

“On the broad shoulders of William Perkins, epoch-making pioneer, stood the entire school of seventeenth-century Puritan pastors and divines, yet the Puritan reprint industry has steadily bypassed him. Now, however, he begins to reappear, admirably edited, and at last this yawning gap is being filled. Profound thanks to the publisher and heartfelt praise to God have become due.”

—J. I. Packer, Board of Governors’ Professor of Theology,  
Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia

“Without a doubt, the Puritans were theological titans. The Puritan theological tradition did not emerge out of a vacuum. It was shaped by leaders and theologians who set the trajectory of the movement and shaped its commitments. William Perkins was one of those men. Perkins’s contribution to Puritan theology is inestimable, and this new reprint of his collected works is a much-awaited addition to all who are still shaped and influenced by the Puritans and their commitment to the centrality of the grace of God found only in Jesus Christ. Even now, every true gospel minister stands in debt to Perkins, and in his shadow.”

—R. Albert Mohler Jr., president, The Southern  
Baptist Theological Seminary

“The list of those influenced by the ministry of William Perkins reads like a veritable Who’s Who of the Puritan Brotherhood and far beyond. This reprinting of his works, so long unobtainable except by a few, is therefore a publishing event of the first magnitude.”

—Sinclair B. Ferguson, Chancellor’s Professor of Systematic Theology,  
Reformed Theological Seminary; Teaching Fellow, Ligonier Ministries

“The father of Elizabethan Puritanism, Perkins presided over a dynasty of faith. The scope of his work is wide, yet on every topic he treats one discovers erudition and deep reflection. He was the first in an amazing line of ministers at Cambridge University’s main church. A pastor to pastors, he wrote a best-seller on counseling, was a formative figure in the development of Reformed orthodoxy, and a judicious reformer within the Church of England. I am delighted to see Perkins’s works made available again for a wide audience.”

—Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Theology  
and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

“William Perkins was a most remarkable Christian. In his relatively short life he was a great preacher, pastor, and theologian. His prolific writings were foundational to the whole English Puritan enterprise and a profound influence beyond his own time and borders. His works have become rare, and their

republishing must be a source of real joy and blessing to all serious Christians. Perkins is the first Puritan we should read.”

—W. Robert Godfrey, president emeritus, Westminster Seminary California

“This is a welcome collection of the gospel-saturated writings of William Perkins. A faithful pastor, Puritan leader, prolific author, and lecturer, Perkins defended the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation throughout his life. Giving particular emphasis to *solus Christus* and *sola Scriptura*, these Reformed doctrines drove him as a pastor to preach the unsearchable riches of God’s truth with confidence and assurance. Sadly, Perkins is unknown to the modern Christian. However, throughout the centuries, the writings, meditations, and treatises of this Puritan luminary have influenced Christians around the world. It is my hope that many will be introduced and reintroduced to the writings of this Reformed stalwart. May his zeal for gospel advance awaken a new generation of biblical preachers and teachers to herald the glory of our sovereign God in this present day.”

—Steven J. Lawson, president, OnePassion Ministries, and professor of preaching at The Master’s Seminary

“Relatively few in the church’s history have left a written legacy of enduring value beyond their own time. Perkins is surely among that select group. Reformation Heritage Books is to be commended for its commitment to making his *Works* available in this projected series, beginning with this volume.”

—Richard B. Gaffin Jr., professor of biblical and systematic theology emeritus, Westminster Theological Seminary

“Christians have heard about William Perkins, especially that he was an extraordinary preacher whose sermons made a deep impression on Cambridge and that they were still impacting the town in the decades that followed Perkins’s death at a mere forty-four years of age in 1602. He was at the heart of the revival of truth and holy living that made the Reformation a glorious work of God. He was the outstanding Puritan theologian of his time, but most of us have not had the opportunity to study his works because of their rarity. After more than three hundred years, this ignorance is going to be ended with the remarkable appearance during the next decade of the complete works of this man of God. We are looking forward to their appearance very much. There will be sufficient gaps between their publication to ensure a sincere attempt at imbibing the truths of each volume, and then we face the challenge of translating Perkins’s teaching into flesh-and-blood living.”

—Geoff Thomas, pastor emeritus, Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth, Wales

The Works of  
WILLIAM PERKINS



# The Works of WILLIAM PERKINS

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## VOLUME 10

*Treatise on How to Live Well in All Estates*  
*Treatise on Vocations*  
*Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family*  
*Calling of the Ministry*  
*Art of Prophesying*  
*Christian Equity*  
*Treatise on Dying Well*

EDITED BY JOSEPH A. PIPA AND  
J. STEPHEN YUILLE

General editors:  
Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas



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## General Preface



William Perkins (1558–1602), often called “the father of Puritanism,” was a master preacher and teacher of Reformed, experiential theology. He left an indelible mark upon the English Puritan movement, and his writings were translated into Dutch, German, French, Hungarian, and other European languages. Today he is best known for his writings on predestination, but he also wrote prolifically on many doctrinal and practical subjects, including extended expositions of Scripture. The 1631 edition of his English *Works* filled over two thousand large pages of small print in three folio volumes.

It is puzzling why his full *Works* have not been in print since the early seventeenth century, especially given the flood of Puritan works reprinted in the mid-nineteenth and late twentieth centuries. Ian Breward did much to promote the study of Perkins, but Breward’s now rare, single-volume compilation of the *Work of William Perkins* (1970) could only present samplings of Perkins’s writings. We are extremely pleased that this lacuna is being filled, as it has been a dream of many years to see the writings of this Reformed theologian made accessible again to the public, including laymen, pastors, and scholars.

Reformation Heritage Books is publishing Perkins’s *Works* in a newly typeset format with spelling and capitalization conformed to modern American standards. The old forms (“thou dost”) are changed to the modern equivalent (“you do”), except in Scripture quotations and references to deity. Punctuation has also been modernized. However, the original words are left intact, not changed into modern synonyms, and the original word order retained even when it differs from modern syntax. Pronouns are capitalized when referring to God. Some archaic terms and obscure references are explained in the editor’s footnotes.

As was common in his day, Perkins did not use quotation marks to distinguish a direct quotation from an indirect quotation, summary, or paraphrase, but simply put all citations in italics (as he also did with proper names). We have removed such italics and followed the general principle of placing citations in quotation marks even if they may not be direct and exact quotations. Perkins generally quoted the Geneva Bible, but rather than conforming his quotations to any particular translation of Scripture, we have left them in

his words. Scripture references in the margins are brought into the text and enclosed in square brackets. Parenthetical Scripture references in general are abbreviated and punctuated according to the modern custom (as in Rom. 8:1), sometimes corrected, and sometimes moved to the end of the clause instead of its beginning. Other notes from the margins are placed in footnotes and labeled, “In the margin.” Where multiple sets of parentheses were nested within each other, the inward parentheses have been changed to square brackets. Otherwise, square brackets indicate words added by the editor. An introduction to each volume by its editor orients the reader to its contents.

The projected *Works of William Perkins* will include ten volumes, including four volumes of biblical exposition, three volumes of doctrinal and polemical treatises, and three volumes of ethical and practical writings. A breakdown of each volume’s contents may be found inside the cover of this book.

If it be asked what the center of Perkins’s theology was, then we hesitate to answer, for students of historical theology know that this is a perilous question to ask regarding any person. However, we may do well to end this preface by repeating what Perkins said at the conclusion of his influential manual on preaching, “The sum of the sum: preach one Christ by Christ to the praise of Christ.”

With the publication of this volume of Perkins’s *Works*, we are grateful to God for the completion of this project, as well as to our editors, proofreaders, and typesetters who persevered throughout the years on these volumes as a labor of love. In some ways, we are grateful our goal of reprinting all the writings of “the father of Puritanism” in modern type has been reached, but in other ways, we will miss editing the writings of our friend, William Perkins, who has edified us in countless ways. It was an honor and privilege to read the corpus of his writings, and we pray God that many thousands will profit immeasurably from reading these ten remarkable volumes that so powerfully impacted the movement we now call Puritanism. *Soli Deo gloria!*

—Joel R. Beeke and Derek W. H. Thomas

## Preface to Volume 10 of William Perkins's Works



The English Reformation was a lengthy process, in which the country wavered between Catholicism and Protestantism as monarchs came and went. In just twenty years, the religion of the land changed four times, but the reign of Elizabeth (1558–1603) brought a measure of stability which allowed the English Reformers to solidify the church's position. William Perkins (1558–1602) played a pivotal role in this, and his works became the standard polemic against Rome.

Despite the progress in reforming medieval teaching in the light of Scripture, Perkins was deeply dissatisfied with the spiritual condition within the Church of England. He was convinced that many of his fellow countrymen still suffered the ill-effects of the Roman Catholic dogma of implicit faith; that is to say, they still assumed that as long as they accepted some "necessary" points of religion they were good Christians. In a day (not unlike our own) in which mere assent was accepted as faith, empty profession was accepted as conversion, and dead formality was accepted as godliness, Perkins was particularly troubled by the prevalence of "civility" within the church. "If we look into the general state of our people," said he, "we shall see that religion is professed, but not obeyed; nay, obedience is counted as preciseness, and so reproached."<sup>1</sup>

This lack of fervency in religion was one of the chief reasons why Perkins was not so concerned about the external forms of the Church of England. Instead of expending his energy on issues related to church polity, he was determined to address what he perceived to be widespread ignorance within

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1. William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition Upon Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London: John Haviland, 1631), 3:261. As R. C. Lovelace explains, "The problem that confronts the Puritans as they look out on their decaying society and their lukewarm church is not simply to dislodge the faithful from the slough of mortal or venial sin, but radically to awaken those who are professing but not actual Christians, who are caught in a trap of carnal security." "The Anatomy of Puritan Piety: English Puritan Devotional Literature, 1600–1640," in *Christian Spirituality III*, eds. L. Dupré and D. E. Saliers (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989), 303.

the church. Simply put, he was adamant that the church's most pressing need was not for ecclesiastical innovation, but practical theological instruction.

This concern became the driving force behind much of Perkins's ministry. It is entirely fitting, therefore, that this final volume of his *Works* should bring together seven treatises that epitomize his practical instruction.<sup>2</sup> These serve to demonstrate Perkins's core conviction that the gospel touches all of life by bringing it under the rule of Scripture. For the reader's benefit, the seven treatises are here introduced under four key headings.

### A God-Honoring Ministry

Like the early Reformers, Perkins believed that preaching is the principal means of grace; in short, the preacher is God's mouthpiece.<sup>3</sup> It was this conviction that led him to commit himself to serve as lecturer at Great St. Andrew's Church in Cambridge.<sup>4</sup> It was also this conviction that led him to devote much of his time and effort to preparing young men for pastoral ministry. He declared, "When we see a people without knowledge and without good guides or teachers, or when we see one stand up in the congregation unable to teach, here is a matter for mourning."<sup>5</sup> For Perkins, the dearth of capable preachers in England was explained in large part by a lack of adequate training. The university curriculum was void of any formal theological education; moreover, it provided no instruction in how to preach or provide pastoral care. Ian Breward remarks, "The assumption was that, since the shape of Christian faith was known and

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2. The table of contents in volume 1 of this series indicates that *Death's Knell* is included in volume 10. Upon further review, however, it has been determined that this work is not properly attributed to William Perkins. It does not appear in the seventeenth-century editions of his *Works*. For a similar assessment, see Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 479–80.

3. See John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2:1018; and John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947), 393.

4. A lecturer was appointed to work alongside the regular pastor. Technically, his ministry was supplemental. In many instances, it was a convenient way to circumvent the rules of conformity. For more on this, see William Haller, *The Rise of Puritanism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), 53; and Paul S. Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent, 1560–1662* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970).

5. William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer in the Way of Catechising, Serving for Ignorant People* (London, 1592), 83. According to Ian Breward, Perkins "stood within a long tradition of complaint at this point. Tyndale had wanted all clergy to be able and conscientious preachers, but by 1583 only one sixth of the English clergy was licensed to preach. After a strenuous campaign by Whitgift to raise the standards of the clergy, there were still only 4,830 licensed to preach in 1603. There were 9,244 parishes." "Introduction," in *The Works of William Perkins*, vol. 2 of the Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics (Berkshire, England: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1970), 35.

the basic duties of the ministry well defined, any educated man could learn how to comfort the troubled, sick, and dying, play his role in local society, understand the Bible, and have a sufficient understanding of classical rhetoric and logic to preach a satisfactory sermon.”<sup>6</sup>

The failure of the universities to equip men adequately for the ministry greatly distressed Perkins. He was not against a robust liberal arts education, but he recognized that something more was needed.<sup>7</sup> Since no major work had been produced by an English Protestant to meet the need for instruction in practical theology, Perkins decided to fill the void by setting out ministerial duties—particularly preaching—in detail.<sup>8</sup>

In *The Calling of the Ministry*,<sup>9</sup> Perkins turned his attention to expounding two texts of Scripture in an attempt to communicate the “duties and dignities” of the pastoral office. He begins with Job 33:23–24,<sup>10</sup> because it contains “a worthy description of a true minister.”<sup>11</sup> In brief, he is known by his (1) *title*—“interpreter,” (2) *rarity*—“one of a thousand,” (3) *office*—“to declare unto men [God’s] righteousness,” (4) *blessing*—“then God will have mercy upon the sinner,” and (5) *commission*—“[God] will say, Deliver him that he go not down into the pit.” As Perkins elaborates on each of these marks, he emphasizes the pastor’s two-fold role of speaking to people on God’s behalf (preaching) and speaking to God on people’s behalf (praying).<sup>12</sup>

Perkins then shifts his focus to Isaiah 6:5–8,<sup>13</sup> describing in detail the prophet’s (1) vision, (2) consolation, and (3) commission. Based on Isaiah’s example, Perkins affirms that when God calls a pastor, He humbles him for

6. Breward, “Introduction,” 36.

7. Breward, “Introduction,” 36.

8. Ian Breward, “William Perkins and the Ideal of the Ministry in the Elizabethan Church,” *The Reformed Theological Review* 24, no. 3 (October 1965): 77–78.

9. William Perkins, *The Calling of the Ministry: Two Treatises, Describing the Duties and Dignities of that Calling*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, vol. 3 (London: John Haviland, 1631). It was published posthumously in 1605.

10. “If there be with him a messenger, an interpreter, one of a thousand to declare unto man his righteousness: Then will he have mercy on him, and will say, Deliver him, that he go not down into the pit, for I have received a reconciliation.”

11. Perkins, *Calling of the Ministry*, 3:429.

12. Perkins, *Calling of the Ministry*, 3:431, 434–35, 444.

13. “Then I said, Woe is me, I am undone, for I am a man of polluted lips and dwell in the midst of a people of polluted lips: for my eyes have seen the King and Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the Seraphim unto me, with a hot coal in his hand, which he has taken from the altar with the tongs: And he touched my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send? and who shall go for Us? Then said I, Here am I, send me. And he said, Go.”

“his own pollution and sinfulness” as “a preparative for grace.”<sup>14</sup> When a pastor sees his sin and misery, he finds nothing in himself but “cause of fear and astonishment.” At this point, God pours “the oil of grace and of sweet comfort” into his heart, thereby refreshing his weary soul with “the dew of His mercy.”<sup>15</sup> For Perkins, this is a necessary step in a man’s call to pastoral ministry, for he cannot preach movingly what he has not felt deeply. It is through his own experience that he learns “the true way of comforting troubled and distressed consciences.”<sup>16</sup>

Perkins stays with the subject of pastoral ministry in *The Art of Prophesying*.<sup>17</sup> Initially, this title might seem strange to those who think of “prophecy” in terms of foretelling. It is important to note, therefore, that Perkins followed John Calvin and other Reformers in recognizing that passages such as Romans 12:6<sup>18</sup> apply the term “prophecy” to preaching.<sup>19</sup> Thus, he did not employ the term “prophesying” in the sense of *foretelling* but *forthtelling*. Viewing the apostolic period as unique in the history of the church, he was a cessationist when it comes to revelatory gifts. He was adamant that the nature of the Holy Spirit’s work in the authors of Scripture was unique, meaning He now illumines what He then inspired; that is to say, He only works upon the foundation of the Word. For Perkins, this implied that the pastor’s chief task is simply to expound what the Holy Spirit has revealed in Scripture. When he stands before his congregation, he does so “in the name and room of Christ,” with the goal of calling people into a “state of grace” and preserving them therein.<sup>20</sup> Preaching,

14. Perkins, *Calling of the Ministry*, 3:443, 452.

15. Perkins, *Calling of the Ministry*, 3:452.

16. Perkins, *Calling of the Ministry*, 3:457. For more on this, see the “preface” in volume 8 of *The Works of William Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019).

17. William Perkins, *The Art of Prophesying; or, A treatise concerning the sacred and only true manner and method of preaching*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, vol. 2 (London, 1631). It was first published in 1592 in Latin, and then translated into English in 1606. The translator was Thomas Tuke, who was later imprisoned for supporting Laudian ceremonialism. See Thomas Seaver, *The Puritan Lectureships: The Politics of Religious Dissent 1560–1662* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970). The treatise consists of eleven chapters, covering the principles of hermeneutics, interpretation, application, and proclamation. For a thorough analysis, see Joseph A. Pipa, “William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching” (PhD dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1985).

18. “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.”

19. John Calvin, *Commentary on The Epistles of Paul: The Epistles to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, eds. D. W. and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 269. Also see the notes on these passages in the Geneva Bible.

20. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:646. For a helpful discussion about urgency in Puritan preaching, see Maarten Kuivenhoven, “Condemning Coldness and Sleepy Dullness: The

therefore, is the means by which people experience God's grace from conversion to glorification.<sup>21</sup>

In *The Art of Prophesying*, Perkins lays out "the sacred and only method of preaching" in four succinct steps. The first is "to read the text distinctly out of the canonical Scriptures." At this point, Perkins's conviction regarding the authority and sufficiency of Scripture steps to the fore. The "canonical" Scriptures consist of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, which constitute the "wisdom of God concerning the truth."<sup>22</sup> As such, they alone form the substance of preaching.<sup>23</sup>

The second step is "to give the sense and understanding" of the text. This is known as interpretation: "the opening of the words and sentences of the Scripture, so that one entire and natural sense may appear."<sup>24</sup> Perkins's process was straightforward. He encouraged preachers to consider the literary style

Concept of Urgency in the Preaching Models of Richard Baxter and William Perkins," in *Puritan Reformed Journal* 4, no. 2 (July 2012): 180–200.

21. For more on this, see J. Stephen Yuille, "Ready to Receive: Humbling and Softening in William Perkins's Preparation of the Heart," *Puritan Reformed Journal* 5, no. 2 (2013): 91–106; Joel R. Beeke, "The Lasting Power of Reformed Experiential Preaching," in *Puritan Reformed Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2004), 425–43; and Paul R. Schaefer, "The Art of Prophesying by William Perkins (1558–1602)," *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

22. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:649. As Breward notes, the "discussion of inspiration and the nature of the Bible was . . . fundamental to Perkins's whole theology and to his understanding of the pastoral task of proclaiming the gospel." "Introduction," 38.

23. Perkins stood at an important juncture in the history of Reformed preaching, particularly as it relates to issues of reception and transmission. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, early modern preaching in England was a neglected field of study, "around which there hung an air of dusty antiquarianism." Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1. In the past fifty years, however, numerous publications have appeared, addressing continuity and discontinuity in early modern preaching in England. E.g., Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Appleby, *Black Bartholomew's Day: Preaching, Polemic and Restoration Nonconformity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). In these historical analyses, Perkins has received his fair share of attention because of his lasting legacy.

24. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:653. Richard Muller observes that Perkins "evidences a preference for a close, literal/grammatical location of the meaning of the text coupled with, as was true of the work of his predecessors in the Reformed tradition, a strong sense of the direct theological address of the text to the church in the present." "William Perkins and the Protestant Exegetical Tradition: Interpretation, Style and Method," in *A Commentary on Hebrews 11 (1609 Edition)*, ed. John H. Augustine (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 87. Muller explains Perkins's use of "scope" and "method" in exegesis—he divides each verse, explains the meaning of its parts, and then draws out the text's argument in terms of the grammatical and logical relations of the parts.

and structure of the text, and then explain specific words and phrases.<sup>25</sup> He also instructed preachers to ask questions of each text. How does it relate to the principal themes of Scripture? What is its context, author, audience, and purpose? What other passages of Scripture shed light on it? In all this, Perkins emphasized that the preacher's principal goal is to "open" Scripture, so that its meaning becomes evident to all.

The third step in preaching is "to collect a few and profitable points of doctrine." Perkins referred to this process as "the right cutting of the Word."<sup>26</sup> In simple terms, it involves deducing the main point of a passage: theological and practical. These "doctrines" are clearly stated in the text or rightly inferred from the text, and they should be reinforced with "proofs" as necessary.<sup>27</sup>

The fourth and final step in preaching is "to apply the doctrines rightly collected to the life and manners of men in a simple and plain speech."<sup>28</sup> This is where Perkins excelled by carefully dividing his audience into six categories: (1) the ignorant and unteachable; (2) the ignorant and teachable; (3) the knowledgeable and proud; (4) the knowledgeable and humble; (5) those who believe; and (6) those who have fallen. Recognizing that a typical congregation consists of people from each of these categories,<sup>29</sup> Perkins counseled preachers to know their people, so that they are able to "apply the doctrines" to each one through correction, admonition, and exhortation. "Thus any place of Scripture ought to be handled," wrote Perkins, "yet so as that all the doctrines be not propounded to the people, but those only which may be fitly applied to our times and to the present condition of the church. And they must not only be choice ones, but also few, lest the hearers be overcharged with their multitude."<sup>30</sup>

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25. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:653–62.

26. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:662.

27. Perkins introduces nine arguments to aid in this work. For definitions of these, see Edward P. J. Corbett and Robert J. Connors, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, 4th edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 84–112.

28. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:664. Sinclair Ferguson explains, "Perkins also well knew that he was addressing the marred image of God, fallen minds, distorted affections, and rebellious wills. The task therefore was to address complex psychosomatic beings, marred in every dimension, by addressing the truth to the mind in order to illumine it, by moving the affections in order to heal them, and by liberating the will from its bondage as the preaching of the gospel effected faith in Christ. Perkins understood that when Paul speaks about Scripture being profitable for *correction*, he uses that language in a positive sense, that is, to transform, heal, and restore the whole person." *William Perkins: Architect of Puritanism*, eds. Joel R. Beeke and Greg Salazar (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2019), 20.

29. For a helpful analysis of these categories, see Erroll Hulse, "William Perkins: Application in Preaching," in *The Pure Flame of Devotion: The History of Christian Spirituality*, ed. G. Stephen Weaver and Ian Hugh Clary (Kitchener, Ont.: Joshua Press, 2013), 177–94.

30. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:669.



The effectiveness of Perkins's own preaching was due in large part to this last step. He had a penchant for dealing with "cases of conscience" through careful self-examination and faithful scriptural application.<sup>31</sup> By all accounts, he was a skilled spiritual physician, who excelled at expounding and applying God's truth to those under his pastoral care. He was committed to ensuring that his preaching was clear and direct, because he believed this was the best way to convince the judgment and embrace the affections, thereby bringing the mind into vital contact with the meaning of Scripture.

Despite his emphasis on method, Perkins was well aware that preaching was insufficient in itself to effect lasting change in others: "We preachers may cry until our lungs fly out, or be spent within us, and men are moved no more than stones."<sup>32</sup> There was still a missing element: unction (or, the demonstration of God's power). Such power is evident when people judge that the Holy Spirit is speaking through the preacher's words and gestures. Perkins explains, "When as the minister of the Word does in the time of preaching so behave himself, that all, even ignorant persons and unbelievers may judge, that it is not so much he who speaks, as the Spirit of God in him and by him.... This makes the ministry to be lively and powerful."<sup>33</sup> But how is such unction achieved? While recognizing that anointed preaching ultimately resides in the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit, Perkins maintained that He is more likely to bless a certain kind of preaching.

This preaching is marked by simplicity. A "simple" or "plain" style of preaching addresses people in a way that facilitates their understanding of what is being said. A. F. Herr remarks, "The plain style is sober, simple in expression, as direct as possible, and free from ornamentation of either fantastic ideas or verbiage."<sup>34</sup> Perkins insisted on this "plain" style because he was persuaded that "a strange word hinders the understanding of those things that are spoken.... It draws the mind away from the purpose to some other matter."<sup>35</sup> Closely related to this, Perkins perceived that far too many preachers were overly concerned with the "trimmings" of their sermons and, therefore, unable to convey Christ in a living way to their people. He was deeply dissatisfied with and

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31. See Ian Breward, "William Perkins and the Origins of Puritan Casuistry," *The Evangelist Quarterly* 40 (1968): 16–22; George L. Mosse, *The Holy Pretence: A Study in Christianity and Reason of State from William Perkins to John Winthrop* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), 48–67.

32. William Perkins, *A Faithful and Plain Exposition Upon the Two First Verses of the Second Chapter of Zephaniah*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London, 1631), 3:424. Also see *Calling of the Ministry*, 3:430.

33. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:670.

34. A. F. Herr, *The Elizabethan Sermon* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), 89–90.

35. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:670.

openly critical of the “ornate” style of preaching widespread within the Church of England.<sup>36</sup> Herr describes this style as “florid” and “witty.”<sup>37</sup> According to Perkins, it was weighed down with human learning, which rendered it ineffective. A pastor’s aim in the pulpit should not be the demonstration of his skill, but the demonstration of God’s power. It was essential for Perkins, therefore, that a preacher possess not only “the knowledge of divine things flowing in his brain but engraved on his heart and printed in his soul by the spiritual finger of God.”<sup>38</sup>

Anointed preaching is also marked by liberty. Perkins was opposed to “memorizing” sermons because he believed it quenched freedom in preaching: “He who through fear does stumble at one word, does trouble the congregation, and confound the memory.”<sup>39</sup> In addition to this, Perkins was convinced that memorization hinders “pronunciation, action, and the holy motions of the affections...because the mind is wholly bent on this, to wit, that the memory fainting now under her burden may not fail.”<sup>40</sup> Perkins’s method was straightforward. As he prepared each sermon, he studied and reviewed until he was familiar with the content of his message. Then, he developed a clear sermon outline accompanied by arguments and illustrations. He felt this approach allowed for liberty in expression. This liberty was facilitated by Perkins’s use of voice and body. His voice was moderate when delivering doctrine, yet fervent when applying God’s truth to the heart. His bodily gestures conveyed gravity. The trunk of his body was quiet, while the motions of his arms, hands, and eyes expressed “the godly affections of the heart.”<sup>41</sup>

Finally, anointed preaching is marked by consistency. As far as Perkins was concerned, God’s grace must be evident in a preacher’s life. Such grace includes

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36. The “ornate” style was chiefly concerned about “the abundant use of rhetorical devices such as repetition, heaping of examples, gradation or word-chains and schemata...innumerable quotations from the church fathers and various secular sources.” Pipa, “William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching,” 38. For more on the styles of preaching, see Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (New York: MacMillan, 1939); J. W. Blench, *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964); and Horton Davies, *The Worship of English Puritans* (Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1997).

37. Herr, *The Elizabethan Sermon*, 89–103. At the time of the Reformation, there were two main types of sermon structure: the “ancient” and the “modern.” The “ancient” was the explanation and application of the text *secundum ordinem textus*, preaching through the text phrase by phrase. The “modern” was structured like most sermons today with an introduction, body, and conclusion. In the hands of the Anglo-Catholics, however, the “modern” declined into “cold and minute analysis and refinement, with little adaptation to life and need.” Edwin Charles Dargan, *The Art of Preaching in the Light of its History* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 143.

38. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:672.

39. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:670.

40. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:670.

41. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:672.

a good conscience before God and man, and an inward feeling of God's truth. It also includes fear of God, love for people, constancy in life, and temperance in conduct.<sup>42</sup> Holiness in a preacher is absolutely necessary because God "abhors the combination of godly speech and an ungodly life."<sup>43</sup> Equally important, Perkins realized that "people do not see the ministry but the person of the minister" and, for this reason, there must be consistency between a pastor's words and walk. Perkins's own growth in godliness was a powerful example to all. According to one biographer, "he lived his sermons, and as his preaching was a comment on his text, so his practice was a comment on his preaching."<sup>44</sup>

Simplicity, liberty, and consistency are no guarantee of unction, but—in Perkins's opinion—characterize the kind of preaching that is most likely to experience the Holy Spirit's blessing. Given his theology of preaching (*simple* in approach and *supernatural* in effect), it is no surprise that Perkins gave himself wholeheartedly to it and to imparting his method to others. His approach became the standard for a generation of preachers, and it continues to exert an influence upon the pulpit down to the present day.<sup>45</sup>

### A God-Honoring Vocation

As a pastor must be faithful in the performance of his calling, so too all believers must be faithful in their calling. Perkins takes up this theme in *A Treatise of the Vocations*.<sup>46</sup> His text is 1 Corinthians 7:20, where Paul declares, "Let every man abide in that same vocation wherein he was called." Perkins begins by identifying two calls in the life of every believer. The first is the "general" call to salvation in Christ, while the second is the "particular" (or, "personal") call to a specific role in the home, church, and commonwealth.<sup>47</sup> To be more precise,

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42. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:672.

43. Perkins, *Art of Prophesying*, 2:671.

44. Thomas Fuller, *Abel Redivivus: or the Dead Yet Speaking*, 2 vols. (London: William Tegg, 1867), 2:436.

45. This method was recommended by the Westminster Divines in the Directory for Public Worship. *The Westminster Confession* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2018), 559–63. Also see *The Larger Catechism*, 159.

46. William Perkins, *A Treatise of the Vocations, or Callings of Men, with the Sorts and Kinds of Them, and the Right Use Thereof* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1603).

47. Perkins, *Vocations*, 1. Much has been made of the Puritan concept of "calling." According to Max Weber, it is responsible for today's capitalism. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1976), 13. For similar views, see R. B. Schlatter, *The Social Ideas of Religious Leaders, 1660–1688* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971); and Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London: Panther Books, 1969), 135–38. In short, Weber argues that the doctrine of election caused the Puritans to focus upon assurance. Given their concept of work as God-ordained, they urged "tireless labor in a calling... as the best possible means of attaining this self-assurance." *Protestant Ethic*, 77–78. This resulted in an emphasis upon "ceaseless, constant, systematic labor in a secular calling" as "the surest and most

the particular call is “a certain kind of life, imposed and ordained on man by God for the common good.”<sup>48</sup> That being the case, each of us must (1) pursue a particular calling,<sup>49</sup> (2) determine that it is the best for us, (3) confirm that it is consistent with the Christian faith, (4) maintain a good reputation in it, and (5) ensure that it never takes precedent over our general calling.

Perkins proceeds to divide particular callings into two groups. The first includes all those that belong to the essence of a society. Without them, society could not exist. In the family, this includes masters, servants, husbands, wives, parents, and children; in the commonwealth, it includes magistrates and subjects; and, in the church, it includes ministers and congregants. The second group consists of all those that serve only for the good, happy, and quiet estate of a society.

Whatever our particular vocation, we are to seek to fulfill it in a God-honoring manner. This is accomplished by following God's will in (1) choosing a vocation, (2) entering a vocation, (3) continuing in a vocation, and (4) ending a vocation. Perkins claims that we should never choose a vocation in isolation, but in consultation with parents and other godly advisors. The church should confirm our choice by ensuring that it suits our gifts and abilities, contributes to the common good, and glorifies God. Of particular interest is Perkins's extensive discussion on “continuance” in vocation. Close to half of his treatise is devoted to this subject, in which he identifies common hindrances to the right use of a vocation; e.g., covetousness, injustice, ambition, envy, and impatience.<sup>50</sup>

Perkins's analysis affords many helpful lessons concerning the nature of work and our approach to it, but his most valuable contribution is his assertion that our “particular” callings are the principal means by which we glorify God in this world. Foundational to the Reformation was the rejection of the notion that the “sacred” refers to anything under the church's control whereas

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visible proof of regeneration and the genuineness of faith.” And this, according to Weber, “was inevitably the most powerful lever imaginable with which to bring the spread of that philosophy of life which we have here termed the ‘spirit’ of capitalism.” *Protestant Ethic*, 116. Weber's thesis has generated a large body of literature. Some scholars question the legitimacy of his distinction between a particularly Puritan and generally Protestant work ethic. See Timothy Breen, “The Non-Existent Controversy: Puritan and Anglican Attitudes on Work and Wealth,” *Church History* 35 (1966): 273–87. C. John Sommerville adopts an entirely different approach from Weber, arguing that Anglicanism (not Puritanism) stressed “worldly enterprise.” “The Anti-Puritan Work Ethic,” *Journal of British Studies* 20 (1981): 73.

48. Perkins, *Vocations*, 2.

49. In this section, Perkins expresses his disapproval of begging. This does not arise from any indifference on his part to the plight of the poor, but from his conviction that the act of begging is contrary to Scripture.

50. Perkins, *Vocations*, 82.

the “secular” refers to anything not under the church’s control.<sup>51</sup> For Martin Luther, this separation between the sacred and secular was the first of “three walls” constructed by the Roman Church. Determined to tear it down, Luther declared, “It is pure invention that pope, bishop, priests, and monks are called the spiritual estate while princes, lords, artisans, and farmers are called the temporal estate. This is indeed a piece of deceit and hypocrisy.”<sup>52</sup> In contrast to the Catholic position, the Reformers were convinced that all of life is sacred.<sup>53</sup> Perkins adopted this view and applied it to his particular context. He insisted that we have two callings. The first is our conversion to Christ; this is our identity. The second is our condition in life; this is the means by which we live out our identity in Christ. In sum, God has assigned and called each of us to a certain life—single or married, carpenter or electrician, government official or manual laborer, parent or child, student or retiree, etc. It is all sacred, in that we are to glorify God in whatever life He has appointed for us.<sup>54</sup>

Equally significant is Perkins’s claim that, when we fulfill our vocation in a God-honoring manner,<sup>55</sup> we actually perform those “good works, which God

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51. This division between secular and sacred has prevailed since the early church period. “In the early part of the fourth century, Eusebius propounded a doctrine of two lives: ‘Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living... permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone.... Such then is the perfect form of the Christ life.’ The other is ‘more humble, more human, permits man to join in pure nuptials, and to produce children... it allows them to have minds for farming, for trade, and other more secular interests as well as for religion... a kind of secondary grade of piety is attributed to them.’ This pattern shaped much of subsequent church thinking. So, for example, Augustine distinguished between an ‘active life’ and a ‘contemplative life.’ The [first] took in almost every kind of work, including studying, preaching, and teaching. The [second] was reflection and meditation upon God and His truth. While both kinds of life were good, the contemplative life was of a higher order.” Paul Marshall, *A Kind of Life Imposed on Man: Vocation and Social Order from Tyndale to Locke* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 18–19.

52. Martin Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate*, in *Luther’s Works*, ed. H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 44:127.

53. P. J. Beale expresses the significance of this view as follows: “Whether his calling was an exalted or a humble one, the Puritan worker sought to glorify God by the way in which he worked, knowing that he had a Master in heaven.” “Sanctifying the Outer Life,” in *Aspects of Sanctification* (London: Westminster Conference, 1981), 72.

54. In other words, the dignity of work does not lie in its importance in the world’s eyes, but in the manner in which it is performed. See Charles Robert Munson, “William Perkins, Theologian of Transition” (PhD dissertation, Case Western Reserve University, 1971), 7.

55. For recent scholarship on the sanctification of work, see Gene Edward Veith, Jr., ed., *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002); Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012).

hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).<sup>56</sup> This is the case because the faithful execution of our vocation contributes to the "common good"—the betterment of society as a whole. It is, therefore, the chief means by which we express our love for God and neighbor (Mark 12:30–31). All that to say, Perkins did not restrict "good works" to acts of serving the poor, helping the sick, visiting the infirm, etc., but viewed them as the natural outworking of the faithful performance of our "particular" calling.

Of great importance, therefore, is the manner in which we approach our calling. The glory of God must be our goal and the Word of God must be our rule. We have an example of what this entails in Perkins's *A Treatise of Christian Equity*.<sup>57</sup> His text is Philippians 4:5, where Paul commands, "Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." Perkins argues that moderation is "so necessary [that] without the practice of it, no house, family, society, city, commonwealth, kingdom, or church, can stand or continue.... There can be no peace, no Christian neighborhood, no true friendship, unless one bears with another and one carries himself towards another in an even and moderate course."<sup>58</sup>

Perkins defines moderation (or, Christian equity) as "a rare and excellent virtue whereby men use a true mean and an equal moderation in all their affairs and dealings with men for the maintaining of justice and preservation of peace."<sup>59</sup> It is to be practiced publicly in courts, councils, parliaments, etc.,<sup>60</sup>

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56. Robert Michaelsen argues that the Puritan concept of calling released the economic drives of Western society. Following the Reformers, the early Puritans developed a religious doctrine of vocation; however, the later Puritans moved to a more secular doctrine. "When the late Puritans talked about the general calling they thought chiefly of particular *acts* which might be called religious acts, rather than an overwhelming experience of the grace of God in Jesus Christ." "Changes in the Puritan Concept of Calling or Vocation," *The New England Quarterly* 26 (1953): 326. These later Puritans gave more power to the natural man by minimizing the doctrine of original sin and maximizing the role of good works in salvation. This shift led to a stress upon industry, prudence, diligence, and orderliness. "It is not a great step," claims Michaelsen, "from the blessing of industry and prudence as the best exercises for the soul to the blessing of these virtues in themselves, or the blessing of the material wealth gained by them." "Changes in the Puritan Concept of Calling or Vocation," 332. By way of critique, Michaelsen places far too much emphasis upon a perceived tendency among the Puritans to equate economic prosperity with God's favor. In actual fact, the Puritans stress God's inscrutability when it comes to economic prosperity. They are well aware that many times the unregenerate prosper while the regenerate experience adversity.

57. William Perkins, *Epieikeia; or, A Treatise of Christian Equity and Moderation* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1604).

58. Perkins, *Epieikeia*, 2–3.

59. Perkins, *Epieikeia*, 3.

60. Perkins, *Epieikeia*, 6.

and privately in our dealings with others.<sup>61</sup> It consists of (1) bearing weaknesses in others, (2) interpreting questionable actions in a positive light, (3) surrendering our rights, and (4) forgiving personal wrongs.<sup>62</sup>

When we pursue our vocation (particularly our relationships) with the glory of God and the good of our neighbor in view, it is pleasing in God's sight. This is a timely message for today's church. It is not uncommon for believers to revert to a medieval mindset whereby they divide life into the sacred and secular. Because of this, they look to certain callings (e.g., missionary or minister) as exemplifying some sort of super spirituality. In addition, they tend to view detachment from everyday life as essential to spiritual progress, assuming that release from the "mundane" roles and responsibilities of life will free them to pursue a deeper relationship with God. Such an outlook represents a severe distortion of the Christian faith. The lesson from Perkins is this: God has assigned each of us and called each of us to a "particular" life. Our responsibility is to live out our identity in Christ in our calling, seeking our neighbor's good to the glory of God.

### A God-Honoring Home

One of the most important vocations is the place we occupy in our family.<sup>63</sup> God appoints and calls each of us to fulfill certain roles and responsibilities

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61. Perkins, *Epieikeia*, 34.

62. Perkins, *Epieikeia*, 35.

63. By the end of the sixteenth century, there was considerable interest in the "right ordering of a household." By way of examples, see Richard Greenham, *A Godly Exhortation and Faithful Admonition to Virtuous Parents and Modern Matrons* (London, 1584); Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage*, (London, 1591); John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godly Form of Household Government* (London, 1598). There are diverse views as to what gave rise to the "Puritan" household. The historian, Christopher Hill, first wrote of the "spiritualization" of the Puritan household in 1964. As a Marxist, he was primarily interested in demonstrating how such a household served as the breeding ground for economic individualism and, therefore, the advent of capitalist values and practices. Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1964; repr., London: Panther Books, 1969), 429–66. Whether employing Hill's exact phraseology or not, others have posited different theories as to the historical and sociological significance of the spiritual household. The German scholar of English literature, Levin Schucking, viewed it as the catalyst for the development of the close conjugal family, owing to its repudiation of celibacy and its celebration of intimacy. Levin Schucking, *The Puritan Family: A Social Study from Literary Sources* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969). For a similar thesis, see Edmund Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956). The feminist historian, Lyndal Roper, decried the spiritual household as responsible for reinforcing repressive patriarchal structures and subjecting children to harmful indoctrination. Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991). More recently, the church historian, Alexandra Walsham, revisited the spiritual household, theorizing that it functioned at times as a support for the political and ecclesiastical establishment, and at other times as an impetus

in the home. Perkins addresses this subject in *Oeconomie, or Household Government*.<sup>64</sup> Convinced that “the only rule of ordering the family is the written Word of God,”<sup>65</sup> he pores over Scripture for any text that might shed light on God’s will for the home.<sup>66</sup> He immerses himself in the world of the patriarchs, the kings of Israel, and the New Testament saints, gleaning examples both to be shunned and emulated. In short, his right ordering of the family is the out-working of his biblical theology.<sup>67</sup> Centuries later, Perkins’s treatment of the subject merits our attention for a number of reasons.

First, Perkins addresses familial challenges with pastoral sensitivity and theological clarity. He explains, for example, the difference between the “betrothal” and “consummation” stages in a marriage contract. He highlights the “essential signs” that indicate a person is “fit” for marriage. In relation to this, he spends several pages mapping out “the just and lawful distance of blood” that is necessary for people to marry. He also deals with issues of compatibility. Is there “parity or equality” in terms of age, condition, and reputation? Perkins also elaborates on the distinctive roles of parents and children in realizing a marriage contract.<sup>68</sup>

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for clandestine resistance to authority. Alexandra Walsham, “Holy Families: The Spiritualization of the Early Modern Household Revisited,” in *Religion and the Household* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2014), 122–60.

64. William Perkins, *Oeconomie, or Household Government, A Short Survey of the Right Manner of Erecting and Ordering a Family, According to the Scriptures*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London, 1631), 3:669. Perkins’s definition of “oeconomie” is derived from Proverbs 24:3, “By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.” Perkins produced this treatise in the early 1590s—an interesting detail, given that he married Timothee Cradock in 1595. Did his impending union give him the necessary impetus to produce a marriage manual?

65. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:669.

66. Perkins’s treatise is saturated with Scripture references and inferences. Expectedly, he turns repeatedly to Genesis 1–2, Proverbs 31, 1 Corinthians 7, Ephesians 5–6, Colossians 3–4, 1 Timothy 3–4, and 1 Peter 3.

67. The historian, Margo Todd, has challenged any notion of a Puritan spiritual household, arising from Protestant theology in “Humanists, Puritans and the Spiritualized Household,” *Church History* 49 (1980): 18. Todd argues that the exaltation of marriage, the creation of the family church, the rise of religious education, the practice of disciplinary duties, and the recognition of spiritual equality emerged from “classical ideas transmitted to the Puritans by humanism.” “Humanists, Puritans and the Spiritualized Household,” 22. Kathleen Davies also disputes the suggestion that Puritanism represents “a very different and more elevated view of family life from that presented in pre-Reformation or early Protestant views of marriage.” “The sacred condition of equality—how original were Puritan doctrines of marriage?” *Social History* 2 (1977): 563. For the opposite view, see Roland Frye, “The Teachings of Classical Puritanism on Conjugal Love,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 2 (1955): 149–55.

68. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:672–82.



In addition to these practical issues, Perkins speaks to a number of specific “cases”—perplexing situations, many of which he undoubtedly faced as a pastor. What happens if a young woman is unwilling to marry a man to whom she was engaged as a child? What happens if a young man enters an engagement in a “furious and frantic” condition, and subsequently changes his mind? What happens if a young woman’s parents arrange for her to marry an unbeliever? What happens if someone’s prospective spouse becomes incapacitated? How should a spouse handle a prolonged absence that is “prejudicial” to the marriage? When is it permissible to dissolve a marriage? What should you do if your spouse deserts you? What should you do if your spouse threatens you? What should you do if your spouse requires something “intolerable” of you? What should you do if your spouse is unfaithful?<sup>69</sup>

In all this, Perkins demonstrates great biblical wisdom, especially as he applies Scripture to broken people in broken relationships. This realism is a missing element from many of the funeral sermons and biographical accounts of the time period, which tend to embellish domestic bliss while ignoring the messier aspects of family life. This is likely the result of apologetic intention. But Perkins provides a needed reality check—one which we would do well to heed. We tend to idolize the past, plunging ourselves into romantic idealism, but there was never an idyllic time in the past when families were free from the ravages of sinful human behavior. And there are never any easy fixes for marital and parental challenges. Perkins points us to God’s Word as the only safe guide for navigating the many complexities that arise in the home.

Second, Perkins articulates a biblical view of the family, founded upon the creation narrative. As he surveys Genesis 1–2, he makes five observations concerning the marital relationship.<sup>70</sup> (1) “It was ordained by God in paradise, above and before all other states of life, in Adam’s innocency before the fall.”<sup>71</sup> (2) “It was instituted upon a most serious and solemn consultation among the three persons in the holy Trinity.” (3) “The manner of this conjunction was excellent, for God joined our first parents, Adam and Eve, together immediately.” (4) “God gave a large blessing unto the estate of marriage.” (5) “Marriage was made and appointed by God Himself, to be the fountain and seminary of all other sorts and kinds of life in the commonwealth and in the church.”

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69. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:682–90.

70. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:671. Perkins acknowledges that the “gift of continency” is in many respects better than marriage, “yet not simply, but by accident, in regard of sundry calamities which came into the world by sin.” This is how he interprets 1 Cor. 7:25–35.

71. “Marriage of itself,” writes Perkins, “is a thing indifferent, and the kingdom of God stands no more in it than in meats and drinks; and yet it is a state in itself far more excellent than the conditions of single life.” *Oeconomie*, 3:671.

For Perkins, therefore, the creation account is foundational to a biblical view of marriage (and the family). His second observation is particularly pertinent: "It was instituted upon a most serious and solemn consultation among the three persons in the holy Trinity." That is to say, the creation narrative stresses that the triune God made Adam and Eve in His image, and then commanded them to be fruitful. The inference is that the triune God intended for this family to mirror the relationship within the Trinity, and to be the context in which we enjoy the kind of relationship enjoyed within the Trinity. That is why the expression "they became one flesh" is so crucial. It highlights an experience of "diversity in unity" which is exclusive to the domain of marriage.

Third, Perkins affirms the "one flesh" principle as the defining feature of the relationship between husband and wife. "Marriage," says he, "is the lawful conjunction of the two married persons; that is of one man and one woman into one flesh."<sup>72</sup> He explains the duties of those who are thus conjoined. The first is "cohabitation": the "quiet and comfortable dwelling together in one place, for the better performance of mutual duties."<sup>73</sup> The second is "communion": the mutual communication of "their persons and goods" to each other, "for their mutual help, necessity, and comfort."<sup>74</sup> Perkins adds, "This duty consists principally in the performance of special benevolence one to another, and that not of courtesy, but of due debt.... Due benevolence must be showed with a singular and entire affection one towards another; and that three ways principally"—enjoying one another,<sup>75</sup> cherishing one another,<sup>76</sup> and rejoicing in one another.<sup>77</sup>

The significance of the "one flesh" principle is evident throughout Perkins's treatise. A husband is to love his wife as himself,<sup>78</sup> regarding his wife's estate as his own.<sup>79</sup> He is also to esteem his wife by "making account of her as his

72. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:670. Perkins cites Gen. 2:21, Matt. 19:6, and Eph. 5:31.

73. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:686.

74. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:689.

75. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:689. For Perkins, the "marriage bed" is that "solitary and secret society" that exists alone between husband and wife. The "right and lawful use" of the marriage bed "is indeed an essential duty of marriage."

76. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:691. "This cherishing," writes Perkins, "is the performing of any duties that tend to the preserving of the lives one of another. Wherefore they are freely to communicate their goods, their counsel, their labors, each to other, for the good of themselves and theirs."

77. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:691.

78. See Ephesians 5:33. As Edmund Leites remarks, "an outward fulfillment of the duties of marriage was not enough; the proper intentions and feelings toward your spouse must also exist." "The Duty to Desire: Love, Friendship, and Sexuality in Some Puritan Theories of Marriage," *Journal of Social History* 15 (1982): 383.

79. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:691.

companion.”<sup>80</sup> Perkins asserts that such “communion of married persons” is “a lively type of Christ and His church,” and “a figure of the conjunction that is between Him and the faithful.”<sup>81</sup> An appreciation of this truth is crucial. One of the principal strains upon marriage in our day is the Epicurean worldview, which ultimately posits no reality outside of the natural order. Faithfulness in marriage, therefore, is simply the result of personal and economic factors. Furthermore, marriage is merely a provisional convenience to be dissolved whenever one of the parties decides it is no longer in their interest. In sharp contrast, a concept of marriage, informed by the “one-flesh” principle, frees it from its modern-day caricature as a trap, chore, or burden. It elevates marriage into the realm of the divine, and it sets marriage apart as one of the greatest callings the world has ever known.

Fourth, Perkins emphasizes the importance of cultivating an intimate marital relationship. In his third observation concerning the institution of marriage, he affirms, “The manner of this conjunction was excellent, for God joined our first parents, Adam and Eve, together immediately.” For Perkins, this joining was emotional, spiritual, and physical. For this reason, he denounces those who forbid marriage and view “due benevolence” as a sin.<sup>82</sup> He criticizes those “schoolmen” who teach that “the secret coming together of man and wife cannot be without sin.”<sup>83</sup> He also criticizes the Church of Rome for prohibiting “certain parties” from marrying because “they think this secret coming together of man and wife to be filthiness.”<sup>84</sup> Perkins makes specific mention of Syricius (334–399), “that filthy pope of Rome, who determined that marriage was the uncleanness of the flesh, and to that purpose abused the words of the

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80. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:691.

81. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:690. See Eph. 5:23.

82. The view of celibacy as a means to spirituality entered the church at an early date. Beginning in the second century, many allowed dualistic philosophies (e.g., Gnosticism and Manichaeism) to influence their beliefs regarding sex. They held that lust taints all sexual activity. For many, this implied that virginity was superior to marriage. Without question, the most influential thinker of the time period was Augustine, who argues that sex practically paralyzes all power of deliberate thought. See *City of God, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, ed. P. Schaff (New York: Random House, 1948), 2:14:16–21. As Henry Chadwick remarks, for Augustine, “in human nature as it now is the sexual impulse is the supreme symptom or expression of the irrational, the uncontrollable, the obsessive condition of the human psyche in its fallen condition.” “The Ascetic Ideal in the History of the Church,” in *Monks, Hermits and the Ascetic Tradition: Vol. 22*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), 19. From this premise, the church of the Middle Ages acknowledged two reasons for marriage: the procreation of children and the avoidance of fornication. These notions remained prominent within the church until the Reformers departed from the accepted tradition by adding a third reason for marriage, namely, mutual society.

83. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:671.

84. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:689. Also see 3:671.

apostle (Rom. 8:8), affirming that they who are in the flesh, that is, in the state of matrimony, 'cannot please God.'<sup>85</sup>

In contrast to the medieval tradition, Perkins affirms four "ends" of marriage.<sup>86</sup> (1) "The procreation of children, for the propagation and continuance of the seed and posterity of man upon the earth." (2) "The protection of a holy seed, whereby the church of God may be kept holy and chaste, and there may always be a holy company of men that may worship and serve God in the church from age to age." (3) "That after the fall of mankind, it might be a sovereign means to avoid fornication, and consequently to subdue and slake [*quench*] the burning lusts of the flesh."<sup>87</sup> (4) "That the parties married may thereby perform the duties of their calling in better and more comfortable manner."

In his treatment of this subject, Perkins demonstrates no antipathy toward the body. God's good gifts (including the conjugal relationship) are expressions of His kindness and are, therefore, intended for our enjoyment. The fact that God created Adam and Eve, declared that they should not be alone, and brought them together (all prior to the fall), is sufficient evidence that marriage is good.<sup>88</sup> Perkins was no ascetic. He had no problem with "natural" delights. "We may use these gifts of God," says he, "not sparingly alone, and for mere necessity...but also freely and liberally, for Christian delight and pleasure. For this is that liberty, which God has granted to all believers."<sup>89</sup> The way to holiness, therefore, is not found in abstaining from God's good gifts, but in enjoying them, echoing Paul's words: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).<sup>90</sup> Perkins believes that

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85. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:689.

86. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:671.

87. Perkins makes it clear that the third "end" has only existed since "the fall of mankind." In other words, the need to avoid fornication only exists because sin exists. For an overview of Puritan views of sexuality, see Daniel Doriani, "The Puritans, Sex, and Pleasure," *Westminster Theological Journal* 53 (1991): 125–43; and Frye, "The Teachings of Classical Puritanism," 149–55. For the common charge of Puritan prudery, see Lyle Koehler, *A Search for Power* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 10; and Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 499, 523. For the opposite view, see Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 43–45.

88. God's Word is the "warrant that they may lawfully do this action," whereas prayer is the means of seeking God's blessing upon the union between husband and wife. Perkins highlights three prayer requests: that it might (1) produce "a blessed seed," (2) preserve "the body in cleanness that it may be a fit temple for the Holy Ghost to dwell in," and (3) serve as "a lively type of Christ and his church." *Oeconomie*, 3:689.

89. William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience, Distinguished into Three Books*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London, 1632), 3:321. Also see 3:342.

90. The issue is not natural delights. They are good because God has ordained them. The issue is abuse, whereby we seek satisfaction in these things apart from God. When the fear of

godliness encompasses all of life; that is, everything is spiritual. Moreover, he believes there is a far better school for godliness than monastic isolationism—namely, the family, where we see our sinfulness and learn how to grow in Christ-likeness.<sup>91</sup>

Fifth, Perkins constructs a spiritual household, marked by mutual responsibilities, distinctive roles, and common purposes. He defines a household as “a natural and simple society of certain persons, having mutual relation one to another, under the private government of one.”<sup>92</sup> There are two crucial components to this definition. The first is that the household consists of a “society of certain persons.” Perkins distinguishes this “society” into three “couples.”<sup>93</sup> The first is husband and wife. As the head of his wife, the husband is to love and honor her.<sup>94</sup> His chief responsibilities include leading family worship, ensuring attendance at public worship, providing for his family, and keeping order within his home. For her part, the wife is “to submit herself to her husband.”<sup>95</sup> Her responsibilities include advising her husband and maintaining her home.

The second couple is parent and child. Parents have two principal duties. First, they are responsible for “bringing up” their children, ensuring “that they may live, and also that they may live well.”<sup>96</sup> This applies to their physical well-being and, more importantly, their spiritual well-being. Parents are “to sow the seeds of godliness and religion in the heart of the child, so soon as it comes to the use of reason and understanding; and as it grows in years, so care must be had that it grows in knowledge and grace.” Together, husband and wife exercise

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God “tempers” our affections, the result is moderation in our use of natural delights. “Thus,” says Frye, “the Puritan warnings were not concerned with any sin involved in physical love itself. . . . Two things were feared: lust as unstable sexual foundation for marriage in this world, and lust as idolatrous preventative of happiness in the world to come.” “The Teachings of Classical Puritanism on Conjugal Love,” 158. From his analysis of the primary literature, Leites concludes, “This sensuous love is not simply permitted, given the existence of a higher, holier, ‘spiritual’ relation between man and wife, nor is it allowed only to forward the other purposes of marriage. It is required as a constituent and intrinsic element of a good marriage. This sensual affection and delight must continue unabated, with the full intensity of youthful desire throughout the whole of married life.” “The Duty to Desire,” 388.

91. Martin Luther described family life as “the school for character.” As quoted in Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1951), 234ff.

92. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:669.

93. As Edmund Morgan observes, “The order of society,” for the Puritans, “consisted in certain dual relationships, most of them originating in agreements between the persons related and all arranged in a pattern of authority and subjection.” *The Puritan Family*, 28. For a treatment of family relations in the Puritan era, see Helen Berry and Elizabeth Foyster, eds., *The Family in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–17.

94. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:691.

95. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:692.

96. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:693.

authority over their children in raising them according to the tenets of God's Word. As for children, they must "yield" obedience, and "recompense" their parents by supporting them when they are old.<sup>97</sup>

The third couple in the household is master and servant. By servants, Perkins means employees such as domestic workers, apprentices, laborers, and shop assistants.<sup>98</sup> Under normal circumstances, these lived as members of their employer's family. The master is to assign labor according to the servant's strength. In addition, he is to recompense his servant by (1) giving him due sustenance while employed, (2) paying him fair wages at the end of his service, and (3) caring for him if he becomes sick during his time of employment.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, a servant "is faithfully and diligently to demean himself in the affairs of his master, and to do service unto him, as unto Christ."<sup>100</sup>

Perkins's "three-couple" paradigm is developed from Ephesians 5:22–6:9 and Colossians 3:18–4:1. In the first text, Paul prefaces his remarks with a general exhortation: "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."<sup>101</sup> He then applies this to the three household relationships: he addresses wives before their husbands, and tells them to be subject to them; he addresses children before their parents, and tells them to obey them; and he addresses servants before their masters, and tells them to obey them. The success of these relationships is made contingent upon adherence to the first command: "Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."

The second component to Perkins's definition of a household is that the above three couples relate to one another "under the private government of one." The head of the household exercises leadership under which his wife

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97. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:695.

98. Perkins makes it clear that there are "two sorts" of servants: (1) a "free servant" is hired for wages to complete a certain service; and (2) a "bond servant" ("commonly called a slave") is purchased for money. *Oeconomie*, 3:697. Perkins wrestles at some length over the legitimacy of slavery. He allows for it as long it is "used with moderation." Moreover, he insists that it must not be "procured and retained by force, for it is a more grievous crime to spoil a man of his liberty than of his riches." For Perkins, therefore, slavery is a voluntary practice. "Where this kind of servitude is abolished, it is not to be again received or entertained among Christians." *Oeconomie*, 3:698. Richard Baxter is very strong in his condemnation of the practice: "To go as pirates and catch up poor negroes or people of another land, that never forfeited life or liberty, and to make them slaves, and sell them, is one of the worst kinds of thievery in the world; and such persons are to be taken for the common enemies of mankind; and they that buy them and use them as beasts, for their mere commodity, and betray, or destroy, or neglect their souls, are fitter to be called incarnate devils than Christians." *A Christian Directory*, in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter* (London: George Virtue, 1846; repr., Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000), 1:462.

99. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:696–97.

100. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:697.

101. See Eph. 5:21.

performs her duties, as do his children and servants.<sup>102</sup> Such a view of the family is not without its detractors, but it is important to appreciate Perkins's full vision. Authority is never an end in itself, but a means to an end. It exists so that life can flourish. Such authority functions within the "one-flesh" principle, meaning it is based on self-giving, not self-serving. Such authority functions within the parameters of God's Word; thus, it is never arbitrary. Moreover, such authority functions within the context of mutuality—acting together, deciding together, working together, living together, etc. Its ultimate goal is to promote family relationships in which love is expressed in selflessness. In Perkins's estimation, when family members fulfill their roles and responsibilities within such a framework, the household becomes "a kind of paradise upon earth."<sup>103</sup>

Sixth, Perkins aims at the promotion of godliness through the family—the basic unity of society. In his struggle for reform, Perkins viewed the household as pivotal. Naturally, therefore, he looked to the head of the household as God's appointed instrument for effecting religious change. This governor must ensure that the members of his household are devoted to the worship of God, and employed "in some honest and profitable business, to maintain the temporal estate and life of the whole."<sup>104</sup> Perkins writes, "Governors of families must teach their children, and servants, and their whole household the doctrine of true religion, that they may know the true God, and walk in all His ways in doing righteousness and judgment. . . . But whereas they neglect their duty, falsely persuading themselves that it does not belong to them at all to instruct others, it is the cause of ignorance both in towns and families. . . ."<sup>105</sup> In Perkins's worldview, the family is the basic unit of society, providing the pattern for larger communities: town, church, and commonwealth. The way to reform the church, transform the town, and alter the course of the commonwealth, therefore, is to spiritualize the household.

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102. It is not difficult to see how quickly the principle of governance and obedience can become determinative in a marital relationship, especially if divorced from the "one flesh" principle. Likewise, it is relatively easy to infer (intended or not) intrinsic male superiority from some of Perkins's remarks.

103. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:670.

104. Perkins, *Oeconomie*, 3:669–70. Perkins provides a brief description of family worship, focusing on biblical instruction and prayer in both the morning and evening. For examples of family devotional works, see Edward Dering, *Godly Private Prayers, for householders to meditate upon, and to say in their families*, 1578; John Parker, *A True Pattern of Piety, meet for all Christian householders to look upon, for the better education of their families*, 1592; Richard Jones, *A Brief and Necessary Catechism, for the benefit of all householders, their children and families*, 1583.

105. William Perkins, *An Exposition of the Symbol or Creed of the Apostles, According to the Tenor of the Scripture and the Consent of Orthodox Fathers of the Church*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London, 1608), 1:173.

### A God-Honoring Life

Having worked through the above treatises, all that remains are two lesser known works which serve as bookends to the present volume. In the first, *How to Live, and That Well*,<sup>106</sup> Perkins considers what it means to live by faith (Hab. 2:4). At the outset, he makes it clear that the faith by which we are saved is the same faith by which we live. Such faith must be “rightly conceived and grounded in the heart.”<sup>107</sup> This occurs when we “trust God upon His Word,” “depend upon it,” and “build upon it.”<sup>108</sup> For Perkins, this is the “obedience of faith” of which Paul speaks in Romans 1:5. It is “absolute,” “sincere,” and “consistent”; moreover, it is focused on the “whole Word” and pursued with an “honest heart.”<sup>109</sup> In short, when we live by faith, we possess “a distinct and settled purpose not to sin, but to do the will of God in all things.”<sup>110</sup> Once faith is thus “conceived and grounded in the heart,” it then “reigns and rules” by two actions: it “moves and makes us to attend on the calling of God, and yield subjection to Him in all His commandments”; and it “establishes and confirms them who believe in their obedience and subjection to God.”<sup>111</sup>

Those who live by such faith (i.e., “in their obedience and subjection to God”) will be prepared to die well. This is Perkins’s contention in *A Salve for a Sick Man*,<sup>112</sup> where he unpacks Solomon’s declaration: “The day of death is better than the day that one is born” (Eccl. 7:1). How can this be true? “The day [of] birth is an entrance into all woe and misery,” declares Perkins, “whereas the day of death, joined with [a] godly and reformed life, is an entrance (or degree) to eternal life.”<sup>113</sup>

Central to Perkins’s view of eternal life is his belief that it consists of three “degrees.”<sup>114</sup> The first is when we repent and believe in Christ; the second is when we die, and our body is buried in the grave while our soul is taken to heaven; and the third is when our body and soul are reunited, and we enter into eternal happiness. The day of our death is better than the day of our birth because it marks the entrance into the second degree of eternal life. At that

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106. William Perkins, *How to Live, and That Well: In all estates and times, especially when helps and comforts fail*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, vol. 1 (London, 1631).

107. Perkins, *How to Live*, 1:476.

108. Perkins, *How to Live*, 1:476.

109. Perkins, *How to Live*, 1:477.

110. Perkins, *How to Live*, 1:477.

111. Perkins, *How to Live*, 1:477–78. Perkins proceeds to consider how faith is the means by which we live the “spiritual” life and “temporal” life.

112. William Perkins, *A Salve for a Sick Man; or, A Treatise Containing the Nature, Differences, and Kinds of Death, as also the Right Manner of Dying Well* (Cambridge: John Legate, 1597).

113. Perkins, *Salve*, 8.

114. Perkins, *Salve*, 8.



moment, we are free from “all miseries” in this fallen world;<sup>115</sup> moreover, we enter “into the presence of the everlasting God, of Christ, and of all the angels and saints in heaven.”<sup>116</sup> “What happiness is this,” declares Perkins, “to see the glory and majesty of God face to face, and to have eternal fellowship with God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our Comforter, and to live with the blessed saints and angels in heaven forever.”<sup>117</sup> We will see Christ beatifically, meaning we will be like Him—conformed to His image.<sup>118</sup> To be conformed to His image is to love Him fully, and to love Him fully is to enjoy Him completely.<sup>119</sup>

With this hope before us, Perkins is convinced that we can die well. To aid in this, we must pursue various duties. The first is to meditate on death.<sup>120</sup> This serves to humble us, further our repentance, and cultivate contentment in every condition of life. The second is to endeavor to weaken the power of death.<sup>121</sup> We must recognize that death's power lies in sin. When we confess our sins, God pardons and removes them; as a result, death loses all its strength. The third duty is to enjoy “peace of conscience, derived from the death of Christ.”<sup>122</sup>

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115. Perkins, *Salve*, 9.

116. Perkins, *Salve*, 10.

117. Perkins, *Salve*, 10.

118. According to Perkins, the beatific vision is not a sight of the eye. There can be no sight of God's essence, because there is no “proportion” between a human eye and that which is infinite and invisible. The promise must, therefore, refer to a “sight of the mind”—“when the creature sees God, so far forth as it is capable of his knowledge.” *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:15–16. In one sense, we see God already, in that we behold Him through the eyes of faith; but Perkins makes it clear that this sight is nothing in comparison to what is coming. At present, we see God “by His effects”; in the future, we will see Him “perfectly.” At glorification, we will be like Christ and, therefore, able to commune with God to the fullest capacities of our souls. This will result in unparalleled delight, as our souls will rest fully in Him. For Perkins, “this seeing of God” will be “true happiness.” *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:16.

119. Dewey Wallace provides the following insight into the importance of this motif among the Puritans: “Heavenly mindedness was the spiritual person's foretaste of the joys of heaven through meditation. This not only strengthened the soul for earthly trials but was one place in Puritan spirituality where the mystical element entered. The heavenly minded person was absorbed in divine things, weaned from earth, and advanced in communion with God because proleptically transported into that blessed state where the saints see God and enjoy his presence forever.... To meditate on that state, binding one's heart so closely to God that all else paled into insignificance, was the aim of the heavenly minded.” *The Spirituality of Later English Puritans* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), xvii.

120. Perkins, *Salve*, 15. The “four last things” (death, judgment, hell, and heaven) figure prominently in Perkins's meditative approach. John Calvin's call for meditation on “the future life” includes the same themes as the “four last things.” *Institutes*, 3:9:1–6. For a detailed study of the four last things, see Robert Bolton, *The Four Last Things: Death, Judgement, Hell, and Heaven* (1633; Religious Tract Society, 1830; repr., Morgan, Pa.: Soli Deo Gloria, 1994).

121. Perkins, *Salve*, 17.

122. Perkins, *Salve*, 19.

The fourth is to accustom ourselves to dying little by little each day.<sup>123</sup> We do this by remembering that we have been crucified with Christ. The fifth duty is to follow Solomon's counsel: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10). These duties strengthen us to see that death "gives the soul passage to rest, life, and celestial glory, in which we shall see God as He is, perfectly know Him, and praise His name forever, keeping without intermission an eternal Sabbath."<sup>124</sup>

From these two treatises we learn (among other things) that true faith never remains indifferent to the things of God. The life of faith must not be confused with merely confessing a doctrinal formula, or participating in the sacraments of the church, or attending regular church services, or reciting a few prayers. Rather, the life of faith is all-encompassing, in that it makes every aspect of life subservient to the will of God as revealed in the Word of God.

Central to Perkins's understanding of the gospel stood the conviction that "true faith makes us one with Christ."<sup>125</sup> This union is *positional*, meaning "Christ, with all His benefits, is made ours."<sup>126</sup> In other words, the blessings of justification, adoption, and redemption (to name but a few) accrue to all those who are one with Christ through faith. Perkins was equally insistent that union with Christ is *transformational*. "The end of all God's grace," declared he, "is that we should be furthered in holiness of life."<sup>127</sup> This means that the gospel touches all of life. As evident in this volume, it shapes our relationships—both private and public; it determines how we carry out our roles and responsibilities at work and in the home; and it impacts the way we live and the way we die. In short, the gospel brings all of life within the bounds of God's Word.

—Joseph A. Pipa and J. Stephen Yuille

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123. Perkins, *Salve*, 19.

124. Perkins, *Salve*, 44.

125. Perkins, *Christ's Sermon in the Mount*, 3:256.

126. William Perkins, *A Golden Chain: or, the Description of Theology, containing the order of the causes of salvation and damnation*, in *The Works of that Famous and Worthy Minister of Christ in the University of Cambridge, M. William Perkins*, 3 vols. (London, 1608), 1:83.

127. William Perkins, *A Godly and Learned Exposition upon the Whole Epistle of Jude* (London, 1606), 53.

How to Live, and That Well  
In all estates and times,  
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And are to be sold at the Crown in Paul's Churchyard by Simon Waterton



## To the Reader

Good Reader, if you would be saved by your faith in Christ after death, you must live by it here before death. And faith, for the time of this life, has two great uses.

The first is to cut off worldly sorrows and cares. It is the common fashion of men to multiply their cares out of measure, and thereby to make their lives most miserable. For, first of all, besides necessary labors, they take upon themselves many needless and superfluous businesses. Second, their manner is to care not only for the labors to be done, but also for the event and success of their labors, that they may always prosper and never be crossed. But this care belongs to God alone. Third, they content not themselves with their lot and condition, but seek by all means to increase their estate and to make themselves rich. Lastly, they exercise themselves not only in disposing of things present, but they forecast many matters in their heads and plot the success of things to come. Now faith, when we have done the works of our callings according to the prescript of the Word of God, (I say) makes us commend to God the blessing, success, and event thereof by prayer and assurance in His promises, not doubting but He will give us all necessary things. And if we want<sup>1</sup> the blessing and success we look for, yet faith makes us to renounce our own desires, and in silence to quiet our hearts in the good pleasure of God. And thus, many worldly cares are cut off.

Second, when a man, at his wits end, knows not what in the world to do, being (as it were) plunged into a sea of miseries, faith gives direction and stays the mind. For when all temporal things fail us, even to the very skin and life, faith preserves within us an affiance of the grace and mercy of God, and the hope of everlasting life. Faith shows us hidden things not to be discerned by sense and reason. Everlasting life is promised us, but we die for all that. We hear of the resurrection, but, in the meantime, we rot in our graves. We are pronounced blessed, but yet we are overwhelmed with infinite miseries. Abundance of all things is promised, but for all this we often hunger and thirst. God promises to hear us and to be present with us, but He seems often times to be

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1. *Want*: lack.

deaf (as it were) to our cries. Now, then comes faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, and [it] makes us lift our minds above the whole world to apprehend the invisible and unspeakable things of God which He has revealed and promised unto us. I show these things more at large in the following small treatise. Read it at your leisure, use it for your good, and see you be a doer of them.

William Perkins

## **“The just man shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4).**

In the former chapter, the prophet complains and expostulates the matter with God: why the Jews (the people of God) should be oppressed by the Chaldeans (the enemies of God). In the beginning of the second chapter, the Lord answers the prophet. And the effect of the answer is this: they shall certainly be delivered in the appointed time, but they shall not yet be delivered. Upon this answer, the prophet might haply<sup>1</sup> object in this manner: how then shall the afflicted Jews be able to live in the meantime? The Lord answers thus by a distinction: the unjust man puffs up himself with vain confidence, but the just man shall live by his faith. For the better understanding of the words, five things are to be explained in order.

First, what is meant by the just man? Justice mentioned in the Word is twofold: (1) the justice of the law; and (2) the justice of the gospel. The justice of the law has in it all the points and parts of justice, and all the perfection of all parts. And it was never found in any upon earth except Adam and Christ. The justice of the gospel has all the parts of true justice, but it wants the full perfection of parts, as a child has all the parts of a man in infancy, though it wants perfection of stature and tallness. And this kind of justice is nothing else but the conversion of a sinner with a purpose, will, and endeavor to please God according to all the commandments of the law. Noah [Gen. 6:9], Job [Job 1:1], Zachariah and Elizabeth [Luke 1:6] were thus just. And the just man must be taken thus in this place for one who turns to God, and by grace endeavors to please God according to the whole law of God in his place and calling.

The second point to be considered is what life is here meant. As death is here twofold (the first and the second), so is life. The first is the conjunction of the body and the soul; the second is the conjunction of the whole man with God. The first is called natural; the second [is called] spiritual (or eternal) life. And both are meant in this place. For Paul brings this very text to prove the justification of a sinner by faith [Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11], and justification is a part of spiritual life because it is the acceptance of a sinner to eternal life. And for

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1. *Haply*: perhaps.

this cause, the prophet says, “The just man shall live,” having relation not only to the time of affliction then to come, but also to eternal life.

The third point to be considered is what is the faith here meant. And it is justifying or saving faith, because we must live by the same faith whereby we are saved. And faith has its effect not only after this life, but also in this life. We must first live by it before we can be saved by it. Paul, therefore, in his own example, expounding this text, says, “And in that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who hath loved me, and given himself for me” [Gal. 2:20].

The fourth point is the construction of the words, and that is two ways. The first is thus: “The just by faith shall live,” the words “by faith” being joined to the word “just.” And then the sense is this: he who is just by his faith shall live (or have eternal life). The second is thus: “The just shall live by his faith,” the words “by faith” being joined to the words “shall live.” And then the sense is this: the just shall live by his faith while he lives in this world. I rather choose and embrace this latter construction and sense, because Paul even in this sense brings this text to prove that eternal life, and consequently justification, comes not by working according to the law but by believing, and he makes an opposition between “living by faith” and “living by works” (Gal. 3:11–12).

The fifth and last point to be considered is how a man should live by faith. Because this last point is of great moment, I will spend some time in the explaining of it. That a man may live by his faith, two things are required. The first [is] that faith is rightly conceived and grounded in the heart. The second [is] that, after it is once conceived, it reigns and rules in the heart.<sup>2</sup>

### **Requirement 1: Faith’s Grounding in the Heart**

That faith may be rightly conceived, two things are required.<sup>3</sup>

#### *Point 1*

The first is the knowledge of the Word of God, for faith stands in relation to the Word, and the Word alone is the foundation of our faith. Hereupon the Word is called the “foundation of the prophets and apostles” (Eph. 2:20). By light of natural reason, we understand that the world had a beginning and was made by God. Yet, reason cannot breed in us a certain persuasion of this point, but only the testimony of the Word of God. And, therefore, it is said: “By faith we understand that the world was ordained by God” (Heb. 11:3). And this made David say, “In God I will praise his word” (Ps. 56:4).<sup>4</sup>

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2. This paragraph break is not in the original.

3. This paragraph break is not in the original.

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