

Rules for Walking in Fellowship
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
John Owen

Part 1: Rules for Walking in Fellowship, with Reference to the Pastor or Minister Who Watches Over Your Souls

Chapter 1: Diligently attend and submit to the word and all ordinances committed to his administration

Proof texts- [1 Corinthians 4:1]; [2 Corinthians 5:18, 20]; [Galatians 4:14]; [2 Thessalonians 3:14]; [Hebrews 13:7, 17]
Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

Chapter 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]; [Hebrews 13.7]; [2 Thessalonians 3.7]; [Philippians 3.17]; [1 Timothy 4.12]; [1 Peter 5.3]
Explanation-An exemplary way of life was always required for those who dispense holy things
Study Questions

Chapter 3: Make continual prayer and supplication on his behalf for assistance and success in his work

Proof texts- [Ephesians 6.18-20]; [2 Thessalonians 3.1-2]; [1 Thessalonians 5.25]; [Colossians 4.3]; [Hebrews 13.18]; [Acts 12.5]; [Hebrews 13.7]
Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

Chapter 4: Reverently esteem your pastor and submit to him for his work's sake

Proof texts- [1 Corinthians 4.1]; [1 Thessalonians 5.12-13]; [1 Timothy 5.17]; [1 Peter 5.5]; [Hebrews 13.17]
Explanation
Motivations
Study questions

Chapter 5: Make provision for your pastor and his family

Proof texts- [1 Timothy 5.17-18]; [Galatians 6.6-7]; [1 Corinthians 9.7, 9-11, 13-14]
Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

Chapter 6: Adhere to him and abide by him in all trials and persecutions of the for the Word

Proof texts- [2 Timothy 4.16]; [2 Timothy 1.16-18]
Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

Chapter 7: Gathering together as a congregation when the minister has appointed, along with our families

Proof text- [Acts 14.27]
Study Questions

Part 2: Rules to be observed by those who walk in fellowship, to remind them of their mutual duties

Chapter 1: Show affectionate, sincere love in all things, without hypocrisy toward one another

Proof texts- [John 15.12]; [John 13.34-35]; [Romans 13.8]; [Ephesians 5.2]; [1 Thessalonians 3.12]; [1 Thessalonians 4.9]; [1 Peter 1.22]; [1 John 4.21]; [Romans 12.10]

Explanation

Motivations

Study Questions

Chapter 2: Continually pray for the prosperous state of the church and God's protection toward it

Proof texts- [Psalm 122.6]; [Philippians 1.4-5]; [Romans 1.9]; [Acts 12.5]; [Isaiah 62.6-7]; [Ephesians 6.18]; [Colossians 4.12]

Explanations

Motivations

Study Questions

Chapter 3: Earnestly strive and contend in all ways, by doing and suffering, for the purity of the ordinances

Proof texts; [Jude 3]; [Hebrews 12.3-4]; [1 John 3.16]; [Galatians 5.1,13]; [1 Corinthians 7.23]; [Song of Solomon 6.4]; [1 Peter 3.15]

Explanation

Study Questions

Chapter 4: Zealously endeavor to preserve unity both in particular and in general

Proof texts- [Philippians 2.1-3]; [Ephesians 4.3-4]; [1 Corinthians 1.10]; [2 Corinthians 13.11]; [Romans 14.19]; [Romans 15.5]; [1 Corinthians 5.6-7]; [Acts 4.32]

Explanation

Motivations

Directions

Study Questions

Chapter 5: Separate from the world and men of the world and all forms of false worship

Proof texts- [Numbers 23.9]; [John 15.19]; [2 Corinthians 6.14-18]; [Ephesians 5.8, 11]; [2 Timothy 3.5]; [Hosea 4.15]; [Revelation 18.4]; [Proverbs 14.7]

Explanation

Motivation

Directions

Study Questions

Chapter 6: Frequently engage in edifying spiritual conversation, according to the gifts God has given

Proof texts- [Malachi 3.16]; [Job 2.11]; [Ephesians 4.29]; [Colossians 4.6]; [Ephesians 5.4]; [1 Thessalonians 5.11]; [Hebrews 3.13]; [Jude 20]; [Hebrews 10.24-25]; [Acts 18.26]; [2 Corinthians 12.7]

Explanation

Motivations

Study Questions

Chapter 7: Mutually bear with each other's infirmities and weaknesses in meekness and patience

Proof texts- [Ephesians 4.32]; [Matthew 18.21-22]; [Mark 11.25-26]; [Romans 14.13]; [Romans 15.1-2]; [1 Corinthians 13.4-7]; [Galatians 6.1]; [Colossians 3.12-14]

Explanation

Motivations

Study Questions

Chapter 8: Bear each other's burdens by tenderly and affectionately participating in your various states

Proof texts- [Galatians 6.2]; [Hebrews 13.3]; [1 Corinthians 12.25-26]; [2 Corinthians 11.29]; [James 1.27]; [Matthew 25. 35-36,40]; [2 Timothy 1.16-17]; [Acts 20.35]

Explanation
Directions
Study Questions

[Chapter 9: Freely contribute and administer material support to those who are truly poor](#)

Proof texts- [1 John 3.17-18]; [1 Corinthians 16.1-2]; [2 Corinthians 9.5-7]; [Romans 12.13]; [Galatians 6.10]; [1 Timothy 6.17-19]; [Hebrews 13.16]; [Leviticus 25.35]; [Matthew 25.34-36,40]

Explanation
Motivations
Directions
Study Questions

[Chapter 10: Diligently mark and carefully avoid all causes and causers of divisions](#)

Proof texts- [Romans 16.17-18]; [Matthew 24.4-5,23-25]; [1 Timothy 6.3-5]; [2 Timothy 2.16-17]; [Titus 3.9-11]; [1 John 2.18-19]; [1 John 4.1]; [2 John 10-11]; [Acts 20.29-31]; [Revelation 2.14-16]

Explanation
Directions
Study Questions

[Chapter 11: Carefully share the lot and portion of the whole church, in prosperity and in affliction](#)

Proof texts- [Matthew 13.20-21]; [Hebrews 10.23-25]; [Hebrews 10.32-39]; [2 Timothy 4.10,16]

Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

[Chapter 12: In church affairs, make no difference of person, but condescend to the humblest person](#)

Proof texts- [James 2.1-6]; [Matthew 20.26-27]; [Romans 12.16]; [John 13.12-16]

Explanations
Motivations
Study Questions

[Chapter 13: Humble yourselves as a whole church and pray earnestly for any who are in distress](#)

Proof texts- [Acts 12.5, 7, 12]; [Romans 12.15]; [1 Corinthians 12.26-27]; [1 Thessalonians 3.1-2]

Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

[Chapter 14: Watch vigilantly over each other's lives, mutually admonish in cases of disorderly walking](#)

Proof texts- [Matthew 18.15-17]; [1 Thessalonians 5.14]; [Hebrews 3.12-13]; [Hebrews 10.24-25]; [Hebrews 12.13, 15-16]; [Leviticus 19.17]; [2 Thessalonians 3.15]; [Romans 15.14]; [James 5.19-20]; [Proverbs 29.1]

Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

[Chapter 15: Walk in holiness and godliness of life, to the glory of the gospel](#)

Proof texts- [Psalm 24.3-4]; [Matthew 5.16,20]; [Matthew 21.19]; [2 Corinthians 7.1]; [2 Timothy 2.19]; [Titus 2.11-12,14]; [Ephesians 4.21-23]; [1 Peter 3.12]; [Hebrews 12.14]; [Ephesians 5.15-16]; [2 Samuel 12.14]

Explanation
Motivations
Study Questions

Part 1: Rules for Walking in Fellowship, with Reference to the Pastor or Minister Who Watches Over Your Souls

I. 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

A. Proof texts

1. *[1 Corinthians 4:1]- Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*
2. *[2 Corinthians 5:18, 20]- Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*
3. *[Galatians 4:14]- and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.*
4. *[2 Thessalonians 3:14]- If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.*
5. *[Hebrews 13:7, 17]- Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*

B. Explanation

1. Two fold power of dispensing the Word

a. Ability or “Dunamis”

- 1.) *[1 Timothy 3.2-7]- An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*
- 2.) *[Titus 1.6-9]- namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.*
- 3.) *[Romans 10.14-15]- How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”*

b. Authority or “Exousia”

1.) Christ’s institution of the office

a.) *[Ephesians 4.11]- And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*

2.) God’s providential designation of the persons

a.) *[Matthew 9.38]- Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.”*

3.) The church’s call, election, appointment, acceptance, and submission

- a.) *[Acts 6.3]- Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.*
- b.) *[Acts 14.23]- When they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.*
- c.) *[2 Corinthians 8.5]- and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.*
- d.) *[Galatians 4.14]- and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.*
- e.) *[1 Thessalonians 5.12-13]- But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.*
- f.) *[1 Corinthians 4.1-2]- Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*
- g.) *[2 Corinthians 1.24]- Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.*
- h.) *[1 Peter 5.3]- nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*
- i.) *[Acts 20.28]- Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

C. Motivations

1. The name in which they speak and administer
 - a. *[2 Corinthians 5.20]- Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*
2. The work that they do
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 3.9]- For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.*
 - b. *[2 Corinthians 6.1]- And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain—*
 - c. *[1 Timothy 4.16]- Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*
3. The return that they make
 - a. *[Hebrews 8.1-7]- Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN." But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.*
4. The regard that the Lord has for them in His employment

- a. *[Matthew 10.40-41]- “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.*
 - b. *[Luke 10.16]- “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”*
5. The account that hearers must make of the Word they dispense
- a. *[2 Chronicles 36.15-16]- The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they continually mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, until there was no remedy.*
 - b. *[Proverbs 1.22-29]- “How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing And fools hate knowledge? “Turn to my reproof, Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. “Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no one paid attention; And you neglected all my counsel And did not want my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your dread comes, When your dread comes like a storm And your calamity comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD.*
 - c. *[Proverbs 13.13]- The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, But the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.*
 - d. *[Mark 4.24]- And He was saying to them, “Take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides.*
 - e. *[Luke 10.16]- “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”*
 - f. *[Hebrews 2.1-3]- For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,*
 - g. *[Hebrews 4.2]- For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.*

D. Study Questions

1. Where does the pastor’s authority come from, and where does it not come from?
2. Why is the Apostle’s metaphor of “ambassador” a helpful one in this regard?
3. What motivations for recognizing “ministerial authority” are given in these verses?
4. Does an ability to share the Gospel make one a minister? Why or why not? What elements of the calling of a minister are mentioned?
5. How might the office of minister be abused?
6. Where might a lack of respect for the authority of the ministerial office lead the congregation?
7. How many of these motivations for submission to ministerial authority center on the man himself?
8. What do they center on instead? Which do you personally find most persuasive, and why?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[1 Corinthians 4.16]- Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me.*
2. *[Hebrews 13.7]- Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*

3. *[2 Thessalonians 3.7]- For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,*
4. *[Philippians 3.17]- Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*
5. *[1 Timothy 4.12]- Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.*
6. *[1 Peter 5.3]- nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*

- B. Explanation-An exemplary way of life was always required for those who dispense holy things
1. *[Zechariah 3.4]- He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, "Remove the filthy garments from him." Again he said to him, "See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes."*
 2. *[Matthew 5.16]- Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*
 3. *[Philippians 3.18-19]- For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.*
 4. *[1 Timothy 3.7]- And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.*
 5. *[Galatians 2.20]- I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*
 6. *[1 Corinthians 9.27]- but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*
 7. *[Hebrews 13.7]- Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*
 8. *[Galatians 4.13-14]- but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself.*
 9. A pastor's life should be vocal; sermons must be practiced as well as preached. Though Noah's workmen built the ark, yet they themselves were drowned. God will not accept the tongue where the devil has the soul. We read that Jesus did "do and teach"
 - a. *[Acts 1:1]- The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,*
 10. 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.

C. Study Questions

1. Why do you think the Apostles stress that pastors, in particular, should set an example in the Christian life?
2. What Biblical examples can you add to Owen's list of good and bad examples in the ministry? What were the consequences of both for the Church in their day?
3. "A pastor's life should be vocal; sermons must be practiced as well as preached." Make a list of the author's reasons for following the pastor's example. Do you agree with them? What dangers might arise from this rule (and can you think of any examples of such 'in the real world')?
4. How can a pastor possibly live up to such a calling, and how might his congregation help him?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Ephesians 6.18-20]- With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*
2. *[2 Thessalonians 3.1-2]- Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith.*
3. *[1 Thessalonians 5.25]- Brethren, pray for us.*
4. *[Colossians 4.3]- praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;*
5. *[Hebrews 13.18]- Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.*
6. *[Acts 12.5]- So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.*
7. *[Hebrews 13.7]- Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*

B. Explanation

1. The greatness of the work
 - a. *[2 Corinthians 2.16]- to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?*
2. The strength of the opposition that lies against it
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 16.9]- for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.*
 - b. *[2 Timothy 4.3-5]- For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, ⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*
 - c. *[Revelation 12.12]- For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."*
3. The concern for men's souls that is in it
 - a. *[Acts 20.26-28]- Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*
 - b. *[1 Timothy 4.16]- Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*
 - c. *[Hebrews 13.7]- Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.*
4. The conviction to be brought upon the world by it
 - a. *[Ezekiel 2.5]- As for them, whether they listen or not—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.*
 - b. *[1 Corinthians 1.23-24]- but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

c. *[2 Corinthians 3.15-16]- But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

5. Its aim and tendency toward the glory of God in Christ
6. The many curses of men against them
 - a. *[Jeremiah 15.10]- Woe to me, my mother, that you have borne me As a man of strife and a man of contention to all the land! I have not lent, nor have men lent money to me, Yet everyone curses me.*

C. Motivations

1. The Word will no doubt be effective when the pastor's ability to administer it is the subject of prayer
 - a. *[Acts 10.1-6]- Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually. About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, "Cornelius!" And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter; he is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea."*
2. The minister's failing is the peoples' punishment
 - a. *[Amos 8.11-12]- "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD, "When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, But rather for hearing the words of the LORD. "People will stagger from sea to sea And from the north even to the east; They will go to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, But they will not find it.*
 - b. *[Isaiah 30.20]- Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will behold your Teacher.*
3. His prayers are continually for the church
 - a. *[Isaiah 62.6-7]- On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. You, who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; And give Him no rest until He establishes And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*
 - b. *[Romans 1.9]- For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,*
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
 - a. *[Ephesians 6.18-20]- With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*
 - b. *[Philippians 2.17]- But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.*
 - c. *[Colossians 1.24]- Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.*

D. Study Questions

1. How many specific prayer requests can you find? Using these verses as a starting point, make a prayer list for your pastor and begin using it this week.
2. Why does your pastor need your constant prayers?
3. How do you benefit from your prayers for your pastor?
 - a. *“The New Testament teaching is that preaching without public prayer is virtually worthless. A good sermon without prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit is like a powerful freight train that holds the potential to be very useful, yet all the while it sits on the tracks without any fuel. What good is the train without its fuel? What good is a sermon without corporate prayer?”* -Ryan McGraw
4. To what extent might Rules 1-3 be considered unpopular today?

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

A. Proof texts

1. ***[1 Corinthians 4.1]- Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.***
2. ***[1 Thessalonians 5.12-13]- But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.***
3. ***[1 Timothy 5.17]- The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.***
4. ***[1 Peter 5.5]- You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.***
5. ***[Hebrews 13.17]- Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.***

B. Explanation

1. Esteem may be civil but motive sacred. It is a Gospel duty
 - a. ***[1 Timothy 5.17]- The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.***

C. Motivations

1. They are called angels
 - a. ***[Hebrews 12.22]- But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,***
 - b. ***[Revelation 1.20]- As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.***
2. They are called bishops or overseers
 - a. ***[Ezekiel 3.17]- “Son of man, I have appointed you a watchman to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me.***
 - b. ***[Acts 20.28]- Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.***
 - c. ***[Titus 1.7]- For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain,***
3. They are called ambassadors
 - a. ***[2 Corinthians 5.20]- Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.***

4. They are called stewards
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 4.1]- Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.*
5. They are called men of God
 - a. *[1 Samuel 2.27]- Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Did I not indeed reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in bondage to Pharaoh's house?'*
 - b. *[1 Timothy 6.11]- But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.*
6. They are called rulers
 - a. *[Hebrews 13.7,17]- Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.*
7. They are called lights
 - a. *[Matthew 5.14]- "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;*
8. They are salt
 - a. *[Matthew 5.13]- "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.*
9. They are called fathers
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 4.15]- For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.*
10. They are called shepherds
 - a. *[Zechariah 11.8]-Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.*

D. Study questions

1. What verbs do these texts use to describe the attitude of a congregation to its pastor?
2. What reasons do they give for such a "reverential estimation"?
3. What obstacles (legitimate and otherwise) might stand in the way of a congregation observing this rule of fellowship?
4. In light of rule, do you think the common title "reverend" (Rev.) is an appropriate one for a pastor of the Church? Why or why not?
5. How can we reconcile rule with Jesus' words in Matthew 23:5-12?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[1 Timothy 5.17-18]- The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."*

2. *[Galatians 6.6-7]- The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*
3. *[1 Corinthians 9.7, 9-11, 13-14]- Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.*

B. Explanation

1. To provide food and protection to those committed to them
2. Our Savior warrants His disciples to take and eat of their things, by their consent, to whomever the word is preached
 - a. *[Luke 10.8]- Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you;*
3. To do this in a way appropriate to the condition they find themselves and the increase given them by God

C. Motivations

1. God's *appointment* as seen in the proof texts above
2. *The necessity of it*
 - a. *[1 Timothy 4.15]- Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all.*
3. *The fairness of the duty*
 - a. *[Matthew 10. 9-10]- Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts, or a bag for your journey, or even two coats, or sandals, or a staff; for the worker is worthy of his support.*
 - b. *[1 Corinthians 9.10]- Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.*
 - c. *[James 5.4-5]- Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.*

D. Study Questions

1. What abuses is the Apostle Paul responding to in these texts? What lines of argument does he use against them? Why is the pastor's salary often such a touchy subject?
2. Owen begins with a scenario foreign to American ears, but applicable in 17th century England and nations today which still retain national established churches. What is this scenario, and discuss the Biblical rationale for it.
3. Do you agree with the parameters Owen suggests for the congregation's support of their pastor? Why or why not?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[2 Timothy 4.16]- At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.*
2. *[2 Timothy 1.16-18]- The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me—the Lord grant to him to find mercy from the Lord on that day—and you know very well what services he rendered at Ephesus.*

B. Explanation

1. *“A common cause should be carried on by common assistance.”*
2. *“That which concerns all should be supported by all.”*

C. Motivations

1. Persecution for the Word begins in the leaders
 - a. *[1 Peter 4.17-18]- For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?*
 - b. *[Zechariah 13.7-8]- “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, And against the man, My Associate,” Declares the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; And I will turn My hand against the little ones. “It will come about in all the land,” Declares the LORD, “That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it.*
2. He is reviled and persecuted for the church’s sake
 - a. *[Colossians 1.24]- Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.*
 - b. *[2 Timothy 2.10]- For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.*

D. Study Questions

1. Can you think of historical or contemporary examples of pastors facing “trials and persecutions for the Word”, and how their congregation stood by them?
2. In what ways is Onesiphorus a good role model for today’s church members?
3. What Satanic strategy does Owen explain to us? How might a congregation thwart this strategy?
4. Explain the vivid metaphors and arguments used to describe the sin of abandoning the pastor in his hour of trial. How might a congregation be guilty of this in subtle ways when there is no overt persecution in the land?

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

A. Proof text

1. *[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.*

B. Study Questions

1. The Church was gathered when the Apostles summoned an assembly. Why do the elders “summon the congregation”, and how important is it to be at Church “whenever the doors are open?”
2. Which rules (or subjects addressed in them) have you found most challenging in thus study? Which do you think this congregation most needs to work on?

3. Commit to pray regularly for your congregation and its pastors, that God might enable you to reflect His glory before a watching world!

Part 2: Rules to be observed by those who walk in fellowship, to remind them of their mutual duties toward one another

- I. Show affectionate, sincere love in all things, without hypocrisy toward one another, like that which Christ showed to His church
 - A. Proof texts
 1. *[John 15.12]- “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”*
 2. *[John 13.34-35]- A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
 3. *[Romans 13.8]- Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law*
 4. *[Ephesians 5.2]- and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*
 5. *[1 Thessalonians 3.12]- and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you;*
 6. *[1 Thessalonians 4.9]- Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;*
 7. *[1 Peter 1.22]- Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,*
 8. *[1 John 4.21]- And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.*
 9. *[Romans 12.10]- Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*
 - B. Explanation
 1. Love is the fountain of all duties toward God and man
 - a. *[Matthew 22.37]- And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’*
 2. Love is the substance of all rules that concern the saints, the bond of communion
 - a. *[Romans 13.8-10]- Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*
 3. *“Never rejoice but when you see your brother in love.”*
 4. The means, subject and outcome of love
 - a. Wrought by the Holy Spirit
 - 1.) *[Galatians 5.22]- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
 - b. To the hearts of believers
 - 1.) *[1 Peter 1.22]- Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,*
 - c. Motivates their soul to seek the good of the children of God

- 1.) *[1 Thessalonians 2.8]- Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.*
- 2.) *[Ephesians 1.15]- For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints,*
- 3.) *[Philemon 5]- because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints;*
- 4.) *[Hebrews 13.1]- Let love of the brethren continue.*

C. Motivations

1. The *command of God* and nature of the whole law, of which love is the fulfillment
 - a. *[Leviticus 19.34]- The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.*
 - b. *[Matthew 19.19]- HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."*
 - c. *[Romans 13.9-10]- For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*
2. The eternal, peculiar, distinguishing, *faithful love of God* towards believers, and the goal He aims at by it
 - a. *[Deuteronomy 7.8]- but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*
 - b. *[Deuteronomy 33.3]- "Indeed, He loves the people; All Your holy ones are in Your hand, And they followed in Your steps; Everyone receives of Your words.'*
 - c. *[Ezekiel 16.8]- "Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD.*
 - d. *[Zephaniah 3.17]- "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.*
 - e. *[Romans 5.8]- But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*
 - f. *[Ephesians 1.4]- just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love*
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
 - a. *[Song of Solomon 3.10]- "He made its posts of silver, Its back of gold And its seat of purple fabric, With its interior lovingly fitted out By the daughters of Jerusalem.*
 - b. *[John 15.13]- Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.*
 - c. *[Ephesians 5.2]- and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*
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
 - a. *[John 13.34]- A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*

- b. *[John 15.12]- “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*
 - c. *[1 Thessalonians 4.9]- Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;*
 - d. *[2 John 5]- Now I ask you, lady, not as though I were writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.*
5. The status of the people between whom this duty is to be exercised
- a. Children of one Father
 - 1.) *[Malachi 2.10]- “Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously each against his brother so as to profane the covenant of our fathers?*
 - b. Members of one body
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 12.12-13]- For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*
 - c. Partakers of the same hope
 - 1.) *[Ephesians 4.4]- There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;*
 - d. Objects of the same hatred from the world
 - 1.) *[1 John 3.13]- Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.*
6. The eminency of this grace
- a. In its divine nature
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 13.13]- But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.*
 - 2.) *[Colossians 2.2]- that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself,*
 - 3.) *[1 John 4.7]- Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*
 - b. In its usefulness
 - 1.) *[Proverbs 3.12]- For whom the LORD loves He reproveth, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.*
 - 2.) *[Proverbs 15.17]- Better is a dish of vegetables where love is Than a fattened ox served with hatred.*
 - 3.) *[Galatians 5.13]- For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*
 - 4.) *[Hebrews 13.1]- Let love of the brethren continue.*
 - c. In its acceptance with the saints
 - 1.) *[Psalm 5.11]- But let all who take refuge in You be glad, Let them ever sing for joy; And may You shelter them, That those who love Your name may exult in You.*
 - 2.) *[Ephesians 1.15-16]- For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;*

- 3.) *[1 Corinthians 13.1-5]- If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,*
7. The impossibility of performing any other duty without this grace
- [Galatians 5.6]- For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.*
 - [1 Thessalonians 1.3]- constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,*
 - [1 John 4.20]- If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.*
8. The great sin of lack of love, with all of its aggravations, are so numerous and diverse
- [Matthew 24.12]- Because lawlessness is increased, ^[a]most people's love will grow cold.*
 - [1 John 3.14-15]- We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*

D. Study Questions

- What do these verses teach us about: The *source* of our love for fellow-believers? The *selflessness* of our love for fellow-believers? The *sincerity* of our love for fellow-believers?
- Why does Owen say, "Love is the fountain of all duties towards God and man"?
- Explain why a local congregation walking in love is such a powerful witness to the world. Can you think of examples you've experienced where this was the case? Can you think of examples where it was *not*?
- What does such love require, and how is it attainable?
- Which (if any) of these motivations to love your fellow church members strikes you as most compelling?
- Discuss the quotation in the box. Do you agree? Which do you think characterizes Reformed Churches more?
 - "A Church full of love is a Church well built up. I had rather see a Church filled with love a thousand times, than filled with the best, the highest, the most glorious gifts and parts that any men in this world could be partakers of. Could they go beyond and exceed all we aim at or desire - could they 'speak with the tongues of men and angels' - it is ten thousand times more for the glory of God and our own comfort, to be a company of poor saints, who are filled with love, than to be of those with the highest attainments without it." (Owen)*

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

A. Proof texts

- [Psalm 122.6]- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.*
- [Philippians 1.4-5]- always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.*
- [Romans 1.9]- For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you,*
- [Acts 12.5]- So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.*

5. *[Isaiah 62.6-7]- On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have appointed watchmen; All day and all night they will never keep silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest for yourselves; And give Him no rest until He establishes And makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*
6. *[Ephesians 6.18]- With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,*
7. *[Colossians 4.12]- Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.*

B. Explanations

1. The great engine by which to prevail with the Almighty
 - a. *[Isaiah 45.11]- Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: "Ask Me about the things to come ^lconcerning My sons, And you shall commit to Me the work of My hands.*
2. The sure refuge of the saints
 - a. *[Psalm 61.2]- From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*
 - b. *[Acts 12.5]- So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.*
3. The beaten path of the soul's communion with God
 - a. *[Zechariah 12.10]- "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.*
 - b. *[Romans 8.26]- In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;*
4. Innumerable commands to perform
 - a. *[Matthew 7.7]- "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*
 - b. *[1 Thessalonians 5.17] - pray without ceasing;*
 - c. *[1 Timothy 2.8]- Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.*
5. Great encouragements to the work
 - a. *[Luke 11.9]- "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*
 - b. *[James 1.5]- But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*
6. With precious promises of acceptance
 - a. *[Psalm 50.5]- "Gather My godly ones to Me, Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."*
 - b. *[Matthew 21.22]- And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."*
 - c. *[John 16.24]- Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.*

C. 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

D. Study Questions

1. What do these verses suggest about: The *content* of your prayers for fellow-believers? The *frequency* of your prayers for fellow-believers? The *opposition* to your prayers for fellow-believers?
2. What Biblical encouragements to intercessory prayer does Owen mention? Which would you find personally most persuasive when you don't feel like praying, and why?
3. How does *Epaphras* model this Rule for Christian fellowship (Col.4:12-13)? How does *Jesus* model it? Why are the pastors and elders of the congregation especially responsible for this (Acts 6:4; 20:28)?
4. List some practical ways available to you in this congregation for putting this rule into practice. To what extent are you taking advantage of these? How might you improve in this area of walking in fellowship?

III. Earnestly strive and contend in all 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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Jude 3]- Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.*
2. *[Hebrews 12.3-4]- For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;*
3. *[1 John 3.16]- We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*
4. *[Galatians 5.1,13]- It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*
5. *[1 Corinthians 7.23]- You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.*
6. *[Song of Solomon 6.4]- You are as beautiful as Tirzah, my darling, As lovely as Jerusalem, As awesome as an army with banners.*
7. *[1 Peter 3.15]- but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;*

B. Explanation

1. Diligent laboring in the Word, with fervent prayer, to acquaint ourselves with the mind and will of God concerning the way of worship which we profess, and the rules of walking which we desire to practice, so that we may be able to give an account to interested inquirers, and stop the mouths of stubborn opposers. According to our knowledge, such will be our valuation of the ordinances we enjoy.
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 people, though the blow may not fall immediately on us, we still feel the pain.
3. Just vindication of the church against insults and false imputations. Who can endure to hear his earthly parents falsely slandered? And shall we then be senseless of reproaches upon her who bears us unto Christ?
4. Joint refusal of subjection, and all Gospel opposition, to any persons or things which, contrary or in addition to the Word, under whatever name, do labor for power over the Church, to

deprive it of any of those liberties and privileges which it claims as part of the purchase of Christ. To them that would beguile us we are not to give place, no not for an hour.”

C. Study Questions

1. List the verbs in these verses, which call Church members to defend the Church. What do they have in common?
2. The “Puritans” got their nickname from their fervent desire to see the Church “purified”. What four things does Owen say we should fight to keep pure in our churches, and how might each of them be threatened in our day?
3. The degree to which we prize something will determine the degree to which we’re willing to sacrifice for it. To what extent are you willing to “do and suffer” for these four elements of Church purity?
4. Summarize each point in your own words, and where applicable, suggest practical ways you could apply them in your own life and congregation.

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Philippians 2.1-3]- Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;*
2. *[Ephesians 4.3-4]- being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;*
3. *[1 Corinthians 1.10]- Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.*
4. *[2 Corinthians 13.11]- Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.*
5. *[Romans 14.19]- So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.*
6. *[Romans 15.5]- Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus,*
7. *[1 Corinthians 5.6-7]- Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.*
8. *[Acts 4.32]- And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.*

B. Explanation

1. 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.
2. 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, rents, evil-suspensions, self-practices, causeless 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”, and conformity of our practice to this rule.
 - a. *[2 Timothy 1.13]- Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.*

3. Civil Unity, or living in harmony about the things of this life, not contending for them nor about them, but rather every one seeking the welfare of each other. Striving is unseemly for brethren. Why should they contend about the world who shall jointly judge the world?

C. 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.
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 the lack of this unity.

D. Directions

1. Labor, by prayer and faith, to have our hearts and spirits thoroughly seasoned with the affectionate love rule 1 requires.
 - a. *“Show affectionate, sincere love in all things, without hypocrisy toward one another, like that which Christ showed to His church”*
2. Carefully observe, in yourselves or others, the first beginnings of strife.
3. Zealously apply ourselves to removing the first appearance of divisions.
4. Daily strike at the root of all dissensions by laboring for universal conformity to Jesus Christ.

E. Study Questions

1. According to these passages, what are the *enemies* of Church unity?
2. How is “spiritual unity” a vital basis for the other two?
3. What is meant by “civil unity” and how does this area often lead to divisions in the Church?
4. Which of Owen’s motivations do you find most convicting and why?

- V. 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

A. Proof texts

1. ***[Numbers 23.9]- “As I see him from the top of the rocks, And I look at him from the hills; Behold, a people who dwells apart, And will not be reckoned among the nations.]***
2. ***[John 15.19]- If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.***
3. ***[2 Corinthians 6.14-18]- Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. “And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.***
4. ***[Ephesians 5.8, 11]- for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;***
5. ***[2 Timothy 3.5]- holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.***
6. ***[Hosea 4.15]- Though you, Israel, play the harlot, Do not let Judah become guilty; Also do not go to Gilgal, Or go up to Beth-aven And take the oath: “As the LORD lives!”***

7. *[Revelation 18.4]- I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;*
8. *[Proverbs 14.7]- Leave the presence of a fool, Or you will not discern words of knowledge.*

B. Explanation

1. He who will not separate from the world is separate from Christ except:
 - a. Not with respect to normal friendships
 - 1.) *[Romans 9.3]- For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,*
 - b. Not in duties of family and relations
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 7.13]- And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away.*
 - c. Not in love and civility
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 5.10]- I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world.*
 - 2.) *[1 Thessalonians 4.12]- so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.*
 - 3.) *[1 Timothy 2.1-2]- First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.*
 - d. Not communicating good things to them
 - 1.) *[Galatians 6.10]- So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*
 - e. Not living profitably and peaceably with them
 - 1.) *[Romans 12.18]- If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*
2. Separate from
 - a. Habits and lifestyle
 - 1.) *[Romans 12.2]- And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*
 - 2.) *[Ephesians 4.17-19]- So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.*
 - b. Light hearted chatting and familiarity
 - 1.) *[Ephesians 5. 3-4]- But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*
 - 2.) *[Ephesians 5. 6-8]- Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light.*
 - 3.) *[Ephesians 5. 10-11]- trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them;*

- c. Their ways of worship and habits of fellowship
 - 1.) *[Revelation 18.4]- I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues;*
 - 2.) *[1 Peter 4.4]- In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you;*

C. Motivation

- 1. God's command
- 2. Our own preservation from sin and protection from punishment
- 3. Christ's delight in purity of His ordinances
- 4. His distinguishing love to his saints

D. Directions

- 1. Exercise an abundance of meekness, patience, gentleness, wisdom and tenderness. Let us not offend anyone unnecessarily.

E. Study Questions

- 1. Read the proof texts and answer the following: What exactly is "the world" that is described in these verses? What are the dangers of the Church becoming like the world?
- 2. In your own words, what is Biblical "separation" and what is it not?
- 3. What examples have you witnessed where this distinction becomes confused?
- 4. What are some practical ways that fellow Church-members could help one another in this area?

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

A. Proof texts

- 1. *[Malachi 3.16]- Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.*
- 2. *[Job 2.11]- Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him.*
- 3. *[Ephesians 4.29]- Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*
- 4. *[Colossians 4.6]- Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*
- 5. *[Ephesians 5.4]- and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*
- 6. *[1 Thessalonians 5.11]- Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.*
- 7. *[Hebrews 3.13]- But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
- 8. *[Jude 20]- But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,*
- 9. *[Hebrews 10.24-25]- and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*
- 10. *[Acts 18.26]- and he [Apollos] began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*

11. *[2 Corinthians 12.7]- Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself!*

B. Explanation

1. Failure to use gifts of edifying others is like hiding a mina in a handkerchief
 - a. *[Luke 19.20]- Another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief;*
2. Ordinary conversation
 - a. *[Ephesians 4.29]- Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.*
 - b. *[Ephesians 5.3-4]- any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.*
 - c. *[Hebrews 3.13]- But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
3. Particular occasions
 - a. *[Luke 24.14]- And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.*
 - b. *[Malachi 3.16]- Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.*
4. Assembling together in appointed groups for prayer and instruction from the Word
 - a. *[Job 2.11]- Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him.*
 - b. *[Acts 10.24]- On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.*
 - c. *[Acts 12.12]- And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.*
 - d. *[Ephesians 5.19]- speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;*
 - e. *[1 Thessalonians 5.14]- We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*
 - f. *[James 5.16]- Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*
 - g. *[Jude 20]- But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,*

C. Motivations

1. Let then, all vain communication be put away.
2. The time is short, and the days are evil.
3. Let it suffice us that we have neglected so many precious opportunities of growing in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and doing good to one another; and let the remainder of our few and evil days be spent in living to Him who died for us.
4. Be not conformed to this world, nor the inhabitants of it.
5. *[2 Peter 3.18]- but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

D. Study Questions

1. What do these verses teach you about: The definition of spiritual conversation? The frequency of spiritual conversation? The content of spiritual conversation? The purpose of spiritual conversation?
2. Why should church-members pursue spiritual conversation? What benefits will they gain?
3. When should church-members engage in spiritual conversation?
4. What two extremes should be avoided in this discipline? (see Owen's explanation above and quotation below)
 - a. *"Our Assembly commands godly conversation at all occasional meetings, or as God's Providence shall dispose, as the Word of God commands, providing none invade the pastor's office, to preach the Word, who are not called thereunto by God and His Church."*
5. Consider what *you* tend to talk about with your Christian friends (at Church, for example). Is your conversation typically about spiritual things? Why or why not? What tends to prevent it? How might you begin to foster such conversations?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Ephesians 4.32]- Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*
2. *[Matthew 18.21-22]- Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*
3. *[Mark 11.25-26]- Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. [But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.]"*
4. *[Romans 14.13]- Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.*
5. *[Romans 15.1-2]- Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.*
6. *[1 Corinthians 13.4-7]- Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*
7. *[Galatians 6.1]- Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*
8. *[Colossians 3.12-14]- So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

B. Explanation

1. It is for the Glory of God
 - a. *[Proverbs 25.2]- It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.*
2. Free pardon is the substance of the gospel, the work of God in perfection

- a. *[Isaiah 55.1-3]- “Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And delight yourself in abundance. “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.*
3. Shown for our imitation
 - a. *[Matthew 18. 23-35]- “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”*
 4. Mutual failings to bear with, offenses to be pardoned, and weakness to be supported, may all serve to remind us of the sins forgiven us. Let him that is without fault throw stones at others.
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 13.12]- For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known.*
 - b. *[James 3.2]- For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.*
 - c. *[John 8.7]- But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”*
 - d. 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
 - e. Some are angry at weaknesses and infirmities; they are proud and conceited, not considering that they themselves also are in the flesh.
 - f. 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’?
 - g. Some more study revenge than pardon.
 - h. Some pretend to forgive, but yet every slight offense makes a continued alienation of the affections and separation of converse.
 - i. Some will carry a smooth face over a rough heart.

C. Motivations

1. God’s infinite mercy, patience, forbearance, longsuffering, and free grace toward us
 - a. *[Matthew 18.23-35]- “For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and*

prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

2. The goodness and unwearied, unchangeable love of the Lord Jesus Christ
 - a. *[1 John 2.1-2]- My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*
3. The experience our own hearts have of needing of others' patience, forbearance, and pardon
 - a. *[Ecclesiastes 7.20-22]- Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins. Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others.*
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

D. Study Questions

1. Make a list of all the "infirmities and weaknesses" experienced by our fellow church-members (and ourselves!) which Paul mentions in these verses.
2. Now make a list of all the ways Paul says we should *respond* to them. Which fruits of the Spirit do you think you'll need to observe this Rule?
3. In your own words, what are the six inappropriate responses to the failings of fellow church-members that Owen lists?
4. Think of an offense you once received from – or witnessed in – another Christian. What *antidotes* does Owen suggest that might keep you from harboring such reactions in your own heart?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Galatians 6.2]- Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.*
2. *[Hebrews 13.3]- Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.*
3. *[1 Corinthians 12.25-26]- so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*
4. *[2 Corinthians 11.29]- Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?*

5. *[James 1.27]- Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.*
6. *[Matthew 25. 35-36,40]- For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*
7. *[2 Timothy 1.16-17]- The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me*
8. *[Acts 20.35]- In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*

B. Explanation

1. Not only in a brother's failings (as in previous chapter) but also in miseries and affliction
2. Requires conformity to Christ
 - a. *[Isaiah 63.9]- In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.*
 - b. *[Acts 9.4]- and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"*
3. Warning of destruction
 - a. *[Amos 6.6]- Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls while they anoint themselves with the finest of oils, Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.*
 - b. *[Nehemiah 2.1-3]- And it came about in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, that wine was before him, and I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. So the king said to me, "Why is your face sad though you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of heart." Then I was very much afraid. I said to the king, "Let the king live forever. Why should my face not be sad when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies desolate and its gates have been consumed by fire?"*

C. Directions

1. A proper valuing, strong desire and high esteem of the church's prosperity, in every member of it
 - a. *[Psalm 122.6]- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May they prosper who love you."*
2. Heartfelt compassion as a fruit of love, to be sensitive to and intimately moved for the several burdens of the saints
 - a. *[Colossians 3.12]- So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;*
3. Courage and boldness to own them without shame in all conditions
 - a. *[2 Timothy 1.16-17]- The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains; but when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me*
4. Personal visits in sickness, troubles and restrictions to advise, comfort and refresh them
 - a. *[Matthew 25.36]- naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.'*
5. Suitable support, by administering spiritual or temporal assistance to their specific condition

D. Study Questions

1. What specific examples do the Apostles give of the rule in action, and how can we show this “affectionate participation” in our congregation today?
2. Explain how Owen argues for this Rule using:
 - a. Christ’s own example
 - b. Our union with Christ and with one another in one body
 - c. The sick spiritual condition of those who neglect this Rule
 - d. The threatened judgments of those who neglect this Rule
3. What are some ministries in this congregation which provide a practical opportunity for you to get started observing this Rule? In this denomination? Beyond our Church?
4. What steps do *you* feel challenged to take in order to apply Rules for Fellowship (5-8)?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[1 John 3.17-18]- But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*
2. *[1 Corinthians 16.1-2]- Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.*
3. *[2 Corinthians 9.5-7]- So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness. Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*
4. *[Romans 12.13]- contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*
5. *[Galatians 6.10]- So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.*
6. *[1 Timothy 6.17-19]- Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.*
7. *[Hebrews 13.16]- And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*
8. *[Leviticus 25.35]- ‘Now in case a countryman of yours becomes poor and his means with regard to you falter, then you are to sustain him, like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.*
9. *[Matthew 25.34-36,40]- ‘Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’*

B. Explanation

1. The poor are always with us according to the Savior’s prediction and God’s promise.
 - a. *[Matthew 26.11]- For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me.*

- b. *[Deuteronomy 15.11]- For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'*
2. When God gave to His people, everyone had an equal share.
 - a. *[2 Corinthians 8.15]- as it is written, "HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK."*
 - b. *[Exodus 16.11-12]- And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "I have heard the grumbings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"*
 3. When God gave to His people, He gave for the necessity of the church.
 - a. *[Acts 4.35]- and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.*
 - b. *[Matthew 6.24]- "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.*
 - c. *[Ephesians 4.28]- He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.*
 4. Relief of poor brethren
 - a. Their relief
 - b. Other's ability
 - 1.) *[2 Thessalonians 3.10-11]- For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies.*

C. Motivations

1. The love of God for us
 - a. *[1 John 3.16]- We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*
2. The glory of the gospel
 - a. *[Matthew 5.7]- "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*
 - b. *[Titus 3.8,14]- This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be unfruitful.*
3. Our union with Christ
4. The testimony of Christ
 - a. *[Matthew 25. 35-36,40]- For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.'*
5. The promise that is added to it
 - a. *[Deuteronomy 15.10]- You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.*

- b. *[Proverbs 19.17]- One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.*
- c. *[Ecclesiastes 11.1]- Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.*
- d. *[Matthew 10.42]- And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."*

D. Directions

1. Appoint some to take what the brethren voluntarily contribute.
 - a. *[Acts 6.1-6]- Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.*
2. Give on the first day of the week
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 16.2]- On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.*
3. Distributing to the necessity of the saints according to the advice of the church, besides private distributions, in which we should also abound
 - a. *[Matthew 6.3]- But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,*
 - b. *[Hebrews 13.16]- And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

E. Study Questions

1. What *obligations* do these verses lay upon the Church?
2. What *motivations* do these verses lay upon the Church?
3. What *practical steps* do these verses commend to the Church?
4. Explain what Owen means by the "trial" of "having the poor with you always"
 - a. *[Matthew 26.11]- For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me.*
5. What rights has God given to govern the use of our financial means? How has God Himself limited these rights? How might these rights (and their limitations) be abused or misapplied (see e.g. Durham quote)?
 - a. *"We wrong others when we do not minister to them when they are in need, and we are in a capacity to help them; yea, when by idleness ad prodigality we incapacitate ourselves to minister to the necessities of others, as Eph.4:28 makes clear." (James Durham on 8th Commandment)*
6. What specific practical rules does Owen suggest to the local congregation for the alleviation of the poor?
7. What do these motivations have in common? Why is guilt not a good motivation?
8. What opportunities do you have as a member of this particular congregation to support the poor in real and tangible ways?

X. 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 forms of wholesome words

A. Proof texts

1. *[Romans 16.17-18]- Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*
2. *[Matthew 24.4-5,23-25]- And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There He is,' do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance.*
3. *[1 Timothy 6.3-5]- If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*
4. *[2 Timothy 2.16-17]- But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus,*
5. *[Titus 3.9-11]- But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.*
6. *[1 John 2.18-19]- Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.*
7. *[1 John 4.1]- Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*
8. *[2 John 10-11]- If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*
9. *[Acts 20.29-31]- I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.*
10. *[Revelation 2.14-16]- But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.*

B. Explanation

1. *[2 Timothy 3.5]- holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.*
2. *[James 3.6]- And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.*
3. *[Romans 16.17]- Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.*

4. *[Isaiah 8.20]- To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.*
5. *[1 Corinthians 2.15]- But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.*
6. *[1 John 2.27]- As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.*
7. *[1 John 4.1]- Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*
8. *[1 Corinthians 14.29]-Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.*
9. *[Acts 17.11]- Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*
10. *[Philippians 1.9-10]- And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;*
11. *[Hebrews 5.14]- But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*
12. *[Matthew 15.14]- Let them alone; they are blind guides [a]of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”*

C. Directions

1. Get your senses exercised in the Word to discern good and evil
 - a. *[Hebrews 5.14]- But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their sense strained to discern good and evil.*
 - b. *[2 Timothy 1.13]- Retain the standard of sound words, which you have heard from me, in the faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus.*
 - c. *[2 John 10]- If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;*
2. Attend and listen to nothing except what comes to you in God’s prescribed manner.
 - a. *[1 Thessalonians 5.21]- But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;*
3. Become knowledgeable to the characteristics of seducers
 - a. Come in sheep’s clothing with good pretenses of innocence and holiness
 - 1.) *[Matthew 7.15]- “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.*
 - b. Good words and fair speeches
 - 1.) *[Romans 16.17-18]- Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*
 - c. Answering men’s lusts in their doctrine-offering the broad way of salvation
 - 1.) *[2 Timothy 4.3]- For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,*
 - d. Pretenses of glorious discoveries and revelation
 - 1.) *[Matthew 24.24]- For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.*

2.) *[2 Thessalonians 2.2]- that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.*

4. Utterly reject and separate from such teachers who have already been tried, convicted and admonished by the church
 - a. *[Titus 3.10]- Reject a factious man after a first and second warning,*
5. Do not receive any teachers without a testimony from such brethren of known integrity in the church
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 16.3]- When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem;*
 - b. *[Acts 9.26]- When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.*
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
 - a. *[1 Timothy 2.3-5]- This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,*
 - b. *[2 Timothy 4.3]- For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,*
 - c. *[Titus 3.9]- But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.*

D. Study Questions

1. In these passages, Paul “marks diligently” those we should “avoid carefully”, who promote divisions in the local congregation. Make a list of their characteristics.
2. What are the sad results of such people in the local congregation?
3. What practical counsel does Paul give to congregations who encounter such men?
4. What do you think Owen means, “a judgment of discerning by the Spirit rests in the church and its several members”?
5. Owen offers seven helpful directions for exercising such discernment in the church: summarize each in your own words, and discuss.
6. Which of the seven do you find most challenging personally, and why? Which do you think is most lacking in American Churches today, and why? Which might Reformed believers be particularly susceptible to fall short on, and why?
7. What steps will you take this week to sharpen your spiritual discernment?

XI. Carefully share the lot and portion of the whole church, in prosperity and in affliction, and do not draw back whatsoever

A. Proof texts

1. *[Matthew 13.20-21]- The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.*
2. *[Hebrews 10.23-25]- Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near*

3. *[Hebrews 10.32-39]- But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.*
4. *[2 Timothy 4.10,16]- for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them.*

B. Explanation

1. To backslide from practicing Christ's ways is to apostasy from Christ Himself
2. Beginnings of great evils are to be resisted

C. Motivations

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

D. Study Questions

1. What is "backsliding"?
2. What sources of backsliding are mentioned in these verses?
3. What role might the local congregation play in preventing backsliding among its membership?
4. What is apostasy?
5. What are its first symptoms?
6. What makes it such an aggravated sin?
7. How is apostasy to be resisted?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[James 2.1-6]- My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?*
2. *[Matthew 20.26-27]- It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;*
3. *[Romans 12.16]- Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.*
4. *[John 13.12-16]- So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that*

you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him.

B. Explanations

1. Where God has not distinguished, neither should we
2. God has chosen the poor of the world to confound the mighty
 - a. *[1 Corinthians 1.27-28]- but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,*
3. Free grace is the only distinguisher

C. Motivations

1. Christ's own example
2. The command of the 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

D. Study Questions

1. What is forbidden, what is commanded, and what is to motivate our obedience?
2. Owen says the Gospel makes *no* distinctions. What does he mean?
3. Then Owen says the Gospel *does not remove* distinctions. What does he mean?
4. What will be the practical results in a local congregation when its members come to see that "Free grace is the only distinguisher"?
5. "Account it the greatest honor to perform the meanest necessary service to the meanest of the saints." What are some less glamorous tasks in the life of *this* congregation? How might you enlist your services to help?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Acts 12.5, 7, 12]- So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.*
2. *[Romans 12.15]- Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*
3. *[1 Corinthians 12.26-27]- And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.*
4. *[1 Thessalonians 3.1-2]- Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,*

B. Explanation

1. *"God delights in the fervent prayers of His churches as much as in their thankful praise."*

C. 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

D. Study Questions

1. What is the logic of Paul's argument for mutual support in trials, illustrated by Peter's escape?
2. In your own words, how does God bring a congregation together to keep this rule?
3. What is your duty as a member of this congregation to your fellow members, and what does the author say should motivate you to perform it? (See also Westminster Confession 26.1)
 - a. *"All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head by His Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man."*
4. How can you personally, practically put this rule into action this week?

XIV. 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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Matthew 18.15-17]- "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*
2. *[1 Thessalonians 5.14]- We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*
3. *[Hebrews 3.12-13]- Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*
4. *[Hebrews 10.24-25]- and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*
5. *[Hebrews 12.13, 15-16]- and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.*
6. *[Leviticus 19.17]- 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.*
7. *[2 Thessalonians 3.15]- Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*
8. *[Romans 15.14]- And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.*
9. *[James 5.19-20]- My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*
10. *[Proverbs 29.1]- A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy*

B. Explanation

1. Watchfulness
2. Admonishment
 - a. Authoritative- with power, teaching

- b. Fraternal-love
- 3. Discipline
- 4. Performance or duties with caution, wisdom, tenderness and moderation
 - a. Do not transgress the rule of charity
 - 1.) *[1 Corinthians 13.7]- bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*
 - 2.) *[Galatians 6.1-5]- Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. For each one will bear his own load.*
 - b. Let there be peace at home by constantly casting out beams and specks from one's own eye
 - 1.) *[Matthew 7.5]- You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*
 - c. No other aim but the glory of God and good of his brother
 - d. Draw admonition from the Word
 - e. External circumstances such as time, place, and person carefully be weighed
 - f. An ordinance that Christ has a special regard for
 - g. Distinguish between personal injuries to self and public scandal
 - h. Self-examination for similar failings always accompany a brother's admonition

C. Motivations

- 1. Authority of Him who appointed admonition
- 2. The privilege, mercy he enjoys by such a spiritual preventing of a danger or evil
- 3. The dreadful judgments that are everywhere threatened to those who despise reproof
 - a. *[Proverbs 29.1]- A man who hardens his neck after much reproof Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.*
 - b. *[Matthew 18.15-17]- "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.*

D. Study Questions

- 1. What is this "mutual admonition" in the congregation (it's goals, motivations, etc)?
- 2. Who is responsible for this mutual admonition in the life of the congregation?
- 3. What should *motivate* us to exhort one another?
- 4. What steps does our Lord lay out for confronting an erring brother or sister?
- 5. What are the *circumstances and goals* of this rule of fellowship?
- 6. What are the *dangers* of this rule of fellowship?
- 7. Owen provides eight directions for performing this rule of fellowship. If you had to admonish a member of this congregation, which of these would you consider most important to keep constantly in mind? Which of these would you find most difficult to maintain?
- 8. If you had to *be admonished* by a member of this congregation, which of these would carry the most weight in helping you humbly accept rebuke? Which of these would be most counter-productive to your brother's admonition if it were lacking?
- 9. Why does Owen include "courage" as a necessary ingredient to this rule? Why might we lack it?
- 10. What motivations are urged upon the admonisher and the admonished?

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

A. Proof texts

1. *[Psalm 24.3-4]- Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, Who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood And has not sworn deceitfully.*
2. *[Matthew 5.16, 20]- Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*
3. *[Matthew 21.19]- Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, "No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you." And at once the fig tree withered.*
4. *[2 Corinthians 7.1]- Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*
5. *[2 Timothy 2.19]- Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."*
6. *[Titus 2.11-12, 14]- For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.*
7. *[Ephesians 4.21-23]- if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,*
8. *[1 Peter 3.12]- "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL."*
9. *[Hebrews 12.14]- Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.*
10. *[Ephesians 5.15-16]- Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*
11. *[2 Samuel 12.14]- However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme*
12. *[Psalm 93.5]- Your testimonies are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore.*

B. Explanation

1. Christ died to wash His church before His Father without spot or blemish
2. Our Master is holy
3. To guide or convince those on the outside
4. To build up one another most effectively
5. Examples are a sharper way of instruction than precepts

C. Motivations

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, follows 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!

D. Study Questions

1. List the aspects of holiness found in these texts. Why are these not optional for the Christian?
2. How does Christ's finished work on the Cross relate to these? (See also Andrew Gray quote)
 - a. *"Faith in Jesus Christ has a noble, excellent influence upon the growth of sanctification, and the attaining of holiness: 'they are sanctified by faith in me'... faith lays hold upon Jesus Christ, and draws strength and virtue from Him, for the conquering of lusts and raising us up into a blessed conformity to Him!"* (Andrew Gray)
3. Why do you think Owen calls personal holiness "the kingdom of God within us?"
4. Explain in what sense personal holiness is a goal of the Gospel.
5. How many *results* of personal holiness are mentioned?
6. Put each of Owen's motivations in your own words and discuss
7. How might we as a congregation encourage one another to greater holiness?
8. How is such greater holiness attained?