy are no happier than others; indeed they are often the most miserable! Do you still believe that happiness can be found in silver, and gold, and eating, and drinking, and horse, and servants, and glittering apparel, and diversions and pleasures? Only if they also make you immortal!

Paragraph 21 Trust instead in the living God. God is a very present help in time of trouble, a help that never fails. God remembers you when you are sick and no one can help you. When there is no hope in the things of this earth, there is hope with God whose consolations sweeten the pain. Even when we are ready to drop into the dust, God will teach us to say “O death! where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God who gives me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord!” Trust in God for happiness, for God gives us all things richly to enjoy, by God’s own rich and free mercy. Most of all, God has given us Jesus Christ, and we may enjoy fellowship with him.

Paragraph 22 Thirdly, we would tell them not to increase in goods. “Lay up not for yourself treasures” is as clear a command as “thou shalt not commit adultery.” Do not aim at gaining more treasures that moth or rust may consume, or thieves break in and steal. Else, do not call yourself a Christian, since you do not obey Christ.

Paragraph 23 If the rich should ask, “Then what should we do with our wealth? Throw it away into the sea?” It would be better than how they are now throwing it away, either into a bank for your future comforts or into folly and luxuries for your present pleasures. If you do not spend your wealth in doing good for others, you spend it to the hurt of yourself. Spending on ourselves creates unreasonable desires, nourishes ill tempers, indulges foolish passions, and supports a vanity of mind. All these things are contrary to that sobriety and piety of heart that seek divine things. So money spent on ourselves is not merely wasted or lost; it is spent to bad purposes and miserable effects to the corruption of our heart, making us unable to follow the doctrines of the gospel.

- Paragraph 24 It is inexcusable to lay up what you do not need for any reasonable purposes. If we lock it up in chests, while the poor and distressed are in need, we are practicing cruelty.
- Paragraph 25 This is why is it difficult for the rich to enter into heaven. Not only are they embezzling and wasting their Lord's goods to the corruption of their souls, but they are also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked, the widowed and the fatherless. They are now accountable for all the want and affliction they could have relieved but chose to ignore!
- Paragraph 26 Fourthly, we would tell them to lay up treasures in heaven, where there is better security than any bank in this world. Give to the poor as to God, with an upright heart, for as you did it to the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. Be a wise and faithful steward, desiring neither to increase it any more than to squander it, but to employ it wholly to the wise and reasonable purposes for which the Lord has made you a steward. Provide what is needful for life and godliness for your household, and then makes friends with all that remains with the mammon of unrighteousness.
- Paragraph 27 We charge the rich of the world to be *habitually doing good*, to live in a course of good works. Be merciful, with all the ability that God gives to you. Be rich in good works, freely giving so as not to lay up treasures on earth. Be ready to distribute to those in need: bread for the hungry, clothing for the naked, hospitality to the stranger, relief for those in prison, healing for the sick (not by miracle but through the blessing of God through your seasonable support.) Defend the oppressed, plead the cause of the fatherless, and make the widow's hearts sing for joy.
- Paragraph 28 We exhort you to be of the same spirit as those in ancient times remained steadfast in that blessed and holy fellowship, wherein none said that anything was his own, but they had all things in common. Be a faithful and wise steward of God and of the poor. Be different from the poor in only two circumstances: that your wants are first supplied out of the portion of the Lord's good which remains in your hands, and that you have the blessedness of giving. Have no other foundation in this world, but lay up for yourself a good foundation in heaven. And then you will hear at that happy hour the King say, "I was hungry and you gave me food. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to me. Come, blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!"

Sermon 24: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

*No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other;
or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.*

Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

*Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life,
what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; not yet for your body, what ye shall put on.*

Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

*Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, not gather into barns;
yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?*

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

*And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow;
they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you,*

That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

*Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is,
and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you,*

*O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying: What shall we eat?
or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?*

(For all these things do the Gentiles seek)

for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow:
for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*

Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

Discourse 9 - Matthew 6:24-34

- Paragraph 1 During the Babylonian captivity, the heathens feared God and served their own gods, a sin we recognize and condemn. Yet, how nearly does this practice represent what most modern Christians do today! We perform outward services to God, but serve our graven images of silver and gold, of money, pleasure and praise.
- Paragraph 2 The Holy Spirit quickly added that these heathens did not actually fear God because they did not keep the law, which commands that we are not to serve other gods. That is the point Jesus makes when he says we cannot serve two masters.
- Paragraph 3 It is vain to try and serve two masters, for we cannot do it. One will hold our affection and allegiance, while the other will suffer when there are competing claims on our loyalty. Likewise, we cannot serve both God and mammon.
- Paragraph 4 We cannot serve God unless we believe in God. To believe in God is to trust God as our strength without whom we can do nothing. To believe in God is to know God as our only help in time of trouble, as our shield and deliverer. Trusting in God is the center of our happiness, since God is the

only good adequate for our needs. As God is our happiness, all things are used only as a means of enjoying God.

- Paragraph 5 The second thing, after believing in God, is to love God as the one God, with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.
- Paragraph 6 The third thing we are to understand by serving God is that we are to resemble or imitate God in spirit and in truth, revealing God's love to all through mercy, kindness, benevolence, compassion, and gentleness.
- Paragraph 7 The fourth thing we are to understand is that serving God means obeying God. We are to glorify God in our bodies as well as with our spirits. This means doing what God commands, avoiding what God prohibits, and doing all else with a single eye and a pure heart.
- Paragraph 8 When we serve mammon, we trust in it to provide our happiness, found in the abundance of our things in this world, to deliver us out of our troubles.
- Paragraph 9 Serving mammon implies, secondly, loving the world, desiring it for its own sake and setting our hearts on the things of this world as our end.
- Paragraph 10 The third thing is that we are conformed to the world, resembling it in its desires, tempers, and affections. We are self-willed, inordinate lovers of ourselves, thinking highly of our own attainments, desirous of the praise of others, yet easily provoked and swift to return evil for evil.
- Paragraph 11 The last thing in serving mammon is that we obey the world by outwardly conforming to its maxims and customs. We walk where other men walk along the broad smooth path, following the crowd, indistinguishable from the crowd and all their appetites for pleasure and ease.
- Paragraph 12 It should be clear that no one can comfortably serve both God and mammon! It makes serving God uncomfortable if we have only the fear, but not the love, of God. It makes faith uncomfortable if we have only the toils of religion but not the joys of religion! These people have only enough faith to make themselves miserable, but not enough to make themselves happy!
- Paragraph 13 A man cannot be consistent in himself if he tries to serve two masters. He loves sin and he hates sin. He seeks God and he flees from God. He is a motley mixture, a heap of contradictions with no integrity one way or the other!
- Paragraph 14 The difference between fire and water, or darkness and light, are nothing compared to the differences between God and mammon. Serving one can never be done while serving the other. Trusting in riches is a denial of

faith in Christ! Examine yourself closely – do you love and trust Christ, or the things of this world? You cannot do both!

- Paragraph 15 Lay aside all thoughts of obeying two masters, and serve God only. If God is all your business below, then the only reasonable design for your life is to “take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or drink, or for your body and what you shall wear.”
- Paragraph 16 This is not to say that a giddy careless temper is the whole of religion in Jesus Christ. We are not to be slothful in business. We are to flee from slothfulness as from drunkenness, and from idleness as from adultery. It is the will of God that everyone should labor to eat their own bread, to provide for their own family, and to owe no one anything. To plan for these things the Lord does not condemn.
- Paragraph 17 What Christ condemns here is the care that wastes the blood and drinks up our spirit, which poisons the blessings of today with fears of tomorrow. This is an affront to God, for it plainly implies that God does not order all things to our good, that God is lacking in wisdom and does not know what we need, and that God is not good. With a single eye to God, do all that in you lies to provide things honest in the sight of others, and then trust God with the rest.
- Paragraph 18 God knows what we need, and has ordered the Creation so that we may have what we need. God provides for the other creatures of the Creation, who cannot sow or reap or gather into barns. Do you think God would ignore the higher beings of God’s Creation? Jesus clearly tells us how important we are to God, and that we are in God’s care.
- Paragraph 19 Even Gentiles and Heathens receive the care of their Creator, though they worry about it because they do not know God. But you know God, and God knows what we need. The infallible way to receive what God has for us is this: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and God’s righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
- Paragraph 20 Seek God’s kingdom before any other thought or care. Let God reign in your heart, manifest Himself in your soul, and dwell and rule there. Let God have sole dominion over you without a rival for your affections. Righteousness is the fruit of God’s reigning in your heart. And what is righteousness, but love? Love produces every right spirit, every right disposition of the heart, and every holy action as is acceptable to God and profitable to us.
- Paragraph 21 We hear this in Paul’s letter to the Romans. If we are ignorant of God’s righteousness, we will try to establish our own righteousness, hardening

ourselves against true righteousness and the faith by which it is alone possible to attain it.

- Paragraph 22 We hear this in Paul's letter to the Philippians, where he again talks about the righteousness of God and the righteousness of the world.
- Paragraph 23 Seek first the kingdom of God, and God will give, over and above, all things needful for the body, as God sees fit for the advancement of the kingdom. Cast your care upon God, and God will not fail to supply what you need.
- Paragraph 24 Therefore take no thought of tomorrow. Take no thought laying up treasures on earth, or procuring more food that you can eat, or more clothes than you can wear, or more money than is required for day to day living. Another day may not come, and if it does, God will still provide.
- Paragraph 25 Do not let the cares of tomorrow be a pretense for neglecting present duties. Doing sinful things to provide for our families does not make those things holy! When we throw away heaven to gain the things of earth, we lose the one but do not gain the other as we discover that it does not satisfy us. They do not seek God's righteousness, and the things they need are not added to them.
- Paragraph 26 Taking thought for tomorrow is also forbidden when we see it as a time when we will be better able to seek God's righteousness and to serve God. You are not likely to serve God in your comfort then if you do not serve God now in your concerns for worldly things. It is those who are faithful in little who will be faithful in much!
- Paragraph 27 Take no thought for the temptations of tomorrow. It is true, you do not have the strength to face a temptation now that may come later, but you are not facing that temptation now. When the temptation does come, so does grace to withstand the temptation. When suffering abounds, the consolations of God will increase by the same proportion. In every situation, the grace of God will be sufficient for you.
- Paragraph 28 So think of tomorrow when tomorrow comes. Take care instead to improve the current hour. The past is as nothing, and the future is not yours until it is given to you. Others came before you and are now gone, returned to the dust of the earth – did worrying about the future change that? Now it is your turn upon the earth. Don't worry about losing the things of this earth when you have the opportunity to gain Christ!
- Paragraph 29 Gladly suffer today, for the sake of God. There is enough evil to deal with today, without adding the evils of tomorrow. Seek instead the blessing of today, and you will find a precious balm prepared by the wisdom of God.

Take as much as God gives in one day, and it will be sufficient, and God will be glorified! Love God, serve God, and enjoy God, this hour and for all eternity!

Sermon 25: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged:
and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye,
but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

*O how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye:
and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine eye,
and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.
Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine,
lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.*

*Ask: and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find:
knock and it shall be opened to you:*

*For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth;
and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

*O what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?
Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more
shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?*

*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you,
do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.*

Discourse 10 - Matthew 7:1-12

- Paragraph 1 In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has finished his main design and laid down the rules touching the right intention for our outward actions. Now he points out the main hindrances of this religion, and concludes with a suitable application.
- Paragraph 2 Our great Teacher laid out all of inward religion in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter, he showed us how all of our actions can be made holy and good and acceptable to God. Without the pure intention, the action is of no value; with it, it is of great price before God.
- Paragraph 3 Jesus begins the seventh chapter with the most common and fatal hindrances to holiness.
- Paragraph 4 The first hindrance is judging. Judge not, lest you be judged!
- Paragraph 5 There is never a time from our first repenting until we are made perfect in love when this caution is not needful. Unspeakable is the mischief we inflict on our own soul as we expose ourselves to the judgment of God, and frequently to those who are judged, turned away from God by those who represent God.
- Paragraph 6 Yet, this caution against judging is not just for the children of God, but also for all the children of the world. They have observed those who

practice the inward religion, so why do they not also follow in this most excellent way? In their judgments, they condemn those they ought to imitate! They seek to judge the faults of others, rather than amend their own.

- Paragraph 7 It is to these persons especially that Jesus says, “why do you behold the mote in your brother’s eye” – the infirmities, the mistakes, the imprudence, the weakness of the children of God – “but do not consider the beam in your own eye?” They do not consider their impenitence, the satanic pride, the accursed self-will, or their idolatrous love of the world. What the world considers a mote in our eye is our zeal for God, our self-denial, our disengagement from worldly cares and employments, our practice of continual prayer and constant communion. First, they need to cast out their beam of impenitence, and feel that they are sinners! They need to cast out their beam of pride, and know themselves as dust and ashes before God. They need to cast out the beam of self-will, and renounce themselves and follow God. They need to cast out their beam of love for the things of this world, learning the difference between using the things of this world and enjoying God. Most of all, they need to cast out their beam of carelessness and indifference, and seek the one thing that is needful.
- Paragraph 8 What is the judging that is here forbidden? It is not the same as evil speaking or thinking evil of another, though it often is joined with judging. If I see someone commit robbery or murder or blaspheme God, I may think ill of him or her.
- Paragraph 9 Thinking of others in a manner that is contrary to love is the kind of judging that Jesus condemns. It is contrary to love to charge someone with ill words or thoughts or actions or intentions when we do not know they are guilty, for they may be innocent in their simplicity and godly sincerity.
- Paragraph 10 Second, we fall into the sin of judging when we condemn the guilty to a higher degree that they deserve. It is an offense against justice, as well as mercy. We sin because we overvalue the fault and undervalue whatever good is found in him.
- Paragraph 11 This judging shows a lack of love on our part, as we think evil of others. We assume that one sin will be repeated, and that repeated sins are evidence of others sins also, and judge them guilty on all counts.
- Paragraph 12 Even if we do not condemn the innocent, or judge the guilty any more than they deserve, we may still sin by judging another when there is not sufficient evidence. Even if the facts we suppose are true, we are still guilty of judging, for we ought not to suppose the worst in others until

there is proof. Even if we have evidence, until we have heard their side of the story, we should not judge or pass sentence. Jewish and Roman courts allow this much before passing judgment!

- Paragraph 13 Even when the other person confesses, we should allow them time and opportunity to have second thoughts and counsel, too. Do not even the courts allow this much?
- Paragraph 14 Judging and condemning others would be rare if we were to walk by the rule of Jesus: if another sins against you, go and tell him of his fault. But if he will not listen, take one or two others so that every word may be established. If the other still refuses to hear it, take it to the church, either the overseers or the whole congregation. After that, commend the whole thing to God.
- Paragraph 15 If we remove the beam from our own eye, we still must be careful about offering to remove the mote from another's eye. Beware of the zeal that is not according to knowledge, for in your desire that all should receive the blessing of Christ you may be seen as attacking the person and not their sin. This is a needful caution to all who believe, and especially those who are now warm in their first love of God. That is why we are given the caution not to give that which is holy to the dogs, or to cast pearls before swine.
- Paragraph 16 Do not be hasty to judge someone to be a dog, until there is full and indisputable proof that they are unholy and wicked. When working with dogs, do not begin with the great mysteries of the gospel to those who do not know if there is a Holy Spirit. Lead them where they are able to hear. Do not start with the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, but talk with them in their own manner, and upon their own principles.
- Paragraph 17 Do not be hasty to judge someone to be swine, until there is full and indisputable proof that they glory to their shame, making no pretense of cleanliness or purity, but instead work in all uncleanness and greed. When working with swine, do not begin with the mysteries of the kingdom for which they have no spiritual senses. Do not tell them of the great and precious promises that God gives us through Jesus Christ, for they are not able to understand them in their present state.
- Paragraph 18 Do not utterly despair for their souls, even if they are dogs and swine. Remember to pray for them, asking for them what you ask for yourself. The neglect of prayer is the third grand hindrance to holiness. Ask that you may experience and practice the whole of religion. Seek God in the ways God has ordained, in searching the scriptures, in hearing His word, in meditating on these words, by fasting, and by partaking in the Supper of

the Lord. Knock on the gates of heaven with prayer, and the door of mercy and holiness will be opened.

Paragraph 19 It is in compassion to the hardness of our heart that Jesus is pleased to give to those who ask, to give love and the image of God to those who seek, and to open the gates of righteousness to those who knock. Always remember to pray, and the promise stands sure.

Paragraph 20 There can be no pretense for unbelief, as Jesus shows in his appeal to how we already act towards others. If we know how to give good things, how much more will God give to us that which is good!

Paragraph 21 If your prayers are only for yourself, without love for your neighbor, then they may be a curse rather than a blessing to you. Remove this hindrance to holiness, and love your neighbor in word and deed and truth. Therefore, whatever you want others to do for you, do for them; for that is the law and the prophets.

Paragraph 22 This is the golden rule of mercy. This rule commends itself to every person – even dogs and swine.

Paragraph 23 This is the whole of what is in the law and in the prophets. And rightly understood, it comprises the whole of the religion that Jesus came to establish upon earth.

Paragraph 24 This rule can be interpreted negatively and positively. Don't do to others what you would not want them to do to you. And supposing you were in their situation, do to them what you would want them to do for you.

Paragraph 25 Let's apply this rule in some obvious situations. We would not want people to judge us, to think without cause evil of us, or to speak evil of us by listing our faults and infirmities. Apply this to ourselves, and we cannot judge others, or think without cause evil of others, or speak evil of others by listing their faults and infirmities.

Paragraph 26 Another application: we want others to love and esteem us, and to behave towards us according to justice and mercy and truth. We desire that others may do for us all the good that they can without injuring themselves, giving up trifles for our conveniences, giving up conveniences for our necessities, and giving up necessities when our need is extreme. Apply this to yourself, and act in the same way towards your neighbors!

Paragraph 27 This is pure and genuine morality. Do this, and you will live. But none can love their neighbor as himself, unless he first loves God. And none can love God until they first believe in Christ and then receive the redemption through his blood, and the assurance through the Holy Spirit.

Faith, therefore, is still the root in both present and future salvation. We still must lead people to the gospel if they are to be saved.

Sermon 26: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

*Enter ye at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way,
that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:
Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life,
and few there be that find it.*

Discourse 11 – Matthew 7: 13-14

- Paragraph 1 Having considered the dangers that we first encounter when we enter real religion, and the hindrances to real religion within, Jesus now cautions us against the hindrances without, those of ill example and ill advice.
- Paragraph 2 Enter by the straight gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction.
- Paragraph 3 These are the inseparable properties of the way to hell: wide is the gate, broad is the way. These are the inseparable properties of the way to heaven: straight is the gate, narrow is the way.

Part 1 The inseparable properties of the way to hell

- Paragraph 1 These lead to destruction for many!
- Paragraph 2 Sin is the gate of hell, and wickedness is the way to destruction. Because the command of God is broad, extending to all our actions, words, and thoughts, sin is a thousand times broader. There is only one way to keep the commandments, but there are thousands of ways to break the commandments.
- Paragraph 3 Can we fix any bounds to the parent-sins of a carnal mind, pride of heart, self-will, and love of the world? Like leaven, their influence is found to permeate all of our affections!
- Paragraph 4 Who can count all their sins, much less the sins of a kingdom or a country or a city or town? Even if we consider only Christians, and even only the purest of all Christians, this is too hard a thing to do! It would be easier to count the grains of sand at the shore, or to count the raindrops.
- Paragraph 5 How many go in at the gate? Nearly as many as there are people! For if we honestly examine any section of humanity, we will see that nearly all live in some habitual sin that is a gross visible kind of ungodliness towards either God or their neighbor. Add to this group those who have the form of godliness but not its power, having never been fully alive to Christ. Many are inwardly filled with all uncleanness, full of pride and vanity, and anger or revenge, of ambition or covetousness, loving themselves more than God or their neighbors.

Paragraph 6 Don't think this only applies to the poor, base, stupid part of mankind! Men of eminence, wealth, and power – the more blessings they have received, the more they have sinned, excelling in vice rather than virtue.

Part 2 The inseparable properties of the way to heaven

Paragraph 1 Many travel the broad way because it is broad, never considering that it is the path to destruction.

Paragraph 2 So straight is the path that leads to heaven that nothing unclean or unholy can enter. No sinner can enter, until he is saved from all his sins, both outward and inward.

Paragraph 3 The way of universal holiness is narrow, for it requires poverty of spirit, holy mourning, meekness, and hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The way of mercy is narrow, for it requires purity of heart, unfeigned love, doing good to all, and gladly suffering evil for righteousness' sake.

Paragraph 4 Very few find their way to even heathen honesty. Fewer still never do unto others what they would not want done to them. Fewer still have never done something unjust or unkind -- and we have only considered the outward sins! How many more would be eliminated when we consider the inward sins!

Paragraph 5 There is great danger in being carried away with the torrent of examples of those in the broad way, when there are so few in the narrow way. Who can stand against the tide?

Paragraph 6 Even if we could resist those who are rude and obvious in their wickedness, we would be swept away by those who are polite, well-bred, genteel, wise, knowledgeable, rational, and elegant! They have skills to persuade us that the way is right because it is broad, and that following the majority cannot be evil. To resist would be evil in their sight! How smoothly they argue that evil is good, and good is evil! They consider our narrow path of holiness the way of destruction!

Paragraph 7 As difficult as it is to stand up against these powers of persuasion, they have a greater tool to confuse the masses. They appeal not to our understanding, but to our fears. This is extremely successful, for while all may not be able to reason as they do, all can certainly fear. And without a firm trust in God, and a sure reliance on God's power and love, we are susceptible to the fears of the world.

Paragraph 8 The rich tempt us into the broad way, unless we are crucified to the world and desire nothing but God.

Paragraph 9 No one wants to be excluded, ill-thought of, afraid, and poor. Even those who know Christ can have trouble refuting their arguments, or to speak of their experience in ways that are convincing against the broad way of evil.

Paragraph 10 Add to this that many Christians are not nobles, or counted among the honorable men of authority. They often are simple common folk, with no power to bring against anyone, or money to yield or buy influence. The world sees no reason to listen to them, and often denigrates them. So their fears, hopes, and desires (except their desire for God) tempt them into the broad way.

Part 3 Enter by the straight gate

Paragraph 1 Strive to enter, as in an agony, for many seek to enter but shall not be able.

Paragraph 2 Jesus gives another reason for not being able to enter through the gate. He says that if the master of the house is inside the house and you are outside, that when you knock and cry to the Lord, you will be refused since, in your sin, the master does not know you.

Paragraph 3 Whether they were refused because they did not strive for the narrow gate, or they strived too late, the effect is the same, and they are denied.

Paragraph 4 So do not wait to strive for the narrow gate! Set your heart on it today, and let it be uppermost in your thoughts always. The broad way leads to destruction. If you are following the crowd, you are walking into the deepest pit! Are the rich, wise, mighty, and noble walking with you? You know this can't be a good thing! Here is an infallible rule – in whatever profession you are engaged, you must be singular or be condemned! It is better to stand alone, than to fall into the pit. Run the race with patience, even if few run with you. The angels waiting for you outnumber the multitudes that would lead you to hell.

Paragraph 5 Strive to enter by the narrow gate! Take on poverty of spirit and inward religion, even if the world considers it madness. Strive to enter, pierced with the nails of sorrow and shame for having followed the crowd instead of Jesus. Strive in holy fear, fervent desire, and prayer for the narrow way of Jesus Christ.

Paragraph 6 Strive to enter by ordering your conversations so that they are holy. Walk with all your strength in the way of God, by innocence, piety and mercy. Abstain from even the appearance of evil; do all possible good to all men; deny yourself all things; take up your cross daily. Be ready to cut off your right hand, to pluck out your right eye, and to suffer the loss of goods, friends, health, and earthly treasures. Do this so that you may enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Sermon 27: Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount

*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,
but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.*

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit;

but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

A good tree cannot bringeth forth evil fruit,

neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Discourse 12 - Matthew 7:15-20

Paragraph 1 It strains the imagination to consider how many people cannot be convinced to walk the narrow way, preferring instead the example of those who walk the broad way.

Paragraph 2 God has sent prophets to point out the narrow way, and to extol all not to be conformed to the world. But what happens when the prophets fall into the snares of which they should warn others? What can be done when prophets exhort the people to walk in the broad way as if it were the narrow?

Paragraph 3 God knows it happens often! There are examples in every age and nation of ambassadors of God becoming agents of the devil. Beware of the false prophets who wear sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Paragraph 4 Let us consider three things about false prophets.

Part 1 Who these false prophets are

Paragraph 1 I intend to speak plainly, instead of like the false prophets who intend to deceive the hearts of the simple with their rhetoric and abuse of the scripture.

Paragraph 2 By prophets, as is often the case in scripture, Jesus means not those who can foretell the future, but those who speak in the name of God. They are false prophets if they teach a false way to heaven, or if they teach what is not true.

Paragraph 3 Every broad way is infallibly a false way, since the way to heaven is the narrow way.

Paragraph 4 The true way is the way of lowliness, mourning, meekness, holy desire, love of God and neighbor, doing good, and suffering evil for Christ's sake. Any one who proclaims as the word of God otherwise is a false prophet.

- Paragraph 5 It doesn't matter if they call their other way faith, or good works, or faith and works, or repentance, or even repentance, faith, and new obedience. These are all good words, but if they are used to present a way that is not the true way, it is false.
- Paragraph 6 The way of condemnation speaks of pride, levity, passion, worldly desires, loving pleasure more than God, unkindness to our neighbors, unconcern for good works, and suffering no evil or persecution for righteousness' sake!
- Paragraph 7 Who would proclaim such an obvious false doctrine and call it Christianity? Any who encourage the proud, the trifler, the passionate, the lover of the world, the man of pleasure, the unjust or unkind, and the others that they are already on the way to heaven. It is not the path to heaven in which they are leading them!

Part 2 What appearance do false prophets put on

- Paragraph 1 It would be helpful if false prophets dressed in such a way that was easily identifiable, but then who would follow them? Instead they put on sheep's clothing.
- Paragraph 2 They come appearing to be harmless, in the most mild and inoffensive manner. Who could suspect that they have even the desire to do harm to others?
- Paragraph 3 They come with an appearance of usefulness, assuring us that they are called to do good as they watch over your soul and train you up in their broad way. As messengers of God, they come to bring you a blessing.
- Paragraph 4 They come with the appearance of religion, doing all for the sake of your conscience. It is their "love of truth," and a "fear that it should suffer," that fuels their zeal in making God a liar and seeing pure religion destroyed.
- Paragraph 5 Above all, they come with the appearance of love, doing all this for your good. They make large professions of their goodwill towards you, of their concern for the danger you are in, and their earnest desire to preserve you from the error found in mischievous doctrines. Concerned that you are deluded by enthusiasm, they try to pull you into the middle and broad way.

Part 3 How we may know what they really are, appearances notwithstanding

- Paragraph 1 Jesus knew that we are not always able to deduce a truth through a long train of consequences, so he gave us a simple rule that is easy to understand: You shall know them by their fruits.
- Paragraph 2 The first test for a prophet: what effect has their doctrine had on themselves? Are they holy and unblamable? Are their conversations holy? Do they have the mind of Christ in them? Are they meek, lowly, patient, lovers of God and their neighbor, and zealous of good works?
- Paragraph 3 What are the fruits of their doctrine in those who hear them – in many, at least, since even the Apostles did not convert all who heard them? Do they have the mind of Christ in them, and walk as Jesus walked? Is there evidence that they have been taught to love and serve God?
- Paragraph 4 We do not expect evil men to bear good fruit. True prophets bring forth the good fruit of holiness, not as an accident, but as a necessary outcome. Those who bring the proud, passionate, unmerciful lovers of the world to be lowly, gentle, lovers of God and man, have brought sinners to repentance. On the other hand, if the unrighteous remain unrighteous, or at least do not exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, then they have listened to a false prophet. And apart from grace, they and their hearers will fall into the bottomless pit!
- Paragraph 5 Beware of the false prophets! They destroy and devour the flock, tearing it apart, for they are unable to lead where they have not known!
- Paragraph 6 If there is such danger with false prophets, should we ever listen to them? It seems plain that we should not; however, Jesus himself told the people to listen to the Pharisees who sat on Moses' seat of authority – and they were clearly false prophets! They were known by their fruits, so Jesus warned the people; but he did not forbid them to listen to them, but instead told the people to do what they were told.
- Paragraph 7 Perhaps you may think that Jesus meant only that they were to listen while the scripture was read. But the Pharisees expounded on the scripture after reading it, and there is no indication that Jesus split the two.
- Paragraph 8 We are to listen to the false prophets today, after expounding on the scripture, because they also administer the sacrament. We would not advise anyone to be cut off from the ordinance of God, for validity does not depend on the goodness of the one who administers it, but on the faithfulness of the One who ordained it. God has given us the sacrament to meet with us in this appointed way, and we have known its blessing – even when the administrator had cursed lips.

- Paragraph 9 This is all that I can say: wait upon God humbly and prayerfully, acting in the best light that you have, taking care not to judge someone a false prophet too quickly. Even if it is proved that they are a false prophet, see that neither anger nor contempt has any place in your heart. Listen carefully and consider what they say – if it harms your soul, then quietly refrain from listening to them; if it does not harm your soul, listen for the truth that must be tangled up in the lies. Test the spirit by the scripture, keeping what agrees and rejecting whatever is not confirmed or disagrees. In particular, reject anything that is described as the way of salvation that is either different from, or short of, the way Jesus has given to us.
- Paragraph 10 And now, a few words directed to the false prophets: O dry bones, listen and hear the word of God for once! How long will you say, “God has spoken,” when it is only your own words that you offer? How long will you call darkness light, and call death the way of life?
- Paragraph 11 Woe to the blind leaders of the blind! They caution going too far when they have scarcely taken even one step towards the kingdom. They have little appetite for righteousness, so they do not hunger and thirst for it.
- Paragraph 12 Where are your eyes and understanding? Have you deceived others for so long that you have deceived yourself? Do you now believe this lie that God has sent you and filled your mouth with God’s words? If that were true, where is your confirmation? Where are the sinners who have repented?
- Paragraph 13 How can you not notice that your fruit is either evil, or that your tree is barren?
- Paragraph 14 My dear brethren, do not harden your hearts, but repent before it is too late! Do not let temporal considerations weigh you down, for eternity is at stake. You have run without being sent, so go no farther! Humble yourself before Jesus, and cry out to him that you are dust, in need of his Spirit to have life that is lowly and meek, that is pure and merciful, that works by love. Then may Christ send his Spirit upon you, and you can indeed do the work of an evangelist, with the word of God in your mouth like a hammer that breaks the rocks into pieces. Then you shall turn many to righteousness!

Sermon 28: Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount

*Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;
but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.*

*Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name?
and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?*

*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:
depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.*

*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them,
I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:
and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,
and beat upon that house, and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

*And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not,
shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:
and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,
and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it.*

Discourse 13 – Matthew 7:21-27

Paragraph 1 Jesus ends the Sermon on the Mount with weighty words that seal his prophecy.

Paragraph 2 Not every one who says “Lord, Lord,” or everyone who does great things in the name of the Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. Counting on these things is as foolish as building a house on sand in the middle of a flood plain just before the rainy season.

Paragraph 3 This sermon will have three parts.

Part 1 Consider the case of him who builds on sand

Paragraph 1 Any one who thinks of going to heaven by any other way than we have already described is counted among those who cry “Lord, Lord” but who will not enter the kingdom. It is not these words only, of course. They imply all the good words of our religion: creeds, professions of faith, prayers we repeat, and thanksgivings we make. It includes our highest tributes to God and God’s mercy to all children, and our faithful telling of God’s mighty acts to the people. It includes knowing the mysteries of faith, and speaking in tongues. It includes sermon that are so persuasive that souls are saved from death. We may say all these things and do all these things, and still not enter the kingdom!

Paragraph 2 Secondly, saying “Lord, Lord” implies doing no harm. We may abstain from presumptive sins and outward wickedness, and be clear of all uncleanness, ungodliness, and unrighteousness – but if we go no farther than this, we shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.

- Paragraph 3 Thirdly, saying “Lord, Lord” implies what are usually styled “good works.” Even if you have a practice of constant communion, listen to an abundance of excellent sermons, partake of every opportunity the church has to offer, and engage in sacrificial giving for the benefit of those in need, you could still have no share in the kingdom of heaven.
- Paragraph 4 If these words amaze you, then you are a stranger to the whole religion of Jesus Christ – no wonder he says he never knew you! All these things are far short of that righteousness and true holiness which Jesus has described. These are all outward things, distant from the inward kingdom that begins as a sown mustard seed from which can grow the great branches that bear the fruit of righteousness, good temper, good words, and good work.
- Paragraph 5 As clear as Jesus made this, people still have trouble hearing it, and will try to plead their case – that they prayed, and refrained from evil, and did good, and maybe even did great things before the people in the name of Jesus. Even then, Jesus will say that he never knew them. Their hearts were not meek and lowly, because they were focused on what they had done instead of on Christ’s holiness and perfect love.
- Paragraph 6 To come before God counting on our own efforts is to be foolish. The floods come to us all, when we are outwardly afflicted, or inwardly tempted, or in the midst of a storm of anger, fear, or desire – and we fall, we sin, and our claims to being righteous enough are washed away to ruin.

Part 2 The wisdom of him who builds on rock

- Paragraph 1 It is wise to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. The wise before God are poor in spirit, aware of their sinfulness that can only be washed away by the atoning blood of Christ. The wise are meek and gentle, patient, overcoming evil with good. The wise love all and will sacrifice even for their enemies. The wise love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. It is in this spirit that the wise enter into the kingdom, enabled to do good, to suffer persecution, and still be exceedingly glad.
- Paragraph 2 How truly wise is this person who knows that they are an everlasting spirit, sent into a house of clay, to do the will of God. This person also knows the world as a place where they are passing through as a stranger and a sojourner on their way to the everlasting habitation. This person knows God, as Father and friend, the parent of all good, the center of the spirits of all flesh, the sole happiness of all intelligent beings. The wise see the end of man, and the means to that end: to love God, to imitate God, and to believe in Jesus Christ whom God has sent.
- Paragraph 3 This person is wise because they build upon the Rock of Ages, Jesus Christ. Christ’s blood and righteousness are the only foundation that can

bear the whole weight of our soul. Secure in that foundation, the wise confess their sins, and are justified freely by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and enabled to live a life of pure love to both God and others.

Paragraph 4 The rains of temptation fall hard upon the wise as well, as God proves the grace given as Satan tests it. But there is no storm that can prevail against this house built upon the foundation of Christ!

Part 3 A practical application

Paragraph 1 What is the foundation of your hope? Upon what do you build your expectation of entering the kingdom of heaven? Is it on the sand of orthodoxy, as if right opinions were a substitute for a living faith? Is the Church, excellent though it may be, as strong a foundation as the blood and righteousness of Christ? This is surely building on sand.

Paragraph 2 Are you building your hope of salvation upon your innocence in not doing harm? This is the least part of religion, even if you were to be entirely blameless before all; and it is nothing if it does not flow from a right principle within. This is building on sand, still.

Paragraph 3 Are you building your hope of salvation upon attending upon all the ordinances of God, for doing what the Lord has commanded you to do? They are nothing apart from faith, mercy, and the love of God. It is the holiness of heart that knows heaven opened in the soul. Counting on attending the ordinances is building on sand.

Paragraph 4 Are you building your hope of salvation upon your good works? Are you doing good to all people of every kind: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the afflicted, caring for the stranger, prophesying in the name of Jesus, preaching the truth of Christ, exhorting sinners into saints? Then go and learn that it is by grace through faith you are saved! Learn to hang naked upon the cross of Christ, and ask in the spirit of the dying thief for your salvation – or you are building on sand, still.

Paragraph 5 Lord, increase my faith, even if it is only a grain of mustard-seed! But do not give me faith that has no works, but stamp the whole image of God on my heart, so that I may have both inward and outward holiness. Do not let me rest on unholy, unsaving faith! If I only claim this faith, then I am lost forever, for it is still on sand that I am building.

Paragraph 6 Build on rock. By the grace of God, know yourself as a sinner, guilty of eternal death, and with no hope of saving yourself. Let it be your hope that you are washed by the blood of Jesus and purified by his Spirit, and know that you are totally dependent upon Christ for every good thought, word, and work.

- Paragraph 7 Weep for your sins, and mourn for God, till God turns your heaviness into joy. And then weep with those who weep, and for those who do not weep for themselves. Mourn for the sins and miseries of all humanity, aware of the difference between heaven and hell in every moment.
- Paragraph 8 To all this seriousness, add the meekness of wisdom. Calmly acquiesce in whatsoever is the will of God, learning to be content in every state. Be mild to the good, and gentle towards all. Beware of outward expressions of anger, and inward emotions contrary to love. Be angry at sin, but love the sinner still.
- Paragraph 9 Hunger and thirst for righteousness, not food and drink. Trample the world's pleasures and treasures under foot, as you seek the pleasures and treasures of heaven. Beware of quenching your thirst with a religion that is only for show, seeking instead the power of godliness that is spirit and life in God and God in thee.
- Paragraph 10 Love your neighbor as yourself! Love friends and enemies as your own soul. Let your love be long-suffering and patient to all! Let it be kind, soft, benign, inspiring with sweetness and tender affection. Rejoice in truth wherever it is found, if it is after godliness. Enjoy what brings glory to God, and promote peace and goodwill among all. Speak well of the dead and the absent, believing all things which may tend to clear your neighbor's character; hope all things in their favor, and endure all things in triumphing over opposition.
- Paragraph 11 Be pure in heart. Be purified through faith of every unholy affection; from pride by poverty of spirit; from turbulent passions by meekness and mercifulness; from every desire but to please and enjoy God by hungering and thirsting after righteousness.
- Paragraph 12 In a word: let your religion be the religion of the heart. Let it lie deep in your inmost soul. Consider yourself little, and base, and mean, and vile (beyond what words can express) in your own eyes; and amazed and humbled by the love of God in Jesus Christ. Be serious, knowing how close to the brink of hell you are at any moment. Be filled with mildness, gentleness, patience, and long-suffering, while also seeking God with all your being. Love God and love each other! In this spirit so suffer all things! Show your faith by works, to do the will of your Father in heaven. Sure as you walk now with God on earth, you will walk with God in heaven!

Sermon 29: The Original, Nature, Property, and Use of the Law
Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.
Romans 7:12

- Paragraph 1 When Paul says that the law is holy, just, and good, does Paul mean the Jewish law or the Roman law? And do we care?
- Paragraph 2 If we read the epistle carefully, it becomes clear that Paul is instead referring to the moral law, which applies as long as we live. If a woman's husband is alive and she married another, she is an adulterer. A woman is bound to her husband by the moral law as long as he lives, but she is released from the law of her husband when he dies. So Paul talks about our union with Christ – when we were in the flesh, we were bound to the old law. When we are in the spirit, we are released from the laws of the flesh to be joined with Christ.
- Paragraph 3 Is the law sin? Some might draw that conclusion, but not Paul! The law is an irreconcilable enemy to sin, especially the moral law.
- Paragraph 4 We will explain and enforce those deep words, so little regarded because they are so little understood, to show the original (origin) of the law, the nature of the law, the properties of the law, and the uses of the law.

Part 1 The origin of the moral law

- Paragraph 1 The moral law did not begin with Moses, or with Noah who proclaimed it, or even with Enoch before him. It began when God created the angels, the “morning stars,” as God endowed them with understanding to discern good from evil and truth from falsehood, so that they might choose one and reject the other.
- Paragraph 2 So that they could employ what God had given them, God gave them the law, the complete model of truth and all good. Their happiness increased as they saw that their obedience to that law would both add to the perfection of their nature, and entitle them to a higher reward.
- Paragraph 3 In a like manner, when God created a new order of intelligent beings out of the dust, God gave to them the same law – not written on stone or parchment, but on their hearts so that it would always be close to them.
- Paragraph 4 The moral law was given at the same time that humans received the breath of God. The angels received it long before the mountains were formed, and before the world was even made. Humans soon rebelled, effectively erasing the law from their hearts; yet, God mercifully wrote it again so that we would know that goodness is to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Paragraph 5 God showed this light to people, yet we continued to corrupt the light. So God chose a peculiar people to receive a more perfect knowledge of God's law, written on two stones, and commanded them to teach it to their children for all generations.

Paragraph 6 That is how God's law has been made known to people who do not know God. But hearing the law is not the same as knowing God, who can only be revealed by God's Spirit. God can be known by all who believe, as God has promised in a new covenant, when God will put the law in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31).

Part 2 The nature of the moral law

Paragraph 1 "Law" and "commandment" are sometimes used as if they were interchangeable, for a commandment is but part of the law. The law here mentioned is not the same as the ceremonial law, for the ceremonial law has no place for "thou shalt not covet."

Paragraph 2 The law here mentioned is not the law of Moses, either. This imperfect and shadowy law is not highly commended by Paul, nor is it ever referred to as a spiritual law; that is, a law that is holy and just and good. It is not the law of Moses that is written on our hearts, but only the moral law.

Paragraph 3 The moral law is an incorruptible picture of the High and HOLY ONE of eternity. This is the face of God unveiled, seen by God's creatures as they were able to bear it, so that they might see God and live. This is the heart of God disclosed to us.

Paragraph 4 An ancient Heathen said, "If virtue could assume such a shape as we could behold her with our eyes, what wonderful love would she excite in us." If! It is done already! The law of God is all virtues in one, visible to those whom God has enlightened.

Paragraph 5 From another view point, the law of God is supreme unchangeable reason, unalterable rectitude, and everlasting fitness of all things ever created – yet even this expression falls far short, and provides only a faint picture to shadow out the deep things of God. We only know God now in part, so we can only speak of God "in part."

Paragraph 6 The law of God is a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature, the fairest offspring of the Father, the brightest shining of wisdom, the visible beauty of the Most High, the delight of the angels, and the glory of every wise believer.

Part 3 The properties of the moral law

Paragraph 1 These are not all the properties of the law (that would take wisdom beyond that of the angels!), but the first is that the law is holy.

Paragraph 2 Holiness is not its effect, but its nature. When it is transcribed into our hearts, it becomes the pure religion, the pure clean unpolluted worship of God.

Paragraph 3 The law is, in the highest degree, pure, chaste, clean, and holy – or it could not be the offspring of God. There is no sin within this law, and therefore it is enmity to sin.

Paragraph 4 That is why Paul so strongly rejects that the law cannot cause sin or is sin itself. We should not suppose that the discoverer of sin is the cause of sin. Seen in the light, we know sin to be sin, as all its disguises and excuses are torn away and its native deformity is revealed. Preferring the dark, sin rages against the light.

Paragraph 5 Second, the law is just. It prescribes exactly what is right, precisely what ought to be done, said, or thought with regard to God, others, and ourselves. It is adapted to all aspects of nature, and suited to the circumstances of each person and their relationships. There is nothing arbitrary in the law, since it is dependent upon the will of God.

Paragraph 6 In our sin, trying to hold God accountable to us, we ask, “But is the will of God the cause of the law, and is God’s will the origin of right and wrong? Is a thing right because God wills it, or does God will it because it is right?”

Paragraph 7 This question is difficult only if we suppose that God’s will is somehow distinct from God. To say “the will of God” or “God Himself” causes the law is to say the same thing.

Paragraph 8 If the law depends on the nature and fitness of things and on their essential relations to each other, then the law depends on God, for all things are the works of God’s hands, created for God’s pleasure alone.

Paragraph 9 It may be granted that God wills, for example, that we should honor our parents because it is right that we do so.

Paragraph 10 Third, the law is good. We may easily infer this, for it flows from the fountain of God’s goodness. It is goodness that the nature of God was imprinted upon angels and humans, and was imprinted afresh on our fallen nature. It was goodness that moved God to publish the law, and to send

prophets to declare the law to those who are blind and thoughtless before God.

Paragraph 11 This law of God is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. It is winning and amiable, including things that are lovely or of good report.

Paragraph 12 The law is good in its effects, as well as its nature. As the tree is, so is its fruit. The fruits of the law of God written on the heart are righteousness, peace and assurance. These fruits manifest God within us, assuring us by pure and perfect love that we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

Part 4 The uses of the moral law

Paragraph 1 The use of the law is to convince the world of sin. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, who can reveal our sin to us without any means at all, or by whatever means pleases the Spirit. There have been those who became aware of their sin during a time of illness, and those who were awakened by a sense of the wrath of God, and those who responded to the good news that God was in Christ reconciling the world to God. But the ordinary method of the Spirit to convict us of our sin is by the law. This is the sword that pierces through all the folds of a deceitful heart. This is the power that strips away our fig leaves behind which we hide our wretchedness and sin.

Paragraph 2 The second use of the law is to bring a person to life, to Jesus Christ, so that the person may live. It is true, by both revealing our sin and driving us to Christ, the law acts the part of a severe schoolmaster, driving by force rather than drawing by love. But the spirit behind it is still love that, by this painful means, tears away our confidence in all that is not God.

Paragraph 3 The third use of the law is to keep us alive. Having been driven to Christ, it helps to keep us there, since Christ is the end of the law of all those who believe.

Paragraph 4 Every believer is done with the law, if we mean the ceremonial law or the law of Moses. Yet, we are not done with the moral law for it is still of unspeakable use. First, in convincing us of our sin that remains, it keeps us close to Christ. Second, in thus deriving strength from Christ, we are empowered to do what his law commands. Third, the law confirms our hope of what we have not yet attained, until we are in actual possession of the fullness of God's promises.

Paragraph 5 This agrees with the experience of every true believer!

Paragraph 6 One example: the law says "thou shalt not kill," and Jesus teaches us that this applies not just to the outer acts but also to every unkind word and

thought. The more I look at this law, the more I feel how far short of it I am, and the more I feel my need of Christ's blood to atone for all my sin.

- Paragraph 7 The law sends me to Christ, and Christ sends me to the law.
- Paragraph 8 To judge the law and to speak evil of it is to be joined with sin, Satan, and death in the depths of hell. James esteemed judging the law an enormous piece of wickedness. Do not think or speak lightly of the law, nor dress it up like a scarecrow, for the law is a blessed instrument of the grace of God. Let it be your glory and joy, next to the cross of Christ.
- Paragraph 9 Never let the law of mercy and truth, of love to God and man, of lowliness, meekness, and purity, forsake you. Let it lead you continually to the atoning blood of Christ.
- Paragraph 10 If God has fulfilled His word by writing this law on your heart, then stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made you free. Not only are you free from the Jewish ceremonies, but also from the guilt of sin, the fear of hell, the power of sin, and the service of the devil. Stand fast in loving God with all your heart, and serving God with all your strength! This is perfect freedom.

Sermon 30: The Law Established Through Faith

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea we establish the law.
Romans 3:31

- Paragraph 1 Paul, in verses 20-28, makes a persuasive argument that all have sinned, and all need the grace of Jesus Christ in order to be justified, concluding with “therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law.”
- Paragraph 2 It would be easy then to conclude that faith abolishes the law. Yet Paul claims that this establishes the law.
- Paragraph 3 Some oddly think that Paul was only referring to the ceremonial law of the Jews. But it is the ceremonial law that is made void. It is the moral law that is established by faith.
- Paragraph 4 Some have argued that faith makes the whole law void, believing that if we establish any law, Christ is of no profit to you and you are fallen from grace.
- Paragraph 5 I don’t think they have thought this through, or else they do not have either the faith or the law within them. With no moral law, we do not have the means of either bringing us to faith or of stirring up that gift of God in our soul.
- Paragraph 6 If you desire to come to Christ, or to walk in Him when you have received faith, then we need to consider what are the usual ways we make void the law, and how by faith we establish the law.

Part 1 The most usual way preachers make void the law

- Paragraph 1 Preachers do this by not preaching on the law at all, as though the law were the enemy of the gospel.
- Paragraph 2 This proceeds because the preacher is ignorant of the nature, properties and use of the law; and either does not know Christ, or are such babes in Christ as to be “unskilled in the word of righteousness.”
- Paragraph 3 Preaching the suffering and merit of Christ does not answer all the ends of the law, for it does not convict us of our sin. The gospel is not the means that most of us come to faith, and it is not how Christ preached. If a person is not aware that they are sick, they won’t see the need for a physician! If a person believes himself or herself to be whole, it is like casting pearls before swine that will trample them under foot.

- Paragraph 4 There is no scriptural command or precedent to offer Christ to the careless sinner.
- Paragraph 5 But, Paul said, “We preach Christ crucified,” and “we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.” This is true, and if we preach as Paul did, this dispute goes away. Who preached the law more than Paul!
- Paragraph 6 In Paul’s first recorded sermon (Acts 13: 39 and following), he is telling the Jews, who are already aware of their sin, that they could not be justified by the law of Moses, but only by faith in Christ. It concludes with the threats of the judgments of God, which in the strongest sense is preaching the law.
- Paragraph 7 In Paul’s next sermon (Acts 14:15 and following), he is talking to heathens at Lystra, and he does not name Christ, but that they should turn from their vain idols to the living God. Now, confess the truth: do you think you are a better preacher than Paul? Or do you think Paul was stoned as judgment from God for failing to preach Christ?
- Paragraph 8 To the jailer convicted of his sin, Paul offered Christ. To the Athenians, Paul told them to give up their superstition, ignorance, and idolatry, moving them towards repentance. To Felix, he spoke of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, until Felix was ready to repent. Go then, and preach as Paul did to the careless sinner, of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come!
- Paragraph 9 But, you may argue, Paul preached Christ in the Epistles. First, an epistle is not a sermon. Second, he was writing to believers, not careless sinners. Third, every epistle is full of the law.
- Paragraph 10 To preach Christ, as Paul has shown us by his example, is to preach both the judgment on our sin and the love of Christ.
- Paragraph 11 To preach Christ is to preach all that Jesus said -- all his promises, all his threatenings and commands, all that is written in his book.
- Paragraph 12 There is no comfort in repeating only the sufferings of Christ for our sins, and there are times when we do not need to be comforted but cut to the heart by our sin and faithlessness. If we only preach his sufferings, the words become flat and dead, and we have made void the gospel as well as the law.

Part 2 The second way we make void the law

- Paragraph 1 We make void the law through faith when we teach that faith supersedes the necessity of holiness. There are thousands of paths from this that lead us away from faith!
- Paragraph 2 If we set aside the law by faith, either 1) we believe that holiness is less necessary than it was before Christ came, 2) we believe that holiness is necessary but to a lesser degree, or 3) we believe that holiness is less necessary for believers than it is for others. From this it follows that we have more liberty from obedience or holiness, which makes the law void.
- Paragraph 3 The first plea is that we are under the covenant of grace, and therefore we do not need to perform the works of the law. But only Adam before the fall was under the covenant of the law! He alone was under the covenant that requires full and perfect obedience as the only condition of acceptance, with no room for pardon for even the smallest transgression. We are all under the covenant of grace, whereby we are acceptable before God by the free grace of God through the merits of Christ, who pardons those who believe with such a faith that, working by love, they produce all obedience and holiness.
- Paragraph 4 The case is not that men were *once* more obliged to obey God, or to do the works of the law, than we are *now*. That would make the works of the law a prior condition for our acceptance. We know that good works, as necessary as ever, are instead the faithful response for our acceptance. The covenant of grace does not give you any ground for making void any part of obedience or holiness.
- Paragraph 5 But are we not justified by faith without the works of the law? Undoubtedly we are! Would to God that all were convinced of this, for it would prevent innumerable evils. Chief among these is antinomianism, for we run so far away from those who insist that the law is the only way to heaven.
- Paragraph 6 The truth lies between both. We are justified by faith, which is the cornerstone of the whole Christian building. We are justified without any works as a previous condition, but those works are the fruit of our faith. If good works do not follow our justification, it shows that our faith is worth nothing and we remain in our sin. Even being justified by faith is no grounds for making void the law or for claiming dispensation from holiness.
- Paragraph 7 But doesn't Paul say that our faith is counted as righteousness? And doesn't it then follow that faith is the same thing as righteousness? So what need is there for righteousness? This is the main pillar of antinomianism. We allow that: 1) God justifies the ungodly, who are void of all good; 2) God justifies the ungodly, who do no good works; 3) God

justifies by faith alone, without any goodness or righteousness as a previous condition; and 4) God counts faith as a *preceding* righteousness before we are justified. But that doesn't have anything to do with *subsequent righteousness*. Paul teaches there is no righteousness *before* faith, but where does he teach there is no righteousness *after* faith?

Part 3 The more common way of making void the law

- Paragraph 1 The most common way is to do it in practice, if not in principle, by living as if faith is designed to excuse us from holiness. Paul told us to guard against this (Romans 6:15): What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid!
- Paragraph 2 Here, being “under the law” may mean: 1) being obliged to observe the ceremonial law; 2) being obliged to conform to the whole Mosaic institution; 3) being obliged to keep the whole moral law as the condition of our acceptance with God; 4) being under the wrath of God, under sentence of eternal death, under a sense of guilt and condemnation, full of horror and slavish fear.
- Paragraph 3 We are under the law of Christ, and so we are not “under the law” in any of those senses. We are not even required to keep the moral law as a condition for acceptance. Since we are accepted, we are delivered from the wrath of God, from all sense of guilt and condemnation, and from the horror and fear of death and hell. We can now perform a willing and universal obedience, motivated not by slavish fear but by the grace of God ruling in our hearts, causing all our works to be done in love.
- Paragraph 4 Is the evangelical principle to action less powerful than the legal principle? Shall we be less faithful because we are loved than because we were afraid? Yet this antinomianism has infected thousands of believers. Has it infected you? Do you indulge yourself with food more now under grace than you did under the law?
- Paragraph 5 Under the law, you were not to indulge the lust of the eyes in any degree. Simple apparel and furniture were enough, with any finery and fashionable elegance seen as a terror and an abomination to you. Do you indulge this lust now, since you are not under the law, but under grace?
- Paragraph 6 You used to not be able to bear any one praising you, since all glory is God's alone. You avoided idle chatter, aware of every precious moment as a gift. You avoided idle expenses, valuing money only less than your time, desiring to be a good steward of both. Do you still fear praise as a poison to your soul? Do you still avoid all conversation that does not serve to edify? Do you still labor to improve every moment? Are you

now less careful with your money and time? Do you now sin because you are not under the law, but under grace?

Paragraph 7 God forbid that you continue to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness! Remember the lessons of the law, and practice the conviction without the pain. Don't let the mercy of God weigh less on you now than the fiery indignation of God did before. Is love less powerful than fear? If not, make this your rule: I will do nothing now under grace that I should not have done before under the law.

Paragraph 8 Examine yourself likewise concerning sins of omission. Because you are under grace, should you study the Word of God less? Should you neglect any opportunity to do good? Should you pray less? Should you fast less? Should you care less about the souls of others? Now that you are a believer in Christ, do you have faith to overcome the world? Repent, and feel the loss of holiness and righteousness from which you have fallen. Be sorrowful before God for your unfaithfulness. Be zealous and do the good works, so that you do not continue to make the law void through faith, and lose the faith you have!

Sermon 31: The Law Established Through Faith

Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Discourse 2, Romans 3:31

Paragraph 1 In the previous sermon, we considered the main ways that we make void the law through faith. They are: we do not preach the need for keeping the law; we do not teach the necessity for keeping the law, as if grace excuses us from holiness; and we do not live by the law, teaching others to sin as we do. So how do we live, so that we can affirm with Paul that we establish the law?

Paragraph 2 We know the ceremonial law is abolished forever, and that the Mosaic law was nailed to the cross. And we do not establish the moral law as a precondition for justification. Yet, we still must establish the moral law.

Part 1 We establish the law by doctrine

Paragraph 1 We establish the moral law by preaching it, without any limitation or reserve, as part of the whole counsel of God, speaking as plainly as we can.

Paragraph 2 We establish the moral law when we share both its literal sense and its spiritual sense. We share both what the law forbids and what the law enjoins, as well as the inward principle, to the thoughts, desires, and intents of the heart.

Paragraph 3 This is important! The fruit (every word and work) is evil if the tree is evil (if our disposition and tempers of the heart are not right before God.) It is also important because even to those who were set aside by God, the law is a mystery of faith; and it is utterly hidden from the heathen world.

Paragraph 4 Sadly, the spiritual meaning of the law is often hidden from most Christians, too.

Paragraph 5 Today's scribes and Pharisees, those who have the form but not the power of religion, are deeply offended when we speak of the religion of the heart. They are particularly offended when we prove to them that all their actions count for nothing, if done apart from the power of God. We declare this truth because it pleases God, even if it displeases men, and we are held accountable by God to do this. We declare the promises and the threats, the blessings and the commandments, as each has its role in bringing people to faith.

Paragraph 6 When we preach Christ, we preach all that he preached, as well. When we preach Christ, we preach of his righteousness and his atonement for our

sins. When we preach Christ, we also preach his offices of High Priest and Prophet and King.

Part 2 We establish the law when we preach faith that produces holiness in the heart

Paragraph 1 We preach that faith itself, even Christian faith, is still only the handmaid of love. As glorious as faith is, it is not the end of the commandments. Love is the end, the sole end, of every dispensation of God. Love alone never fails.

Paragraph 2 The glory of faith is a great temporary means that God has ordained to promote the eternal glory of love.

Paragraph 3 As long as love will exist after faith is gone, so long did love exist before there was faith. The angels had no need for faith in the general sense, as the evidence of things unseen, since they beheld the face of God. Neither did they have any need for faith in the particular sense, since they did not need the blood of Christ.

Paragraph 4 There was not even faith (in the general sense) in paradise, since Adam walked with God by sight, and not by faith.

Paragraph 5 Certainly there was no faith in the particular sense in paradise. There was no need for atonement before the fall, so there was no need for faith. But even then love filled Adam's heart. It was only when love was lost by sin that faith was needed to restore man to the love from which he had fallen.

Paragraph 6 Faith was originally designed by God to re-establish the law of love. This does not rob faith of its value, but reveals it and exalts it as the grand means of restoring that holy love in us. It follows, then, that faith has no value in itself (as neither do any of the other means), but because it leads to the end of love, we consider it an unspeakable blessing to men and an unspeakable value before God.

Part 3 We establish the law when it rules in our own hearts and lives

Paragraph 1 We might establish the law by our preaching and doctrine, but we are only sounding brass and tinkling cymbals if the law is not also revealed in our lives.

Paragraph 2 How do we establish the law in our hearts? The only way is by faith, experienced every day. As long as we walk by faith and not by sight, we go swiftly on the way to holiness. We are crucified to the world, and the world to us, as we keep our eyes only on those things that are eternal and our heart on the things above.

- Paragraph 3 In the more particular sense of faith being a confidence in a pardoning God, we establish His law in our own hearts. There is no motive that more powerfully inclines us to love God, as the sense of the love of God in Christ. From this grateful love springs love for our neighbors. This love, grounded in faith, fulfills the negative law (all the “thou shalt nots”) and the positive law, inciting us to do good as we have time and opportunity, in every possible kind and degree, to all persons.
- Paragraph 4 The faith fulfills not only the external part of the law, but also works inwardly by love, purifying the heart and cleansing it of all vile affections. At the same time, it works to fill us with all goodness, righteousness, and truth, causing us to walk in the light of heaven, even as God is in heaven.
- Paragraph 5 Let us endeavor to establish the law in our life, using all the power we receive “to fulfill all righteousness.” It was this light that convicted us of our sin, so beware that we do not put it out by taking up again anything that is not for the glory of God or the profit of our own soul. Faith can give us a greater tenderness of conscience, and a more exquisite sensibility of sin. The treasures of the earth are mere bubbles on the water compared to the joy we have in Jesus.
- Paragraph 6 Flee from sin, as you would from the face of a serpent! Sin is exceedingly heinous to those who know the amiable light of God’s perfect and holy will. Watch and pray, that you may sin no more. When the sun shines in a dark place, you can even see the motes of sin in your heart! Do all diligence to walk in the light you have received. And be zealous to receive more light daily, more of the knowledge and love of God, more of the Spirit of Christ, more of his life, and more of the power of the resurrection! Then you may go on from faith to faith, and the law of love will be established to all eternity!

Sermon 32: The Nature of Enthusiasm

And Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself.

Acts 26:24

- Paragraph 1 The world thought that Paul, and all who had his heart religion, was “beside himself.” It is true, there is something that is called “Christianity” that is consistent with common sense, outward duties performed in a decent manner, orthodox in thought and opinions, and with a quantity of heathen morality -- but it won’t upset your neighbors at all. But if you have a religion of the heart, soon people will think you are “beside yourself”!
- Paragraph 2 This is no compliment from them. Claim to have the love of God shed abroad in your heart, to see God who is invisible, and to walk by faith instead of sight, and people will judge you to have too much religion and that is has affected your sanity.
- Paragraph 3 The world thinks it is madness to ignore the temporal things and to pursue eternal things, such as the happy, holy love of God; the testimony of God’s Spirit with our spirit; the truth, spirit, life and power of Jesus Christ.
- Paragraph 4 The world will allow that we can be sane about others things, even if we are beside ourselves when it comes to religion. They call this religious affliction “enthusiasm.”
- Paragraph 5 Those who throw out this charge likely don’t understand what it means. I will explain it so that those who are unjustly accused can be comforted, and those who should be accused might be cautioned against it.
- Paragraph 6 It is generally allowed that “enthusiasm” comes from the Greek, but from where it is not clear. It seems forced to say it comes from “in God,” while others say is comes from “in sacrifice” referring to those who were most violently afflicted during the times of ritual sacrifice. For all I know, it may be a fictitious word, invented from the noise which some make when afflicted.
- Paragraph 7 It has always been a word with a loose uncertain sense, difficult to translate, since we do not know how the word was derived.
- Paragraph 8 No wonder that “enthusiasm” can mean so many different things to so many different people! For some, it is a good thing, the divine impulse far superior to our earthly senses. Both the Prophets of old and the Apostles were enthusiasts in this sense.

- Paragraph 9 Others are indifferent concerning this word, likening it to the enthusiasm of the poets, as a sign of uncommon vigor of thought and fervor of spirit not usually found in common people.
- Paragraph 10 But neither of these definitions is how “enthusiasm” is usually understood today. Most agree that this is something evil, a misfortune if not a fault -- particularly when it comes to the religion of the heart.
- Paragraph 11 The world sees this as a disorder of the mind, greatly affecting the sense of reason and even shutting our minds to plain understanding. This would make “enthusiasm” a mental illness, and not a folly. Fools draw wrong conclusions from right premises, while madmen draw right conclusions from wrong premises.
- Paragraph 12 Every religious enthusiast is a religious madman. Enthusiasm is a religious madness arising out of some falsely imagined influence or inspiration of God; at least, from imputing something to God which ought not to be imputed, or expecting something from God which ought not to be expected.
- Paragraph 13 The most common enthusiasm is thinking you have the grace of God when you do not. They believe themselves to be redeemed, even though there has been no repentance or conviction of their sins. This is the seed that quickly springs up, striking with light pride their unbroken heart filled with inordinate self-love.
- Paragraph 14 These enthusiasts imagine themselves to have faith in Christ, but all their behavior is as wide of truth and soberness as any other madman’s behavior!
- Paragraph 15 An example of this kind of enthusiast is the zealot for a particular form of worship, as the champion for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. All his behavior is based on this, which would be tolerable if it were true, but instead the behavior is the evident effect of a distempered brain and heart.
- Paragraph 16 The most common kind of enthusiasts are those who imagine that they are Christian, and are not. That they are not Christians is easy to prove: they are unholy, they love the world, they are proud, they are passionate, and they do not know the mind of Christ. They are no more Christians than they are archangels! But they imagine that they are Christian because they have been called Christians, they were baptized, they embrace Christian opinions, they attend Christian worship, and they live a good Christian life like their neighbors. All they lack is even one grain of true faith in Christ, real inward holiness, the love of God, and the assurance of the Holy Spirit!

- Paragraph 17 From this false premise that you have received the grace of Jesus Christ arises the palpable glaring inconsistency that runs through your behavior, which is an awkward mix of real Heathenism and imaginary Christianity. But it is hard to see when there are so many others just like you, laboring under the same false premise. But the majority imagination of men does not replace the will of God!
- Paragraph 18 A second sort of enthusiast is any one who imagines that they have such gifts from God that they do not have. They imagine that they have the power to perform miracles, or that they have the power of prophecy and to tell the future with exactness and certainty. A little time and plain facts can usually dissuade these enthusiasts.
- Paragraph 19 Similar to these enthusiasts are those who suppose they preach under the influence of the Holy Spirit, but in fact do not. I know that our preaching and prayers are in vain if they are not attended by the power of the Holy Spirit, but there is a real influence and an imaginary influence. Those who imagine that God dictates their very words, and therefore believe that they have more authority than Paul or the Apostles in what they say, are enthusiasts.
- Paragraph 20 To a lower degree, this same kind of enthusiasm is found in persons who imagine that the Spirit of Christ directs every thing they do, when this is not true. Of course, Christ can direct us; but how many things do we impute to Christ, which have no rational or scriptural basis? These enthusiasts imagine that they receive particular direction concerning even the most insignificant circumstances, forgetting that God has given us the *ability to reason* as a guide -- though we would never exclude the secret assistance of the Holy Spirit in any moment.
- Paragraph 21 Some of these enthusiasts expect to be directed in extraordinary ways, by visions or dreams, strong impressions, or sudden impulses. God has worked this way before, and still may do so now in rare cases. Yet it seems to happen frequently to some people in their imaginations! They are misled by pride and a warm imagination, ascribing to God revelations that are utterly unworthy of God.
- Paragraph 22 You may ask, "But aren't we supposed to inquire what is the will of God in all things?" Of course we are! But how are we to make this inquiry? Well, not by waiting for supernatural dreams or visions, or by looking for particular directions in impulses and impressions. We are to consult the oracles of God -- the law and the testimony!
- Paragraph 23 But how can we know the will of God in a particular case, if it is not addressed in scripture? Scripture gives us this general rule: the will of God is our sanctification. We are to be inwardly and outwardly holy; we

should be good and do good in every kind to the highest degree that we can. To test a particular case, try the general rule.

- Paragraph 24 Experience tells us what advantages we have in our present state, and reason can show what certainly or probably will be the advantages of our future state. By comparing these, we can see which direction is more conducive to our growing in holiness.
- Paragraph 25 We should suppose the assistance of the Holy Spirit in this inquiry. This assistance may come in circumstances remembered, looking at the issue from a new light, or in opening our mind to a new conviction. To this assistance there may also be an unutterable peace of mind and an uncommon measure of love that leaves us no possibility of doubting that this is God's will for us.
- Paragraph 26 This is the plain, scriptural, rational way to know what is God's will in a particular case. To expect otherwise is a plain breach of the third commandment, a gross way of taking the name of God in vain. For those tempted towards enthusiasm, it may be better to ask, "What will be most conducive for my improvement, and what will make me most useful?"
- Paragraph 27 Another form of enthusiasm is thinking to attain the ends without the means, through the immediate power of God. God can, and sometimes does, exert immediate power. But to expect it when we have been given the means, and then refuse to use those means, is to be an enthusiast. Examples of this include expecting to understand scripture without reading it and meditating on it, or intentionally speaking in public without any preparation while expecting God to fill your mouth with holy words.
- Paragraph 28 Some claim that imagining something to be the providence of God, when we can see the source, is enthusiasm. I doubt this, for I can think of nothing that is not the providence of God. If God presides over the whole universe as over every single person, and over every single person as over the whole universe, then what are we not to ascribe to God's providence?
- Paragraph 29 If we do not forget that God's providence is for all, then we do not fall into the enthusiasm of believing that we are a peculiar favorite of God's.
- Paragraph 30 The immediate offspring of enthusiasm is pride, which dries up the very springs of faith and love, of righteousness and true holiness. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.
- Paragraph 31 Enthusiasm and pride create an unadvisable and unconvincible spirit, which leaves little hope for recovery. Reason cannot convince someone who believes they are led on the higher plane of God's immediate wisdom. Growing in pride, the enthusiast also grows in stubbornness.

- Paragraph 32 Thus fortified against the grace of God, and against all advice and help from others, the enthusiast is wholly left to the guidance of their own heart, the king of the children of pride. Grounded in contempt for others, expressed in anger and unkind dispositions, the enthusiast can have terrible outward effects of wickedness and darkness, committed in the name of Christ.
- Paragraph 33 Take care then who you would call an enthusiast! It does not mean what you think it means, as you have commonly used it!
- Paragraph 34 The more evil a name contains, the more cautious you should be before you apply it to others. To bring a heavy accusation without full proof is consistent with neither justice nor mercy.
- Paragraph 35 Because enthusiasm is a great evil, beware of falling into it. Do not think more highly of yourself than you should. Do not imagine that you have attained grace that you have not. You may have love and joy, and yet not have a living faith. Pray for the revelation of Christ in you, and the assurance of the Spirit's witness with your own spirit.
- Paragraph 36 Do not imagine that God has called you to destroy lives, instead of saving them. Never dream of forcing people into God's ways. Compel people only with reason, truth and love.
- Paragraph 37 Do not run with a herd of enthusiasts, thinking you are a Christian when you are not. Until you have the mind of Christ in you, and walk as Christ walked, do not call yourself a Christian.
- Paragraph 38 Do not trust in visions or dreams, or in sudden impressions and strong impulses, but test them by applying the plain scriptural rule, with the help of experience and reason. Do not lightly take the name of God in your mouth, or talk of the will of God in trifling matters.
- Paragraph 39 Lastly, do not imagine that you can attain the end without using the means of grace. Constantly and carefully use all the means of grace, which are the ordinary channels of God's grace. Use every means which either reason or scripture commends as conducive to either obtaining or increasing any of the gifts of God. Expect a daily growth in that pure and holy religion of the heart that the world and nominal Christianity calls enthusiasm, but which is the true wisdom of God, the glorious image of the Most High, the righteousness and peace, and the fountain of living water that spring up into eternal life.

Sermon 33: A Caution Against Bigotry

And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name: and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us.

But Jesus said, Forbid him not.

Mark 9:38-39

- Paragraph 1 Immediately after Jesus taught his disciples that the greatest receive little children as if they were receiving Christ, the disciples report forbidding someone from casting out devils in Jesus' name, even though he was not one of the disciples. Jesus tells them should not have forbidden this man from doing what he was doing.
- Paragraph 2 This same passage is found in Luke's gospel, yet people today say, "what do we care about this passage? No one is casting out devils today."
- Paragraph 3 They are wrong about this, and I will show how devils are cast out today, what is meant by "not one of us," and what Jesus meant in his directive.

Part 1 In what sense are devils cast out today

- Paragraph 1 God dwells and works in the children of light; the devil dwells and works in the children of darkness. The Holy Spirit possesses the souls of good people; the evil spirit possesses the soul of the wicked.
- Paragraph 2 We are not to limit our thinking of the devil as only a lion roaring and seeking those to be devoured, or as a subtle enemy who sneaks into our lives. The devil dwells and works in the wicked.
- Paragraph 3 The devil, prince of this world, possesses all who do not know God. In old days, the devil tormented both body and soul. Today, he torments their souls only, and as covertly as possible. Then, it was to drive men into superstition. Today, it is to drive us into infidelity.
- Paragraph 4 Historians tell us that in some savage countries the devil still works openly, driving them to superstition. The devil's goal is different for you, seeking to make you believe that you are a god unto yourself, without need of the true God.
- Paragraph 5 The devil reigns as surely in barbaric lands as he does here, though we are too often asleep in this lion's mouth. The devil plays with you now, before he swallows you up! The game is to create a sense of liberty, so that they do not recognize their captivity and then flee to God.
- Paragraph 6 The devil blinds their eye of understanding, and chains them down with their own vile affections. They are bound by the love of the world, love of

money, and the love of pleasure and praise. By pride, envy, anger, hate, and revenge, these chains draw them into hell.

- Paragraph 7 Look at the Romans! At the height of their civilization, they were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, despitiful proud boasters, disobedience to parents, covenant breakers, unloving, implacable, and unmerciful.
- Paragraph 8 This witness to their depravity comes from their own witness, Dion Cassius.
- Paragraph 9 The same can be found among the modern heathens of the world. The natural religion of the Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws, and all other native people in the new world is to torture prisoners, and then roast them to death. And we have reports of despicable acts against parents by the children, and against the children by the parents.
- Paragraph 10 But it not just the Heathen who act this way. The Spaniards and Portuguese butcher thousands in South America, as do the Dutch in the East Indies, the French in North America; and our own countrymen have slaughtered whole nations.
- Paragraph 11 These horrors might keep us from noticing how the devil is at work among us here, but if we open our eyes, it is all around us! Are not common swearers, drunkards, whoremongers, adulterers, thieves, robbers, sodomites, and murderers found in every part of our country?
- Paragraph 12 The devil is just as much at work in dissemblers, tale-bearers, liars, and slanderers; in oppressors and extortionists; in the ones who sell out their friends, honor and country. And how easily do we hear these same people talk of religion, conscience, honor, virtue, and public spirit!
- Paragraph 13 Every minister of Christ can and does cast out devils, if the Lord's work prospers in his hands. By the power of God, the minister brings the sinners to repentance, leading to both an inward and outward change, from evil to good. Here, the power of the devil ends and the power of the Son of God destroys the work of the devil.
- Paragraph 14 All this is the work of God, for it is God alone who can cast out Satan. Generally, God is pleased to do this through us as instruments of God's hand. God chooses to do this through the weak to confound the mighty, and through the foolish to confound the wise, so that the glory is clearly God's!

Part 2 Should we forbid those who do not follow us?

Paragraph 1 “Those who do not follow us” could mean those who have no outward connection to us. Yet God sends whom God will send, and there is no reason for us to believe that everyone God sends is necessarily connected to us, or even known to us.

Paragraph 2 “Those who do not follow us” could mean those who do not belong to our party. Yet the reason today for so many parties is that we have divided our witness over often trifling moments, and then continued the division for generations.

Paragraph 3 It follows that this could also mean those who differ from us in religious opinions. When we first received the Holy Spirit, we were of one mind, but that did not last long – even among the apostles! There is no scriptural evidence that they all thought alike again, so it shouldn’t surprise us that today there are varieties of opinion within the Church. It would be rare that someone who is casting out devils would agree with us in every point!

Paragraph 4 With the differing opinions there will necessarily be differing practices within the faith. Practices may vary in church governance, liturgy, sacramental practices, and other practices. The unavoidable consequence of this is that there will be those who do not follow us in practice.

Paragraph 5 “Those who do not follow us” applies to those of a different Church, but also of a Church that we may consider unscriptural and anti-Christian, utterly false and erroneous in doctrines and practice, guilty of superstition and idolatry, adding articles of faith to those of the apostles, dropping a commandment and voiding others by their traditions, all while claiming to conform to the ancient Church.

Paragraph 6 The difference grows wider, as our differences in judgments and practices become differences in affections towards others. Instead of loving our neighbor, we who claim to follow Christ are divided with a sharpness and bitterness against them, and them against us. It is clear that they do not follow us.

Paragraph 7 I can’t imagine that there was this great a difference between the disciples and the one they sought to forbid from casting out devils. But I wanted to show the extremes that we have seen, so that we may not give into this temptation and fight against God.

Part 3 Jesus said, “Forbid him not.”

Paragraph 1 Suppose someone who does not follow us in judgments, practice, and affections, and yet they care casting out devils.

- Paragraph 2 It is our human nature to doubt that the devil was really cast out, even if we saw it with our own eyes, simply because the caster does not agree with us.
- Paragraph 3 What would be a reasonable proof? Was the person before a gross open sinner? Does he now live a Christian life? Was the change wrought by the preaching of the one who does not follow us? Then the devil was really cast out, and only our sin would make us deny it.
- Paragraph 4 Do not attempt to hinder this ministry, either by your authority, or arguments, or persuasions. Satan is already working hard to do that very thing.
- Paragraph 5 But what if the one casting out devils is a layperson? If the proofs are there, then do not attempt to hinder the one God has sent to do this work.
- Paragraph 6 But how do I know God sent this layperson to cast out devils? If God did not send them, they could do nothing. Go ahead and ask their parents and friends if this person is godly, and then recognize that God has worked in this way to cast out devils.
- Paragraph 7 I agree that it is important that those who preach Christ should have both an outward and inward calling, but I deny that it is *absolutely* necessary.
- Paragraph 8 If we examine the apostolic age, it is evident in the Acts of the Apostles that when the people were scattered the preaching of Christ continued. We cannot imagine that all who preached had an outward calling.
- Paragraph 9 The evidence seems to make it clear that preaching Christ was necessary before one could be ordained. The proof is that their lives must be holy and unblamable, but also that they show they have gifts that are necessary for the edification of the Church.
- Paragraph 10 A person may have gifts and bring sinners to repentance, and still be denied ordination by the Bishop. The Bishop may forbid them to cast out devils, but I will not! I have presented my reasons for this. You may despise the arguments I have made, but that is not the same as answering my arguments. If someone casts out devils, I will not fight against God!
- Paragraph 11 Do not forbid those who cast out devils. We do this when we deny or belittle the work God does through them. We do this when we discourage their work by drawing them into disputes, or by threatening them with consequences. We do this when we speak unkindly to them or about them. We do this when we forbid others to listen to them.

Paragraph 12 Everyone is either on God's side or Satan's side. If you are on God's side you will not forbid any one who is casting out devils! Instead, you will encourage, enable, and strengthen by tender love those who are doing God's work.

Part 4 If we forbid anyone casting out devils, we are bigots

Paragraph 1 Bigotry is a too strong attachment to, or fondness for, our own party, opinion, church, and religion, that leads us to forbid others from casting out devils.

Paragraph 2 Examine yourself! Do you forbid someone either directly or indirectly, simply because they differ from you in opinions or practice?

Paragraph 3 Examine yourself! Are you sorry that God would choose to work through someone who holds such erroneous opinions, and then try to discourage them through anger, contempt, unkindness, and talking behind their back about their faults and defects? Then you are a bigot!

Paragraph 4 Examine yourself? Would you forbid a Papist, an Arian, or a Socinian from casting out devils? Would you forbid a Jew, a Deist, or a Muslim from casting out devils? Then you are a bigot still!

Paragraph 5 Don't be content with not forbidding others who cast out devils. Acknowledge the finger of God at work, and encourage whomsoever God is pleased to employ for this work. Speak well of them, defending their character and their mission.

Paragraph 6 One caution: Others may try to forbid you from casting out devils, but that is no excuse to return evil for evil. Rather labor and watch and pray the more to confirm your love toward the other. If they speak evil of you, speak all manner of good (that is true) of them.

Sermon 34: Catholic Spirit

And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him, and he saluted him, and he said to him,

Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?

And Jehonadab answered: It is. If it be, give me thine hand.

II Kings 10:15

- Paragraph 1 We begin with the royal law that we are to love our neighbors as Jesus said we are to do: loving our enemies, blessing those who curse us, doing good to those who hate you, praying for those who mistreat you.
- Paragraph 2 There is a peculiar love expected of those who love God, and that is we are to love one another as Jesus has loved us. This is the mark of our discipleship, as John in his letter points out in several verses.
- Paragraph 3 We give nodding agreement to this, but we do not practice it. The two great hindrances to this love are that we do not think alike, and we do not walk in faith alike.
- Paragraph 4 Even if these differences prevent us from having an external union, must they prevent us from having an internal affection for each other? If we can't think alike, does that prevent us from loving alike? If we are not of one opinion, may we not be of one heart?
- Paragraph 5 Let us consider the example of Jehu, who asked Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right as my heart is with your heart?" and then offered, "If it be, give me thy hand."

Part 1 Is your heart right, as my heart is with your heart?

- Paragraph 1 There is no inquiry into Jehonadab's opinions. If we search the scripture, we know that Jehonadab held some uncommon opinions that likely differed from Jehu's opinion.
- Paragraph 2 Even though Jehu is known for driving furiously in things religious and secular, he is not concerned to know Jehonadab's opinions.
- Paragraph 3 It is certain today that people will hold peculiar opinions that differ from others. Since we can only know in part, it is impossible that we will always see things the same.
- Paragraph 4 We all believe that what we believe is true, or else we wouldn't believe it. Yet, even then, we recognize that we could be mistaken about some things, since we do not know everything.

- Paragraph 5 We may not know where we may be mistaken, because both prejudice and ignorance can be invincible, making us incapable of seeing some things in a new light. Can we hold others guilty for this?
- Paragraph 6 It is wisdom to allow others the liberty of thinking that we desire for ourselves. People will differ from us in thought, so the only question of love is, “Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?”
- Paragraph 7 There is no inquiry made into Jehonadab’s mode of worship. Again, they worshiped in different places, with different contexts concerning them.
- Paragraph 8 Even though we agree that God is spirit, and must be worshiped in spirit and truth, our opinions and practices differ.
- Paragraph 9 Since we must all give our own account before God, we must all choose how we will worship God, following the dictates of our conscience, in simplicity and godliness. No one has the power to constrain another from making the choice that seems godly to him or her.
- Paragraph 10 While it is the very nature of Christianity that we walk together in faith, and therefore a member of a particular congregation to disciple us, none has power on earth to oblige us to attend a particular congregation or particular mode of worship. Simply being born in England does not make you an Anglican. If we followed that logic, the Reformation could not have happened.
- Paragraph 11 I believe my style of worship is primitive and apostolic, but I dare not *impose* it on others who may not believe as I do in this matter. There is no reason to ask another if they worship exactly as I do, if they receive the sacraments exactly as I do, if their form of church governance is exactly the same as mine, if their understanding of baptism is the same as mine, or even if they practice baptism and communion. We can certainly talk about these differences, but the important question is, “Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?”
- Paragraph 12 But what does it mean, “Is thy heart right?” First, we ask, “Is your heart right with God?” Do you believe God and all God’s perfections and powers? Do you have the evidence, a supernatural conviction, of the things of God? Do you walk by faith, and not by sight?
- Paragraph 13 Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Is he revealed in your soul? Do you know him crucified? Does he dwell in your heart, forming you by faith into his righteousness to do his good works?
- Paragraph 14 Is your faith filled with the energy of love? Do you love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength? Is your happiness found in God?

- Paragraph 15 Are you employed in doing the will of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, as the Holy Spirit enables you?
- Paragraph 16 Are you employed in doing good as your response to God's grace, or because you are afraid of death and hell instead?
- Paragraph 17 Do you love your neighbor as yourself, without exception? Is your soul filled with good will and tender affection for even those who oppose you, or who are unholy and unthankful?
- Paragraph 18 Is your love of your neighbors reflected in your works? Are you doing good to all you can as you have opportunity? If you can say "yes," then your heart is right, as my heart is with your heart.

Part 2 If it be, then give me thy hand.

- Paragraph 1 This does not mean you must take on my opinions or that I must take on yours. Give me your hand!
- Paragraph 2 This does not mean you must embrace my mode of worship or that I must take on your mode of worship. We can disagree about forms of governance, modes of baptism, forms of prayers, and receiving the elements of communion. Give me your hand!
- Paragraph 3 It means, "Love me." Not in a general love for all people, or as we are called to love our enemies, or as we are called to love a stranger who doesn't know the way, but as a friend that is your brother in Christ, and a fellow citizen in the kingdom of God.
- Paragraph 4 Love me with the love that is patient and kind, and that does not envy or provoke. Think no evil of me, letting love cover all, believing the best in each other, and hoping the best for each other.
- Paragraph 5 It means, "Commend me to God in all your prayers." Pray that I may be corrected of my errors in faith, and supplied what I lack in faith. Pray that my heart may become more like your heart, more right towards God and towards each other. Pray that I may grow in faith and love, towards God and our neighbors. Pray that I may do good and abstain from evil.
- Paragraph 6 It means, "Encourage me to love and do good works." Don't just talk to God about me, but talk to me in the same way. If I am doing my own will instead of the will of God, "smite me friendly." Help me to amend my faults, strengthen my weaknesses, build up my love for God and others, and make me more fit for our Master's use.

Paragraph 7 It means, “Love me in deed and in truth.” As far as your conscience will allow, join with me in doing the work of God. Speak honorably of the work of God, and those God has chosen to do it. Sympathize with me when I am in difficulty or distress, and offer cheerful and effectual assistance, that God may be glorified in all we do.

Paragraph 8 I must not expect this assistance without also being willing to give it to you. And this claim is not just between us, but offered to all whose heart is right before God and their neighbors, that we may all love one another as Christ loves us.

Part 3 Catholic spirit

Paragraph 1 Truly “catholic spirit” is entirely distinct from *speculative latitudinarianism*. It is not an indifference to all opinions, for that is the spawn of hell. This catholic spirit is in persons who have found their faith (even as we allow for growth in faith and understanding), not in those who are still seeking faith. It is not the attempt to combine opinions, which only muddies our understanding. Go and learn the first elements of the gospel of Christ, and then you shall learn to have a catholic spirit.

Paragraph 2 Truly “catholic spirit” is entirely distinct from *practical latitudinarianism*. It is not an indifference to how we worship, accepting whatever any one does for their own practice. We must be convinced that how we worship is both scriptural and rational, even as we allow that others may form different opinions that they also believe to be both scriptural and rational.

Paragraph 3 Truly “catholic spirit” is entirely distinct from the latitudinarianism that is indifferent to where we worship. It is needful for our faith that we are united to one congregation, in spirit and in practice, where we may be held accountable in love for our discipleship.

Paragraph 4 We can be firmly fixed in our religious principles, firmly attached to our mode of worship, and firmly united to one particular congregation, and still have a heart enlarged towards all people, known and unknown, embracing them with the love of Jesus Christ. This is catholic spirit: this is universal love.

Paragraph 5 A person with catholic spirit is one who: gives their hand to all whose hearts are right with God, who know how to value and praise God for all the advantages enjoyed, who worships in a scriptural manner, who is united to a congregation for their discipleship, and then loves as friends all who -- whatever their opinions, modes of worship, or particular congregation -- believe in Jesus Christ, love God and their neighbors, who respond to the grace of Jesus Christ in order to please God, who abstain from evil, and who does good works. This person will commend others to

God in prayer, speak tenderly to others to build up their faith, and labor alongside them for the kingdom of God.

Paragraph 6 Let us run in this universal love, until we are swallowed up in love for ever and ever!

Charles Wesley Hymn "Catholic Love"

Weary of all this worldly strife,
 these notions, forms, and modes and names,
To Thee, the Way, the Truth, the Life,
 Whose love my simple heart inflames,
Divinely taught, as last I fly,
 with Thee and Thine to live and die.

Forth from the midst of Babel brought,
 parties and sects I cast behind;
Enlarged my heart, and free my thought,
 wherever the latent truth I find,
The latent truth with joy to own,
 and bow to Jesus' name alone.

Redeemed by Thine almighty race,
 I taste my glorious liberty,
With open arms the world embrace,
 but cleave to those who cleave to Thee;
But only in Thy saints delight,
 who walk with God in purest white.

One with the little flock I rest,
 the members sound who hold the Head,
The chosen few, with pardon blest,
 and by the anointing Spirit led
Into the mind that was in Thee,
 into the depths of Deity.

My brethren, friends, and kinsmen these,
 who do my heavenly Father's will;
Who aim at perfect holiness,
 and all Thy counsels fulfill,
Athirst to be whatever Thou art,
 and love their God with all their heart.

For these, however in flesh disjoined,
 wherever dispersed over earth abroad,
Unfeigned, unbounded love I find,
 and constant as the life of God;
Fountain of life, from thence it sprung,
 as pure, as even, and as strong.

Joined to the hidden church unknown
 in this sure bond of perfectness,
Obscurely safe, I dwell alone,
 and glory in the uniting grace,
To me, to each believer given,
 to all Thy saints in earth and heaven.

Sermon 35: Christian Perfection

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.

Philippians 3:12

- Paragraph 1 The word *perfect* is what many cannot bear to hear, and *preaching perfection* runs the great hazard of being accounted by those who cannot bear it as worse than a heathen or a publican.
- Paragraph 2 Even though the word offends some, because it is in the oracles of Christ, we will proclaim it.
- Paragraph 3 We may not lay aside the words of God, as if they were the words of men. We do need to understand them. Paul may not have claimed perfection for himself, but in the next verse he says, “Let us as many as be perfect, be thus minded.”
- Paragraph 4 In order to help us understand perfection, I will show in what sense Christians are not perfect, and in what sense they are perfect.

Part 1 In what sense Christians are not perfect

- Paragraph 1 Both scripture and experience shows that we are not perfect in knowledge. Our knowledge is in the general truths that God has revealed to all natural men. But we also have knowledge of spiritual things, such as the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts. We know the providence of God, and how to keep a conscience clear before God and man.
- Paragraph 2 But we do not know everything about God Almighty. We cannot know how God can be Three-in-One, or how the eternal Son of God took upon himself the form of a servant but without the attributes of his divine nature. We do not know the timetable of God’s purposes for us, or when God’s kingdom will be completed.
- Paragraph 3 We do not know all the ways God has blessed us, as we are often unaware of these blessings until later. We do not know how God was able to create this universe and how God holds it together so that it works according to his plan.
- Paragraph 4 We are not free of ignorance, which as an unavoidable consequence, means we are not free from mistakes. We are not mistaken concerning what is essential for salvation, and we do not put darkness for light and light for darkness. But in things unessential for salvation we do make mistakes. We may be unaware of the facts or the circumstances or the actions in question, as to whether they were evil or good. We err when we consider good people to be better than they are, or wicked people to be

worse than they are, and sometimes in believing that good people are wicked, and wicked people are good.

Paragraph 5 Even when we consider the scriptures, we will differ in opinions as to what is meant. This is not proof that those who agree with us are the true children of God, and those who disagree are condemned; only that none of us are infallible or omniscient.

Paragraph 6 While John does say that by the Holy Spirit we know all things (I John 2:20), it is clear from the context that he means we know all things needful for our soul's health.

Paragraph 7 So we are not so perfect as to be free from ignorance or error, and to this list we can add that we are not free from infirmities. By infirmities, we do not mean the current usage of this word as a cover for our sins, but the bodily infirmities – those inward or outward imperfections that are not of a moral nature. These would include slowness of understanding, inability to retain what we have learned, slowness of speech, improper language usage, ungracefulness of pronunciation, and a thousand other things that people might consider as less than perfect in our mannerisms.

Paragraph 8 We are not so perfect as to be free from temptation. It is true that some people work so greedily at uncleanness that they seemingly are unaware of their temptations. Inner sins instead of gross outward sins tempt those who work at having the form of godliness. There are those who may not be tempted for great periods of time, but even they shall know temptation as even Jesus did.

Paragraph 9 Christian perfection, therefore, does not imply an exemption from ignorance, or mistake, or infirmities. Christian perfection is simply another term for holiness. Yet even in holiness, there is no absolute perfection on earth, for there is always a need to grow in grace and to daily advance in the knowledge and love of God.

Part 2 In what sense are Christians perfect

Paragraph 1 There are several stages in a Christian's life. We know from the scriptures that there are those who are newborn babes and those who have attained some maturity in the faith. John in his letters refers to little children, young men, and fathers in the faith. Those he called fathers in the faith, he called perfect men, being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Paragraph 2 It is chiefly the fathers that will be important for this discourse; though even babes in Christ can be in a sense perfect, if they do not commit sin.

- Paragraph 3 Paul's letter to the Romans (chapter 6) explains how those who are reborn cannot sin any longer.
- Paragraph 4 The very least that can be implied in these words is that all real Christians are made free of outward sin. Peter (I Peter 4:1-2) agrees with Paul that Christians cease from sinning because they live to do the will of God.
- Paragraph 5 John's words are most well known concerning Christians not being able to sin because the Christian is born of God (I John 3:8 and following, and 5:18).
- Paragraph 6 Some claim that this means that the Christian does not sin willfully, or habitually, or as other men do, or as he did before. But where do they get this interpretation? Not from the scriptures!
- Paragraph 7 But what about these examples from the Bible: Abraham lying about his wife being his sister, Moses provoking God at the waters of strife, David murdering Uriah and committing adultery with Bathsheba? All this is true, but it only proves that the holiest among the Jews sometimes sin. But it does not follow that sinning is required for Christians.
- Paragraph 8 Consider what Jesus said about John the Baptist. He is the greatest of all born of women, but even the least of those in the kingdom of God are greater than John. Don't confuse the kingdom of God on earth with the kingdom of glory, where it is obvious that the least glorified saint in heaven is greater than any man on earth. Jesus placed John above Abraham, Moses and David; and then placed true believing Christians above John – because they have the knowledge of the grace of Jesus Christ. It does not follow then that the privileges of Christians should be brought down to the Jewish standard.
- Paragraph 9 But what about the proverb, "Even a just man sins seven times a day"? Scripture does not say that. Proverbs 24:16 says, "A just man falls seven times, and rises up again." There is no mention of it being in one day, and it does not say, "fall into sin," since it means "falling into temporal affliction." In context, this proverb warns the wicked, for a just man falls seven times and gets up, but the wicked fall into mischief. God delivers the just man, but when the wicked fall, there will be no one to deliver them.
- Paragraph 10 Still, others object that Solomon said that there is no man that does not sin. (1 Kings 8:46, 2 Chronicles 6:36). Without a doubt, in Solomon's day that was true, as it was true from Adam to Moses, and Moses to Solomon, and from Solomon to Christ. But then Christ entered the world and he is the man who is good and sins not, and he took away our sins, making us heirs of salvation.

- Paragraph 11 It was not until the day of Pentecost when those who waited for the promises of God received the sanctifying graces of the Holy Spirit that they would be made more than conquerors over sin.
- Paragraph 12 That is also Peter's testimony (I Peter 1:9 and following.) They received the end of their faith when they received the Holy Spirit.
- Paragraph 13 The privileges of Christians are not to be measured by those under the Jewish covenant. The fullness of time has come, the Holy Spirit is given, and the great salvation of God is ours by the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- Paragraph 14 To understand "He that is born of God sinneth not," you must apply New Testament understandings. You might say that scripture proves that both Peter and Paul sinned after receiving the Holy Spirit. It would be bad logical reasoning to then conclude that because two Christians sinned, all Christians necessarily must sin. There was no necessity for either of them to sin, because they had a means to escape their temptation. The grace of God was sufficient for them, and for us. We may be tempted to sin, but we do not need to yield for we are not tempted above what we are able to bear.
- Paragraph 15 Consider Paul's witness. He received a thorn to the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. Paul asked for the thorn to be removed, but God told him that His grace would be sufficient, and God's strength is made perfect in Paul's weakness.
- Paragraph 16 1) This passage does not say that the thorn caused Paul to sin, or that it made sinning necessary. 2) Tertullian, Chrysostom and Jerome wrote that Paul suffered from a violent headache, while Cyprian is not as specific to the bodily ailment that tormented Paul. 3) The thorn was to strengthen Paul through the experience of weakness. 4) Whatever the thorn was, it could not be either an inward or outward sin, since Paul then says, "Most gladly will I glory in my weakness, that the strength of Christ may rest upon me." We may believe that when we are weak in body, we can be strong in spirit. But no one can believe that when we are weakened by sin we would then boast that we are strong in spirit! We are never to glory and take pleasure in pride, or anger, or lust. 5) The thorn was given to Paul fourteen years before he wrote the epistle, and he labored in the gospel for years after that. Even if it had been a spiritual weakness, there is no reason to believe that God did not make him strong as he grew in grace and love.
- Paragraph 17 But doesn't James say "in many things we offend all" (3:2) and isn't offending the same as sinning? 1) In this context it certainly is, for James is referring to those persons God had not sent. His use of the word we

does not include himself or any real Christian, since he uses the same form later to write “bless we God and therewith curse we men. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing.” True, but not out of the mouth of the Apostle, or of any who is a new creature in Christ. 2) Preceding these words James wrote, “My brethren, be not many master, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.” Who? No the Apostle or true believers, seeing “there is no condemnation to them who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” 3) Then James tells us of a man who does not offend, contradistinguished and pronounced a perfect man.

Paragraph 18 But how do we reconcile John with himself? He also wrote, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” and “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Paragraph 19 1) The tenth verse explains the eighth, when he repeats it as “if we say we have not sinned.” 2) The point is not whether we have sinned before, so this is not proof that we do sin now. 3) The ninth verse explains the eighth and tenth, that the blood of Christ cleanses us of sin that we may “go and sin no more.”

Paragraph 20 1) The blood of Christ cleanses us of sin. 2) No one can claim to have not sinned and therefore not need cleansing. 3) God is ready to forgive our past sins and to save us from them in the time to come. 4) “These things I write to you,” says the Apostle, “that you may not sin.” We need not continue in sin because we have an Advocate. John continues in the third chapter that we are not to be deceived, for those who sin are of the devil, and the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. Whoever is born of God does not sin. Therefore, we can assert in conformity to the doctrine of John and the whole tenor of the New Testament that *a Christians is so far perfect as not to commit sin.*

Paragraph 21 This is the glorious privilege of every Christian, even those who are babes in the faith. In a second sense, a Christian is perfect in not having evil thoughts and evil tempers. Thoughts about evil and sin are not the same thing as evil and sinful thoughts. If we are perfect, we are like our Master, who was free of evil and sinful thoughts.

Paragraph 22 Evil thoughts come out of the heart. If our hearts are no longer evil, then evil thoughts cannot proceed from our heart. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, just as a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Matthew 7:17-18).

Paragraph 23 Paul asserts that this is a privilege of real Christians. (2 Corinthians 10:4 and following)

- Paragraph 24 Freed from evil thoughts, Christians are free from evil tempers. We are not above our Master, but every one who is perfect is like his Master. This Jesus said just after he taught that we are to love our enemies, do good to those who hate you, and to turn the other cheek. Jesus knew the world could not receive these words, so he immediately adds, “Can the blind lead the blind?” He knew the world would object that “these things are too grievous to be borne, and too high to be attained,” which is when he said that the disciple is not above his Master. Do we doubt that Jesus will keep his promise “for every one that is perfect shall be as his Master”?
- Paragraph 25 Everyone who can say with Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me,” is delivered from inward and outward sin.
- Paragraph 26 When Christ lives in us, “our hearts as purified, even as He is pure.” (I John 3:3) We are purified from pride, self-will, and anger (in the common sense of the word.) We can be angry at sin, but sorry for the offenders.
- Paragraph 27 Thus does Jesus save His people from their sins – not just the outward sins but also the sins of the heart. Some may still object that this does not happen until we die. Yet John affirms that he and other living Christians are as their Master. (I John 4:17)
- Paragraph 28 This is a theme that is repeated throughout John’s letter. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us of all sin” (1:5 and following). And, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” John doesn’t say that the blood of Christ will cleanse us at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment, but in this world. If any sin remains, we are not cleansed from all sin and all unrighteousness. Neither let the sinner say that the cleansing only applies to the guilt of sin, for 1) it is clear that first we are forgiven and then we are cleansed, and 2) if it only applies to the guilt of sin the case would be made for justification by works, requiring all inward and outward holiness, as evidence of power over sin, before justification. If we have only been cleansed of the guilt of sin and not sin itself, we are not walking in the light.
- Paragraph 29 This is how God fulfills the things He has said since the world begun. By Moses, “I will circumcise your heart, to love the Lord your God; by David “Create in me a clean heart, O God:” by Ezekiel, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your filthiness . . . a new heart also will I give you.”

Paragraph 30 “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the dear of God.” “This one thing let us do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” until we are also “delivered from the bondage to corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God”!

Sermon 36: Wandering Thoughts

Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10:5

Paragraph 1 Will God bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, so that our thoughts never wander from holiness and wisdom?

Paragraph 2 This is important, for many have cast away the precious gift of God because they were induced by their wandering thoughts to first doubt and then deny the work God had done in them, which grieved the Holy Spirit until the Spirit withdrew and left them in darkness.

Paragraph 3 It is time we considered calmly and seriously the issue of wandering thoughts.

Part 1 What are the several sorts of wandering thoughts

Paragraph 1 There are two general sorts: thoughts that wander from God, and thoughts that wander from the point at hand

Paragraph 2 As we love the world, our thoughts wander away from God to the things we love: what we shall eat, what we shall drink, what we shall put on, what we shall see, what we shall hear, what we shall gain. As long as we are in our natural state, every thought is a wandering thought.

Paragraph 3 In this natural state we not only do not love God, we are often at war with God. We doubt, or even deny, God's power, wisdom, mercy, justice, and holiness. In our vain imaginations that we are superior to God, we then have thoughts that are angry, malicious, or revengeful against those who do not recognize our superiority. At other times, we are captivated by airy or earthly pleasures. All of these thoughts are at war with God!

Paragraph 4 Widely different from these are when the heart does not wander from God, but the understanding wanders from the particular point at hand. I may read a verse from God's Word, consider how it is applied in our faith, compare it to how other religions fall short of this glory, consider other ways that we fall short of God's glory, and then realize that I have forgotten where I began with this word of God. These thoughts did not wander from God, but they did wander from the point being considered.

Part 2 What are the general occasions for wandering thoughts

Paragraph 1 It is easy to observe that wandering thoughts that are at war with God are sinful tempers. Why are not all our thoughts on God? Because we do not know God! Why do our thoughts focus on the world? Because we are

idolaters! We do not believe, so we have no faith; or at least, no more faith than a devil.

- Paragraph 2 We cannot begin to enumerate all the ways our sinful tempers cause our thoughts to be at war with God. The thoughts rise out of our sinfulness.
- Paragraph 3 Having a diseased body can cause our thoughts to wander. Raging madness and unevenness of thought can afflict those whose blood is disordered. Nervous conditions can corrupt our thinking.
- Paragraph 4 Even if we are healthy, we may find ourselves in a state of delirium. When we sleep we are liable to dream, and who among us is master of our thoughts while we dream?
- Paragraph 5 Even when we are awake, are we always so awake that we can steadily govern our thoughts? Sometimes we are too heavy, too dull and languid, to pursue any chain of thought. Or, we may be too lively, and our imagination takes us away hither and thither, whether we want to or not.
- Paragraph 6 How many wanderings of thought arise because of the associations of our ideas that are made without our knowledge or choice. We may not know why one idea causes us to think of something else, but we do it; and even the holiest and wisest men cannot break those associations.
- Paragraph 7 We can be very intentionally focused, but then be distracted by either great pleasure or great pain that demands our immediate attention.
- Paragraph 8 It is in our very nature to notice the things we see or hear, which can distract us from what we were thinking.
- Paragraph 9 Evil spirits seeking to keep us away from God can work through all of these distractions, and can even act upon our spirit to distract us without any of these external means.

Part 3 Which wandering thoughts are sinful, and which are not

- Paragraph 1 All our thoughts that wander away from God are undoubtedly sinful, for they imply a practical atheism, causing us to live apart from God. Thoughts that rebel against God's being, attributes, and providence over all things are sinful.
- Paragraph 2 All thoughts that spring from evil tempers are sinful.
- Paragraph 3 All thoughts that produce or feed a sinful temper are sinful.

Paragraph 4 Even those thoughts that arise out of our weakness or disease are sinful, if they lead to sinful tempers that seek the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life. And certainly thoughts that come from evil spirits are sinful.

Paragraph 5 Wandering thoughts, when our heart does not wander, are no more sinful than the motion of the blood in our veins. Thoughts that arise from weakness and infirmity and nervousness are innocent, if they do not take our heart from God. Even our involuntary associations are innocent, if they do not take us away from God.

Paragraph 6 If, when talking with others, I am distracted from my point in order to see theirs, this wandering is still innocent. And if an evil spirit planted the thought, it may be troublesome and evil, but not necessarily sinful. Satan tempted Jesus with evil thoughts, and Jesus understood Satan's thought, but Jesus did not sin simply because that thought was in his mind.

Paragraph 7 None of these wandering thoughts are inconsistent with perfect love. If they were, then even sleep would be sinful, and recognizing great pain would be sinful.

Part 4 Which wandering thoughts do we need to be delivered from

Paragraph 1 Every one that is perfected in love will be delivered from wandering thoughts that cause our hearts to wander from God, that are contrary to the will of God, or that leave us without God in the world,

Paragraph 2 Of the latter sort of wandering thoughts, as long as the cause remains, the effects will remain.

Paragraph 3 For an example, if a fever causes a delirium, which causes our thoughts to wander, our thoughts will continue to wander until the fever is broken.

Paragraph 4 If pain causes our thoughts to wander, they will continue to wander until we have eased the pain. If involuntary associations cause our thoughts to wander, they will continue to wander unless we break those associations. Our corruptible body pressing down on our mind causes all these wanderings.

Paragraph 5 These wandering thoughts will be with us until we lie down in the dust and leave this world.

Paragraph 6 As long as there are evil spirits, there will be wandering thoughts that can trouble, but not conquer, those they cannot destroy. We cannot expect an entire deliverance until we are lodged "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

Paragraph 7 To expect to be delivered from those wandering thoughts occasioned by evil spirits is to expect that the devil should die or fall asleep, or at least no longer try to lead us into sin. To expect to be delivered from wandering thoughts caused by others is to expect that all people cease from the earth, or that we are totally secluded from others. To pray that we be delivered from those wandering thoughts caused by our body's infirmities is to pray that we leave our bodies, or else it is praying for impossibilities and absurdities. We cannot be both angels and human at the same time! Yet, when the immortal comes, the mortal is done away.

Paragraph 8 Rather, let us pray, in spirit and understanding, that all these wandering thoughts may work together for our good. As we suffer from infirmities, distractions, and assaults of evil spirits, may we be "more than conquerors." Rather, let us pray to be delivered from sin, both root and branch; that we may be cleansed from all the pollution of the flesh and spirit, from every evil temper and word and work; that we may love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength. Let us pray that the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, and temperance, may be found in us. Pray this until you enter the everlasting kingdom of Lord Jesus Christ!

Sermon 37: Satan's Devices
We are not ignorant of his devices.
2 Corinthians 2:11

- Paragraph 1 The devices of the subtle god of this world are numberless, but I will speak of one whereby he endeavors to divide the gospel against itself, and by one part to overthrow the other.
- Paragraph 2 The inward kingdom of heaven, which is set up in the heart of all who repent and believe, is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. But this is only the first fruits of the Spirit, not the harvest. As great as these blessings are, we trust to see even greater blessings.
- Paragraph 3 We expect to be made perfect in love, which casts out our fears and all desires except glorifying God. We expect to love and serve God more, growing in the experienced knowledge and love of God our Savior, so that we may walk continually in God's light. We expect to receive the whole mind of Christ so that we may love others with all right affections, cleansed from our sins both inward and outward.
- Paragraph 4 We trust the promises of God, who cannot lie. We expect that the time will come when all that we do or say or think is for the glory of God.
- Paragraph 5 The grand device of Satan is to destroy the first fruits by our expectations of the greater work that God will do in us.

Part 1 How Satan does this

- Paragraph 1 By focusing on how far we have to go to become perfect in love, instead of on how far we have come, we can become discouraged and lose our joy. We undervalue what God has already done because we have a glimpse of how much greater God will do.
- Paragraph 2 Satan shakes our peace as we consider how sinful we remain, and we are tempted to seek works righteousness apart from Christ.
- Paragraph 3 If we hold fast to the grace of Jesus, Satan raises doubts in us because our fruits are so small compared to what we see in the sanctified. If, we are known by our fruits, we are known to be very righteous.
- Paragraph 4 In times of pain and suffering, Satan presses harder, reminding us that without holiness we cannot see God. We know how far we are from entire holiness, and we doubt that our works have been anything but vanity, and both peace and joy in the Lord are destroyed.

- Paragraph 5 By reminding us that we expect more righteousness, Satan assaults us by showing us how unrighteous we remain, hoping to destroy the righteousness we have attained.
- Paragraph 6 Our joy in the Lord strengthens us to fight the good fight. By dampening our joy in the Lord, we are hindered in both our inward and outward holiness.
- Paragraph 7 Our peace in the Lord advances the image of God in us. By dampening our peace, and increasing our fear, our souls are benumbed.
- Paragraph 8 Even as Satan strikes at our joy and peace by attacking our conviction of the necessity of perfect love, he also attacks our faith. Faith is the foundation of our holiness and peace; and without faith, our confidence in a loving and pardoning God is overthrown. We love because God first loves us; and if we doubt that love, we do not have the strength to love our neighbors as ourselves. Rather than just dampening our peace and joy, this strikes at the root of the whole work of God!
- Paragraph 9 When Satan strikes at those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, it is an unspeakable violence towards our faith. We see clearly the wickedness of our hearts and the purity of Christ's heart, and the alienation of our soul from God and the triune nature of God. In our doubting, we may believe that it is impossible to be made perfect in love, and we are ready to give up both faith and love.
- Paragraph 10 If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence so that we may receive the promises of God, Satan uses another snare. We are distracted to consider the fulfillment of the promises in this life, to the neglect of those promises in life eternal. It is those promises of life eternal which strengthen us when we are called to bear our cross in this life.
- Paragraph 11 Even in this there is a snare, for we may focus too much on the promises of life eternal that we fail to improve today in love and peace.
- Paragraph 12 This is how the subtle enemy of God and man works, dividing the gospel against itself. Satan tries to turn our hope into an occasion for unholy tempers.
- Paragraph 13 Satan attempts to turn our expectation of perfect love into fretfulness and impatience that we have not yet received this love, and even into envy at those who have received. By this desire for perfect holiness, we become unholy and pull down that which we desire, and are worse off than we were before!

Paragraph 14 Satan seeks another advantage over us, by confusing people about what it means to be perfect in love, so the prejudices of men are set against the glorious promises of God.

Part 2 How we can rise higher when Satan intends us to fall

Paragraph 1 Satan tries to dampen your joy in the Lord by having you consider your sin and unworthiness before God. You can throw this dart back at Satan, for the more you feel your vileness the more you can rejoice in the grace of Jesus Christ. The greater the change the more God may triumph in your soul!

Paragraph 2 Satan tries to assault your peace in the Lord by contrasting your unrighteousness with God's holiness, so that it is apparent that you are not justified before God. You can throw this dart back at Satan, for being convinced that you cannot save yourself you will rely all the more on the blood of Christ and His righteousness. Write it upon your heart, "I am justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." The sinfulness you feel and the holiness you expect shall both contribute to establish your peace.

Paragraph 3 Satan tries to have us give up the shield of our faith and our confidence in God's love. It is then that we must hold fast what we have attained, and to continue to labor to stir up the gift of God which is in you. Press on in the peace and joy of faith to the renewal of your whole soul in the image of your Creator. Pray continually, seeking the prize of your high calling in its genuine native beauty as the most desirable gift in all the stores of God's rich mercies.

Paragraph 4 In this same power of faith, press on to glory. God has joined from the beginning pardon, holiness, and heaven, so never split them apart.

Paragraph 5 Instead of lamenting that you have not received the fullness of God's gifts, give thanks that God has delivered you this far towards holiness. Give thanks because God will renew you further. Give thanks that the burden of sin that remains will not always remain. Put your trust in the Lord!

Paragraph 6 If there is someone who seems to you to have attained perfect love, rejoice and take comfort in it, as a sign of what God can do in you! This is a fresh proof of the faithfulness of God in fulfilling God's promises.

Paragraph 7 Redeem the time by improving the present moment, seeking every moment to grow in grace, or of doing good. The promise of grace tomorrow should not make you negligent towards the grace that can be received today. The more you expect to receive the more you should labor for God. God has given you grace sufficient for this day, that you may

receive all the benefits God is willing to pour upon you. Give all diligence to add to your faith courage, temperance, patience, brotherly kindness, and the fear of God, until you attain the pure and perfect love.

Paragraph 8 Finally, if you have abused this hope of being holy, let the abuse end so that your use of holiness can continue. Use holiness to bring glory to God, for the profit of your soul. In steadfast faith, in tranquility of spirit, in full assurance of hope, and rejoicing evermore, press on to perfection!

Sermon 38: Original Sin

*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,
and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

Genesis 6:5

- Paragraph 1 How different is this image than the vain images painted by persons in all ages, who view humanity as little less than gods, possessing all virtue and happiness with their souls.
- Paragraph 2 It is not just the heathens or the ancients who hold this view, but also Christians today who emphasize “the fair side of human nature.”
- Paragraph 3 Is it any wonder that these accounts have become so popular among the people? Who doesn’t like to be told that they are pleasant creatures, little less than the angels? It has become quite the fashion to hold this view, and very unfashionable to say anything disparaging about human nature.
- Paragraph 4 What should we do with our Bibles, then? For this fashionable viewpoint is irreconcilable with the Biblical witness! God’s account of us is that we have been in sin since the time of Adam, and that nothing clean can out of that which is unclean. We will consider what we were like before the flood, whether we are any different now, and what that means for us today.

Part 1 Our human nature before the flood

- Paragraph 1 We must remember that we consult the scripture because this is God’s account of our nature, and God is not deceived. God saw the wickedness of man – not this or that man; not a few men only; not a majority of men, but the whole of humanity was wicked in God’s eyes. Noah alone, out of possibly millions of persons who had been provided from the hand of God more than they needed, found favor before God. Only Noah (with perhaps some exceptions for his household) was an exception to this universal wickedness that merited universal destruction.
- Paragraph 2 God saw everything – every thought, every feeling, every action – and saw only wickedness.
- Paragraph 3 God saw an evil that was contrary to moral rectitude, the will of God, the nature of God, the pure image of God, the justice, mercy and truth of God, and the essential relationships between God and each person.
- Paragraph 4 Wasn’t there any good mingled anywhere in this evil? No, none at all. It is possible that God’s Spirit tried to stir them to repentance during the 120 years it took to build the ark, but none repented.

Paragraph 5 Wasn't there ever a break in the evil, where something good might be found in the heart of men? The scripture says, "God, who saw the whole imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart to be only evil," saw that it was always the same, evil continually, every year, every day, every hour, every moment.

Part 2 Are we the same now, as we were then?

Paragraph 1 Scripture certainly doesn't give us any reason to think otherwise! God declared this through David, that "they are all gone out of the way" of truth and holiness; "there is none righteous, no, not one." This is the account of the prophets, and of the apostles.

Paragraph 2 This account is confirmed today by daily experience. True, the natural man isn't able to discern this wickedness, which doesn't surprise us. As long as the natural man doesn't know about spiritual things, there is no awareness of the lack of spiritual things. But as soon as God opens their eyes, they are deeply convinced that they are by nature full of folly and ignorance, sin, and wickedness.

Paragraph 3 When God opens our eyes, we see that we have been atheists in the world, with no knowledge or acquaintance with God. It is true that we could use our ability to reason to come up with concepts of God, and even that there is a God, but we did not know God any more than we know the Emperor of China, whom we could also reasonably be sure existed. But unlike the emperor, whom we could see under the right conditions, we cannot see God in our natural state.

Paragraph 4 There is a story of an ancient king who devised an experiment to discover our true natural state. He had two infants, as soon as they were born, conveyed to a place where they were to receive no instruction of any kind, so that only what was natural would be seen. What happened? They had no language, only making noises like animals. If two infants in like manner were raised with no instruction about God, we cannot doubt (unless the grace of God intervenes) that when raised they would also be like wild animals when it comes to God. So much for "natural religion" when it is separated from tradition and God's Spirit!

Paragraph 5 With no knowledge of God, we do not love God. It is rare to find someone who will say that they do not love God, but the fact is too plain to deny. What we love, we delight in, but there is no delight to be found in a God we do not know.

Paragraph 6 Not only do we not love God, we do not fear God. It is true that even natural men have, sooner or later, a senseless irrational fear (properly called "superstition") that some will call "religion." But even this is not

natural, but an acquired understanding received through conversation or from the example of those around us.

Paragraph 7 Thus, all natural people are atheists. But we are also idolaters! Even if it is not the idolatry of worshipping graven images or things of nature, we worship ourselves in our hearts, bowing down to pay honor that is due to God alone.

Paragraph 8 Pride is not the only form of idolatry that we are guilty of before God. Satan's image is stamped on us whenever we take pleasure in our self-will, independent of God's will. Why does the natural man do things? Because we have the will to do it; and in this, we agree with Satan against God.

Paragraph 9 We bear the image of Satan and tread in his steps, but this next thing makes us guiltier than Satan before God. We love the world, seeking happiness in the creation and not the Creator. We delight in sensual pleasures like any wild beast. We are not better than goats, and maybe even not as good as goats! We might be able to discern great differences between individual men in their outward actions towards these sensual pleasures, but there is no great difference between them in their hearts.

Paragraph 10 The pleasure of the eye, or the pleasures of the imagination, may differ from person to person, but it is still taking pleasure in something other than God. The pleasure becomes flat and insipid as we get bored with one thing, and another thing takes its place since the desire remains within us.

Paragraph 11 Another symptom of this fatal disease is the pride of life, or the desire for praise. The greatest admirers of human nature allow that this is strictly natural that we should desire praise, and they see no shame in admitting it or even in encouraging it! We seek the honor that comes from other people, instead of seeking the honor that comes from God alone. Christians and Heathens alike think it is a sign of a virtuous mind to seek the honor and praise of others, while they think there is something wrong with those who are content with the honor that comes from God alone.

Part 3 What this mean for us

Paragraph 1 Heathens may teach that we are infected with many vices, and may even be prone to them, but that we also possess a natural good that can overbalance the evil. Christianity teaches that we are totally corrupt, conceived in sin, with a carnal mind at war with God, since we are not subject to God's law, and a corrupt soul that can do no good thing since its thoughts are continually evil.

- Paragraph 2 This is the shibboleth: Do you believe that we are by nature filled with all manner of evil, void of all good, wholly fallen, and totally corrupted? Then you are (so far) a Christian. If not, you are a Heathen still.
- Paragraph 3 The religion of Jesus Christ is God's method for healing our sin-sick soul, to restore our human nature that has been totally corrupted by sin. God heals our atheism by giving us knowledge of Godself, and of Jesus Christ whom God has sent. God does this by giving us faith, a divine evidence and conviction of God and the things of God – in particular, this one important truth: Christ loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*. By repentance and lowliness of heart is pride healed. Our self-will is healed by resignation, meekness, and submission to God's will. Our love of the world is healed by the holy love of God. This is faith working by love.
- Paragraph 4 If we were not fallen, there would be no need for this. There would be no need to renew our hearts, our spirits, or our minds. We would consider godliness superfluous in the light of "naughtiness." Any external religion would do, as long as it fulfilled our rational intents and purposes. If reason is well-ordered words, then religion is nothing more than well-ordered words and actions. If we are not filled with wickedness, then we only have to be concerned with ordering our outward actions.
- Paragraph 5 But that is not how God sees it at all. The great end of religion is the renewal of our hearts in the image of God, to repair the total loss of righteousness and holiness that has been our condition since Adam. And if the end of your religion is not the restoration of God's love within us, then your religion is a mere mockery of God, to the destruction of your own soul. Beware of those teachers who try to convince you that poor farce is Christianity! They will try to deceive you with unrighteousness, with all the smoothness of language, appealing to decency and beauty and elegance of expression, claiming earnest good will and reverence of Scripture. There is no need for all this fanciness to know the plain truth: you were born in sin, thus you must be born again. In Adam there is death; in Christ there is life.

Sermon 39: The New Birth

Ye must be born again.

John 3:7

Paragraph 1 Out of all the doctrines of Christianity, these two may be considered fundamental: justification and new birth. Justification is what God does for us; the new birth is what God does in us.

Paragraph 2 Much has been written about justification, explaining every point and opening the scriptures well. Much has been written about the new birth, though usually with theories that are hard to understand or so superficial as to be of slight help. It is time for a full and clear account of the new birth.

Part 1 Why must we be born again?

Paragraph 1 It begins with the creation, for we were made in God's image. This barely refers to our *natural image*, as a picture of God's immortality, being spiritual in nature and possessing freedom of will. This is not merely a reference to our *political image*, as the governors of the lower world. It refers to our *moral image* of righteousness and true holiness. Since God is love, from the beginning we were created to be like God, full of love, mercy, and truth, without sin, and pronounced by God as being "very good."

Paragraph 2 Even though we were made in the image of God, we were not made immutable. We were created able to stand, and yet liable to fall. God even warned us of this, but we chose to not honor God, and we fell in a willful act of disobedience. By this act of rebellion, we declared that we would not have God rule over us, and that we would seek our pleasures not in the Creator but in the creation. God had warned that this disobedience would lead to death, and it did: when the body is separated from the soul, it dies; when the soul is separated from God, it dies. The fear of Adam is the evidence of the death of his soul. Adam became both unholy and unhappy.

Paragraph 3 Adam did not physically die in the hour that he disobeyed God, so the death referred to here cannot mean the physical death, or we make God a liar. Adam lived above 900 years, so we must understand this as a spiritual death.

Paragraph 4 In Adam all the generations that were to come from him also died. Everyone descended from Adam comes into the world spiritually dead: dead to God, dead in sin, void of the moral image of God with its righteousness and true holiness. Instead, we now bear the moral image of the devil, in pride and self-will, with all the sensual appetites and desires.

This is why we must be born again, for we are now born in total corruption.

Part 2 How must we be born again?

- Paragraph 1 This is the most important question that we can ask, and it deserves our most important consideration!
- Paragraph 2 A philosophical answer is impossible, as Jesus assured Nicodemus, but the evidence of the Spirit's movement does not depend on our understanding where it begins and where it goes.
- Paragraph 3 However, we can satisfy every rational and Christian purpose for those who desire only the salvation of their soul. Jesus was not the first to use the expression, "being born again." When a Heathen was convinced that the Jewish religion was of God and desired to join them, he would be baptized before he was circumcised, and it would be said that they had been born again. That is why Nicodemus, as a teacher in Israel, should have understood what Jesus said to him, even if it was in stronger terms than he was used to hearing. It is clear that this is not a literal birth, but a spiritual birth, using terms that are close to describing a natural birth.
- Paragraph 4 Before a child is born, he has eyes but cannot see; ears, but cannot hear, unless it is a very imperfect sensing of the outer world. It is only after the child is born that he can begin to really see and hear the world into which he is born. So it is for our spiritual birth! We were made to experience the spiritual life, but until we are born into that life, we have at best a very imperfect sensing of the spiritual world. He may be a living man, but he is a dead Christian. But when he is born again, born into the spiritual life, the light shines in the darkness, and the promises of God are fulfilled.
- Paragraph 5 What is the nature of the new birth? It is that great change that God works in the soul, raising it from the death of sin into the life of righteousness. It is the renewal of the moral image of God in righteousness and true holiness, revealed when the love of the world is changed into the love of God; when pride changes to humility; when passion changes into meekness; when hatred, envy, and malice change into sincere, tender, disinterested love for all. It is the change from the earthly, sensual, and devilish mind into the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

Part 3 To what end is being born again necessary?

- Paragraph 1 The new birth is necessary for holiness, for holiness is not a bare external religion of outward duties, but the moral image of God stamped upon our hearts. It is the mind of Jesus, and it consists of all the heavenly affections and tempers mingled together in one. It implies a continual, thankful love

towards God, and this love empowers us to love every child of man. It implies living blamelessly before others in our thoughts, words, and work, as a continual sacrifice that honors Christ. There is no holiness without the renewal, the change, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 2 The new birth is necessary for eternal salvation. We flatter ourselves if we think we can live in our sin until our last breath and then live with God; yet this is the broad way that many believe! They count on being harmless, or virtuous, or honest, or moral – or on their use of the means of grace! Holiness is necessary for glory, and the new birth is necessary for holiness.

Paragraph 3 The new birth is necessary for true happiness, for we cannot be truly happy if we are not holy – if we are not in relationship with God. Unholy tempers create a present hell in us, and even the softer passions unleashed can create a thousand times more pain than pleasure. These passions will reign over us, until we are born again.

Part 4 What we can infer from all this

Paragraph 1 Baptism is not one and the same as the new birth. There are two parts to a sacrament: the outward and sensible sign, and the inward and spiritual grace signified. Baptism is a sacrament, with the water the sign that points to regeneration. Therefore, water and regeneration are two separate things. Baptism is the outward sign; new birth is the inward change.

Paragraph 2 Since the new birth is not the same thing as baptism, it follows that the new birth does not always accompany baptism. We may be born of water but not born of the Spirit. There may be the outward sign, but not the inward grace. We believe and teach that when infants are baptized they are also born again. We do not understand how this works in infants, but then we do not understand how this works in adults, either, so this cannot be raised as an objection. We may not understand how it works for infants, but we can test it with adults, for by its fruit is a tree known. There is clear evidence here that there are children of the devil who are baptized, and then continue to live as children of the devil.

Paragraph 3 The new birth is not the same thing as sanctification. William Law tries to make this case that they are the same in his treatise on Christian Regeneration. The objection to this is that Law thinks of regeneration as a progressive work – this is true of sanctification, but not the new birth. The new birth is the gate to sanctification, but it is not the whole. Our sanctification begins with the new birth, just as a child's life begins with its birth – but it is not mature all at once, but must grow into maturity.

Paragraph 4 There is one more point to consider: what do we say to those who are baptized but who also live as children of the devil? We say that they must be born again, but those who believe their baptism is their new birth know they cannot be baptized again. They say they will not renounce their baptism, though by their living they have denied it already. We say, baptized or unbaptized, they must be born again so that they may be inwardly holy, which can lead to outward holiness, and then to true happiness in this world and in the world to come. Outward holiness without the new birth is merely the form of godliness without its power. You may take advantage of every opportunity to use the means of grace, but they are nothing if you are not born again! If you have not experienced this inward grace, make it your constant prayer: “Lord, add this to all Thy blessings – let me be born again!” Let me be born again, not of the corruptible seed but by the incorruptible word of God, and then let me grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Sermon 40: The Wilderness State

*Ye now have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice,
and your joy no man taketh from you.*

John 16:22

Paragraph 1 After God brought the people of Israel out of their bondage, they did not immediately enter into the Promised Land, but wandered in the wilderness. In a like manner, after God delivers those who fear him from the bondage of sin, many of them wander, more or less, out of the good way into which God has brought them. They come into a “waste and howling desert” where they are tempted and tormented, what we may call the wilderness state.

Paragraph 2 People in this state deserve compassion, because they labor under an evil disease. In their darkness it is difficult to find a remedy, and even their teachers in the faith may not understand it.

Part 1 What is the nature of this disease known as the wilderness state?

Paragraph 1 The wilderness state is when one has lost the faith that they once had in their heart. They have lost the divine evidence of things not seen, that they once enjoyed. They do not have the inward demonstration of the Holy Spirit, nor do they have the light of Christ to illuminate their eyes of spiritual understanding. They have lost the assurance that their spirit witnesses to the Holy Spirit, nor do they have a sure trust in God’s love. In this state, they are as weak and feeble-minded as other men who do not believe.

Paragraph 2 With the loss of faith comes the loss of love. They do not have the delight of God’s presence, nor the desire for God’s presence. They do not know the love of God, so they cannot know the love for their neighbor. They have lost their zeal, their mercy, and their compassion for the souls of the lost. Instead of seeking to restore the lost in meekness with the gentle truth, they are overcome with anger, peevishness, and impatience, and they return evil for evil.

Paragraph 3 With the loss of faith and love, there follows the loss of joy in the Holy Spirit. With the loss of the assurance of forgiveness there is no reason for joy. There is no hope that springs from joy, having lost the awareness of God’s love. When the cause is removed, so is the effect!

Paragraph 4 With the loss of faith, love, and joy, there follows the loss of peace that passes all understanding. Painful doubt returns, and we doubt whether we ever did, or ever will, believe. We doubt the testimony we once received, and convince our selves that we have deceived our souls. With the doubt

comes the return of fear: of the wrath of God, of being cast away by God, of fear of death.

Paragraph 5 With the loss of faith, love, joy, and peace, there follows the loss of power. We lose the power over sin, evil tempers, and desires. We may struggle with these sins, but we do not overcome and are in bondage again. We lose our glory, our place in God's kingdom, our righteousness, and our peace and joy.

Part 2 What is the cause for this wilderness state?

Paragraph 1 There are many causes, but it will never be because of the arbitrary sovereign will of God, for God's invariable will is our sanctification. This is a free gift from God. God never *deserts* us; it is we only who *desert* God.

Paragraph 2 The most usual cause of this inward darkness is sin. First, we consider the sin of commission. When we abuse the goodness of God, insulting God's love, darkness may be felt and the estrangement begins.

Paragraph 3 A more frequent cause is the sin of omission. This does not immediately quench the Spirit, but acts gradually and slowly. If a sin of commission is pouring water on the fire, a sin of omission is withdrawing the fuel from the fire. The Spirit may give us many notices and inward checks before the Spirit's influence is withdrawn from us. It takes, though, a train of omissions, willfully persisted in, before we are left in utter darkness.

Paragraph 4 Perhaps the most common sin of omission is the neglect of private prayer. How can we expect our life with God to continue if we neglect to spend time with God alone?

Paragraph 5 Another sin of omission that can plunge us into darkness is to fail to reprove our neighbor in their sin, so that they will suffer for their sin. When we are aware of their sin, we make the sin our own, and are accountable for it before God.

Paragraph 6 Another cause is giving way to some kind of inward sin. Even if we do not show pride in our outward conversations, pride may rule our inward spirit, and we fall into the snare of the devil. We may imagine that we have more grace, wisdom, or strength than we actually do, and we think more highly of our self than we should, and we consider it our glory.

Paragraph 7 The same effect may be produced by giving into anger, whatever the occasion or provocation may be. We may claim that our anger is because of our zeal for the truth or for the glory of God, but it is actually the flame of wrath: earthly, animal, and devilish. This anger cannot exist in the

same heart with the mild, gentle love of God! This is particularly the case of offense: instead of the sweet influence of the Holy Spirit, we choose the destructive influence of sinful anger.

Paragraph 8 When fierceness and anger are asleep, and love alone is awake in us, we may be endangered by desire for any thing that is not God. Any foolish desire, or vain or inordinate affection, can plunge us into the darkness of the wilderness state, for God cannot admit any rival. If we fail to hear God calling to us as we chase after idols, we will soon be cold, barren, and dry, blinded by the god of this world.

Paragraph 9 Spiritual sloth is another cause for the wilderness state. If we do not battle the forces of darkness, we are sure to be defeated by them.

Paragraph 10 Whether it is a sin of omission or commission, whether inward or outward, the cause of our darkness may not be well at hand. Sometimes the sin committed, that is the occasion for our present distress, may lie at a considerable distance from us. It may have been committed days, weeks, or months before. It may be that God has given us this time to repent and make amends, and we have failed to do this and now receive its consequences.

- (1) Another cause of darkness is *ignorance*. There is no passage in the Scripture that asserts that we *must* pass through darkness as part of our faith journey, though there are mystic writers who make this claim. If we expect this darkness as necessary, we will find darkness!
- (2) It is also ignorance, taught by Romish writers and accepted without examination by many Protestants, that walking in a luminous faith is a lower dispensation. They teach it is a higher faith to be stripped of even love, peace, and joy as they walk in darkness.
- (3) Temptation can be the cause of darkness. When we first enjoyed the light of God, temptations fled from us and we knew peace. But when temptations return, and we contend with evil within our hearts and in our world, a weak believer may feel cast into darkness.
- (4) The force of those temptations is greater if we imagined that we were previously totally cleansed of all sin and were already sanctified. In our joy we *feel* no sin, so we imagine that we *have* no sin in us. So instead of calling upon God to deal with our temptation, we attempt to *reason* with our enemy, thinking it is conquered when it is not yet.

Part 3 What is the cure for this wilderness state?

Paragraph 1 It is a fatal mistake to assume that there is one cure for a problem with so many causes. It is quackery to simply apply the promises, to *preach the gospel*, as they call it. Giving comfort to those in darkness may make them feel better, but it makes the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.

They prostitute the promises of God by applying them to all without distinction, leading to the death of their souls. First you must know the cause, and this will naturally point out the cure.

- Paragraph 2 For instance: is it sin that occasions the darkness? What sin? Inward or outward? Does your conscience accuse you of committing any sin? Is this why you have lost your joy and peace in God? How can you expect joy and peace to return till you put away the accursed thing?
- Paragraph 3 If after close examination, you cannot find any sin of commission that clouds your soul, check next for sins of omission. Are there sins you need to reprove, that until now have received your tacit approval? Do you walk in all the ordinances of God? Do you make use of all the means of grace? Walk in the way that God has prepared for us, and you will walk in the light. Remove the sin, whether of commission or omission, or any comfort you receive will be false and deceitful. Do not expect peace until you are at peace with God, which cannot come until there are “fruits meet for repentance.”
- Paragraph 4 Perhaps you are not aware of any sins of omission. Consider other inward sins! Is there a dryness and barrenness in your soul because you have departed from the living God? Have you pride, claiming as your own the good God has done through you? Do you think more highly of your self than you should? Have you gloried in any thing except the cross of Jesus? Have you sought the praise of others, or taken pleasure in it? If you have fallen by pride, humble your self. Have you been offended at another because you believe they have sinned against you, leading you to sin against the great law of love? Look to Jesus, that you may renew your strength. Have you given in to foolish desires or inordinate affections? Put away these idols, and give God again the place in your heart!
- Paragraph 5 Do you dwell in ease, and therefore have entered into spiritual sloth? The even course of outward duties may keep you content, but they do not cause you to struggle to enter by the narrow gate. Watch! Wake up! And stay awake!
- Paragraph 6 If, after all this examination, you can discern nothing present that would cause this darkness, consider the past. Consider your former tempers, words, and actions. Have these been right before the Lord? If the guilt of any unrepented sin remains on your soul, you will remain in darkness until you are renewed by repentance.
- Paragraph 7 It will take a different cure than these if the cause is not sin, but ignorance. Remove the ignorance in order to remove the darkness.

- Paragraph 8 Isaiah 1:10 does not say that the one who walks in darkness ever walked in light. We would also give the advice to trust in God to those who walk in darkness so that they may see the light. So this verse does not prove that believers must walk in darkness.
- Paragraph 9 It is inferred by some that Hosea 2:14 shows that God will bring every believer *into the wilderness*. The text does not appear to be talking about particular believers, but to the Jewish nation only. Even if it is applicable to particular believers, the plain meaning is this: I will draw him by love; I will convince him of sin; I will comfort him by My pardoning mercy.
- Paragraph 10 Some quote our opening scripture. Some would imply that God will, after a time, withdraw from all believers, and that they could not have joy until they had experienced sorrow. But the context is clear that Jesus is talking to the apostles concerning his death and resurrection. This was fulfilled in the particular case of the apostles, but no inference can then be drawn from this to apply to God's dealing with believers in general.
- Paragraph 11 Some cite I Peter 4:12 as support for this doctrine. We might be able to accommodate this text to refer to inward trials, but the context doubtless refers to martyrdom and the sufferings connected to it.
- Paragraph 12 The mystics teach that God can work more swiftly in purifying our soul by using sorrow instead of joy; and by distress, pain, and anguish instead of peace. But that is not what Scripture teaches. Nowhere does it say that the absence of God best perfects God's work in our heart! Rather, an hour in God's presence will do more than the absence of an age. Joy in the Holy Spirit is more effective than the want of joy in purifying us; and the peace of God is the best means of refining the soul of the dross of earthly affections.
- Paragraph 13 The effect will not cease until the cause is removed. Yet we should not expect the effect will immediately cease. The light of God is still a gift, and God may choose to give it sooner or later as it pleases God. A wound is not immediately healed when the dart is removed from the flesh, and soreness and pain may remain long after.
- Paragraph 14 If darkness is occasioned by manifold and heavy temptations, the best way of removing and preventing this is to teach believers to always expect temptations while they still live in an evil world among evil people ruled by an evil lord. Be convinced that sanctification is not done all at once, that when they first believed they were like new born babies who still have to expect many storms to come as they mature into the full stature of Christ. Above all, we must teach that we are not to reason with the devil, but to seek God's strength and help in prayer. Apply the promises of the gospel to these persons, not to the ignorant or the impenitent. They shall

know the loving-kindness of God, and receive God's tender mercies, trusting in the faithfulness of God to complete in us what God has begun in us. God will say, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Sermon 41: Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations

Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.

I Peter 1:6

Paragraph 1 To most believers, darkness and heaviness seem to be nearly the same thing. Heaviness is an experience that almost all the children of God will struggle with, but it is essentially different from darkness. If we do not understand the difference, it becomes easy to slip from heaviness into darkness.

Part 1 Who are the persons the apostle says are in heaviness?

Paragraph 1 The epistle gives us clues as to the condition of these persons. We can tell that these are persons of a living faith, even while they are in heaviness.

Paragraph 2 These are persons who have the peace that passes all understanding.

Paragraph 3 These are persons who are full of a living hope of an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fades not.

Paragraph 4 These are persons filled with joy in the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 5 Even in the midst of their heaviness, they still enjoy the love of God shed abroad in their hearts.

Paragraph 6 Yes, they are in heaviness, but they are also holy, retaining their power over sin. Upon the whole, their heaviness is consistent with faith, hope, love, peace, joy, and inward and outward holiness. The heaviness did not interfere with any part of the work of God in their hearts.

Part 2 What kind of heaviness were they in?

Paragraph 1 The constant and literal translation is that these persons were made sorry, that they grieved. This is a condition that every human is well acquainted with.

Paragraph 2 The translators likely used “heaviness” to indicate both the degree and the continuance of this sorrow. This is not a slight degree of grief here, but such as makes a strong impression on our soul. This is not a transient sorrow that passes away with the hour, but a grief that takes hold of our heart and continues for some time as a settled temper, rather than as a passion.

Paragraph 3 Even in those who have a living faith, this heaviness can be so deep as to overshadow the whole soul, coloring our affections, and even weakening

our bodies. We know that the corruptible body presses down the soul; but in this case, the soul presses down on the body and weakens it further.

Paragraph 4 We can call these times a “fiery trial.” Many expressions used for outward afflictions can be applied to this inward affliction of heaviness, but not to those who are in darkness. Those in darkness cannot rejoice in God; those in heaviness can rejoice still.

Part 3 What were the causes of their heaviness?

Paragraph 1 They are in heaviness because of manifold temptations. They are manifold, not just in number, but also in kinds. There can be thousands of varied and diversified temptations, dependent on the circumstances, which makes these temptations all that more difficult to guard against. Those of strong body and health may find heaviness upon their mind when they experience bodily disorders, acute diseases, and violent pain.

Paragraph 2 Diseases of the body that have a long continuance may bring about heaviness. Faith does not overturn the course of nature, as natural cause produce natural effects. Faith no more hinders the *sinking of the spirit* in those with nervous disorders, than it causes the pulse to rise when we have a fever.

Paragraph 3 Calamity and poverty may bring about heaviness. Those who stand at a distance may think what is lost is not a major concern, and what remains is enough to be content with, but that is not what it feels like to those who are in the midst of that loss. Those who work hard and yet receive little wages for their work, and then return to poor cold homes with not enough food to feed the hunger of their children or to repair their used-up strength, may feel heaviness upon their minds. I am astonished that this poverty does not occasion more heaviness even among those who believe!

Paragraph 4 Next to this, the death of those who are dear to us may occasion heaviness. A tender parent, a beloved child, or a friend whose heart beat as our own are, next to the grace of God, the last best gifts of heaven! And how they died may enhance our sorrow and heaviness. It is the design of God that we should feel sorrow at such a loss -- we are not to extinguish our affections, but to regulate them.

Paragraph 5 We may feel an even deeper sorrow for those we love who are dead to God. This anguish of spirit may be heightened by the destruction that awaits those who used to believe and walk in the ways of holiness.

Paragraph 6 We may be assured that when we are in heaviness, our great adversary will seek opportunity to gain advantage over our soul and take us down into darkness. Doubts and negative thoughts may enter our mind to lead

us away from God, and stir up our heart against God. If we reason with the devil, more and more will heaviness ensue -- if not utter darkness!

Paragraph 7 Some want us to believe that another cause for heaviness is that God has left us willfully. God may leave us, if we grieve the Holy Spirit by either outward or inward sin, by doing evil or neglecting to do good, by giving way to pride or anger or spiritual sloth or foolish desire or inordinate affection. But God never withdraws from us because it pleases God to do this! It is beneath the majesty and wisdom of God “to play bo-peep with His creatures.” This claim by some mystics is inconsistent with God’s justice and mercy, the whole tenor of the scriptures, and the solid experience of God’s children.

Paragraph 8 Another mystic claim that must be refuted is that we experience heaviness when we know our self, and how different we are from God’s moral image. They infer that, even after we have attained justifying faith, we must experience heaviness because of this self-knowledge.

Paragraph 9 What the mystic calls heaviness is nothing more than being convicted of our sins, which by nature must precede justifying faith. If the mystic was justified in that moment they were convicted of their sins, then there was no time for the gradual self-knowledge, and so the knowledge came after faith, making it feel more severe because it was unexpected. We do come to a deeper self-knowledge of our sinfulness and corruption after we have faith, but it does not require that we experience heaviness or a dark night of the soul, since those who know the perfect love of God are partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. As our knowledge of our sin increases, so does our knowledge of God’s love. Instead of a desert, we find love, peace, and joy gradually springing up into everlasting life.

Part 4 What is the purpose of heaviness?

Paragraph 1 The Apostle gives us a plain and direct answer: “that the trial of their faith, which is much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tried by fire, may be found unto praise, and honor, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (verse 7).

Paragraph 2 We know that gold is purified by fire, separated from its dross. So is our faith purified by the fire of temptations -- the more we are tried, the more we are purified, and strengthened, confirmed and abundantly increased in the power, love and faithfulness of God. One gracious end of heaviness is the increase of our faith.

Paragraph 3 Heaviness can also try, purify, confirm, and increase our living hope, increasing in the same measure as our faith. At the same time, it increases our joy in the Lord, since we have a hope full of immortality.

- Paragraph 4 We rejoice even more because, in addition to the increase of our faith and hope, is the increase of our love – both our gratitude to God and our good will towards others. The more sensible we are of God’s loving-kindness towards us, the more love is enflamed within us for the One who first loves us.
- Paragraph 5 We can also advance in holiness of heart and conversation. The good tree produces good fruit! Inward holiness is the fruit of the faith that works by love. Our heart is purified from pride, self-will, passion, love of the world, foolish and hurtful desires, and vile and vain affections. We are humbled more and more, which calms our turbulent spirit, tames our fierce nature, softens our obstinacy, and crucifies us to the world, so that all our strength and happiness is in God.
- Paragraph 6 These increases in our faith, hope, love and holiness lead us into glory and honor before angels and men, for those who endure until the end. All these trials work towards our unspeakable gain, and these light afflictions which are for but a moment very light indeed compared to the eternal weight of glory!
- Paragraph 7 Add to this the advantage others may receive by our witness during times of testing. Example frequently makes a deeper impression upon us than precept. Even those who do not know God can be influenced by the calm and serene soul in the midst of storms!

Part 5 Some inferences to be drawn

- Paragraph 1 Darkness, or the wilderness state, implies a total loss of joy in the Holy Spirit; heaviness does not, since we rejoice with joy unspeakable in the midst of sorrow. Darkness implies the loss of the peace of God; heaviness does not, since both peace and grace may be multiplied. In darkness, our love is waxed cold; in heaviness love retains its full force. In darkness, faith is lost, or seriously decayed; in heaviness, there is still a clear unshaken confidence in God. If we can distinguish faith from unbelief, hope from despair, peace from war, and love of God from love of the world, we can infallibly distinguish between heaviness and darkness.
- Paragraph 2 There may be a need for heaviness, but there can be no need for darkness. Heaviness may be necessary for our spiritual growth and refinement, as it increase our faith, confirms our hope, purifies our heart, and perfects us in love. We cannot say darkness is needed, for the loss of faith, hope and love is not conducive to holiness.
- Paragraph 3 From the apostle’s writing we can even say that heaviness is not *always* needful. “Now, for a season, if need be” would indicate that it is not

needful for *all persons*, nor for any person at *all times*. God has both the wisdom and power to work the same grace in some by other means. Yet, manifold temptations are usually the portion given to the dearest children.

Paragraph 4 We ought to endeavor to watch and pray that heaviness does not cause us to fall into darkness. We do not need to avoid heaviness, but only to wait upon God so that God's design on us can be fulfilled. If we keep an eye to the gracious ends of the increase of our faith, hope, love, peace and glory, using all diligence that we do not make void the counsel of God. Let us work with God, by the grace God gives us, so that we may be purified in body and spirit, and daily grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, until we are received into His everlasting kingdom!

Sermon 42: Self-Denial

And He said to them all, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Luke 9:23

- Paragraph 1 It is usually suggested that this direction was meant only for the apostles, or to no more than the earliest Christians. Yet it is very reasonable that this direction is for any man, of whatever rank, station, circumstances, in any nation, in any age of the world, will effectually come after Jesus by denying himself in all things, taking up his cross of whatever kind, and doing this daily.
- Paragraph 2 Denying ourselves and taking up our cross are not just expedient things to do in religion, but absolutely, indispensably necessary for our either becoming, or continuing as, disciples. It is necessary, because if we do not deny ourselves, we are not his disciples, but are following after other masters.
- Paragraph 3 This has been a popular theme for ministers in all ages of the church. It is impossible to avoid denying our Lord if we do not deny ourselves. We are not walking in the way of the Crucified Lord, if we do not take up our cross.
- Paragraph 4 Since it has been a popular topic, we may ask why it needs to be addressed again. Popularity does not mean that all who have heard it understand it, and even those who have written about it either did not understand the nature of this direction, or its extent in life, or its absolute necessity in faith. They have written in mystical terms that seem designed to conceal our self-denial; or they speak with great strength of its necessity but are vague on the particulars; or if they give particulars, they are such extreme examples that most would not be affected. It is time for a practical application for the common man!

Part 1 What does it mean to deny our selves and take up our cross?

- Paragraph 1 Those who rely on the guidance of nature more than the guidance of grace, and those who want the power of godliness but not its form, attack this direction. They do not practice self-denial, and speak against those who do as if they were guilty of the heresy of "salvation by works." The antinomians decry self-denial as "preaching the law." Gird yourself with prayer, so that what you are about to read may never be erased by those who would deny you this necessity for holiness!
- Paragraph 2 The will of God is absolute and binding on every angel and every person on earth. It then follows as an undeniable consequence that we are not to do our will in anything. Self-denial is the denying or refusing to follow

our own will, in conviction that the will of God is the only rule of action for us.

- Paragraph 3 Since the fall, our nature is corrupted by sin, and our will is corrupted with it. Our will is to indulge our natural corruption. The will of God is that we resist and counteract that corruption at all times and in all things. This is the ground for constant and universal self-denial.
- Paragraph 4 An illustration: the will of God is a straight path that leads to God. The will of man is not only different from the will of God, but also contrary to it. This path will never lead us to God – and it is impossible to walk two paths at the same time.
- Paragraph 5 It is undoubtedly pleasing to follow our own will, by indulging in any instance that offers corruption of our nature. By doing this, we strengthen our desire to follow our own will, instead of the will of God. We may be pleased for the moment, but these pleasures lead to our death.
- Paragraph 6 Self-denial then is denying our own will when it does not fall into the will of God. It is the denial of any pleasure that does not lead to, or spring from, God. The path of following our own will may be flowery, and the poison sweet, but it is still poisoning that leads to our death.
- Paragraph 7 A cross is anything contrary to our will, anything that is displeasing to our nature. It goes beyond self-denial, which is to forgo pleasure, because it calls us to endure the pain.
- Paragraph 8 When we run the race that is set before us according to the will of God, there is often something grievous to us that we are called to do. The choice is plain – we are to take up our cross, or we turn aside from the way of God into sin.
- Paragraph 9 To heal this corruption, it is often needful to “pluck out our right eye” – this pain is to be preferred to the everlasting pain of perdition. Or, it may be that we need to pass through the refining fire to remove the dross of our sin, and we cannot pass through the fire without pain.
- Paragraph 10 The only way to cure the covetousness of the rich man was for him to give away all his possessions, and he went away sorrowful, for he chose to part with the hope of heaven in order to avoid the pain of his cure. It was a cross that he chose not to bear.
- Paragraph 11 We “bear our cross” when we endure, with meekness and resignation, what is laid upon us without our choice. We “take up our cross” when we voluntarily suffer what it is in our power to avoid, but do so in embracing the will of God.

Paragraph 12 It is incumbent upon all Christians to both take up, as well as to bear, his cross. It is not his cross alone, for temptations are common to us all; yet it is his cross alone, for it is a gift from God for the ordering of our lives in the ways that are in keeping with God's will. If we receive our cross as a token of God's love, and dealing with it as wisely as our faith directs, God disposes our cross for our good.

Paragraph 13 It is easy to think of Jesus as the Physician of our soul, giving to us the cure that leads to holiness. Searching our wounds, we experience the pain that is part of the healing process. That which is putrid in our lives is cut away, in order to preserve that which is sound in us. It is better to cut off the right hand than to have the whole body cast into hell!

Paragraph 14 Taking up our cross is not disciplining our selves (as some speak) through means and devices that harm our bodily health, but the embracing of God's will when it is contrary to our own.

Part 2 Without self-denial, we are not fully disciples of Jesus Christ.

Paragraph 1 There may be times and circumstances when we do not have the means of grace available to us. But the great hindrance to growing in, or receiving, grace is always the lack of self-denial, or taking up our cross.

Paragraph 2 For example: a man hears the good news, is pleased by it, acknowledges its truth, but is little effected by it, since he will not deny himself his bosom sins – even as he knows it is an abomination to God. He is still senseless to spiritual things because he will not deny himself.

Paragraph 3 Suppose he opens his eyes a little, and begins to awaken. His eyes are quickly shut because he again yields to the sweet poison in his heart.

Paragraph 4 Some will stay awake, but they do not find what they seek. They do not bear fruits worthy of repentance because they have not ceased from doing evil. They do not do the good they are called to do, because they cling to the sin of their education, or profession, or constitution; they do not take up their cross.

Paragraph 5 Even if this man has tasted of the powers of the world to come, and has seen the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and had the love of God shed abroad in his heart, he may still be as weak any other man – if he still relishes the things of earth, and has more taste for the things he can see than for those that are not seen. He has turned to some pleasing sin, if not in outward act, yet in his heart. He gives place to pride, or anger, or desire, or self-will, or stubbornness. He is made a shipwreck because he refused self-denial and taking up his cross.

Paragraph 6 Maybe this man is not yet a shipwreck of faith, and still bears the witness that he is a child of God. But he is not going on to perfection, for he does not hunger and thirst for righteousness. If he does not entirely neglect the means of grace, he does not use them with all his might. Why? Because the times of dryness in prayer and worship are not pleasant, and other diversions do please him. Or, the weather for going to worship is not pleasant, and the comfort of one's bed is more pleasing. Or, the sacrifice of eating plain food in order to be able to give help to others is not pleasant, and the rich foods give his body comfort. Or, we could list many more excuses given by those who refuse self-denial and taking up their cross.

Paragraph 7 Those who are dead in sin, and those who are beginning to awake but have no deep conviction, and those who are convinced of their sin but do not seek the remission of their sins, and those who received forgiveness but then make a shipwreck of their faith, and those who are wearied of the faith journey all have this one thing in common: they have avoided self-denial and taking up their cross.

Part 3 The lesson learned

Paragraph 1 Those who speak against self-denial and taking up their cross are ignorant of the scripture, ignorant of the power of God, and ignorant of true Christian experience!

Paragraph 2 We know the reason why so many who used to burn brightly for God have now lost both heat and light. If they did not hate self-denial, they at least didn't value it highly enough to practice it.

Paragraph 3 It isn't enough that ministers do not oppose the teaching of self-denial, or that they say nothing about it at all. It is not enough to even say that the minister is in favor of self-denial. The minister must speak of it, frequently and largely and clearly, as an absolute necessity for all persons at all times in every place.

Paragraph 4 The last point is the most important – be sure to apply this teaching to your own soul! Practice self-denial and taking up your cross from this moment on. Practice it universally, day by day, without intermission, until your spirit returns home to God!

Sermon 43: The Cure of Evil-Speaking

If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church:

but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen and a publican.

Matthew 18:15-17

Paragraph 1 “Speak evil of no man” says the great Apostle (Titus 3:2). This is as plain a command as “Thou shalt not murder,” but who regards this command? Who even understands it? Evil speaking is not the same thing as lying or slandering, for the evil said may be entirely true. Evil speaking is speaking evil of someone who is absent. There is no material difference between evil speaking and back-biting, tale-bearing, and whispering.

Paragraph 2 This is something that everyone of every station in life has in common. Almost every conversation today, if it is of any length, contains evil speaking.

Paragraph 3 It is so common that it is almost impossible to avoid. We hear it all around us, and we are tempted to engage in it ourselves. The temptation also comes from within, for the evil speaking may gratify our pride, or justify our anger, resentment, and other unkind tempers.

Paragraph 4 Evil speaking is difficult to avoid because we often fall into it out of a noble and holy indignation against vile creatures. Our hatred of sin leads us to sin, and we end up serving the devil out of our pure zeal for God.

Paragraph 5 Jesus has given us a plain way to avoid evil speaking, a rule that is an infallible preventative or a certain cure. In the preceding verses, Jesus tells us the way to avoid offenses that turn us away from God: if our right hand causes us to sin, cut it off. But how can we avoid giving offense to some, and being offended by others? Jesus teaches us how, by giving us a sure method of avoiding offenses and evil speaking.

Part 1 If your brother sins against you

Paragraph 1 “Go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone.” The most literal way of following this is also the best way. It is to be done in a right spirit and a right manner. The success of a reproof depends on the spirit it is given. Spend time in prayer with God, so that you may have a lowly spirit that knows that it is God who makes you differ, and if any good comes of this reproof, it is because God has done the good. Speak in a meek and lowly spirit, for the “wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” If the other person knows what you say to be true, they will be restored in

a spirit of meekness. If they oppose the truth, only a spirit of gentleness may bring them around to the truth. Always speak in a spirit of tender love, for love conquers all.

- Paragraph 2 Be sure that how you speak is consistent with the gospel of Christ. Avoid everything in look, gesture, word, and tone that would savor pride or self-sufficiency. Avoid a magisterial or dogmatic position, and its arrogance and assumptions. Avoid any bearing of disdain or contempt, of anger or railing. Let there be no shadow of hate or ill-will, bitterness or sourness. Use the air and language of love in the heart, even as you speak in the most serious and solemn manner.
- Paragraph 3 If you can't speak to them in person because of lack of access or opportunity, you may use a trusted messenger who will speak to them in the same manner and spirit above described. Only beware that you do not pretend to have lack of access or opportunity, in order to avoid taking up your cross. But if you can't do this, this way is better than none.
- Paragraph 4 If you can't speak to them, and no one can go for you, then write them a letter. This may indeed be the most advisable way to speak with them, if they do not easily bear reproof. It is often easier to read the words than to hear them, as it does not come as such a shock to their pride or sense of honor. And if they do not understand it at first, they can read it again as needed. Adding your name is nearly the same as going to the person, so this should always be done –unless it would be improper for a very particular reason.
- Paragraph 5 It is clear that, not only does Jesus command us to do this, he commands us to go to the person first, before we try any thing else. This is the way, so walk in it. There are two other steps available, if needed, but to skip the first step is inexcusable.
- Paragraph 6 It is no excuse for doing something different, claiming, "I spoke to no one until I was so burdened that I could not refrain." You were burdened, for you are under the guilt of sin for not talking to your brother about the offense. God reproves you for this sin of omission, for not telling your brother about his sin of commission. Telling another may bring you comfort, yet ease bought by sin is a dear purchase!
- Paragraph 7 There is one exception to his rule: if it is necessary to accuse the guilty in order to preserve the innocent. If there is no other way to stop the evil from being done except by making it known to the person to whom the evil is to be done, then you may tell it. But treat this like medicine: use it with fear and trembling, as seldom as possible, and only when absolutely necessary – and even then, use it as little as possible. Otherwise the rule holds: "go and tell him of his fault between thee and him alone."

Part 2 When the other person won't listen to you

- Paragraph 1 What should we do if they won't listen, or if they repay evil for good, or they take offense and are not convinced? We must expect that this will frequently be the case! The blessing we intended for the other will return to us. Jesus has given us full and clear directions on how to continue. Next, we are to take two or three witnesses. These witnesses must be of a loving spirit, a lowly spirit, and clothed in humility. They are to be meek and gentle, patient and long-suffering. They are to be witnesses to the wisdom from above, free from bias and partiality and prejudice of any kind. They are to be persons known by the other as possessing good character. If the choice is between persons known to the other or known only to you, it is preferable to use persons known to the other.
- Paragraph 2 Love will dictate the manner to proceed, according to the nature of the case. No rule will apply in every case. But in general, it may be best if the witnesses provide assurance that they come mildly and affectionately, in a principle of good will, or otherwise they would not be involved in this concern. To make this apparent, it may be best to have the two repeat their previous conversation, of what was accused and what was said in their self-defense. Then the witnesses may decide how best to proceed to effect reconciliation.
- Paragraph 3 A possible order: 1) briefly repeat what you spoke, and what he answered; 2) enlarge upon, open, and confirm the reasons given on both sides; 3) give weight to your reproof, showing how it is just, and kind, and timely for their good; 4) enforce the advice and persuasions that will lead to reconciliation.
- Paragraph 4 Jesus makes it clear. We go first to the person alone, and if that does not bring reconciliation, then we bring two or three witnesses. We are to do it in this order, not skipping a step to get to the next, or we will be guilty of evil speaking.

Part 3 When the other person won't listen to witnesses

- Paragraph 1 The third step is to tell it to the church – but what does this mean? You cannot tell it to the national church, for that would not serve any Christian end. You cannot tell it to all the people with whom you have a connection, for that will not bring any good end, either. It would not bring a good end if you told every person within a congregation, or a society, or a class. All that remains is to tell the elder, or elders, of a congregation to which you both belong, who are responsible for watching over your souls. It is to be done, if it conveniently can, in the presence of the person accused of this sin, as plainly as possible, but also with all the tenderness

and love that the nature of the thing will admit. It is now the elder's responsibility to hold the person accountable, and you are no longer responsible for their sin.

- Paragraph 2 Let us be clear: this is the third step, and it comes only after steps one and two. No other order is allowed, nor is any other method. There may be times, however, when steps two and three are the same, if the elders are the persons used as witnesses, but this still takes place if necessary only after we have gone to our brother alone.
- Paragraph 3 If the other person won't listen to the church, treat him as a publican or heathen. Remember him in your prayers, and commend him to God. Trust God to work in him as God sees fit to do. Treat him with tender good will and courtesy. But you need not have any more familiarity with them than you would any other heathen.
- Paragraph 4 If this is the rule by which Christians are to walk, then where are the Christians? If we look in every land and in every church, we discover they are exceedingly rare! If you are committed to living by this rule, to avoid evil speaking and to seek only the holiness of others out of love for their souls, then consider this rule also: "Hear evil of no man." If there were no hearers of evil, there would be no speakers of evil. Isn't listening to the evil speaking just as bad as the evil speaking? If they insist they must tell you because their soul is burdened, tell them to unburden their soul in the way Jesus commands!
- Paragraph 5 Let this start with the Methodists, that we may set an example for the world. Put away evil speaking, tale-bearing and whispering. Speak only good of those who are absent. Think of how this example could affect our Christian brothers and sisters! Think of how this example could affect the wild unthinking world! Then will the world cry, "See how these Christians love one another!" Lord, enable us to love one another, not only in word and in tongue, but also in deed and in truth, even as Christ has loved us!

Sermon 44: The Use of Money

I say unto you, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Luke 16:9

- Paragraph 1 After the Parable of the Prodigal Son, addressed to those who murmured at his receiving sinners, Jesus then addresses the children of God with the Parable of the Unjust Steward. Jesus commends the unjust steward for being wise (according to the precepts of the world), and then says to these children of God that they are to make friends of the unrighteous money (to use it wisely according to the precepts of heaven.)
- Paragraph 2 Men of the world often discuss the right use of money, but it is a subject that is not sufficiently considered by those God has chosen out of the world. Neither do these chosen understand how to use money to its greatest advantage; instead, we often rail against money as a great evil. The love of money, we know, is the "root of all evil" – but not the money itself. The fault lies not in the money, but in those who use it. Money can be used for ill, like everything else. Money can do good – consider its service to all civilized nations in aiding the common transactions of life. If we lived as if all were filled with the Holy Spirit and no one counted anything he had as his alone, there would be no need for money. It is certain that the angels have no use for money! But in the present state of humanity, money is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. With it we can feed the hungry, provide drink for the thirsty, clothing for the naked, hospitality to the stranger and sojourner, aid to the widow and fatherless, advocacy for the oppressed, procuring health for the sick, and provide assistance to those with physical limitations.
- Paragraph 3 It is therefore of the highest concern that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent for the noblest ends in the highest degree. All necessary instruction can be reduced to three simple rules, rightly applied.

Part 1 **Rule 1: Gain all you can**

- Paragraph 1 Here we engage the world on its own ground! It is our bound duty to gain all we can, without buying gold too dear or paying more for it than it is worth. There are some things we should not do in order to gain all we can. We are not gain at the expense of life or health. We should not engage in work that labors too hard or too long, for it tears down the body. Some work is too dangerous to do for even the strongest, while other employment may be too much for the weak of constitution. Life is more than meat and raiment, and if our pursuit of meat and raiment threatens our life, we should find a new line of work!

- Paragraph 2 We are to gain all we can without hurting our mind, any more than our body. We are not to engage in sinful trades that are contrary to the will of God, or which are illegal in our country. If the practice of a trade is innocent in itself, but which requires sinful activity to be involved in the trade, then we must avoid them as a sacred duty. As we gain money, we are not to lose our souls! What may be innocent for one person may be sinful for another. I am convinced I could not study mathematics without being a Deist, if not an Atheist, and yet others may study this without sustaining any inconvenience to their soul.
- Paragraph 3 We are to gain all we can without hurting our neighbor. If we love our neighbor as our self, we cannot do anything that would harm our neighbor. We cannot hurt them in their substance, by taking their increase of their lands, by gaming, by overcharging, or by high interest rates. We cannot sell our goods below market price to ruin our neighbor's trade, nor are we to entice away any of our neighbor's necessary workers.
- Paragraph 4 We are to gain all we can without hurting our neighbor's body. We may not sell any unhealthy thing, including spirituous liquors. It is true that alcohol may have some medicinal properties, so it may be sold only for this end (but I do not know of any distiller who produces alcohol for this end!) They make their gain by poisoning people, and the curse of God is upon them because of this.
- Paragraph 5 Other practitioners have the same guilt, when they practice their medicine in a way that prolongs the disease and increases their billing!
- Paragraph 6 We are to gain all we can without hurting our neighbor's soul. We do this when make our appeals to his unchastity or intemperance in order to gain for ourselves. This would include nearly every tavern, restaurant, opera house, theater, or other place of public diversion. If it profits a man soul, you are clear to engage in this trade; but if the trade is sinful in itself, or is a natural inlet to sin of various kinds, then you will have a sad account to make before God at the time of judgment!
- Paragraph 7 If you observe all these cautions and restrictions, then it is your duty to gain all you can by honest industry, using all possible diligence, doing the best work possible, wasting no time with trifles, and not putting off what can be done today. Always seek something profitable to gain, if not in money then for your soul.
- Paragraph 8 Gain all you can by using your common sense. Just because others have done something in one way is no reason that you cannot improve upon it. Be continually learning from your experience, and the experience of others, by reading and reflection, so that what you may be able to do better work.

Part 2 Second rule: save all you can

- Paragraph 1 Do not throw the precious talent into the sea; leave that folly for the heathens. Idle expenses are the same thing as throwing it into the sea, so do not spend any part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.
- Paragraph 2 Do not waste any on the desires of the flesh. I do not simply mean avoid gluttony and drunkenness, for even heathens recognize this. But there is a regular reputable kind of sensuality, such as an elegant taste for fine foods, that cannot be maintained except at considerable cost. Cut out this expense, and be content with what plain nature requires.
- Paragraph 3 Do not waste any on the desires of the eye. This would include expensive clothing and needless ornaments, expensive landscaping or adornments for your home, expensive furniture, costly art works, and elegant rather than useful gardens.
- Paragraph 4 Do not waste any on the pride of life. Do not worry about seeking the admiration or praise of men by trying to impress them with your fine things. People will applaud your fine clothes, sumptuous feasts, and generous hospitality, but you buy their applause at too dear a cost. Seek instead the honor that comes from God.
- Paragraph 5 If you knew that the more you indulge your desires, the more those desires increase, would you still try to satisfy those desires? Whatever you pay to satisfy a desire will end up costing you more as the desire increases. Throwing your money into the sea would be less folly!
- Paragraph 6 Why should you throw money away on your children, by indulging their desires for finery and superfluities? It only buys them more pride, more vanity, more lust, more hurtful and foolish desires!
- Paragraph 7 Do not leave your money to your children so that they will throw it away. If you have good reason to believe that they would use this money now only for satisfying desires, do not set this trap for them when you are not here to watch over them. Otherwise, you are only increasing their sins, and are consequently plunging them deeper into perdition. Will they thank you for all you leave them when they are in the fires of hell?
- Paragraph 8 What are we to do for our children then, if we do have a considerable estate to leave to them? If there is one who would put it to good use, I would leave them the bulk of my estate, and provide the rest just so much to continue to live in the manner they are used to. But if there is none who know the value of money, I would leave them only enough to stay above

want, and give the rest in such a manner as I judged would be most for the glory of God.

Part 3 Rule 3: Give all you can

Paragraph 1 Gaining all you can is nothing, if it ends with saving all you can, for this is nothing more than laying up treasures on earth. It doesn't matter then if your treasures are in the bank or in the sea, because not to use it is effectually to throw it away. Therefore the third rule is "give all you can."

Paragraph 2 Remember that we are stewards, not proprietors, in this world. God has provided all, even our own lives, so all belongs to God.

Paragraph 3 To be a faithful steward, first provide those things that are needful for yourself: food, clothing, and whatever is necessary for preserving the body in health and strength. Second, provide in the same manner for your spouse, children, servants, and any others pertaining to your household. If there is anything left over, then do good to the members of the household of faith. If there is anything left after this, as you have opportunity do good to all persons.

Paragraph 4 Consider these questions whenever you will be expending any money: 1) Am I acting according to my character, as a steward and not the proprietor? 2) Am I doing this in obedience to the will of God? 3) Can I offer this expense as a sacrifice to God? 4) Have I a reason for believing that this act is in keeping with the reward at the resurrection of the just?

Paragraph 5 If any doubt remains, you may farther examine your self in prayer by seeking the Searcher of hearts, so that your conscience may not condemn you.

Paragraph 6 This is what it means to make friends of unrighteous mammon. Do not stint yourself like a Jew rather than a Christian to this or that proportion. Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's, be it more or less, so that you may give a good accounting of your stewardship.

Paragraph 7 This is the way of wise and faithful stewardship. Don't delay, and take up these practices today! Our kingdom is not of this world, so do not abide by heathen customs concerning money. No more sloth! No more waste! No more covetousness! Employ whatever God has entrusted with you in doing good – all possible good, in every possible kind and degree, to the household of faith, and to all men. Give all you have, as well as all you are, as a spiritual sacrifice, and you will be laying up treasures in heaven!