

## THE ABUSE OF THE DOCTRINE OF FREE GRACE

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What is the principle thing in Christianity? On what does all finally depend, and what is the surest sign of a state of grace? These questions, my brethren, are not difficult to answer. The principal thing, and the surest touchstone of Christianity, is this: that our godliness should shine forth in our life, business, and all our walk and conversation; in our sufferings, in avoiding of evil, in patience, in meekness, in placability, in compassion, in industry, and in a faithful discharge of our daily calling. "Let your light so shine before men," said the Lord, "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." "By their fruit ye shall know them." "Show me thy faith by thy works," says James. And Paul says, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." "Ye are," exclaimed Peter, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." In these, and many other passages of Holy Scripture, all our boasted godliness and fancied merit, are pronounced worthless and hypocritical; yea, even judged and condemned, when they do not so affect our hearts, as to produce a virtuous life, fruitful in good works. "Without holiness," says God "no man shall see the Lord." And in the first epistle of St. John we find, "He that committeth sin, is of the devil; and whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot commit sin, because he is born of God." "Whosoever is born of God, sinneth not." This is a remarkable passage; how are we to understand it? Are they who are born again really free from all sin? Need they no longer daily renew the complaints and sighs of a contrite heart, that they have been so remiss in their most sacred obligations; in love to their God, and to their brethren? Doth not John himself declare, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"; yea, we make God a liar. How then can we bring these two passages, which seem to contradict each other, into unison? This will not be so difficult, my brethren, if we look more closely at the context. John tells us explicitly why the regenerated do not sin. He says, "He doth not commit sin, because His seed (the seed of God, the seed of the new life from God, Christ Jesus, who is the true life) remaineth in him. Whosoever is truly born of God, has obtained another nature, a new life: he is become a new creature in Christ Jesus; he sees sin in its most frightful form, and abhors it as the greatest evil; he hates it as an act of enmity towards God—as the murderer of his Saviour, his own life, his salvation. Nothing is so horrible, so odious to him, as sin; he bears in his heart a deep and sincere desire, and an earnest prayer renewed daily and hourly, to be delivered from the bondage of this tyrant, and to serve the Lord in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The Saviour has enlightened him from pure mercy, so that he has recognized his wretched condition through sin; He has atoned for his sins by the death struggle on the cross; He has forgiven his transgressions, and purified him in His own blood, and made him blessed and

holy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. This astonishing grace, this unspeakable mercy has eternally estranged him from sin; sin has become detestable to him, it is a crying abomination, a most unnatural ingratitude, and therefore he hates, avoids, flies, and curses sin; and prays, strives, sighs, and uses his utmost endeavors to root it from his heart. But how is this possible? Doth not the seed of the serpent yet reign within him? Do not the most beloved children of grace still sigh and groan under the weight of their transgressions? Is not the Christian's pillow often moistened with the tears of godly sorrow and repentance? Truly it is, but yet even in this distress and lamentation, this strife against sin, and this imploring of the sanctifying power of the blood of Christ, there is proof given, that he who is born again has received a new nature which cannot sin, to which sin is a strange, disgusting, and unfriendly element; and that the old Adam, which exists in sin, has, nevertheless, received a death wound which will by degrees cause his destruction.

We ought to try and examine ourselves, sincerely as before the sight of God, whether we know this new life by experience. Many deceive themselves, many pretend to have the seed of God in them, many imagine themselves in a state of grace when it is not so; and the consequence of this will be, that they will turn the grace of God into licentiousness, and still continue to go on in sin. Where grace has really been experienced, it breathes death against the pleasures of sin. We will now consider this so frequent an abuse—not of grace, but of the doctrine of grace. In Thy light, oh Lord! Shall we see light. Lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us, that we may be healed. Thy mercy is great to those that fear Thee. How unnumbered are the wonders which Thou doest to Thy children! Thy bowels yearn with compassion; Thou hadst pity upon the miserable, and didst give. Oh God! Give us the eye of faith—Thou gavest Thine only beloved Son, Thy heart's treasure, to be despised on earth, in the deepest lowliness, in contempt, to bear grief, death, and the curse; Thou sufferedst Him to be trodden under the foot of sinners, that Thine enemies, Thy despisers, might not be lost. Oh Lord! Give us the eye of faith; give us a heart to understand heavenly things; let us but be aware of a part of Thine, and Thy Son our Saviour's overflowing mercy; then shall we forever be removed into Thy comfort, and show forth Thy praise in time and in eternity. Give us to understand the true nature of sin, so that the name of Jesus may be precious to us above all things. Declare unto us something of the riches of Thy compassion, of the stability of Thy truth, of the unchangeableness of Thy promises, of the all-sufficiency of the holy sacrifice of Golgotha, and especially of our own nothingness and our deep guilt, that it may lead us to depend daily on Thee, and to look to Thee for grace, as our only means of existence. Oh, Lord! Guard us from hypocrisy, which is an abomination to Thee. Let Thy grace and truth dwell within us, that we may never, like the foolish virgins, call in vain: "Lord, Lord, open to us!" Grant us a pure, sincere, and upright heart, a spirit free from guile, a single eye! But if we are without the humble, childlike spirit; if, instead of truth itself, we have only the words of truth; and if we have only as yet attained to that degree of knowledge and sense which leaves us unfruitful, slothful, cold, proud, impure, without the daily fervent communion of prayer with Thee, without chastisement without desire for sanctification; then remove the scales from our eyes, and break the whited sepulcher of our hearts, that from it we may issue in terror, and fall in sincere contrition at Thy feet to acknowledge from the deepest heartfelt experience, that Thou are perfect grace and truth. Then shall we, oppressed by hatred of sin, moved by Thine unmerited love and faithfulness, animated by Thy Spirit, clothed with the garment of Thy righteousness, overpowered by Thy free grace, "give diligence to make our calling and election sure, for if we do this we shall

never fall." Lord, be merciful to us, and bless Thy Word to us! Amen.

*"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" Romans 6:1,2.*

Guided by these words, we will consider the abuse of the doctrine of grace under the three following heads:

1. How is it possible that the abuse of the doctrine of grace is so easy, and therefore so frequent and customary?
2. That it is a crime, and therefore worthy of punishment.
3. How can a man be delivered from that error, and attain the right use of this doctrine?

And while this important subject is under our consideration, may our merciful God shed His blessing upon us, and make His truth powerful in our hearts for Christ's sake.

Before, however, we commence a close examination of these three heads, we will make a few remarks upon the subject of grace in general. We are necessitated to do so by the words of our text, which stand in intimate connection with the preceding verses. In the fifth chapter St. Paul describes the riches of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. The riches of this grace are superabundantly great; so great that none can number them; yea, speech will fail if they are only reflected upon. We, miserable, condemned, cursed, sinners, can and shall be saved in the midst of all our wretchedness. We have deserved that God should take no more heed of us, but leave us to take our coarse the way of destruction. We have derided and despised His law, His love, His mercy, His truth, His representations, His entreaties, His calls to repentance, His earthly and spiritual blessings. Our conscience bears witness to the truth of this. It is written in burning characters which cannot be quenched, though you were to pour a sea of streams upon them. But, behold, all these sins God will overlook. The Lord of glory appeared to us, clothed in flesh and blood like ours, tangible and audible to our senses, like a human being, but poor; He veiled the rays of His Divine majesty, that we might not fear Him and flee from Him; but might draw near to Him with childlike simplicity, as to our equal. Further, He stepped into the gap; He bowed Himself beneath the law, and accomplished it as an obedient servant, for love of us, and in our stead. All He said and did was performed for our benefit, and it all has a meritorious property, and is all-sufficient as an expiation. Finally, He submitted to the torments of hell and condemnation, which we have deserved, and was made a curse instead of us, and died the bitter death of a malefactor. "God made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Yea, God offers a complete justification in the Son of His love, to all poor, miserable, condemned sinners. We may thus appear in His presence, not only free from the curse, from punishment and sin, but holy, righteous, guiltless, without blemish, clothed in the beaming, spotless robe of the righteousness of our Surety, in which even the eyes of the Holy God can discern no stain of sin. We may approach the most wretched sinner, and say to him, "There is a Redeemer, a Comforter, a Surety, a Saviour for you, who can fill you with the peace of God,

who can pour into your breast the most blessed hopes of future glory, who can even in the midst of the vale of tears build you a habitation of peace, against which all the waves, storms, and floods in the world, will spend their strength in vain! When his tears and prayers have been for some time answered, and he can lay hold of Jesus with the hand of faith, then the Saviour plucks him as a brand from the burning, and presents him before the presence of His Father as a pardoned child of God, to whom all things have worked together for good. Mark! Not merely for his salvation, but for his good! It is true that we lost much—nay all by Adam's sin. The image of God was destroyed, and we are reduced to so powerless a state, that we cannot stretch forth the withered hand to pluck the fruit from the tree of life. But behold! Listen! Be astonished, and pray! There is a free grace of God, which without any respect of persons, can save to the uttermost, and pardon sins of the deepest dye! We speak to all sinners—to old sinners, to young sinners, to adulterers, thieves, murderers, slanderers, blasphemers, the voluptuary, the deceiver, and the Sabbath breaker—however deformed and soiled by sin, though they may deserve eternal condemnation a thousandfold, we call to you aloud, our heart impressed with the sincerest love for your souls: Ye may now be delivered from all your guilt, yea even today ye may gain justification of life in Jesus Christ.

You need bring nothing of your own; you can be cured permanently and gratuitously of all your own sins and misdeeds; Jesus will absolve you from all; and give you forgiveness of sins, a new birth, faith, sanctification, safety and glorification; He will save you, convert, justify, favor, and bless you; yea, He will dwell in you, and walk in you, and you shall be in Him what He was and is, the holy and beloved One of God! O my brethren, how blessed is the man, who, overcome by this free grace, is removed out of himself and incorporated with Christ. His grace swallows up all our sins, and all our evil, like a fathomless sea; and introduces all the treasures of heavenly glory into our souls. This grace raises us above all cares, and leads us to repose in the depths of the eternal love of God; this grace finishes the work begun in us; and never ceases from correcting, healing, strengthening, and blessing us; it screens, and arms us against all the enemies of our salvation; it helps us to bear our cross; it conducts us through the narrow path of death, to the regions of eternal glory; it constitutes our song of praise throughout eternity. Then what shall I say, my brothers and sisters, but that whosoever is born of this blessed mother, to the light of life; whosoever has experienced anything of the riches of its tenderness and truth, and has truly been convinced, by the light of God's Word, of the depth and extent of his wretched condition, must feel that it is impossible to describe the value of this grace. We cannot sufficiently appreciate its unspeakable value; the most ardent songs of praise are but poor and weak in comparison. And yet it is a melancholy truth, which bears fearful testimony to the deep corruption of the human heart, that though the prophets and apostles zealously applied themselves to guard this precious doctrine from corruption, yet it was necessary at all times, notwithstanding and it is to the present day, to preach with unabated zeal against its abuse.

1. We have already said that this abuse of the doctrine of the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, is very easy. Is it truly thus? If I am in danger of sinking in a deep and muddy stream, and a compassionate preserver throws himself into the water and rescues me at the hazard of his own life; should I forget my preserver and his deed of love, and throw myself afresh into the stream, the depths of which threatened to destroy me? Should I not rather, all my life long, be eager to testify my gratitude to my faithful benefactor? Should I not anxiously avoid the dark stream

and its frightful depths, and sincerely hate and abhor it? Oh my brethren, whosoever has experienced real grace, who knows grace in its true character, and sees clearly that the Lord might justly have left him to perish, but that He has saved him, out of His free mercy, by the offering up of His own life; and not only that, but has also chosen him from the foundation of the world, looked upon him as a righteous child of God, and made him blessed to all eternity; he ought to dread nothing so much as a continuance in sin, and daily desire nothing more fervently than to be faithful to this Saviour until death. But, truly, this experience does not fall to the lot of every man, and hence has arisen the abuse of it. Men talk about free grace without having the slightest acquaintance with it from personal experience; instead of living in the element of grace, they have nothing but a mere head knowledge, or a superficial perception of it in their hearts; a complete rupture with the world, the flesh, and the devil, has not yet taken place; the conscience sleeps the sleep of death, and Christ is regarded as a mere substitute, whom the sinner thinks will make up the deficiency of his own fancied merit. Thus the abuse of this doctrine becomes very easy. When the whole head, the whole heart is filled with false premises, how can we be surprised that they should lead to the most false—nay, infamous conclusions? What wonder is it that such a man, who chatters about grace without having become acquainted with it from heartfelt experience, with the tears of repentance, should appropriate the kindness of this Redeemer to himself, in such a manner as to leave his heart and life unchanged. Only imagine to yourself a man who has yet to learn his deeply sinful condition in the sight of God. He hears how Christ has atoned for all; how He has offered a perfect sacrifice for the salvation of sinners, that His blood washes out all sin; that nothing further remains to be completed; that man must be saved by free grace, without the merit of works; he hears, that all which serves to advance a godly life and walk, must be bestowed by the Saviour; and that we can do literally nothing without Him. The sinner's own inability is to him welcome intelligence; it is like an agreeable pillow to repose on. "This," thinks he, "may be turned to some account." "Thou hast sinned," says he to himself, "consequently the Saviour belongs to thee, He has blotted out thy sins; His merits, His righteousness, are thine." He torments himself, and labors to bring his opinions to these truths; he appeals as being entirely orthodox to the promises of the Word of God; confirmed by the Heidelberg catechism,\* he believes himself called to repel all the accusations of the law, and of his own conscience, and allows himself to go on quite smoothly, as though everything were in the best possible condition. He has perhaps wept once over his sins; has accused himself, by a few strong expressions, as a lost sinner; has experienced the insufficiency of his own resolutions, and has deduced from a superficial insight into the demands of the law, that he cannot stand before God in his present state.

*\*The Heidelberg catechism contained the confession of faith of the German Calvinists, and may be compared to the Westminster catechism.*

He now places Christ before him, and firmly persuades himself that he belongs to the elect of God, and that none can have aught against him. He troubles not himself as to whether he daily experiences the workings of grace in his heart, whether he is become a new creature, and sin is destroyed within him; he thinks that in his own perception of the doctrine of grace, and in the humble acknowledgments which he makes of his necessity of it, he possesses the fullest security that he belongs to the people of God; and considers—truly in a manner which excites horror when closely viewed—that this and every other declaration of the Bible may be brought forward to justify his apparent Christianity. Yea, he may perhaps be a zealous advocate for free grace; while he himself is still lying under the wrath of God, and has no spark of grace in his

heart. Perhaps you think that this abuse of the doctrine of grace is of unfrequent occurrence? By no means. Most men are sick of the same disease. Whence comes it, that you are so quiet, so careless, so happy, so confident, so gay, so merry, while you belong to the children of this world? Wherewith do you comfort yourself? You must die; you are traveling towards eternity! You must appear before the judgment seat of God; you have broken the law of God, and deserved the wrath of the Almighty. This you cannot deny. If your mouth says, No! No! Your heart cries, Yea, Amen, it is true. How can your heart have rest while these truths are existing; while the reproaches of your conscience are loud, and warnings of death, and the judgment to come, fill your breast? "God is gracious," you say; and with this you try to cover your sins, and to still the goadings of your conscience, as well as you can. But, in God's name how can you believe in the grace of that God whom you despise; whose Word and commandment you reject; and whom you daily and hourly offend by your sins against Him? But you answer, notwithstanding, "God is merciful"; and thus you continue in your sins, in your impenitence, in your enmity against God; you lie and deceive, revel and rage, hate and covet, curse and swear; and spend your day in vain tittle tattle. Is not this abusing the grace of God? Do we not continually abuse His longsuffering more and more, while we walk along the broad way of destruction as unconverted men? But what shall we say of those who have really an insight into the grace of God, in the Gospel, and yet knowingly and willingly continue in their sins, or even only in one single sin? Have these hypocrites disappeared, or can we speak of such persons as monsters, who are not to be met with in our country? Would to God it were so, but sad experience teaches us to the contrary. Even here, among ourselves in this country, where the knowledge of Christianity has the pre-eminence; where it is less subject to reproach than elsewhere; where the name of the Lord Jesus is acknowledged, even in our neighborhood, it is beyond all things necessary to warn you against the abuse of the doctrine of grace.\*

*\*The author resides in a part of Germany (the Valley of the River Wupper), the inhabitants of which are more prone to fall into the errors of a dead orthodoxy, than into the opposite extremes of a rationalism so prevalent in the rest of Protestant Germany.*

Even here there is a very large number of such, who have certainly the appearance of leading a godly life, while they deny the power of it, and declare by their actions, that though they can talk fluently about free grace they have always resisted its chastisement, which would have subdued their ungodly dispositions. Alas! There are but few who earnestly engage in a determined warfare against sin. Most persons content themselves with mere knowledge, thoughts, feelings, acknowledgments, and speeches; while they, more or less, willfully turn the comforting truths of the Gospel into a pillow for their sins to rest upon. Thus the free grace of God is extolled by many who openly continue in their sins; and publicly mark themselves, by their pride or indolence; by their judging arrogance and uncharitable speeches; by their fraud and reveling; by their falsehood, avarice, and other vices, as men who know not the true life in grace. We meet with many persons who are zealous defenders of the truth, while in the observance of their domestic and civil duties they come far behind the great mass of the carnally minded and careless children of the world. They are always extolling the Saviour, His merits, His free mercy, while they daily make Him the servant of sin. Men are anxious, truly, to be preserved from the curse, from the final punishment of sin; but they submit to the dominion of this or that sin, without any serious combat. And if men are urgently called to combat sin, they call it all legality, while they make the Gospel, in a carnal manner, favor their indolence and impurity, and run the doctrine of grace into an intoxicating draught, against the voice of the law and of their conscience Alas! The number of those who are true believers, and who in all

points grow up to the full measure of the stature of Christ, living in the element of free grace, with the greatest purity, is very small; many, many hearts are filled with the leaven of the Pharisees; and the dangerous disease of the abuse of the doctrine of grace is an epidemic which snatches away numberless victims.

2. But this is very melancholy—It cries to heaven, it is beyond all measure lamentable. For what is so criminal as for man to degrade Jesus to the rank of a servant of sin, and His Gospel to be a passport for all immorality, to a resting place for his own indolence? What! Has the Son of God trembled and mourned beneath the weight of thy sins? Has He endured the floods of torment, and the pains of hell? Has He, forsaken of God, hung upon the cross, and breathed out His precious life there, in order that thou mightest in carnal indolence serve dead idols? Behold, the Eternal God opens His whole heart to thee; He follows thee, in all thy goings; He blesses and delights thee in a thousand different ways; He sets before thee the most splendid offers for the redemption of thy soul; He sends His Divine grace to meet thee; and is ready, like a tender mother, to take care of thee, to refresh thee; and yet thou continuest with thy dead heart to praise his love with thy mouth, yet turning this same love into a cloak for thy wickedness. What are these sins which thou committest? Are they not, as it were so many blows from your hand, directed against the infinite love of God? Are they not like the traitor kiss of Judas, worthy of the deepest abhorrence? Thou sayest, "God has chosen me, saved me, regenerated me; He has snatched me as a brand from the burning; He has forgiven me my sins; He has received me among the number of His elect, and has embraced me with His free grace."

If God has done all this for thee, how canst thou endure the thought of daily crucifying thy merciful Redeemer afresh, and causing him to mourn? Talk not of thine awakening, talk not of the grace of God; thou hast as yet never known the hellish nature of sin, nor hast thou experienced the true meaning of pardon. If the Lord has chosen, saved, favored, and blessed thee, shouldest thou not in deep humility bow thyself to the dust? Thy heartfelt love for the God who has thus loved thee, should daily incite thee to gratitude: "For to this end hath God chosen us," says St. Paul, "that we should be holy and unblamable before Him in love." If you can so far abuse the Gospel of the grace of God, as to bear to continue even in one single sin, without contrition, striving, and fighting against it, and without the most earnest wish to subdue it; you are a dreadful hypocrite, and your sins are by far more hateful and abominable than the sins of those who do not possess your knowledge. If, however, the abuse of the doctrine of grace is such a horrible and crying sin, such an unnatural wickedness, its punishment will likewise be fearful. We see a proof of this in Judas Iscariot, the traitor. This ungodly wretch imagined that he was in the favor of Jesus, and belonged to the number of His elect; but he deceived himself, it was not so. He was in secret alliance with sin. He was devoted to avarice; and he coveted, and stole, under the very eyes of Him whose disciple he pretended to be. He even journeyed about with the other Apostles; preached the name of Jesus; and who knows but that he was not more conversant with the doctrines of the Gospel than the rest of the Apostles put together? But what did it avail him? Discord gnawed at his vitals; an evil conscience tormented him as often as he came under his Master's eye; a warning from the lips of his Lord sounded in his ear, as the thunder of the judgment; till at last the flames of despair; which consumed his vitals, burst forth—till he, finally, in the grasp of this despair, put an end to himself with horror and dread. Yea, if you apprehend the doctrine of grace, only carnally; if you leave it as a useless treasure of knowledge, to dwell only in the head, instead of within the

heart; if you lend but a finger to Satan, while you pretend to be giving your whole hand to Jesus, and are knowingly and willfully under the dominion of the least appearance of sin; then you are on the direct road which Judas took to eternal damnation. The abuse of this doctrine is the most dreadful ingratitude, the most fearful mockery of the living God, which men can commit—the most hateful insult which we can show to the Lord.

What wonder is it that the Lord, who will not be mocked, threatens it with the most dreadful punishments?

3. Yea! Our compassionate God guards and warns us, that we may not in future receive our portion with the hypocrites. He assists us in His mercy, that we may be secured from the abuse of His grace, and may attain to the right and proper use of it. How does this appear? How are we to attain to it? We will shortly, in the last place, consider this. We have seen already how this abominable sin is very easy to commit; how common it is; and how criminal, and therefore how worthy of punishment. If you have attentively and considerately followed what has been hitherto said, you will have remarked, that we spoke not so much of the abuse of grace itself, as of the abuse of the doctrine of grace. There is a wide difference between the two. The doctrine of grace may be viewed in a false, sinful light, and looked at only on one side, so as to have no influence—at least, no deep, essential influence—upon the reason and actions of the man. But is this possible with grace itself? "God forbid," says Paul, "that we which are dead to sin should live any longer therein!" True grace contains a death blow to all sin, and a powerful incitement to all goodness. Whoever has truly found grace in the eyes of the Lord, has seen sin in all its most hateful forms, and knows its curse, its deserving of condemnation, and has engaged in warm combat against it; bearing a bitter hatred towards it in his heart, and not even having any inward desire in his soul, but this, to consecrate his whole heart, his whole life to the Lord, who has in so unmerited a manner saved him, and drawn him to Himself. But whosoever can grieve this Eternal Comforter, by even one single sin; whosoever can reconcile his heart to take pleasure in any sinful deed or desire, has placed a phantom, an airy conception of his brain, in the stead of real grace; and does not belong to those who have experienced the grace of God, and are become partakers of it. If you wish then to be freed from the abuse of grace, and to attain to the right use of it, behold I can give you no other advice than this: Learn to know the grace of God by experience. In grace alone, where it is in truth experienced, lies all-saving power. Learn to see what thou art in the sight of God; what thou deservest according to His law; learn to know, how it is only through His free mercy that thy salvation can be effected; and that He has effected it. You must descend from the proud height of your imagined righteousness, till you know yourself, as Paul did, to be the chief of sinners, who has deserved everlasting wrath, curse, damnation, and hell; but who is not worthy of the least benefit from God. When you have learned this in deep humility, then the grace of God will become great and precious to you; then you will perceive what a hateful hellish monster all sin, and every sin, is; then it will be your chief desire daily and hourly to destroy all and each sin; yea, then will your heart lay hold of the free grace of God, so that in the deepest heartfelt humility, love, and thankfulness, you will offer yourself as a living sacrifice for the great love wherewith the Lord has loved you, and will ever love you. Means of grace are not wanting to us. If it is the real intention of your heart—and not only of your lips—to attain to grace; if the Spirit of God has kindled a longing after God in you, then you will faithfully employ the Word of God, prayer, and the holy sacraments; and avoid all occasions of sin, and frivolous, vain, worldly society; and strive with all your efforts, and all the powers at your command, to attain the goal—the everlasting blessedness of your soul.

Thus we return anew to begging and entreating you, and admonishing you in Christ's stead: "be ye reconciled to God." No longer reject the saving hand of your Surety; fall at His feet, and become His blessed heritage. With all the riches of His house, with all the precious blood-bought treasures of His kingdom, with all His most holy merits, with his spotless righteousness, with endless peace, with joy which infinitely outweighs all earthly pleasures, the Everlasting Comforter appears before thy soul to crown it with grace and mercy. Oh, receive the presents of this bountiful Lord. Draw Him towards thyself with all the treasures of His grace, and He will stablish, strengthen, and settle you in the blessed experience, that His grace shall never depart from you, nor the covenant of His peace fail.