

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCE

Chapter 7 COMPLEMENT

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Transcript

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COMPLEMENT

Let us begin by defining our term. The "complement" of a thing is that which gives it completeness. In contemplating the natural condition of Adam's children we obtain a one-sided and misleading view if we confine our attention to their spiritual helplessness. That they are morally impotent, that they are totally depraved, that they are thoroughly under the bondage of sin, has been amply demonstrated. But that does not supply us with a complete diagnosis of their present state before God. Though fallen man is a wrecked and ruined creature, nevertheless he is still accountable to his Maker and Ruler. Though sin has darkened his understanding and blinded his judgment, he is still a rational being. Though his very nature is corrupt at its root, this does not exempt him from loving God with all his heart. Though he is "without strength," yet he is not "without excuse." And why not? Because side by side with fallen man's inability is his moral responsibility. MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

It is at this very point that the people of God, and especially His ministers, need to be much on their guard. If they appropriate one of the essential parts of the doctrine of Scripture but fail to lay hold of the equally essential supplementary part, then they will necessarily obtain a distorted view of the doctrine. "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). The word emphasized in the above quotation is of paramount importance, though its significance seems to be discerned by few today. Truth is twofold. Every aspect of truth presented in the Word is balanced by a counterpart aspect; every element of doctrine has its corresponding obligation. These two sides of the truth do not cross each other, but run parallel. They are not contradictory but complementary. The one aspect is just as essential as the other, and both must be retained if we are to be preserved from dangerous error. It is only as we hold firmly to "all the counsel of God" that we are delivered from the fatal pitfalls of false theology. God Himself has illustrated this duality of truth by communicating the same concept to us in the form of the two Testaments, the Old and the New, the contents of which, broadly speaking, exemplify those two summaries of His nature and character: "God is light" (1 John 1:5); "God is love" (1 John 4:8). This same fundamental feature is seen again in the two principal communications which God has made, namely, His law and His gospel. That which characterizes the divine revelation in its broad outlines also holds equally

good in connection with its details. Promises are balanced by precepts, the gifts of grace with the requirements of righteousness, the bestowments of abounding mercy with the exactions of inflexible justice. Correspondingly, the duties placed upon us answer to this twofold revelation of the divine character and will; as light and the Giver of the law, God requires the sinner to repent and the saint to fear Him; as love and the Giver of the gospel, the one is called upon to believe and the other to rejoice. The doctrine of man's accountability and responsibility to God is set forth so plainly, so fully and so constantly throughout the Scriptures that he who runs may read it, and only those who deliberately close their eyes to it can fail to perceive its verity and force. The entire volume of God's Word testifies to the fact that He requires from man right affections and right actions, and that He judges and treats him according to these. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12) that the rights of God may be enforced upon moral agents. In the day of the revelation of His righteous judgment, God "will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:5-6). Then will be fulfilled that word of Christ's "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Men are responsible to employ in God's service the faculties He has given them (Matt. 25:14-30; Luke 12:48). They are responsible to improve the opportunities God has afforded them (Matt. 11:20-24; Luke 19:41-42). Thus it is clear that—in keeping with the Word of God as a whole and with all His ways both in creation and providence—the doctrine of man's inability has a complementary and balancing doctrine, namely, his responsibility; and it is only by maintaining both in their due proportions that we shall be preserved from distorting the truth. But man is a creature of extremes, and his tendency to lopsidedness is tragically evidenced all through Christendom. The religious world is divided into opposing parties which contend for bits of the truth and reject others. Where can be found a denomination which preserves a due balance in its proclamation of God's law and God's gospel? In the presentation of God as light and God as love? In an equal emphasis on His precepts and His promises? And where shall we find a group of churches, or even a single church, which is preserving a due proportion in its preaching on man's inability and man's responsibility? On every side today men in the pulpits pit one part of the truth against another, overstressing one doctrine and omitting its complement, setting those things against each other which God has joined together, confounding what He has separated. So important is it that God's servants should preserve the balance of truth, so disastrous are the consequences of a one-sided ministry, that we feel impressed to point out some of the more essential balancing doctrines which must be preserved if God is to be duly honored and His people rightly edified. We shall later resume the subject of human responsibility in order to throw light on the problem raised by the doctrine of man's impotence. MEANS OF SALVATION

First, let us consider the causes and the means of salvation. There are no less than seven things which do concur in this great work, for all of them are said, in one passage or another, to "save" us. Salvation is ascribed to the love of God, to the atonement of Christ, to the mighty operations of the Spirit, to the instrumentality of the Word, to the labors of the preacher, to the conversion of a sinner, to the ordinances, or sacraments. The view of salvation entertained today by the majority of professing Christians is so superficial, so cramped, so inadequate. Indeed, so great is the ignorance which now prevails that we had better furnish proof texts for each of these seven concurring causes lest we be charged with error on so vital a subject. Salvation is ascribed to God the Father "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling" (2 Tim. 1:9)—because of His electing love in Christ. To the Lord Jesus: "He shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21)—because of His merits and satisfaction. To the Holy Spirit: "He hath saved us, by the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5)—because of His almighty efficacy and operations. To the instrumentality of the Word, "the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jam. 1:21) —because it discovers to us the grace whereby we may be saved. To the labors of the preacher: "In doing this thou

shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16)—because of their subordination to God's work. To the conversion of a sinner in which repentance and faith are exercised by us: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation"—by the repentance spoken of in verse 38 (Acts 2:40); "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). To the ordinances, or sacraments: "Baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21)—because it seals the grace of God to the believing heart. Now these seven things must be considered in their order and kept in their place, otherwise incalculable harm will be done. For instance, if we elevate a subsidiary cause above a primary one, all sense of real proportion is lost. The love and wisdom of God comprise the prime cause, the first mover of all the rest of the causes which contribute to our salvation. Next are the merit and satisfaction of Christ, which are the result of the eternal wisdom and love of God and also the foundation of all that follows. The omnipotent operations of the Holy Spirit work in the elect those things which are necessary for their participation in and application of the benefits purposed by God and purchased by Christ. The Word is the chief means employed in conversion, for faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). As the result of the Spirit's operations and His application of the Word, we are brought to repent and believe. In this it is the Spirit's general custom to employ the ministers of Christ as His subordinate agents. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are to confirm repentance and faith in us. Not only must these seven concurring causes of salvation be considered in their proper order and kept in their due place, but they must not be confounded with one another so that we attribute to a later one what belongs to a primary one. We must not attribute to the ordinances that which belongs to the Word; the Word is appointed for conversion, the ordinances for confirmation. A legal contract is first offered and then sealed (ratified) when the parties are agreed: "Then they that [1] gladly received his word were [2] baptized" (Acts 2:41). Nor must we ascribe to the ordinances that which belongs to conversion. Many depend on their outward hearing of the Word as ground for partaking of the Lord's Supper: "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets" (Luke 13:26). But sound conversion, not frequenting the means of grace, is our title to pardon and life: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jam. 1:22). Again, we must not ascribe to conversion what belongs to the Spirit. Our repentance and faith are indispensable for the enjoyment of the privileges of Christianity, yet these graces do not spring from mere nature but are wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. Nor must we ascribe to the Spirit that honor which belongs to Christ, as if our conversion were meritorious, or that the repentance and faith worked in us deserved the benefits we have come to possess. No, that honor pertains to the Lamb alone, who merited and purchased all for us. Neither must we ascribe to Christ that which belongs to the Father, for the Mediator came not to take us away from God, but to bring us to Him: "Thou . . . hast redeemed us to God" (Rev. 5:9). Thus all things pertaining to our salvation must be ranged in their proper place, and we must consider what is peculiar to the love of God, the merit of Christ, the operations of the Spirit, the instrumentality of the Word, the labors of the preacher, the conversion of a sinner, the ordinances. Unless we observe the true order of these causes and rightly predicate what pertains to each, we fall into disastrous mistakes and fatal errors. If we ascribe all to the mercy of God so as to shut out the merit of Christ, we exclude God's great design in the cross—to demonstrate His righteousness (Rom. 3:24-26). On the other hand, if we proclaim the atonement of Christ in a manner that lessens esteem of God's love, we are apt to form the false idea that He is all wrath and needed blood to appease Him; whereas Christ came to demonstrate His goodness (2 Cor. 5:19). If we ascribe to the merits of Christ that which is proper to the work of the Spirit, we confound things that are to be distinguished, as if Christ's blood could take us to heaven without a new nature being wrought in us. If we ascribe our conversion to the exercise of our own strength, we wrong the Holy Spirit. If, upon pretended conversion, we neglect the means and produce no good works, we err fatally. Not only must these seven things not be confounded, but they must not be separated from one another. We cannot rest on the grace of God without the atonement and merits of

Christ, for God does not exercise His mercy to the detriment of His justice. Nor can we rightly take comfort in the sacrifice of Christ without regeneration and true conversion wrought in us by the Spirit, for we must be vitally united to Christ before we can receive His benefits. Nor must we expect the operations of the Spirit without the instrumentality of the Word, for of the church it is said that Christ (by the Spirit) would "sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26). Nor must we conclude that we are regenerated by the Spirit without repentance and faith, for these graces are evidences of the new birth. Nor must the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper be slighted; otherwise we dislocate the method by which God dispenses His grace. Second, Christ must not be divided, either in His natures or His offices. There may be an abuse of the orthodox assertion of His deity, for if we reflect exclusively on that and neglect His great condescension in becoming flesh, we miss the chief intent of His incarnation—to bring God near to us in our nature. On the other hand, if we altogether consider Christ's humanity and overlook His Godhead, we are in danger of denying His super-eminent dignity, power and merit. Man is always disturbing the harmony of the gospel and setting one part against another. Unitarians deny that Christ is God and so impeach His atonement, pressing only His doctrine and example. Carnal men reflect only on Christ's redemption as the means of our atonement with God, and so overlook the necessary doctrine of His example, of Christ's appearing in order to be a pattern of obedience in our nature—so often pressed in Scripture (John 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:6). Let us not put asunder what God has joined together. So with Christ's offices. His general office is but one, to be Mediator, or Redeemer, but the functions which belong to it are three: prophetic, priestly and royal, one of which concerns His mediation with God, the other His dealings with us. We are to reflect on Him in both parts: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb. 3:1). The work of an apostle has to do with men, that of a high priest with God. But some are so occupied with Christ's mediation with God that they give little thought to His dealings with men; others so consider His relation to men that they overlook His mediation with God. Regarding His very priesthood, some are so concerned with His sacrifice that they ignore His continual intercession and thus fail to appreciate what a comfort it is to present our requests by such a worthy hand to God; yet both are acts of the same office. Great harm has been done by so preaching the sacrifice and intercession of Christ that His doctrine and government have been made light of. This is one of the most serious defects today in a considerable section of Christendom which prides itself on its orthodoxy. They look so much to the Saviour that they have scarcely any eyes for the Teacher and Master. The whole religion of many professing Christians consists in depending on Christ's merits and trusting in His blood, without any real concern for His laws, by believing and obeying of which we are interested in the fruits of His righteousness and sacrifice. But the Word of God sets before us an entirely different sort of religion and does not make one office of the Redeemer disturb another. None find true rest for their souls until they take Christ's yoke upon them. He is the Saviour of none unless He is first their Lord. The Scriptures of truth set forth Christ under such terms as not only intimate privilege to us, but speak of duty and obedience as well. "God hath made that same Jesus . . . both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). He is Lord, or supreme Governor, as well as Christ the anointed Saviour; not only a Saviour to redeem and bless, but a Lord to rule and command. "Him hath God exalted . . . to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). Here again the compound terms occur because of His double work—to require and to give. Christ is such a Prince that He is also a Saviour, and such a Saviour that He is also a Prince; and as such He must be apprehended by our souls. Woe be to those who divide what God has joined. Also, "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). On the one side, as Christ saves His people from their sins, so He also governs them; on the other side, His dominion over the church is exercised in bringing about its salvation. The carnal segment of the religious world snatches greedily at comforts but has no heart for

duties; it is all for privileges but wants nothing of obligations. This libertine spirit is very natural to all of us: "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2:3). It was thus with men when Christ was in their midst: "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). Had He presented Himself to them simply as Redeemer He would have been welcome, but they had no desire for a Sovereign over them. Christ is wanted for His benefits, such as pardon, eternal life and everlasting glory; but the unregenerate cannot endure His strict doctrine and righteous laws—submission to His scepter is foreign to their nature. On the other hand there are some who so extol the mediation of Christ with men that they ignore His mediation with God. Some are so absorbed with the letter of His doctrine that they overlook the necessity of the Holy Spirit to interpret it for them and apply it to their hearts. Men are such extremists that they cannot magnify one thing without deprecating another. They rejoice in the Spirit's communicating the Scriptures, but they deprecate His equally important work of opening hearts to receive them (Acts 16:14). Others so urge Christ as Lawgiver that they neglect Him as the fountain of grace. They are all for His doctrine and example, but despise His atonement and continued intercession. It is this taking of the gospel piecemeal instead of whole which has wrought such damage and corrupted the truth. Oh, for heavenly wisdom and grace to preserve the balance and to preach a full gospel. We have pointed out that side by side with the fact of fallen man's spiritual impotence must be considered the complementary truth of his moral responsibility. We have sought to show the vital importance of holding fast to both and presenting them in their due proportions, thereby preserving the balance between them. In order to make this the more obvious and impressive, and at the same time to demonstrate the disastrous consequences of failing to do this, we have enlarged on the general principle of maintaining the gospel in its fullness instead of taking it piecemeal. We have endeavored to enforce the necessity for adhering to what God has joined together and of not confounding what He has separated, illustrating the point by a presentation of the seven concurring causes of salvation and of the natures and offices of Christ. We now resume that line of thought. Third, the order of the covenant must not be disturbed. Said David of the Lord, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5). Certain writers have expressed themselves quite freely on the everlastingness of this covenant, and also on its sureness; but they have said very little on the ordering of it, and still less on the necessity of our abiding by its arrangements. No one will have any part in this covenant unless he is prepared to take the whole compact. Within the contract God has so arranged things that they may not and do not hinder one another. This order of the covenant appears chiefly in the right statement of privileges and conditions, means and ends, duties and comforts. 1. Privileges and conditions. "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts 13:38-39). Do not those words state a condition which excludes the infidel and includes the penitent believer? "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me," declared the holy Saviour (John 13:8). Unless we are cleansed by Him we can have no part with Him in His benefits. "He became the author of the eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9). Christ would act contrary to His divine commission, contrary to the covenant agreed upon by Him, were He to dispense His grace upon any other terms. Some men trust in their own external and imperfect righteousness, as if that were the only plea to make before God; whereas others look at nothing in themselves—either as conditions, evidence or means—and think their only plea is Christ's merits. But neither those who trust in their own works nor those who think that no consideration is to be had for repentance, faith and new obedience adhere to the covenant of grace. Those who preach such a course offer men a covenant of their own modeling, not the covenant of God which is the sole charter and sure ground of the Christian's hope. The blood of Christ accomplishes its work, but repentance and faith must also do theirs. True, they have not the least degree of that honor which belongs to the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ or the operations of the Spirit;

nevertheless repentance, faith and new obedience must be kept in view in their place. Is it not self-evident that none of the privileges of the covenant belong to the impenitent and unbelieving? It is the Father's work to love us, Christ's to redeem, and the Spirit's to regenerate; but we must accept the grace offered—that is, repent, believe and live in obedience to God.

2. Means and ends. There is a right order of means and ends, that by the former we may come to the latter. The greater end of Christianity is our coming to God, and the prime and general means are the office and work of Christ: "For Christ hath also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). The subordinate means are the fruits of Christ's grace in sanctifying us and enabling us to overcome temptations—more expressly by patient suffering and active obedience. By patient suffering: "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17). "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19). By obedience: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4). Now the great difficulty in connection with our salvation (1 Pet. 4:18) lies not in a respect to the end but the means. There is some difficulty about the end, namely, to convince men of an unseen bliss and glory; but there is far more about the means. There is not only greater difficulty in convincing their minds, but in gaining their hearts and bringing them to submit to that patient, holy, self-denying course whereby they may obtain eternal life. Men wish the end, but refuse the means. Like Balaam (Num. 23:10) they want to die the death of the righteous, but are unwilling to live the life of the righteous. When the Israelites despised the land of Canaan (Ps. 106:24-25) it was because of the difficulty of getting to it. They were assured that Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey, but when they learned there were giants to be overcome first, walled towns to be scaled and numerous inhabitants to be vanquished, they demurred. Heaven is a glorious place, but it can only be reached by the way of denying self; and this few are willing to do. But the covenant expressly urges this upon us (Matt. 16:24; Luke 14:26).

3. Duties and comforts. Also there is a right order of duties and comforts. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). Observe carefully how commands and comforts, precepts and promises are here interwoven, and let us not separate what God has joined together. We must diligently attend to both in our desires and practices alike. We must not pick and choose what suits us best and pass by the rest, but earnestly seek after God and diligently use all His appointed means that He may "fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11). But of how many must God say, as He did of old, "Ephraim is as a heifer that is taught and loveth to tread out the corn, but will not break the clods" (Hosea 10:11, an ancient translation). People desire privileges but neglect duties; they are all for wages but reluctant to work for them. So it is even in the performance of duties: some are welcomed and done, others are disliked and shirked. But every duty must be observed in its place and season, and one must never be set against another. In resisting sin some avoid sensuality but yield to worldliness, deny fleshly lusts but fall into deadly errors. So with graces: Christians look so much to one that they forget the others. We are told to take unto ourselves "the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:11), not simply a breastplate without a helmet. We must not play up knowledge so as to neglect practice, nor fervor of devotion so as to mislead us into ignorance and blind superstition. Some set their whole hearts to mourn for sin and think little of striving after a sense of their Saviour's love; others prattle of free grace but are not watchful against sin nor diligent in being fruitful. Lest some imagine that we have departed from the landmarks of our fathers and have inculcated a spirit of legality, we propose to supply a number of quotations from the writings of some of the most eminent of God's servants in the past, men who in their

day lifted up their voices in protest against the lopsided ministry which we are decrying, and who stressed the vital importance of preserving the balance of truth and of according to each segment its due place and emphasis. For the evil we are resisting is no new thing, but one that has wrought much havoc in every generation. The pendulum has ever swung from one extreme to the other, and few have been the men who preserved the happy mean or who faithfully declared all the counsel of God. We begin with a portion of Bishop J. C. Ryle's Estimate of Manton, the Puritan: Manton held strongly the need of preventing and calling grace; but that did not hinder him from inviting all men to repent, believe, and be saved. Manton held strongly that faith alone lays hold on Christ and appropriates justification; but that did not prevent him urging upon all the absolute necessity of repentance and turning from sin. Manton held strongly to the perseverance of God's elect; but that did not hinder him from teaching that holiness is the grand distinguishing mark of God's people, and that he who talks of "never perishing" while he continues in willful sin, is a hypocrite and a self-deceiver. In all this I frankly confess I see much to admire. I admire the Scriptural wisdom of a man who, in a day of hard and fast systems, could dare to be apparently inconsistent in order to "declare all the counsel of God." I firmly believe that this is the test of theology which does good in the church of Christ. The man who is not tied hand and foot by systems, and does not pretend to reconcile what our imperfect eyesight cannot reconcile in this dispensation, he is the man whom God will bless.

If Manton were on earth today we do not know where he would be able to obtain a hearing. One class would denounce him as a Calvinist, while another would shun him as an Arminian. One would accuse him of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, while another would charge him with gross legality. All would say he was not consistent with himself, that one of his sermons contradicted another; that he was a "yea and nay preacher," one day building up and the next day tearing down what he had previously erected. So long as he confined himself to what their Articles of Faith expressed, Calvinists would allow him to address them; but as soon as he began to press duties upon them and exhort to performance of those duties, he would be banished from their pulpits. Arminians would tolerate him just so long as he kept to the human responsibility side of the truth, but the moment he mentioned unconditional election or particular redemption they would close their doors against him. That prince of theologians, John Owen, in his work "The Causes, Ways, and Means of Understanding the Mind of God," after fully establishing "the necessity of an especial work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds to make us understand the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures," and before treating of the means which must be used and the diligent labors put forth by us, began his fourth chapter by anticipating and disposing of an objection. A certain class of extremists (termed enthusiasts in those days) argued that, if our understanding of the Scriptures was dependent upon the illuminating operations of the Holy Spirit, then there was no need for earnest effort and laborious study on our part. After affirming that the gracious operations of the Spirit "do render all our use of proper means for the right interpretation of the Scripture, in a way of duty, indispensably necessary," Mr. Owen went on to point out: But thus it hath fallen out in other things. Those who have declared any thing either of doctrine or of the power of the grace of the Gospel, have been traduced as opposing the principles of morality and reason, whereas on their grounds alone, their true value can be discovered and their proper use directed. So the apostle preaching faith in Christ with righteousness and justification thereby, was accused to have made void the law, whereas without his doctrine the law would have been void, or of no use to the souls of men. So he pleads "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). So to this day, justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ and the necessity of our own obedience, the efficacy of Divine grace in conversion and the liberty of our wills, the stability of God's promises and our diligent use of means, are supposed inconsistent.

It will be seen from the closing sentences of the above quotation that there were some in the days of the Puritans who made a god of consistency, or rather of what they considered to be consistent, and that they pitted parts of the truth against their own favorite doctrines, rejecting anything which they considered to be inharmonious or incongruous. But Owen refused to accede to them and preferred to be regarded as inconsistent with himself rather than withhold those aspects of the gospel which he well knew were equally glorifying to God and profitable for His people. It is striking to note that the particular things singled out by him for mention are the very ones objected to by the hyper-Calvinists today, which shows how far astray they are from what Owen taught. We continue to quote from him: So it is here also. The necessity of the communication of spiritual light unto our minds to enable us to understand the Scriptures, and the exercise of our own reason in the use of external means, are looked on as irreconcilable. But as the apostle saith, "Do we make void the law by faith? yea, we establish it;" though he did it not in that place, nor unto those ends that the Jews would have had and used it. So we may say, do we by asserting the righteousness of Christ make void our own obedience, by the efficacy of grace destroy the liberty of our wills, by the necessity of spiritual illumination take away the use of reason? yea, we establish them. We do it not, it may be, in such a way or in such a manner as some would fancy and which would render them all on our part really useless, but in a clear consistency with and proper subserviency unto the work of God's Spirit and grace.

"The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up?" (John 12:34). In his comments upon this verse, that grand old commentator Matthew Henry said: They alleged those scriptures of the O.T. which speak of the perpetuity of the Messiah, that He should be so far from being cut off in the midst of His days, that He should be a "Priest forever" (Psa. 110:4) and a King "forever" (Psa. 89:29, etc.). That He should have length of days forever and ever, and His years "as many generations" (Psa. 61:6); from all this they inferred the Messiah should not die. Thus great knowledge in the letter of the Scripture, if the heart be unsanctified, is capable of being abused to serve the cause of infidelity and to fight Christianity with its own weapons. Their perverseness will appear if we consider that when they vouched the Scripture to prove that the Messiah "abideth forever," they took no notice of those texts which speak of the Messiah's death and sufferings: they had heard out of the law that He "abideth forever," but had they never heard out of the law that Messiah "shall be cut off" (Dan. 9:26), that He shall "pour out His soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12), and particularly that His "hands and feet" should be pierced? Why then do they make so strange of His being "lifted up?"

The folly of these skeptical Jews was not one whit greater than that of rationalistic Calvinists. The one group refused to believe one part of Messianic prophecy because they were unable to harmonize it with another; the latter reject the truth of human responsibility because they cannot perceive its consistency with the doctrine of fallen man's spiritual impotence. Aptly did Matthew Henry follow up the above remarks by immediately adding: We often run into great mistakes, and then defend them with Scripture arguments, by putting those things asunder which God in His Word has put together, and opposing one truth under the pretence of supporting another. We have heard out of the Gospel that which exalts free grace, we have heard also that which enjoins duty, and we must cordially embrace both, and not separate them, or set them at variance.

Divine grace is not bestowed with the object of freeing men from their obligations but rather with that of supplying them with a powerful motive for more readily and gratefully discharging those obligations. To make God's favor a ground of exemption from the performance of duty comes perilously near to turning

His grace into lasciviousness. In his "Precious Remedies Against Satan's Devices," Thomas Brooks wrote: The fourth device Satan hath to keep souls off from holy exercises, is by working them to make false inferences on those blessed and glorious things that Christ hath done. As that Jesus Christ hath done all for us, therefore there is nothing for us to do but to joy and rejoice. He hath perfectly justified us, fulfilled the law, satisfied Divine justice, pacified His Father's wrath, and is gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us, and in the meantime to intercede for us; and therefore away with praying, mourning, hearing, etc. Ah! what a world of professors hath Satan drawn in these days from religious services by working them to make such sad, wild and strange inferences from the excellent things the Lord Jesus hath done for His beloved ones.

The Puritan named one remedy for this: To dwell as much on those scriptures that show you the duties and services that Christ requires of you, as upon those scriptures that declare to you the precious and glorious things Christ hath done for you. It is a sad and dangerous thing to have two eyes to behold our dignity and privileges, and not one to see our duties and services. I should look with one eye upon the choice things Christ hath done for me to raise up my heart to love Christ with the purest love and to joy in Him with the strongest joy, and to lift up Christ above all who hath made Himself to be my all; and I should look with the other eye upon those services and duties that the scriptures require of those for whom Christ hath done such blessed things, as 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 15:58; Gal. 6:9; 1 Thess. 5:16, 17; Phil. 2:12; Heb. 10:24, 25. Now a soul that would not be drawn away by this device of Satan must not look with a squint eye upon these blessed scriptures, and many more of like import, but he must dwell upon them, make them to be his chiefest and choicest companions, and this will be a happy means to keep him close to Christ.

Our principal design in writing further on the fact that man's spiritual impotence is his moral responsibility is to make plainly manifest the tremendous importance of preserving the balance of truth, which is mainly a matter of setting forth each element of it in its scriptural proportions. Almost all theological and religious error consists of truth perverted, truth wrongly divided, truth misapplied, truth overemphasized, truth viewed in a wrong perspective. The fairest face on earth, possessed of the most comely features, would soon become ugly and unsightly if one feature continued growing while the others remained undeveloped. Physical beauty is mainly a thing of due proportion. And thus it is with the Word of God: Its beauty and blessedness are best perceived when it is presented in its true proportions. Here is where so many have failed in the past; some favorite doctrine has been concentrated on, and others of equal importance neglected. **NEED FOR BALANCED TEACHING**

It is freely granted that in these degenerate days the servant of God is often called upon to give special emphasis to those verities of Holy Writ which are now so generally ignored and denied. Yet even here much wisdom is needed lest our zeal run away with us. The requirements of that phrase "meat in due season" must ever be borne in mind. When working among Arminians we should not altogether omit the human responsibility side of the truth, yet the main emphasis ought to be placed on the divine sovereignty and its corollaries, which are so sadly perverted, if not blankly denied, by free-willers. Contrariwise, when ministering to Calvinists our chief aim should be to bring before them not those things they most like to hear, but those which they most need—those aspects of truth they are least familiar with. Only thus can we be of the greatest service to either group. To illustrate what we have just said, take the subject of prayer. In preaching on it to Arminians, it would be well to define very clearly what this holy exercise is not designed to accomplish and what is its spiritual aim, showing that our prayers are not intended for the overcoming of any reluctance in God to grant the mercies we need, still less our supplications meant to

effect any change in the divine purpose. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations" (Ps. 33:11). Rather the purpose of prayer is the subjecting of ourselves to God in asking for those things which are according to His will. In preaching to Calvinists we should warn against that fatalistic attitude which assumes that it will make no difference to the event whether we petition God or not, reminding them that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jam.5:16). Some Arminians need rebuking for irreverence and unholy familiarity in addressing the Most High, while some Calvinists should be encouraged to approach the throne of grace with holy boldness, with the liberty of children petitioning their father. The same course needs to be followed when expounding the great subject of salvation. Discrimination must be used as to which aspects most need to be set before any particular congregation. The manner in which this most blessed theme should be presented calls for much understanding, not only of the subject itself but also of the truth. Some doctrines are more difficult to apprehend than others (2 Peter 3:16), and they need to be approached gradually and given out "here a little, there a little." We are well aware that in offering such counsel we lay ourselves open to the charge of acting craftily; in reality we are simply advocating the very policy pursued by Christ and His apostles. Of the Saviour it is recorded that "with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it" (Mark 4:33); and addressing His apostles He said, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12; cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-2; 9:19-22). What we have advocated above is simply adopting our presentation of the truth according to the state of our congregation. There is a vast difference between presenting the way of salvation to the unconverted and expounding the doctrine of salvation to those who are converted, though too many preachers make little distinction here. Great care needs to be exercised when preaching from one of the Epistles to a general congregation, lest on the one hand the children's bread be cast to the dogs or, on the other, seekers after the Lord be stumbled. While it is true that, in the absolute sense, no sinner can save himself or even contribute anything toward his salvation by any physical or mental act of his own, yet he must be constantly reminded that the gospel sets before him an external Saviour (rather than One who is working secretly and invincibly in him) whom he is responsible to promptly receive on the terms by which He is offered, to him. It is most important that pulpit and pew alike should have a right conception of the relation of faith to salvation—a full-orbed conception and not a restricted and one-sided view. Believing is not only an evidence of salvation and a mark of regeneration, but it is also necessary in order to obtain salvation. True, the sinner is not saved for his faith; yet it is equally true that he cannot be saved without it. That believing is in one sense a saving act is clearly affirmed: "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39). Take the case of Cornelius. It is plain from Acts 10:2, 4 that a work of grace had been wrought in his heart before Peter was sent to him; yet Acts 11:14 makes it equally clear that it was necessary for the apostles to go and speak words "whereby he and his house should be saved." One of those "words" was "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (10:43). Let it not be objected that we are hereby making a savior of faith, for Christ did not hesitate to say "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50). As an example of how well Calvin himself preserved the balance of truth we quote the following from his Institutes: Yet at the same time a pious man will not overlook inferior causes. Nor, because he accounts those from whom he has received any benefit, the ministers of the Divine goodness, will he therefore cast them by unnoticed, as though they deserved no thanks for their kindness; but will feel and readily acknowledge his obligation to them, and study to return it as ability and opportunity may permit. Finally, he will reverence and praise God as the principal Author of benefits received, will honour men as His ministers; and will understand, what, indeed, is the fact, that the will of God has laid him under obligations to those persons by whose means the Lord has been pleased to communicate His benefits.

While ascribing supreme honor and glory to the Author of every blessing, we must not despise the instruments He may design to employ in the imparting of them. The great Reformer went on: If He suffer any loss either through negligence or through imprudence, he will conclude that it happened according to the Divine will, but will also impute the blame of it to himself. If any one be removed by disease, whom, while it was his duty to take care of him, he has treated with neglect,—though he cannot be ignorant that that person had reached those limits which it was impossible for him to pass, yet he will not make this a plea to extenuate his guilt; but, because he has not faithfully performed his duty towards him, will consider him as having perished through his criminal negligence. Much less, when fraud and preconceived malice appear in the perpetration either of murder or of theft, will he excuse those enormities under the pretext of the Divine Providence: in the same crime he will distinctly contemplate the righteousness of God and the iniquity of man, as they respectively discover themselves.

How far was Calvin from the squint-eyed vision of many who claim to be his admirers! Writing on "the conducting of prayer in a right and proper manner," he stated: The fourth and last rule is, That thus prostrate with true humility, we should nevertheless be animated to pray by the certain hope of obtaining our requests. It is indeed an apparent contradiction to connect a certain confidence of God's favour with a sense of His righteous vengeance, though these two things are perfectly consistent if persons oppressed by their own guilt be encouraged solely by the Divine goodness. For as we have before stated that repentance and faith, of which one terrifies and the other exhilarates, are inseparably connected, so their union is necessary in prayer. And this agreement is briefly expressed by David: "I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy: and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple" (Psa. 5:7). Under the goodness of God he comprehends faith, though not to the exclusion of fear, for His majesty not only commands our reverence, but our own unworthiness makes us forget all pride and security and fills us with fear. I do not mean a confidence which delivers the mind from all sense of anxiety, and soothes it into pleasant and perfect tranquillity, for such a placid satisfaction belongs to those whose prosperity is equal to their wishes, who are affected by no care, corroded by no anxiety and alarmed by no fear. And the saints have an excellent stimulus to calling upon God when their needs and perplexities harass and disquiet them and they are almost despairing in themselves, till faith opportunity relieves them; because amid such troubles the goodness of God is so glorious in their view, that though they groan under the pressure of present calamities and are likewise tormented with the fear of greater in future, yet a reliance on it alleviates the difficulty of bearing them and encourages a hope of deliverance.

Here we have brought together two radically different exercises of the mind, which are totally diverse in their springs, their nature and their tendency—fear and confidence, perturbation and tranquillity: two spiritual graces which some imagine neutralize each other—humility and assurance. A sight of God's ineffable holiness fills a renewed heart with awe; and when it is coupled with a sense of His high majesty and inflexible righteousness, the soul—conscious of its excuseless sins, its defilement and its guilt—is made to fear and tremble, feeling utterly unfit and unworthy to address the Most High. Yes, but if the humbled saint is able to also contemplate the goodness of God, view Him as the Father of mercies and consider some of His exceeding great and precious promises which are exactly suited to his dire needs, he is encouraged to hope. And while his humility does not then degenerate into presumption, yet is he constrained to come boldly to the throne of grace and present his petitions. Calvin spoke clearly on this point: The prayers of a pious man, therefore, must proceed from both these dispositions, and must also contain and discover them both: though he must groan under present evils and is anxiously afraid of new ones, yet at the same time he must resort for refuge to God, not doubting His readiness to extend the assistance of His hand. For God is highly displeased by our distrust, if we supplicate Him for blessings

which we have no expectation of receiving. There is nothing, therefore, more suitable to the nature of prayers, than that they be conformed to this rule:—not to rush forward with temerity, but to follow the steps of faith. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (Jam. 1:5, 6). Where, by opposing "faith" to "wavering" he very aptly expresses its nature. And equally worthy of attention is what he adds, that they avail nothing who call upon God in unbelief and doubt, and are uncertain in their minds whether they shall be heard or not.

The charge preferred by God against Israel's priests of old—"Ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law" (Mal. 2:9)—applies to many preachers today. Some have gone to such extremes that they have denied there is any such thing as God chastising His own dear children. They argue that since "he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (Num. 23:21), and since He has declared of His bride, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee" (Song of Sol. 4:7), there remains no occasion for the rod. It is this dwelling on favorite portions of truth to the exclusion of others which has led many into grievous errors. The non-imputation of sin to believers and the chastising of sin in believers are both plainly taught in the Scriptures (e.g., 2 Sam. 12:13-14 where both facts are mentioned side by side). Whether or not they can be reconciled to mere human reason, both must be firmly held by us. As Matthew Henry tersely expressed it, "In the doctrine of Christ there are paradoxes which to men of corrupt mind are stumblingstones." It is the twofoldness of truth which has (in part) furnished occasion for infidels to declare that the Bible is full of contradictions; being blind spiritually, they are unable to perceive the perfect harmony of the whole. To what a sorry pass have things come, then, when some who wish to be regarded as the very champions of orthodoxy make the same charge against those who contend for the entire faith once delivered to the saints. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is the standard which must be applied to the pulpit as well as the lawcourt. One element of truth must not be pressed to such an extreme that another is denied; each must be given its due and distinctive place. It is a favorite device of Satan's to drive us from one extreme to another. This may be seen by observing the order of the temptations which he set before the Saviour. First he sought to overthrow Christ's faith, to bring Him to doubt the Word of God and His goodness to Him. He said something like this: "God has proclaimed from heaven that Thou art His beloved Son, yet He is allowing Thee to starve to death here in the wilderness," as is clear from his "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." Failing to prevail by such an assault, Satan then took a contrary course in his next attack, seeking to bring the Lord Jesus to act presumptuously: "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The force of this was: "Since Thou art so fully assured of the Father's loving care, demonstrate Thy confidence in His protection; since Thy faith in His Word is so unshakable, count upon His promise that no harm shall befall Thee even though Thou castest Thyself from the pinnacle of the temple." The above has been recorded for our learning, for it shows us the guile of the devil and the cunning tactics which he employs, especially that of swinging from one extreme to another. Let it be borne in mind that as he dealt there with Christ the Head, so Satan continues to act with all Christ's members. If he cannot bring them to one extreme, he will endeavor to drive them to another. If he cannot bring a man to covetousness and miserliness, he will attempt to drive him to prodigality and thriftlessness. If a man is of the sober and somber type, let him beware lest the devil, in condemning him for this, lead him into levity and irreverence. The devil cannot endure one who turns neither to the right hand nor to the left; nevertheless, we must seek to keep the golden mean, neither doubting on the one hand nor presuming on the other, giving way neither to despair nor to recklessness. Let us not forget that truth itself may be misused (2 Pet. 3:16), and the very grace of God may be turned into lasciviousness (Jude 4). Solemn warnings are these. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring

it to pass" (Ps. 37:5). That is a blessed promise, yet I altogether pervert it if I use it to the neglect of duty and sit down and do nothing. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free" (Gal. 5:1). That is an important precept, yet I put it to wrong use if I so stand up for my own rights that I exercise no love for my brothers in Christ. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). That too is a blessed promise, yet it does not exempt me from using all proper means for my preservation. The Christian farmer knows that unless God is pleased to bless his labors he will reap no harvest, but that does not hinder him from plowing and harrowing. Let us close these remarks by a helpful quotation from one who showed the perfect consistency between Romans 8:38-39 and 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Charles Hodge stated: The reckless and listless Corinthians thought they could safely indulge themselves to the very verge of sin; while this devoted apostle considered himself as engaged in a life-struggle for his salvation. The same apostle, however, who evidently acted on the principle that the righteous scarcely are saved and that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, at other times breaks out in the most joyous assurance of salvation, and says that he was persuaded that nothing in heaven, earth or hell could ever separate him from the love of God. The one state of mind is the necessary condition of the other. It is only those who are conscious of this constant and deadly struggle with sin, to whom this assurance is given. In the very same breath Paul says, "O wretched man that I am" and "thanks be to God who giveth us the victory" (Rom. 7: 24, 25). It is the indolent and self-empty professor who is filled with a carnal confidence.

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