

Puritan Theology III

Timothy L. Goad

TH742

Dr. Chris Mills

The North American Reformed Seminary

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine and interact with the writings of three Puritan authors: Thomas Watson's *The Ten Commandments*, Walter Marshall's *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, and John Flavel's *Keeping the Heart: How to Maintain Your Love for God*. Given that these three works span more than 600 pages in total, it is not the intent of this writer to provide an in-depth analysis of everything written therein, rather, it is hoped that a summary presentation of the more salient points in each work will be beneficial to the reader.

The Ten Commandments

About the Author

Born sometime around 1620, reportedly in Yorkshire, England, Thomas Watson is one of the most recognized, well-loved, and prolific of the Puritans. At the age of nineteen, having studied extensively at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, Watson earned a Bachelor of Arts degree. Three years later, in 1642, he received a Master of Arts degree.

In about 1647, Watson married Abigail Beadle. The couple would produce at least seven children over the next thirteen years, although four of them died relatively young.

With the implementation of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, Watson, like many of his Puritan colleagues, was ejected from his parish. As was common among ejected ministers of his day, according to Beeke and Pederson (2006), Watson "continued to preach in private – in barns, homes, and woods – whenever he had the opportunity" (p. 606). Following the great fire of London in 1666, Watson secured a large room in which he held public worship services. In 1672, He moved his ministry to Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate where he preached for some three years before Stephen Charnock joined him in the ministry there. The two ministered together for five years until Charnock's death in 1680.

Watson died suddenly in 1686 while praying, leaving behind an indelible legacy in the form of the written word. His best known works include classics such as *All Things for Good*, *The Art of Divine Contentment*, *The Beatitudes*, *A Body of Divinity*, *The Fight of Faith Crowned*, *Heaven Taken By Storm*, *The Lord's Prayer*, *The Mischief of Sin*, *The Ten Commandments*, and many others.

Introduction

This book is a continuation of Thomas Watson's three-volume exposition on the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Given that there is undeniably much less emphasis placed on the moral Law of God now than in the Puritan era, this work is especially worthy of careful inquiry and meditation by the modern reader. In his own introduction, Watson (2009) begins by establishing four essential primary presuppositions or considerations that must be considered before a serious study of the Ten Commandments commences.

The first of these is obedience. Obedience, the author maintains, "is a part of the honour we owe to God" as it "carries in it the life-blood of religion" (p. 1). The rule of obedience, Watson writes, is the word of God. In short, the believer's obedience must correspond with God's word. As Watson (2009) relates, zeal, if it is not according to the word of God, is merely will-worship. "Popish traditions" and feigned humility are abominations as well since they are not founded upon God's word. Obedience, the author writes, will be acceptable before God based on six necessary ingredients.

First, obedience must be "cum animi prolubio" or "free and cheerful," (p. 2) otherwise it is little more than penance and not sacrifice.

Secondly, obedience must be "devout and fervent...As water that boils over; so the heart must boil over with hot affections in the service of God" (p. 2).

In the third place, obedience must be extensive. In other words, obedience is required with regard to all of God's commands. As the psalmist declared, "You have commanded your precepts to be kept diligently. Oh that my ways may be steadfast in keeping your statutes! Then I shall not be put to shame, having my eyes fixed on all your commandments" (Ps. 119:4-6).

Fourthly, obedience must be sincere. As Watson (2009) shares, "The end of our obedience must not be to stop the mouth of conscience, or to gain applause or preferment; but that we may grow more like God, and bring more glory to Him" (p. 3). As the apostle Paul similarly exhorted his Corinthian readers, believers are to "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

The fifth necessary ingredient for acceptable obedience is that it must be in and through Christ. Our obedience does not procure our acceptance before God. Only the merits of Christ can do that. As Paul related to the Ephesians, "He has made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6). Coming to God in any other way than by the merits of Christ does more to provoke God than please Him.

Sixthly, obedience must be constant. As the psalmist observed, "Blessed are they who observe justice and do righteousness at all times!" (Ps. 106:3). As Watson comments:

When a servant has entered into covenant with his master, and the indentures are sealed, he cannot go back, he must serve out his time; so there are indentures drawn in baptism, and in the Lord's Supper the indentures are renewed and sealed on our part, that we will be faithful and constant in our obedience; therefore we must imitate Christ, who became obedient unto death. (p. 4)

Men do not instinctively obey God, the author writes, because they have cast off the yoke of obedience:

God bids men to pray in their family, but they live in the total neglect of it; he bids them sanctify the Sabbath, but they follow their pleasures on that day; he bids them abstain from the appearance of sin, but they do not abstain from the act; they live in the act of

revenge, and in the act of uncleanness. This is a high contempt of God; it is rebellion, and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft. (p. 4)

There are two reasons for this disobedience. First, they lack the requisite faith that would compel them to obey. Second, because of this want of God-given faith, man cannot deny himself. Unless God changes his heart in salvation, his lusts will continue to control him. As Watson writes, “If lust cannot be denied, God cannot be obeyed” (p. 4).

Watson’s (2009) second presupposition or consideration believed to be essential to a serious study of the Ten Commandments is love. Love is after all, the author maintains, the sum of the Ten Commandments. Indeed, when Jesus asked the inquisitive lawyer to sum up the Law, he responded (and Jesus agreed), “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Lk. 10:27). Watson (2009) then goes on to define this concept of love as “a holy fire kindled in the affections, whereby a Christian is carried out strongly after God as the supreme good” (p. 6).

The author then writes at considerable length about the various characteristics of this love toward God. In enumerating the visible signs which will characterize the believer as being in possession of this love, Watson (2009) indicates that (1) it will be marked by a desire to love God; (2) it will be the believer’s only source of contentment; (3) the one possessing this love will hate anything which separates him from God; (4) this love will be accompanied by sympathy (including grief for the evils which befall others); (5) the one in possession of this love will labor to render God lovely to others; (6) the one loving in this way will weep bitterly for His absence; and (7) he who loves God will be willing to do all and suffer all for Him.

What must the believer do in order to love God aright? Watson (2009) imparts much wisdom in this regard by way of three critical points: (1) The believer must wait on the preaching of the word. “As faith comes by hearing,” he advises, “so does love” (p. 11); (2) The believer

must “Beg of God that He will give you a heart to love Him” (p. 11). Just as king Solomon asked God for wisdom and it pleased the Lord, the believer should cry out to God for a heart to love Him; and (3) The believer must keep his love for God flaming upon the altar of his heart because “Love, like fire, is ever ready to go out” (p. 11).

The third thing Watson (2009) indicates is a critical component to a serious consideration of the Ten Commandments is an understanding of their preface which is, simply, God’s announcement to Moses, “I am the Lord thy God.” Based on this divine origin, Watson (2009) argues:

The moral law is unalterable; it remains still in force. Though the ceremonial and judicial laws are abrogated, the moral law delivered by God’s own mouth is of perpetual use in the church. It was written in tables of stone to show its perpetuity. (p. 13)

At this point, the reader will observe that not everyone (either in Watson’s day or within modern evangelicalism) agrees with this assessment concerning the perpetuity of the moral Law of God. There have always been adherents within the church at-large who, in varying degrees, exhibit certain antinomian tendencies with regard to whether or not the Ten Commandments are to be binding on Christians today. Among those in this category are the proponents of so-called New Covenant Theology. According to Brooks (2005), the most prominent of these includes John Reisinger. In his book *Tablets of Stone*, he reportedly wrote:

The Bible always considers the Tablets of Stone [i.e., ten commandments] as the specific covenant document that established the nation of Israel as a body politic at Mount Sinai... The Scripture nowhere states or infers that we are to think of the Tablets of Stone as “God’s eternal unchanging moral law.” We are always to think “Old Covenant.”

Similarly, Brooks (2005) writes, Don Fortner has also argued:

Those who tell us that believers are under the law as a rule of life have a hard time proving their position from the New Testament. This is because every statement about the believer and the law in the entire New Testament asserts exactly what Paul says in Romans 6:14 – “ye are not under the law”!

In the interest of complete transparency, this writer must agree with Murray's (1976) assessment that:

In the denial of the permanent authority and sanctity of the moral law there is a direct thrust at the very centre of our holy faith, for it is a thrust at the veracity and authority of our Lord Himself. (p. 202)

Although Watson (2009) continues discussing this point for some thirty more pages, any further discussion here far exceeds the limitations of this paper.

Fourthly and finally, Watson (2009) completes his introduction to this work insisting that the right understanding of God's Law is also a critical component in the serious study thereof. In summary, the author makes a distinction between the moral Law and the gospel. The Law, he maintains, requires that we worship God as our Creator. The gospel, on the other hand, requires that we worship Him in and through Christ. "The moral law," he insists, "requires obedience, but gives no strength (as Pharaoh required brick, but gave no straw), but the gospel gives strength; it bestows faith on the elect; it sweetens the law; it makes us serve God with delight" (p. 44).

The Ten Commandments Examined

As the title suggests, the bulk of Watson's (2009) work lends itself to an in-depth treatment of the Ten Commandments, which is, again, part of a larger work containing an exposition of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. As previously stated, given the limited nature of this paper, the writer will touch upon the more salient points made by the author.

The First Commandment – "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). Watson (2009) sees two branches in this commandment. First, it demands that we must have [the One True God] for our God, and second, we must have no other gods. To have "the Lord Jehovah (one God in three persons); the true, living, eternal God" (p. 49) as one's God is first and foremost, according to the author, "to acknowledge him for a God" (p. 49). All other "gods"

are merely idols that are in no way able to help the believer in his time of need. To have God as one's God is also "to choose Him" (p. 50). Rather than an obscure reference to Arminianism, Watson (2009) argues that any choosing of God to be one's God requires knowledge of Him.

We must know God in his attributes, as glorious in holiness, rich in mercy, and faithful in promises. We must know him in his Son. As the face is represented in a glass, so in Christ, as in a transparent glass, we see God's beauty and love shine forth. (p. 50)

To have God as one's God is also "to enter into solemn covenant with him" (p. 50), "to give him adoration," "to trust in him" (p. 51), "to love him," and "to obey him" (p. 52).

The Second Commandment – "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:4-6). As reflected in the first commandment, worshipping false gods is a forbidden practice. In this second commandment, Watson (2009) makes it clear that the believer is also warned against "worshipping the true God in a false manner" (p. 59). Despite the practice of scores of professing Christians down through the ages, worshipping God by the use of images is, according to the author, "both absurd and unlawful" (p. 60). Indeed, nowhere does the Word of God tell man that it is either permitted or necessary to worship God using images of any kind. As Watson (2009) argues, even though the Scriptures do provide the reader with various anthropomorphic expressions which may be erroneously interpreted as representative of certain of God's physical characteristics (God the Father and the Holy Spirit are incorporeal (having no physical being)), these are really intended to convey important information about God's attributes (e.g., His "eyes" signify omniscience; His "hands" signify His power, etc.). As Watson

(2009) concludes, “We dare not to live under the same roof as [idolatrous Papists]...or join in marriage with image-worshippers” (p. 63).

The Third Commandment – “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Ex. 20:7). Like the previous commandment, this commandment also has two parts: (1) A negative aspect (i.e., the believer must not take God’s name in vain; and (2) An affirmative aspect (i.e., the believer should take care to reverence and honor God’s name). Watson (2009) then gives helpful examples of what it actually means to take God’s name in vain. These include speaking slightly and irreverently of His name, professing His name when one has no intention of living according to His commands, using God’s name in idle discourse (as the author suggests, “He is not to be spoken of but with a holy awe upon our hearts”) (p. 85), worshiping God with one’s lips but not with his heart, praying to Him without believing in Him, profaning or abusing His word, swearing by His name, prefixing God’s name to any wicked action (mentioning God in connection with wicked things), using one’s tongue to dishonor God’s name, making rash and unlawful vows, speaking evil of God, and making false promises in His name. To even the most casual observer, it is not difficult to see how this particular command is routinely violated with impunity, even by professing believers, many of whom find nothing wrong with the occasional, “Oh my God” or “For God’s sake.” Perhaps they would be more careful if they realized that even these seemingly innocuous sayings constitute a very real violation of the third commandment.

The Fourth Commandment – “Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made

heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day and hallowed it” (Ex. 20:8-11). There has been much discussion in the church at-large concerning whether or not this particular commandment is still in force for the believer today. The teaching on the perpetuity of the Sabbath seems to have come under attack, not merely by more progressive or liberal Christians, but by many of those in the mainstream as well. Even some in the Reformed camp have taken to citing Calvin (1845) as favoring the idea that Christians are no longer required to obey this commandment. More often than not, they apt to quote this well-known snippet from Calvin’s Institutes to bolster their position (*italics added*):

The Sabbath being abrogated, there is still room among us, first, to assemble on stated days for the hearing of the Word, the breaking of the mystical bread, and public prayer; and, secondly, to give our servants and labourers relaxation from labour. It cannot be doubted that the Lord provided for both in the commandment of the Sabbath.

Calvin (1845) was not, however, arguing that the Sabbath had been completely done away with.

Watson (2009) also argued unambiguously (and quite helpfully):

The old seventh-day Sabbath, which was the Jewish Sabbath, is abrogated, and in the room of it the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath, succeeds. The morality or substance of the fourth commandment does not lie in keeping the seventh day precisely, but keeping one day in seven is what God has appointed. (p. 95)

A more careful reading of Calvin (1845) reveals the same sentiment. Citing Moses in Deuteronomy and Exodus, he writes, “Who can deny that both are equally applicable to us as to the Jews? Religious meetings are enjoined us by the word of God; their necessity, experience itself sufficiently demonstrates...[and] if the reason for which the Lord appointed a Sabbath to the Jews is equally applicable to us, no man can assert that it is a matter with which we have nothing to do. Our most provident and indulgent Parent has been pleased to provide for our wants not less than for the wants of the Jews” (Deut. 5:14; Ex. 23:12).

So, in saying that the Sabbath was abrogated, what is meant is that the ceremonial and legalistic aspects characteristic of the Jewish Sabbath have been done away with. This understanding does not invalidate the fourth commandment. The principle of one day in seven set aside for the worship of God and the relaxation of His people (now known as the Lord's Day) constitutes a perpetual ordinance. Watson (2009) provides four compelling arguments for the continuation of the Sabbath. In short, it is rationale, just, God Himself observed it, and He blessed it. This writer would recommend Watson's (2009) nearly thirty-page treatment of this important subject as one of the best (and most concise) available.

The Fifth Commandment – “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” (Ex. 20:12). Before writing anything concerning this particular commandment, Watson (2009) makes an interesting observation about the nature of the two tablets upon which God's commandments were written. He compares the commandments themselves to Jacob's ladder writing:

The first table respects God, and is the top of the ladder that reaches to heaven; the second respects superiors and inferiors, and is the foot of the ladder that rests on the earth. By the first table, we walk religiously towards God; by the second, we walk religiously toward man. (p. 122)

This statement is not at all unlike what Jesus said about the two halves of God's Law when He summarized them in Mark's gospel saying:

“The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength’ [the *ascent* of ‘Jacob's ladder’]. The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ [the *descent* of ‘Jacob's ladder’]. There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mk. 12:29-31).

Regarding this commandment, the author reminds his readers that it comes with a promise. If one will honor father and mother, his days will be long in the land. Watson (2009) then proceeds to discuss this commandment by observing, primarily, that there are five kinds of fathers to

which this commandment applies: the political father, the ancient father, the spiritual father, the domestic father, and the natural father. A thorough treatment of each by the author then ensues.

The Sixth Commandment – “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13). This command, the author observes, relates to the prohibition of murder, not only of others, but of oneself as well. This prohibition not only pertains to *physical* murder but the murder of another’s *name* as well. According to Watson (2009) murder of another can occur twelve ways: (1) with the hand; (2) with the mind; (3) with the tongue; (4) with the pen; (5) by plotting another’s death; (6) by putting poison into cups; (7) by witchcraft and sorcery; (8) by having an intention to kill another; (9) by consenting to another’s death; (10) by not hindering the death of another when in our power; (11) by unmercifulness; and (12) by not executing the law upon capital offenders. This final means of murder is especially relevant to today’s ongoing national discussion concerning the validity of capital punishment as a deterrent against murderers. Watson (2009) makes a very valid point in arguing “A felon having committed six murders, the judge may be said to be guilty of five of them, because he did not execute the felon for his first offense” (p. 140).

The Seventh Commandment – “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14). In this commandment, Watson (2009) notes that there is “something tacitly implied and something expressly forbidden” (p. 152). The thing implied, Watson (2009) contends, is “that the ordinance of marriage should be observed” (p. 152). The thing forbidden is “infecting ourselves with bodily pollution and uncleanness” as “the fountain of this sin is lust” (p. 153). The author goes on to write that the sin of adultery is actually a twofold sin containing both a mental aspect (involving the conception of the sin in the mind) and a corporal aspect (actually carrying out the sin). The author dedicates ten pages to addressing this particular commandment.

The Eighth Commandment – “Thou shalt not steal” (Ex. 20:15). Watson (2009) states, “As the holiness of God sets him against uncleanness, in the command, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery;’ so the justice of God sets him against rapine and robbery, in the command, ‘Thou shalt not steal.’ The thing forbidden in this commandment, is meddling with another man’s property” (p. 164). He then goes on to discuss the causes of theft, the kinds of theft, and the particular aggravations brought on by disobedience to this commandment.

The Ninth Commandment – “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour” (Ex. 20:16). According to Watson (2009), this command “has a prohibitory and mandatory part: the first is set down in plain words, the other is clearly implied” (p. 169). What this commandment prohibits is anything that might disparage or lead to prejudice against one’s neighbor. Slandering one’s neighbor, for example, is a sin against the ninth commandment as are bearing false witness *for* another and bearing false witness *against* another. What is implied in this commandment is that one stand up for others to “vindicate them when they are injured by lying lips” (p. 173).

The Tenth Commandment – “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s” (Ex. 20:17). This tenth and final commandment, Watson (2009) relates, forbids covetousness in general as well as in particular. The simple command, “Thou shalt not covet” is a reference to the general aspect of the overall command as it prohibits the desire to possess anything that the Lord has not Himself seen fit to provide. Whether intentional or not, such covetousness is an indication of dissatisfaction with the Lord’s provision. As the author writes, “It is lawful to use the world, yea, and to desire so much of it as may keep us from the temptation of poverty (Prov. 30:8, 9)...and as may enable us to honour God with

works of mercy...but the danger is, when the world gets into the heart” (p. 174). More particularly, this command prohibits the coveting of anything that belongs to another. The author then proceeds at considerable length to expound further on this particular commandment.

The Law and Sin

Man’s Inability to Keep the Moral Law – In Section III of this work, Watson (2009) begins a brief treatment of the relation of the Law and sin. In the first place, he establishes the fact that man has no innate ability to perfectly keep the commandments of God. In support of this contention, he writes:

Man in his primitive state of innocence, was endowed with ability to keep the whole moral law. He had rectitude of mind, sanctity of will, and perfection of power. He had the copy of God’s law written on his heart; no sooner did God command but he obeyed... Man’s innocence was like a well-tuned organ, he was sweetly in tune to the will of God. (p. 184)

Since the fall of Adam (which resulted in the fall of all of mankind (Rom. 5:12)), man has been without the ability to keep the moral Law of God perfectly. Even regenerate man, although the enmity between him and God has been removed and although he has been clothed with Christ’s imputed righteousness, cannot keep the Law of God perfectly. This inability, Watson (2009) writes, is by design and is intended both to humble us and to direct us to Christ where we will find “pardon for our defects” (p. 186). That man is unable to keep perfectly the moral Law of God can actually be a great source of comfort as he reflects on his position, not under a covenant of works, but under the covenant of grace.

Degrees of Sin – Watson (2009) next turns his attention to addressing the degrees of sin. He begins with the obvious question, “Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?” (p. 189). In short, he answers in the affirmative contending, “As some diseases are worse than others, and some poisons more venomous, so some sins are more heinous” (p. 189). He uses

Ezekiel's writing as a proof text: "Ye have done worse than your fathers, your sins have exceeded theirs" (Ez. 16:47). The author then goes on to support his contention further pointing out that this truth can be seen in the fact that:

(1) There was difference in the offerings under the law; the sin offering was greater than the trespass offering; (2) Because some sins are not capable of pardon as others are, therefore they must needs be more heinous, as the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost; (3) Because some sins have a greater degree of punishment than others (Matt. 23:14) (p. 189)

Watson (2009) further indicates that those sins committed presumptuously are obviously more heinous than those committed in ignorance.

The Wrath of God – The third point in this third section of Watson's (2009) work concerns that which ever sin deserves: the wrath of God. In defining this wrath, the author states that, first and foremost, it "deprives of the smiles of God's face. It is hell enough," he opines, "to be excluded [from] his presence" (p. 194). He goes on to illustrate that this wrath is also irresistible and terrible and "shall seize upon every part of a sinner" (p. 195). It is also without intermission, eternal, and just.

The Way of Salvation

The fourth and final section of Watson's work concerns the way of salvation. While it is unfortunate that the scope of this particular paper is simply insufficient to conduct any in-depth reflection on the contents of the final forty pages of this work, the writer would wholeheartedly commend them to the reader. In this final section, Watson (2009) covers the following critical components of salvation, providing invaluable insight into each: Faith (pp. 200-205), Repentance (pp. 205-211), The Word (pp. 211-217), Baptism (pp. 217-223), The Lord's Supper (pp. 223-238), and Prayer (pp. 239-245).

There is one particular area in this final section that warrants special observation. The doctrine of repentance is perhaps one of the most misunderstood doctrines in much of the church at-large. Many view repentance as a prerequisite to regeneration. In other words, in order to be saved, one must find it within himself (through an exercise of his alleged free will) to repent of his sins. They believe that once repentance has taken place to God's satisfaction, He then rewards the sinner with salvation. What many fail to understand in this regard is that repentance is the gift of God that accompanies regeneration. As Parsons (2014) has written:

First and foremost, repentance is a gift. It is an act that the Holy Spirit works in us resulting in an act that flows out of us. Although it is our act, it does not originate from within us. In fact, in our naturally stubborn, rebellious hearts the whole notion of repentance is foreign. Just as our righteousness is a foreign, or "alien," righteousness from Christ, so is our repentance. It is granted to us by God Himself. We would not even conceive of such a thing left to ourselves. Instead, we would come up with all sorts of excuses for our sin and would point our depraved fingers at everyone else around. But by His grace, God grants repentance to His adopted children...

Yes, God requires repentance as a condition of salvation (Mk. 1:14ff.); however, He Himself must grant it if anyone is to be saved. It is also important to acknowledge that repentance is not something that is performed once at the beginning of one's new life in Christ. Repentance is required as long as sin remains, which, for the believer, will be until "this corruption shall put on incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:42ff.).

The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification

About the Author

Walter Marshall was born in 1628 at Bishops Wearmouth in Durham, England. At the early age of eleven, Marshall was admitted to Winchester College. Nine years later, in 1648, he became a fellow at New College, Oxford. In 1656, Marshall was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree and, two years later, he was appointed as vicar of Hursley, Hampshire. He was married and had two daughters.

With the passage of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, all ministers in the Church of England were required to provide ordination credentials as well as a statement of conformity to the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer. Marshall, as a great number of his fellow Puritan pastors, decided that, in keeping with his conscience, he would not conform. This unwavering stance led to a widespread ejection of Nonconformists from their parishes on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1662. Following the loss of his parish, Marshall was installed to the ministry at Gosport, Hampshire where he would remain for the final eighteen years of his life.

Marshall died in 1680. According to Beeke and Pederson (2006), "Before he died, he said to his visitors, 'I die in the full persuasion of the truth, and in the comfort of that doctrine which I have preached to you.' He then offered his last words: 'The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 6:23)" (p. 416).

Introduction

According to John Murray, this particular work is the most important book on sanctification ever written. While it is regrettable that an exhaustive examination of this work is simply not possible given the limited scope of this paper, this writer will attempt to address the more salient points contained therein. Marshall's (2012) work is divided into fourteen separate chapters or "directions," each of which is designed to stimulate in-depth meditation on the key aspects of the biblical doctrine of sanctification and each of which is further broken down into a total of 192 numbered subheadings.

By way of further introduction, given the possibility that readers of this work may not possess an accurate working definition of its subject (sanctification), the following cursory definition is provided from Chapter 13 of the Westminster Confession of Faith entitled "Of Sanctification":

They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more are quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. This sanctification is throughout the whole man, yet imperfect in this life: there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcilable war, the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet, through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying Spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome: and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

In summary, the doctrine of sanctification teaches both that regenerate man is *positionally* sanctified by virtue of the finished work of Jesus Christ in securing his atonement and, at the same time, he is *being* sanctified (further transformed into the image of Christ) until he passes from this temporal life into life eternal.

The need for quality works concerning this particular subject cannot be overstated as many of today's professing believers are, unfortunately, the byproducts (or could it be said, "victims") of an evangelistic era in which "easy-believism" and decisional regeneration have become commonplace. Not that this situation is anything particularly new, it merely seems as if it is far more prevalent in this day and time than ever before. Indeed, even Ryle (2001) observed that confusion in the area of sanctification abounded in his own day (1816-1900). In the introduction to his own classic work on this subject, Ryle (2001) observed that "Just as in time past [Satan] has succeeded in mystifying and confusing men's minds about justification, so he is labouring in the present day to make men "darken counsel by words without knowledge" about sanctification" (p. xvii).

Direction One – The first direction provided by the author is intended to serve as an introduction to all that follows through the establishment of necessary presuppositions. In this first direction, Marshall (2012) states that before one can acceptably perform the duties of

holiness and righteousness required by the Law of God, he must first learn how that might be done. His first presupposition is clear: God does in fact require of every believer holiness, righteousness, and obedience. The Ten Commandments most perfectly express this truth, in summary form, “in those two great commandments of love to God and our neighbour (Matt. 22:37, 39)” (p. 1) as well as throughout the Holy Scriptures. Living up to these requirements, the author suggests, should be the primary preoccupation of every believer. This obedience, however, cannot take place unless one is availed of the means whereby he might be successful.

Marshall (2012) then provides eight critical considerations that are prerequisite to this success. Among these, the author posits that there must be the realization that “We are all, by nature, void of all strength and ability to perform acceptably that holiness and righteousness which the law requires” (p. 5). Without this important acknowledgment, man will lack the most basic motivation with which to spur him on to increased holiness and righteousness.

Additionally, the author notes that those who deny the doctrine of original sin are still aware that they are under the curse of God and the sentence of death for their actual sins, thus they, too, must be made aware of the way out of their sins if they are to please God.

Direction Two – In this portion of his work, Marshall (2012) indicates that there are several endowments and qualifications which are necessary if the believer is to be enabled to practice the law of God. In particular, said believer must have a heart that is inclined to do so. Evidence of this kind of heart is reflected in the believer’s having been persuaded that he has been reconciled to God and his ability to look forward, with great anticipation, to that which awaits him in eternity. In order for any man to have a heart that is inclined to obey the law of God, he must undergo a heart transplant, having his heart of stone replaced with a heart of flesh (Ez. 36:26). In other words, the innate condition of man’s heart must be supernaturally changed,

through regeneration, from its natural inclination toward disobedience to an unquenchable desire to please God. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus provides a very sobering assessment of the heart in its natural condition saying, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander" (Matt. 15:19). Paul also touches on the cause of this condition in his epistle to the Romans. Speaking of men who, because of original sin, suppress the truth in unrighteousness he writes, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21). Not surprisingly, the Old Testament also has a great deal to say about the innate condition of man's heart. According to Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9). This stark reality concerning the innate condition of man's heart undoubtedly influenced the Psalmist as he wrote:

Who may ascend into the holy hill of the Lord? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of His salvation. (Ps. 24:3-5)

It was also this realization that led the Lord Himself to say to His disciples, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

Direction Three – In this third direction, the author observes that the only way for one to receive the faculties necessary to enable him to practice the law successfully is to receive them out of the fullness of Christ through fellowship with Him. This fellowship requires that one be in Christ and have Christ in himself by a mystical union with Him. Marshall (2012) is very quick to point out that he is not referring here to man's taking advantage of the universal presence of God but "by such a close union as that we are one spirit and one flesh with Him; which is a privilege peculiar to those that are truly sanctified" (p. 34). In other words, if one is to practice the law successfully, he must have first experienced union with Christ in salvation. This critical union is

reflected in numerous passages in the New Testament: “You have put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of Him that created Him; where Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:10, 11); “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17); “I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20); “This is the record, that God has given us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life, and he that does not have the Son does not have life” (John 5:11, 12).

As the author queries:

Can we desire that God should more clearly teach us that all the fullness of the new man is in Christ, and all that spiritual nature and life by which we live to God in holiness, and that they are fixed in Him so inseparably, that we cannot have them except we be joined to Him, and have Him abiding in us? (p. 39)

This important point emphasizes very forcefully that one does not conjure up his own good works in order to merit the favor of God in salvation. On the contrary, one is only able to perform satisfactorily if he has been joined in union to Christ through salvation.

Direction Four – Marshall (2012) continues in this chapter to explain how the Spirit of God accomplishes the believer’s union with Christ. This union, he maintains, comes by means of the gospel, through which Christ enters the believer’s heart to bring about saving faith. This saving faith, the author continues, is a grace of the Spirit which enables one to “believe on Christ as He is revealed and freely promised to us in this, for all His salvation” (p. 47). As the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans in the first chapter of his epistle to them, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Contrary to what is a popular belief among a large portion of evangelicals today, salvation is not a synergistic or cooperative arrangement between fallen man and a thrice-holy God. As Paul goes on to point out in numerous places throughout his epistles, salvation comes to man exclusively on the basis of God’s monergistic, sovereign activity in granting him the faith to believe. He writes very clearly in his letter to the Ephesians that man, in

his natural state, is “dead in transgressions and sins” (Eph. 2:1) and is “by nature deserving of wrath” (Eph. 2:3). How is man, who is dead in his transgressions and sins, able to live? Is it by an act of his alleged free will? Can he simply choose to live in fulfillment of his side of the bargain with God to be saved? Hardly. As Paul continues, “But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved” (Eph. 2:4-5). In fact, Paul clarifies this particular point even further as He writes in this same passage:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2:8-10).

Direction Five – In chapter five, Marshall (2012) points out that one cannot attain to the practice of true holiness by any of his endeavors while he continues in his natural state. As stated previously, without one’s having experienced the new birth in Christ through the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit, he will never be able to practice true holiness. In his natural state, man simply cannot please God because he does not possess the innate righteousness that would enable him to do so. As Isaiah wrote, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away” (Is. 64:6). Other Scriptures similarly display this sentiment. For example, as Jesus shared with Nicodemus, in order for one to be able to practice true holiness, he must be transformed from his natural state to newness of life through spiritual rebirth. That is, he must be born of water and the Spirit or else he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). Likewise, we are created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10). As Marshall (2012) observes, “If we could love God and our neighbor as the law requires, without a new birth and creation, we might live without them, for Christ has

said, ‘This do, and you shall live’ (Lk. 10:28)” (p. 65). The problem, however, is that one cannot do what the law requires without his having been born again. As Paul asserted very definitively, “Those in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8).

Direction Six – Here, the author quite effectively argues that those who strive to perform in sincere obedience to Christ’s commands, as if such obedience is, in and of itself, able to procure for them “a right and title to salvation,” are seeking to be saved by the law and not by God-given faith. Such individuals, he maintains, will never be able to gain salvation accordingly. Indeed, one of the most persistent erroneous notions, not only within what is often described as “nominal Christianity” (which is really not Christianity at all) but among many of the world’s major religions, is the idea that all man must do to secure the eternal favor of God is to simply try his best at being obedient. Consequently, on the sole basis of his own good faith efforts to obey, man feels an entitlement to salvation regardless of whether or not he has been granted God-given faith. As Marshall (2012) wrote:

Our consciences are informed by the common light of natural reason that it is just with God to require us to perform these duties, that we may avoid His wrath and enjoy His favor. And we cannot find any better way than this to obtain happiness, or to stir up ourselves to duty, without divine revelation. Yet, because our own consciences testify that we often fail in the performance of those duties, we are inclined by self-love to persuade ourselves that our sincere endeavors to do the best we can shall be sufficient to procure the favor of God, and pardon for all our failings. (p. 77)

Given what has already been discussed about the absolute necessity of saving faith, man has been duped into a false sense of security when it comes to his eternal state. As a remedy to this line of reasoning, Paul wrote to the Romans condemning those who would seek righteousness by the works of the law and not by faith (Rom. 9:32). To the Galatians he had much the same thing to say in pointing out that those who sought justification by the law had actually fallen from the grace of Christ (Gal. 5:4). Simply stated, Marshall (2012) observes that:

Those that endeavor to procure Christ's salvation by their sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ do act contrary to that way of salvation by Christ, free grace and faith, discovered in the gospel, though they own it in profession ever so highly. (p. 85)

The apostle Paul was quite clear on this point as well arguing that if salvation is "by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but, if it is of works, then it is no more of grace; otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

Direction Seven – In this seventh chapter, Marshall (2012) indicates that, contrary to common belief and practice, one is not to suppose that he must first attain to a certain level of holiness before he is made fit to receive the free offer of saving grace. He writes:

We are naturally so prone to ground our salvation on our own works that, if we cannot make them procuring conditions and causes of our salvation by Christ, yet we shall endeavor at least to make them necessary preparatives to fit us for receiving Christ and His salvation by faith. (p. 102)

Someone once commented to this writer that he believed that his neighbor (to whom he had been witnessing for many years) was "very close to being saved." When it was suggested that one can no more be "nearly a Christian" than a woman can be "nearly pregnant," the man became indignant and simply refused to believe that there was no eternal value in his having prepared his neighbor to be ready to receive the gospel. The author further explains that salvation or the lack thereof is a binary proposition. One is either born again or he is not; one has either been made a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) or he has not; one has either been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13) or he has not. In spite of the clarity of Scripture in this regard, the belief persists that, in order for man to be saved, he must first achieve a certain level of holiness on his own to render him "savable" by the grace of God. However, as Paul wrote to the Romans:

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – through perhaps for a good person one would dare

even to die – but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:6-8)

As Marshall (2012) indicates, much of the erroneous belief surrounding this issue stems from an improper understanding of passages such as Luke 13:3 or Mark 1:15 which place the act of repentance before belief. As the author points out, however:

But we are to know that Christ places the duty of repentance first as the end to be aimed at, and faith in the next place, as the only means of attaining it, and, though the end is first in intention, yet the means are first in practice and execution, though both are absolutely necessary to salvation. (p. 106)

He continues by pointing out that repentance is simply a turning from sin to God and His service, a turning which requires, first and foremost, one's coming to Christ in faith. In short, he writes, "The way to repent is to begin with believing" (p. 106). Moreover, the only way one will ever believe, enabling him to repent of his sins, is through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit who provides for him both the desire and ability to do so.

Direction Eight – Closely related to the previous direction, the author continues in this chapter by exhorting his readers to "Be sure to seek for holiness of heart and life only in its due order, where God has placed it, after union with Christ" (p. 114). Here the author wants his readers to understand that holiness of heart and life are not, as many suppose, self-generated. In other words, seeking to perform the law of God without first having done a work of saving grace in one's life will result in that which, instead of glorifying God, will have a detrimental effect. Marshall (2012) observes that, if one seeks the attainment of holiness in the right gospel order, he will "have the advantage of the love of God manifested towards [him], in forgiving [his] sins, receiving [him] into favor, and giving [him] the spirit of adoption, and the hope of His glory..." (p. 115). On the other hand, the author continues:

If you rush upon the immediate performance of the law, without taking Christ's righteousness and His Spirit in the way to it, you will find both wind and tide against you:

your guilty consciences and corrupt dead natures will certainly defeat and frustrate all your enterprises and attempts to love God and serve Him in love, and you will but stir up sinful lusts instead of stirring up yourselves to true obedience, or, at best, you will but attain to some slavish and hypocritical performances. (p. 115)

Direction Nine – In this section of his work, Marshall (2012) reminds his readers that one's ability to perform the duties of the law sincerely is contingent upon his having first received the comforts of the gospel. In man's fall from obedience to God, he forfeited the ability to perform his duty "by the comforts of his first happy estate in Paradise" (p. 120). Having been redeemed, however, these comforts have been restored. In fact, it is these comforts, defined by the author as "a good persuasion of our reconciliation with God, and of our happiness in heaven, and of our sufficient strength both to will and to do that which is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ," which enable the believer "to be rationally inclined and bent to the practice of holiness" (p. 122). Continuing along these lines, Marshall (2012) points out that peace, joy, and hope are recommended to the Christian in Scripture as the catalyst or spring of other holy duties while fear and oppressing grief are forbidden as hindrances to the same. This particular truth is clarified in passages such as Philippians 4:7: "The peace of God keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," Nehemiah 8:10: "Do not be sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength," 1 John 3:3: "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as He is pure," and 1 John 4:18: "Fear has torment: he that fears is not made perfect in love." The author also observes that "The usual method of gospel doctrine, as it is delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures, is first, to comfort our hearts, and in this way to establish us in every good word and work (2 Thess. 2:17)" (p. 123). This reference is only one of many in which the apostles can be seen first acquainting the churches with God's grace exhibited towards them in Christ and then with the many spiritual blessings which are also theirs. It is only within the framework of these

comforts that the apostles proceed with their exhortations and encouragements to practice their holy duties. As Marshall (2012) wonders:

What doleful melody will the heart make in the duty of praise, if we account that all those perfections, for which we praise Him, will rather aggravate our misery than make us happy? What a heartless work will it be to pray to Him, and to offer up ourselves to His service, if we have no comfortable hope that He will accept us? Is it possible for us to free ourselves from carking (i.e. worrisome) cares by casting our care upon the Lord, if we do not apprehend He cares for us? Can we be patient in affliction, with cheerfulness, and under persecutions, except we have peace with God and rejoice in hope of the glory of God? (Rom. 5:1-3). What reason can persuade us to submit willingly, according to our duty, to the stroke of present death, if God is pleased to lay it upon us, when we have no comforts to relieve us against the horrible fear of intolerable torments in hell for ever? (p. 125)

Direction Ten – This tenth direction supplies a fitting explanation and support for the previous direction in that, before one can be prepared by the comforts of the gospel, he must have an assurance of his salvation. Marshall (2012) writes, “we must endeavor to believe on Christ confidently, persuading and assuring ourselves, in the act of believing, that God freely gives us an interest in Christ and His salvation, according to His gracious promise” (p. 130). Thankfully, God has been abundantly gracious in providing His children with many scriptural proofs for the assurance of salvation. One of this writer’s most cherished among these proofs is in Paul’s letter to the Romans. There, the apostle informs his readers of what would later be known as the “ordo salutis” or “order of salvation” writing that:

Those whom [God] foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (Rom. 8:29)

In light of this truth, the apostle continues:

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall

separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:31-39)

With respect to the doctrine of assurance, Marshall (2012) also warns that such assurance does not give the one thus assured any sense of license to continue in sin. Neither does assurance remove from the believer any future doubts about his standing in Christ. On the contrary, even though the believer has a right to full assurance of his salvation, the corruption of remaining sin, on occasion, will cause him to reexamine his profession of faith accordingly. This necessary examination will, in the true believer, result in confession and repentance of the sin that will, in turn, allow him to regain full assurance of his salvation.

Direction Eleven – Here, the author challenges his readers with endeavoring diligently not only to believe in Christ as one's first act of faith, but then to continue and increase in that faith in order to develop a fuller enjoyment of Christ. Of the four remaining directions, Marshall (2012) writes, "Having already discovered [i.e., revealed] to you the powerful and effectual means of a holy practice, my remaining work is to lead you to the actual exercise and improvement of them, for the immediate attainment of the end" (p. 157). Contrary to what is, again, popular belief among many today, living as a Christian is not a passive endeavor. As Marshall (2012) observes, "Believing on Christ is a work that will require diligent endeavor and labor for the performance of it" (p. 160). In other words, having been saved by God's grace, we must ourselves seek to grow and thrive in that faith so that we might enjoy Christ to the fullest. There are numerous places in Scripture commending the saints for having a growing faith. For example, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes, "We ought always to give thanks

to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly” (2 Thess. 1:3). To the Corinthians, the apostle similarly wrote, “Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand” (2 Cor. 10:15). As the author also indicates, any growth in one’s faith is the byproduct of the inner working of the Holy Spirit and not the result of fleshly endeavors.

Direction Twelve – In this twelfth direction, Marshall (2012) exhorts his readers to walk, not according to their old nature or anything related to it, but according to their new nature in Christ. Only through doing so can the believer expect to “attain to an acceptable performance of those holy and righteous duties, as far as it is possible in this present life” (p. 186). This truth is variously expressed in Scripture as “living by faith” (Hab. 2:4; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 10:38), “walking by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7), “faith working by love” (Gal. 5:6), “overcoming the world by faith” (1 John 5:4), and “quenching all the fiery darts of the wicked, by the shield of faith” (Eph. 6:16). The apostle Paul addresses this teaching as well, writing:

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (Rom. 8:3-5)

The reason the author emphasizes this truth is because “though we are partakers of a new holy state by faith in Christ, yet our natural state remains in a measure with all its corrupt principles and properties” (p. 191). Indeed, as Jesus related to His disciples, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Therefore, Marshall (2012) exhorts his readers accordingly to walk, not according to the flesh but according to their new nature in Christ.

Direction Thirteen – The author continues by expressing the importance of the Word of God itself in obtaining and practicing holiness as a new creation in Christ. This exhortation, by the author’s own admission, is “the same” as the previous one. He chose to include it nevertheless in order to emphasize the “weight and comprehensiveness of it” (p. 216) as a stand-alone exhortation. What makes this particular direction different from the previous direction is that Marshall (2012) moves beyond his general observation concerning the need to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit as opposed to the flesh to observe that “we must endeavor diligently to know the Word of God contained in the Holy Scripture, and to improve it to this end that we may be made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15)” (p. 218). As he goes on to observe:

The most effectual knowledge for your salvation is to understand these two points: the desperate sinfulness and misery of your own natural condition, and the alone sufficiency of the grace of God in Christ for your salvation, that you may be abased as to the flesh and exalted in Christ alone. (p. 220)

Only the diligent and faithful study of the Word of God can teach these things.

By way of an important clarification of this point, Marshall (2012) indicates that the believer must never equate knowledge about Christ with actually knowing and trusting on Him for salvation. There are countless examples in the historical record of those who while “seemingly devout and frequent hearers of the Word [did] notwithstanding remain in lamentable and wonderful ignorance of the saving truth” (p. 221).

Direction Fourteen – Finally, the author reiterates that one’s seeking for holiness and righteousness can only result from his continuing to believe and walk in Christ by faith. This exercise, he maintains, will be a tremendous source of encouragement for the believer. As Marshall (2012) writes, “This direction may serve as an epilogue or conclusion by stirring us up unto a lively and cheerful embracing those gospel rules aforementioned by several weighty

motives” (p. 254). He then lists the more desirable properties characterizing everything he has taught in the previous directions or chapters.

These properties include the following: What has been taught “tends to the abasement of all flesh and exaltation of God only, in His grace and power through Christ” (p. 254); it shows that man can do nothing in accordance with his natural will or through any power of the flesh.

The author writes:

That all our good works and living to God are not by our own power and strength at all, but by the power of Christ living in us by faith; and that God enables us to act, not merely according to our natural power, as He enables carnal men and all other creatures, but above our own power by Christ united to us and in us through the Spirit. (p. 255)

Additionally, man is rendered impotent to do any spiritual good. This sobering truth causes the child of God to flee to Christ who, through the new birth, which enables him to be a partaker of Christ’s divine nature, is enabled to do that which is pleasing to God. Finally, what has been written in this work “confirms us in the true doctrine of justification and reconciliation with God by faith, relying on the merits of Christ’s blood, without any works of our own...” (p. 259).

Keeping the Heart: How to Maintain Your Love for God

About the Author

John Flavel was born in 1628 in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire. His father, Richard Flavel, also a minister, died of the plague in 1665 while serving a prison sentence for nonconformity. Largely educated on religious matters by his father, John was ordained by the presbytery at Salisbury in 1650.

Flavel married Joan Randall in 1655. She and their first baby died in childbirth in 1655. A year later, Flavel married Elizabeth Stapell to whom he enjoyed a close marriage and God’s gift of children.

In 1656, Flavel accepted the call to serve in the seaport town of Dartmouth. According to Beeke and Pederson (2006), his popularity is reflected in an observation made by one of his parishioners who wrote, “I could say much, though not enough of the excellency of his preaching; of his seasonable, suitable, and spiritual matter; of his plain expositions of Scripture; his talking method, his genuine and natural deductions, his convincing arguments, his clear and powerful demonstrations, his heart-searching applications, and his comfortable supports to those that were afflicted in conscience. In short, that person must have a very soft head, or a very hard heart, or both, that could sit under his ministry unaffected” (p. 247).

Like many of his fellow Puritan ministers, Flavel was also ejected from his pulpit because of the 1662 Act of Uniformity. Also like many of his colleagues, Flavel continued to meet in private with his parishioners, very often preaching to them under the concealment of the nearby woods. As Beeke and Pederson (2006) relate, “Once he even disguised himself as a woman on horseback in order to reach a secret meeting place where he preached and administered baptism” (p. 247).

When, in 1672, King Charles II issued the Declaration of Indulgence, giving Nonconformists freedom to worship, Flavel returned to Dartmouth. With the cancellation of this declaration a year later, Flavel once again resorted to preaching secretly wherever the opportunity presented itself. It was during this time that Flavel’s second wife died and he subsequently married Ann Downe, a minister’s daughter. Married for eleven years, John and Ann had two sons.

Flavel’s writing career began in the late 1670s and 1680s during the time he was unable to preach publicly. During this time, he published no fewer than nine books. It was also during this time that Flavel lost his third wife, Ann, and married his fourth wife, Dorothy.

In 1685, Flavel returned to Dartmouth but his ministry was still limited to what he was able to do from home. Only two years later, King James II declared yet another indulgence allowing Nonconformists to preach publicly once again. Flavel's congregation built a large church upon his return to public ministry, however, his ministry would only continue for the next couple of years, ending with his death from a massive stroke on June 6, 1691, at the age of sixty-three. His last words were, "I know that it will be well with me."

Also a very prolific writer, John Flavel's works have been compiled into six volumes, spanning some 3,600 pages. Most notable among these are his *Christ Knocking at the Door of the Heart*, *The Fountain of Life*, *The Method of Grace*, *The Mystery of Providence*, and *Keeping the Heart*, which is, in part, the subject of this paper.

Introduction

In introducing this work to a twenty-first century audience, J. I. Packer astutely observed that "keeping the heart steady, zealous for God's glory...is not always so easily done...Flavel makes it evident that for him there are no shortcuts here, and that blithe self-reliance in times of testing is the high road to spiritual suicide" (p. 12). To this end, Flavel (2012) himself observed

The heart of man is his worst part before it is regenerated, and the best afterward; it is the seat of principles, and the foundation of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally set upon it. The greatest difficulty in conversion is to win the heart of God; and the greatest difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God. (p. 13)

The author then announces the particular direction he wishes to go in this work by way of (1) An exhortation (Keep thy heart with all diligence) and (2) The reason or motive for enforcing it (For out of it are the issues of life). Concerning the exhortation, Flavel (2012) further subdivides the content into two separate topics. First, the author examines the matter of the duty (to keep thy heart), and then he addresses the manner of performing it (with all diligence). The

author goes on to enlighten the reader concerning his proposed methodology which is four-fold: (1) An inquiry into what the keeping of the heart supposes and imports; (2) The assignment of diverse reasons why Christians must make this a leading business of their lives; (3) An examination of those seasons which especially call for diligence in keeping the heart; and (4) An application of the whole.

This paper will contain a brief examination of and interaction with the author's thoughts in each of the aforementioned areas.

What the Keeping of the Heart Supposes and Imports

Flavel (2012) begins this work with a primary and fundamental presupposition. Keeping one's heart with God requires that said heart be the byproduct of regeneration. A heart left in its natural state, in which it not only remains at enmity with God but is motivated entirely by self-interest, self-love, and self-seeking simply cannot be right with God. The heart, however, which has been made new through the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit and thus longs to be preserved from sin and fit for a life of communion with God.

Flavel (2012) provides six "particulars" which are necessary to keep the heart in this right relationship to God. These include: (1) Frequent observation of the frame of the heart. This "particular" reminds the writer of the exhortation of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians regarding their need for self-examination in preparation for the observance of the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:28). Enjoying full communion with God requires a recurring examination of one's heart. As Flavel (2012) observed, "The heart can never be kept until its case be examined and understood" (p. 19). (2) One must be deeply humbled by the remaining evils and disorders of his heart. As the author notes:

It is with the heart well kept, as it is with the eye; if a small dust get into the eye it will never cease twinkling and watering till it has wept it out: so the upright heart cannot be at rest till it has wept out its troubles and poured out its complaints before the Lord. (p. 19)

Recognizing that one's heart needs these periodic cleansings is important in keeping it with God;

(3) When sin does occasionally defile the heart, “earnest supplication and instant prayer for purifying and rectifying grace” (p. 19) is required if the heart is to maintain a right frame before God; (4) Vowing to oneself that he will avoid any occasion for sins of the heart is crucially important if the heart is to be kept appropriately. Flavel (2012) uses Job, who famously made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1) as a very helpful example of this principle. (5) One must maintain “a constant and holy jealousy over our own hearts” (p. 20). As the author writes, “Quick-sighted self-jealousy is an excellent preservative from sin. He that will keep his heart must have the eyes of the soul awake and open upon all the disorderly and tumultuous stirrings of his affections” (p. 20). (6) The realization of the presence of God. Flavel (2012) writes, “When the eye of our faith is fixed upon the eye of God's omniscience, we dare not let our thoughts and affections to vanity” (p. 21). One is reminded here of R. C. Sproul's well-known reminder of a particular Latin phrase, *coram Deo*. In explaining this phrase, Sproul (2014) remarked:

This phrase literally refers to something that takes place in the presence of, or before the face of, God. To live *coram Deo* is to live one's entire life in the presence of God, under the authority of God, to the glory of God. To live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are acting under the gaze of God. God is omnipresent. There is no place so remote that we can escape His penetrating gaze.

Keeping one's heart with God is of crucial importance if he is to live a life that consistently honors and glorifies Him.

Assign Some Reasons Why Christians Must Make This the Great Business of Their Lives

The importance of keeping one's heart with God is, as Flavel (2012) writes, "the great business of their lives" (p. 23). Why? The author offers six considerations to this end. In the first place, Christians should be concerned with making this endeavor the great business of their lives because doing so promotes the glory of God. Simply stated, from the beginning, God has declared His wrath against all forms of wickedness in the heart. The Christian would do well to remember that God is just as vehemently opposed to sins of the heart as He is to the physical commission of them. This principle is precisely what Jesus referred to concerning adultery in His sermon on the mount in Matthew's gospel when He taught His hearers, "You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28).

Secondly, Flavel (2012) writes, "The sincerity of our profession much depends upon the care we exercise in keeping our hearts" (p. 24). Simply stated, one who cares little for keeping his heart with God may make a good external showing of his religion but he will be a hypocrite nonetheless. As the author notes, "to let thy heart habitually and without control wander from God, is a sad, a dangerous symptom indeed" (p. 27).

The third consideration offered by the author concerning why Christians must make the keeping of their hearts the great business of their lives is that "There is a spiritual luster and beauty in the conversation of the saints" (p. 27). As the apostle Paul exhorted the Colossians, believers should indeed make it a practice to "Let [our] speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt..." (Col. 4:6). Likewise, in his counsel to the Ephesians, the apostle wrote, "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that is may give grace to those who hear" (Eph. 4:29).

Fourthly, Flavel (2012) notes “the comfort of our souls much depends upon the keeping of our hearts” (p. 29). Quite often, those who have the most difficulty with assurance are they who have the greatest difficulty in keeping their hearts. As the author points out, the scriptural method is clear, as believers are constantly reminded to “give all diligence” (2 Pe. 1:10), “prove yourselves” (Phil. 2:15; James 1:22), etc. to be who we claim to be in Christ. This work is also the function of the Holy Spirit who resides in the believer. In so doing, He bears witness to the believers’ adoption as God’s children and subsequently bears witness with the individual spirit of each believer in the same regard.

The fifth consideration provided by the author is that the believer’s keeping of his heart improves upon the graces (or the “habits and roots of grace”) placed there by God. The heart of the true believer is not unlike a garden in which God has deposited grace upon grace. Because of this divine implantation of God’s various graces, the one who desires to keep his heart will strive to cultivate and grow in terms of those things. The heart of one who possesses what the author refers to as a “heedless spirit” (p. 33), will find that the seed of God’s graces has fallen upon the highway where the birds come and devour it, proving such a one to have never been a true believer at all.

The sixth and final consideration offered by Flavel (2012) is that “the stability of our souls in the hour of temptation depends on the care we exercise in keeping our hearts” (p. 33). Simply stated, Satan makes easy prey of the careless heart in the hour of temptation. The author continues saying, “If he wins that, he wins all, for it commands the whole man” (p. 33). The one who acts appropriately to keep his heart, however, will not succumb to the wiles of the devil.

Special Seasons in the Life of a Christian which Require our Utmost Diligence in Keeping the Heart

Flavel (2012) continues his work by pointing out that, although there is never a time when the believer should be excused from his work of keeping his heart, there will be times (or seasons) when doing so will require more vigilance. These occasions are briefly discussed under this heading.

The time of prosperity (p. 35) – Although it may seem a bit counterintuitive, there is no greater time to exercise extreme care in keeping the heart than during times of prosperity. One of this writer’s favorite Proverbs speaks to this issue beautifully. Attributed to Agur, Proverbs 30:7-9 reads:

Two things I ask of you, Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.

Indeed, prosperity (especially sudden prosperity) can dramatically decrease one’s dependence on God for the most important things in life.

The time of adversity (p. 41) – As Flavel (2012) observes, “When providence frowns upon you, and blasts your outward comforts, then look to your heart; keep it with all diligence from repining against God, or fainting under His hand; for troubles, though sanctified, are troubles still” (p. 41). One need only look to Job as the premier example of what is involved in keeping the heart amidst great trials. It is also helpful to remember the words of the apostle Paul to the Romans, acknowledging “God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). As Flavel (2012) reminds his readers, “By these cross providences God is faithfully pursuing the great design of

electing love upon the souls of his people, and orders all these afflictions as a means sanctified to that end” (p. 41).

The time of Zion’s troubles (p. 48) – Not only do personal trials and difficulties pose a danger to keeping one’s heart, when the church itself experiences difficulty, it can have the same effect. As the author notes:

When the church, like the ship in which Christ and his disciples were, is oppressed and ready to perish in the waves of persecution, then good souls are ready to be shipwrecked too, upon the billows of their own fears. (p. 48)

Flavel (2012) offers seven very helpful encouragements designed to alleviate any adverse effects posed by this particular season. First, he exhorts his readers to “Settle this great truth in your heart, that no trouble befalls Zion but by the permission of Zion’s God; and he permits nothing out of which he will not ultimately bring much good to his people” (p. 49). Secondly, he suggests that believers remember that, even in the midst of troubles within Zion, her King is yet there. Thirdly, Flavel (2012) exhorts his readers to “Consider the great advantages attending people of God in an afflicted condition” (p. 51). In other words, if God Himself has determined that a season of affliction is best for the continued maturation of the church, then any objection “is not only irrational, but ungrateful” (p. 51). Closely related to this truth, in the fourth place, the author states that it is important to be careful that one not overlook the many precious mercies the people of God enjoy in such times of trouble. Even amidst the greatest difficulty, believers yet have considerable cause for praise. Fifthly, Flavel (2012) observes that no matter how low the church may be plunged into adversity, she will assuredly rise again. As the Lord Himself declared, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). The sixth encouragement offered by the author in this regard is to remember the record of God’s care and tenderness in other periods of difficulty. C. H. Spurgeon, in a sermon entitled, “Our

Expectation,” made one of this writer’s most well loved quotes regarding this subject.

Commenting on the longevity and durability of Christ’s church, Spurgeon said:

Beloved, if it had been possible to destroy the church of God on earth, it would have been destroyed long ago. The malice of hell has done all that it could do to destroy the seed of Christ—the seed that sprang from his death. Standing in the Colosseum at Rome, I could not, as I looked around on the ruins of that vast house of sin, but praise God that the church of God existed, though the Colosseum is in ruins. Anyone standing there, when the thousands upon thousands gloated their eyes with the sufferings of Christians, would have said, "Christianity will die out; but the Colosseum, so firmly built will stand to the end of time;" but lo, the Colosseum is a ruin, and the church of God more firm, more strong, more glorious than ever!

The seventh point of encouragement provided by Flavel (2012) is that if one can derive no comfort from the aforementioned considerations, he should try to draw some out of his very own trouble.

The time of danger and public distraction (p. 55) – One thing which will prevent one from tending to the matter of keeping his heart with God, as he should is to be unduly distracted by what may be going on in the world around him. As the author writes:

When there are ominous signs in the heavens, or the distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; then the hearts of men fail for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. (p. 55)

As Paul told his young protégé Timothy, “God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7). Granted, some things in this world are indeed legitimate causes of fear. As Flavel (2012) advises, “It is not my purpose to commend to you a stoical apathy, nor yet to dissuade you from such a degree of cautionary preventive fear as may fit you for trouble and be serviceable to your soul,” however, the believer need not let such fears distract him from keeping his heart. The author then goes on to provide 14 very helpful suggestions for the alleviating of this kind of fear. Given the limited scope of this paper, however, the writer must simply commend these to the reader as a point of future reference.

The time of outward wants (p. 65) – Very simply, Flavel (2012) acknowledges that being in a condition of want or need can often render the keeping of the heart a difficult task. He writes:

When the waters of relief run low, and want begins to press, how prone are the best hearts to distrust the fountain! When the meal in the barrel and the oil in the cruse are almost spent, our faith and patience too are almost spent. (p. 65)

In providing encouragement against this season, the author provides several important suggestions. These include: (1) acknowledging that one is in good company as many of the greatest saints the world has ever known have experienced want. More important in this regard is the understanding that “God has set no mark of hatred upon you, neither can you infer want of love from want of bread” (p. 67); (2) God has promised that He will not leave His saints in such a condition; (3) Although things may be bad presently, things might have indeed been worse; (4) Although the affliction is great, remember that God is far greater; (5) If things are bad now, they will get better shortly; (6) It does not become the children of God to distrust His all-sufficiency; and (7) Such poverty is not necessarily the result of sin but is merely one’s present affliction.

The season of duty (p. 74) – The sixth season requiring due diligence in keeping one’s heart is when one is called to his Christian duty. In this season, Flavel (2012) notes, there is a two-fold distraction. First, there can be a wandering of the heart (whether voluntary or habitual), and secondly involuntary and lamented distractions can impede the believer. In order to appreciate fully the author’s exhortation here, it is especially important for the contemporary reader to note to what he is referring when using the term “*duty*” (a reference to one’s occupation). With this understanding, it is not difficult at all to appreciate the warnings against allowing the secular world to influence the mind and heart.

It is especially difficult for the Christian to keep his heart when receiving injuries and abuses from men (p. 81). Thankfully, as the author indicates, “We have choice helps in the gospel to keep our hearts from sinful motions against our enemies, and to sweeten our embittered spirits” (p. 82). Flavel (2012) goes on to provide nine ways for the believer to react appropriately “when you find your heart begin to be inflamed by revengeful feelings.” A sampling from this list includes the following: remembering the severe prohibitions against revenge in the law of God; Setting before one’s eyes “the most eminent patterns of meekness and forgiveness”; Considering the character of the person who has done such wrong; Questioning oneself so as to ascertain whether or not any good has actually come from being wronged; and, finally, one is to consider above all “by whom your troubles are ordered” (p. 85). This consideration, the author says, will be of tremendous help in keeping one’s heart from revenge.

When we meet with great trials (p. 87) – As Flavel (2012) writes, “In such cases the heart is apt to be suddenly transported with pride, impatience, or other sinful passions” (p. 87). How does one prevent this potential lapse into sin? The author offers six suggestions, which include maintaining a posture of humility, cultivating a habit of communion with God, contemplating the evil nature and effects of an unsubmitive and restless temper, considering how desirable it is for a Christian to overcome any remaining evil propensities, shaming oneself by thinking about the character of those who are most well-known for their meekness and submission, and avoiding anything and everything which might tend to irritate one’s feelings.

The hour of temptation (p. 89) – The author describes this season as a time “when Satan besets the Christian’s heart, and takes the unwary by surprise” (p. 89). How does the Christian keep his heart from yielding to temptation? First, he does so by resisting the devil and his promises of pleasure. As James exhorts the believer, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”

(James 4:7). Secondly, although many sins are committed in secret, Flavel (2012) reminds his readers that God is always beholding us and our actions. This observation, he says, should constitute a great deterrent from sin. In the third place, the author writes, “the prospect of worldly advantage often enforces temptation” (p. 91). The Christian’s mind, however, should not be on worldly advantage but on spiritual interests. Fourthly, the alleged “smallness” of a particular sin may cause one to think nothing of committing it. Even the smallest of sins, he notes, is an affront to a great and holy God.

The time of doubting and of spiritual darkness (p. 92) – Doubt and uncertainty, especially during periods of spiritual darkness, can make it very difficult for one to keep the heart. This doubt can indeed be the result of the Christian’s relapsing back into a particular sin, “from the strength of his affections toward creature enjoyments” (p. 93), or from what happens in his secular life. Flavel (2012) supplies several helpful suggestions for alleviating the effects of doubt and uncertainty which the writer wholeheartedly commends to the reader of this paper.

When sufferings for religion are laid upon us (p. 100) – As Peter wrote in the fourth chapter of his first epistle:

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.” (1 Pe. 4:12-14)

So Flavel (2012) also advises, the believer should put all persecution and suffering of this type into the proper perspective. He asks, “What reproach would you cast upon the Redeemer and his religion by deserting him at such a time as this?” (p. 100), “Dare you violate your conscience out of complaisance to flesh and blood? Who will comfort you when your conscience accuses and condemns you? What happiness can there be in life, liberty, or friends, when inward peace is

taken away?” (p. 101), “Is not the public interest of Christ and his cause infinitely more important than any interest of your own, and should you not prefer his glory and the welfare of his kingdom before everything else?” (p. 101), “Did the Redeemer neglect your interest and think lightly of you, when for your sake he endured sufferings between which and yours there can be no comparison?” (p. 101). Of course the purpose of these obviously rhetorical questions is to remind the Christian of the preciousness of Christ and the transcendent value of being made His followers over and above any persecution which might come the believer’s way for his faith.

When we are warned by sickness that our dissolution is at hand (p. 102) – For some, even Christians, the prospect of imminent death can be difficult to accept. Nevertheless, if viewed in the right perspective, death itself need be no deterrent to one’s keeping his heart with God. Flavel (2012) offers a few very helpful suggestions in this regard. First of all, it is of the utmost importance that the Christian understand that death is harmless to him. It is, the author maintains, “like putting off your clothes, or taking rest” (p. 103). Secondly, writes Flavel (2012), death is necessary to fit the Christian for the full enjoyment of God. “Whether you are willing to die or not, there certainly is no other way to complete the happiness of your soul” (p. 103). In the fourth place, the author asks his reader to consider that “the happiness of heaven commences immediately after death” (p. 104).

Improving and Applying the Subject

In the final chapter to this book, Flavel (2012) sets out to expand further on what he has already covered in great depth. In so doing, he provides many very beneficial “parting shots,” as it were to any who, while convinced that they are keeping their hearts with God, may not in fact be doing do at all. To these individuals he writes:

I infer for their humiliation, that unless the people of God spend more time and pains about their hearts than they ordinarily do, they are never like to do God much service, or

to possess much comfort in this world. I may say of that Christian who is remiss and careless in keeping his heart, as Jacob said of Reuben, *Thou shalt not excel.* (p. 108)

Conclusion

In an age in which nominal Christianity (even so-called “carnal Christianity”) is fast becoming accepted as the norm both inside and outside of the church, this writer would highly encourage his readers to obtain a copy of this intensely practical work and, very slowly and with great deliberation, feast on every word.

References

- Beeke, J. R. & Pederson, R. J. (2006). *Meet the puritans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage Books.
- Brooks, R. (2005). *Antinomianism-the present confusion, part one*. Retrieved from [http://
http://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2005/antinomianism-the-present-confusion-part-1/](http://http://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2005/antinomianism-the-present-confusion-part-1/)
- Calvin, J. (1845). *Institutes of the Christian religion (Beveridge edition)*. Retrieved from [http://
www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes/](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes/)
- Flavel, J. (2012). *Keeping the heart*. Ross-shire, UK: Christian Focus Publications
- Marshall, W. (2012). *The gospel mystery of sanctification*. UK: Fig Publishers
- Murray, J. (1976). *Collected writings of John Murray*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust
- Parsons, B. (2014). *The gift of repentance*. Retrieved from [http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/
gift-repentance/](http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/gift-repentance/)
- Ryle, J. C. (2001). *Holiness: Its nature, hindrances, difficulties, and roots*. Moscow, ID: Charles Nolan Publishers
- Shaw, R. (2015). *The reformed faith: An exposition of the Westminster confession of faith*. Retrieved from [http://www.reformed.org/documents/shaw/index.html?mainframe=
documents/shaw/shaw_13.html](http://www.reformed.org/documents/shaw/index.html?mainframe=/documents/shaw/shaw_13.html)
- Sproul, R. C. (2014). *What does coram Deo mean?* Retrieved from [www.ligonier.org/blog/what-
does-coram-deo-mean/](http://www.ligonier.org/blog/what-does-coram-deo-mean/)
- Spurgeon, C. H. (1891). *Our expectation*. Retrieved from [http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/
2186.htm](http://www.spurgeon.org/sermons/2186.htm)
- Watson, T. (2009). *The ten commandments*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust