



PURITAN
Treasures
FOR TODAY

*Rules for
Walking in
Fellowship*

JOHN
OWEN

What good is a church community if it lacks loving fellowship?

In *Rules for Walking in Fellowship*, John Owen supplies struggling congregations with biblical guidelines for making church life in the present a foretaste of heavenly fellowship to come. He discusses both the responsibilities congregations have toward pastors as well as the duties members have toward one another. Together, Owen presents twenty-four rules for fostering gospel fellowship, supporting them with numerous proof texts, brief explanations, and words of motivation to keep them. His simple approach makes this book ideal for personal or small group study. Here, then, is a collection of indispensable biblical rules that will challenge Christians in any given congregation, of whatever denomination—a little gem that is at the same time doctrinal, practical, and ecumenical.

“Everything Owen wrote is worth reading, but some of his books are more accessible than others. This little practical treatise is a great way to meet a great Christian mind as it deals with the most basic elements of the Christian’s life in his church. I have loved reading Owen for nearly thirty years now and return to him again and again, never without profit. Enjoy this book. And learn from it.”

Carl R. Trueman, *Paul Woolley Professor of Church History,
Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia*

JOHN OWEN (1616–1683) was an English Puritan who served as vice-chancellor of Oxford University and pastor of congregations in Coggeshall and London. His works have been reprinted by Banner of Truth Trust.

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Rules for Walking in Fellowship

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John Owen

Edited by
David G. Whitla

Puritan Treasures for Today
Series Editor: J. Stephen Yuille



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Rules for Walking in Fellowship

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Preface

It takes no great insight to discern that the biblical doctrine of the church has fallen on hard times. Several contemporary trends illustrate this. The church of the living God is no longer respected as “the house of God... the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), but is instead redefined as an “emergent” phenomenon writing its own story. Many people exchange the ministerial authority of godly pastors and elders for the unaccountability of the home church or the well-meaning pursuit of an every-member ministry. They see making a commitment to a particular local congregation by vows of church membership as an antiquated practice at best, and an infringement of Christian liberty at worst.

And yet, ironically, in this present atmosphere there is one aspect of the church that advocates of all these positions generally agree upon: that Christians ought to live in *fellowship* with one another. “Community” is a buzzword that finds ready expression in all parts of Western society, and yet the church is frequently

assumed to be merely a voluntary society that one may drift in or out of, with no strings attached. How curious the assumption that the fellowship of the members of the body of Christ can take place in a dismembered body, eviscerated of the elemental structures of church government, church discipline, and church membership established by its glorious Head! It was not always so. While the pressures mentioned above are perennial enemies of the church, there have always been those in her midst who have called her back to biblical purity in ecclesiastical matters. In seventeenth-century Britain and America, many clergy and laymen showed such zeal for a return to a pure, biblical ecclesiology that they were branded with the nickname “Puritans.” Unlike today’s church-growth gurus, they argued from Scripture that the communion of the saints was not to be divorced from these structures, but rather was dependent upon them. In other words, while the church existed as an organism, it also had an organization—and the two were interdependent.

One who wrote extensively on the subject was John Owen (1616–1683), whose prominence in this movement has frequently earned him the title Prince of the Puritans.¹ Owen’s extraordinary gifts propelled him to many high-profile positions, especially during

1. For a brief biography and bibliography of Owen, see Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, *Meet the Puritans* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2006), 454–63.

the Commonwealth era in England (1649–1660). His remarkable career included such posts as chaplain to the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell; vice-chancellor of Oxford University; and dean of Christ Church, Oxford. He was also the theological polemicist *par excellence* of the Puritan movement, writing over eighty books, including some of the greatest theological works in the English language.² But despite such a momentous public life, John Owen was also fundamentally a pastor.

In 1647, he was called to a local congregation in Coggeshall, Essex, which grew to almost two thousand members under his ministry. During his ministry here, Owen became an outspoken congregationalist. It was a turbulent time for the Church of England: like our own day, there were fierce debates over the nature of church membership (conformity versus nonconformity), church government (presbyterian, congregationalist, or episcopalian), and a host of other, all-too-familiar questions about forms of worship, millennial views, and the relationship between church and state, to name just a few.³ In this

2. *The Works of John Owen* in sixteen volumes remain in print (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), as do the seven volumes of his massive *Exposition of Hebrews* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2010) and his single-volume *Biblical Theology*, recently translated from the Latin (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2009).

3. For a helpful overview of the intramural debates between the Puritans over the doctrine of the church, see Joel R. Beeke and Mark Jones, *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine for Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), 621–51.

highly charged atmosphere, Owen wrote the little book you hold in your hands, which pleads for unity and fellowship in the truth within the local congregation. It was the fifth book he ever published⁴ and arguably the simplest—providing the contemporary reader with an excellent introduction to the works of this great theologian.⁵ In the words of his biographer, it is “designed to recall men from debates about church order into serious, humble performance of those duties which grow out of their common fellowship in the Gospel. Amid its maxims of holy wisdom, it would be impossible to discover whether Owen was a Congregationalist or a Presbyterian.”⁶ The reader may judge for himself the accuracy of the latter statement,⁷ but there can be no doubt that Owen

4. See Andrew Thomson, *Life of Dr. Owen*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 1:cxxi.

5. The editor of Owen's *Works*, William H. Goold, comments, “One feature of it can hardly escape the reader's attention—Owen is here, for once, a master in the art of condensation” (prefatory note to *Eshcol: A Cluster of the Fruit of Canaan*, by John Owen, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1996), 13:52.

6. Thomson, *Life of Dr. Owen*, 1:xxxvii. See also William Orme, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Religious Connexions of John Owen*, D.D. (London: T. Hamilton, 1820), 78.

7. It could be argued that Owen's congregationalism makes a brief appearance in his parenthetical remarks about church censures in rule 14. See also Beeke and Jones, *A Puritan Theology*, 628–33; and Sinclair B. Ferguson, *John Owen on the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2001), 179–81.

achieves his stated goal of pastorally exhorting believers of every denominational stripe to unite in the common pursuit of warm Christian fellowship.

Its original title had two parts: a typically flowery seventeenth-century title, followed by a straightforward subtitle. The former is *Eshcol; A Cluster of the Fruit of Canaan, brought to the borders for the encouragement of the saints traveling thitherward, with their faces towards Zion*. The mercifully simpler subtitle is *Rules of Direction for the Walking of the Saints in Fellowship According to the Order of the Gospel*. The reference to Eshcol is from Numbers 13:23–24: “And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence.” Eshcol was a “sneak peek” of life in the Promised Land. It was the place where God gave His assembled people their first taste of the sweet fruits of Canaan to spur them on in their journey, till one day they enjoyed their inheritance in full. Owen’s point is that the local congregation is to be like Eshcol: it is *here* that we should get a preview of the heavenly Canaan in the fellowship it affords. He reminds us that church fellowship in the present ought to be a foretaste of the joy of the saints in one another and their Lord in glory.

Owen drives this challenge home in twenty-two rules for fellowship: seven duties of the congregation to their pastor, and fifteen duties for fellowship between members of the congregation. Each rule is supported by several proof texts, a brief explanation, and words of motivation to keep them. Together, they provide twenty-two marks of a healthy church. This helpful layout makes *Rules for Walking in Fellowship* an ideal resource for personal or small group study, and it is nothing if not Scripture saturated: almost 40 percent of the book is made up of proof texts!

Here, then, is a collection of indispensable biblical rules that will challenge Christians in any given congregation of whatever denomination—a little gem that is at the same time doctrinal, practical, and ecumenical. Writing in the nineteenth century, Owen's editor, William H. Goold, went so far as to say, "It forms a manual on church-fellowship which is to this day unsurpassed."⁸ Owen's work continues to stand the test of time, and in a day of confusion about church membership and the responsibilities it entails, it is high time for a new edition to serve the present generation.

—David G. Whitla

8. Goold, prefatory note to *Eshcol*, 13:52. This is the first time Owen's book has been reprinted as a separate volume since the London edition of 1778. See Mark Burden's bibliography, "John Owen, Learned Puritan," *Center for Early Modern Studies, University of Oxford*, <http://www.cems-oxford.org/projects/lucy-hutchinson/john-owen-learned-puritan>.

To the Reader

There are, Christian reader, certain principles of church affairs that all who seek the reformation of the church and its growth in the power of godliness generally agree to, regardless of denominational differences. Some of them are the foundation of this collection of rules for our walking in gospel fellowship. The most essential are these four:

First, that particular congregations or assemblies of believers, gathered into one body to participate in the ordinances of Jesus Christ, under their own officers, are divinely instituted.

Second, that positive commands bind every faithful believer to join himself to a single congregation that displays the marks of a true church.

Third, that in order to unite with and fellowship in a church, every man must give his own voluntary consent and submission to Christ's ordinances in that church.

Fourth, that it benefits the believers of one place to join together in one congregation unless, because they are too numerous, they decide by common consent to divide into more; this order cannot be disturbed without danger, strife, and breach of love.

These principles—which are evident in the Word, clear in themselves, and owned by virtually everyone who claims to desire the reformation of the church—are not liable to any serious exception from either Scripture or church history. I presupposed these four things and took them for granted in preparing the following rules.

The apostolic direction and precept in such cases is that “whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule,” to the performance of which this promise is added: “If in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you” (Phil. 3:15–16). The current differences about church order and discipline have continued since ancient times. They have become so involved and intricate through biased debates that although these matters seem clear in the Scriptures to me, those who disagree with me would say the same thing. I have little hope of accomplishing this promise of revelation (in Phil. 3:16) in men who differ about contested truths until we first accomplish the obedience of walking suitably and answerably by the same rules that we *do* agree on.

Every day I am more persuaded of this because I see men for the most part spending their strength and

time more to oppose things they disagree with than to practice the things they and others agree are most necessary. I have designed these pages to recall the minds of men from the entanglements of controversies about church affairs (at least, the minds of those who may not have much light to judge these debates, yet have much warmth and love for gospel obedience) and encourage them to seriously, humbly perform the duties that are, by the express command of Jesus Christ, incumbent on them in how they should walk.

I shall only add this: even though people who are part of a Reformed church may observe the following rules and duties beautifully and advantageously, nevertheless most (if not all) of them ought to be the constant practice of all Christians in their daily lives, even if they are not persuaded of the necessity of any such church reformation as we plead for. And in this I am fully resolved that the practice of any one duty here mentioned by any one soul that was previously neglected shall be an abundant recompense for publishing my name with these papers, which offer so little of those ornaments of art or learning that men desire to behold in things that come to public view.

—John Owen

PART 1

*Rules for Walking in Fellowship,
with Reference to the Pastor or Minister
Who Watches Over Your Souls*

CHAPTER 1

Attending to the Ordinances Dispensed by Your Pastor

RULE 1

Diligently attend and submit to the word and all ordinances committed to his administration and dispensed by his ministerial authority, with ready obedience in the Lord.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **1 Corinthians 4:1**—Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- ∞ **2 Corinthians 5:18, 20**—And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.... Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

- ☞ **Galatians 4:14**—And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.
- ☞ **2 Thessalonians 3:14**—And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.
- ☞ **Hebrews 13:7, 17**—Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.... Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Explanation

There is a twofold power for dispensing the Word of God: (1) ability and (2) authority.

The first power (ability) with its attending qualifications is mentioned and recounted in 1 Timothy 3:2–7; Titus 1:6–9; and many other places. Ability is required of those who are called to the office of minister. It may also be found in various degrees and measures in some who are never set apart to the ministry but who are by this gift nonetheless warranted to share the gospel when the providence of God calls them to (Rom. 10:14–15). The work of preaching for the conversion of souls is a moral duty, under the general precept of “doing good to

all.” The fact that some men are appointed to perform this work as a specific office does not prevent it.

The *second* power (authority) is proper only to those who are set apart to this work in an orderly manner, as we see from the following:

1. Christ’s institution of the office (Eph. 4:11).
2. God’s providential designation of the persons (Matt. 9:38).
3. The church’s call, election, appointment, acceptance, and submission (Acts 6:3; 14:23; 2 Cor. 8:5; Gal. 4:14; 1 Thess. 5:12–13).

These do not give pastors dominion over the faith of believers (2 Cor. 1:24) nor make them lords over God’s heritage (1 Peter 5:3), but entrust them with a stewarding power in the house of God (1 Cor. 4:1–2)—that is, the particular flock over which, in particular, they have been made overseers (Acts 20:28).

From such ministers we are to receive the word as the truth of God (as we should from all who speak according to the gospel), but also as the truth that they in particular hold out with ministerial authority, according to the institution of Christ.

The failure to consider these things lies at the heart of all that negligence, carelessness, and laziness in hearing the word preached that has possessed many professing Christians in our day. Nothing but a respect for the truth and authority of God in the administration

of the word will ever bring the minds of men to pay attention to it soberly and profitably. Men are not weary of hearing until they are weary of practicing.

Motivations

1. The name in which they speak and administer (2 Cor. 5:20).
2. The work that they do (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1; 1 Tim. 4:16).
3. The return that they make (Heb. 8:17).
4. The regard that the Lord has for them in His employment (Matt. 10:40–41; Luke 10:16).
5. The account that hearers must make of the word they dispense (2 Chron. 36:15–16; Prov. 1:22–29; 13:13; Mark 4:24; Luke 10:16; Heb. 2:1–3; 4:2).

CHAPTER 2

Following Your Pastor's Example

RULE 2

Observe and diligently follow his way of life, as far as he walks in the steps of Jesus Christ.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **1 Corinthians 4:16**—Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.
- ∞ **Hebrews 13:7**—Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.
- ∞ **2 Thessalonians 3:7**—For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.
- ∞ **Philippians 3:17**—Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

- ∞ **1 Timothy 4:12**—Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.
- ∞ **1 Peter 5:3**—Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock.

Explanation

An exemplary way of life was always required for those who dispense holy things, both under the Old Testament and New. This is apparent by the following:

1. Although they foreshadowed Jesus Christ, the glorious robes of the ministering priests in the Old Testament, the soundness and integrity of their person (without disfigurement, imperfection, or blemish), and the Urim and Thummim, along with many other ornaments, also set forth the purity and holiness required in the ministers themselves (Zech. 3:4).
2. In the New Testament, the shining of their light in all good works (Matt. 5:16) is likewise emphatically required. This is not only so that no offense may be taken at the ways of God and His worship, which they administer (as happened in the Old Testament with Hophni and Phineas [1 Sam. 2:17]; and in the New [Phil. 3:18–19]). But it is also so that those who are outside may be convinced (1 Tim. 3:7), and the churches themselves directed in

the practice of all the will and mind of God revealed by their pastors, as we see in the texts above.

A pastor's life should be vocal; sermons must be practiced as well as preached. Though Noah's workmen built the ark, they themselves were still drowned. God will not accept the tongue where the devil has the soul. Acts 1:1 speaks of all that Jesus began to "*do and teach.*" If a man teaches uprightly and walks crookedly, more will fall down in the night of his life than he built in the day of his doctrine.

Now, as to how a minister lives an exemplary life, the principle of it must be that of the life of Christ in him (Gal. 2:20), so that when he has taught others, he himself might not be "a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). Through this principle he has a spiritual understanding and light given to him to understand the counsel of God, which he must then communicate to others (see John 5:20; 1 Cor. 2:12, 16; 2 Cor. 4:6-7). His commitment to this work must be focused and not self-seeking (Matt. 5:46; Luke 6:32), which is why so many important qualifications of his person and lifestyle are required (1 Tim. 2:2-7; Titus 1:6-9) and also why he must aim to be an example, to the glory of God (1 Tim. 4:12).

Thus, we ought to observe their general conduct and the end of their faith (Heb. 13:7). And we ought to cover over with love their genuine weaknesses, which may arise through the many temptations they are exposed to

in our day or which are imposed on them through the zeal of the adversaries who contend against them (Gal. 4:13–14). And men will do this when they conscientiously consider that even the lives of their teachers are an ordinance of God to relieve them under temptations and to provoke them to holiness, zeal, meekness, and self-denial.

CHAPTER 3

Praying for Your Pastor

RULE 3

Make continual prayer and supplication on his behalf for assistance and success in the work committed to him.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Ephesians 6:18–20**—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
- ∞ **2 Thessalonians 3:1–2**—Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

- ☞ **1 Thessalonians 5:25**—Brethren, pray for us.
- ☞ **Colossians 4:3**—Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.
- ☞ **Hebrews 13:18**—Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.
- ☞ **Acts 12:5**—Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.
- ☞ **Hebrews 13:7**—Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

Explanation

The greatness of the work (for which who is sufficient? [2 Cor. 2:16]); the strength of the opposition that lies against it (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Tim. 4:3–5; Rev. 12:12); the concern for men's souls that is in it (Acts 20:26–28; 1 Tim. 4:16; Heb. 13:7); the conviction to be brought upon the world by it (Ezek. 2:5; 1 Cor. 1:23–24; 2 Cor. 3:15–16); its aim and tendency toward the glory of God in Christ—all these call aloud for the saints to unite daily in fervent supplication for their pastor's support. That these prayers are to be for your pastor's assistance, encouragement, abilities, success, deliverance, and

protection is proved in this rule. As their temptations are multiplied, so ought your prayers to be multiplied on their behalf. They have many curses of men against them (Jer. 15:10): it is hoped that God hears some prayers for them, too. When many are not ashamed to revile them in public, some ought to be ashamed not to remember them in private.

Motivations

1. The word will no doubt be effective when the pastor's ability to administer it is the subject of prayers (Acts 10:1–6).
2. The minister's failing is the people's punishment (Amos 8:11–12; Isa. 30:20).
3. His prayers are continually for the church (Isa. 62:6–7; Rom. 1:9).
4. Whatever he greatly needs in prayer will ultimately be for the congregation's good, and not just his own. So help him who carries the burden (Eph. 6:18–20; Phil. 2:17; Col. 1:24).

CHAPTER 4

Esteeming Your Pastor

RULE 4

Reverently esteem your pastor and submit to him for his work's sake.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **1 Corinthians 4:1**—Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.
- ∞ **1 Thessalonians 5:12–13**—And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.
- ∞ **1 Timothy 5:17**—Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.

- ∞ **1 Peter 5:5**—Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.
- ∞ **Hebrews 13:17**—Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

Explanation

The respect and esteem required may be civil, but the motive sacred; the honor of the minister is a gospel duty acceptable to God in Christ (1 Tim. 5:17). Honor and reverence is only due because of a particular eminence: it is given to pastors by virtue of their employment and is proved by the titles Scripture gives to them. They are called “angels” (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 1:20); “bishops” or “overseers” (Ezek. 3:17; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:7); “ambassadors” (2 Cor. 5:20); “stewards” (1 Cor. 4:1); “men of God” (1 Sam. 2:27; 1 Tim. 6:11); “rulers” (Heb. 13:7, 17); “lights” (Matt. 5:14); “salt” (Matt. 5:13); “fathers” (1 Cor. 4:15), and by many more similar terms. If under these titles they honor God as they ought, God will also honor them as He has promised; and His people are conscience bound to esteem them highly for their work’s sake. But if any of them prove to be fallen angels, thrown-down stars, negligent bishops, treacherous

ambassadors, arrogant reveling stewards, tyrannical or foolish rulers, blind guides, unsavory salt, insatiable dogs, the Lord and His people shall abhor them and cut them off in a month (Zech. 11:8).

CHAPTER 5

Paying Your Pastor's Salary

RULE 5

Make provision for your pastor and his family, by administering earthly things suitable to the state and condition of the church.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **1 Timothy 5:17–18**—Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.
- ∞ **Galatians 6:6–7**—Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.
- ∞ **1 Corinthians 9:7, 9–11, 13–14**—Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a

vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?... For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?... Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Explanation

It is a promise to the church under the gospel that “kings shall be [her] nursing fathers, and their queens [her] nursing mothers” (Isa. 49:23). To such it belongs principally to provide food and protection for those committed to them. The churches in many ages have enjoyed the fruit of this promise; supreme and kingly powers have enacted laws giving portions and granting privileges to churches and their pastors. It is so in many places in the days in which we live. On this ground, wherever equitable and righteous laws do allow such economic support to the pastors of churches from

those who receive spiritual benefit by their gospel labors, it should be thankfully accepted and embraced, as a fruit of God's providence for the good of His servants. Besides, our Savior allows His disciples to take and eat from the willing hand of those to whom they preach the Word (Luke 10:8). However, this is not always the case; these sources may sometimes fail. For this reason the continual care—and frequently the burden, or rather labor of love—in providing for the pastors lies upon the churches themselves. They are to do this in a way appropriate to the condition in which they find themselves and the increase given them by God. This is an obligation for the whole congregation in general, and each member in particular.

Motivations

1. *God's appointment* as in the proof texts cited above.
2. *The necessity of it.* How shall he go into warfare if he is troubled about the necessities of this life? They are to give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry (1 Tim. 4:15), so other works will need to be done for them.
3. *The fairness of the duty.* Our Savior and the apostles plead this case on the grounds of equity and justice and the laws and rules of righteousness among men of every rank in Matthew 10:9–10 and 1 Corinthians 9:10. They call for integrity in the way of proportionate recompense, as with the wages of the laborer.

To detain these is a crying sin (James 5:4–5), the wretched endeavors of men of corrupt minds, who would rob and deprive ministers of that which rightly belongs to them by the providence of God.

CHAPTER 6

Standing by Your Pastor in His Trials

RULE 6

Adhere to him and abide by him in all trials and persecutions for the Word.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **2 Timothy 4:16**—At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.
- ∞ **2 Timothy 1:16–18**—The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Explanation

A common cause should be carried on by common assistance. That which concerns all should be supported

by all. When persecution arises for the Word's sake, generally it begins with the leaders (1 Peter 4:17–18). The common way to scatter the sheep is by striking the shepherds (Zech. 13:7–8). He is reviled and persecuted for the church's sake (Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:10), and therefore it is the church's duty to share with him and help bear his burden. All the fault in scattering congregations has not been in ministers; often the people did not stand by them in their trial. May the Lord not lay it to their charge! The captain is betrayed, and so forced to poor terms with his enemy; but when he presses ahead with the assurance of being followed by his soldiers, instead he looks back in the face of danger and finds they've all run away! In England, usually, no sooner had persecution laid hold of a minister but the people willingly received another in his place, perhaps a wolf instead of a shepherd. Should a wife forsake her husband because he has come into trouble for her sake? When it is required that a church member in such a situation perform a known duty, is the crime of a spiritual backslider any less serious? While a pastor lives, if he suffers for the truth, the church cannot desert him nor cease the performance of all required duties without showing horrible contempt for the ordinances of Jesus Christ. This is a burden that congregations often lay on the shoulders of ministers, that they may not leave their post under any circumstances whatsoever, while those who lay the burden on them will often freely leave the pastors and their ministry without any cause at all.

CHAPTER 7

**Gathering to Worship
When Summoned**

RULE 7

Gather together as a congregation when the minister has appointed, along with our families.

Proof Text

∞ **Acts 14:27**—And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

Conclusion to Part 1

These are some of the rules concerning the church's duty toward the pastor or pastors set over it in the Lord, by all means giving them encouragement in the work and saying also to them, "Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (Col. 4:17). Readers may easily deduce the duties that concern the other officers of the church from these rules by analogy and proportion.

PART 2

*Rules to Be Observed by Those Who
Walk in Fellowship, to Remind Them of Their
Mutual Duties toward One Another*

CHAPTER 8

Loving One Another

RULE 1

Show affectionate, sincere love in all things, without hypocrisy toward one another, like that which Christ showed to His church.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **John 15:12**—This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.
- ∞ **John 13:34–35**—A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
- ∞ **Romans 13:8**—Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

- ∞ **Ephesians 5:2**—And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.
- ∞ **1 Thessalonians 3:12**—And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.
- ∞ **1 Thessalonians 4:9**—But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.
- ∞ **1 Peter 1:22**—Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.
- ∞ **1 John 4:21**—And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.
- ∞ **Romans 12:10**—Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

Explanation

Love is the fountain of all duties toward God and man (Matt. 22:37), the substance of all rules that concern the saints, the bond of communion, “the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:8–10), the advancement of the honor of the Lord Jesus, and the glory of the gospel. The early Christians had a proverbial speech they said Christ had given them: “Never rejoice but when you see your

brother in love." And it was common among the heathens to say concerning the early Christians, "See how they love one another!" because of their readiness to lay down their lives for their brethren. It is the fountain, rule, scope, aim, and fruit of gospel communion. Nothing will make the doctrine of the Lord Jesus more eminent than this mutual intense, affectionate love among His followers. For this He gives them innumerable precepts, exhortations, and motives, but above all, His own heavenly example.

It would not fit our present intention to discuss love in its causes, nature, subject, fruits, effects, tendency, eminency, and exaltation. Nor will I simply repeat the places of Scripture that mention these things. Only let us plainly affirm that if there were no other cause of reformation, the practice of this grace—which, shamefully, those who call themselves Christians have lost, to the dishonor of Christ and His gospel—would be abundantly enough to encourage us to undertake it, despite any obstacle.

Now this love is a spiritual grace wrought by the Holy Ghost (Gal. 5:22) in the hearts of believers (1 Peter 1:22). Love motivates their souls (1 Thess. 2:8) to seek the good of the children of God as such (Eph. 1:15; Philemon 5; Heb. 13:1), uniting their hearts with the beloved. Joy, delight, and contentment with the good of the beloved accompanies this kind of Christian love.

Motivations

1. The *command of God* and nature of the whole law, of which love is the fulfillment (Lev. 19:34; Matt. 19:19; Rom. 13:9–10).
2. The eternal, peculiar, distinguishing, *faithful love of God* toward believers, and the goal He aims at by it (Deut. 7:8; 33:3; Ezek. 16:8; Zeph. 3:17; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 1:4).
3. The intense, *inexpressible love of Jesus Christ* in His whole humiliation and laying down His life for us, specifically declared to be an example for us (Song 3:10; John 15:13; Eph. 5:2).
4. The eminent *renewal of the old command of love*, with such new enforcements that it is called “a new commandment,” and is particularly the law of Christ (John 13:34; 15:12; 1 Thess. 4:9; 2 John 5).
5. The *status of the people between whom this duty is to be exercised*: we are (a) children of one Father (Mal. 2:10); (b) members of one body (1 Cor. 12:12–13); (c) partakers of the same hope (Eph. 4:4); (d) objects of the same hatred of the world (1 John 3:13).
6. The *eminency of this grace*: (a) in itself, and in its divine nature (1 Cor. 13; Col. 2:2; 1 John 4:7); (b) in its usefulness (Prov. 5:12; 15:17; Gal. 5:13; Heb. 13:1); (c) in its acceptance with the saints (Ps. 5:11; Eph. 1:15–16; 1 Cor. 13).

7. The *impossibility of performing any other duty without this grace* (Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3; 1 John 4:20).
8. The *great sin of lack of love*, with all its aggravations (Matt. 24:12; 1 John 3:14–15), are so numerous and diverse that we will not list all of them here.

Love, which is the bond of communion, makes itself out and is particularly exercised in the following rules.

CHAPTER 9

Praying for the Church

RULE 2

Continually pray for the prosperous state of the church and God's protection toward it.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Psalm 122:6**—Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.
- ∞ **Philippians 1:4–5**—Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.
- ∞ **Romans 1:9**—For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.
- ∞ **Acts 12:5**—Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

- ∞ **Isaiah 62:6–7**—I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.
- ∞ **Ephesians 6:18**—Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.
- ∞ **Colossians 4:12**—Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

Explanation

Prayer is the great engine by which to prevail with the Almighty (Isa. 45:11) and the sure refuge of the saints at all times, both on their own behalf (Ps. 61:2) and also of others (Acts 12:5). It is a benefit the poorest believer may bestow and the greatest potentate has no power to refuse. This is the beaten path of the soul's communion with God, for which the saints have many gracious promises of assistance (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 8:26) and innumerable commands to perform (Matt. 7:7; 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Tim. 2:8), with great encouragements to the work (Luke 11:9; James 1:5) and with precious promises of acceptance (Ps. 50:15; Matt. 21:22; John 16:24). By all these things and in various other ways the Lord has abundantly testified His delight in this sacrifice of His

people. Now, as the saints are bound to pray for all men, of whatever sort (1 Tim. 2:1–2), unless they are such that have sinned unto death (1 John 5:16)—yes, even for their persecutors (Matt. 5:44) and those who hold them in bondage (Jer. 29:7)—so most especially for all saints (Phil. 1:4), and peculiarly for those with whom they are in fellowship (Col. 4:12). Since the Lord has promised that “upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion and upon her assemblies” there shall be “a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flame of fire by night” (Isa. 4:5), it is everyone’s duty to pray that the Lord would accomplish it. He who does not continue to pray for the Lord’s glory to remain on the church is not worthy of its privileges. Prayer, then, for the good, prosperity, flourishing peace, increase, edification, and protection of the church is a duty every day required of all its members.

Motivations

1. Esteem for the ordinances.
2. Concern for God’s glory.
3. The honor of Jesus Christ.
4. Our own benefit and spiritual interests.
5. The explicitness of the command.

CHAPTER 10

Taking a Stand for the Church

RULE 3

Earnestly strive and contend in all lawful ways, by doing and suffering, for the purity of the ordinances, the honor, the liberty, and the privileges of the congregation, and work together against opposers and common adversaries.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Jude 3**—Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

- ∞ **Hebrews 12:3–4**—For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

- ∞ **1 John 3:16**—Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
- ∞ **Galatians 5:1, 13**—Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.... For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.
- ∞ **1 Corinthians 7:23**—Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.
- ∞ **Song of Solomon 6:4**—Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.
- ∞ **1 Peter 3:15**—But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Explanation

The former rule concerned our dealing with God on behalf of the church. This rule concerns our dealing with men on behalf of the church. For rightly performing this rule, many things are required, for example:

1. Diligent laboring in the Word, with fervent prayer, to acquaint ourselves with the mind

and will of God concerning the way of worship we profess and the rules of walking we desire to practice, so that we may be able to give an account to humble inquirers and close the mouths of stubborn opposers. We will value the ordinances that we enjoy in proportion to how well we know God's Word. A man will not contend unless he knows his title and what it is worth.

2. Realizing that all the aspersions cast upon and injuries done to the church are really Christ's, and also our own—Christ wounded through the sides of his servants—and if we are His, even though the blow may not fall immediately on us, we still feel the pain. All such reproaches and rebukes fall on us. Justly vindicate the church against insults and false slanders. Who can endure to hear his earthly parents falsely slandered? How then can we ignore insults to the church—she who carries us to Christ?
3. Jointly refusing subjection and all opposition to the gospel by any people or things that, contrary or in addition to the Word, under whatever name, strive for power over the church, to deprive it of any of the liberties and privileges it claims as part of the purchase of Christ. We are not to give a hearing to those who would bewitch us, not even for an hour.

CHAPTER 11

Preserving Unity

RULE 4

Zealously endeavor to preserve unity, both in particular and in general.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Philippians 2:1–3**—If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.
- ∞ **Ephesians 4:3–4**—Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.
- ∞ **1 Corinthians 1:10**—Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all

speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

- ∞ **2 Corinthians 13:11**—Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.
- ∞ **Romans 14:19**—Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.
- ∞ **Romans 15:5**—Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus.
- ∞ **1 Corinthians 6:5–7**—I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?
- ∞ **Acts 4:32**—And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Explanation

Union is the main aim and most proper fruit of love; no duty of the saints in the gospel is pressed with more earnestness and vehement exhortation than this.

Now, unity is threefold: *First, spiritual unity*, by the participation of the same Spirit of grace; communion with the same Christ, who is one Head to all. This we have with all the saints in the world, wherever they are; even with those who have departed and are sitting down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Secondly, ecclesiastical unity, or church communion in the participation of ordinances, according to the order of the gospel. This is a fruit and branch of the former. It is opposed to schism, divisions, rifts, evil suspicions, self-practices, and groundless differences in judgment in spiritual things concerning the kingdom of Christ. It is opposed to whatever prevents our closeness of affection, oneness of mind, consent to “the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13), and conformity of our practice to this rule. And this is earnestly pressed, commanded, and desired in and among the churches as being the glory of Christ, the honor of the gospel, the joy and crown of the saints.

Thirdly, civil unity, or an agreement about the things of this life, not contending for them nor about them, but rather everyone seeking the welfare of each other. Striving is improper for brethren. Why should those who shall jointly judge the world contend about the world?

Motivations

1. The remarkable earnestness of Christ and His apostles in their prayers for and precepts of this duty.
2. The certain dishonor of the Lord Jesus, scandal to the gospel, ruin to the churches, shame and sorrow to the saints, that follow when it is neglected (Gal. 5:15).
3. The gracious results and sweet heavenly consolation that attend proper observance of this duty.
4. The many fearful aggravations that attend the sin of dividing the body of Christ.
5. The sad contempt and profaning of ordinances that have fallen on many churches through a lack of this unity.

Directions

1. Labor, by prayer and faith, to have our hearts and spirits thoroughly seasoned with the affectionate love rule 1 requires.
2. Carefully observe, in ourselves or others, the first beginnings of strife, which are as the letting out of water and, if not prevented, will sweep over us like the sea.
3. Zealously apply ourselves to removing the first appearance of divisions, and in cases where we do not prevail, to consult the church.
4. Daily strike at the root of all dissension by laboring for universal conformity to Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 12

Separating from the World

RULE 5

Separate from the world and men of the world and all forms of false worship, so that you clearly become a people dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Numbers 23:9**—For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.
- ∞ **John 15:19**—If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.
- ∞ **2 Corinthians 6:14–18**—Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what

communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

- ☞ **Ephesians 5:8, 11**—For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.... And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.
- ☞ **2 Timothy 3:5**—Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.
- ☞ **Hosea 4:15**—Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth.
- ☞ **Revelation 18:4**—And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

∞ **Proverbs 14:7**—Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.

Explanation

Separation is not generally well received in the world, and yet there is a separation suitable to the mind of God. He who will not separate from the world and false worship is *separated* from Christ.

Now, the separation from people commanded here is not with respect to normal friendships or our spiritual care for the good of their souls (Rom. 9:3); nor with respect to duties of family relations (1 Cor. 7:13); nor even in the obligations of love and civility (1 Cor. 5:10; 1 Thess. 4:12); much less in not seeking their good and prosperity (1 Tim. 2:1–2), or not communicating good things to them (Gal. 6:10), or not living profitably and peaceably with them (Rom. 12:18). Rather, it refers to separation from the following:

1. Their habits and lifestyle (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:17–19).
2. Lighthearted chatting and familiarity where enmity or opposition presents itself (Eph. 5:3–4, 6–8, 10–11).
3. Their ways of worship and habits of fellowship (Rev. 18:4), not running with “them to the same excess of riot” (1 Peter 4:4).

For these three and similar commands and expressions of the will of God are most explicit, as the proof texts above show, and your spiritual profit and edification also require it. Causelessly separating from established churches that walk according to the order of the gospel (though perhaps failing in the practice of some things of little concern) is no small sin. But separating from the sinful practices, disorderly patterns, and false, unwarranted ways of worship keeps the command of not partaking in other men's sins. To delight in the company, fellowship, society, and conversation of unsavory, disorderly persons proclaims a spirit not endeared to Christ.

Motivations

1. God's command.
2. Our own preservation from sin and protection from punishment (that with others we might be not infected and plagued).
3. Christ's delight in the purity of His ordinances.
4. His distinguishing love to His saints.

Direction

In the practice of this rule, let us exercise an abundance of meekness, patience, gentleness, wisdom, and tenderness. Let us not offend anyone unnecessarily.

CHAPTER 13

*Engaging in Spiritual
Conversation*

RULE 6

*Frequently engage in edifying spiritual conversation,
according to the gifts God has given.*

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Malachi 3:16**—Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.
- ∞ **Job 2:11**—Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.
- ∞ **Ephesians 4:29**—Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good

to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

- ∞ **Colossians 4:6**—Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.
- ∞ **Ephesians 5:4**—Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.
- ∞ **1 Thessalonians 5:11**—Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.
- ∞ **Hebrews 3:13**—But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.
- ∞ **Jude 20**—But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.
- ∞ **Hebrews 10:24–25**—And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
- ∞ **Acts 18:26**—And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

☞ **2 Corinthians 12:7**—And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

Explanation

I have previously said that men who are not solemnly called and set apart to the office of public teaching may still receive useful gifts for edifying others. Failing to use these gifts in an orderly way, according to the rule and custom of the churches, is to hide in a napkin a talent given for trade and profit (Luke 19:20). No one doubts that every man should labor to walk and dwell in knowledge within his own family. It is equally clear that we should also labor to do so in the church, which is the family of God.

This is declared in the texts above, which especially mention prayer, exhortation, instruction from the Word, and consolation. Now, the performance of this duty of mutual edification is incumbent on the saints in the following ways:

1. *In ordinary conversation* (Eph. 4:29; 5:3–4; Heb. 3:13). In ordinary daily conversation, believers should mention the Lord continually, with substantial discussion that tends to edify, and not waste their opportunities

with foolish, light, trivial dialogue that is unsuitable.

2. *On particular occasions* (Luke 24:14; Mal. 3:16). If, in God's providence, anything occurs that is weighty and significant for the church, believers should consider it carefully and learn spiritual lessons from it.
3. *By assembling together in appointed groups* for prayer and instruction from the Word (Job 2:11; Acts 10:24; 12:12; Eph. 5:19; 1 Thess. 5:14; James 5:16; Jude 20). This is a special ordinance and appointment of God for the increasing of knowledge, love, charity, experience, and the improving of gifts received, every one contributing to the building of the tabernacle.

Let then all vain communication be put away. The time is short, and the days are evil. Let it be enough that we have already wasted many precious opportunities for growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) and doing good to one another; and let us spend the rest of our few, evil days living to Him who died for us. Be not conformed to this world, nor to its inhabitants.

CHAPTER 14

**Bearing with One
Another's Faults**

RULE 7

Mutually bear with each other's infirmities, weaknesses, tenderness, and failings in meekness, patience, and pity, and assist those who are in need.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Ephesians 4:32**—And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
- ∞ **Matthew 18:21–22**—Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.
- ∞ **Mark 11:25–26**—And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.

But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

- ☞ **Romans 14:13**—Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.
- ☞ **Romans 15:1–2**—We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.
- ☞ **1 Corinthians 13:4–7**—Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
- ☞ **Galatians 6:1**—Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.
- ☞ **Colossians 3:12–14**—Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ

forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Explanation

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing” (Prov. 25:2). Free pardon is the substance of the gospel, the work of God in perfection (Isaiah 55), and is shown to us for imitation (Matt. 18:23–35). While we are clothed with flesh we do all things imperfectly; indeed, freedom from failings is a fruit of glory: we see here darkly, as in a glass, and know in part (1 Cor. 13:12). We all stumble in many things (James 3:2), and who knows how often? Mutual failings to bear with, offenses to pardon, weaknesses to support—may all remind us of our own frailty, as mere pennies compared to the great talents that have been forgiven us. Let him that is without fault throw stones at others (John 8:7).

Some men rejoice in others’ failings; they are malicious and fail more in that sinful joy than their brethren in that which they rejoice at. Some are angry at weaknesses and infirmities; they are proud and conceited, not considering that they themselves also are in the flesh. Some delight to dwell always upon a frailty; they deserve to find no charity in the same kind. For injuries, who can bear “up to seven times?” (Matt. 18:21–22). Peter thought it much. Some study revenge more than pardon. Some pretend to forgive, concealing a rough heart behind a smooth face.

Christ is in none of these ways. They have no savor of the gospel. Meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness, hiding, covering, removing of offenses—these are the footsteps of Christ. Do you see your brother fail? Pity him. Does he continue in it? Earnestly pray for him and admonish him. If you are angry, vexed, rejoiced, alienated from him, then you are partner with him in evil, instead of helping him.

Suppose your God should be angry every time you gave Him cause and struck every time you provoked Him! When your brother offends you, restrain your heart until you take a faithful view of the patience and forbearance of God toward you, and then consider His command to you to go and do likewise. Let us, then, put on all tenderness of affection and heartfelt compassion toward one another, as becomes saints. Let pity, not envy; mercy, not malice; patience, not passion; Christ, not flesh; grace, not nature; pardon, not spite or revenge be our guides and companions in our life's walk.

Motivations

1. God's infinite mercy, patience, forbearance, longsuffering, and free grace toward us sparing, pardoning, pitying, bearing with us, in innumerable daily, hourly failings and provocations—especially all this being proposed for our imitation according to our measure (Matt. 18:23–35).

2. The goodness and unwearied, unchangeable love of the Lord Jesus Christ every day for us; He does not cease to plead on our behalf, despite our continual backsliding (1 John 2:1–2).
3. The experience our own hearts have of needing of others' patience, forbearance, and pardon (Eccl. 7:20–22).
4. The strictness of the command and the threats which accompany our failure to obey it.
5. The great glory of the gospel, which comes when the brethren walk uprightly according to this rule.

CHAPTER 15

**Bearing One Another's
Burdens**

RULE 8

Bear each other's burdens by tenderly and affectionately participating in your various states and conditions.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Galatians 6:2**—Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.
- ∞ **Hebrews 13:3**—Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.
- ∞ **1 Corinthians 12:25–26**—That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

- ☞ **2 Corinthians 11:29**—Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?
- ☞ **James 1:27**—Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.
- ☞ **Matthew 25:35–36, 40**—For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.... And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
- ☞ **2 Timothy 1:16–17**—The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.
- ☞ **Acts 20:35**—I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Explanation

The former rule concerned the demeanor and frame of spirit toward our brothers in their failings; this one concerns our brothers' miseries and afflictions. This

also requires conformity to Christ, who in all the afflictions of His people is afflicted (Isa. 63:9) and is persecuted in their distresses (Acts 9:4). If we could make our spiritual union bear any resemblance to the mutual union of many parts in one physical body, to which Scripture frequently compares it, surely we would perform this duty with excellence. No man has ever hated his own flesh: if one part of his body is in pain, the rest have little comfort or ease. It is a diseased member that is not affected by the anguish of its companions. Those who forget the miseries of their brethren in the midst of their own plentiful enjoyments are particularly marked for destruction (Amos 6:6). If we will not feel the weight of our brothers' afflictions, burdens, and sorrow, it is a righteous thing that our own should be double. The desolations of the church make Nehemiah grow pale in the court of the king (Neh. 2:1–3). Those who are unconcerned with the troubles, sorrows, afflictions, needs, poverties, and persecutions of the saints—not even so far as to pity their wounds and feel their strokes or to refresh their spirits and help bear their burdens upon their own shoulders—never can assure themselves that they are united to the Head of those saints.

Directions

1. A proper valuing, strong desire, and high esteem of the church's prosperity, in every member of it (Ps. 122:6).

2. Heartfelt compassion as a fruit of love; to be sensitive to and intimately moved for the several burdens of the saints (Col. 3:12).
3. Courage and boldness to own them without shame in all conditions (2 Tim. 1:16–17).
4. Personal visits in sicknesses, troubles, and restrictions to advise, comfort, and refresh them (Matt. 25:36).
5. Suitable support, by administering spiritual or temporal assistance, to their specific conditions.

CHAPTER 16

Helping the Poor

RULE 9

Freely contribute and administer material support to those who are truly poor, suitable to their necessities, needs, and afflictions.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **1 John 3:17–18**—But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.
- ∞ **1 Corinthians 16:1–2**—Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

- ☞ **2 Corinthians 9:5–7**—Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.
- ☞ **Romans 12:13**—Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.
- ☞ **Galatians 6:10**—As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.
- ☞ **1 Timothy 6:17–19**—Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.
- ☞ **Hebrews 13:16**—But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

- ∞ **Leviticus 25:35**—And if thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.
- ∞ **Matthew 25:34–36, 40**—Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.... And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

Explanation

That the poor are always among us and part of us, according to our Savior's prediction (Matt. 26:11) and the promise of God (Deut. 15:11), is a trial of the poor themselves and of others. It tests their own contentment with Christ alone and submission to the all-disposing sovereignty of God; and it tests others in how freely they can part, for Christ's sake, with the possessions that fill their hands. When God gave manna for food to His people, everyone had an equal share: "He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack" (2 Cor. 8:15; cf. Ex. 16:18). This equal

distribution was again, for the necessity of the church, reduced into practice in the days of the apostles (Acts 4:35). Of the total sum of the believers' possessions, distribution was made to every man according to his need.

It is unquestionable that every man, by the ordinance and appointment of God, has a peculiar right to how he uses and disposes of the earthly things that have been personally entrusted to him. The very commands to freely distribute and give are enough to prove this. But that these things are exclusively given to men for themselves and their own use is denied: friends are not to be made of mammon (Matt. 6:24), and Christ needs for some what He has bestowed on others. If He has given you your own and your brother's portion also to keep, will you be false to your trust and rob your brother? Christ, who was rich, became poor for our sakes; if He makes us rich, it is that we may feed the poor for His sake. Neither does this duty lie only (though chiefly) on those who have great financial means; those who have nothing but their labor should give out of that for those who cannot work (Eph. 4:28). The two mites are required, as well as accepted. Now, the relief of the poor brethren in the church has a twofold rule: (1) their necessity, and (2) others' abilities. Help must be proportional to these two things, provided that those who are poor live appropriately for their condition (2 Thess. 3:10–11). And just as we should relieve men in their poverty, we also should, by all lawful means, prevent

them from becoming poor. To keep a man from falling is an equal mercy to helping him up when he is down.

Motivations

1. The love of God for us (1 John 3:16).
2. The glory of the gospel, which is exceedingly exalted by such generosity (Matt. 5:7; Titus 3:8, 14).
3. Our union with Christ, in which a common inheritance is promised to us all.
4. The testimony of the Lord Jesus, witnessing what is done in this rule is done unto Himself (Matt. 25:35–36, 40).
5. The promise that is added to it (Deut. 15:10; Prov. 19:17; Eccl. 11:1; Matt. 10:42).

Directions

1. Appoint some to take what the brothers voluntarily contribute (Acts 6:1–6).
2. Give on the first day of the week in step with the way God has blessed (1 Cor. 16:2).
3. Distribute to the necessity of the saints according to the advice of the church, besides private distributions, in which we should also abound (Matt. 6:3; Heb. 13:16).

CHAPTER 17

**Being Wary of Those Who
Divide the Church**

RULE 10

Diligently mark and carefully avoid all causes and causers of divisions; especially shun seducers, false teachers, and inventors of heresies and errors, contrary to the form of wholesome words.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Romans 16:17–18**—Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.
- ∞ **Matthew 24:4–5, 23–25**—And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.... Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false

prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.

- ☞ **1 Timothy 6:3–5**—If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.
- ☞ **2 Timothy 2:16–17**—But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus.
- ☞ **Titus 3:9–11**—But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.
- ☞ **1 John 2:18–19**—Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they

went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

- ∞ **1 John 4:1**—Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.
- ∞ **2 John 10–11**—If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that bideth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.
- ∞ **Acts 20:29–31**—For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.
- ∞ **Revelation 2:14–16**—But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Explanation

The former part of this rule was addressed in rule 4: If preserving unity ought to be our aim, then certainly the causes and causers of division ought to be avoided. Paul says, “from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5). There are certain people whose tongues seem to be operated by the devil—as James puts it, “set on fire of hell” (James 3:6). As though they were the offspring of serpents, they enjoy the fire of controversy more than anything else: disputing, quarreling, backbiting, and endless strivings are what they live on. Note such men, and avoid them! (Rom. 16:17). They are generally men of private interests, fleshly goals, selfish ambitions, and proud spirits.

Now, as for the second part of the rule about seducers in particular, it is apparent that a judgment of discerning by the Spirit rests in the church and its several members (see Isa. 8:20; 1 Cor. 2:15; 1 John 2:27). They are commanded to the exercise this duty in 1 John 4:1 and 1 Corinthians 14:29; they are commended for it in Acts 17:11; and they are encouraged in it in Philemon 1:9–10 and Hebrews 5:14. “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15:14). Gold that refuses to be tested may well be suspected as to its genuineness. Christians must therefore choose the good, and refuse the evil.

Directions

1. Get your senses exercised in the Word “to discern good from evil” (Heb. 5:14), especially so that you get

from Scripture a “form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13) of the main truths of the gospel and fundamental articles of religion, so that the first time you encounter something contrary to them, you will be able to turn away from whoever brings it and not “bid him God speed” (2 John 10).

2. Attend and listen to nothing except what comes to you in God’s prescribed manner. Some men—indeed, very many in our days—have such itching ears after novelty that they run greedily after everyone who lies in wait to deceive with cunning, enticing words to make out some new pretended revelations, and this from a supposed liberty—indeed, duty—of testing all things (1 Thess. 5:21). But little do they consider that God will only have His own work done in His own way. However, most of the seducers and false prophets of our days seem to come outside of God’s prescribed manner, leaving their own callings to wander without an ordinary or extraordinary call, without providence or a promise. For a man to put himself voluntarily and unbidden upon the hearing of such teachers is to tempt God. It will be just and righteous to deliver them up to the efficacy of error, that they may believe the lies they hear. Pay attention, then, only to those who come in the way of God’s prescribed manner. To others do not bid Godspeed.
3. Always be ready with and bearing in mind the characteristics of seducers that the Holy Spirit has given us in the Word, through which they seduce poor

unstable souls, such as these: *First*, that they come in “sheep’s clothing” (Matt. 7:15) with good pretenses of innocence and holiness. *Second*, with “good words and fair speeches” (Rom. 16:17–18), smooth as butter and oil. *Third*, answering men’s lusts in their doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3), bringing doctrines that pander to certain beloved lusts of men, offering a broad and easy way of salvation. *Fourth*, pretenses of glorious discoveries and revelations (Matt. 24:24; 2 Thess. 2:2).

4. Utterly reject and separate from such teachers who have already been tried, convicted, and admonished by the church (Titus 3:10).
5. Do not receive any teacher without a testimony from some brethren of known integrity in the churches. Such is the misery of our days that people will run to hear teachers without knowing where they came from or what they are. It is regrettable that we have laid aside the excellent practice of the first churches, to give letters of reference to those who were to travel from one place to another (1 Cor. 16:3) and to not receive any without them (Acts 9:26).
6. Walk in an orderly way, ignoring the doctrine of any teacher who is unknown to and unapproved by the churches.
7. Distance yourselves from all delight in novelties, disputes, and contentions about words that do not tend to godliness. They are usually the beginnings of fearful apostasies (1 Tim. 2:3–5; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 3:9).

CHAPTER 18

*Sharing the Church's Lot,
No Matter What*

RULE 11

Cheerfully share the lot and portion of the whole church, in prosperity and affliction, and do not draw back on any occasion whatsoever.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Matthew 13:20–21**—But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.
- ∞ **Hebrews 10:23–25, 32–39**—Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching....

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

☞ **2 Timothy 4:10, 16**—For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.... At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

Explanation

To backslide from practicing any of Christ's ways or using any of His ordinances that you are convinced He has instituted is really in no small degree an apostasy from Christ Himself. Apostasy of every degree is

greatly aggravated by renouncing a tasted sweetness and goodness from God in exchange for transitory things instead. Backsliders are seldom without excuses, but yet we see, without exception, that such things universally tend to more ungodliness. Every unrecovered step backward from any of Christ's ways exposes falseness in the heart, whatever its former pretenses may have been. Those who look for and embrace excuses to decline any gospel duty in exchange for visible and temporal things will certainly not lack excuses when they find themselves tempted.

The beginnings of great evils are to be resisted. We have already pointed out that neglecting this duty—which is always accompanied by contempt for the fellowship of saints—has been a main cause of the great dishonor and confusion most churches in the world have fallen into in our day. It is a righteous thing for God to allow the sons of men to become foolish in their imaginations. In such people, neither the love of Christ nor the terror of the Lord can overcome their fear of man.

Let this, then, along with the danger and abomination of backsliding, make such an impression on the hearts of Christians, that they might wholeheartedly cleave unto the Lord and follow hard after Him in all His ordinances. Thus, if persecution should arise, they may cheerfully follow the Lamb wherever He goes and, by sticking closely to one another, receive such mutual assistance and support that their joint prayers may

prevail with the goodness of God, and their joint sufferings overcome the wickedness of men.

So then, let us in all conditions attach ourselves closely to the church in which we walk in fellowship.

Motivations

1. The eminence and excellence of the ordinances we enjoy.
2. The danger of backsliding and the evidence of unsoundness in every degree of it.
3. The scandal, confusion, and disorder of the churches when we neglect them.

CHAPTER 19

Associating with the Lowly

RULE 12

In church affairs, make no difference of persons, but condescend to the humblest persons and services for the use of the brethren.

Proof Texts

∞ **James 2:1–6**—My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have

despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats?

- ☞ **Matthew 20:26–27**—But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.
- ☞ **Romans 12:16**—Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.
- ☞ **John 13:12–16**—So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

Explanation

Where the Lord has not distinguished, neither should we. In Jesus Christ there is neither rich nor poor, high nor low, but a new creature. Generally speaking, God has chosen the poor of this world to confound the mighty (1 Cor. 1:27–28). Experience shows us that not

many great, not many wise, not many mighty after the flesh are partakers of the heavenly calling.

That said, the gospel of Christ in no way opposes or takes away those many differences and distinctions among people that are caused by power, authority, relationships, enjoyment of earthly blessings, gifts, age, or any other eminency whatsoever. Such are according to the institution and appointment of God, and so are the respect, reverence, duty, obedience, and subjection due to people according to their respective distinctions. Much less does the gospel pull up the ancient bounds of propriety and interest in earthly things, but only declares that in comparison to purely spiritual things, these outward things (which for the most part happen to all alike) are of no ultimate value or esteem. Men in the church are considered as saints, and not as great or rich. All are equal; all are naked before God.

Free grace is the only distinguisher—all are brethren in the same family, servants of the same Master, employed about the same work, driven by the same precious faith, enjoying the same purchased privileges, expecting the same recompense of reward and eternal dwelling place. From where should any difference arise? Let the greatest count it their greatest honor, then, to perform the most basic necessary service to the humblest of the saints. A community in all spiritual advantages should give equality in spiritual affairs. Not he that is

richest, not he that is poorest, but he that is humblest is looked upon by the Lord (Isa. 66:2).

Motivations

1. Christ's own example.
2. The commands of Scripture.
3. God's not distinguishing of persons.
4. Our common participation of the same faith.
5. The sheer unprofitableness of all that highlights outward differences in the things of God.

CHAPTER 20

Praying for the Afflicted

RULE 13

Humble yourselves as a whole church and pray earnestly for any who are in distress, persecution, or affliction.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Acts 12:5, 7, 12**—Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.... And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.... And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.
- ∞ **Romans 12:15**—Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

- ∞ **1 Corinthians 12:26–27**—And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.
- ∞ **2 Thessalonians 3:1–2**—Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

Explanation

Since this duty has been described in general and included in other former rules, we shall speak less to it. God delights in the fervent prayers of His churches as much as in their thankful praises; therefore, He calls them, by various providential dispensations, to perform these duties. Now often, to spare the whole church, He does this by the afflictions of one of the members of the congregation, knowing that the near relation that is between them, by His institution and Spirit, will make their distress common and their prayers closely combined.

Spiritual union is more noble and excellent than natural; and yet in this it would be monstrous if any particular member, or the whole congregation in general, did not both suffer with and care for the distress of every part and member. Any member who does not feel

the pains of his fellow members is rotten and ready to be cut off, for fear of infecting the body.

Therefore, if any members of the church lie under the immediate afflicting hand of God or the persecuting rage of man, it is the duty of every fellow member and the church in general to be aware of it, and to consider themselves such sharers in it as to be instantly before God in earnest prayer, and helpful to them by appropriate practical assistance in order that their spiritual concern in that affliction may be clear.

Motivations

1. The will of God is fulfilled by it.
2. The glory of the gospel is exalted in it.
3. The preservation and deliverance of the whole church is procured by it.
4. Conformity with Christ's sufferings in His saints is attained by it.
5. An invaluable benefit of church fellowship is enjoyed by it.

CHAPTER 21

*Keeping Each Other
Accountable*

RULE 14

Watch vigilantly over each other's lives, mutually admonish in cases of disorderly walking, and render an account to the church if the offending party will not be prevailed upon.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Matthew 18:15–17**—If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church.
- ∞ **1 Thessalonians 5:14**—Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly.
- ∞ **Hebrews 3:12–13**—Take heed, 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 To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

- ∞ **Hebrews 10:24–25**—Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works...exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.
- ∞ **Hebrews 12:13, 15, 16**—Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.... Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.
- ∞ **Leviticus 19:17**—Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.
- ∞ **2 Thessalonians 3:15**—Count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.
- ∞ **Romans 15:14**—I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.
- ∞ **James 5:19–20**—Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way

shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

☞ **Proverbs 29:1**—He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

Explanation

A threefold duty is included here: watchfulness, admonition (the main focus of this rule), and, where necessary, discipline. This duty is of eminent necessity and usefulness, for the glory of God and the gospel, the general good and spiritual edification of the church, and to recover souls to the right way. This is not to say that we should curiously pry into one another's failings, much less maliciously search into doubtful unknown things, to trouble or disparage our brethren—that would be quite contrary to the love that "thinketh no evil," but "shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Cor. 13:5; 1 Peter 4:8). Rather, out of a sense of the glory of God, the honor of the gospel, and care for each other's souls, we are to observe one another's walking, so that what is exemplary may be followed, what fails may be directed, and what is amiss may be reprov'd, so that in all things God may be glorified and Christ exalted.

Now, there are two admonitions here: the first is authoritative (which has to do with power), and the second is fraternal (which has to do with love). The former incorporates the authority of doctrine (the teaching of the

church) and the authority of discipline (which belongs to the whole church). We will not address these here, but will deal instead with the latter—fraternal admonition. Fraternal admonition consists of exhortation (encouraging each other toward good) and reproof (confronting what is amiss). This reproof is particularly aimed at in this rule. We assert that it is the duty of every church member toward those with whom he walks in fellowship to admonish from the Word any whom he sees walking with unsound footing, as becomes the gospel, and by this means to recover his soul to the right way.

It is taken for granted that the performance of this duty requires much caution and wisdom, tenderness and moderation, without which it often degenerates from a peaceable remedy of evil into fuel for strife and debate instead. Therefore, let those who are called to perform this duty diligently consider the following things:

1. That in the whole action he does not transgress the rule of charity which we find in 1 Corinthians 13:7 and Galatians 6:1–5.
2. Let him have peace at home by constantly laboring to cast out all beams and specks from his own eye (Matt. 7:5).
3. Let him so perform it that it may evidently appear that he has no other aim but the glory of God and the good of his reprovèd brother—all envy and rejoicing in evil being far away.

4. Let him be sure to draw his admonitions from the Word, that the authority of God may appear in them, and without the Word let him not presume to speak.
5. Let all the external circumstances of the admonition, such as the time, place, persons, and the like, be carefully weighed, so that all provocation in the least manner may be fully avoided.
6. Let it be considered as an ordinance that Christ has a special regard for.
7. Let him carefully distinguish between personal injuries to himself—whose mention calls more for forgiveness than reproof—and other offenses tending to public scandal.
8. Lastly, let self-examination for the same or similar failings always accompany our brotherly admonition.

These and similar things being duly weighed, let every brother, with Christian courage, admonish from the Word every one whom he judges to walk disorderly in any particular whatsoever, and not to let him continue to sin. Let him be content and satisfied when the admonished person gives an adequate defense or promises amendment of life. Unless we do so, when there is a real offense, we cannot be freed from the guilt of other men's sins.

Let also the person admonished, with all Christian patience, accept the admonition, without any more

regret of spirit than he would have against him who should break the weapon with which he was in danger of being slain, considering—

1. The authority of Him who has appointed the admonition.
2. The privilege and mercy he enjoys by such a spiritual preventing of a danger or an evil that perhaps he himself had not discerned.
3. The dreadful judgments that are everywhere threatened to those who despise reproof (Prov. 29:1); and so thankfully accept a just admonition from even the humblest in the congregation.

For the last step, of bringing it to the church if not prevailing by private admonition, our Savior has so plainly laid down both the manner and end of proceeding in Matthew 18:15–17 that it needs no explanation. (I shall only observe that by “church” in verse 17 cannot be understood the elders of the church alone, but rather the whole congregation. If the offended brother should take with him two or three of the elders to the offender—which he may do—then they would be the church, and the church would have to be told of the offense before the reproof had been confronted by the two or three, which is contrary to Christ’s rule.)

CHAPTER 22

Being Holy

RULE 15

Walk in all holiness and godliness of life, to the glory of the gospel, edification of the church, and conviction of those who are outside.

Proof Texts

- ∞ **Psalm 24:3–4**—Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
- ∞ **Matthew 5:16, 20**—Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.... For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.
- ∞ **Matthew 21:19**—And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but

leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever. And presently the fig tree withered away.

- ∞ **2 Corinthians 7:1**—Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- ∞ **2 Timothy 2:19**—Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.
- ∞ **Titus 2:11–12, 14**—For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.... [Christ] gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
- ∞ **Ephesians 4:21–23**—If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.
- ∞ **1 Peter 3:1–2**—Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the

conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

- ☞ **Hebrews 12:14**—Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.
- ☞ **Ephesians 5:15–16**—See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
- ☞ **2 Samuel 12:14**—Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

Explanation

Holiness adorns the LORD's house forever (Ps. 93:5); without it none shall see God (Heb. 12:14). Christ died to wash His church, to present it before His Father without spot or blemish, and to purchase for Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works. It is the kingdom of God within us and by which it appears to all that we are the children of the kingdom. Let this, then, be the great discriminating character of the church from the world, that they are a holy, humble, self-denying people. Our Master is holy; His doctrine and worship are holy. Let us strive that our hearts may also be holy.

This is our wisdom toward those who are outside, to guide or convince them; this is the means for building up one another most effectively. Examples are a

sharper way of instruction than precepts. Loose walking, causing the name of God to be blasphemed, the little ones of Christ to be offended, and His enemies to rejoice, is attended with most dreadful woes. Oh that all who are called to a holy profession and do enjoy holy ordinances did shine also in holiness of life, that those who accuse them as evildoers might have their mouths stopped and their hearts filled with shame, to the glory of the gospel! To this rule belongs wise walking in all patience, meekness, and longsuffering toward those that are outside, until they appear clearly to be fighters against God when they are to be prayed for. To this rule also might be referred the patience of the saints in all tribulations, sufferings, and persecutions for the name of Christ.

Motivations

Motives for the exercise of universal holiness, in acts internal and external, private and public, personal and of all relations, are these:

1. The utter insufficiency of the most precious ordinances for any communion with God without it.
2. The miserable condition of deceived souls, with their barren, empty, fruitless faith.
3. The glory of the gospel, when the power of it has an evident impression on the hearts, thoughts, words, actions, and lives of professors.

4. The scandal of the gospel, the advantage of its adversaries, the shame of the church, and fierce wrath of God, following the unsuitable walking of professing Christians.
5. The sweet reward which the practice of holiness brings along with it even in this life, with that eternal weight of glory to which it leads hereafter—to which the holy Son of God is bringing us all, through the sprinkling of His most holy blood!

Conclusion to Part 2

And so this concludes the rules required from those who have obtained grace and which adorn their profession, to walk together in fellowship according to the rule of the gospel. Let these be observed both in their details and their full scope toward their brothers and sisters in the congregations with which they have communion.