

fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” (Matt. 15:19-20). “An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45).

Yet sin is not a weakness or flaw for which we cannot be held responsible. It is an energetic, purposeful antagonism to God. Sinners freely and gladly choose sin. It is human nature to love sin and hate God. “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” (Rom. 8:7, KJV).

In other words, sin is rebellion against God. Sinners reason in their hearts, “With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?” (Ps. 12:4, emphasis added). Isaiah 57.4 characterizes sinners as rebellious children who open wide their mouths and stick out their tongues against God. Sin would dethrone God, depose Him, usurp Him, and set self in His rightful place. All sin is ultimately an act of pride, which says, “Move over, God; I’m in charge.” That’s why all sin at *its core is blasphemy*.

- O. We inevitably attempt to camouflage or disavow our own sinfulness. There are many ways we do this, as we have noted. They can be summarized in roughly three categories: covering up, justifying ourselves, and being oblivious to our own sins.

First, we try to cover up. Adam and Eve did this in the Garden, after the first sin: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” (Gen. 3:7). Then they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God (v. 8). King David tried in futility to cover his guilt when he sinned against Uriah. He had committed adultery with Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba. When she became pregnant, David first plotted to try to make it seem as if Uriah was the father of the baby (2 Sam. 11:5-13). When that didn’t work, he schemed to have Uriah killed (vv. 14-17). That only compounded his sin. For all the months of Bathsheba’s pregnancy, David continued to cover his sin (2 Sam. 11:27). Later, when David was confronted with his sin and repented, he confessed, “When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer.” (Ps. 32:3-4).

Second, we attempt to justify ourselves. Sin is always someone else’s fault. Adam blamed Eve, whom he described as “the woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the

tree, and I ate.” (Gen. 3:12, emphasis added). That shows he was blaming God as well. He didn’t even know what a woman was, until he woke up married to one! God, he reasoned, was responsible for the woman who victimized him. We likewise try to excuse our wrongdoing because we think it is someone else’s fault. Or we argue that we think we have a valid reason. We convince ourselves that it is okay to return evil for evil (cf. Prov. 24:29; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9). Or we reason that if our ultimate motives are good, evil can be justified--the perversion of thinking the end justifies any means (cf. Rom. 3:8). We call sin sickness, label ourselves victims, or deny that what we have done is really wrong. The human mind is endlessly creative when it comes to finding ways to justify evil.

Third, we are oblivious to our own sin. We do often sin in ignorance or presumption.

“Let me put it very plainly in this way: there is no point in our saying that we believe that Christ has died for us, and that we believe our sins are forgiven, unless we can also say that for us old things are passed away and that all things are become new; that our outlook towards the world and its method of living is entirely changed. It is not that we are sinless, nor that we are perfect, but that we have finished with that way of life. We have seen it for what it is, and we are new creatures for whom everything has become new.”

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

- P. Nobody’s perfect. That truth, which ought to make us tremble before a God who is holy, holy, holy, is usually invoked instead to excuse sinful behavior, to make us feel better. How often do we hear people brush aside their own wrongdoing with the casual words, “Well, after all, nobody’s perfect”? People claim they’re not perfect to boost their self-esteem, but it is another evidence of a vanishing conscience. There is accuracy in the claim, but it should be a timid confession, not a flippant means of justifying sin.

Scripture recognizes that we are not perfect. Even the apostle Paul wrote, “*Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected,* but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:12-14, emphasis added).

We all fall short of perfection--way short. Paul teaches us that our own imperfection should only spur us on toward the goal of complete Christlikeness. When we begin to use our human frailty as an excuse from guilt, we are walking on dangerous ground. We must continue to press on toward the goal: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:48). "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:16). It is folly to think that being imperfect somehow provides us with a legitimate excuse to exempt us from God's perfect standard.

According to Dr. Warfield, Romans 6 "was written for no other purpose than to assert and demonstrate that justification and sanctification are indissolubly bound together." Or, in Paul's own imagery, dying with Christ (justification) and living with Christ (sanctification) are both necessary results of true faith. Those who think grace makes holiness optional are tragically deceived. Those who think they have experienced all the sanctification they need are equally deluded. Those who think self-esteem is more important than holiness are blind to the truth. If we would know God's principles for dealing with sin, we must understand that it is a life-and-death struggle to the end. To be content with good feelings about oneself is to be content with sin.

But because we are united with Christ, changes in our very nature occur as well. Regeneration, conversion, and sanctification are the words that describe that change. We are born again -- *regenerated* - given a new heart, a new spirit, and a new love for God. (Ezek. 36:26; 1 Jn. 4:19-20). We become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:3-4). We are raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). And the old sinful self is put to death: "Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin." (Rom. 6:6-7).

For example, Paul told the Ephesians: "That you put off, concerning your former conduct, . . . the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and . . . be renewed in the spirit of your mind. (Eph. 4:22-23, emphasis added). The Greek verb tenses there are infinitives, not imperatives. They could be translated "you have laid aside" and "you are renewed" -- not as commands, but as statements of fact. That seems to make better sense of what Paul is saying. Certainly it is the only way we can possibly read the parallel passage, Colossians 3:9-10: "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

“The Christian ... knows that he cannot embrace that cross, or, more important, embrace the Christ who died on it and now lives for ever in the service of God, without renouncing all known sin. We cannot serve two masters—a crucified Christ who died for our sin, and sin for which he died. The more we rejoice in the way of salvation, therefore, the more we will mortify sin. That will not make us perfect, because there is no complete mortification in this life. But it will bring us joy in walking in the power of Christ and being delivered from the power of sin. This, in part, is the answer to our common perplexity: How can we keep our way pure?”

Sinclair Ferguson

“Seeing that sin is so sinful, it is evil even to be a thinking sinner, or a sinner though only in thought. It is too commonly said that thoughts are free. They are indeed free in respect of men, who cannot judge us for them, but God can and will. Many people who seem to be modest and sparing as to evil words and deeds will still make bold with thoughts and, as the saying is, pay it with thinking. Such are speculative, contemplative sinners.”

Ralph Venning

No sin is more destructive to the conscience than the sin that takes place in the arena of the mind. Sins of the mind assault the conscience like no other sins, because the conscience is their only deterrent. After all, who but God and the sinner ever knows about them? “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?” (1 Cor. 2:11). Many people who will not do evil deeds are nevertheless boldly evil in their thoughts. A man who abstains from fornication for fear of getting caught might convince himself it is all right to indulge in salacious fantasies because he thinks no one else will ever discover such a private sin. The sins he deliberately entertains in his mind may be a thousand times more evil than anything he would ever think of doing before others. Scripture says his guilt is the same as if he acted out his fantasies.

Q. Sow a thought, reap an act. Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny. Evil thoughts thus underlie and lay the groundwork for all other sins.

No one ever “falls” into adultery. The adulterer’s heart is always shaped and prepared by lustful thoughts before the actual deed occurs. Likewise, the heart of the thief is bent by

covetousness. And murder is the product of anger and hatred. All sin is first incubated in the mind.

Jesus taught this truth to His disciples: “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.” (Matt. 15:18-20, emphasis added).

Jesus was teaching that the real point of the Mosaic Law was the moral truth embodied in the external ceremonial requirements. He downplayed the symbolic aspects of washing and abstaining from what is legally declared unclean. Instead He emphasized the moral requirement of the law. Defilement, He suggested, is not primarily a ceremonial or external problem; what is truly defiling in the spiritual sense is the wickedness that emanates from the heart. In the New Testament, “the heart” is the seat of the whole person—mind, imagination, affections, conscience, and will. “Heart” is often used as a synonym for “mind.” In these verses, therefore, our Lord was condemning the wickedness of an impure thought life.

☞ To indulge in sins of thought, therefore, is to molest the conscience directly. Those whose thoughts are impure cannot have pure consciences; the guilt is inherent in the evil thought. When the thoughts are defiled, the conscience immediately is, too. That is why nothing is more characteristic of unbelief than an impure mind combined with a defiled conscience: “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” (Titus 1:15, emphasis added). In fact, nothing damages the conscience more than the habit of indulging in evil thoughts. Unfortunately, once begun, the practice becomes all too easy. This is a sin that does not have to wait for an opportunity; the mind can sin anytime, anywhere, under any circumstances. So the habit is quickly and easily established. ☞

David ended Psalm 19, his great paean to the sufficiency of Scripture, with these words:

Who can understand *his* errors? Cleanse me from secret *faults*. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous *sins*; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable

in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.” (vv. 12-14).

That is the state of mind of every truly godly person. It is also the goal of biblical instruction: “Love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” (1 Tim. 1:5).

How’s your thought life?

- R. A HOLY HATRED OF SIN: God has clearly indicted us for our own sin and assigned full responsibility to each individual sinner. The proof of that is the biblical doctrine of hell -- the awful reality that each damned and unforgiven sinner will pay forever in hell the terrible price for his or her own sins. In no way can this guilt be escaped by blaming others. Clearly, God does not see us as a race of victims! If He saw us as victims, He would punish someone else. But every condemned sinner will pay the full price in eternal torment for his or her own deeds -- because each one is fully responsible.

No one’s conscience will be silent then. It will turn on the sinner with a fury, reminding him that he alone is responsible for the agonies he will suffer eternally. John Blanchard writes,

“Things will be very different in hell [for those who have numbed their consciences here on earth] ... their consciences will be their worst tormentors. Nor will there be any way in which they can be stifled or silenced. As John Flavel wrote in the seventeenth century, “Conscience, which should have been the sinner’s curb here on earth, becomes the whip that must lash his soul in hell. Neither is there any faculty or power belonging to the soul of man so fit and able to do it as his own conscience. That which was the seat and centre of all guilt, now becomes the seat and centre of all torments.”

Conscience will make the sinner acutely aware that he deliberately, freely and gladly chose the lifestyle that led him to hell, that he is there because of his willfulness and obstinacy. In addition, it will force him to admit the truth of every charge it brings, and the justice of every pain he suffers, so that, in Flavel’s words, “In all this misery, there is not one drop of injury or wrong.” As if this were not horrifying enough, the castigation will be uninterrupted; the sinner will have “No rest day or night.” (Rev. 14:11). As never before, he will discover the truth of God’s words that “There is no peace . . . for the wicked.” (Isaiah 48:22).

If you find your conscience vanishing, you must realize the seriousness of your condition and repent, beseech God for a clear, functioning conscience, and set yourself to the task of laying aside sin in your own life.

Distance runners' hearts are usually larger than average. The many miles running in training actually conditions the heart to enable it to pump blood more efficiently during long periods of exercise. David was saying that God would equip him spiritually with a heart that fit him to run the race he had committed himself to. In other words, God will honor your commitment to lay aside sin.

VII. IT IS TIME TO SEARCH OUR CONSCIENCE.

- A. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23-24, KJV).
- B. Psalm 139 is a meditation on the omniscience of God. God views and perfectly knows *everything*. The psalmist represents that perfect knowledge by affirming that God knows all our actions: ("You know my sitting down and my rising up.") (v. 2); all our thoughts: ("You understand my thought afar off.") (v. 2); all our words ("But there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.") (v. 4).

Then he illustrates the impossibility of fleeing from the divine presence:

"Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwelling the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me," even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You." (vv. 7-12).

Then he speaks of the knowledge God had of him before he was even born:

"For You have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb. ... My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and

skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed.
And in Your book they all were written, the days
fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of
them.” (vv. 13, 15-16).

After this the psalmist observes what must be inferred as a necessary consequence of God’s omniscience: “You would lay the wicked, O God!” (v. 19).

Finally, the psalmist makes a practical application of his meditation on God’s omniscience: he begs God to search and test him, and see if there is any wicked way in him, and lead him in the everlasting way.

Obviously, the psalmist was not imploring God to search him so that God could gain any information. The whole point of the psalm is to declare that God already knows everything. Therefore, the psalmist must be praying for God to search him so that *the psalmist himself* might see and be informed of the sin in his own heart.

- C. David obviously had examined his own heart and ways, but he did not trust that. He was still fearful that there might be some unknown sin in him that had escaped his own searching, so he cried to God to examine him.

Elsewhere, David wrote, “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults.” (Psalms 19:12). By “secret faults” he meant sins that were secret to himself - those sins that were in him that he was not aware of.

All of us ought to be concerned to know whether we live in ways of sin without even knowing it. Whether we entertain some secret lust or neglect some spiritual duty, our hidden sins are just as offensive to God and just as dishonoring to Him as the open, flagrant, known sins. Since we are prone to sin anyway and our natural hearts are full of sin, we must take special care to avoid those sins that are presumptuous, unintentional, and done in ignorance.

Our trouble in seeing whether there be any wicked way in us is not because we lack external light. God has certainly not failed to tell us plainly and abundantly what wicked ways are. He has given us ample commandments to show us what we ought to do or not do, and these are clearly set before us in His Word. So our difficulty in knowing our own hearts is not because we lack the proper guidelines.

How can people live in ways that displease God—yet seem completely insensitive and go on utterly oblivious to their own sin? Several factors contribute to this evil tendency of humanity:

1. The blinding, deceitful nature of sin. The human heart is full of sin and corruption, and corruption has a spiritually blinding effect. Sin always carries a degree of darkness with it. The more it prevails, the more it darkens and deludes the mind. It blinds us to the reality of what is in our own hearts. Again, the problem is not at all that we lack the light of God's truth. The light shines clearly enough around us, but the fault is in our own eyes; they are darkened and blinded by a deadly disability that results from sin.

2. Sin easily deceives because it controls the human will, and that colors the judgment. Where lust prevails, it disposes the mind to approve. Where sin influences our preferences, that sin seems pleasing and good. The mind is naturally prejudiced to think whatever is pleasing is right. Therefore when a sinful desire gains the will, it also prejudices the understanding. And the more a person walks in sin, the more that person's mind will probably be darkened and blinded. That is how sin gains its mastery of people.

3. Therefore when people are unaware of their own sin, it can be extremely difficult to make them see the wrongness of it. After all, the same evil desires that lead them into sin blind them in it. The more an angry person gives in to malice or envy, the more those sins blind the understanding to approve of them. The more a man hates his neighbor, the more he will be disposed to think that he has good cause to hate, and that the neighbor is hateful, and that he deserves to be hated, and that it is not his duty to love him. The more a man's impure lust prevails, the more sweet and pleasant the sin will appear, and the more he will be inclined to think there is no evil in it.

4. Likewise, the more a person covets material things, the more likely he is to think himself excusable in doing so. He will tell himself that he needs certain things and cannot do without them. If they are necessary, he reasons, it is no sin to desire them. All the lusts of the human heart can be justified in such a way. And the more they prevail, the more they blind the mind and influence the judgment to approve of them. That is why Scripture calls worldly appetites "lusts of deceit" (Eph. 4:22). Even godly people may for a time be blinded and deluded by lust, so that they live in a way which is displeasing to God.

5. Lusts also stir up the carnal mind to invent excuses for sinful practices. Human nature is very subtle when it comes to rationalizing sin. Some people are so strongly devoted to their wickedness that when conscience troubles them about it, they will rack their brains to find arguments to stop the mouth of conscience and make themselves believe they may proceed lawfully in a sinful practice.

6. Self-love also prejudices people to condone their own sin. People do not like to condemn themselves. They are naturally prejudiced in their own favor. So they will look for good names by which to call their sinful dispositions and practices. They will make them virtuous—or at least they will make them innocent. They label covetousness “prudence” or call greed “business savvy.” If they rejoice at another’s calamity, they pretend it is because they hope it will do the person good. If they drink too much, it is because their constitutions require it. If they backbite or talk against their neighbor, they claim it is only zeal against sin. If they get into a dispute, they call their stubbornness conscience, and categorize their petty disagreements as matters of principle. Thus they find good names for all their evil ways.

7. People tend to shape their principles according to their practices rather than vice versa. Rather than allowing their behavior to conform to their consciences, they will expend tremendous energy trying to get their consciences to conform to their behavior.

8. Because sin is so deceitful, and because we have so much sin dwelling in our hearts, it is difficult for us to judge our own ways and practices righteously. On this account we should make diligent self-examination and be much concerned to know whether there is any wicked way in us. “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (Heb. 3:12-13).

9. People more easily see faults in others than in themselves. When they see others do wrong, they immediately condemn them—even while excusing themselves for the very same sin! (Cf. Rom. 2:1). We all see the specks in others’ eyes better than the beams in our own. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the hearts.” (Prov. 21:2). “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). We cannot trust our own hearts in this matter. Instead, we must keep a protective eye on ourselves, interrogate our own hearts carefully, and cry to God that he will

search us thoroughly. "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool."
(Prov. 28:26).

10. The Power of habit. Some people are oblivious to the sins they practice out of habit. Habitual sins often stupefy the mind, so that sins that once pricked the conscience begin to seem harmless.

11. The example of others. Some people become desensitized to their own sin because they let popular opinion dictate their standards. They look to the behavior of others to discern what is right and wrong. But society is so tolerant of sin that many sins have become destigmatized. Things that displease God and are abominations in His sight appear innocent when viewed through the eyes of popular opinion. Perhaps we see them practiced by those whom we esteem highly, by our superiors, and by those who are accounted wise. That greatly slants the mind in favor of them and diminishes the sense of their evil. It is especially dangerous when godly men, respected Christian leaders, are seen engaging in sinful practices. That especially tends to harden the observer's heart and blind the mind with respect to any evil habit.

12. Incomplete obedience. Those who obey God half-heartedly or incompletely are in great danger of living in undetected sin. Some professing Christians neglect half of their spiritual duties while concentrating on the other half. Perhaps their thoughts will be wholly taken up with secret prayer, Bible reading, public worship, meditation, and other religious duties -- while ignoring moral duties, such as their responsibilities to their spouse, their children, or their neighbors.

They know they must not defraud their neighbor, lie, or fornicate. But they seem not to consider what an evil it is to talk against others lightly, to take up a reproach against a neighbor, to contend and quarrel with people, to live hypocritically before their families, or to neglect their children's spiritual instruction.

Such people may seem very conscientious in some things-- those branches of their duty on which they keep their eye -- but they may entirely neglect other important branches.

13. It is naturally very difficult to assess our own sin honestly. But if we are sufficiently concerned about it, and if we are strict and thorough in searching our own hearts, we can, for the most part, discover the sin within. Persons who want to please and obey God, with all the light we enjoy, certainly do not need to go on in the ways of sin through ignorance.

It is true that our hearts are exceedingly deceitful. But God, in His holy Word, has given sufficient light for the state of darkness we are in. By thorough care and inquiry, we may know our spiritual responsibilities, and we can know whether we are living in any sinful way. Everyone with any true love for God will be glad for biblical assistance in this inquiry. Such persons are deeply concerned to walk in all things as God would have them walk, so as to please and honor Him. If their lives are in any way offensive to God, they will be glad to know it and would by no means choose to have their own sin concealed from them.

Also, those who sincerely inquire, *What shall I do to be saved?* will want to identify the sin in their lives. For their sin is what keeps them from Christ.

14. *Knowledge of God's law.* If you desire to know whether you live in some unknown sin, you must become thoroughly acquainted with what God requires of you. In Scripture * God has given us a true and perfect guide by which we ought to walk. He has expressed His precepts clearly and abundantly, so that we might be able to know -- despite our own spiritual darkness and disadvantages -- precisely what He requires of us. What a full and abundant revelation of God's mind we have in the Scriptures! How plain it is in instructing us how to behave! How often the precepts are repeated! And how explicitly they are revealed in so many various forms so that we might fully understand them!

But what good is all that if we neglect God's revelation and make no effort to become acquainted with it? What good is it to have godly principles yet not know them? Why should God reveal His mind to us if we don't care enough to know what it is?

15. Yet the only way we can know whether we are sinning is by knowing His moral law: "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Rom. 3:20). Therefore if we don't want to go on displeasing God, we ought to study diligently the principles of right and wrong He has revealed. We ought to read and search the Holy Scriptures much. And we ought to do it with the intention of knowing our whole duty, so that the Word of God may be "lamp to my feet and a light to my path." (Psalms 119:105).

16. That being so, it is clear that most people are very much guilty simply because of their negligence of spiritual duties. They are blameworthy first of all because they disregard God's Word and other resources that might inform them. They act as if such study were the work of ministers only. Such ignorance is often willful, deliberate carelessness. If they are unaware of what God demands of them, it is their own fault. They have enough

opportunities to know, and they could know if they wanted to. Furthermore, they take pains to acquire other kinds of knowledge. They are well trained in whatever worldly interests strike their fancy. They learn whatever is necessary to earn a living in this world. But they will not expend any energy in spiritual pursuits that count for eternity. *

17. Knowledge of ourselves. Second, if you desire to know whether you are harboring secret sin, you must examine yourself. Compare your life with God's law to see if you conform to the divine standard. That is the primary way we must discover our own character. This is an important difference between human beings and brute creatures: a human is capable of self-reflection, contemplating his own actions, and evaluating the nature and quality of them. Doubtless it was partly for this very reason that God gave us this power -- so that we might know ourselves, and consider our own ways.

We must examine ourselves until we satisfactorily discover either agreement or disagreement with the principles of Scripture. This requires the utmost diligence, lest we overlook our own irregularities, or lest some evil way in us should lie hidden under disguise.

You might think we would already be better acquainted with ourselves than with anything else. After all, we are always present with ourselves. We are immediately conscious of our own actions. We instantly know about everything that happens within us and everything that we do.

But in some respects the true knowledge of ourselves is harder to obtain than almost anything else. We therefore must pry diligently into the secrets of our own hearts and examine carefully all our ways and practices. Here are some guidelines to help in this process:

18. Always join self-reflection with your reading and hearing of God's Word. When you read the Bible or hear sermons, reflect on yourself, comparing your own ways with what you read or hear. Ponder what agreement or disagreement there is between the Word and your ways. The Scriptures testify against all kinds of sin, and contain directions for every spiritual responsibility, as Paul wrote: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17, emphasis added). Therefore when you read the commandments given by Christ and His apostles, ask yourself, *Do*

I live according to this rule? Or do I live in any way contrary to it?

19. When you read in the historical parts of Scripture about the sins others have been guilty of, reflect on yourself as you go along. Ask yourself whether you are guilty of similar sins. When you read how God reproved the sins of others and executed judgments on them for their sins, ask whether you deserve similar chastisement. When you read the examples of Christ and the saints, ask yourself whether you live in ways contrary to their example. When you read how God commended and rewarded His people for their virtues and good deeds, ask whether you deserve the same blessing. Make use of the Word as a mirror in which you carefully inspect yourself -- and be a doer of the Word (Jas. 1:23-25).

20. How few are there who do this as they should! While the minister is testifying against sin, most are busy thinking how others fail to measure up. They may hear hundreds of things in sermons that properly apply to them; yet it never so much as comes into their minds that what the preacher is saying in any way concerns them. Their minds readily fix on other people whom the message seems to fit, but they never think whether they themselves need the message.

21. Be especially careful to ask yourself if such activities might actually be sinful. Perhaps you have argued with yourself that such and such a practice is lawful; you don't see any evil in it. But if the thing is generally condemned by godly people, it certainly looks suspicious. You may be wise to consider conscientiously whether it is actually displeasing to God. If a practice is generally disapproved of by those who in such cases are most likely to be right, you ought to consider all the more carefully whether the thing in question is lawful or unlawful.

* 22. Ask yourself whether on your deathbed you will have pleasant memories of the way you have lived. Healthy people often indulge in activities they would not dare do if they thought they would soon stand before the Lord. They think of death as something in the distance, so they find it much easier to still their consciences about what they are doing today. Yet if they thought they might soon die, they would not find it so comfortable to contemplate such activities. Conscience is not so easily blinded and muffled when the end of life appears imminent.

* 23. Ask yourself solemnly, therefore, whether you are doing anything now that might trouble you on your deathbed. Think over your ways and test yourself with the sobering expectation of soon going out of the world into eternity. Earnestly endeavor to judge impartially what things you will be glad for on a deathbed -- as well as what you will disapprove of, and wish you had left alone.

24. Consider what others may say of you. Although people are blind to their own faults, they easily discover the faults of others -- and are apt enough to speak of them. Sometimes people live in ways that are not at all appropriate, yet they are blind to it themselves. They do not see their own shortcomings, though the faults are perfectly plain and evident to others. They themselves cannot see their failings, yet others cannot shut their eyes or avoid seeing where they fall short.

Some people, for instance, are very proud without knowing it. But the problem appears notorious to others. Some are very worldly; yet they seem not to be aware of it themselves. Some are malicious and envious. Others see it, and to them it appears truly hateful. Yet the very ones with the problem do not reflect on it. There is no trusting our own hearts or our own eyes in such cases. So we must hear what others say of us, observe what they charge us with, heed what fault they find with us, and strictly examine whether there is some foundation for it.

25. If others charge us with being proud, worldly, or spiteful and malicious -- or accuse us of any other ill temper or practice -- we should ask ourselves honestly whether it is so. The accusation may seem to us to be altogether groundless, and we may think that the accuser's motives or spirit are wrong. But the discerning person will see it as an occasion for self-examination.

We should especially listen to what our friends say to us and about us. It is foolhardy, as well as unchristian, to take offense, and resent it, when we are thus told of our faults. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." (Prov. 27:6). We should rejoice that we are shown our spots. *

26. But also we should heed what our enemies accuse us of. If they reproach and revile us to our faces -- even out of a wrong attitude -- we should ponder it enough to reflect inwardly, and ask ourselves whether there is any truth in it. Even if what is said comes across in a reproachful, reviling manner, there may still be much truth in it. When people criticize others, even when their motives for criticizing are wrong, they are nevertheless likely to target real faults. In fact, our enemies are likely to attack us where

we are weakest and most defective, and where we have given them most grounds to criticize. They are most prone to attack us where we can least defend ourselves. Those who revile us -- though they do it from an unChristian spirit and in an unChristian manner -- will usually identify the very areas where we are the most blameworthy.

27. So when we hear of others talking against us behind our backs, no matter what the spirit of the criticism, the right response is to reflect upon ourselves, and consider whether we indeed are guilty of the faults they lay to our charge. That is certainly a more godly response than to be in a rage, to revile in return, or to despise them for their evil-speaking. Thus we may get good out of evil, and it is the surest way to defeat the designs of our enemies who revile and backbite against us. They do it from wrong motives, wanting to injure us. But in this way we may turn it to our own good.

28. When you see others' faults, examine whether you have the same deficiencies in yourself. Too many people are ready to speak of others' faults when they have the very same shortcomings. Nothing is more common than for proud men to accuse others of pride. Likewise it is common for dishonest men to complain of being wronged by others. Evil traits and practices in others appear much more odious in others than they do in ourselves. We can easily see how contemptible this or that sin is in someone else. We see so readily in others what a hateful thing pride is, or how evil malice can be, or how pernicious other faults can be. But though we can easily see such imperfections in others, when we look at ourselves, those things are obscured by a mirror of deceit.

29. Therefore when you see others' faults, when you notice how someone else acts amiss, what an unkind attitude he shows, or how unsuitable her behavior is, when you hear others speak of it, or when you find fault with others in their dealings with you -- reflect. Consider whether there is any similar shortcoming in your own conduct or attitude. Realize that these things are just as unbecoming and offensive in you as they are in others. Pride, or a haughty spirit and mannerisms, are as odious in you as they are in your neighbor. Your own malicious and revengeful spirit toward your neighbor is just as despicable as his malicious and revengeful spirit toward you. It is just as sinful for you to wrong or deceive your neighbor as it is for him to wrong or deceive you. It is just as destructive and unkind for you to talk against others behind their backs as it is for them to do the same to you.

30. Consider how others are blind to their own sins, and ask yourself if you suffer from the same kind of blindness. You

know that others are blinded by their lusts. Could it be that some carnal appetite or lust of the mind has blinded you? You see how others are blinded by their worldliness. Ask whether your own attachment to this world might be blinding you in a way that causes you to justify things in your life that are not right. You are as prone to be blinded by sinful desires as others. You have the same deceitful and desperately wicked heart. "As in water face reveals face, so a man's heart reveals the man." (Prov. 27:19).

31. Examine the secrets of your own heart. Do you live with some hidden sin? Do you neglect some duty only you and God know about? Do you indulge in some secret practice that is offensive to the all-seeing eye of God? Examine yourself concerning all your private responsibilities: Bible reading, meditation, secret prayer. Do you fulfill those duties at all? And if so, do you fulfill them in an unsteady and careless manner? What is your behavior like when you are hid from the eye of the world – when you have no restraints other than conscience? What does your own conscience tell you?

I will mention two matters in particular:

32. Ask yourself whether you neglect the reading of God's Word. The Bible was surely written to be read -- not only by ministers, but by the people, too. It is not enough to have read the Bible once, or to read it once in a great while. The Scriptures were given to be with us continually, to act as our rule of life. Just as the craftsman must have his yardstick and the blind man his guide, just as he who walks in darkness carries a light, so the Bible was meant to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. 119:105).

Joshua 1:8 says: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Deut. 6:6-9 commanded the Israelites,

“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You will write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

33. Ask yourself whether you are secretly gratifying some sensual lust. There are many ways and degrees of gratifying our carnal lusts, but every one of them is provoking to a holy God. Even if you refrain from gross indulgences, do you in some way secretly from time to time gratify your lusts and allow yourself to taste the sweets of unlawful delight?

Do you realize that it is offensive to God even when we gratify a lust only in our thoughts and imagination? Are you guilty of this sin?

34. You have had directions laid before you on how to examine yourself for sin you may be unaware of. How are things in your own life? Do you find that you are living in some sinful way? I'm not asking whether you find yourself clear from sin. That is not expected of you, for there is no one who does not sin (1 Kings 8:46). But is there some way of sin in which you live, which is your lifestyle or practice? There are doubtless some who are clear in this matter, some "whose way is undefiled, who walk in the law of the Lord ... who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways." (Ps. 119:1-3).

Let your own conscience answer how you find your own life. Are you guilty? Do you practice some sin as a matter of habit? Have you *allowed* yourself to do so? If that is the case, consider the following things:

35. If you have been seeking salvation and not yet found it, some way of sin in your life may be the reason. You may have wondered what is the matter when you have long been concerned about your salvation -- when you have sought it diligently -- yet to no avail. You have many times cried to God, yet He does not regard you. Others obtain comfort, yet you remain in darkness. But is it any wonder at all, if you have held on to your sin for so long? Isn't this a sufficient reason why all your prayers and all your pleas have been blasted?

If you are trying to retain your sin while seeking the Savior, you are not seeking salvation the right way. The right way is to turn from your ungodliness. If there is one member that is corrupt and you don't cut it off, there is danger that it will carry you to hell. (Matt. 5:29-30).

36. If grace seems to be languishing rather than flourishing in your soul, perhaps some way of sin is the cause. The way to grow in grace is to walk in obedience, and to be very thorough in doing so. Grace will flourish in the hearts of all who

live in this manner. If you live in some way of sin, however, it will be like some secret disease eating at your vitals. Sin will thus keep you poor, weak, and languishing.

Just one sin practiced habitually will suppress your spiritual prosperity and will diminish the growth and strength of grace in your heart. It will grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). It will prevent the good influence of God's Word. As long as it remains it will be like an ulcer, keeping you weak and lean, though you be fed the most wholesome spiritual food.

37. If you have fallen into great sin, perhaps some way of sin in your life was the underlying root of your greater failure. A person who does not avoid every sin and is not meticulously obedient cannot be guarded against great sins. The sin in which he lives will always be an inlet, an open door, by which Satan will find entrance. It is like a breach in your fortress through which the enemy may get in and find his way to hurt you greatly. If you have fallen into some horrible sin, perhaps this is the reason.

Or if you allow some way of sin as an outlet for your own corruption, it will be like a breach in a dam, which if left alone will grow bigger and bigger until it cannot be stopped.

38. If you live very much in spiritual darkness, without sensing God's presence, it may be that some way of sin is the reason. If you complain that you have little sweet communion with God; if you feel God has deserted you; if God seems to hide His face from you and seldom shows you evidences of His glory and grace; or if you seem left to grope in darkness and wander in the wilderness -- this may be the reason. Perhaps you have cried to God often. Perhaps you experience sleepless nights and sorrowful days. If you are living in some way of sin, it is very probable that is the cause, the root of your mischief, the Achan, the troubler that offends God and brings so many clouds of darkness over your soul. You are grieving the Holy Spirit, and that is why you have no comfort from Him.

Christ promised He would disclose Himself to His disciples. But it is on the condition that they keep His commands: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." (John 14:21). But if you habitually live in disobedience to any of His commandments, then it is no wonder He does not give you reassuring manifestations of Himself. The way to receive God's favor is to walk closely with Him.

39. If you have been doubting your salvation, perhaps some way of sin in your life has stoked those doubts. The best way to gain clear evidence of your salvation is by a close walk with God. This, as we have already observed, is also the way to have grace flourishing in the soul. And the more lively God's grace is in us, the more likely it is to be seen. When Christ is disclosing Himself to us, we have the reassurance of His love and favor.

But if you live in some way of sin, it is no wonder if that greatly diminishes your assurance. After all, it subdues the exercise of grace and hides the light of God's countenance. It may be that you will never know whether you are a true Christian or not until you have wholly forsaken the way of sin in which you live.

40. If you have met with the frowns of Providence, perhaps some way of sin in your life explains why. When you have received sore rebukes and chastisements, it is very probable that your practicing a sinful habit or tolerating an evil act is what has caused you the trouble. Sometimes God is exceedingly severe in His dealings with His own people for their sins in this world. Moses and Aaron were not permitted to enter Canaan because they disobeyed God and sinned with their lips at the waters of Meribah. And how terrible was God in His dealings with David! What affliction did He send upon him through his family! One of his sons raped his sister; another murdered his brother; and having expelled his father out of his own kingdom in the sight of all Israel, he defiled his father's concubines on the housetop in full view of everyone. In the end he met with a terrible demise that utterly broke his father's heart. (2 Sam. 18:33). Immediately after that followed the rebellion of Sheba. (2 Sam. 20). Then at the end of his life, David saw another of his sons usurping the crown.

How harshly did God deal with Eli for living in the sin of not restraining his children from wickedness! Both sons were killed in one day, and Eli himself died a violent death. The ark was taken into captivity (1 Sam. 4). Eli's house was cursed forever. God Himself swore that the iniquity of Eli's house would never be purged by sacrifice and offerings (1 Sam. 3:13-14). The priesthood was taken from Eli and given to another line. And there never again was an old man in Eli's family (1 Sam. 12:31).

Is the way of sin in which you live the reason for the rebukes of Providence you have met with? True, it is not the proper business of your neighbors to judge you with respect to events of Providence, but you certainly ought to inquire yourself whether God is contending with you (Job 10:2).

ATTEND
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IMMEDIATELY

41. If death is a fearful thought for you, perhaps it is because you are living in some way of sin. When you think of dying, do you find yourself shrinking back at the thought? When you have an illness, or when something threatens your life, are you frightened? Are thoughts of dying and going into eternity alarming to you, even though you profess to be a Christian?

If you are living in some sinful way, that is probably the foundation of your fears. Sin keeps your mind sensual and worldly and hinders a lively sense of heaven and heavenly enjoyments. Sin keeps grace low and prevents the anticipation of heavenly comforts you would otherwise have. Sin prevents your having the comforting sense of the divine favor and presence. Without that, no wonder you cannot look death in the face without terror.

42. Don't continue in any way of sin. If you have found in reading this that you have lived in a way of sin, consider that from this point on if you live in the same way, you will be living in known sin. Whether it was known sin in the past or not, you may have inadvertently been living in it. But now that you are aware of it, if you continue in it, your sin will not be a sin of *ignorance*, but you will show yourself to be one of those who willfully live in ways of known sin.

John 8:1-11:

"And everyone went to his own house. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say? This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.'

And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.'"

Acts 23:1:

“Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’”

Rom. 2:12-16:

“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

Rom. 9:1-3:

“I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, by conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Rom. 13:1-8:

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due; taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.”

Cor. 8:1-13:

“Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is only one God, the Father, of whom are all

things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”

1 Cor. 10:25-33:

“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for ‘The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness.’ If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. But if anyone says to you, ‘This was offered to idols,’ do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for ‘The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness.’ Conscience, I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”

2 Cor. 1:8-12:

“For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many. For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.”

2 Cor. 4:1-5:

“Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

2 Cor. 5:9-12:

“Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well-known to God, and I also trust are well-known in your consciences. For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to glory on our behalf, that you may have something to answer those who glory in appearance and not in heart.”

1 Tim. 1:1-7:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, to Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. As I urged you when I went into Macedonia – remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.”

1 Tim. 1:15-20:

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus

and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.”

1 Tim. 3:9-12:

“Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

2 Tim. 1:1-11:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.”

Titus 1:10-16:

“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’ This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.”

Heb. 9:6-15:

Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience -- concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Heb. 10:1-4:

"For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins."

Heb. 10:16-25:

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,' then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider

one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Heb. 13:16-21:

“But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. But I especially urge you to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

1 Pet. 2:17-21:

“Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh. For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”

1 Pet. 3:13-22:

“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed ‘And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.’ But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the