

THE GOSPEL MYSTERY OF SANCTIFICATION

By Walter Marshall

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Walter Marshall was a Presbyterian minister, best known today for this excellent work on sanctification. He was born in 1628 in the north of England. An Oxford-educated Puritan, Marshall was forced to leave his parish in the infamous Great Ejection of 1662, but he remained faithful to the call of God, shortly finding another congregation which he pastored until his death in 1680.

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CHAPTER ONE

That we may acceptably perform the duties of holiness and righteousness required in the law, our first work is to learn the powerful and effectual means by which we may attain to so great an end.

This direction may serve instead of a preface, to prepare the understanding and attention of the reader for those that follow.

First, it acquaints you with the great end for which all those means are designed, that are the principal subject to be here treated of. The scope of all is to teach you how you may attain to that practice and manner of life which we call holiness, righteousness, or godliness, obedience, true religion; and which God requires of us in the law, particularly in the moral law, summed up in the Ten Commandments, and more briefly in those two great commandments of love to God and our neighbour (Matt. 22:37, 39), and more largely explained throughout the Holy Scriptures. My work is to show how the duties of this law may be done when they are known: therefore do not expect that I should delay my intent to help you to the knowledge of them by any large exposition of them – which is a work already performed in several catechisms and commentaries. Yet, that you may not miss the mark for want of discerning it, take notice in few words that the holiness which I would bring you to is spiritual (Rom. 7:14). It consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in the holy thoughts, imaginations and affections of the soul, and chiefly in love, from whence all other good works must flow, or else they are not acceptable to God; not only in refraining the execution of sinful lusts, but in longing and delighting to do the will of God and in a cheerful obedience to God, without repining, fretting, grudging at any duty, as if it were a grievous yoke and burden to you.

Take notice farther that the law, which is your mark, is exceeding broad (Ps. 119:96) and yet not the more easy to be hit, because you must aim to hit it, in every duty of it, with a performance of equal breadth, or else you cannot hit it at all (James 2:10). The Lord is not at all loved with that love that is due to Him as Lord of all, if He is not loved with all our heart, spirit and might. We are to love everything in Him, His justice, holiness, sovereign authority, all-seeing eye, and all His decrees, commands, judgements, and all His doings. We are to love Him, not only better than

other things, but singly, as only good, the fountain of all goodness; and to reject all fleshly and worldly enjoyments, even our own lives, as if we hated them, when they stand in competition with our enjoyment of Him, or our duty towards Him. We must love Him as to yield ourselves wholly up to His constant service in all things, and to His disposal of us as our absolute Lord, whether it is for prosperity or adversity, life or death. And, for His sake, we are to love our neighbour – even all men, whether they are friends or foes to us; and so do to them in all things, that concern their honour, life, chastity, worldly wealth, credit and content, whatever we would that men should do to us in the like condition (Matt. 7:12). This spiritual universal obedience is the great end to the attainment of which I am directing you. And, that you may not reject my enterprise as impossible, observe that the most I promise is no more than an acceptable performance of these duties of the law such as our gracious merciful God will certainly delight in and be pleased with during our state of imperfection in this world, and such as will end in perfection of holiness and all 'happiness in the world to come.

Before I proceed farther, stay your thoughts a while in the contemplation of the great dignity and excellency of these duties of the law, that you may aim at the performance of them as your end with so high an esteem as may cast an amiable lustre upon the ensuing discovery of the means. The principal duties of love to God above all, and to each other for His sake, from whence all the other duties flow, are so excellent that I cannot imagine any more noble work for the holy angels in their glorious sphere. They are the chief works for which we were at first framed in the image of God, engraven upon man in the first creation, and for which that beautiful image is renewed on us in our new creation and sanctification by Jesus Christ, and shall be perfected in our glorification. They are works which depend not merely on the sovereignty of the will of God, to be commanded or forbidden, or left indifferent, or changed, or abolished at His pleasure, as other works that belong either to the judicial or ceremonial law, or to the means of salvation prescribed by the gospel; but they are, in their own nature, holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), and suitable for us to perform because of our natural relation to our Creator and fellow creatures; so that they have an inseparable dependence on the holiness of the will of God, and an indispensable establishment thereby. They are works sufficient to render the performers holy in all manner of conversation, by the fruits

which they bring forth, if no other duties had ever been commanded; and by which the performance of all other duties is sufficiently established as soon as they are commanded; and without which, there can be no holiness of heart and life imagined; and to which, it was one great honour of Mosaical, and is now of evangelical ordinances, to be subservient for the performance of them, as means which shall cease when their end, this never-failing charity, is perfectly attained (1 Cor. 13). They are duties which we were naturally obliged to, by that reason and understanding which God gave to man at His first creation to discern what was just and suitable for him to do, and to which even heathens are still obliged by the light of nature, without any written law, or supernatural revelation (Rom. 2:14, 15). Therefore they are called natural religion, and the law that requires them is called the natural law and also the moral law; because the manners of all men, infidels as well as Christians, ought to be conformed to it and, if they had been fully conformable, they would not have come short of eternal happiness (Matt. 5:19; Luke 10:27, 28), under the penalty of the wrath of God for the violation of it. This is the true morality which God approves of, consisting in a conformity of all our actions to the moral law. And, if those that, in these days, contend so highly for morality, do understand no other than this, I dare join with them in asserting that the best morally principal man is the greatest saint; and that morality is the principal part of true religion, and the test of all other parts, without which faith is dead and all other religious performances are a vain show and mere hypocrisy: for the faithful and true Witness has testified, concerning the two great moral commandments of love to God and our neighbour, that there is none other commandment greater than these, and that on them 'hang all the law and the prophets' (Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:31).

The second thing contained in this introductory direction is the necessity of learning the powerful and effectual means by which this great excellent end may be accomplished, and of making this the first work to be done, before we can expect success in any attempt for the attainment of it.

This is an advertisement very needful; because many are apt to skip over the lesson concerning the means (that will fill up this whole treatise) as superfluous and useless. When once they know the nature and excellency of the duties of the law, they account nothing wanting but diligent performances; and they rush blindly on immediate practice, making more

haste than good speed. They are quick in promising, 'All that the Lord has spoken, we will do,' (Exod. 19:8), without sitting down and counting the cost. They look on holiness as only the means of an end, of eternal salvation: not as an end itself, requiring any great means for attaining the practice of it. The enquiry of most, when they begin to have a sense of religion, is 'What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?' (Matt. 19:16); not, 'How shall I be enabled to do anything that is good?' Yea, many that are accounted powerful preachers spend all their zeal in the earnest pressing the immediate practice of the law, without any discovery of the effectual means of performance – as if the works of righteousness were like those servile employments that need no skill and artifice at all, but industry and activity. That you may not stumble at the threshold of a religious life by this common oversight, I shall endeavour to make you sensible that it is not enough for you to know the matter and reason of your duty, but that you are also to learn the powerful and effectual means of performance before you can successfully apply yourselves to immediate practice. And, for this end, I shall lay before you the considerations following.

1. We are all, by nature, void of all strength and ability to perform acceptably that holiness and righteousness which the law requires, and are dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath, by the sin of our first father, Adam, as the Scripture witnesses (Rom. 5:12, 15, 18, 19; Eph. 2: 1-3; Rom. 8:7, 8). This doctrine of original sin, which Protestants generally profess, is a firm basis and groundwork to the assertion now to be proved, and to many other assertions in this whole discourse. If we believe it to be true, we cannot rationally encourage ourselves to attempt a holy practice, until we are acquainted with some powerful and effectual means to enable us to do it. While man continued upright, in the image of God, as he was at first created (Eccles. 7:29; Gen. 1:27), he could do the will of God sincerely, as soon as he knew it; but, when he was fallen, he was quickly afraid, because of his nakedness; but could not help it at all, until God discovered to him the means of restoration (Gen. 3:10, 15). Say to a strong healthy servant, 'Go', and he goes; 'Come', and he comes; 'Do this', and he does it; but a bedridden servant must know first how he may be enabled. No doubt the fallen angels knew the necessity of holiness, and trembled at the guilt of their sin; but they knew of no means for them to attain to holiness effectually, and so continue still in their wickedness. It was in

vain for Samson to say, 'I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself,' when he had sinned away his strength (Judg. 16:20). Men show themselves strangely forgetful, or hypocritical, in professing original sin in their prayers, catechisms and confessions of faith, and yet urging on themselves and others the practice of the law, without the consideration of any strengthening, enlivening means – as if there were no want of ability, but only of activity.

2. Those that doubt of, or deny the doctrine of original sin may all of them know concerning themselves (if their consciences are not blind) that the exact justice of God is against them and they are under the curse of God and sentence of death for their actual sins, if God should enter into judgement with them (Rom. 1:32; 2:2; 3:9; Gal. 3:10). Is it possible for a man, that knows this to be his case and has not learned any means of getting out of it, to practice the law immediately, to love God and everything in Him, His justice, holiness and power, as well as His mercy, and to yield himself willingly to the disposal of God, though God should inflict sudden death on him? Is there no skill or artifice at all required in this case to encourage the fainting soul to the practice of universal obedience?

3. Though heathens might know much of the work of the law by the common light of natural reason and understanding (Rom. 2:14), yet the effectual means of performance cannot be discovered by that light, and therefore are wholly to be learned by the teaching of supernatural revelation. For what is our natural light, but some sparks and glimmerings of that which was in Adam before the Fall? And even then, in its brightest meridian, it was not sufficient to direct Adam how to recover ability to walk holily, if once he should lose it by sin, nor to assure him beforehand that God would vouchsafe to him any means of recovery. God has set nothing but death before his eyes in case of transgression (Gen. 2:17) and, therefore, he hid himself from God when the shame of his nakedness appeared, as expecting no favour from Him. We are like sheep gone astray, and know not which way to return, until we hear the Shepherd's voice. Can these dry bones live to God in holiness? O Lord, You know; and we cannot know it, except we learn it of You.

4. Sanctification, by which our hearts and lives are conformed to the law, is a grace of God communicated to us by means, as well as justification,

and by means of teaching, and learning something that we cannot see without the Word (Acts 26:17, 18). There are several things pertaining to life and godliness that are given through knowledge (2 Peter 1:2, 3). There is a form of doctrine made use of by God to make people free from sin, and servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17, 18). And there are several pieces of the whole armour of God necessary to be known and put on, that we may stand against sin and Satan in the evil day (Eph. 6:13). Shall we slight and overlook the way of sanctification, when the learning the way of justification has been accounted worth so many elaborate treatises?

5. God has given, in the Holy Scriptures by His inspiration, plentiful instruction in righteousness, 'that we may be thoroughly furnished for every good work' (2. Tim. 3:16, 17), especially since 'the dayspring from on high has visited us,' by the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'to guide our feet in the way of peace' (Luke 1:78, 79). If God condescend to us so very low, to teach us this way in the Scriptures and by Christ, it must needs be greatly necessary for us to sit down at His feet and learn it.

6. The way of attaining to godliness is so far from being known without learning out of the Holy Scriptures that, when it is here plainly revealed, we cannot learn it so easily as the duties of the law, which was known in part by the light of nature, and therefore the more easily assented to. It is the way by which the dead are brought to live to God; and therefore doubtless it is far above all the thoughts and conjectures of human wisdom. It is the way of salvation, in which God will 'destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent,' by discovering things by His Spirit, that 'the natural man does not receive, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor. 1:19, 21; 2:14). 'Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness' (1 Tim. 3:16). The learning of it requires double work; because we must unlearn many of our former deeply-rooted notions and become fools, that we may be wise. We must pray earnestly to the Lord to teach us, as well as search the Scriptures, that we may get this knowledge. 'O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!' 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes; and I will keep it to the end' (Ps. 119: 5, 33). 'Teach me to do Your will' (Ps. 143:10). 'The Lord direct your hearts to the love of God' (2 Thess. 3:5). Surely these saints did not so

much want teaching and directions concerning the duties of the law to be done, as concerning the way and means by which they might do them.

7. The certain knowledge of these powerful and effectual means is of the greatest importance and necessity for our establishment in the true faith and avoiding errors contrary to them, for we cannot rationally doubt that the moral duties of love to God and our neighbour are absolutely necessary to true religion, so that it cannot submit without them. And, from this principle, we may firmly conclude that nothing repugnant to the practice of these holy duties ought to be received as a point of faith, delivered to us by the most holy God; and that whatever is truly necessary, powerful and effectual to bring us to the practice of them ought to be believed, as proceeding from God, because it has the image of His holiness and righteousness engraven on it. This is a sure test and touchstone, which those that are seriously religious will use to try their spirits and their doctrines, whether they are of God or no; and they cannot rationally approve any doctrine as religious, that is not according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3). By this touchstone Christ proves His doctrine to be of God, because in this He seeks the glory of God (John 7:17, 18). And He teaches us to know false prophets by their fruits (Matt. 7:15, 16), in which the fruits, which their doctrine tends to, are especially to be considered. Thus it appears that, until we know what are the effectual means of holiness, and what not, we want a necessary touchstone of divine truth, and may be easily deceived by false doctrine, or brought to live in mere suspense concerning the truth of any religion, like the seekers. And, if you mistake, and think those means to be effectual that are not, and those that are effectual to be weak, or of a contrary effect, your error in this will be a false touchstone to try other doctrines, by which you will readily approve of errors and refuse the truth, which has been a pernicious occasion of many errors in religion in late days. Get but a true touchstone, by learning this lesson, and you will be able to try the various doctrines of Protestants, Papists, Arminians, Socinians, Antinomians, Quakers; and to discover the truth and cleave to it, with much satisfaction to your judgement, among all the janglings and controversies of these times. In this way you may discover whether the Protestant religion established among us has in it any sinews of Antinomianism; whether it is guilty of any insufferable defect in practical principles, and deserves to be altered and turned almost upside

down with new doctrines and methods, as some learned men in late times have judged by their touchstones.

8. It is also of great importance and necessity for our establishment in holy practice; for we cannot apply ourselves to the practice of holiness with hope of success, except we have some faith concerning the divine assistance, which we have no ground to expect, if we do not use such means as God has appointed to work by. 'God meets them that remember Him in His own ways' (Isa. 64:5); and 'makes a breach on them that do not seek Him after the due order' (1 Chron. 15:13). He has chosen and ordained such means of sanctification and salvation as are for His own glory, and those only He blesses to us; and He crowns no man that strives, unless he strives lawfully (2 Tim. 2:5).

Experience shows plentifully, both of heathens and Christians, how pernicious ignorance, or mistaking of those effectual means, is to a holy practice. The heathens generally fell short of an acceptable performance of those duties of the law which they knew, because of their ignorance in this point: (i) Many Christians content themselves with external performances, because they never knew how they might attain to spiritual service. i) And many reject the way of holiness as austere and unpleasant, because they did not know how to cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, without intolerable pain; whereas they would find 'the ways of wisdom' (if they knew them) 'to be ways of pleasantness, and all her paths to be peace' (Prov. 3:17). This occasions the putting off repentance from time to time, as an uncouth thing. (iii) Many others set on the practice of holiness with a fervent zeal, and run very fast; but do not tread a step in the right way; and, finding themselves frequently disappointed and overcome by their lusts, they at last give over the work and turn to wallow again in the mire – which has occasioned several treatises, to show how far a reprobate may go in the way of religion, by which many weak saints are discouraged, accounting that these reprobates have gone farther than themselves; whereas most of them never knew the right way, nor trod one step right in it, for, 'there are few that find it' (Matt. 7:14). (iv) Some of the more ignorant zealots do inhumanly macerate their bodies with fasting and other austerities, to kill their lusts; and, when they see their lusts are still too hard for them, they fall into despair and are driven, by horror of

conscience, to make away with themselves wickedly, to the scandal of religion.

Peradventure God may bless my discovery of the powerful means of holiness so far as to save some one or other from killing themselves. And such a fruit as this would countervail my labour; though I hope God will enlarge the hearts of many by it to run with great cheerfulness, joy and thanksgiving in the ways of His commandments.

CHAPTER TWO

Several endowments and qualifications are necessary to enable us for the immediate practice of the law. Particularly we must have an inclination and propensity of our hearts thereunto; and therefore we must be well persuaded of our reconciliation with God, and of our future enjoyment of the everlasting heavenly happenings, and of sufficient strength both to will and perform all duties acceptably, until we come to the enjoyment of that happiness.

Those means that are next to the attainment of the grand end aimed at are first to be discovered, that we may learn how to get them by other means, expressed in the following directions. Therefore I have named here several qualifications and endowments that are necessary to make up that holy frame and state of the soul by which it is furnished and enabled to practice the law immediately; and that not only in the beginning, but in the continuation of that practice. And, therefore, note diligently that these endowments must continue in us during the present life, or else our ability for a holy life will be lost; and they must be before practice, not in any distance of time, but only as the cause is before the effect. I do not say that I have named particularly all such necessary qualifications; but this much I dare say, that he that gains these may, by the same means, gain any other that should be ranked with them; and this is a matter worthy of our serious consideration, for few understand that any special endowments are required to furnish us for a holy practice, more than for other voluntary actions. The first Adam had excellent endowments bestowed on him for a holy practice when he was first created according to the image of God; and the second Adam had endowments more excellent, to enable Him for a harder task of obedience. And, seeing obedience is grown more difficult, by reason of the opposition and temptations that it meets with since the fall of Adam, we, that are to be imitators of Christ, had need have very choice endowments, as Christ had – at least as good, or something better than Adam had at first, as our work is harder than his. What king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first, and consults whether he is able, with ten thousand, to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? And shall we dare to rush into battle against all the powers of darkness, all worldly terrors and allurements, and our own inbred domineering corruptions, without considering whether we have

sufficient spiritual furniture to stand in the evil day? Yet many content themselves with such an ability to will and do their duty, as they would have to be given to men universally; by which they are no better enabled for the spiritual battle than the generality of the world, that lie vanquished under the wicked one; and therefore their standing is not at all secured by it. It is a hard matter to find what this universal ability is, that so many contend so earnestly for, of what it consists, by what means it is conveyed to us and maintained.

Bodily agility has spirits, nerves, ligaments and bones to subsist by; but this spiritual universal ability seems to be some occult quality, that no sufficient account can be given how it is conveyed, or of what it is constituted. That none may deceive themselves, and miscarry in their enterprises for holiness, by depending on such a weak occult quality, I have here showed four endowments, of which a true ability for the practice of holiness must necessarily be constituted and by which it must subsist and be maintained. I intend to show afterwards by what means they are given to us, and whether the inclination or propensity here mentioned be perfect or imperfect. And they are of such a mysterious nature that some, who own the necessity of endowments to frame them for holiness, are prone to think that less than these will serve, and that some of these frame us rather for licentiousness than holiness, as they are here placed before any actual performance of the moral law; and that some things contrary to them would put us into a better frame for holiness. Against all such surmises, I shall endeavour such a demonstration of these endowments particularly as may gain the assent of right reason, insisting on them in the same order in which I have placed them in the direction.

In the first place, I assert that *an inclination and propensity of heart to the duties of the law* is necessary to frame and enable us for the immediate practice of them. And I mean not such a blind propensity as inanimate creatures and brutes have to their natural operations, but such a one as is fitting for intelligent creatures, by which they are, by the conduct of reason, prone and bent to approve and choose their duty, and averse to the practice of sin. And therefore I have intimated that the three other endowments mentioned in the direction are subservient to this as the chief of all, which are sufficient to make it a rational propensity. This is contrary to those that, out of zeal for obedience, but not according to knowledge,

contend so earnestly for free will, as a necessary and sufficient endowment to enable us to perform our duty, when once we are convinced of it, and of our obligation to it; and that extol this endowment, as the greatest benefit that universal redemption has blessed all mankind with, though they consider this free will without any actual inclination to good. Yea, they cannot but acknowledge that, in most of mankind that have it, it is encumbered with an actual bent and propensity of the heart altogether to evil. Such a free will as this is can never free us from slavery to sin and Satan, and fit us for the practice of the law; and therefore is not worthy of the pains of those that contend so hotly for it. Neither is the will so free as is necessary for the any of holiness, until it is endued with an inclination and propensity thereunto; as may appear by the following arguments.

1. The duties of the law are of such a nature that they cannot possibly be performed while there is wholly an aversion or mere indifferency of the heart to the performance of them, and no good inclination and propensity towards the practice of them, because the chief of all the commandments is to love the Lord with our whole heart, might and soul; to love everything that is in Him; to love His will, and all His ways, and to like them as good. And all duties must be influenced in their performance by this love: we must delight to do the will of God; it must be sweeter to us than the honey or honeycomb (Ps. 40:8; Job 23:12; Ps. 63:1; 119:20; 19:10). And this love, liking, delight, longing, thirsting, sweet relishing must be continued to the end; and the first indeliberate motion of lust must be regulated by love to God and our neighbour; and sin must be lusted against (Gal. 5:17), and abhorred (Ps. 36:4). If it were true obedience (as some would have it) to love our duty only as a market man loves foul ways to the market, or as a sick man loves an unpleasant medicinal potion, or as a captive slave loves his hard work for fear of a greater evil – then it might be performed with averseness, or want of inclination; but we must love it, as the market man gain, as the sick man health, as pleasant meat and drink, as the captive liberty. Doubtless there can be no power in the will for this kind of service without an agreeableness of our inclination to the will of God, a heart according to His own heart, an aversion of our hearts from sin and a kind of antipathy against sin; for we know the proverb, 'Like loveth like.' There must be an agreeableness in the person or thing beloved to the disposition of the lover. Love to God must flow from a clean heart (1 Tim. 1:5), a heart cleaned from evil propensities and inclinations. And reason will tell

us that the first motions of lust which fall not under our choice and deliberations cannot be avoided without a fixed propensity of the heart to holiness.

2. The image of God (in which God, according to His infinite wisdom, judged it suitable to frame the first Adam in righteousness, and true holiness, and uprightness) (Gen. 1:27; Eph. 4:24; Eccles. 7:29), consists in an actual bent and propensity of heart to the practice of holiness – not in a mere power of will to choose good or evil; for this, in itself, is neither holy nor unholy, but only a groundwork, on which either the image of God or of Satan may be drawn; nor in an indifference of propensity to the choice of sin or duty; for this is a wicked disposition in an intelligent creature that knows his duty, and fits us only to halt between God and Baal. God set Adam's soul at first wholly in a right bent and inclination, though Adam might act contrary to it if he would; as we may be prevailed on to do some things contrary to our natural inclinations, and it is easy to fail of our duty, though great preparation and furniture are required for the performance of it. The second Adam also, the Lord Jesus Christ, was born a holy thing (Luke 1:35), with a holy disposition of His soul, and propensity to goodness. And can we reasonably hope to rise to the life of holiness, from which the first Adam fell, or to be imitators of Christ, since duty is made so difficult by the Fall, if we are not renewed in a measure according to the same image of God, and enabled with such a propensity and inclination?

3. Original corruption (by which we are dead to God and godliness from the birth, and made willing slaves to the performance of all actual sins until the Son of God makes us free) consists in a propensity and inclination of the heart to sin, and averseness to holiness. Without this propensity to sin, what can that 'law of sin in our members' be, 'that wars against the law of our mind, and leads us captive to the service of sin'? (Rom. 7:23.) What is that poison in us, for which men may be called serpents, vipers? What is that spirit of whoredoms in men, by reason of which they will not frame their doings to turn to God? (Hos. 5:4.) How is the tree first corrupt, and then its fruit corrupt? (Matt. 12: 33.) How can man be said to be abominable and filthy, that drinks iniquity like water? (Job 15:16.) How should the mind of the flesh be continual enmity to the law of God? (Rom. 8:7.) I know there is also a blindness of understanding and other things belonging to original corruption which conduce to this evil propensity of

the will; but yet this propensity itself is the great evil, the indwelling sin, which produces all actual sins and must of necessity be removed or restrained, by restoring that contrary inclination, in which the image of God consists; or else we shall be backward and reprobate to every good work, and whatever freedom the will has, it shall be employed only in the service of sin.

4. God restores His people to holiness, by giving to them 'a new heart, and a new spirit, and taking away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and giving them a heart of flesh' (Ezek. 36:26, 27); and He circumcises their heart to love Him with their whole heart and soul. And He requires that we should be transformed 'in the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is His acceptable will' (Rom. 12:2). And David prays, for the same end, 'that God would create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit in him' (Ps. 51:10). If anyone can judge that this new, clean, circumcised heart, this heart of flesh, this new right spirit, is such a one as has no actual inclination and propensity to good, but only a power to choose good or evil, undeservedly called free will, with a present inclination to evil, or an indifference of propensity to both contraries, it will not be worth my labour to convince such a judgement. Only let him consider whether David could account such a heart to be clean and right, when he prayed (Ps. 119:36), 'Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness.'

The second endowment necessary to enable us for the immediate practice of holiness, and concurring with the two other that follow to work in us a rational propensity to this practice, is *that we be well persuaded of our reconciliation with God*. We must reckon that the breach of amity, which sin has made between God and us, is made up by a firm reconciliation to His love and favour. And in this I include the great benefit of justification, as the means by which we are reconciled to God, which is described in Scripture, either by forgiving our sins, or by the imputation of righteousness to us (Rom. 4:5-7); because both are contained in one and the same justifying act – as one act of illumination comprehends expulsion of darkness and introduction of light; one act of repentance contains mortification of sin and vivification to righteousness; and every motion from anything to its contrary is but one and the same, though it may be expressed by divers names, with respect to either of the two contrary terms, the one of which is abolished, the other introduced by it. This is a

great mystery (contrary to the apprehensions, not only of the vulgar, but of some learned divines) that we must be reconciled to God and justified by the remission of our sins and imputation of righteousness, before any sincere obedience to the law, that we may be enabled for the practice of it. They account that this doctrine tends to the subversion of a holy practice, and is a great pillar of Antinomianism, and that the only way to establish sincere obedience is to make it rather a condition to be performed before our actual justification and reconciliation with God. Therefore some late divines have thought fit to bring the doctrine of former Protestants concerning justification to their anvil, and to hammer it into another form, that it might be more free from Antinomianism and effectual to secure a holy practice. But their labour is vain and pernicious, tending to Antinomian profaneness, or painted hypocrisy at best; neither can the true practice or painted be secure, except the persuasion of our justification and reconciliation with God be first obtained without works of the law, that we may be enabled in this way to do them; as I shall now prove by several arguments, intending also to show in the following directions that such a persuasion of the love of God as God gives to His people tends only to holiness, though a mispersuasion of it is, in many, an occasion of licentiousness.

1. When the first Adam was framed for the practice of holiness at his creation, he was highly in the favour of God, and had no sin imputed to him, and he was accounted righteous in the sight of God, according to his present state, because he was made upright according to God's image. And there is no reason to doubt but that these qualifications were his advantage for a holy practice, and the wisdom of God judged them good for that end and, as soon as he lost them, he became dead in sin. The second Adam also, in our nature, was the beloved of the Father, accounted righteous in the sight of God, without the imputation of any sin to Him, except what His office was to bear on the behalf of others. And can we reasonably expect to be imitators of Christ, by performing more difficult obedience than the first Adam's was before the Fall, except the like advantages be given to us by reconciliation and remission of sins and imputation of a righteousness given by God to us, when we have none of our own?

2. Those that know their natural deadness under the power of sin and Satan are fully convinced that, if God leave them to their own hearts, they can do

nothing but sin; and that they can do no good work, except it please God, of His great love and mercy, to work it in them (John 8:36; Phil. 2:13; Rom. 8:7, 8). Therefore, that they may be encouraged and rationally inclined to holiness, they must hope that God will work savingly in them. Now, I leave it to considerate men to judge whether such a hope can be well grounded, without a good persuasion of such a reconciliation and saving love of God to us as does not depend on any precedent goodness of our works, but is a cause sufficient to produce them effectually in us. Yea, we know further (if we know ourselves sufficiently) that our death in sin proceeded from the guilt of the first sin of Adam, and the sentence denounced against it (Gen. 2:17); and that it is still maintained in us by the guilt of sin and the curse of the law; and that spiritual life will never be given us, to free us from that dominion, except this guilt and curse be removed from us; which is done by actual justification (Gal. 3:13, 14; Rom. 6:14). And this is sufficient to make us despair of living to God in holiness while we apprehend ourselves to be under the curse and wrath of God, by reason of our transgressions and sins still lying on us (Ezek. 33:10).

3. The nature of the duties of the law is such as requires an apprehension of our reconciliation with God, and His hearty love and favour towards us for the doing of them. The great duty is love to God with our whole heart, and not such a contemplative love as philosophers may have to the object of sciences, which they are concerned in no further than to please their fancies in the knowledge of them; but a practical love, by which we are willing that God should be absolute Lord and Governor of us and all the world, to dispose of us and all others according to His will, as to our temporal and everlasting condition, and that He should be the only portion and happiness of all those that are happy; a love by which we like everything in Him as He is our Lord – His justice as well as any other attribute – without wishing or desiring that He were better than He is; and by which we desire that His will may be done on us and all others, whether prosperity or adversity, life or death; and by which we can heartily praise Him for all things, and delight in our obedience to Him, in doing His will, though we suffer that which is ever so grievous to us, even present death.

Consider these things well, and you may easily perceive that our spirits are not in a fit frame for the doing of them, while we apprehend ourselves

under the curse and wrath of God, or while we are under prevailing suspicions that God will prove an enemy to us at last. Slavish fear may extort some slavish hypocritical performances from us, such as that of Pharaoh in letting the Israelites go, sore against his will. But the duty of love cannot be extorted and forced by fear, but it must be won, and sweetly allured by an apprehension of God's love and goodness towards us, as that eminent, loving and beloved disciple testifies. 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love thrusts out fear – because fear has torment, and he that fears has not been made perfect in love. We must love Him because He first loved us' (1 John 4: 18, 19).

Observe here that we cannot be beforehand with God in loving Him, before we apprehend His love to us. And consult your own experience, if you have any true love to God, whether it were not wrought in you by a sense of God's love first towards you? All the goodness and excellency of God cannot render Him an amiable object to us, except we apprehend Him an agreeable good to us. I question not but the devils know the excellency of God's nature as well as our greatest metaphysical speculators, and this but fills them the more with tormenting horror and trembling, that is contrary to love (James 2:19). The greater God's excellency and perfection is, the greater evil He is to us, if He hates and curses us. And therefore the principle of self-preservation, deeply rooted in our natures, hinders us from loving that which we apprehend as our destruction. If a man is an enemy to us, we can love him for the sake of our loving reconciled God, because His love will make man's hatred to work for our good, but if God Himself is our enemy, for whose sake can we love Him? Who is there that can free us from the evil of His enmity and turn it to our advantage, until He is pleased to reconcile Himself to us?

4. Our conscience must of necessity be first purged from dead works, that we may serve the living God. And this is done by actual remission of sin, procured by the blood of Christ, and manifested to our consciences, as appeared by Christ's dying for this end (Heb. 9:14, 15; 10:1, 2, 4, 14, 17, 22). That conscience, by which we judge ourselves to be under the guilt of sin and the wrath of God, is accounted an evil conscience in Scripture, though it perform its office truly, because it is caused by the evil of sin, and will itself be a cause of our committing more sin, until it can judge us to be justified from all sin, and received in the favour of God. Love which

is the end of the law must proceed from a good conscience, as well as from any other cleanness of heart (1 Tim. 1:5). David's mouth could not be opened to show forth the praise of God until he was delivered from bloodguiltiness (Ps. 51:14, 15). This evil guilty conscience, by which we judge that God is our enemy and that His justice is against us to our everlasting condemnation by reason of our sins, strongly maintains and increases the dominion of sin and Satan in us, and works most mischievous effects in the soul against godliness, even to bring the soul to hate God and to wish there were no God, no heaven, no hell, so we might escape the punishment due to us. It so disaffects people towards God, that they cannot endure to think, or speak, or hear of Him and His law, but strive rather to put Him out of their minds by fleshly pleasures and worldly employments. And thus they are alienated from all true religion, only binding it and stopping the mouth of it. It produces zeal in many outside religious performances, and also false religion, idolatry and the most inhuman superstitions in the world.

I have often considered by what manner of working any sin could effectually destroy the whole image of God in the first Adam, and I conclude it was by working first an evil guilty conscience in him, by which he judged that the just God was against him and cursed him for that one sin. And this was enough to work a shameful nakedness by disorderly lusts, a turning his love wholly from God to the creature, and a desire to be hidden from the presence of God (Gen. 3:8, 10) which was a total destruction of the image of God's holiness. And we have cause to judge that from the same cause proceeds the continual malice, rancour, rage and blasphemy of the devil and many notorious wicked men against God and godliness. Some may think Job uncharitable in suspecting, not merely that his sons had sinned, but that they had been so abominably wicked as to curse God in their hearts (Job 1:5). But Job well understood that if the guilt of any ordinary sin lies on the conscience it will make the soul to wish secretly that God was not, or that He were not so just a judge; which is a secret cursing of God that cannot be avoided until our consciences are purged from the guilt of sin, by the offering of Christ for us; which was then figured out by the burnt offerings of Job for his sons.

4. God has abundantly discovered to us in His Word that His method in bringing men from sin to holiness of life is first, to make them know that

He loves them and that their sins are blotted out. When He gave the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, He first discovered Himself to be their God, that had given them a sure pledge of His salvation by their delivery from Egypt, in the preface (Exod. 20:2). And during all the time of the Old Testament God was pleased to make the entrance into religion to be by circumcision, which was not only a sign, but also a seal of the righteousness of faith, by which God justifies people while they are considered as ungodly (Rom. 4:5, 11). And this seal was administered to children of eight days old, before they could perform any condition of sincere obedience, for their justification, that their furniture for a holy practice might be ready beforehand.

Furthermore, in the time of the Old Testament, God appointed divers washings, and the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, to prepare and sanctify them for other parts of His worship in His tabernacle and temple, to figure out His purging their consciences from dead works by the blood of Christ, that they might serve the living God (Heb. 9:10, 13, 14, 22). This, I say, was then figurative sanctification, as the word sanctification is taken in a large sense, comprehending all things that prepare us for the service of God, chiefly the remission of sin (Heb. 10:10, 14, 18). Though, if it is taken in a strict sense, respecting only our conformity to the law, it must necessarily be placed after justification, according to the usual method of Protestant divines. God also minded them of the necessity of purging away their guilt first, that their service might be acceptable, by commanding them to offer the sin offering before the burnt offering (Lev. 5:8; 16:3, 11). And lest the guilt of their sins should pollute the service of God, notwithstanding all their particular expiations, God was pleased to appoint a general atonement for all their sins one day every year, in which the scapegoat was 'to bear on him all their iniquities into an uninhabited land' (Lev. 16:22, 34).

Under the New Testament, God uses the same method, in loving us first, and washing us from our sins by the blood of Christ, that He may make us priests, to offer the sacrifices of praise and all good works to God, even the Father. He entered us into His service by washing away our sins in baptism; he feeds and strengthens us for His service by remission of sins, given to us in the blood of Christ at the Lord's Supper; He exhorts us to

obey Him, because He has already loved us, and our sins are already pardoned. 'Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as also God forgave you in Christ. Then be mimics of God, as loved children, and walk in love, even as also Christ loved us' (Eph. 4:32; 5:1, 2). 'I write to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. Do not love the world or the things in the world' (1 John 2:12, 15). I might quote abundance of texts of the same nature. We may clearly see by all this that God has accounted it a matter of great importance and has condescended to take wonderful care in providing plentiful means, both under the Old and New Testament, that His people might be first cleansed from guilt and reconciled to Himself, to fit them for the acceptable practice of holiness. Away then with all the contrary methods of the new divinity!

The third endowment necessary to enable us for the practice of holiness, without which a persuasion of our reconciliation with God would be of little efficacy to work in us a rational propensity to it, is that we be persuaded of our future enjoyment of the everlasting heavenly happiness. This must precede our holy practice, as a cause disposing and alluring us to it. This assertion has several sorts of adversaries to oppose it. Some account that a persuasion of our own future happiness, before we have persevered in sincere obedience, tends to licentiousness; and that the way to do good works is rather to make them a condition necessary for the procuring of this persuasion. Others condemn all works, that we are allured or stirred up to by the future enjoyment of the heavenly happiness, as legal, mercenary, flowing from self-love, and not from any pure love to God; and they figure out sincere godliness by a man bearing fire in one hand, to burn up heaven, and water in the other to quench hell; intimating that the true service of God must not proceed at all from hope of reward, or fear of punishment, but only from love. To establish the truth asserted, against the errors that are so contrary to it and to each other, I shall propose the ensuing considerations.

1. The nature of the duties of the law is such that they cannot be sincerely and universally practiced without this endowment. That this endowment must be present in us is sufficiently proved already by all that I have said concerning the necessity of the persuasion of our firm reconciliation with God by our justification, to prepare us for this practice; because that

includes a persuasion of this future happiness, or else it is of little worth. All that I have to add here is that sincere obedience cannot rationally subsist, except it is allured, encouraged and supported by this persuasion. Let me, therefore, suppose a Sadducee, believing no happiness after this life, and put the question: 'Can such a one love God with his whole heart, might and soul?' Will he not be reasonable, rather to lessen and moderate his love towards God, lest he should be overmuch troubled to part with Him by death? We account it most reasonable to sit loose in our affections from things that we must part with. Can such a one be satisfied with the enjoyment of God as his happiness? Will he not rather account that the enjoyment of God and all religious duties are vanities, as well as other things, because in a little time we shall have no more benefit by them than if they had never been? How can such a one be willing to lay down his life for the sake of God when, by his death, he must part with God, as well as with other things? How can he willingly choose afflictions rather than sin, when he shall be more miserable in this life for it, and not at all happy hereafter? I grant, if afflictions come unavoidably on such a person, he may reasonably judge that patience is better for him than impatience, but it will displease him that he is forced to the use of such a virtue, and he will be prone to fret and murmur at his Creator, and to wish he had never been, rather than to endure such miseries and to be comforted only with vain transitory enjoyments. I think I have said enough to show how unfurnished such a man is for holiness. And he that will burn up heaven, and quench hell, that he may serve God out of love, thereby leaves himself little better furnished than the Sadducee. The one denies them, the other will not have them at all to be considered in this case.

2. The sure hope of the glory of heaven is made use of ordinarily by God, since the fall of Adam, as an encouragement to the practice of holiness, as the Scripture abundantly shows. Christ, the great pattern of holiness, 'for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame' (Heb. 12:2). And, though I cannot say that the first Adam had such a sure hope, to preserve him in innocency, yet he had, instead of it, the present possession of an earthly paradise and a happy estate in it, which he knew would last, if he continued in holiness, or be changed into a better happiness. The apostles did not faint under affliction, because they knew that it brought for them 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. 4:16, 17). The believing Hebrews 'took joyfully the plundering of

your goods – knowing in yourselves that you have better and more enduring riches in Heaven' (Heb. 10:34). The apostle Paul accounts all his sufferings unprofitable, were it not for a glorious resurrection, and that Christians would be of all men most miserable, and that the doctrine of the Epicures were rather to be chosen: 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.' And he exhorts the Corinthians to be 'abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. 15:58).

As worldly hope keeps the world at work in their various employments, so God gives His people the hope of His glory to keep them close to His service (Heb. 6:11, 12; 1 John 3:3). And it is such a sure hope as shall never make them ashamed (Rom. 5:5). Those that think it below the excellency of their love to work from a hope of the heavenly reward do in this way advance their love beyond the love of the apostles and primitive saints, and even of Christ Himself.

3. This persuasion of our future enjoyment of everlasting happiness cannot tend to licentiousness, if we understand well that perfect holiness is a necessary part of that happiness, and that though we have a title to that happiness by free justification and adoption, yet we must go to the possession of it in a way of holiness (1 John 3:1-3). Neither is it legal or mercenary to be moved by this persuasion, seeing the persuasion itself is not gotten by the works of the law, but by free grace through faith (Gal. 5:5). And, if it is a working from self-love, yet, for certain, it is not that carnal self-love which the Scripture condemns as the mother of sinfulness (2 Tim. 3:2), but a holy self-love, inclining us to prefer God above the flesh and the world, such as God directs us to when He exhorts us to save ourselves (Acts 2:40; 1 Tim. 4:16). And it is so far from being contrary to the pure love of God that it brings us to love God more purely and entirely. The more good and beneficial we apprehend God to us to all eternity, doubtless the more lovely God will be to us, and our affections will be the more inflamed towards Him. God will not be loved as a barren wilderness, a land of darkness to us, neither will He be served for nothing (Jer. 2: 31). He would think it a dishonour to Him to be owned by us as our God, if He had not prepared for us a city (Heb. 11: 16). And He draws us to love Him by the cords of a man, such cords as the love of man uses to be drawn by, even by His own love to us in laying His benefits before us (Hos. 11: 4).

Therefore, the way for us to keep ourselves in the love of God is to look for His mercy to eternal life (Jude 21).

The last endowment, for the same end as the former, is *that we will be persuaded of sufficient strength both to will and perform our duty acceptably*, until we come to the enjoyment of the heavenly happiness. This is contrary to the error of those that account it sufficient if we have strength to practice holiness if we will, or to will it if we please; and this is the sufficient strength which they earnestly contend for as a great benefit bestowed on all mankind by universal redemption. It is also contrary to the error of those that think the practice of godliness and wickedness to be alike easy, excepting only some difficulty in the first alterations of vicious customs, and in bearing persecutions, which they account to be a rare case; since the kingdoms of the world have been brought to the profession of Christianity; or that think that God requires omen only to do their endeavour, that is, what they can do; and it is nonsense to say they cannot do what they can do. According to their judgement, it is needless to concern ourselves much about sufficient strength for holy practice. For the confirmation of the assertion against those errors take these arguments.

1. We are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, unable to will or do anything that is spiritually good, notwithstanding the redemption that is by Christ until we are actually quickened by Christ (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 8:7-9). Those that are sufficiently enlightened and humbled know themselves to be naturally in this case, and that they do not only want executive power to do good, but chiefly a heart to will it and to be pleased with it; and that, if God does not work in them both to will and to do, they shall neither will nor do anything pleasing to Him (Phil. 2:13); and that, if He leaves them to their own corruption, after He has begun the good work, they shall certainly prove vile apostates, and their latter end will be worse than their beginning. We may conclude from this that whoever can courageously attempt the practice of the law, without being well persuaded of a sufficient power by which he may be enabled to be heartily willing, as well as to perform when he is willing, until he has gone through the whole work of obedience acceptably, such a one was never yet truly humbled and brought to know the plague of his own heart; neither does he truly believe the doctrine of original sin, whatever formal profession he makes of it.

2. Those that think sincere conformity to the law, in ordinary cases, to be so very easy, show that they neither know it nor themselves. Is it an easy thing to wrestle, not against flesh only, but against principalities, powers and spiritual wickedness in high places? (Eph. 6:12.) Is it an easy thing not to lust or covet according to the tenth commandment? The apostle Paul found it so difficult to obey this commandment that his concupiscence prevailed the more by occasion of the commandment (Rom. 7: 7, 8). Our work is not only to alter vicious customs, but to mortify corrupt natural affections which bred these customs; and not only to deny the fulfilling of sinful lusts, but to be full of holy love and desires. Yet even the restraining the execution of corrupt lusts and crossing them by contrary actings is, in many cases, like 'the cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye' (Matt. 5:29, 30). If obedience is so easy, how did it come to pass that the heathens generally did those things, for which their own consciences condemned them as worthy of death? (Rom. 1:32.) And that many among us seek to enter into this strait gate, and are not able (Luke 13:24), and break so many vows and purposes of obedience and fall back to the practice of their lusts, though, in the meantime, the fears of eternal damnation press hard on their consciences?

As for those that find persecution for religion to be so rare a thing in late days, they have cause to be suspected that they are of the world, and therefore the world loves its own; else they would find that national profession of religion will not secure those that are truly godly from several sorts of persecutions. And suppose men do not persecute us for religion, yet there is great difficulty in bearing great injuries from men on other accounts, and losses, poverty, bodily pains, long diseases and untimely deaths from the ordinary providence of God, with such hearty love to God and to injurious men, for His sake, and such a patient acquiescence in His will, as the law of God requires. I acknowledge that the work of God is easy and pleasant to those whom God rightly furnishes with endowments for it; but those who assert it to be easy to men in their common condition show their imprudence in contradicting the general experience of heathens and Christians. Though many duties do not require much labour of body or mind, and might be done with ease, if we were willing; yet it is easier to remove a mountain than to move and incline the heart to will and affect the doing of them. I need not concern myself with those that account that all have sufficient strength for a holy practice,

because they can do their endeavour, that is, what they can do; for God requires actual fulfilling His commands. What, if by our endeavours we can do nothing in any measure according to the rule, shall the law be put off with no performance? And shall such endeavours be accounted sufficient holiness? And what if we cannot so much as endeavour in a right way? If a man's ability were the measure of acceptable duty, the commands of the law would signify very little.

3. The wisdom of God has ever furnished people with a good persuasion of a sufficient strength that they might be enabled both to will and do their duty. The first Adam was furnished with such a strength; and we have no cause to think that he was ignorant of it, or that he needed to fear that he should be left to his own corruptions, because he had no corruptions in him, until he had produced them in himself by sinning against strength. When he had lost that strength, he could not recover the practice of holiness, until he was acquainted with a better strength, by which the head of Satan should be bruised (Gen. 3:15). Our Lord Christ, doubtless, knew the infinite power of His deity to enable Him for all that He was to do and suffer in our nature. He knew the Lord God would help Him, therefore He should not be confounded (Isa. 50:7). The Scripture shows what plentiful assurance of strength God gave to Moses, Joshua, Gideon, when He called them to great employments, and to the Israelites, when He called them to subdue the land of Canaan. Christ would have the sons of Zebedee to consider whether they were able to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with (Matt. 20:22). Paul encourages believers to the life of holiness by persuading them that sin shall not prevail to get the dominion over them, because they are not under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:13, 14). And he exhorts them to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, that they might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10, 11). John exhorts believers not to love the world, nor the things of the world, because they were strong, and had overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:14, 15).

They that were called of God before this to work miracles were first acquainted with the gift of power to work them, and no wise man will attempt to do them without knowledge of the gift. Even so, when men that are dead in sin are called to do the works of a holy life, which are in them

great miracles, God makes a discovery of the gift of power to them, that He may encourage them in a rational way to such a wonderful enterprise.

CHAPTER THREE

The way to get holy endowments and qualifications necessary to frame and enable us for the immediate practice of the law, is to receive them out of the fullness of Christ, by fellowship with Him; and that we may have this fellowship, we must be in Christ, and have Christ Himself in us, by a mystical union with Him.

Here, as much as anywhere, we have great cause to acknowledge with the apostle that, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness – even so great that it could not have entered into the heart of man to conceive it, if God had not made it known in the gospel by supernatural revelation. Yea, though it is revealed clearly in the Holy Scriptures, yet the natural man has no eyes to see it there, for it is foolishness to him. And, if God express it ever so plainly and properly, he will think that God is speaking riddles and parables. I do not doubt but it is still a riddle and parable, even to many truly godly that have received a holy nature in this way. For the apostles themselves had the saving benefit of it before the Comforter discovered it clearly to them (John 14:20). And they walked in Christ as the way to the Father before they clearly knew Him to be the way (John 14:5). And the best of us know it but in part, and must wait for the perfect knowledge of it in another world.

One great mystery is that the holy frame and disposition, by which our souls are furnished and enabled for immediate practice of the law, must be obtained by receiving it out of Christ's fullness, as a thing already prepared and brought to an existence for us in Christ and treasured up in Him; and that as we are justified by a righteousness wrought out in Christ and imputed to us, so we are sanctified by such a holy frame and qualifications as are first wrought out and completed in Christ for us, and then imparted to us. And, as our natural corruption was produced originally in the first Adam, and propagated from him to us, so our new nature and holiness is first produced in Christ, and derived from Him to us, or as it were propagated. So that we are not at all to work together with Christ, in making or producing that holy frame in us, but only to take it to ourselves, and use it in our holy practice, as made ready to our hands. Thus we have fellowship with Christ, in receiving that holy frame of spirit that was originally in Him. For fellowship is when several persons have the same thing in common (1 John 1:1-3). This mystery is so great that

notwithstanding all the light of the gospel, we commonly think that we must get a holy frame by producing it anew in ourselves and by forming and working it out of our own hearts. Therefore many that are seriously devout take a great deal of pains to mortify their corrupt nature and beget a holy frame of heart in themselves by striving earnestly to master their sinful lusts, and by pressing vehemently on their hearts many motives to godliness, labouring importunately to squeeze good qualifications out of them, as oil out of a flint. They account that, though they be justified by a righteousness wrought out by Christ, yet they must be sanctified by a holiness wrought out by themselves. And though, out of humility, they are willing to call it infused grace, yet they think they must get the infusion of it by the same manner of working, as if it were wholly acquired by their own endeavours. On this account they acknowledge the entrance into a godly life to be harsh and unpleasing, because it costs so much struggling with their own hearts and affections, to new frame them. If they knew that this way of entrance is not only harsh and unpleasant, but altogether impossible; and that the true way of mortifying sin and quickening themselves to holiness is by receiving a new nature, out of the fullness of Christ; and that we do no more to the production of a new nature than of original sin, though we do more to the reception of it – if they knew this, they might save themselves many a bitter agony, and a great deal of misspent burdensome labour, and employ their endeavours to enter in at the strait gate, in such a way as would be more pleasant and successful.

Another great mystery in the way of sanctification is the glorious manner of our fellowship with Christ in receiving a holy frame of heart from Him. It is by our being in Christ, and having Christ Himself in us – and that not merely by His universal preference as He is God, but by such a close union as that we are one spirit and one flesh with Him; which is a privilege peculiar to those that are truly sanctified. I may well call this a mystical union, because the apostle calls it a great mystery, in an Epistle full of mysteries (Eph. 5:32), intimating that it is eminently great above many other mysteries. It is one of the three mystical unions that are the chief mysteries in religion. The other two are the union of the Trinity of Persons in one Godhead, and the union of the divine and human natures in one Person, Jesus Christ, God and man. Though we cannot frame an exact idea of the manner of any of these three unions in our imaginations, because the depth of these mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet we have cause

to believe them all, because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are a necessary foundation for other points of Christian doctrine. Particularly, this union between Christ and believers is plain in several places of Scripture, affirming that Christ is, and dwells in believers, and they in Him (John 6:56; 14:20); and that they are so joined together as to become one Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17); and that believers are 'members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones' and they two, Christ and the church, are one flesh (Eph. 5:30, 31).

Furthermore, this union is illustrated in Scripture by various resemblances, which would be very much unlike the things which they are made use of to resemble, and would rather seem to beguile us by obscuring the truth than instruct us by illustrating it, if there were no true proper union between Christ and believers. It is resembled by the union between God the Father and Christ (John 14:20; 17:21-23); between the vine and its branches (John 15:4, 5); between the head and body (Eph. 1:22, 23); between bread and the eater (John 6:51, 53, 54). It is not only resembled, but sealed in the Lord's Supper, where neither the popish transubstantiation, nor the Lutherans' consubstantiation, nor the Protestants' spiritual preference of Christ's body and blood to the true receivers, can stand without it. And, if we can imagine that Christ's body and blood are not truly eaten and drunk by believers, either spiritually or corporally, we shall make the bread and wine gut with the words of institution not only naked signs, but such signs as are much more apt to breed false notions in us than to establish us in the truth. And there is nothing in this union so impossible, or repugnant to reason, as may force us to depart from the plain and familiar sense of those Scriptures that express and illustrate it. Though Christ is in heaven, and we on earth, yet He can join our souls and bodies to His at such a distance without any substantial change of either, by the same infinite Spirit dwelling in Him and us; and so our flesh will become His, when it is quickened by His Spirit; and His flesh ours, as truly as if we ate His flesh and drank His blood. And He will be in us Himself by His Spirit, who is one with Him, and who can unite more closely to Christ than any material substance can do, or who can make a more close and intimate union between Christ and us. And it will not follow from this that a believer is one person with Christ, any more than that Christ is one person with the Father, by that great mystical union. Neither will a believer be in this way made God, but only the temple of God, as Christ's body and soul is; and

the Spirit's lively instrument, rather than the principal cause. Neither will a believer be necessarily perfect in holiness in this way, or Christ made a sinner. For Christ knows how to dwell in believers by certain measures and degrees, and to make them holy so far only as He dwells in them. And though this union seem too high a preferment for such unworthy creatures as we are, yet, considering the preciousness of the blood of God, by which we are redeemed, we should dishonour God, if we should not expect a miraculous advancement to the highest dignity that creatures are capable of through the merits of that blood. Neither is there anything in this union contrary to the judgement of sense, because the bond of the union, being spiritual, does not fall at all under the judgment of sense.

Several learned men of late acknowledge no other union between Christ and believers than such as persons or things wholly separated may have by their mutual relations to each other; and accordingly they interpret the places of Scripture that speak of this union. When Christ is called the Head of the church, they account that a political head or governor is the thing meant. When Christ is said to be in His people, and they in Him, they think that the proper meaning is that Christ's law, doctrine, grace, salvation, or that godliness is in them, and embraced by them, so that Christ here must not be taken for Christ Himself, but for some other thing wrought in them by Christ. When Christ and believers are said to be one Spirit, and one flesh, they understand it of the agreement of their minds and affections – as if the greatness of the mystery of this union mentioned (Eph. 5:32) consisted rather in a harsh trope, or a dark improper expression, than in the depth and abstruseness of the thing itself; and as if Christ and His apostles had affected obscure intricate expressions, when they speak to the church of things very plain, and easy to be understood. Thus that great mystery, the union of believers with Christ Himself – which is the glory of the church, and has been highly owned formerly, both by the ancient fathers, and many eminent Protestant divines, particularly writers concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, and by a very general consent of the church in many ages – is now exploded out of the new model of divinity. The reason of exploding it, as I judge in charity, is not because our learned refiners of divinity think themselves less able to defend it than the other two mysterious unions, and to silence the objections of those proud sophisters that will not believe what they cannot comprehend; but rather, because they account it to be one of the sinews of Antinomianism, that lay

unobserved in the former usual doctrine; that it tends to puff up men with a persuasion that they are justified and have eternal life in them already, and that they do not need to depend any longer on their uncertain performances of the condition of sincere obedience for salvation; by which they account the very foundation of a holy practice to be subverted. But the wisdom of God has laid another manner of foundation for a holy practice than they imagine, of which this union (which the builders refuse) is a principal stone, next to the head of the corner. And in opposition to their corrupt glosses on the Scriptures that prove it, I assert that our union with Christ is the cause of our subjection to Christ as a political head in all things, and of the abiding of His law, doctrine, grace, salvation and all godliness in us, and of our agreement with Him in our minds and affections; and therefore it cannot be altogether the same thing with them. And this assertion is useful for a better understanding of the excellency of this union. It is not a privilege procured by our sincere obedience and holiness, as some may imagine, or a reward of good works, reserved for us in another world; but it is a privilege bestowed on believers in their very first entrance into a holy state, on which all ability to do good works depends, and all sincere obedience to the law follows after it, as fruit produced by it.

Having thus far explained this direction, I shall now show that though the truth contained in it is above the reach of natural reason, yet it is evidently discovered to those that have their understandings opened to discern that supernatural revelation of the mysterious way of sanctification which God has given to us in the Holy Scriptures.

1. There are several places in Scripture that plainly express it. Some texts show that all things pertaining to our salvation are treasured up for us in Christ, and comprehended in His fullness so that we must have them from that place, or not at all (Col. 1:19). It pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in Him. And, in the same Epistle the apostle shows that the holy nature, by which we live to God, was first produced in us by His death and resurrection: 'And you were circumcised in Him with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh,... being buried with Him,...made alive together with Him being dead in your sins' (Col. 2:11-13). 'Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ' (Eph. 1:3). A holy frame of spirit, with all its necessary qualifications, must needs be comprehended in this,

in all spiritual blessings. These are given us in Christ's person in heavenly places, as prepared and treasured up in Him for us while we are on earth. Therefore we must have our holy endowments out of Him, or not at all. In this text some choose rather to read heavenly things, as in the margin, because neither places nor things are expressed in the original; but the former textual reading is to be preferred before the marginal, as being the proper sense of the original Greek phrase, which is, and must necessarily be so rendered in two other places of the same Epistle (Eph. 3:10; 6:12). Another text is 1 Corinthians 1:30, which shows that 'Christ is of God made to us sanctification,' by which we are able to walk holily; as well as wisdom, by the knowledge of which we are savingly wise; and righteousness, by the imputation of which we are justified; and redemption, by which we are redeemed from all misery to the enjoyment of His glory, as our happiness in the heavenly kingdom. Other texts of Scripture show plainly that we receive our holiness out of His fullness by fellowship with Him (John 1:16, 17): 'And we have received of His fullness and grace on top of grace.' And it is understood of grace answerable to the law given by Moses, which must needs include the grace of sanctification: 'Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. God is light. If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another' (1 John 1:3, 5-7). Thus we may infer that our fellowship with God and Christ includes particularly our having light, and walking in it holily and righteously. There are other texts that teach the proof of the whole direction fully, showing, not only that our holy endowments are made ready first in Christ for us, and received from Christ, but that we receive them by union with Christ: 'You have put on the new man, which is renewed after the image of Him that created Him; where Christ is all and in all' (Col. 3:10, 11). 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit' (1 Cor. 6:17). 'I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me' (Gal. 2:20). 'This is the record, that God has given us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life, and he that does not have the Son does not have life' (John 5:11, 12). Can we desire that God should more clearly teach us that all the fulness of the new man is in Christ, and all that spiritual nature and life by which we live to God in holiness, and that they are fixed in Him so inseparably, that we cannot have them except we be joined to Him, and have Him abiding in us? Take heed lest, through prejudice and hardness of heart, you are guilty of making God a liar, in not believing this eminent record that God has given us His Son.

2. God is pleased to illustrate this mysterious manner of our sanctification by such a variety of similitudes and resemblances as may put us out of doubt that it is truth, and such a truth as we are highly concerned to know and believe. I shall endeavour to contract the chief of these resemblances and the force of them briefly into one sentence, leaving it to those that are spiritual to enlarge their meditation on them. We receive from Christ a new holy frame and nature, by which we are enabled for a holy practice, by union and fellowship with Him, in like manner (i) as Christ lived in our nature by the Father (John 6:57); (ii) as we receive original sin and death propagated to us from the first Adam (Rom. 5:12, 14, 16, 17); (iii) as the natural body receives sense, motion and nourishment from the head (Col. 2:19); (iv) as the branch receives its sap, juice and fructifying virtue from the vine (John 15:4, 5); (v) as the wife brings forth fruit by virtue of her conjugal union with her husband (Rom. 7:4); (vi) as stones become a holy temple by being built on the foundation, and joined with the chief cornerstone (1 Peter 2:4-6); (vii) as we receive the nourishing virtue of bread by eating it, and of wine by drinking it (John 6:51, 55, 57), which last resemblance is used to seal to us our communion with Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Here are seven resemblances instanced, of which some illustrate the mystery spoken of more fully than others. All of them in some way intimate that our new life and holy nature are first in Christ, and then in us, by a true proper union and fellowship with Him. If any should urge that the similitude of Adam and his seed, and of married couples, rather make for a relative than a real union between Christ and us; let them consider that all nations are really made of one blood, which was first in Adam (Acts 17:26); and that the first woman was made out of the body of Adam, and was really bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. And by this first married couple the mystical union of Christ and His church is eminently resembled (Gen. 2:22-24; Eph. 5: 30-32). And yet it supposes both these resemblances in the nearness and fullness of them, because those that are joined to the Lord are not only one flesh, but one spirit with Him.

3. The end of Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection was to prepare and form a holy nature and frame for us in Himself, to be communicated to us by union and fellowship with Him; and not to enable us to produce in ourselves the first original of such a holy nature by our own endeavours.

1. By His incarnation, there was a man created in a new holy frame, after the holiness of the first Adam's frame had been marred and abolished by the first transgression. This new frame was far more excellent than ever the first Adam's was; because man was really joined to God by a close inseparable union of the divine and human nature in one Person, Christ; so that these natures had communion each with the other in their actings, and Christ was able to act in His human nature, by power proper to the divine nature, in which He was one God with the Father. The words that He spoke while He was on earth, He spoke not of Himself, by any mere human power, but the Father that dwelt in Him, He did the works (John 14:10). Why was it that Christ set up the fallen nature of man in such a wonderful frame of holiness, in bringing it to live and act by communion with God, living and acting in it? One great end was that He might communicate this excellent frame to His seed, that should be born of Him and in Him by His Spirit, as the last Adam, the quickening Spirit; that, as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so we might also bear the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:45, 49), in holiness here, and in glory hereafter. Thus He was born Emmanuel, God with us; because the fullness of the Godhead, with all holiness, did first dwell in Him bodily, even in His human nature, that we might be filled up with that fullness in Him (Matt. 1:23; Col. 2:9, 10). Thus He came down from heaven as living bread that, as He lives by the Father, so those that eat Him may live in Him (John 6:51, 56), by the same life of God in them that was first in Him.

2. By His death, He freed Himself from the guilt of our sins imputed to Him, and from all that innocent weakness of His human nature which He had borne for a time for our sakes. And, by freeing Himself, He prepared a freedom for us, from our whole natural condition, which is both weak as He was, and also polluted without guilt and sinful corruption. Thus the corrupt natural estate, which is called in Scripture the old man, was crucified together with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed. And it is destroyed in us, not by any wounds that we ourselves can give to it, but by our partaking of that freedom from it, and death to it, that is already wrought out for us by the death of Christ; as is signified by our baptism, in which we are buried with Christ by the application of His death to us (Rom. 6:2-4, 10, 11). 'God, in sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to be a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous demand of the law should be fulfilled in us, who

walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Rom. 8:3, 4). Observe here that, though Christ died that we might be justified by the righteousness of God and of faith, not by our own righteousness, which is of the law (Rom. 10:4-6; Phil. 3:9), yet He died also, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, and that by walking after His Spirit, as those that are in Christ (Rom. 8:4). He is resembled in His death to a corn of wheat dying in the earth, that it may propagate its own nature, by bringing forth much fruit (John 12:24); to the Passover that was slain, that a feast might be kept on it; and to bread broken, that it may be nourishment to those that eat it (1 Cor. 5:7, 8; 11:24); to the rock smitten, that water may gush out of it for us to drink (1 Cor. 10:4). He died that He might make of Jew and Gentile one new man in Himself (Eph. 2:15), and that He might see His seed, that is, such as derive their holy nature from Him (Isa. 53:10). Let these Scriptures be well observed, and they will sufficiently evidence that Christ died, not that we might be able to form a holy nature in ourselves, but that we might receive one ready prepared and formed in Christ for us, by union and fellowship with Him.

3. By His resurrection, He took possession of spiritual life for us, as now fully procured for us, and made to be our right and property by the merit of His death. Therefore we are said to be quickened together with Christ, even when we were dead in sins, and to be raised up together, yea, and to be made to sit together in heavenly aces in Christ Jesus, as our Head, while we continue on earth in our own persons (Eph. 2:5, 6). His resurrection was our resurrection to the life of holiness, as Adam's fall was our fall into spiritual death. And we are not ourselves the first makers and formers of our new holy nature, any more than of our original corruption; but both are formed ready for us to partake of them. And, by union with Christ, we partake of that spiritual life that He took possession of for us at His resurrection, and in this way we are enabled to bring forth the fruits of it; as the Scripture shows by the similitude of a marriage union (Rom. 7:4). We are married to Him that is risen from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit to God. Baptism signifies the application of Christ's resurrection to us as well as His death; we are raised up with Him, in it, to newness of life, as well as buried with Him; and we are taught in this way that, because He died to sin once and lives to God, we should likewise reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin and alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:4, 5, 10, 11).

4. Our sanctification is by the Holy Ghost, by whom we live and walk holily (Rom. 15:16; Gal. 5:25). Now, the Holy Ghost first rested on Christ in all fullness, that He might be communicated from Him to us; as was signified to John the Baptist by the similitude of the descending of a dove from the opened heavens, resting on Christ at His baptism (John 1:32, 33). And when He sanctifies us, He baptizes us to Christ, and joins us to Christ by Himself, as the great bond of union (1 Cor. 12:13). So that according to the scriptural phrase, it is all one, to have Christ Himself, and to have the Spirit of Christ in us (Rom. 8:9, 10). He glorifies Christ, for He receives those things that are Christ's and shows them to us (John 16:14, 15). He gives us an experimental knowledge of those spiritual blessings which He Himself prepared for us by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ.

5. The effectual causes of those four principal endowments, which in the foregoing direction were asserted as necessary to furnish us for the immediate practice of holiness, are comprehended in the fullness of Christ, and treasured up for us in Him; and the endowments themselves, together with their causes, are attained richly by union and fellowship with Christ. If we are joined to Christ, our hearts will be no longer left under the power of sinful inclinations, or in a mere indifferency of inclination to good or evil; but they will be powerfully endowed with a power, bent and propensity to the practice of holiness,. By the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, and inclining us to mind spiritual things and to lust against the flesh (Rom. 8:1, 4, 5 ; Gal. 5:17). And we have in Christ a full reconciliation with God, and an advancement into higher favour with Him than the first Adam had in the state of innocency, because the righteousness that Christ wrought out for us by His obedience to death is imputed to us for our justification, which is called the righteousness of God, because it is wrought by One that is God as well as man; and therefore it is of infinite value to satisfy the justice of God for all our sins, and to procure His pardon and highest favour for us (2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:19). And, that we may be persuaded of this reconciliation, we receive the spirit of adoption through Christ, by which we cry, 'Abba, Father' (Rom. 8: 15). In this way also we are persuaded of our future enjoyment of the everlasting happiness, and of sufficient strength both to will and to perform our duty acceptably, until we come to that enjoyment. For the spirit of adoption teaches us to conclude that, if we are the children of God, then we are heirs

of God, and joint heirs with Christ; and that the law of the spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death; and that nothing shall be against us, nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ; but in all opposition and difficulties that we meet with, we shall be at last 'more than conquerors through Him that loved us' (Rom. 8:17, 23, 35, 37, 39).

Furthermore, this comfortable persuasion of our justification and future happiness and all saving privileges cannot tend to licentiousness, as it is given only in this way of union with Christ, because it is joined inseparably with the gift of sanctification, by the Spirit of Christ, so that we cannot have justification, or any saving privilege in Christ, except we receive Christ Himself and His holiness, as well as any other benefit; as the Scripture testifies that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1).

6. Whereas it may be doubted whether the saints that lived before the coming of Christ in the flesh could possibly be one flesh with Him, and receive a new nature by union and fellowship with Him, as prepared for them, in His fullness, we are to know that the same Christ that took our flesh was before Abraham (John 8:58), and was foreordained before the foundation of the world, to be sacrificed as a lamb without blemish, that He might redeem us from all iniquity by His precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-20). He had the same Spirit then, which filled His human nature with all its fullness afterwards, and raised it from the dead; and He gave that Spirit then to the church (1 Peter 1:11; 3:18, 19). Now, this Spirit was able and effectual to unite those saints to that flesh which Christ was to take to Himself in the fullness of time, because He was the same in both, and to give out to them that grace with which Christ would afterwards fill His flesh, for their salvation as well as ours. Therefore David accounts Christ's flesh to be his, and spoke of Christ's death and resurrection as his own, beforehand as well as any of us can do since their accomplishment: 'My flesh also shall rest in hope; for You will not leave my soul in hell; neither will You allow Your holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life' (Ps. 16:9-11). Yea, and saints before David's time did all eat of the same spiritual meat and drink of the same spiritual drink, even of the same Christ, as we do, and therefore were partakers of the same privilege of union and fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 10:3, 4). And when Christ was

manifested in the flesh, in the fullness of time, all things in heaven and on earth, all the saints departed, whose spirits were then made perfect in heaven, as well as the saints that then were, or should afterwards be on earth, were 'gathered together in one,' and comprehended in Christ as their Head (Eph. 1:10). And He was 'the chief corner-stone, in whom the building of the whole church on the foundation' of the prophets before, and the apostles after His coming, 'being fitly framed together, grows to a holy temple in the Lord' (Eph. 2:20, 21). Jesus Christ 'is the same yesterday, and today, and forever' (Heb. 13:8). His incarnation, death and resurrection were the cause of all the holiness that ever was, or shall be given to man, from the fall of Adam, to the end of the world – and that by the mighty power of His Spirit, by which all saints that ever were, or shall be, are joined together to be members of that one mystical body of which He is the Head.

CHAPTER FOUR

The means or instruments by which the Spirit of God accomplishes our union with Christ, and our fellowship with Him in all holiness, are the gospel, by which Christ enters into our hearts to work faith in us, and faith, by which we actually receive Christ Himself, with all His fullness, into our hearts. And this faith is a grace of the Spirit, by which we heartily believe the gospel and also believe on Christ as He is revealed and freely promised to us in this, for all His salvation.

That which I assented, in the foregoing direction, concerning the necessity of our being in Christ, and having Christ in us by a mystical union to enable us for a holy practice, might put us to a stand in our endeavours for holiness, because we cannot imagine how we should be able to raise ourselves above our natural sphere to this glorious union and fellowship, until God is pleased to make known to us by supernatural revelation the means by which His Spirit makes us partakers of so high a privilege. But God is pleased to help us, when at a stand to go on forward, by revealing two means or instruments by which His Spirit accomplishes the mystical union and fellowship between Christ and us, and which rational creatures are capable of attaining to, by His Spirit working in them.

One of these means is the gospel of the grace of God, in which God makes known to us the unsearchable riches of Christ and Christ in us, the hope of glory (Eph. 3:8; Col. 1:27), and also invites us and commands us to believe on Christ for His salvation, and encourages us by a free promise of that salvation to all that believe on Him (Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9, 11). This is God's own instrument of conveyance, in which He sends Christ to us to bless us with His salvation (Acts 3:26). It is the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:6, 8, 9). Faith comes by the hearing of it, and therefore it is a great instrument by which we are begotten in Christ and Christ is formed in us (Rom. 10:16, 17; 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 4:19). There is no need for us to say in our hearts, 'Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down from above?' or, 'Who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ up from the dead, that we may be united and have fellowship with Him in His death and resurrection?' For the Word is near us, the gospel, the word of faith in which Christ Himself graciously condescends to be near us, so that we may come at Him there without going any further, if we desire to be joined with Him (Rom. 10:6-8).

The other of these means is faith, that is wrought in us by the gospel. This is our instrument of reception, by which the union between Christ and us is accomplished on our part by our actual receiving Christ Himself with all His fullness in our heart, which is the principal subject of the present explanation.

The faith which philosophers commonly treat of is only a habit of the understanding, by which we assent to a testimony on the authority of the testifier. Accordingly, some would have faith in Christ to be no more than a believing the truth of things in religion, on the authority of Christ testifying them. But the apostle shows that the faith by which we are justified is faith in Christ's blood (Rom. 3:24, 25), not only in His authority as a testifier. And though a mere assent to a testimony were sufficient faith for knowledge of things, which the philosophers aimed at, yet we are to consider that the design of saving faith is not only to know the truth of Christ and His salvation, testified and promised in the gospel, but also to apprehend and receive Christ and His salvation, as given by and with the promise. Therefore, saving faith must necessarily contain two acts, believing the truth of the gospel, and believing on Christ, as promised freely to us in the gospel, for all salvation. By the one, it receives the means in which Christ is conveyed to us; by the other, it receives Christ Himself, and His salvation in the means, as it is one act to receive the breast or cup in which milk or wine are conveyed, and another act to suck the milk in the breast and to drink the wine in the cup. And both these acts must be performed heartily with an unfeigned love to the truth and a desire of Christ and His salvation above all things. This is our spiritual appetite, which is necessary for our eating and drinking Christ, the food of life, as a natural appetite is for bodily nourishment. Our assenting to, or believing the gospel, must not be forced by mere conviction of the truth, such as wicked men and devils may be brought to, when they had rather it were false. Neither must our believing in Christ be only constrained for fear of damnation, without any hearty love and desire towards the enjoyment of Him; but we must receive the love of the truth by relishing the goodness and excellency of it; and we must 'account all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and count them but dung, that we may win Christ and be found in Him' (2 Thess. 1:10; Phil. 3:8, 9), esteeming Christ to be all our salvation and happiness (Col. 3: 11), 'in whom all fullness dwells' (Col. 1:19). And this love must be to every

part of Christ's salvation – to holiness as well as forgiveness of sins. We must desire earnestly that God would create in us a clean heart and right spirit, as well as hide His face from our sins (Ps. 51:9, 10); not like many that care for nothing in Christ but only deliverance from hell. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled (Matt. 5:6). The former of these acts does immediately unite us to Christ, because it is terminated only on the means of conveyance, the gospel; yet it is a saving act, if it be rightly performed, because it inclines and disposes the soul to the latter act, whereby Christ Himself is immediately received into the heart. He that believes the gospel with hearty love and liking, as the most excellent truth, will certainly with the like heartiness believe on Christ for salvation. They that know the name of the Lord will certainly put their trust in Him (Ps. 9:10). Therefore in Scripture saving faith is sometimes described by the former of these acts, as if it were a mere believing the gospel; sometimes by the latter, as a believing on Christ, or in Christ: 'If you believe in your heart, that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved' (Rom. 10:9). 'The scripture says, that whoever believes on Him, shall not be ashamed' (v. 11). 'Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God' (1 John 5:1). 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God' (v. 13).

For the better understanding of the nature of faith, let it be further observed, that the second and principal act of it, believing on Christ, includes believing on God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, because they are one and the same infinite God, and they all concur in our salvation by Christ, as the only Mediator between God and us, 'in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen' (2 Cor. 1:20). By Him (as Mediator) we believe 'in God, who raised Him up from among the dead and gave glory to Him – so that your faith and hope might be in God' (1 Peter 1:21). And it is the same thing with trusting on God, or on the Lord, which is so highly commended in the whole Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, as may easily appear by considering that it has the same causes, effects, objects, adjuncts, opposites and all the same circumstances, excepting only that it had a respect to Christ as promised before His coming, and now it respects Him as already come in the flesh. Believing in the Lord and trusting on His salvation are equivalent terms that explain

one another (Ps. 78:22). I confess that trusting on things seen or known by the mere light of reason, as on our own wisdom, power, riches, or princes, or any arm of flesh, may not so properly be called believing on them; but trusting on a Saviour, as discovered by a testimony, is properly believing on Him. It is also the same thing that is expressed by the terms of resting, relying, leaning, staying ourselves on the Lord, called hoping in the Lord, because it is the ground of that expectation which is the proper act of hope, though our believing and trusting is for the present as well as future benefit of this salvation. The reason why it is so commonly expressed in the Scriptures of the New Testament by the terms of believing on Christ might be probably because, when that part of Scripture was written, there was cause in a special manner to urge believing the testimony that was then newly revealed by the gospel.

Having thus explained the nature of faith, I come now to assert its proper use and office in our salvation: that it is the means and instrument by which we receive Christ and all His fullness actually into our hearts. This excellent use and office of faith is encountered by a multitude of errors. Men naturally esteem that it is too small and slight a thing to produce so great effects, as Naaman thought washing in Jordan too small a matter for the cure of his leprosy. They contemn the true means of entering in at the strait gate, because they seem too easy for such purpose, and in this way they make the entrance not only difficult, but impossible to themselves. Some will allow that faith is the sole condition of our justification and the instrument to receive it, according to the doctrine maintained formerly by the Protestants against the Papists; but they account that it is not sufficient or effectual to sanctification, but that it rather tends to licentiousness, if it is not joined with some other means that may be powerful and effectual to secure a holy practice. They commend this great doctrine of Protestants as a comfortable cordial for persons on their deathbeds, or in agonies under terrors of conscience; but they account that it is not good for ordinary food, and that it is wisdom in ministers to reach it seldom and sparingly, and not without some antidote or corrective to prevent the licentiousness to which it tends. Their common antidote or corrective is that sanctification is necessary to salvation, as well as justification; and though we are justified by faith, yet we are sanctified by our own performance of the law. So they set up salvation by works, and make the grace of justification to be of no effect, and not at all comfortable. If it had indeed such a malignant

influence on practice, it could not be owned as a doctrine proceeding from the most holy God, and all the comfort that it affords must needs be ungrounded and deceitful. This consequence is well understood by some late refiners of the Protestant religion, and therefore they have thought fit to remodel this doctrine, and to make saving faith to be only a condition to procure a right and title to our justification by the righteousness of Christ, which must be performed before we can lay any good claim to the enjoyment of it, and before we have any right to use any instrument for the actual receiving of it; and this they call an accepting of, or receiving Christ. And, that they may the better secure the practice of holiness by their conditional faith, they will not have trusting in God or Christ for salvation to be accounted the principal saving act of it; because, as it seems to them, many loose wicked people trust on God and Christ for their salvation as much as others and are, by their confidence, hardened the more in their wickedness; but they had rather it should be obedience to all Christ's laws, at least in resolution, or a consent that Christ should be their Lord, accepting of His terms of salvation, and a resignation of themselves to His government in all things. It is a sign that the Scripture form of teaching is grown into disesteem with our great masters of reason when trusting in the Lord, so much commended in Scripture, is accounted a mean and ordinary thing. They endeavour to affright us from owning faith to be an instrument of justification by telling us that in this way we that use the instrument are made our own principal justifiers, to the dishonour of God; though it might be easily answered that we are made in this way only the principal receivers of our own justification from God, the giver of it, to whom all the glory belongs.

All these errors will fall if it can be proved that such a faith as I have described is an instrument by which we actually receive Christ Himself into our hearts, and holiness of heart and life, as well as justification, by union and fellowship with Him. For the proof of it, I shall offer the following arguments.

1. By faith we have the actual enjoyment and possession of Christ Himself, and not only of remission of sin, but of life, and so of holiness. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). We live to God; and yet not we, but Christ lives in us by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:19, 20). He that believes on the Son of God has the Son and everlasting life that is in Him

(1 John 5:12, 13; John 3:36). He that hears Christ's word, and believes on Him that sent Christ, has everlasting life and is passed from death to life (John 5:24). These texts express clearly such a faith as I have described. Therefore the efficiency or operation of faith, in order to the enjoyment of Christ and His fullness, cannot be the procurement of a bare right or title to this enjoyment; but rather it must be an entrance to it, and taking possession of it. We have our access and entrance by faith into that grace of Christ in which we stand (Rom. 5:2).

2. The Scripture plainly ascribes this effect to faith: that by it we receive Christ, put Him on, are rooted and grounded in Him; and also that we receive the Spirit, remission of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26, 27; Col. 2:6, 7; Gal. 3:14; Acts 26:18). And the Scripture illustrates this receiving by the similitude of eating and drinking: He that believes on Christ drinks the living water of His Spirit (John 7:37-39). Christ is the bread of life; His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. And the way to eat and drink it is to believe in Christ and, by so doing, we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, and we have everlasting life (John 6:35, 47, 48, 54-56). How can it be taught more clearly that we receive Christ Himself properly into our souls by faith, as we receive food into our bodies by eating and drinking, and that Christ is as truly united to us in this way as our food when we eat or drink it? So that faith cannot be a condition to procure a mere right or title to Christ, no more than eating or drinking procures a mere right or title to our food; but it is rather an instrument to receive it, as the mouth that eats and drinks the food.

3. Christ, with all His salvation, is freely given by the grace of God to all that believe on Him, for we are saved by grace through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8, 9). We are justified freely by His grace, through faith in His blood (Rom. 3:24, 25). The Holy Ghost, who is the bond of union between Christ and us, is a gift (Acts 2:38). Now, that which is a gift of grace must not at all be earned, purchased or procured by any work, or works performed as a condition to get a right or title to it. Therefore faith itself must not be accounted such a conditional work. If it is by grace, it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace (Rom. 11:6). The condition of a free gift is only take, and have. And in this sense we will readily acknowledge faith to be a condition, allowing

a liberty in terms where we agree in the thing. But if you give a peppercorn to purchase a title to it, then you spoil the freeness of the gift. The free offer of Christ to you is sufficient to confer on you a right, yea, to make it your duty to receive Christ and His salvation as yours. And because we receive Christ by faith as a free gift, therefore we may account faith to be the instrument and, as it were, the hand by which we receive Him.

4. It has been already proved that all spiritual life and holiness are treasured up in the fullness of Christ and communicated to us by union with Him. Therefore the accomplishing of union with Christ is the first work of saving grace in our hearts. And faith itself, being a holy grace and part of spiritual life, cannot be in us before the beginning of it; but rather it is given to us and wrought in the very working of the union. And the way in which it conduces to the union cannot be by procuring a mere title to Christ as a condition, because then it should be performed before the uniting work begins; but rather by being an instrument, by which we may actually receive and embrace Christ, who is already come into the soul to take possession of it as His own habitation.

5. True saving faith, such as I have described, has in its nature and manner of operation a peculiar aptitude or fitness to receive Christ and His salvation, and to unite our souls to Him, and to furnish the soul with a new holy nature, and to bring forth a holy practice by union and fellowship with Him. God has fitted natural instruments for their office, as the hands, feet, etc., so that we may know by their nature and natural manner of operation for what use they are designed.

In like manner, we may know that faith is an instrument formed on purpose for our union with Christ and sanctification, if we consider what a peculiar fitness it has for the work. The discovery of this is of great use for the understanding of the mysterious manner of our receiving and practicing all holiness by union and fellowship with Christ, by this precious grace of faith. And to make you, as it were, to see with your eyes that it is such an instrument as I have asserted it to be, I shall present it to your view in three particulars.

1. The grace of faith is as well fitted for the soul's receiving Christ and union with Him as any instrument of the body is for receiving and closing with things needful for it. By the very act of hearty trusting or believing on

Christ for salvation and happiness, the soul casts and puts away from itself everything that keeps it at a distance from Christ as all confidence in our strength, endeavours, works, privileges; or in any worldly pleasures, profits, honours; or in any human helps and succours for our happiness and salvation, because such confidences are inconsistent with our confidence in Christ for all salvation. Paul, by his confidence in Christ, was taken off from all confidence in the flesh. He suffered the loss of glorying in his privileges and legal righteousness, and counted all other enjoyments in matters of the world, or of religion, to be but 'loss, that he might win Christ, and be found in Him' (Phil. 3:3, 5-9). The voice of faith is 'Assyria shall not save us. We will not ride on horses. We shall not say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods; for in You the fatherless find mercy' (Hos. 14:3). 'We have no might against this great company' of our spiritual enemies, 'we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on You' (2 Chron. 20:12).

I might multiply places of Scripture, to show what a self-emptying grace faith is, and how it casts other confidences out of the soul by getting above them to Christ as the only happiness and salvation. The same act of trusting or believing on Christ, or on God, is the very manner of our souls coming to Christ (John 6:35); 'drawing near to the Lord' (Ps. 73:28); 'making our refuge in the shadow of His wings' (Ps. 57:1); 'staying ourselves and our minds on the Lord' (Isa. 50:10; 26:3); 'laying hold on eternal life' (1 Tim. 6:12); 'lifting up our souls to the Lord' (Ps. 25:1); 'committing our way, or casting our burden on the Lord' (Ps. 37:5; 55:22); and our eating and drinking Christ, as has already appeared. Let us consider that Christ and His salvation cannot be seen, or handled, or attained to, by any bodily motion; but are revealed and promised to us in the Word. Now, let any invent, if they can, any way for the soul to exercise any motion or activeness in the receiving of this unseen promised salvation, besides believing the Word and trusting on Christ for the benefit promised. If Christ were to be earned by works, or any other kind of conditional faith, yet a faith must be instrumental to receive Him. Some think love as fit to be the uniting grace, but I have showed that love to Christ's salvation is an ingredient to faith. And though love is an appetite to union, yet we have no other likely way to fill this appetite while we are in this world, besides trusting on Christ for all His benefits, as He is promised in the gospel.

2. There is in this saving faith a natural tendency to furnish the soul with a holy frame and nature, and all endowments necessary to it, out of the fullness of Christ. A hearty affectionate trusting on Christ for all His salvation, as freely promised to us, has naturally enough in it to work in our souls a rational bent and inclination to, and ability for, the practice of holiness; because it comprehends in it a trusting that, through Christ, we are dead to sin and alive to God; that our old man is crucified (Rom. 6:2-4); and that we live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); and that we have forgiveness of sin; and that God is our God (Ps. 48:14); and that we have in the Lord righteousness and strength, by which we are able to do all things (Isa. 45:24; Phil. 4:13); and that we shall be gloriously happy in the enjoyment of Christ to all eternity (Phil. 3:20, 21). When the saints in Scripture speak so highly of such glorious spiritual privileges as I have here named, they acquaint us with the familiar sense and language of their faith, trusting on God and Christ, and they give us but an explication of the nature and contents of it; and they speak of nothing more than what they receive out of the fullness of Christ. And how can we otherwise judge, but that those that have a hearty love to Christ and can, on a good ground, think and speak such high things concerning themselves, must needs be heartily disposed and mightily strengthened for the practice of holiness?

2. Because faith has such a natural tendency to dispose and strengthen the soul for the practice of holiness, we have cause to judge it a suitable instrument to accomplish every part of that practice in an acceptable manner. Those that with a due affection believed steadfastly on Christ for the free gift of all His salvation may find by experience that they are carried forth by that faith, according to the measure of its strength or weakness, to love God heartily, because God has loved them first (1 John 4:19); to praise Him, to pray to Him in the name of Christ (Eph. 5:20; John 16:26, 27); to be patient with cheerfulness, under all afflictions giving thanks to the Father that has called them to His heavenly inheritance (Col. 1:11, 12); to love all the children of God out of love to their heavenly Father (1 John 5:1); to walk as Christ walked (1 John 2:6); and to give themselves up to live to Christ in all things, as constrained by His love in dying for them (2 Cor. 5:14). We have a cloud of witnesses concerning the excellent works that were produced by faith (Heb. 11). And though trusting on God be accounted such a slight and contemptible thing, yet I know no work of obedience which it is not able to produce. And note the

excellent manner of working by faith. By it we live and act in all good works, as people in Christ, as raised above ourselves, and in our natural state, by partaking of Him and His salvation; and we do all in His name and on His account. This is the practice of that mysterious manner of living to God in holiness which is peculiar to the Christian religion in which we live; and yet not we, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). And who can imagine any other way but this for such a practice, while Christ and His salvation are known to us only by the gospel?

The explanation that I have made of the nature and office of true faith, and of its aptitude for its office, is sufficient to evidence that it is a most holy faith, as it is called (Jude 20), and that such a trusting on Christ as I have described in its own nature cannot have any tendency to licentiousness, but only to holiness; and that it roots and grounds us in holiness, more than the mere accepting of any terms of salvation and consenting to have Christ for our Lord can do; and is more powerful to secure a holy practice than any of those resolutions of obedience, or resignating acts, that some would have to be the great conditions of our salvation, which are indeed no better than hypocritical acts, if they are not produced by this faith. There is indeed a counterfeit dead faith, such as wicked men may have and, if that tend to licentiousness, let not true faith be blamed, but rather mark the description of it which I have given, that you may not be deceived with a counterfeit faith instead of it.

I shall add something concerning the efficient cause of this excellent grace and of our union with Christ by it; by which it may appear that it is not so slight and easy a way of salvation as some may imagine. The author and finisher of our faith, and of our union and fellowship with Christ by faith, is no less than the infinite Spirit of God, and God and Christ Himself by the Spirit, for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body of Christ and are all made to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12, 13). God grant us, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith (Eph. 3:16, 17). If we do but consider the great effect of faith, that by it we are raised to live above our natural condition by Christ and His Spirit living in us, we cannot rationally conceive that it should be within the power of nature to do anything that advances us so high.

If God had done no more for us in our sanctification than to restore us to our first natural holiness, yet this could not have been done without putting forth His own almighty power to quicken those that are dead in sin; how much more is this almighty power needful to advance us to this wonderful new kind of frame, in which we live and act, above all the power of nature, by a higher principle of life than was given to Adam in innocency, even by Christ and His Spirit living and acting in us? The natural man brings forth his offspring according to his image by that natural power of multiplying with which God blessed him at his first creation; but the second Adam brings forth His offspring new-born according to His image only by the Spirit (John 3:5). As many as received Him, even those that believe on His name, are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12, 13). Christ took His own human nature into personal union with Himself, in the womb of the virgin Mary, by the Holy Ghost coming on her and the power of the Highest overshadowing her, the same power by which the world was created (Luke 1:35). So He takes us into mystical union and fellowship with Himself by no less than an infinite creating power, for we are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus to good works (Eph. 2:10), and, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).

For the accomplishing this great work of our new creation in Christ, the Spirit of God works first on our hearts, by and with the gospel, to produce in us the grace of faith. For, if the gospel should come to us in word only, and not in power and in the Holy Ghost, Paul might labour to plant, and Apollos to water, without any success, because we cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God; yea, we shall account them foolishness until the Spirit of God enable us to discern them (1 Thess. 1:5; 1 Cor. 3:6; 2:14). We shall never come to Christ by any teaching of man, except we also hear and learn of the Father and be drawn to Christ by His Spirit (John 6:44, 45). And, when saving faith is wrought in us, the same Spirit gives us fast hold of Christ by it. As He opens the mouth of faith to receive Christ, so He fills it with Christ; or else the acting of faith would be like a dream of one that thinks he eats and drinks and, when he awakes, he finds himself empty. The same Spirit of God did both give that faith by which miracles were wrought, and also worked the miracles by it; so also the same Spirit of Christ works saving faith in us and answers the aim and end of that faith by giving us union and fellowship with Christ by it, so that none of the

glory of this work belongs to faith, but only to Christ and His Spirit. And, indeed, faith is of such a humbling self-denying nature that it ascribes nothing that it receives to itself, but all to the grace of God; and therefore God saves us by faith, that all the glory may be ascribed to His free grace (Rom. 4:16). If Adam had strength enough in innocency to perform the duty of faith as well as we, yet it will not follow that he had strength enough to raise himself above his natural state into union with Christ; because faith does not unite us to Christ by its own virtue, but by the power of the Spirit working by it and with it. Thus are we first passive, and then active, in this great work of mystical union; we are first apprehended of Christ, and then we apprehend Christ. Christ entered first into the soul, to join Himself to it, by giving it the spirit of faith; and so the soul receives Christ and His Spirit by their own power; as the sun first enlightens our eyes, and then we can see it by its own light. We may further note, to the glory of the grace of God, that this union is fully accomplished by Christ giving the spirit of faith to us even before we act that faith in the reception of Him; because, by this grace or spirit of faith, the soul is inclined and disposed to an active receiving of Christ. And, no doubt, Christ is thus united to many infants who have the spirit of faith and yet cannot act faith, because they are not come to the use of their understandings; but those of riper years that are joined passively to Christ by the spirit of faith will also join themselves with Him actively, by the act of faith and, until they act this faith, they cannot know or enjoy their union with Christ and the comfort of it, or make use of it in acting any other duties of holiness acceptably in this life.

CHAPTER FIVE

We cannot attain to the practice of true holiness by any of our endeavours while we continue in our natural state and are not partakers of a new state by union and fellowship with Christ through faith.

It is evident all do not have that precious faith by which Christ dwells in our hearts; yea, the number of those that have it is small comparatively to the whole world that lies in wickedness (1 John 5:19, 20); and many of those that at length attain to it do continue without it for some considerable time (Eph. 2:12). And though some may have the spirit of faith given to them from their mother's womb (as John the Baptist, Luke 1:15, 44), yet even in them there is a natural being by generation before there can be a spiritual being by regeneration (1 Cor. 15:46). Thus arises the consideration of two states or conditions of the children of men in matters that appertain to God and godliness, the one of which is vastly different from the other. Those that have the happiness of a new birth and creation in Christ by faith are thereby placed in a very excellent state, consisting in the enjoyment of the righteousness of Christ for their justification, and the Spirit of Christ to live by in holiness here and glory for ever, as has already appeared. Those that are not in Christ by faith cannot be in a better state than that which they received together with their nature from the first Adam by being once born and created in him, or than they can attain to by the power of that nature, with any such help as God is pleased to afford to it. This latter I call a natural state, because it consists in such things as we have either received by natural generation or can attain to by natural power through divine assistance, as the Scripture calls man in this state the natural man (1 Cor. 2:14). The former I call a new state, because we enter into it by a new birth in Christ. I may call it a spiritual state, according to the Scripture, because it is received from Christ the quickening Spirit, and the natural and spiritual man are opposed (1 Cor. 2:14, 15); though some call both these states spiritual, because the everlasting weal or woe of the soul, or spirit, of man is chiefly concerned in them.

It is a common error of those that are in a corrupt natural state that they seek to reform their lives according to the law, without any thoughts that their state must be changed before their lives can be changed from sin to righteousness. The heathens, that knew nothing of a new state in Christ, were urged by their own consciences to practice several duties of the law,

according to the knowledge they had by the light of nature (Rom. 2:14, 15). Israel according to the flesh had a zeal of God and godliness and endeavoured to practice the written law, at least in external performances, while they were enemies to the faith of Christ. And Paul attained so far that he was blameless in these external performances of the righteousness of the law, while he persecuted the church of Christ (Phil. 3:6).

Some are so near the kingdom of God, while they continue in a natural state, that they are convinced of the spirituality of the law, that it binds us principally to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves, and to perform universal obedience to God, in all our inward thoughts and affections, as well as in all our outward actions, and to do all the duties that we owe to our neighbour, out of this hearty love (Mark 12:33, 34). And they struggle and labour with great earnestness to subdue their inward thoughts and affections to the law of God, and to abstain, not only from some sins, but from all known sins, and to perform every known duty of the law with their whole heart and soul, as they think; and are active and intent in their devout practice, that they overwork their natural strength, and so fervent is their zeal, that they are ready even to kill their bodies with fastings and other macerations, that they may kill their sinful lusts. They are strongly convinced that holiness is absolutely necessary to salvation, and are deeply affected with the terrors of damnation; and yet they were never so much enlightened in the mystery of the gospel as to know that a new state in Christ is necessary to a new life; therefore they labour in vain to reform their natural state, instead of getting above it in Christ. And some of these, when they have misspent many years in striving against the stream of their lusts, without any success, do at last fall miserably into despair of ever attaining to holiness, and turn to wallowing in the mire of their lusts, or are fearfully swallowed up with horror of conscience.

There are several false opinions by which such ignorant zealots encourage themselves in their fruitless endeavours. Some of them judge that they are able to practice holiness, because they are not compelled to sin, and may abstain from it if they will. To this they add that Christ, by the merit of His death, has restored that freedom of will to good which was lost by the Fall, and has set nature on its legs again, and that, if they endeavour to do what lies in them, Christ will do the rest, by assisting them with the supplies of

His saving grace; so they trust on the grace of Christ to help them in their endeavours. They plead further that it would not consist with the justice of God to punish them for sin, if they could not avoid it; and that it would be in vain for the ministers of the gospel to preach to them and exhort them to any saving duty, if they cannot perform it. They produce examples of heathens, and of such as had the name of Christians, without any acquaintance with the faith that I have described, who have attained to a great excellency in religious words and works.

My work at present is to deliver those ignorant zealots from their fruitless tormenting labours, by bringing them to despair of the attainment of holiness in a natural state, that they may seek it only in a new state by faith in Christ, where they may certainly find it, without such tormenting labour and anxiety of spirit. For this end, I shall confirm the truth asserted in the direction, and fortify it against the forementioned false opinions by the ensuing considerations.

1. The foundation of this assertion is firmly laid in the direction already explained, and confirmed by many places of Scripture. For, if all endowments necessary to enable us for a holy practice can be had only in a state of union and fellowship with Christ by faith, and faith itself, not by the natural power of free will, but by the power of Christ, coming into the soul by His Spirit, to unite us with Himself, who does not see that the attainment of true holiness by any of our most vigorous endeavours, while we continue in our natural condition, is altogether hopeless? I need add no more, were it not to show more fully what abundance of light the Scripture affords to guide us right in this part of our way, that those who wander out of it by following any false light of their own, or other corrupted judgements, may find themselves the more inexcusable.

2. It is evident that we cannot practice true holiness while we continue in a natural state, because we must be born of water and of the Spirit, or else we cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5); and we are created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10). If we could love God and our neighbour as the law requires, without a new birth and creation, we might live without them, for Christ has said, 'This do, and you shall live' (Luke 10:28). Now, a new birth and creation is more than a mere reforming and repairing our natural state. If we were put into a certain state and condition

by the first birth and creation, much more by the second. For the first produces the substance of a man as well as a state; the second had nothing to produce, but a new state of the same person. And note that we were first created and born in Adam the natural man, but our new birth and creation are in Christ the spiritual Man. And, if any man is in Christ, he is in a new state, far different from the state of Adam before the Fall. He is wholly a new creature; as it is written, old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

3. It is positively asserted by the apostle Paul that those that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). Many are too overly and negligent in considering the sense of this gospel phrase, what it is to be in the flesh. They understand no more by it than to be sinful, or to be addicted inordinately to please the sensitive appetite. They should consider that the apostle speaks here of being in the flesh, as the cause of sinfulness; as the next verse speaks of being in the Spirit, as the cause of holiness; and, whatever cause it is, it must needs be different from its effect. Sin is a poverty of the flesh, or something that dwells in the flesh (Rom. 7:18), and therefore it is not the flesh itself. The flesh is that which lusts against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17), and therefore it is not merely sinful lusting. The true interpretation is that by flesh is meant the nature of man, as it is corrupted by the fall of Adam and propagated from him to us in that corrupt state by natural generation; and to be in the flesh is to be in a natural state, as to be in the Spirit is to be in a new state, by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9). The corrupt nature is called 'flesh', because it is received by carnal generation; and the new nature is called spirit, because it is received by spiritual regeneration. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6). So the apostle, if he is rightly understood, has said enough to make us despair utterly of attaining to true holiness while we continue in a natural state.

3. The apostle testifies that those that have been taught as the truth is in Jesus have learned to avoid their normal sinful conversation by putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and by putting on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:21, 22, 24). Putting off the old man and putting on the new man is the same with not being in the flesh, but in the Spirit, in the foregoing testimony; that is, putting off our natural state and putting on a

new state by union and fellowship with Christ. The apostle himself shows that by the new man is meant that excellent state where Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11). Therefore, by the old man, must needs be meant the natural state of man, in which he is without the saving enjoyment of Christ, which is called 'old', because of the new state to which believers are brought by their regeneration in Christ. This is a manner of expression peculiar to the gospel, as well as the former, and as slightly considered by those that think that the apostle's meaning is only that they should put off sinfulness and put on holiness in their conversation, and so they think to become new men, by turning over a new leaf in their practice and leading a new life.

Let them learn here that the old and new man are two contrary states, containing in them, not only sin and holiness, but all other things that dispose and incline us to the practice of them; and that the old man must be put off, as crucified with Christ, before we can be freed from the practice of sin (Rom. 6:6, 7). And therefore we cannot lead a new life until we have first got a new state by faith in Christ. Let me add here that the meaning of the apostle is the same where he directs us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, as the means by which we may cast off the deeds of darkness and walk honestly, as in the daytime, not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh (Rom. 13:12-14).

5. Our natural state has several properties that wholly disable us for the practice of holiness and enslave us to the practice of sin while we continue in it. Here I shall show that the old man, the flesh, or natural state, is not only sin, as some would have it, but it contains in it several things, which I shall name, that make it to be sinful, besides several other things that make it miserable. I have shown that in Christ we have all endowments necessary to frame us for godliness; so, in our fleshly state, we have all things contrary to that holy frame. One thing belonging to our natural state is the guilt of sin, even of Adam's first sin, and of the sinful depravation of our nature, and of all our own actual transgressions, and therefore we are by nature the children of wrath (Eph. 2:3) and under the curse of God. The benefit of remission of our sin and freedom from condemnation is not given to us in the flesh, or in a natural state, but only in Christ (Rom. 8:1; Eph. 1:7). And can we imagine that a man should be able to prevail against sin, while God is against him, and curses him?

Another property, inseparable from the former, is an evil conscience, which denounces the wrath of God against us for sin, and inclines us to abhor Him as our enemy, rather than to love Him, as has been shown; or, if it is a blind conscience, it hardens us the more in our sins.

A third property is an evil inclination, tending only to sin, which therefore is called 'sin that dwells in us', and 'the law of sin in our members', that powerfully subdues and captivates us to the service of sin (Rom. 7:20, 23). It is a fixed propensity to lust against the law without any deliberation; and therefore its lustings are not to be prevented by any diligence or watchfulness. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:7). How vain then is it to plead that they can do good, if they will, when their minds and will itself are enslaved to sin?

A fourth property is subjection to the power of the devil who is the god of this world, that has blinded the minds of all that do not believe (2 Cor. 4:4), and will certainly conquer all whom he fights with on his own dunghill, that is, in a natural state.

And, from all these properties, we may well conclude that our natural state has the property never to be good, to be stark dead in sin (Eph. 2:1), according to the sentence denounced against the first sin of mankind in Adam: 'In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die' (Gen. 2:17). For you can no more bring it to holiness, by any of the most vehement motives and endeavours, than you can bring a dead carcass to life, by chafing and rubbing it. You can stir up no strength, or fortifying grace, in the natural man by such motives and endeavours, because there is no strength in him to be stirred up (Rom. 5:6). Though you do all that lies in you to the utmost, while you are in this flesh, you can do nothing but sin, for there is no good thing in you, as the apostle Paul shows by his own experience: 'I know, that in me (that is, in my flesh), no good thing dwells' (Rom. 7:18).

6. We have no good ground to trust on Christ to help us to will or to do that which is acceptable to Him while we continue in our natural state, or to imagine that freedom of will to holiness is restored to us by the merit of His death. For, as it has been already shown, Christ aimed at a higher end in His incarnation, death and resurrection, than the restoring the decay and ruins of our natural state. He aimed to advance us to a new state, more

excellent than the state of nature ever was, by union and fellowship with Himself, that we might live to God, not by the power of a natural free will, but by the power of His Spirit living and acting in us. So we may conclude that our natural state is irrecoverable and desperate because Christ, the only Saviour, did not aim at the recovery of it. It is neither holy nor happy, but subject to sin and to all miseries, as long as it remains. Even those that are in a new state in Christ, and do serve the law of God with their mind, do yet with their flesh serve the law of sin (Rom. 7:25). As far as it remains in them, it lusts against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17); and it remains dead, because of the sin, even when the Spirit is life to them, because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10), and must be wholly abolished by death, before we can be perfected in that holiness and happiness that is by faith in Christ. After God had promised salvation by Christ, the seed of the woman, He placed cherubims and a flaming sword to keep man out of Paradise, in this way teaching him that his first state was lost without hope, and that the happiness intended for him was wholly new. Our old natural man was not revived and reformed by the death of Christ, but crucified together with Him, and therefore to be abolished and destroyed out of us by virtue of His death (Rom. 6:6). It is like the part of a garment infected with the plague of leprosy, which was to be rent off as incurable, that the garment might be clean (Lev. 13:56). If Christ is not in us, we are reprobates (2 Cor. 13:5), that is, we are in a state which God has rejected from partaking of His salvation; so that we are not to expect any assistance from God to make us holy in it, but rather to deliver us from it.

7. This does not at all discharge those that are in a natural state from obligation to holiness of life, nor render them excusable for their sins at the tribunal of God's justice. For God has made man upright, but they sought out many inventions (Eccles. 7:29). Observe well the words of this text, and you will find that all they who have sought out many inventions, rather than upright walking, are comprehended in man that was at first made upright. And 'man' in the text signifies all mankind. The first Adam was all mankind, as Jacob and Esau were two nations in the womb of Rebecca (Gen. 25:23). God made us all in our first parent, according to His own image, able and inclined to do His law and, in that pure nature, our obligation to obedience was first laid on us, and the first wilful transgression, by which our first parent bereaved himself of the image of God, and brought on himself the sentence of death, was our sin as well as

his, for, 'In one man, Adam, all have sinned, and so death is passed on all' (Rom. 5:12); because all mankind were in Adam's loins, when the first sin was committed, even as Levi may be said to have paid tithes in Abraham before he was born, because, when his father Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, he was yet in his loins (Heb. 7:9, 10). The promise of God, that He will not charge the iniquities of parents on their children, is a promise belonging to the new covenant confirmed in the blood of Christ; and it is yea and amen to us only in Christ, in whom we have another nature than that which our parents conveyed to us, so that we cannot justly claim the benefit of it in our old natural state (Jer. 31:29-31; 2 Cor. 1:20). Those that account their impotency a sufficient plea to excuse them or others show that they were never truly humbled for that great wilful transgression of all mankind in the loins of Adam. Inability to pay debt excuses not a debtor that has lavished away his estate; neither does drunkenness excuse the mad actings of a drunkard, but rather aggravates his sin. And our impotency consists not in a mere want of executive power, but in the want of a willing mind to practice true holiness and righteousness. Naturally we do not love it, we do not like it, but lust against it (Gal. 5:17), and hate the light (John 3:20). If men in a natural state had a hearty love and liking to true holiness, and a desire and serious endeavour to practice it out of hearty love, and yet failed in the event, then they might, under some pretence, plead for their excuse (as some do for them) that they were compelled to sin by an inevitable fate. But none have just cause to plead any such thing for their excuse, because none endeavour to practice true holiness out of hearty love to it, until the good work be begun in their souls and, when God hath begun, He will perfect it (Phil. 1:6), and will, in the meantime, accept their ready mind, though they fall short in performance (2 Cor. 8:12). 'How abominable,' then, 'and filthy is man, that drinketh iniquity as water?' (Job. 15:16), that cannot practice holiness, because he will not? This is their just condemnation, that they love darkness rather than light. They deserve to be partakers with the devils in torments, as they partake with them in evil lusts; and their inability to do good will no more excuse them than it excuses devils.

4. Neither will this assertion make it a vain thing to preach the gospel to natural people, and to exhort them to true repentance and faith in Christ for their conversion and salvation. For the design of our preaching is not to bring them to holiness in their natural state, but to raise them above it, and

to present them perfect in Christ in the performance of those duties (Col. 1:28). And though they cannot perform those duties by their natural strength, yet the gospel is made effectual for their conversion and salvation by the power of the Holy Ghost, which accompanieth the preaching of it; to quicken those that are dead in sin, and to create them anew in Christ, by giving to them repentance to life and lively faith in Christ. The gospel cometh to the elect of God, not only in word, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in such assurance that they receive it with joy of the Holy Ghost (1 Thess. 1:5, 6). The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, that giveth life (2 Cor. 3:6-8); it is 'mighty through God' (2 Cor. 10:4). It dependeth not at all upon the power of our free will to make it successful for our conversion, but it conveyeth into the soul that life and power whereby we receive and obey it. Christ can make those that are dead in sin to hear His voice and live (John 5:25). Therefore He can speak to them by His gospel and command them to repent and believe with good success, as well as He could say to dead carcasses, 'Talitha cumi' (Mark 5:4); 'Lazarus come forth,' (John 11:43, 44); and to the sick of the palsy, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house' (Matt. 9:6).

5. There is no reason that the examples of heathen philosophers, or any Jews or Christians by outward profession, that have lived without the saving knowledge of God in Christ, should move us, by their wise sayings and renowned attainments in the practice of devotion and morality, to recede from this truth that has been so fully confirmed out of the Holy Scriptures. Have we not cause to judge that the apostle Paul, while he was a zealous Pharisee, and at least some few of the great multitude of the Jews in his time that were zealous of the law and had the instruction of the Holy Scriptures, attained as near to that true holiness as the heathen philosophers, or any others in their natural state? Yet Paul, after he was enlightened with the saving knowledge of Christ, judged himself the chief of sinners in his highest former attainments, though, in the judgement of others, he was blameless touching the righteousness which is in the law; and he found it necessary to begin to live to God in a new way by faith in Christ, and to suffer the loss of all his former attainments, and to count them but dung that he might win Christ (1 Tim. 1:15; Phil. 3:6-8).

And none of the great multitude of Jews that followed after the law of righteousness did ever attain to it, while they sought it not by faith in

Christ (Rom. 9:3, 32). What performances are greater in outward appearance, than for a man to give all his goods to the poor, and to give his body to be burnt? And yet the Scripture allows us to suppose that this may be done without true charity, and therefore without any true holiness of the heart and life (1 Cor. 13:3). Men in a natural state may have strong conviction of the infinite power, wisdom, justice and goodness of God, and of the judgement to come, and the everlasting happiness of the godly and torments of the wicked. These convictions may stir them up, not only to make a high profession, and to utter rare sayings concerning God and godliness, but also to labour with great earnestness to avoid all known sin, to subdue their lusts, to perform universal obedience to God in all known duties, and to serve Him with their lives and estates to the utmost, and to extort out of their hearts some kind of love to God and godliness, that, if possible, they may escape the terrible torments of hell and procure everlasting happiness by their endeavours. Yet all their love to God is but forced and feigned; they have no hearty liking to God or His service; they account Him a hard Master, and His commandments grievous, and they repine and fret inwardly at the burden of them, and, were it not for fear of everlasting fire, they would little regard the enjoyment of God in heaven, and they would be glad if they might have the liberty to enjoy their lust without danger of damnation. The highest preferment of those that are born only after the flesh, in Abraham's family, is but to be children of the bondwoman (Gal. 4:23). And though they toil more in God's service than many of His dear children, yet God does not accept their service, because their best performances are slavish, without any childlike affections towards God, and not better than glittering sins. And yet these natural men are not at all beholden to the goodness of their natures for these counterfeit shows of holiness, or for the least abstaining from the grossest sins. If God should leave men fully to their own natural corruptions, and to the power of Satan (as they deserve) all show of religion and morality would be quickly banished out of the world, and we should grow past feeling in wickedness, and like the cannibals, who are as good by nature as ourselves. But God, that can restrain the burning of the fiery furnace without quenching it, and the flowing water without changing its nature, also restrains the working of natural corruption without mortifying it. Through the greatness of His wisdom and power, He makes His enemies yield feigned obedience to Him (Ps. 66:3), and to do many things good for the matter of them, though they can do nothing in a right holy manner. He

has appointed several means to restrain our corruptions – as the law, terrors of conscience, terrible judgements, and rewards in this life, magistrates, human laws, labour for necessaries, as food and raiment. And those gospel means that are effectual for sanctification serve also for restraint of sin. God has gracious ends in this restraint of sin, that His church may be preserved and His gospel preached in the world; and that these natural men may be in a better capacity to receive the instructions of the gospel; and that such of them that are chosen may, in due time, be converted; and that those of them that are not truly converted may enjoy more of the goodness of God here, and suffer less torments hereafter. As vile and wicked as the world is, we have cause to praise and to magnify the free goodness of God that it is no worse.

CHAPTER SIX

Those that endeavour to perform sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, as the condition by which they are to procure for themselves a right and title to salvation, and a good ground to trust on Him for the same, do seek their salvation by the works of the law, and not by the faith of Christ, as He is revealed in the gospel and they shall never be able to perform sincere and true holy obedience by all such endeavours.

For the understanding the terms of this direction, note here that I take salvation as comprehending justification, as well as other saving benefits, and sincere obedience as comprehending holy resolutions, as well as the fulfilling of them. The most of men that have any sense of religion are prone to imagine that the sure way to establish the practice of holiness and righteousness is to make it the procuring condition of the favour of God and all happiness. This may appear by the various false religions that have prevailed most in the world. In this way the heathens were brought to their best devotion and morality by the knowledge of the judgement of God, that those that violate several of the great duties to God and their neighbour are worthy of death, and by their consciences accusing or excusing them, according to the practice of them (Rom. 1:32; 2:14, 15). Our consciences are informed by the common light of natural reason that it is just with God to require us to perform these duties, that we may avoid His wrath and enjoy His favour. And we cannot find any better way than this to obtain happiness, or to stir up ourselves to duty, without divine revelation. Yet, because our own consciences testify that we often fail in the performance of those duties, we are inclined by self-love to persuade ourselves that our sincere endeavours to do the best we can shall be sufficient to procure the favour of God, and pardon for all our failings.

Thus we see that our persuasion of salvation by the condition of sincere obedience has its original from our corrupt natural reason, and is part of the wisdom of this world. It is none of 'the wisdom of God in a mystery, that hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory'; it is none of those things of the Spirit of God which 'have not entered the heart of man,' and which the 'natural man cannot receive; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor. 2:6, 7, 9, 14). It is none of 'the foolishness of preaching,' by which it pleased God 'to save them that believe' (1 Cor. 1:21). And

though we have a better way revealed to us in the gospel, for the enjoyment of the favour of God, and holiness itself, and all salvation, without any procuring condition of works, by the free gift of God's grace through faith in Christ, yet it is very difficult to persuade men out of a way they are naturally addicted to, and that has forestalled and captivated their judgements, and is bred in their bone, and therefore cannot easily be got out of the flesh. Most of those that live under the hearing and profession of the gospel are not brought to hate sin as sin, and to love godliness for itself, though they are convinced of the necessity of it to salvation, and therefore they cannot love it heartily. The only means they can take to bring themselves to it is to stir up themselves to a hypocritical practice in their old natural way, that they may avoid hell, and get heaven, by their works. And their own consciences witness that the zeal and love that they have for God and godliness, their self-denial, sorrow for sin, strictness of life, are in a manner forced and extorted from them by slavish fear and mercenary hope, so that they are afraid that, if they should trust on Christ for salvation by free grace without works, the fire of their zeal and devotion would be quickly extinguished, and they should grow careless in religion, and let loose the reins to their lusts, and bring certain damnation on themselves. This moves them to account them the only Boanerges and powerful preachers that preach little or none of the doctrine of free grace, but rather spend their pains in rebuking sin and urging people to get Christ and His salvation by their works, and thundering hell and damnation against sinners.

It has been further observed that some that have contended much for salvation by free grace, without any condition of works, have fallen into Antinomian opinions and licentious practices. The experience of these things has much prevailed with some learned and zealous men of late among ourselves to recede from the doctrine of justification by faith without works, formerly professed unanimously, and strongly defended by the Protestants against the Papists as a principal article of true religion. They have persuaded themselves that such a way of justification is ineffectual, yea, destructive to sanctification, and that the practice of sincere obedience cannot be established against Antinomian dotages and prevailing lusts, except it is made the necessary condition of our justification, and so of our eternal salvation. Therefore they conclude that God has certainly made sincere obedience to be the condition of our

salvation. And they have endeavoured to new-model the Protestant doctrine, and to interpret the Holy Scriptures in a way agreeable and subservient to this their only sure foundation of holiness.

But I hope to show that this their imagined sure foundation of holiness was never laid by the holy God, but that it is rather an error in the foundation, pernicious to the true faith, and to holiness of life. I account it an error especially to be abhorred and detested, because we are so prone to be seduced by it, and because it is an error by which Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light, and a patron of holiness, has greatly withstood the gospel in the apostles' times, and stirred up men to persecute it out of zeal for the law, and has since prevailed to set and maintain Popery, by which the mystery of iniquity works apace in these days to corrupt the purity of the gospel among Protestants, and to heal the deadly wound that was given to Popery by preaching the doctrine of justification by faith without works.

One thing asserted in the direction against this fundamental error is that it is a way of salvation by the works of the law, and not by the faith of Christ, as revealed in the gospel; though the maintainers of it would have us believe that it is the only way of the gospel, that so we may not doubt its power and efficacy for our justification, sanctification and our whole salvation. Their reasons are because the law, as a covenant of works, requires us to do all its commandments perfectly that we may live; whereas they plead only for a milder condition of sincere doing, that we may live. And they plead not for doing duties, as obliged to it by the authority of the law given of God by Moses, but only in obedience to the commands of Christ in the gospel. Neither do they plead for salvation by sincere obedience without Christ, but only by Christ, and through His merit and righteousness. And they acknowledge that both salvation itself and sincere obedience are given to them freely by the grace of Christ: so that all is of grace. They acknowledge also that their salvation is by faith, because sincere obedience is wrought in them by believing the gospel, and is included in the nature of that faith, which is the entire condition of our salvation, and some call it the resignation act. of faith. But all these reasons are but a fallacious wizard on a legal way of salvation, to make it look like pure gospel, as I shall evince by the following particulars.

1. All that seek salvation by the sincere performance of good works, as the procuring condition, are condemned by the apostle Paul for seeking righteousness by the works of the law, and not by faith (Rom. 9:32), and for seeking to be justified by the law, and falling from the grace of Christ (Gal. 5:4). This one assertion, if it can be proved, is enough to pluck off the fallacious wizard from the condition of sincere obedience, and to make men abhor it, as a damning legal doctrine, that bereaves its followers of all salvation by Christ. And the proof of it is not difficult to persons that warily consider a point of so great moment for their salvation.

The Jews and judaizing Christians, against whom the apostle chiefly disputes in his whole controversy, did not profess any hope of being justified by perfect obedience, according to the rigour of the law, but only by such obedience as they accounted to be sincere, and not hypocritical. And we have no cause to doubt, but that the judaizing Galatians had learned by the gospel to distinguish sincere obedience from hypocrisy. The Jewish religion bound all that professed it to acknowledge themselves to be sinners, as appears by their anniversary humiliation on the day of atonement, and several other rites of the law, and many clear testimonies in the oracles of God that were committed to them (Ps. 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Eccles. 7:20). Yet they knew they were bound to turn to the Lord with all their hearts, in sincerity and uprightness, and that God would accept of sincere obedience; for which cause they might better put it for the condition of the law, than we can of the gospel (Ps. 51:6, 10; Deut. 6:5; 30:10). So that if the apostle had disputed against those that held only perfect obedience to be the condition of justification, he had contended with his own shadow. And they might as readily judge sincere obedience to be the condition of justification under the law, as we can judge it to be the condition under the gospel.

Neither does the apostle condemn them merely for accounting sincere obedience to the law, as given by Moses, to be the condition of their justification, but more generally for seeking salvation by their own works. And he alleges against them that Abraham, who lived before the law of Moses, was not justified by any of his works, though he did perform sincere obedience; and that David, who lived under the law of Moses, was not justified by his works, though he performed sincere obedience, and

was as much given to obey the law given by Moses, as we are to obey any commands of Christ in the gospel (Rom. 4:2, 3, 5, 6).

Neither does he condemn them for seeking their salvation only by works, without respecting at all the grace and salvation that is by Christ, for the judaizing Galatians were yet professors of the grace and salvation of Christ, though they thought obedience to the law a necessary condition for the partaking of it, as also many other judaizing believers did. And, doubtless, they accounted themselves obliged to it, not only by the authority of Moses, but of Christ also, whom they owned as their Lord and Saviour. And we may be sure it was no damning error to account Moses' law obliging at that time, for many thousands of the Jews that were sound believers held the ceremonies of Moses to be in force at that time, and Paul was tender towards them in it (Acts 21:20, 26; 15:5). And other Jews sought justification, not only by their sincere works, but also by trusting on the promise made to Abraham and on their priesthood and sacrifices, which were types of Christ. And the most legal Pharisees would thank God for their works, as proceeding from His grace (Luke 18:11). And they could as well acknowledge their salvation to be by faith as the asserters of salvation by sincere obedience can in these last days, for they accounted that their sincere obedience was wrought in them by believing the Word of God, which contained gospel, as well as legal doctrine, in it and therefore that it must be included in the nature of faith, if faith were taken for the condition of their whole salvation.

Let them [not build again] that Judaism which the apostle Paul destroyed, by which the Jews stumbled at Christ (Rom. 9:32), and the Galatians were in danger of falling from Christ and grace (Gal. 5:2, 3). Let them beware of falling under the curse which He has denounced on this very occasion against any man or angel that shall preach any other gospel than that which he has preached (Gal. 1:8, 9).

2. The difference between the law and gospel does not at all consist in this, that the one requires perfect doing; the other, only sincere doing; but in this, that the one requires doing; the other, not doing, but believing for life and salvation. Their terms are different, not only in degree, but in their whole nature.

The apostle Paul opposes the believing required in the gospel to all doing for life, as the condition proper to the law (Gal. 3:12). The law is not of faith, but the man that does them shall live in them (Rom. 10:5). To him that does not work, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (Rom. 4:5). If we seek salvation by ever so easy and mild a condition of works, we do in this way bring ourselves under the terms of the law, and become debtors to fulfil the whole law in perfection, though we intended to engage ourselves only to fulfil it in part (Gal. 5:3), for the law is a complete declaration of the only terms by which God will judge all that are not brought to despair of procuring salvation by any of their own works, and to receive it as a gift freely given to them by the grace of God in Christ. So that all that seek salvation, right or wrong, knowingly or ignorantly, by any works, less or more, whether invented by their own superstition, or commanded by God in the Old or New Testament, shall at last stand or fall according to these terms.

3. Sincere obedience cannot be performed to all the commands of Christ in the gospel, except it is also performed to the moral law, as given by Moses, and as obliging us by that authority. Some asserters of the condition of salvation by sincere obedience to the commands of Christ would fain be free from the authority of the law of Moses, because that justifies none, but thunders out a curse against all those that seek salvation by the works of it (Gal. 3:10, 11). But, if they were at all justified by sincere works, their respect to Moses' authority would not hinder their success; for many that were good Christians accounted themselves bound to obey, not only the moral, but the ceremonial law; and if they had sought justification by any works, they would have sought it by those (Acts 21:20, 21). They did not know of any justification by sincere works, as commanded only in the gospel; yet, if they had erred in anything absolutely necessary to salvation, the apostles would not have tolerated their weakness. And, whether they will or no, they must seek their salvation by the works of the moral law, as given by Moses, or else they can never get it by sincere obedience to the commands of Christ. Christ never loved their new condition so well as to abolish the Mosaical authority of the moral law, for the establishment of it. He came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them, in the practice required by them, and has declared that 'Whoever then shall break one of these commandments, even the least, and shall teach men so, that one shall be

called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall practice and teach them, that one shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven' (Matt. 5:19). He commands us to 'do to men whatever we would they should do to us, because this is the law and the prophets' which is sufficient to prove that He would have us to account the law authoritative to oblige us in this matter. He requires His disciples to observe and do whatever the scribes and Pharisees bid them, because they sat in Moses' seat (Matt. 23:2, 3).

And, to come to the point in hand, when Christ had occasion to answer the questions of those that were guilty of the same error that I am now dealing with, in seeking salvation by their own works, He showed them that they must obey the commands as they were already established by the Mosaical authority, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: 'What is written in the law? How do you read it? This do, and you shall live' (Luke 10:26, 28). If you will enter into life, keep the commandments, which are, 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery,' etc.

In like manner the apostles of Christ urged the performance of moral duties on believers by the authority of the law given by Moses. The apostle Paul exhorts to love one another, because he that loves another has fulfilled the law (Rom. 13:8), and to honour our father and mother, which is the first command with promise (Eph. 6:2). The apostle John exhorts to love others, as no new, but an old commandment. The apostle James exhorts to fulfil the royal law, according to the Scriptures. You shall love your neighbour as yourself; and to keep all the commandments of the law, one as well as another, because he that said, 'Do not commit adultery', said also, 'Do not kill' (James 2:8, 10, 11). Sound Protestants have accounted the denial of the authority of the moral law of Moses to be an Antinomian error. And though our late prevaricators against Antinomianism do not maintain this error, yet they establish a worse error, justification by their sincere gospel works. I think the denomination of the Antinomians arose from this error. The law of Moses had its authority at first from Christ, for Christ was the Lord God of Israel, that ordained the law by angels on mount Sinai in the hand of Moses, a mediator for the Israelites, who were then His only church, and with whom we believing Gentiles are now joined, as fellow members of one and the same body (Eph. 3:6). And though Christ has since abrogated some of the commandments, then given by Moses, concerning figurative ceremonies and judicial proceedings, yet

He has not annulled the obligative authority of the moral law, but has left it in its full force, to oblige in moral duties that still are to be practiced, as, when some acts of any parliament are repealed, the authority of the same parliament remains inviolable in other acts that are not repealed.

I know they object that the Ten Commands of the moral law, the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, are also done away by Christ (2 Cor. 3:7). But this makes altogether against their conditional covenant, for they are the ministration of death, and done away, not as they commanded perfect obedience, for even Christ Himself commands us to be perfect (Matt. 5:48), but as they were conditions for procuring life and avoiding death, established by a promise of life to the doers, and a curse to the breakers of them (Gal. 3:10, 12). The covenant made with Israel on Mount Sinai is abolished by Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 8:8, 9, 13). And the Ten Commandments do not bind us as they were words of that covenant (Exod. 34:28). I mean, they do not bind us as conditions of that covenant, except we seek to be justified by works. For the law, as a covenant, still stands in force enough to curse those that seek salvation by their own works (Gal. 3: 10) and, if abolished, it is only to those that are in Christ by faith (Gal. 2:16, 20; Acts 3:22-25; 15:10, 11). But the Ten Commandments bind us still, as they were then given to a people that were at that time under the covenant of grace made with Abraham, to show them what duties are holy, just and good, well-pleasing to God, and to be a rule for their conversation. The result of all is that we must still practice moral duties as commanded by Moses, but we must not seek to be justified by our practice. If we use them as a rule of life, not as conditions of justification, they can be no ministration of death, or killing letter to us. Their perfection indeed makes them to be harder terms to procure life by, but a better rule to discover all imperfections, and to guide us to that perfection which we should aim at. And it will be our wisdom not to part with the authority of the decalogue of Moses, until our new divines can furnish us with another system of morality as complete as that and as excellently composed, and ordered by the wisdom of God, and more authentic than that is.

4. Those that endeavour to procure Christ's salvation by their sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ do act contrary to that way of

salvation by Christ, free grace and faith, discovered in the gospel, though they own it in profession ever so highly.

1. They act contrary to the way of salvation by Christ, for they would heal themselves, and save themselves from the power and pollution of sin, and procure God's favour, by performing sincere obedience, before they are come to Christ, the only Physician and Saviour. They lay their own obedience lowest in the foundation of their salvation, and build the enjoyment of Christ on it, who ought to be the only foundation. They would sanctify themselves, before they have a sure interest in Christ and, going about to establish their own righteousness, they do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God in Christ (Rom. 10:3, 4). Sometimes they will call the righteousness of Christ their legal righteousness, that they may make room for an evangelical righteousness of their own works, to be the immediate procuring cause of their justification by Christ, whereas the apostle Paul knew no evangelical righteousness but that of Christ, which he called the righteousness of faith without the law (Rom. 3:21, 22) and not of the law (Phil. 3:9). Thus they make void Christ's salvation, while they pretend to own it, and Christ profits them nothing. Christ is become of none effect to them, while they would be justified by the law (Gal. 5:2, 4). If we would be saved by Christ, we must own ourselves dead, lost sinners, that can have no righteousness for justification but His, no life or ability to do good, until God bring us into union and fellowship with Him.

2. They do act also contrary to salvation by grace, according to the true meaning of the gospel. For we are not saved by grace, as the supreme cause of salvation, by the intervention of works, given and accepted by grace, as the procuring cause; in which sense we might be saved by grace, though by a covenant of works; as a servant, that has monies given him by his master to purchase an annuity of his master at a low rate may profess that he had an annuity given him freely, and yet he has purchased it and may claim it as a due debt. But we are saved by grace, as the immediate and complete cause of our whole salvation, excluding procurement of our salvation by the condition of works and claiming it by any law as a due debt.

The Scripture teaches us that there is a perfect opposition and utter irreconcilableness between salvation by grace and works: 'If by grace, then

it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but, if it is of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work' (Rom. 11:6). So also, there is an opposition between a reward reckoned of grace and of debt (Rom. 4:4); between a promise of happiness by the law, and by grace (Rom. 4:13, 16). God is so jealous of the glory of His free grace that He will not save us by any works, though of His own working in us, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:9). He knows when He heals men by physic, or maintains them by the labour of their hands, they are prone to attribute the glory rather to the means they use than to His sole bounty and goodness.

3. They do also act contrary to the way of salvation by faith, for, as I have shown already, the faith which is required for our salvation in the gospel is to be understood in a sense contrary to doing good works as a condition to procure our salvation, and so the true difference between the terms of the law and the gospel may be maintained. Believing is opposed to all working for salvation, and the law of works to the law of faith (Rom. 4:5; 3:27; Eph. 2:8, 9). Therefore, we must not here consider faith as a work of righteousness, as comprehending any works of righteousness performed or done, as a condition to procure a right and title to Christ, as the hand by which we work, to earn Him as our bread and drink, as our wages; but only as the hand by which we receive Christ, as freely given to us, or as the mouth by which we eat and drink Him, as has been proved. God gives a sufficient right to receive Christ and His salvation by the free gospel offer and invitation, so that He leaves nothing for our faith to do, but to lay hold of Him as a free gift, that the glory of our salvation may not be ascribed at all to our faith or works, but only to this free grace of God in Christ: 'It is of faith, that it may be by grace' (Rom. 4:16).

6. Christ or His apostles never taught a gospel that requires such a condition of works for salvation as they plead for. The texts of Scripture which they usually allege for this purpose are either contrary to it, or widely distant from it – as they might learn from many Protestant interpreters, if their affection to a popish tenet had not blinded them. I shall instance briefly only in a few of those texts by which you may have some light to judge of the true meaning of the rest. That obedience of faith, mentioned by the apostle Paul, as the great design of gospel preaching (Rom. 1:5), is as contrary to their condition of sincere obedience for

salvation, as the law of faith is to the law of works (Rom. 3:27). It is an obedience that consists in believing the report of the gospel, as the apostle explains himself: 'They have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias says, Lord, who has believed our report?' (Rom. 10:16.) Faith is to be imputed for righteousness, not because it is a work of righteousness itself, but because we do by it renounce all confidence in any righteous works whatever, and trust on Him that justifies the ungodly, as is clear by that very text which they usually pervert for their purpose (Rom. 4:5). They grossly pervert those words of Paul: 'Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality eternal life' (Rom. 2:6, 7), where they will have Paul to be declaring the terms of the gospel, when he is evidently declaring the terms of the law to prove that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law, as appears by the tenor of his following discourse (Rom. 3:9, 10). They join evidently with the Papists against the concurrent judgement of the best Protestant divines in the interpretation of the text: 'You see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only' (James 2:24), where they will have James deliver the doctrine of justification in more proper expressions than the apostle Paul, who teaches justification by faith without works; though Paul treats on this doctrine as his principal subject, and James only speaks of it occasionally, as a motive to the practice of good works, by which we may easily judge which of their expressions are to be taken for the most proper.

Protestants have showed sufficiently that James speaks not of a true saving faith, but of such a dead faith as devils have; not of justification in a proper sense, but of the declaration and manifestation of it by its fruits. Besides, he speaks of justification by works as commanded in the law given by Moses, as appears by his citing the commandments of the law (James 2:8, 11), which our contrivers of the new divinity would have nothing to do with in their model of the doctrine of justification.

Another text alleged by them is 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city' (Rev. 22:14). But the Greek word which is here translated 'right' is translated 'power' or 'privilege' (John 1:12). It signifies here a rightful possession of the fruit of the tree of life,

and not a mere title to it. So this text proves no more than what the Protestants generally acknowledge, that good works are the way in which we are to walk to the enjoyment and possession of the glory of Christ, though a title to Christ and His glorious salvation be freely given us without any procuring condition of works. They account also that when the happiness of heaven is called a reward, it must needs imply a procuring condition of works, as Revelation 22:12; Matthew 5:12. But though it is called a reward, because it is given after the doing of good works, and because it recompenses good works better than any wages on earth can recompense the labourer, yet it is a reward of grace, not of debt (Rom. 4:4); it is no proper wages, but a free gift: 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 6:23).

Another thing asserted in the direction is that those that endeavour to perform this sincere obedience as a condition to procure a right and title to Christ and His salvation shall never be able to perform sincerely any true obedience by all such endeavours. Though they labour earnestly, and pray fervently, fast frequently, and oblige themselves to holiness by many vows, and press themselves to the practice of it by the most forcible motives taken from the infinite power, justice and knowledge of God, the equity and goodness of His commands, the salvation of Christ, everlasting happiness and misery, or any other motive improved by the most affectionate meditation – yet they shall never attain to the end which they aim at in such an erroneous way. They may restrain their corruptions, and bring themselves to many hypocritical slavish performances, by which they may be esteemed among men as eminent saints, but they shall not be able to mortify one corruption, or to perform one duty in such a holy manner as God approves. Yet here I censure only an error, not the life of the persons that maintain it. I have heard that some preach legally and pray evangelically. I doubt not but the frame of their hearts and lives is rather according to their prayers than their sermons. Though Peter complied with Judaism in an outward act of profession, yet he lived himself like a Christian (Gal. 2:11, 14). I affirm only that no godly person did or could attain to his godliness in this erroneous way. And what a lamentable disappointment is this to those that have attempted to alter the Protestant doctrine, and to pervert and confound law and gospel, and have bred much contention in the church, that they might secure the practice of sincere

obedience against Antinomian errors, by making it the procuring condition of their salvation, when, after all this ado, the remedy is found to be as bad as the disease, equally unserviceable and destructive to that great end for which they designed it, and that it has an Antinomian effect and operation, contrary to the power of godliness!

Much more might be said for the confutation of this novel doctrine, but, if this one thing be well proved, it may be sufficient to make the zealous contrivers of it to be ashamed of their craft, and angry with themselves, and sorry that they have taken so much pains, and stretched their wits to maintain such an unprofitable, unsanctifying opinion. It will be sufficient for the proof of it, if I show that the practice of true holiness cannot possibly be attained to by seeking to be saved by the works of the law; because I have already proved that this doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience is according to the terms of the law, and not of the gospel. And in this way those also may see their error that ascribe justification only to the gospel, and sanctification to the law. Yet, because those asserters of the condition of sincere obedience will hardly be persuaded by what has been said, that it is the way of the law of works, I shall, for their more full conviction, sufficiently manifest that 'it is of no other nature and operation, than any other doctrine that is proper to the law, and has no better fruit', as I proceed to prove by the following arguments that holiness cannot be attained by seeking it by the law of works, that so it may appear not worthy to be called gospel doctrine.

1. The way of salvation by the works of the law is contrary and destructive to those necessary means of a holy practice that have been laid down in the foregoing directions, and manifestly proved out of the Holy Scriptures. I have made it appear that a hearty propensity to a holy practice cannot be attained without some good persuasion of our reconciliation with God by justification, and of our everlasting happiness, and of sufficient strength both to will and to perform our duty; and that these, and all other endowments necessary to the same end, are to be had only in Christ, by union and fellowship with Him; and that Christ Himself, with all His fullness, is united to us by faith; which is not a condition to procure a right and title to Christ, but an instrument by which we receive Him actually into our hearts, by trusting on Him for all salvation freely promised us in the gospel. All these means of a holy practice are things in which our

spiritual life and happiness consists, so that, if we have them, everlasting life is begun in us already. Because they are the necessary means of a holy practice, therefore the beginning of everlasting life in us must not be placed after such a practice, as the fruit and consequence of it; but must go before it, as the cause before the effect. Now, the terms of the law are directly contrary to this method. They place the practice of holiness before life and make it to be the means and procuring cause of life, as Moses describes them: 'The man that does these things shall live by them' (Rom. 10: 5). By these terms, you are first to do the holy duties commanded, before you have any interest in the life promised, or any right to lay hold of it as yours by faith. And you must practice holiness without the forementioned means, or else you can never attain to them. Thus the true means are turned out of their office and, instead of being causes, they are made to be effects and fruits of a holy practice. And it will be in vain ever to expect such effects and fruits, for holiness itself, with all its effects, must needs be destroyed, when its necessary causes are taken away. Therefore, the apostle Paul testifies that the way of salvation by the works of the law makes faith void, and the promises of no effect, and frustrates the grace of God, as if Christ died in vain, and makes Christ to be of no profit, and of none effect to us, as those that are fallen from grace (Rom. 4:14; Gal. 2:21; 5:2, 4).

Let us now examine the modern doctrine of salvation by the condition of sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, and we shall quickly find it to be a chip of the same block with the former legal way of salvation, in the same manner destructive to the means of holiness and to holiness itself. It requires of us the performance of sincere obedience, before we have the means necessary to produce it, by making it antecedent to our justification, and persuasion of eternal happiness, and our actual enjoyment of union and fellowship with Christ, and of that new nature which is to be had only in Him by faith. It destroys the nature of that saving faith by which we actually receive and enjoy Christ and all His benefits, and knocks off our hands from laying hold of Christ and His salvation by telling us still, as Christ told the legal worker, after all his labour, that yet we lack something (Mark 10:21); that it is presumption to take Him as our own, until we have performed the condition for our right and title to Him, which is another kind of saving faith, otherwise called sincere obedience. By this devised conditional faith, Satan keeps many poor souls at bay, poring on their own

hearts for many years together, to find whether they have performed the condition, and whether they have as yet any right to Christ for their salvation, not daring to venture to take Him as their own. It is a strong partition wall, that will certainly hinder the soul from coming to Christ, until it is thrown down by the knowledge of salvation by grace without any procuring condition of works. And though it is accounted but as the payment of a peppercorn for a great estate, yet it is enough to break the ablest man in the world, because it debars him from laying hold of the only effectual means of holiness, by which that peppercorn may be obtained.

2. Those that seek salvation by the works of the law do therein act according to their natural state. They live and walk according to the flesh, or old man; not according to the new state, by Christ living in them. I doubt not but several of them that live under the light of the gospel are partakers of a new state in Christ, and walk holily in it; but the best in this world have in them flesh as well as spirit, and may act according to either state in some measure, and in this matter they do act according to their carnal natural state. When the believing Galatians were seduced to a legal way of salvation, the apostle Paul charges it on them as their folly that, having begun in the Spirit, they would now be 'made perfect in the flesh' (Gal. 3:3). And he resembles those that desire to be under the law to Abraham's son born of Hagar the bondwoman to show that such do walk as those that are born after the flesh, not after the Spirit (Gal. 4:22, 23, 29). The law was first given to Adam in his pure natural state, to prescribe terms for his continuance in the happiness which he then enjoyed. And ever since that time the flesh, or natural man, is married to the law, and the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives, that is, until he be dead to his fleshly state by the body of Christ, and married to Him that is raised from the dead (Rom. 7:1, 4). We are not at all under the law as a covenant of works, according to our new state in Christ, as the apostle testifies: 'You are not under the law, but under grace' (Rom. 6:14) and 'If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law' (Gal. 5:18). From this, we may firmly conclude that none can possibly attain to true godliness by acting according to legal terms, because I have fully proved already that it is impossible to be godly while we are in the flesh, or in a natural state, and that, as far as we act according to it, we can do nothing but sin. The law is so weak through the flesh, that it cannot bring us to fulfil its own righteousness (Rom. 8:3, 4). It is married to a cross piece of flesh, that is

enmity to it, and can never be subject to it (Rom. 8:7). It sues the natural man for an old debt of obedience, that he is utterly unable to pay since the Fall, and the success is accordingly: it gets nothing.

Neither do those take a better course, that would bring themselves to holiness by making sincere obedience to Christ's commands the condition of their salvation. Their way is the same for substance with that of the Galatians beforementioned, who would be made perfect in the flesh, not by perfect obedience, but sincere; as has been shown before. Their endeavours to procure an interest in Christ by their sincere obedience do testify against themselves, that they do not act as people that are in Christ, but rather as people that judge themselves to be without an interest in Christ, and to be yet to seek for it. And sincere obedience is as impossible to be attained to as perfect obedience; if we act according to our dead natural state.

3. As the law bereaves of all strengthening means that are to be had by faith in Christ, and finds us without strength in our natural state, so, of itself, it affords us no strength to fulfil its own commands: 'If there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law' (Gal. 3:21). It does not so much as promise life until we have performed the obedience required by it. The man that does these things shall live by them (Rom. 10: 5). It is well called a voice of words (Heb. 12:19), because its high and big words are not accompanied with an enlivening power. And the doctrine of life and salvation by sincere obedience is no better-natured, or more bountiful to us, for it exacts of us the performance of the condition, before it allows us any life or salvation by Christ. Can any man rationally expect strength to obey sincerely by following a doctrine that does not so much as promise it? The true gospel is of a more benign nature, for it promises that God will pour out of His Spirit on all flesh (Acts 2:17), and will put the laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts (Heb. 8:10), and will cause us to walk in His statutes, that we shall keep His judgements, and do them (Ezek. 36:27). This word of God's grace, that requires not holiness of us as a condition, but promises it to us as a free gift, must needs be the only doctrine that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified (Acts 20: 32). Seeing it pleases God to bring us to holiness by believing a doctrine, we may reasonably expect that God should work on

us suitably to the nature of the doctrine which we believe, that He should give by a giving doctrine, and exact by an exacting doctrine.

4. The way of procuring life and happiness by the condition of perfect or sincere works is not a rational method for the recovery of fallen man, though it were good for the preserving of life before the Fall, for it prescribes the immediate practice of holiness to recover a man dead in sin – as if one should say to the sick of the palsy, 'Arise and walk, and then you shall be whole and able to walk.' We sometimes say jestingly to a child that is fallen on the ground, 'Come here, and I will help you up', but if we should say so to one that is cast on his bed by a dead palsy we should be guilty of mocking and cruelly insulting the afflicted. Those that are humbled and made sensible of their original sin and natural deadness know that they must first live by the Spirit, before they can act holily (Gal. 5:25). They will enquire, 'How shall we have strength to perform the duty required?' If you answer, that they must trust in God and Christ to help them, they may readily reply, they have no sure ground to trust in God or Christ for any saving grace according to this doctrine, before they have performed this condition, at least in a sincere resolution of obedience, and that they are as unable to bring their hearts to such a resolution as a dead man is to raise himself out of the grave. Take another instance. The method of the doctrine of works is 'You must love God first, and then, on that condition, He will love you again', whereas, on the contrary, 'We love God, because He loved us first' (1 John 4:19). And if God suspend His love to us upon any condition, our love to Him will not be absolute, but suspended upon the same condition, and no way contrary to an actual hating of Him.

3. The law is so far from healing our sinful corruption that it proves rather an occasion of sinful motions and actings in those that seek salvation by the works of it. This comes to pass by reason of the power of our natural corruption, which is stirred up and rages the more when the holy and just law of God is set in opposition against it, so that the fault is not in the law, but in our own hearts. Those that find not this by their own experience should believe the apostle Paul, who teaches it plainly, and that from his own experience (Rom. 7:5, 14). He affirms that there are motions of sin by the law in a fleshly state, and that sin, taking occasion by the commandment, 'You shall not covet', wrought in him all manner of

concupiscence, deceived him, slew him, became exceeding sinful; and that without the law, he was alive, and sin dead but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. He shows the cause of this irreconcilable enmity and contrariety between his sinful nature and the law: 'The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.' Take notice here, from the reason given by the apostle, that the doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience will have the same event. Corrupt nature is contrary to sincere obedience, as well as perfect and, if we make it the condition of our salvation, sin will take the same occasion by it to become exceeding sinful in its motions and actings. The success of legal doctrine upon the natural man is according to the proverb, 'Do not reprove a scorner, lest he hate you' (Prov. 9:8). Rebuking a madman is the way to enrage him, and such is the natural man in spiritual things, since he fell out of his right mind by the sin of Adam.

We find by manifold experience that, though man is generally addicted to the principle of salvation by works, yet multitudes of them hate all strict preachers and professors of true holiness, because they are a torment to their consciences. They endeavour to shelter themselves in ignorance of the law, accounting that the less they know, the less they shall answer for, and therefore they would not have right things prophesied to them (Isa. 30:10). And they have prevailed generally in the world to darken the natural knowledge of moral duties in such a degree that there is a necessity of learning them by divine revelation out of the Scriptures. We may find how prone legal writers are to corrupt the sense of the law, that they may leave starting-holes for their corruptions, by the corrupt glosses of the scribes and Pharisees, from which Christ did vindicate it (Matt. 5). And, as far as I have observed, none more endeavour to discover the purity and perfection of the law than those that seek holiness and salvation without any legal condition, by the mere free grace of God in Christ. The doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience is but a mincing the perfection required in the law, and yet how is this doctrine minced again and again, until it is become so small, that the substance of all true obedience is lost? A willingness to be saved according to Christ's terms, or a consent that Christ should be our Lord, or a resolution to obey His commandments (which is little more than ignorant men trust on, when they say they hope God will save them because they have a good meaning, though they live in the neglect of all religion) without any further practice of holiness, shall pass with many for enough of sincere obedience, both to enter them into a state

of salvation, and to continue them in it; so that they shall never be accounted breakers of the gospel covenant, while so much can be pretended. The most that is made necessary for salvation shall be only to endeavour to do what we can to obey Christ's commands, though all that the most can do is nothing that is truly good. Those that have a little more zeal for their salvation by works are prone to spend it in superstitious observances, because they suit better with their carnal nature than the spiritual commands of God and Christ. I doubt not but this has been one occasion of the prevailing of heathenish, Jewish and popish superstitions in the world. We find by experience how Popery fell in several nations of late years, when the great pillar of it, the doctrine of justification by works, was overthrown by the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone.

If these legal zealots be forced by strong conviction to endeavour the practice of spiritual duties for the quieting of their guilty consciences, they may be brought to strive and labour earnestly, and even to macerate their bodies with fasting, that they may kill their lusts; but still their lusts are alive, and as strong as ever they were, and do show forth their enmity against the law of God by inward fretting, repining and grudging at it, as a grievous taskmaster, though a slavish fear restrain their gross outward actings. And, if once these zealots are enlightened with the knowledge of the spiritual nature of the law to discern that God rejects all their slavish service, and will not own it for sincere obedience, then they fall into despair of their salvation, because they see they have failed in their highest attempts to perform the condition, and they can easily discover themselves, that their hearts swell in anger and manifest hatred against the law, yea, and against God and Christ, for prescribing such hard conditions of salvation, which they cannot keep, and yet must expect to be damned eternally for breaking them. This fills them with blasphemous thoughts against God and Christ, and they can hardly refrain from blaspheming with their tongues. And when they are brought to this horrible condition, if God does not in mercy discover to them the way of salvation by free grace, through faith alone, they will endeavour, if they can, to sear their consciences past feeling of sin, and fully to abandon all religion, which has proved such an insufferable torment to them, or, if they cannot sear their consciences, some of them are easily prevailed with by Satan, rather to murder themselves than to live longer in the hatred of God, the spirit of blasphemy and continual horror of conscience.

This is the pestilent effect of legal doctrine upon a carnal heart, that does but rouse up and terribly enrage the sleeping lion, our sinful corruption, instead of killing it – as is too evident by the sad experience of many that have endeavoured with all their might to practice it, and by the Scripture, that shows a sufficient cause why it cannot be otherwise. Therefore, the doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience, that was invented against Antinomianism, may well be ranked among the worst Antinomian errors. For my part, I hate it with perfect hatred, and account it mine enemy, as I have found it to be. And I have found by some good experience the truth of the lesson taught by the apostle, that the way to be freed from the mastery and dominion of sin is not to be under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14).

6. The way of salvation by works was blasted by the curse denounced against the first Adam's sin, so that now it cannot work life in us, or holiness, but only death, for the law, which requires both sincere and perfect obedience to God in all things, was made known to Adam at his first creation, as the means of continuing the happy life that was then bestowed on him, and it would have been effectual for this end, if he had not transgressed in eating the forbidden fruit. But, when he had once brought himself and his posterity under the terrible sentence, 'You shall surely die' (Gen. 2:17), all that knowledge of God or His law that before wrought continuance of life was turned by that cursing sentence the contrary way, to work for his death, even for the death of the soul in sin, as well as for the death of his body; and therefore it quickly moved him to hide himself from God as an enemy. It was as if God should say, 'All the light and knowledge that you have shall not be able to continue your life, or restore it; but it shall rather tend to your death.' Therefore, while we continue in our natural state, under the first Adam's guilt and curse, the knowledge of the law, yea, and all such knowledge of God and His attributes as natural man may attain to, must needs be in like manner accursed to us. And seeing man did not use his natural knowledge and wisdom aright, God is resolved to revenge the abuse of it by giving us salvation in a way contrary to it that seems foolishness to the natural man, and wholly to abolish the way of living by any of our works, or by any wisdom or knowledge that the natural man can attain unto. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Has not God made foolish the wisdom of

this world? For, after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe' (1. Cor. 1:19-21).

4. Hence we may conclude that the end which God aimed at in giving the law to Moses was not that any should ever attain to holiness or salvation by the condition of perfect or sincere obedience to it, though, if there had been any such way of salvation at that time, it must have consisted in the performance of that law, which was then given to the church to be a rule of life, as well as a covenant. There was another covenant made before that time with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a covenant of grace, promising all blessings freely through Christ, the promised seed, by which only they were to be saved. And the covenant of the law was added that they might see their sinfulness and subjection to death and wrath, and the impossibility of attaining to life or holiness by their works, and be forced to trust on the free promise only for all their salvation, and that sin might be restrained by the spirit of bondage until the coming of that promised seed Jesus Christ, and the more plentiful pouring out of the sanctifying Spirit, by Him. This the apostle Paul shows largely (Gal. 3:15-24; Rom. 5:20, 21; 10:3, 4). None of the Israelites under the Old Testament were ever saved by the Sinai covenant; neither did any of them ever attain to holiness by the terms of it. Some of them did indeed perform the commandments of it sincerely, though imperfectly, but those were first justified, and made partakers of life and holiness, by virtue of that better covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which was the same in substance with the new covenant or testament established by the blood of Christ. Had it not been for that better covenant, the Sinai covenant would have proved to them an occasion of no happiness, but only of sin, despair and destruction. Of itself it was only a killing letter, the ministration of death and condemnation, and therefore it is now abolished (2 Cor. 3:6, 8, 9, 11).

We have cause to praise God for delivering His church, by the blood of Christ, from this yoke of bondage; and we have cause to abhor the device of those that would lay upon us a more grievous and terrible yoke, by turning our very new covenant into a covenant of sincere works, and leaving us no such better covenant, as the Israelites had under their yoke, to relieve us in our extremity.

CHAPTER SEVEN

We are not to imagine that our hearts and lives must be changed from sin to holiness in any measure, before we may safely venture to trust on Christ for the sure enjoyment of Himself and His salvation.

We are naturally so prone to ground our salvation on our own works that, if we cannot make them procuring conditions and causes of our salvation by Christ, yet we shall endeavour at least to make them necessary preparatives to fit us for receiving Christ and His salvation by faith. And men are easily persuaded that this is not at all contrary to salvation by free grace, because all that is in this way ascribed to our works, or good qualifications, is only, 'That they put us in a fit posture to receive a free gift. If we were to go to a prince for a free gift, good manners and due reverence would teach us to trim ourselves first, and to change our slovenly clothes, as Joseph did when he came out of the dungeon into the presence of Pharaoh. It seems to be an impudent slighting and contemning the justice and holiness of God and Christ, and an insufferable affront and indignity offered to the divine Majesty, when any dare presume to approach His presence in the nasty pickle of his sins, covered all over with putrefying sores, not at all closed, bound up or cleaned; much more when they endeavour to receive the Most Holy One into such an abominable stinking kennel as a sinner's heart is, before it be at all reformed. The parable concerning the man that was to be bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness, for coming to the royal wedding without a wedding garment, seems to be intended as a warning against all such presumption' (Matt. 22:11, 13). Many that behold with terror the abominable filth of their own hearts are kept off from coming immediately to Christ by such imaginations, which Satan strongly maintains and increases in them by his suggestions, so that they can by no means be persuaded out of them, until God teaches them inwardly, by the powerful illumination of His Spirit. They delay the saving act of faith, because they think they are not yet duly prepared and qualified for it. On the same account, many weak believers delay coming to the Lord's Supper for many years together, even as long as they live in this world, and would be as likely to delay their baptism, if they had not been baptized in infancy. Against all such imaginations, I shall propose the following considerations.

1. The error is pernicious to the practice of holiness, and to our whole salvation, in the same manner with that treated of in the foregoing direction, and may be confuted by the same arguments which are there produced. Whether holiness be made a procuring condition of our salvation through Christ, or only a condition necessary to qualify us for the reception of Christ, we are equally brought under those legal terms of doing first the duties required in the law, that so we may live. Therefore, we are equally bereaved of the assistance of those means of holiness, mentioned in the foregoing directions, as union and fellowship with Christ, and the enjoyment of all His sanctifying endowments by faith, which should go before the practice of holiness, that they may enable us for it; and we are equally left to labour in vain for holiness, while we are in our accursed natural state, by which our sinful corruption will rather be exasperated than mortified, so that we shall never be duly prepared for the reception of Christ, as long as we live in the world. Thus, while we endeavour to prepare our way to Christ by holy qualifications, we do rather fill it with stumbling-blocks and deep pits, by which our souls are hindered from ever attaining to the salvation by Christ.

2. Any the least change of our hearts and lives from sin to holiness, before our receiving of Christ and His salvation by faith, is not at all necessary according to the terms of the gospel, nor required in the Word of God. Christ would have the vilest sinners come to Him for salvation immediately, without delaying the time to prepare themselves for Him. When the wicked jailer enquired, 'What he must do to be saved?' Paul directed him forthwith to believe on Christ, with a promise that in so doing he should be saved and, straightway, he and all his were baptized (Acts 16:30, 33). Paul does not tell him that he must reform his heart and life first, though he was in a very nasty pickle at that time, having but a little before fastened Paul and Silas in the stocks, and newly attempted a horrid wilful self-murder. Those three thousand Jews that were converted by Peter's preaching, and added the same day to the church by baptism (Acts 2:41), seemed to have as much need of some considerable time to prepare themselves for receiving Christ as others, because they had but lately polluted themselves with the murder of Christ Himself (Acts 2:23). Christ commands His servants to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and to bring in to His feast the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind; yea, to go out into the highway and to compel them to come

in, without allowing them to tarry until they had cleansed their sores, and shifted off their filthy rags, and swarms of lice. Christ would have us to believe on Him that justifies the ungodly, and therefore He does not require us to be godly before we believe (Rom. 4:5). He came as a Physician for the sick, and does not expect that they should recover their health, in the least degree, before they come to Him (Matt. 9:12). The vilest sinners are fitly prepared and qualified for this design, which is, to show forth the exceeding riches of grace, pardoning our sins, and saving us freely (Eph. 2:5, 7). For this end the law of Moses entered that the offence might abound, that so, where sin abounded, grace might much more abound (Rom. 5:20). He loved us in our most loathsome sinful pollution, so as to die for us, and much more will He love us in it, so as to receive us when we come to Him for the purchased salvation. He has given full satisfaction to the justice of God for sinners, that they might have all righteousness and holiness, and all salvation only by fellowship with Him through faith. Therefore, it is no affront to Christ, or slighting and condemning the justice and holiness of God, to come to Christ while we are polluted sinners; but rather it is an affronting and contemning the saving grace, merit and fullness of Christ, if we endeavour to make ourselves righteous and holy before we receive Christ Himself, and all righteousness and holiness in Him by faith. Christ loathed not to touch a leper and condescend to wash the feet of His disciples, and did not expect that they should be washed and perfumed beforehand, as some great ones of the world are said to do, when they wash the feet of poor men, in imitation of Christ.

3. Those that receive Christ with an unfeigned faith shall never want a wedding garment to adorn them in the sight of God. Faith itself is very precious in the sight of God, and most holy (2 Peter 1:1; Jude 20). God loves it, because it gives the glory of our salvation only to the free grace of God in Christ (Rom. 4:16), and renounces all dependence upon any conditions that we can perform to procure a right to Christ, or to make ourselves acceptable to Him. It contains in it a hearty love to Christ as a Saviour, and a hungering and thirsting appetite for His salvation, and it is the mouth by which the soul feeds hungrily on Him. What wedding garment can sinners bring with them more delightful than this to their bountiful God, whose great design is to manifest the abundant riches of His glorious grace and bounty in this wedding feast? The Father Himself

loves them, because they love Christ, and believe that He came out from God (John 16:27). But yet we see that the excellency of faith lies in this, that it accounts not itself, nor any work of ours, a sufficient ornament to make us acceptable in the sight of God. It will not be our wedding garment itself, but it buys of Christ white raiment, that we may be clothed, and that the shame of our nakedness may not appear (Rev. 3:18). Though it loves and desires the free gift of holiness, yet it abandons all thoughts of practicing holiness immediately, before we come to Christ for a holy nature. It puts on Christ Himself, and in Him all things that pertain to life and godliness. Thus every true believer is clothed with the sun (Rev. 12:1), even with the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus, who is pleased to be Himself both our wedding garment and feast, and all our spiritual and eternal happiness.

For more full satisfaction and consolation of those distressed souls that lie under the terrible apprehensions of their own sinfulness and the wrath of God, and do not dare venture to trust steadfastly on Christ for their salvation, until they can find in themselves some change from sin to holiness, I shall mention particularly several of these things that such would find in themselves, and I shall show that, if some of them be not partly comprehended in faith itself, they are fruits and consequences of faith, and therefore they cannot be rationally expected before we trust on Christ for our salvation.

1. They think it necessary to repent before they believe on Christ for their salvation, because repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation: 'Unless you repent you shall all likewise perish' (Luke 13:3), and Christ places the duty of repentance before faith: 'Repent, and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:15). But we are to know that Christ requires repentance first as the end to be aimed at, and faith in the next place, as the only means of attaining it, and, though the end is first in intention, yet the means are first in practice and execution, though both are absolutely necessary to salvation. For what is repentance, but a hearty turning from sin to God and His service? And what way is there to turn to God, but through Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life, without whom none can come to the Father? (John 14:6.) And what way is there of coming to Christ, but by faith? Therefore, if we would turn to God in the right way, we must first come to Christ by faith, and faith must go before repentance, as the great instrument afforded us by

the grace of God for the effectual performance of it. Repentance is indeed a duty which sinners owe naturally to God, but the great question is 'How shall sinners be able to perform it?' This question is resolved only by the gospel of Christ: 'Repent and believe'. The way to repent is to begin with believing. Therefore the great doctrine of John, in his baptism of repentance, was that they should believe on Him that should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus (Acts 19:4).

2. Regeneration also is necessary to salvation (John 3:3) and, therefore, many would find it wrought in themselves before they trust on Christ for their salvation. But consider what regeneration is. It is a new begetting or creating us in Christ (1 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 2:10), in whom we are partakers of a divine nature far different from that which we received from the first Adam. Now, faith is the uniting grace by which Christ dwells in us, and we in Him, as has been shown, and therefore it is the first grace wrought in our regeneration, and the means of all the rest: when you truly believe, you are regenerated, and not till then. Those that receive Christ by believing, and those only, are the sons of God, which are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12, 13).

3. They account it necessary to receive Christ as their Lord and Lawgiver, by a sincere resignation of themselves to His government any a resolution to obey His law, before they receive Him as their Saviour. This is one principal lesson of the new divinity, and such a receiving Christ as Lord is made to be the great act of saving faith, without which such faith as I have described, by which we trust on Christ for salvation, is reckoned no better than gross presumption. They teach that Christ will not bestow His salvation on those that do not first yield their subjection to His kingly authority; but He calls them His enemies, because they would not that He should reign over them, and requires that they be brought and slain before Him (Luke 19:27). And I own it as a certain truth that Christ will save none but those that are brought to resign themselves sincerely to the obedience of His royal authority and laws.

But yet we must observe that they are not brought to this holy resignation, or to any sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, before they receive His salvation, but rather by receiving it. Men that were never thoroughly sensible of their natural death in sin easily bring themselves to resolve universal obedience to God when they are on their deathbeds, or in any

imminent danger, or when they would prepare themselves for the Lord's Supper, that so they may make their peace with God, and trust securely on Christ for His salvation. But all resolutions of that kind are vain and hypocritical, sooner broken than made. Those that know the plague of their own hearts do find that their mind is enmity unto the law of God and Christ, and cannot be subject unto it (Rom. 8:7), and that they can as soon remove a mountain as give up themselves sincerely to obedience before they trust on Christ for His salvation, and for the gift of a new heart, by which they may be enabled both to will and to do anything that is acceptable to God. We should have been sufficiently obliged to all obedient purposes, resolutions and resignations, if Christ had never come into the world to save us, but He knew that we could perform nothing holily, except He made us first partakers of salvation, and that we shall never obey Him as a Lawgiver, until we receive Him as a Saviour. He is a saving Lord; trust on Him first to save you from the guilt and power of sin, and dominion of Satan, and to give you a new spiritual disposition; then, and not till then, the love of Christ will constrain you to resign yourself heartily to live to Him that died for you (2 Cor. 5:14), and you will be able to say, with an unfeigned resolution, 'O Lord, truly I am Your servant, I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid; You have loosed my bands' (Ps. 116:16).

5. It seems to them evident that some good works are necessary, before we can trust on Christ safely for the forgiveness of sins, because our Saviour teaches us that, if we do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses, and directs us to pray, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors' (Matt. 6:12, 15). Restitution was also to be made of things wrongfully got from others, before the sacramental atonement was made by the trespass-offering (Lev. 6:5, 7). I answer, this is sufficient to prove that forgiving others and restitution according to our ability, or at least a sincere desire and purpose so to do, are very closely joined with the forgiveness of our sins, and are very necessary to fit us for prayer, and for sacramental applications of pardoning grace to ourselves.

A lively faith cannot be without these fruits and, therefore, we cannot pray, or partake of sacraments, in faith, without them; but yet, if we strive to do either of these before we trust on Christ for our pardon and salvation, we shall do them slavishly and hypocritically, not in a holy acceptable

manner. Our forgiving others will not be accompanied with any hearty love to them as to ourselves, for the sake of God, and our restitution will be but a forced act, like Pharaoh's letting the children of Israel go, or like Judas's restoring the thirty pieces of silver, being compelled to it by terror of spirit; and when the terror that forced us is removed, we shall be as ready to recall our forgiveness, and to wrong others again, as Pharaoh was to bring the Israelites again into bondage after he had let them go (Exod. 14:5). If you would forgive others heartily, so as to love them again, you must first, by faith in Christ, apprehend the love and mercy of God towards yourselves, and then you will be able, according to the apostle's instructions, to be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you (Eph. 4:32). The readiness of Zaccheus to make restitution followed upon a discovery of Christ's love to him, and his joyful receiving Christ into his house was fruit by which he evidenced the truth of that faith that was already wrought in his heart.

6. I shall reckon up together several other qualifications that distressed souls would find in themselves, that they may be duly prepared to trust on Christ for their salvation, and when they have laboured anxiously a long time, and cannot get them, at last they lie down in sorrowful despondence, not daring to apply the consolations of the grace of God in Christ to their wounded consciences. Let perplexed souls mark the particulars, and observe whether the condition of their own souls be reached in any of them. O you afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, what good qualifications are they that you would have, that you may be encouraged to lay hold on Christ for salvation?

It is likely you will answer, in the bitterness of your soul, 'O let me have first some love to God and godliness in my heart, and freedom from my hateful heart-risings against Him and His service! Let me have some good thoughts of God, His justice, mercy, holiness, that I may be able to justify Him though He damn me, and that I may not be filled with murmuring and hellish blasphemies in my mind against Him. Let the raging of my lust be abated, and the stinking kennel of my wicked heart a little cleansed. Let me have some holy reverential fear of God, and not only a panic tormenting horror. I would be more affected with the wrath of God, and not be of a slighting heedless spirit. I would be more humbled for sin, loathe it, and be ashamed of, and be sorry for it with a godly sorrow, not

merely because of the punishment, but because it grieves and vexes the Holy Spirit of God. I would be able to make a willing and ingenuous confession of sin, and to pour out my soul to the Lord in lively affectionate prayer for forgiveness, and to praise and glorify Him heartily, and not be like a lifeless stone in the duty of prayer, as I am.'

Are these the things you desire, O poor distressed soul? The best reply I can make for your speedy comfort is to inform you that the things are good, but your desires are not well timed. It is unreasonable for you to expect these holy qualifications while you are in your natural state, under the guilt of sin and the apprehension of the wrath of God, before you have received the atonement and the new spiritual life that is by Christ, through faith in His name. You but exasperate your corruption and harden your heart and make your wounds stink the more because of your foolishness. Such good qualifications are included in the nature of faith, and for the most part they follow after it, so that they cannot possibly be obtained before you trust on Christ for your salvation, as I shall show concerning them particularly in their order.

A love to the salvation of God, and to the free gift of holiness, is included in the nature of faith, so that it cannot be hearty without it. Act faith first, and the apprehension of God's love to your soul will sweetly allure and constrain you to love God and His service universally: 'We love Him because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19). We cannot be beforehand with God in love, and we must perceive His love, to make us love Him, for, if we look on Him as a God contrary to us, that hates us and will damn us, our own innate self-love will breed hatred and heart-risings against Him, in spite of our hearts. That love, which is the end of the law, must flow from faith unfeigned (1 Tim. 1:5). And, if hatred works in you more than love, how can you expect good thoughts of God, or any other than blaspheming or at least murmuring thoughts of Him, in this condition? Ill-will never speaks or thinks well. The first right holy thoughts you can have of God are thoughts of His grace and mercy to your soul in Christ, which are included in the grace of faith. Get these thoughts first by believing in Christ, and they will breed in you love to God, and all good thoughts of Him, and free you from blasphemous and murmuring thoughts by degrees, for love thins no evil (1 Cor. 13:5).

Then will you be able to account God just and merciful, if He had damned you, and extended His grace to others, and you will be able to think well of His holiness, and of His decrees, which many cannot endure to hear of.

The way to get rid of your raging lusts is by faith, that purifies the heart and works by love (Acts 15:9; Gal. 5:6). The soul must be brought to take pleasure in God and Christ by faith, or else it will lust after fleshly and worldly pleasures. And the more you strive against lusts without faith, the more they are stirred up, though you prevail so far as to restrain the fulfilling of them. Beg a holy fear of God, with fear of coming short of the promised rest through unbelief (Heb. 4:1). Such a fear is an ingredient of faith, and it will breed in us a reverential, yea, a childlike fear of God and His goodness (Heb. 12:28; Hos. 3:5). We must have grace by which we may serve God with reverence. It is in the margin, 'We must have, or hold fast grace.' And there is no other way to hold fast grace but by faith, and this will quickly calm all panic and tormenting horror.

And if you would be free from carelessness and slighting the wrath of God, your way is first, by believing, to avoid despairing, for people grow careless by despairing and, for their own quiet, they will endeavour to slight evils which they have no hope to prevent, according to the proverb, 'Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die' (1 Cor. 15:32). True humiliation for sin is either a part or fruit of faith, for, on our believing, we shall remember our own evil ways and doings, that were not good, and shall loathe ourselves in our own sight, for all our abominations (Ezek. 36:31). We shall also then willingly renounce our own righteousness, and account it but dung, that we may win Christ by faith (Phil. 3:7, 8). But beggars will make the most of all their nasty rags till they are furnished with better clothes, and cripples will not cast away their crutches, until they have a better support to lean on. Godly sorrow for sin is wrought in us by believing the pardoning grace of God, as it is found by experience, that a pardon from a prince will sometimes sooner draw tears from a stubborn malefactor, than the fear of a halter will. Thus the sinful woman was brought to wash Christ's feet with her tears (Luke 7:37, 38). We are not like to be sorry for grieving God with our sins, while we look on Him as an enemy that will ease Himself well enough of His burden, and right Himself on us, by our everlasting destruction.

The belief of God's pardoning and accepting grace is a necessary means to bring us to an ingenuous confession of sins. The people freely confessed their sins, when they were baptized of John in Jordan, for the remission of sins (Mark 1: 4, 5). The confession of despairers is forced, like the extorted confessions and cryings out of malefactors upon the rack. A pardon sooner opens the mouth to an ingenuous confession than, 'Confess and be hanged', or, 'Confess and be damned'. Therefore, if you would freely confess your sins, believe first that God is faithful and just to forgive your sins through Christ (1 John 1:9).

And if you would pray to God, or praise Him, with lively affections, you must first believe that God will hear you, and give you what is best for you for Christ's sake (John 16: 23, 24), otherwise your praying will be only from the teeth outward, for how shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? (Rom. 10:14.) You must come first to Christ, the altar, by faith, that by Him you may offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually (Heb. 13:10, 15).

Finally to pass from particulars, to the general assertion laid down in the direction, if you ask, 'What shall we do that we may work the works of God, or get any saving qualifications?' I must direct you first to faith, as the work of works, and the great saving preparatory to all good qualifications, by answering in our Saviour's words: 'This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent' (John 6:28, 29).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Be sure to seek for holiness of heart and life only in its due order, where God has placed it, after union with Christ, justification and the gift of the Holy Ghost and, in that order, seek it earnestly by faith as a very necessary part of your salvation.

I hope the reader will observe warily in all these directions, that the holiness aimed at as the great end in the whole discourse does not confide in the grace or act of faith required peculiarly by the gospel, which, though it be a saving gift of Christ, yet is here considered rather as a means precedent to the reception of Christ and all His salvation, than a part of His salvation received. But the holiness aimed at consists in conformity to the whole moral law, to which we are naturally obliged, if there had never been any gospel, or any such duty as believing in Christ for salvation.

Now, in this direction, three things are contained that are very necessary to guide us to the attainment of this great end, and therefore worthy of our serious consideration.

Firstly, it is a matter of high concern, to be acquainted with the due place and order in which God has settled this holy practice in the mystery of our salvation, and a great point of Christian wisdom to seek it only in that order. We know that God is the God of order, and that His infinite wisdom has appeared in appointing the order of His creatures, which we are forced to observe for attainment of our ends in worldly things; so also in spiritual things God has made an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure (2 Sam. 23:5). The benefits of it have an orderly dependence each upon the other, as links of the same golden chain, though several of them, and a title to them all, are given to us at one and the same time. And I think enough has been said already to show in what order God brings us to the practice of the moral law. He makes us first to be in Christ by faith, as branches in the vine, that we may bring forth much fruit (John 15:4, 5). He first purges our consciences from dead works by justification, that we may serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). He makes us first to live in the Spirit, and then to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). This is the order prescribed in the gospel, which is the power of God to salvation, though the law prescribes a quite contrary method, that we should first perform its commands, that so we may be justified and live, and in this way it proves a

killing letter to us. Now, mark well the great advantages you have for the attainment of holiness by seeking it in a right gospel order. You will have the advantage of the love God manifested towards you, in forgiving your sins, receiving you into favour, and giving you the spirit of adoption, and the hope of His glory freely through Christ, to persuade and constrain you by sweet allurements to love God again, who has so dearly loved you, and to love others for His sake, and to give up yourselves to the obedience of all His commands out of hearty love to Him. You will also enjoy the help of the Spirit of God to incline you powerfully to obedience, and to strengthen you for the performance of it against all your corruptions and the temptations of Satan, so that you will have both wind and tide to forward your voyage in the practice of holiness. Contrariwise, if you rush upon the immediate performance of the law, without taking Christ's righteousness and His Spirit in the way to it, you will find both wind and tide against you: your guilty consciences and corrupt dead natures will certainly defeat and frustrate all your enterprises and attempts to love God and serve Him in love, and you will but stir up sinful lusts instead of stirring up yourselves to true obedience, or, at best, you will but attain to some slavish and hypocritical performances. Oh, that people would be persuaded to consider the due place of holiness in the mystery of salvation, and to seek it only there where they have all the advantages of gospel grace to find it! Many miscarry in their zealous enterprises for godliness and, after they have spent much labour in vain, God makes a breach on them, even to their everlasting destruction, as He did on Uzza, to a temporal destruction, because they did not seek Him after the due order (1 Chron. 13:10).

Secondly, we are to look upon holiness as a very necessary part of that salvation that is received by faith in Christ. Some are so drenched in a covenant of works that they accuse us for making good works needless to salvation, if we will not acknowledge them to be necessary, either as conditions to procure an interest in Christ, or as preparatives to fit us for the receiving Him by faith. And others, when they are taught by the Scriptures, that we are saved by faith, through faith, without works, do begin to disregard all obedience to the law, as not at all necessary to salvation, and account themselves obliged to it only in point of gratitude; if it be wholly neglected, they do not doubt but free grace will save them harmless. Yea, some are given up to strong Antinomian delusions, that

they account it a part of the liberty from the bondage of the law, purchased by the blood of Christ, to make no conscience of breaking the law in their conversation.

One cause of these errors, that are so contrary one to the other, is that many are prone to imagine nothing else to be meant by salvation, but to be delivered from hell, and to enjoy heavenly happiness and glory; thus they conclude that, if good works are a means of glorification, and precedent to it, they must also be a precedent means of our whole salvation; and that, if they be not a necessary means of our whole salvation, they are not at all necessary to glorification. But, though salvation is often taken in Scripture, by way of eminency, for its perfection in the state of heavenly glory, yet, according to its full and proper signification, we are to understand by it all that freedom from the evil of our natural corrupt state, and all those holy and happy enjoyments that we receive from Christ our Saviour, either in this world by faith, or in the world to come by glorification. Thus justification, the gift of the Spirit to dwell in us, the privileges of adoption, are parts of our salvation which we partake of in this life. Thus also, the conformity of our hearts to the law of God, and the fruits of righteousness with which we are filled by Jesus Christ in this life, are a necessary part of our salvation.

God saves us from our sinful uncleanness here by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, as well as from hell hereafter (Ezek. 36:29; Titus 3:5).

Christ was called JESUS, that is, a Saviour, because He saved His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Therefore it is a part of our salvation to deliver us from our sins, which is begun in this life by justification and sanctification, and perfected by glorification in the life to come. Can we rationally doubt whether it be any proper part of our salvation by Christ to be quickened, to live to God, when we were by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and to have the image of God in holiness and righteousness restored to us, which we lost by the Fall; and to be freed from a vile dishonourable slavery to Satan and our own lusts, and made the servants of God, and to be honoured so highly as to walk by the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? And what is all this but holiness in heart and life?

We then conclude that holiness in this life is absolutely necessary to salvation, not only as a means to the end, but by a nobler kind of necessity, as part of the end itself. Though we are not saved by good works, as procuring causes, yet we are saved to good works, as fruits and effects of saving grace, which God has prepared that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10). It is, indeed, one part of our salvation to be delivered from the bondage of the covenant of works; but the end of this is, not that we may have liberty to sin (which is the worst of slavery) but that we may fulfil the royal law of liberty, and that we may serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (Gal. 5:13; Rom. 7: 6). Yea, holiness in this life is such a part of our salvation as is a necessary means to make us suitable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light and glory; without holiness we can never see God (Heb. 12:14), and are as unfit for the glorious presence as swine for the presence chamber of an earthly prince. I confess, some may be converted when they are so near the point of death that they may have little time to practice holiness in this world, but the grace of the Spirit is active like fire (Matt. 3:11), and, as soon as it is given, it will immediately produce good inward working of love to God and Christ and His people. This will be sufficient to manifest the righteous judgement of God in saving them at the great day, when He shall judge every man according to His work; though some possibly may not have so much time to discover their inward grace in any outward works, as the thief upon the cross (Luke 23:40, 43).

The third and last thing to be noted in this direction is that holiness of heart and life is to be sought for earnestly by faith, as a very necessary part of our salvation. Great multitudes of ignorant people that live under the gospel harden their hearts in sin, and ruin their souls for ever, by trusting on Christ for such an imaginary salvation as does not consist at all in holiness, but only in forgiveness of sin and deliverance from everlasting torments. They would be free from the punishment due to sin, but they love their lusts so well that they hate holiness, and would not be saved from the service of sin. The way to oppose this pernicious delusion is not to deny, as some do, that trusting on Christ for salvation is a saving act of faith, but rather to show that none do or can trust on Christ for true salvation, except they trust on Him for holiness; neither do they heartily desire true salvation, if they do not desire to be made holy and righteous in their hearts and lives. If ever God and Christ give you salvation, holiness

will be one part of it; if Christ does not wash you from the filth of your sins, you have no part with Him (John 13:8).

What a strange kind of salvation do they desire, that do not care for holiness? They would be saved, and yet be altogether dead in sin, aliens from the life of God, bereft of the image of God, deformed by the image of Satan, his slaves and vassals to their own filthy lusts, utterly unsuitable for the enjoyment of God in glory. Such a salvation as that was never purchased by the blood of Christ, and those that seek it abuse the grace of God in Christ and turn it into lasciviousness. They would be saved by Christ, and yet out of Christ, in a fleshly state; whereas God frees none from condemnation, but those that are in Christ, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; or else they would divide Christ, and take a part of His salvation, and leave out the rest, but Christ is not divided (1 Cor. 1:13). They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love in time to come, but that they may practice their enmity against Him without any fear of punishment.

But, let them not be deceived, God is not mocked. They do not understand what true salvation is, neither were they ever yet thoroughly sensible of their lost estate, and of the great evil of sin; and that which they trust on Christ for is but an imagination of their own rags, and therefore their trusting is gross presumption. True gospel faith makes us come to Christ with a thirsty appetite, that we may drink of living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (John 7: 37, 38), and cry out earnestly to save us, not only from hell, but from sin, saying, 'Teach me to do Your will; Your Spirit is good' (Ps. 143:10), 'Turn me, and I shall be turned' (Jer. 31:18); 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right Spirit within me' (Ps. 51:10). This is the way by which the doctrine of salvation by grace necessitates us to holiness of life, by constraining us to seek for it by faith in Christ as a substantial part of that salvation which is freely given us through Christ.

CHAPTER NINE

We must first receive the comforts of the gospel, that we may be able to sincerely perform the duties of the law.

Since man fell from obedience to God, which he was enabled and engaged to perform by the comforts of his first happy state in Paradise, God might have justly refused ever to give man again any comforts beforehand, to encourage him to his duty, that the way to holiness being hedged up against him with the thorns and briars of fear, grief and despair, he might never be able to escape the sentence of death which was denounced against his first transgression. This justice of God is manifest in the method of the legal covenant, in which God promises us no life, comfort or happiness, until we have thoroughly performed His law, and may be seen in the Mount Sinai promulgation, explicated throughout Leviticus 26. And we are by nature so strongly addicted to this legal method of salvation that it is a hard matter to dissuade those that live under the light of the gospel from placing the duties of the law before the comforts of the gospel. If they cannot make salvation itself, yet they will be sure to make all the comforts of it to depend on their own works. They think it as unreasonable to expect comfort before duty, as wages before work, or the fruits of the earth before the husbandman's labour (2 Tim. 2:6). They account the only effectual way to secure the obedience we owe to the law of God is to ground all our comforts on the performance of it; and that the contrary doctrine strengthens the hands of the wicked, by prophesying peace to them, where there is no peace (Ezek. 13:16, 22), and opens the floodgates to all licentiousness. Therefore, some preachers will advise men not to be solicitous and hasty of getting comfort, but that they should rather exercise themselves diligently to the performance of their duty; and they tell them that, in so doing, their condition will be safe and happy at last, though they never enjoy any comfort of their salvation, as long as they live in this world.

That you may rightly understand what I have asserted in the direction against such vulgar errors, take notice that I do not make the only place of gospel comfort to be before the duties of the law. I acknowledge that God comforts His people on every side (Ps. 71:21), both before and also after the performance of their duty, and that the greatest consolations do follow after duty; yet some comforts God gives to His people beforehand, as

advance money, to furnish them for His service, though most of the pay comes in afterward. Neither do I hereby speak any peace to those that continue in their sinful natural state, for the comforts I speak of cannot be received without rejecting those false confidences by which natural men harden themselves in sin, nor without that effectual working of the Spirit by which we are made good trees, that we may bring forth good fruit. Though they are given before the sincere practice of the law, yet they are not given to us in our corrupt sinful nature, but in and with the new holy nature, which immediately produces a holy practice, though it must necessarily go before, as the cause before the effect; and they are no other than comforts of those spiritual benefits by which our new state and nature is produced, and of which it is constituted and made up – as the comforts of redemption, justification, adoption, the gift of the Spirit and the like. Neither do I intend here any transport or ravishment of joy and delight, but only such manner of comfort as rationally strengthens, in some measure, against the oppression of fear, grief and despair, which we are liable to by reason of our natural sinfulness and misery.

This explanation of the sense of my assertion is sufficient to answer some common objections against it. And I hope the truth of it will be fully evidenced by the following arguments.

1. This truth is a clear consequence from those principles of holiness that have been already confirmed. I have shown that we must have a good persuasion of our reconciliation with God, and of our happiness in heaven, and of our sufficient strength both to will and to do that which is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, that we may be rationally inclined and bent to the practice of holiness. These endowments must be had by receiving Christ Himself, with His Spirit, and all His fullness, by trusting on Him for all His salvation, as He is freely promised to us in the gospel; and that by His faith we do as really receive Christ, as our food by eating and drinking. Now, let right reason judge: can we be persuaded of the love of God, of our everlasting happiness and our strength to serve God, and yet be without any comforts? Can the glad tidings of the gospel of peace be believed, and Christ and His Spirit actually received into the heart, without any relief to the soul from oppressing fear, grief, despair? Can the salvation of Christ be comfortless, or the bread and water of life without any sweet relish to those that feed on Him with hungering and thirsting

appetites? God will not give such benefits as these to those that do not desire and esteem them above the world. And certainly the very receiving of them will be comfortable to such, except they receive them blindfold, which they cannot do, when the very giving and bestowing them opens the eyes of a sinner and turns him from darkness to light, by which, at least in some measure, he sees and perceives spiritually the things that concern his present and future peace, and reaps some encouraging and strengthening comfort by it to the practice of holiness.

2. Peace, joy, hope are recommended to us in Scripture as the spring of other holy duties; and fear and oppressing grief forbidden as hindrances to true religion: 'The peace of God keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4:7). 'Do not be sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength' (Neh. 8:10). 'Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as He is pure' (1 John 3:3).

'Fear has torment: he that fears is not made perfect in love' (1 John 4:18). This is the reason why the apostle doubles the exhortation, to rejoice in the Lord always, as a duty of exceeding weight and necessity (Phil. 4:4). What are such duties, but comfort itself? And can we think that those duties are necessary to our continuance in a holy practice, and yet not to the beginning of it, where the work is most difficult and encouragement most needful? Therefore we must make haste in the first place to get a comfortable frame of spirit, if we would make haste, and not delay, to keep God's holy commandments.

3. The usual method of gospel doctrine, as it is delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures, is first, to comfort our hearts, and in this way to establish us in every good word and work (2 Thess. 2:17). And it appears how clearly this method is adjusted in several Epistles written by the apostles, in which they first acquaint the churches with the rich grace of God towards them in Christ, and the spiritual blessings which they are made partakers of for their strong consolation, and they exhort them to a holy conversation, answerable to such privileges. And it is not only the method of whole Epistles, but of many particular exhortations to duty, in which the comfortable benefits of the grace of God in Christ are made use of as arguments and motives to stir up the saints to a holy practice; which comfortable benefits must first be believed, and the comfort of them

applied to our own souls, or else they will not be forcible to engage us to the practice for which they are intended.

To give you a few instances, out of a multitude that might be alleged, we are exhorted to practice holy duties because we are dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:11); and because sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14); because we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, and God will quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit dwelling in us (Rom. 8:9, 11); because our bodies are the members of Christ and the temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:15, 19); because God has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21); and has promised that He will dwell in us, and walk in us, and be to us a Father, and we shall be to Him sons and daughters (2 Cor. 6:18; 7:1); because God has forgiven us for Christ's sake, and accounts us His dear children; and Christ has loved us, and given Himself for us; and we, that were sometimes darkness, are now light in the Lord (Eph. 4:32; 5:1, 2, 8); because we are risen with Christ and, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:1, 4); because God has said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you' (Heb. 13:5); because of the many promises made to us (2 Cor. 7:1). Search the Scriptures, and you may with delight see that this is the vein that runs through gospel exhortations, and you may find the like vein of comfort running through the prophetic exhortations in the Old Testament.

Some may object that the apostles used this method, in their writings to saints, who had practiced holiness already, that so they might continue and increase therein. But to that I may easily reply, 'If it be a method needful for grown saints, much more for beginners, that find the work of obedience most difficult and have most need of strong consolation.' And I hope to show how we may be able to lay hold of these consolations by faith, in the very first beginning of a holy life. Besides, the gospel proposes peace and comfort freely to those that are not yet brought to holiness that, if they have hearts to receive it, they may be converted from sin to righteousness. When the apostles entered into a house they were first to say, 'Peace be to this house' (Luke 10:5). At their very first preaching to sinners, they acquainted them with the glad tidings of salvation by Christ, for everyone that would receive it as a free gift by faith (Acts 3:26; 13:26, 32, 38; 16:

30, 31). The assured them, if they would but trust heartily on Christ for all His salvation, they should have it, although they were at present the chief of sinners – which was comfort sufficient for all that duly esteem spiritual comfort, hungering and thirsting after it. And this is a method agreeable to the design of the gospel, which is, to advance the riches of the grace of God in all our spiritual enjoyments. God will give us His consolations before our good works, as well as after them, that we may know that He gives us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, and not through the procurement of our works (2 Thess. 2:16).

7. The nature of the duties of the law requires a comfortable state of the soul for the performance of them. I have before proved sufficiently that they require a persuasion of our reconciliation with God, and of our future happiness, and strength by which we may be able to walk in holy obedience. Joshua must be strong and very courageous, that he might observe to do according to the law that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded Him (Josh. 1:7). I shall instance briefly in the comforts without which several great duties cannot be sincerely performed. Can we love God, and delight in Him above all, while we look on Him as our everlasting enemy, and apprehend no love and mercy in Him towards us that may render Him a suitable good for us, and lovely in our eyes?

What doleful melody will the heart make in the duty of praise, if we account that all those perfections, for which we praise Him, will rather aggravate our misery than make us happy? What a heartless work will it be to pray to Him, and to offer up ourselves to His service, if we have no comfortable hope that He will accept us? Is it possible for us to free ourselves from carking cares by casting our care upon the Lord, if we do not apprehend He cares for us? Can we be patient in affliction, with cheerfulness, and under persecutions, except we have peace with God and rejoice in hope of the glory of God? (Rom. 5:1-3.) What reason can persuade us to submit willingly, according to our duty, to the stroke of present death, if God is pleased to lay it upon us, when we have no comforts to relieve us against the horrible fear of intolerable torments in hell for ever?

If we should be called to suffer martyrdom for the Protestant religion, as our ancestors in this nation have done, we should find it necessary to abandon the late upstart notions that have been bred in a time of ease, and

to embrace the comfortable doctrine of former Protestants, which, through the grace of God, made so many courageous and joyful martyrs.

5. The state of those that are to be brought from sin to godliness requires necessarily that, after they be convinced of the vanity of their former false confidences, and of their deadness in original sin and subjection to the wrath of God, they should have a supply of new gospel comforts afforded, to encourage their fainting souls to holy practices. How little do many physicians of souls consider the condition of their unconverted patients, that are altogether without spiritual life and strength, and are or must be convinced of it? He that prescribes bodily exercise to a man lying bedridden under a dead palsy, before any effectual means is used to strengthen him, deserves the name of a merciless insulting tormentor rather than of a wise and tender-hearted physician. How unreasonable is it to prescribe the immediate practice of love to God, and universal obedience to Him out of love, as the means of cure for those that see nothing but wrath and enmity in God towards them in their present condition? What is it but to require a man to work without strength, promising him that he shall have strength when his work is done? For comfort or joy is so called because it strengthens (Neh. 8:10).

True it is that the law, which is the ministration of condemnation, obliges them to obedience; but our merciful god expects no sincere performance of His law from such impotent miserable wretches, in order to their salvation by Christ, till He has first delivered them, in some measure, from those discomforts, slavish fears and despondencies that hold them captive under the law of sin and death. We may require a strong healthy person first to work, and then to expect meat, drink and wages; but a fainting, famished person must first have food, or a reviving cordial, to strengthen his heart before he can work.

8. Both Scripture and experience show that this is the method by which God brings His people from sin to holiness. Though some of them are brought under terrors for a while, that sin may be the more embittered, and the salvation of Christ rendered more precious and acceptable to them, yet such are again delivered from their terrors by the comforts of God's salvation, that they may be fitted for holiness. And, generally, a holy life begins with comfort and is maintained by it.

God gave to Adam, at his first creation, the comfort of His love and favour and the happiness of Paradise, to encourage him to obedience, and when he had lost these comforts by the Fall, he was no longer able to obey until he was restored by new comfort of the promised seed. Christ, the second Adam, set God always before His face and He knew that, because God was at His right hand, He should not be moved; therefore His heart was glad, and His glory rejoiced (Ps. 16:8, 9). This made Him willing to bear His agony and bloody sweat, and to be obedient to death, even the death of the cross. God drew the Israelites to obedience with the cords of a man, with the bands of love, by taking off the yoke of their jaws and laying meat before them (Hos. 11:4). David tells us, for our instruction, how he was brought to a holy conversation: 'Your loving kindness is before my eyes; and I have walked in Your truth' (Ps. 26:3); 'Lord, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments' (Ps. 119:166).

We have several examples in the New Testament of the joy that sinners had in the first receiving of Christ (Acts 2:41). And when the gospel first came to the Thessalonians, 'they received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost' (1 Thess. 1:4, 5, 6). 'When the Gentiles heard the word of God, they were glad; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed' (Acts 13:48). The apostle Paul was constrained by the love of Christ to give up himself to live to Christ (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

I dare appeal to the experience of any that obey God out of hearty love. Let them examine themselves and consider whether they were brought to give up themselves to serve God in love without comfortable apprehensions of the love of God towards them? I dare say there are no such prodigies in the new birth.

7. What comfortless religion do those make that allow people no comfort beforehand, to strengthen them for holy performances, which are very cross, displeasing and grievous to their natural inclinations, as the plucking out a right eye, cutting off a right hand; but would have them first to do such things with love and delight, under all their present fears, despondencies and corrupt inclinations, and to hope that, by doing the work thoroughly and sincerely, they shall at last attain to a more comfortable state? All true spiritual comfort, as well as salvation, is indeed quite banished out of the world, if it be suspended upon the condition of our good works – which has already appeared to be the condition of the

law, that works no comfort, but wrath (Rom. 4:14, 15). This makes the way of godliness odious to many. They think they shall never enjoy a pleasant hour in this world, if they walk in them, and they had rather comfort themselves with sinful pleasure than have no comfort at all.

Others labour a while in such a comfortless religion, with inward fretting and repining at the bondage of it, and at last grow weary and throw off all religion, because they know none better. They that bind such heavy burdens on men, and grievous to be borne, will plead that they are not to be blamed, because they do but preach the gospel of God and Christ; whereas, indeed, they preach a gospel of man's own forging, contrary to the nature of the true gospel of Christ, which is glad tidings of great joy to all people (Luke 2:10). An uncomfortable gospel cannot proceed from God the Father, who is the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3); nor from Christ, who is the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25); nor from the Spirit, who is the Comforter (John 14:16, 17).

God meets him that rejoices and works righteousness (Isa. 64:5). He will be served with gladness and singing, as He showed by the type of variety of music and great numbers of musicians in the temple, as Christ speaks to us by His gospel, that His joy may abide in us, and that our joy may be full (John 15:11). No sorrow is approved of by God, except godly sorrow, which can never be in us without some comfort of the love of God towards us. They that are offended at the uncomfortableness of a religious life never yet knew the true way of religion; else they would find that the ways of wisdom are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (Prov. 3:17).

CHAPTER TEN

That we may be prepared by the comforts of the gospel to perform sincerely the duties of the law, we must get some assurance of our salvation in that very faith by which Christ Himself is received into our hearts. Therefore, we must endeavour to believe on Christ confidently, persuading and assuring ourselves, in the act of believing, that God freely gives to us an interest in Christ and His salvation, according to His gracious promise.

It is evident that those comforts of the gospel that are necessary to a holy practice cannot be truly received without some assurance of your interest in Christ and His salvation, for some of these comforts consist in a good persuasion of our reconciliation with God, and of our future heavenly happiness, and of strength both to will and to do that which is acceptable to God through Christ, as has been before showed. Thus it will clearly follow that this assurance is very necessary to enable us for the practice of holiness, as those comforts that must go before the duties of the law, in order of nature, as the cause goes before the effect, though not in any distance of time. My present work is to show what this assurance is, that is so necessary unto holiness, and which I have here asserted we must act, in that very faith by which we receive Christ Himself into our hearts, even in justifying saving faith. This doctrine seems strange to many that profess themselves Protestants in late days, whereas it was formerly highly owned by the chief Protestants whom God made use of to restore the purity of the gospel, and to maintain it against the Papists for many years. They commonly taught that 'faith was a persuasion or confidence of our own salvation by Christ; and that we must be sure to apply Christ and His salvation to ourselves in believing'. And this doctrine was one of the great engines by which they prevailed to overthrow the popish superstition, of which doubtfulness of salvation is one of the principal pillars. But many of the successors of those Protestants have deserted them, and left their writings to be shamefully insulted by the Papists. And this innovation has been of longer standing among us than several other parts of our new divinity, and maintained by those that profess to abhor that corrupt doctrine which the Papists have built upon such principles. Modern divines may think they stand on the shoulders of their predecessors, whose labours they enjoy, and that they can see farther than they, as the schoolmen might

have like thoughts of the ancient fathers, but, for all this, they may not be able to see so far, if the eyes of their predecessors were better enlightened by the Spirit of God to understand the mystery of the gospel. And why may we not judge that it is so in the present case? The eyes of men in these late years have been blinded in this point of assurance by many false imaginations. They think because salvation is not promised to us absolutely, but on condition of believing on Christ for it, therefore we must first believe directly on Christ for our salvation and, after that, we must reflect in our minds on our faith and examine it by several marks and signs, especially by the fruit of sincere obedience, and if, upon this examination, we find out certainly that it is true saving faith, then, and not before, we may believe assuredly that we in particular shall be saved. On this account, they say that our salvation is by the direct, and our assurance by the reflex act of faith, and that many have true faith and shall be saved that never have any assurance of their salvation as long as they live in this world. They find, by Scripture and experience, that many precious saints of God are frequently troubled with doubtings whether they shall be saved, and whether their faith and obedience are sincere, so that they cannot see assurance in themselves; therefore they conclude that assurance must not be accounted absolutely necessary to justifying faith and salvation, lest we should make the hearts of doubting saints sad and drive them to despair. They account that former Protestants were guilty of a manifest absurdity in making 'assurance to be of the nature and definition of saving faith', because all that hear the gospel are bound to saving faith, and yet they are not bound absolutely to believe that they themselves shall be saved; for then many of them would be bound to believe that which is not declared in the gospel concerning them in particular – yea, that which is a plain lie, because the gospel shows that many of those that are called are not chosen to salvation, but perish for ever (Matt. 20:16). No wonder if the appearance of so great an absurdity move many to imagine that 'saving faith is a trusting or resting on Christ as the only sufficient means of salvation, without any assurance, or that it is a desiring and venturing to trust or rely on Him, in a mere state of suspense and uncertainty concerning our salvation, or with a probable opinion or conjectural hope of it at best'.

Another objection against this doctrine of assurance is that 'it destroys self-examination, bringing forth the evil fruits of pride and arrogancy, as if they

knew their places in heaven already, before the day of judgement, causes carelessness of duty, carnal security, all manner of licentiousness'. And this makes them commend doubtfulness of our salvation, as necessary to maintain in us humility, religious fears, watchfulness, much searching and trying our spiritual state and ways, diligence in good works and all devotion.

Against all these contrary imaginations, I shall endeavour to maintain this ancient Protestant doctrine of assurance, which I have expressed in the direction. And, first, I shall lay down some observations for the right understanding of it, which will be sufficient to turn the edge of the strongest objections that can be made against it.

1. Observe diligently that the assurance directed to is not a persuasion that we have already received Christ and His salvation, or that we have been already brought into a state of grace, but only that 'God is pleased graciously to give Christ and His salvation to us, and to bring us to a state of grace, though we have been altogether in a state of sin and death until this present time', so that this doctrine does not at all tend to breed presumption in wicked and unregenerate men that their state is good already, but only encourages them to come to Christ confidently for a good state. I acknowledge that we may, yea, many must be taught to doubt whether their present state is good; and that it is humility so to do; and that we must find out the certainty and sincerity of our faith and obedience by self-examination, before we can have as well-grounded assurance that we are in a state of grace and salvation already; and that such an assurance belongs to that which they call the reflex act of faith (if any act of faith can be made of it, it being a spiritual sense of feeling of what is in myself), and is not the essence of that faith by which we are justified and saved; and that many precious saints are without it, and subject to many doubts that are contrary to it; so that they may not know at all that it shall go well with them at the day of judgement; and that it may be sometimes intermitted, if not wholly lost after it is gotten; and that we should strive to walk holily, that we may attain to it, because it is very useful to our growth and increase in faith, and in all holiness. Most Protestants among us, when they speak or write of assurance, mean only that which is by reflection. And I have said enough briefly to show that what I assert is consistent with the doctrine which is commonly received concerning it, and destructive to

none of the good fruits of it, therefore not guilty of those evils that some falsely charge it with. This kind of assurance, which I speak of, does not answer the question: 'Whether I am already in a state of grace and salvation?' There is another great question that the soul must answer that it may get into a state of grace: 'Whether God is graciously pleased now to bestow Christ and His salvation on me, though I have been until now a very wicked creature?' We must be sure to resolve this question comfortably by another kind of assurance in the direct act of faith, in which we are to persuade ourselves (without reflecting on any good qualifications in ourselves) that God is ready graciously to receive us into the arms of His saving mercy in Christ, notwithstanding all our former wickedness, according to that gracious promise: 'I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said to them, You are not My people, there shall they be called the children of the living God' (Rom. 9:25, 26).

2. The assurance directed to is not a persuasion of our salvation, whatever we do, or however we live and walk, but only in a limited way, through mere free grace in Christ, by partaking of holiness as well as forgiveness and by walking in the way of holiness to the enjoyment of the glory of God. We shall not heartily desire or endeavour to assure ourselves of such a salvation as this is, if we be not brought first to see our own sinfulness and misery, and to despair of our own righteousness and strength, and to hunger and thirst for the sanctifying as well as justifying grace of God in Christ, so that we may walk in His ways of holiness to the enjoyment of heavenly glory. The faith by which we receive Christ must have in it, not only a persuasion of happiness, but these and the like good qualifications that will make it a most holy faith. Certainly an assurance thus qualified will not beget any pride in us, but rather humility and self-loathing, except any account it pride to rejoice and glory in Christ, when we have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). It will not destroy religious fear and breed carnal security; but rather it will make us fear going aside from Christ our only refuge and security and walking after the flesh. Noah had cause to enter into the ark and to abide there with assurance of his preservation; yet he might well be afraid to venture out of the ark, because he was persuaded that continuance in the ark was his only safety from perishing in the flood. And how can a persuasion of salvation in a way of

holiness breed slothfulness in duty, carelessness and licentiousness? It rather mightily allures and stirs us up to 'be always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord' (1 Cor. 15:58).

They that are persuaded of the free grace of God towards them in Christ are not, indeed, solicitous about earning their salvation by their own legal works. And Satan is ready to suggest to them that this is a sinful carelessness and tends to licentiousness. But they that will believe this false suggestion of Satan show plainly that they do not yet know what it is to serve God in love, and that they are held in to all their obedience by the bit and bridle of slavish fear, 'as the horse and mule that have no understanding' (Ps. 32:9).

3. Beware of thinking so highly of this assurance as if it were inconsistent with any doubting in the same soul. A great reason why many Protestants have receded from the doctrine of their ancestors in this point is because they think there can be no true assurance of salvation in any that are troubled with doubtings, as they find many be, whom they cannot but own as true believers and precious saints of God. True, indeed, this assurance must be contrary to doubtings in the nature of it and so, if it be perfect, in the highest degree, it would exclude all doubting out of the soul; and it now excludes it in some degree. But is there not flesh, as well as spirit, in the best saints on earth? (Gal. 5:17.) Is there not a law in their members warring against the law of their minds? (Rom. 7:23.) May not one that truly believes say, 'Lord, help my unbelief?' (Mark 9:24.) Can any on earth say they have received any grace in the highest degree, and that they are wholly free from the contrary corruption? Why then should we think that assurance cannot be true, except it is perfect and free the soul from all doubtings? The apostle counts it a great blessing, to the Thessalonians, that they had much assurance; intimating that some true assurance might be in a less degree (1 Thess. 1:5). Peter had some good assurance of Christ's help when he walked on the water at Christ's command, and yet he had some doubtfulness in him, as his fear showed when he saw the wind boisterous. He had some faith contrary to doubting, though it were but little, as Christ's words to him show: 'O you of little faith, why did you doubt?' (Matt. 14:29-31.) It is strange if the flesh and the devil shall never oppose a true assurance and assault it with doubtings. A believer may be

sometimes so overwhelmed with doubtings that he may not be able to perceive an assurance in himself. He is so far from knowing his place in heaven already (as some scoffingly object) that he will say that he does not know any assurance that he has of being there, and needs diligent self-examination to find it out. Yet, if at that time he can blame his soul for doubting, 'Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him' (Ps. 42:11); if he can condemn his doubtings as sinful, and say with himself, 'This is my infirmity' (Ps. 77:10), these doubtings are of the flesh, and of the devil; if he still endeavour to call God 'Father', and complain to Him that he doubts whether He is his Father, and pray that God will give him the assurance of His fatherly love, which he is not sensible of, and dispel those fears and doubtings; I say, that such a one has some true assurance, though he must strive to grow to a higher degree, for, if he were not persuaded of the truth of the love of God towards him, he could not rationally condemn his fears and doubts concerning it as sinful; neither could he rationally pray to God as his Father, or that God would assure him of that love that he does not think to be true.

Do but grant that it is the nature of saving faith thus to resist and struggle with slavish fears of wrath and doubting of our own salvation, and you grant, in effect, that there is, and must be something of assurance of our salvation in saving faith, by which it resists doubtings, and you are, in effect, of the same judgement with me in the assertion, however strange my expressions seem to you. If this that I have said concerning our imperfection in assurance, as well as in other graces, were well considered, this ancient Protestant doctrine would be freed from much prejudice and gain more esteem among us.

4. In the last place, let it be well observed that the reason why we are to assure ourselves in our faith that 'God freely gives Christ and salvation to us particularly' is not because it is a truth before we believe it, but because it becomes a certain truth when we believe it, and because it will never be true, except we do, in some measure, persuade and assure ourselves that it is so. We have no absolute promise of declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or does give Christ and His salvation to any one of us in particular; neither do we know it to be true already by Scripture, or sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves absolutely of it: yea, we are without

Christ's salvation at present, in a state of sin and misery, under the curse and wrath of God. Only I shall prove that we are bound by the command of God thus to assure ourselves, and the Scripture sufficiently warrants us that we should not deceive ourselves in believing a lie but, according to our faith, so shall it be to us (Matt. 9:29). This is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds; and therefore no wonder if it be found weak and imperfect, and difficult to be obtained, and assaulted with many doubtings. We are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have that they are true, and would remain true, whether we believe them or no, so that we cannot deny our assent, without rebelling against the light of our senses, reason or conscience. But here our assurance is not impressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the thing; but we must work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the Spirit of God, and in this way we bring our own thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ. None but God can justly require of us this kind of assurance, because He only calls those things that are not, as though they were (Rom. 4:17). He only can give existence to things that yet are not, and make a thing to be true, on our believing it, that was not true before. He only can make good that promise: 'What ever things you desire, when you pray; believe that you receive them, and you shall have them' (Mark 11:24). 'Who is he that says, and it comes to pass, when the Lord does not command it!' (Lam. 3:37). Therefore, this faith is due to God only and greatly redounds to His glory. Men will often require a believing something like it, as when one says, 'I will forgive your offence, and be your friend, if I can find that you believe it, and that you take me for a friend.' But their fallible word is not sufficient ground to make us persuade ourselves absolutely that we shall have their promised favour.

The faith of miracles gives us some light in this matter. Christ assured them on whom they were wrought, and who had power given them of working them, that the miracles should be wrought, if they believed without doubting of the event (Mark 11:22, 23). And there is a reason for this resemblance, because the end of working miracles was to confirm the doctrine of the gospel of salvation by faith in Christ's name, as the Scriptures clearly show, and, indeed, the salvation of a sinner is a very great miracle. It is reported that wizards often require those that come to them that they should believe they shall obtain what they desire of them, or at least that they are able to fulfil their desires; whereby the devil, the

master of those wizards, shows himself to be God's ape, and that he would feign have that honour and glory ascribed to himself that is due to God alone.

Having thus explained the nature of that assurance which I have directed to, I shall now produce several arguments to prove that 'there is, and must necessarily be, such an assurance or persuasion of our salvation in saving faith itself'.

1. This assurance of salvation is implied in the description before given of that faith by which we receive Christ and His salvation into our hearts. I described faith to be a grace of the Spirit, by which 'we heartily believe the gospel, and also believe on Christ, as He is revealed and freely promised to us in it, for all His salvation'. And I showed in the explanation that believing on Christ is the same with resting, relying, leaning, staying ourselves on Christ, or God through Christ, for our salvation. It may be some will like the description the better, because faith was there described by terms that are ordinarily used, even by those that deny the necessity of assurance; but these ordinary terms do sufficiently include assurance in the nature of faith, and they cannot stand without it. And this shows that many hold the doctrine of assurance implicitly, and profess it, though they think the contrary. Believing on Christ for salvation, as freely promised to us, must needs include a dependence on Christ with a persuasion that salvation shall be freely given, as it is freely promised to us. Believing with a divine faith, grounded on the infallible truth of the promise, if it did not in some measure exclude a mere suspense and wavering opinion or conjecture, were not worthy to be so called. Some may be so absurd as to say that faith is only a believing that we shall be saved by Christ, if we perform such conditions as He requires, and then, indeed, it will leave us where it found us as to any certainty of salvation, until those conditions are performed.

But I have already prevented such an absurdity by showing that this believing on Christ is itself, not only the condition of our salvation, but also the instrument by which we actually receive it. Believing, being the proper act of faith, must needs have the same contraries to it, as staggering (Rom. 4:20); wavering (Heb. 10:23); doubting (Matt. 14:31); fearing (Mark 5:36). These contraries do much illustrate the nature of faith and do show that believing must have some confidence in it, else it would have

doubting in the very nature of it; for what man that understands the preciousness of his immortal soul, and his danger of losing it, can ever avoid fear, doubting and trouble of heart by any believing whereby he does not at all assure himself of his salvation? The other terms of 'trusting' and 'resting' on Jesus Christ, etc., by which faith is often described by orthodox teachers, must include assurance of salvation, because they signify the same thing with believing on Christ. The soul must have its sufficient support to bear it up against oppressing fears, troubles, cares, despair, that it may thus trust and rest. The right manner of trusting and hoping in the Lord is by assuring ourselves, against all fears and doubtings, that the Lord is our God, and He is become our salvation. 'I trusted in You, O Lord: I said You are my God' (Ps. 31:14). 'The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust' (Ps. 18:2). 'Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid' (Isa. 12:2). 'O my soul, hope in God, who is the health of my countenance, and my God' (Ps. 42:11). True hope is grounded in God only, that He will bless us, that He may be an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast (Heb. 6:17-19). If you trust, rely and stay yourselves on Christ, or hope in Him, without assuring yourselves at all of salvation by Him, you make no better use of Him than if He were a broken reed and, if you would stay yourselves on the Lord, you must look upon Him as your God; as the prophet teaches, 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God' (Isa. 50:10). If you will rest in the Lord, you must believe that He deals bountifully with you (Ps. 116:7), or else, for ought you know, you may make your bed in hell. And you will show little regard of Christ and of your soul if you dare to rest under the wrath of God, without any persuasion of a sure interest in Christ. People may please themselves with such a trusting or resting, etc. when they are at ease; but in time of temptation it vanishes away and appears to be no true faith, but is turned into shame. The soul that lives in such wavering and doubting concerning salvation does not stay itself, nor rest at all, but is 'like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed; he is a double minded man, unstable in all his ways' (James 1:6, 8).

If you continue on the mere suspense and doubtfulness of salvation by Christ, your desire to trust is but a lazy woulding, without any fixed resolution, and you dare not yet venture to persuade and assure yourselves of your desire to trust and rely on Jesus Christ, I may answer that you cannot do this much in a right manner, except you desire and venture to

persuade and assure yourselves of your salvation by Christ, notwithstanding all the causes that you have to doubt and fear the contrary. If it is objected that we may trust on Christ only as a sufficient means of salvation, without any assurance of the effect, I shall acknowledge that the sufficiency of God and Christ is a good ground for us to rest on; but we must understand by it, not only a sufficiency of power, but also of goodwill and mercy towards us, for what have we to do more with the sufficiency of God and Christ's power than fallen angels, without His goodwill towards us? And if this be truly believed, it will exclude doubtfulness concerning your salvation.

2. Several places of Scripture declare positively and expressly that we are to be assured of our salvation in that faith by which we are justified and saved. I shall produce some instances. We are exhorted to draw near to God with full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22). Many apply this text to that which they call the reflex act of faith, because they imagine that all assurance must needs be by reflection. But the words of the text clearly touch us to understand it of that act of faith by which we draw near to God, that is, the direct act, and it is that very faith by which the just do live – even justifying, saving faith (v. 8).

And this assurance must be full, at least in the true and proper nature of it, in opposition to mere doubtfulness and uncertainty, though we are yet further to labour for that which is full in the highest degree of perfection. And the same faith by which we are exhorted to draw near to God, and by which the just lives, is, a little after (Heb. 11:1), affirmed to be the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. Why should saving faith have these high titles and attributes given to it, if it did not contain in it a sure persuasion of the great things of our salvation hoped for, making them to be evident to the eyes of our mind, as if they were already present in their substance, though yet not visible to our bodily eyes? That faith by which we are made partakers of Christ and to be Christ's house must be worthy to be called 'confidence', and accompanied with rejoicing hope: 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end' (Heb. 3:6, 14). What is confidence concerning anything, but trusting concerning it with a firm persuasion of the truth of it? If we have only a strong opinion concerning a thing, without any absolute certainty, we use to say that we are not

altogether confident of it. The faith by which we are justified must be in a measure like to the faith by which 'Abraham, against hope, believed in hope, that his seed should certainly be multiplied according to the promise of God; though, by reason of the deadness of his own body, and Sarah's womb', he could have no evidence from his own qualifications to assure himself of it, but all appearances were rather to the contrary, as the apostle teaches clearly (Rom. 4:18, 19, 23, 24). As absolute as this promise was, thus made to Abraham, yet it was not to be fulfilled without this assurance of faith and, by the like faith, the free promises of salvation by Christ will be absolutely fulfilled to us.

The apostle James expressly requires that we should ask good things of God in faith, nothing doubting – which includes assurance manifestly, and he tells us plainly that without it a man ought not to think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. Therefore we may firmly conclude that without it we shall not receive the salvation of Christ (James 1:6, 7). And that which the apostle James requires us not to doubt of is the obtaining the things that we ask; as we may learn from an instruction to the same purpose given to us by Christ Himself: 'Whatever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them' (Mark 11:24).

More places of Scripture might be alleged to the same purpose, but these are sufficient to evince that we are bound to assure ourselves of our salvation in faith itself, or else we are never likely to enjoy it; and that it is not humility, but rather proud disobedience, to live in a state of mere suspense and doubtfulness concerning our salvation; and that this assurance must be in the direct act of faith by which we are justified and saved. For, as for that which is called the reflex act of faith, it is a certain truth, and generally owned, that it is not absolutely necessary to salvation to any, and that it is sinful and pernicious to many to believe that they are already entered into a state of grace and salvation.

3. God gives us sufficient ground in Scripture to come to Christ with confident faith at the very first, trusting assuredly that Christ and His salvation shall be given to us, without any failing and delay, however vile and sinful our condition has been before. The Scripture speaks to the vilest sinners in such a manner as if it were framed on purpose to beget assurance of salvation in them immediately (Acts 2:39; 3:26). This

promise is universal that 'whoever believes on Christ shall not be ashamed', without making a difference between Jew and Greek (Rom. 10:11, 12). And this promise is confirmed by the blood of Christ, who was given for the world and lifted up upon the cross for this very end, that 'whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:14-16). His invitation is free to any: 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink,' and this drink is promised to everyone that believes (John 7:37, 39). The command of believing is propounded, not only in general, but in particular; and the promise of salvation on believing is also applied personally, and that to such as have been before in a state of sin and wrath, as to the wicked, persecuting, self-murdering jailer: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, and your house' (Acts 16:31). God commanded them that walked altogether in sin before to call Him their own Father, in their very first returning (Jer. 3:4). So God saith He will say, 'You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God' (Hos. 2:23), confidently averring their personal interest in Him. God has joined confidence or salvation inseparably together: 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; and quietness and confidence shall be your strength' (Isa. 30:15).

What a poor slender use and improvement do many make of these discoveries of the rich grace of God towards sinners, who say that, if we see that we have performed the condition of believing, then we may take Christ confidently as our own? They skip over the first principal use they ought to make of them. The very performance of the condition is to take Christ as our own immediately, and to eat and drink Him by believing confidently on Him for our salvation. If an honest rich man say to a poor woman, 'I promise to be your husband, if you will have me; say but the word, and I am yours,' may not she presently answer confidently, 'You are my husband, and I claim you for my husband'? And should she not rather say so, than say, 'I believe not what you say'? If an honest man say, 'Do but take this gift, and it is your own; do but eat and drink, and you are freely welcome,' may not I take the gift and eat and drink at first without any further ado, and with assurance that it is mine freely? If I do it doubtingly, I disparage the honesty and credit of the donor, as if he were not a man of his word. In like manner, if fearing to be too confident, lest we should believe a lie, we should come to Christ doubtingly and in mere suspense whether we should be freely entertained, after all God's free invitations and

promises, should we not disparage the faithfulness of God? And should we not be guilty of making God a liar? As the apostle John teaches, because of our not believing the record which God gave of His Son, 'And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life: and this life is in His Son' (1 John 5:10, 11).

And what if the salvation promised is not absolutely intended for all to whom the gospel comes? It is enough that God gives us His faithful word that they that believe shall have it, and none else; and has absolutely intended to fulfil His word that none shall find it to be a lie to them, and has joined believing and salvation inseparably together.

On this ground God may justly cause the promise of this salvation to be published to all, and may justly require all to believe on Him assuredly for their own salvation, that so it may appear whether they will give Him the glory of His truth; and if they will not, He may justly reject them, and punish them severely for dishonouring Him by their unbelief. In this case, we must not look to the secret decrees of God, but to His revealed promises and commands. Thus God promised to the Israelites in the wilderness that He would give them the land of Canaan, and would fight for them against their enemies, and required them not to fear or be discouraged, that so the promise might be fulfilled to them; yet God never absolutely decreed or intended that those Israelites should enter in, as the event did quickly manifest (Deut. 1:20, 21, 29, 30). Yet were they not bound in this case to trust confidently in God to give them victory over their enemies, and to give them the possession of the land? Had they not sufficient ground for such a faith? Was it not just with God to consume them in the wilderness for their unbelief? 'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being made of entering into this everlasting rest through Christ, we should come short of it, and fall after the same example of unbelief' (Heb. 4:1, 11).

4. The professors of true godliness that we read of through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament commonly professed their assurance and persuasion of their interest in God and His salvation, and were directed by the Word of God so to do, and true saints had still some true assurance of it. And we have no cause to judge that this assurance was grounded on the certainty of their own good qualifications, but rather on the promises of God by the direct act of faith. We may judge of the ordinary profession of

the frame of spirit that was in saints by some instances. I shall begin with the profession that the church made when it was very corrupt, at its first coming out of Egypt, when few of them could assure themselves by their own good qualifications that they were in a state of grace already – which many now imagine to be the only way of assurance. Even in that corrupt time the children of Israel sung that triumphant song of Moses, 'The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation; He is my God,' etc. (Exod. 15:2). Moses taught them in this song to assure themselves of their own personal interest in the salvation, and he guided them to the practice of their duty. And they did not find fault with Moses, as some do with ministers in these days, for putting them to express more confidence in their song than they can find ground for from their qualifications; but they applied themselves to the exercise of their faith, agreeably to the song and, doubtless, this faith was unfeigned in some few of them, though but feigned in others, for it is testified of them, that when 'they believed His words, they sang His praise' (Ps. 106:12).

Several other psalms and songs that were by divine appointment in common use under the Old Testament are as clear an evidence as we can desire of that assurance of faith which is commonly professed, and that people were generally bound to, under the Old Testament, as Psalms 23, 27, 44 and 46. Many other psalms, or expressions in psalms, might be alleged. The spirits of few in comparison could have thoroughly complied with such psalms, though they were true believers, if all the assurance of love of God must altogether depend upon the certain knowledge of the sincerity of their own hearts.

We have a great cloud of witnesses gathered out of the whole history of the Old Testament (Heb. 11) who did, and suffered and obtained great things by faith, whose examples are produced on purpose that we follow them in believing to the saving of our souls (Heb. 10:39). And, if we consider these examples particularly, we shall find that many of them do evidently guide us to such a saving faith as has an assurance of the effect contained in the nature of it. I confess we read several times of the fears and doubtings of the saints under the Old Testament; but we read also how they themselves condemned them as contrary to faith, as in the Psalms (Ps. 42:11, 31:22; 78:7, 10). The most mournful psalm in Scripture begins with an expression of some assurance (Ps. 88:1). And we may note that the

doubtings that we meet with of the saints of old were commonly occasioned by some extraordinary affliction, or some heinous transgression, not by common failings, or the common original depravation of nature, or the uncertainty of their election, or any thought that it is humility to doubt and that they were not bound to be confident of God's salvation, because then many might be bound to believe a lie. It is hard to find any of these occasions of doubting under the Old Testament, though they are grown too rife among us now under the New Testament.

In the time of the apostles we may well expect that the assurance of faith grew higher, because the salvation of Christ was revealed and the Spirit of adoption poured forth plentifully and the church made free from its former bondage under the terrifying legal covenant. Paul could prove to primitive Christians, by appeals to their own experience, that they were the 'children and heirs of God, because they had not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, by which they cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirits [or, bears our spirits witness],' as the Syriac and vulgar Latin render it, and as the like Greek phrase is rendered (Rom. 9:1), 'that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs' (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:6). And the apostle tells the Ephesians that after they believed 'they were sealed with the Holy Spirit, which was the earnest of their inheritance' (Eph. 1:13, 14), that is, they were sealed from the same time that they believed, for the original words are in the same tense. If this witness, seal and earnest of the Spirit had not been ordinary to believers, it would not have been sufficient to prove that they were the children of God, and such manner of arguing might have driven some to despair that wanted this witness, seal and earnest.

Let us enquire now whether the Spirit bears witness that we are the children of God and enables us to cry, 'Abba, Father', by the direct act, or by that which they call the 'reflex act' of faith? For we must not think that it is done by an enthusiasm, without any ordinary means; nor can we reasonably imagine that no true believers can call God 'Father', by the guidance of the Spirit, but only those few that are so sure of their own sincerity that by reflecting on it they can ground an act of faith concerning their own interest in Christ. No, surely. Therefore we may judge rather that the Spirit works this in us by giving us saving faith itself, by the direct act of which all true believers are enabled to trust assuredly on Christ for the

enjoyment of the adoption of children; and all His salvation, according to the free promise of God, and to call God Father, without reflecting on any good qualifications in themselves, for the Spirit is received by the direct act of faith (Gal. 3:2); and so He is the Spirit of adoption and comfort to all that receive Him. They that assert that the Spirit witnesses our adoption, only by assuring us of the sincerity of our faith, love and other gracious qualifications, and by the reflex act of faith, teach also commonly that you must again try whether the Spirit thus witnessing is the Spirit of truth or of delusion, by searching narrowly whether our inward grace be sincere or counterfeit; so that in this way the testimony of the Spirit is rendered so hard to be discerned that it stands us in no stead, but all our assurance is made at last to depend on our own certain knowledge of our own sincerity.

There are several other evidences to show that believers generally were persuaded of their salvation in the apostles' time. They loved and waited for the coming of Christ to judge the world (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Tim. 4:8). They loved all the saints for the hope that was laid up for them in heaven (Col. 1:3-5). The Corinthians, that were very carnal and but babes in Christ, were persuaded that they should judge the world and angels, and that their bodies were members of Christ and the temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:2, 3, 15, 19). The very first coming of the gospel to the Thessalonians was 'in the Holy Ghost', and 'much assurance', so 'that they received it in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost,' when as yet they had no considerable time to get assurance by reflecting on their good qualifications (1 Thess. 1:5, 6). Likewise, the believing Hebrews, when they were luminated at their first conversion, 'took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance,' and this was their confidence, which they were not to cast off, because the just lives by faith. And therefore it appears that this confidence belongs necessarily to justifying saving faith (Heb. 10:34, 35, 38).

Now, let those that allege the examples or experience of many modern Christians to disprove all that I have asserted consider well whether these are fit to be laid in the balance against all the Scripture examples and experience that I have produced out of the Old and New Testament. I confess that assurance of salvation is more rarely professed by Christians in these times than formerly; and we may thank some teachers for it, that have deserted the doctrine of former Protestants in this point, and vented

against it several errors, such as have been already named, and now would take advantage to confirm the truth of their doctrine from those doubtings in Christians that have been chiefly occasioned by it. But, however, the nature of saving faith is still the same. And I assert that, in these days as well as formerly, it always has in it some assurance of salvation by Christ, which does and will appear at least in resisting and condemning all doubtings, and praying against them, and endeavouring to trust assuredly, and to call God, 'Father'; except in extraordinary desertions, by which our case must not be tried.

We are not to trust the judgement of many concerning themselves. They will judge falsely that they have no assurance at all, because they know not yet, by marks and signs, that they are in a state of grace already, or because they think that there is no assurance when there are many doubtings, and because it is so weak, and so much oppressed with doubting, that it can hardly be discerned, as life in a fainting fit. But, if their judgements are better informed, they may be brought to discern some assurance in themselves. We are also to take heed of mistaking those for true believers that are not so, and for judging this point by their experiences, which is a vulgar error. The blind charity of some moves them to take all for true believers who are full of doubts and troubles concerning their salvation, though it may be they only are convinced of sin and brought to some zeal of God that is not according to the knowledge of the way of salvation by Christ; and they think it duty to comfort such ignorant persons by persuading them that their state is good, and their faith right, though they have no assurance of salvation. Thus they are brought to judge falsely concerning the nature of faith, out of their blind charity to such as are yet in ignorance and unbelief and, instead of comforting such, they rather take the direct way to harden them in their natural state, and to divert them from seeking consolation by saving faith in Christ, and to ruin their souls for ever.

5. The chief office of this faith in its direct saving act is to receive Christ and His salvation actually into our hearts, as has been proved; which office cannot be rationally performed except we do, in some measure, persuade our hearts and assure ourselves in the enjoyment of Him. As the body receives things into itself by the hands and mouth, so the soul receives these things to itself, and lays actual hold on them, by the faculty of the

will, making choice of them and embracing them in a way of present enjoyment and possession, as it does by the faculty of the understanding, see and apprehend them. Thus the soul receives comfort from outward things, as a righteous person cannot receive inward comfort from outward things, as from worldly estate, wife, husband, friends, etc., except he choose them as good, and account them his own by a right and title. This is the only rational way by which the soul can actively lay hold on Christ, and take actual possession of Him and His salvation, as He is freely offered and promised to us in the gospel by the grace of faith, which God has appointed to be our great instrument for the receiving of Him and closing with Him. If we do not make choice of Christ as our only salvation and happiness, or if we be altogether in a state of suspense and doubting whether God will be pleased to give Christ to us or no, it is evident that our souls are quite loose from Christ, and have no holdfast or enjoyment of Him. They do not so much as pretend to any actual receiving, or laying hold, or choosing of Him, neither are they fully satisfied that it is lawful for them so to do; but rather they are yet to seek whether they have any good ground and right to lay hold on Him or not.

Let any rational man judge whether the soul does or can put forth any sufficient act for the reception and enjoyment of Christ as its Saviour, Head or Husband, while it is yet in doubt whether it is the will of Christ to be joined with it in such a near relation? Can a woman honestly receive anyone as her husband, without being assured that he is fully willing to be her husband? The same may be said concerning the several parts of Christ's salvation which are to be received by faith. It is evident that we do not aright receive the benefit of remission of sins, for the purging of our consciences from that guilt that lies on them, unless we have an assured persuasion of God's forgiving them. We do not actually receive into our hearts our reconciliation with God and adoption of children and the title to an everlasting inheritance, until we can assure ourselves that God is graciously pleased to be our God and Father, and take us to be His children and heirs. We do not actually receive any sufficient strength to encourage our hearts to holiness in all difficulties, until we can steadfastly believe that God is with us, and will not forsake us.

Thus then we may firmly conclude that whoever seeks to be saved by faith, and does not seek to have assurance or confidence of his own

salvation, but deceives himself and deludes his soul with a mere fancy instead of saving faith and, in effect, seeks to be saved in his corrupt natural state, without receiving and laying actual hold of the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation.

5. It is also a great and necessary office of saving faith to purify the heart, and to enable us to live and walk in the practice of all holy duties by the grace of Christ, and by Christ Himself living in us, as has been shown before; which office faith is not able to perform, except some assurance of our own interest in Christ and His salvation be comprehended in the nature of it. If we would live to God, not ourselves, but by Christ living in us, according to Paul's example, we must be able to assure ourselves as he did, 'Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me' (Gal. 2:20). We are taught that 'if we live in the Spirit, we should walk in the Spirit' (Gal. 5:25). It would be high presumption if we should endeavour to walk above our natural strength and power by the Spirit, before we have made sure of our living by the Spirit. I have showed that we cannot make use of the comfortable benefits of the saving grace of Christ, by which the gospel engages and encourages us to a holy practice, except we have some confidence of our own interest in those saving benefits. If we do not assuredly believe that we are dead to sin, and alive to God through Christ, and risen with Christ, and not under the law but under grace, and members of Christ's body, the temple of His Spirit, the dead children of God, it would be hypocrisy to serve God on the account of such privileges as if we reckoned ourselves to be partakers of them.

He that thinks he should doubt of his salvation is not a fit disciple for this manner of doctrine, and he may reply to the preachers of the gospel, 'If you would bring me to holiness, you must make use of other more effectual arguments, for I cannot practise upon these principles, because I do not have faith enough to believe that I have any interest in them. Some arguments taken from the justice and wrath of God against sinners, and His mercy towards those that perform the condition of sincere obedience, would work more powerfully on me.' O what a miserable, worthless kind of saving faith is this, that cannot fit a believer to practise in a gospel manner on the most pure and powerful principles of grace, but rather leaves him to work on legal principles, which can never bring him to serve God acceptably out of love! And as such a faith fails wholly in the right

manner of obeying upon gospel principles, so it fails also in the very matter of some great duties, which are of such a nature that they include assurance of God's love in the right performance of them; such are those great duties of peace with God, rejoicing in the Lord always, hope that does not make ashamed, owning the Lord as our God and our Saviour, praying to Him as our Father in heaven, offering up body and soul as an acceptable sacrifice to Him, casting all our cares of body and soul upon Him, contentment and hearty thanksgiving in every condition, making our boast in the Lord, triumphing in His praise, rejoicing in tribulation, putting on Christ in-our baptism, receiving Christ's body as broken for us and His blood as shed for us in the Lord's Supper, committing our souls willingly to God as our Redeemer whenever He shall be pleased to call for us, loving Christ's second appearance and looking for it as that blessed hope.

When we fall into any sudden doubting whether we are in a state of grace already, when we are called to any present undertaking, as to partake of the Lord's Supper, or any duty that required assurance to the right performance of it, we must relieve ourselves by trusting confidently in Christ for the present gift of His salvation, or else we shall be driven to omit the duty, or not to perform it rightly or sincerely. Can we judge ourselves already in a state of grace, by the reflex act of faith, if we do not find that we perform these duties, at least several of them, sincerely, or if we do not find that we have such a holy faith as enables, or inclines us to the performance of them? And can we be thus enabled and inclined by any faith that is without some true assurance of our salvation? Therefore, I conclude that we must necessarily have some assurance of our salvation in the direct act of faith, by which we are justified, sanctified and saved, before we can upon any good ground assure ourselves that we are already in a state of grace by that which we call the reflex act.

Give me such a saving faith as will produce such fruits as these. No other faith will work by love, and therefore will not avail to salvation in Christ (Gal. 5:6). The apostle James puts you on showing your faith by your works (James 2:18). And in this trial, this faith of assurance comes off with His praise and honour. When God called His people to work outward miracles by it, all things have been possible to them, and it has frequently brought forth such works of righteousness as may be deservedly esteemed great spiritual miracles. From this has proceeded that heroic fortitude of

the people of God, whereby their absolute obedience to God has shined forth in doing and suffering those great things which are recorded in the Holy Scriptures and in the histories of the church. And if we be ever called to the fiery trial, as Protestants formerly were, we shall find their doctrine of assurance will encourage us in suffering for the sake of Christ.

7. The contrary doctrine, which excludes assurance out of the nature of saving faith, brings forth many evil fruits. It tends to bereave our souls of all assurance of our salvation and solid comfort, which is the life of religion, by placing them after sincere universal obedience; whereas, if we have them not first, we can never attain to this obedience, nor to any assurance that depends on it, as has been proved. And this, as far as it prevails, makes us subject to continual doubtings concerning our salvation, and to tormenting fears of wrath, which casts out true love to God and can produce no better than slavish hypocritical service. It is one of the principal pillars by which manifold superstitions in Popery are supported, as their monkish orders, their satisfactions for sin, by works of penance, bodily macerations, whippings, pilgrimages, indulgences, trusting on the merits of saints, etc. When once men have lost the knowledge of the right way to assure themselves of salvation, they will catch at any straw, to avoid drowning in the gulf of despair.

There is no way to administer any solid comfort to the wounded spirits of those that see themselves void of all holiness, under the wrath and curse of God, dead in sin, not able so much as to think a good thought. You do but increase their terror and anguish, if you tell them they must first get faith and obedience and, when they find they have done that, they may persuade themselves that God will receive them into His grace and favour. Alas! They know that they cannot believe, nor obey, except God assist them with His grace and favour. And what if they be even at the point of death, and struggling with death's pangs, so that they have no time or leisure to get good qualifications, and examine the goodness of them? You must have a more speedy way to comfort such, by discovering to them the free promise of salvation to the worst of sinners by faith in Christ, and by exhorting them to apply those promises and trust on Christ confidently for remission of sins, holiness, and glory; assuring them also that God will help them to believe sincerely on Christ, if they desire it with all their hearts, and that it is their duty to believe, because God commands it.

Several other evils are occasioned by the same doctrine. Men are unwilling to know the worst of themselves and prone to think their qualifications better than they are, that they may avoid despair. Others please and content themselves without any assurance of their interest in Christ, because they think that it is not necessary to salvation, and that but few attain to it; and in this they show little love to Christ, or to their own souls. Some foster doubtings of salvation as signs of humility, though they will hypocritically complain of them. Many spend their time in poring upon their own hearts to find out some evidence of their interest in Christ, when they should rather be employed in receiving Christ and walking in Him by a confident faith.

Some are troubled with doubts whether they should call God 'Father', and what apprehensions they should have of Him in prayer; and are offended at ministers that in their public prayers use any expressions that the people cannot join in, as when they do own God as their God and Father, and Christ as their Saviour, and on the same account they are offended at the public singing of many of David's psalms, and avoid partaking of the Lord's Supper, because they are not satisfied about their interest in Christ.

Though true believers have some assurance of salvation in saving faith itself, yet it is much weakened in many by this contrary doctrine and assaulted with many doubtings; and then other good qualifications must needs be low and weak together with it, and so obscure that it is very hard to discern them. How hard a thing then will it be for true believers to assure themselves, by the certain knowledge of their own sincerity, that they are in a state of grace already, which some say is the only assurance of faith? Some prescribe such marks and signs to distinguish sincerity from hypocrisy that believers cannot sufficiently try themselves by them, except they have more knowledge and experience than ordinary.

Thus many believers walk heavily in the bitterness of their souls, conflicting with fears and doubtings all their days. And this is the cause that they have so little courage and fervency of spirit in the ways of God, and that they so much mind earthly things, and are so afraid of sufferings and death; and if they get some assurance by the reflex act of faith, they often soon lose it again by sins and temptations. The way to avoid these evils is to get your assurance, and to maintain it, and renew it upon all occasions by the direct act of faith, by trusting assuredly on the name of

the Lord, and staying yourself on your God, when you walk in darkness, and see no light in any of your own qualifications (Isa. 50:10). I doubt not but the experience of choice Christians will bear witness to this truth.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Endeavour diligently to perform the great work of believing on Christ in a right manner, without any delay; and then also continue and increase in your most holy faith, that so your enjoyment of Christ, union and fellowship with Him, and all holiness by Him, may be begun, continued and increased in you.

Having already discovered to you the powerful and effectual means of a holy practice, my remaining work is to lead you to the actual exercise and improvement of them, for the immediate attainment of the end. And I think it may be clearly perceived by the foregoing directions that faith in Christ is the duty with which a holy life is to begin, and by which the foundation of all other holy duties is laid in the soul.

It is before sufficiently proved that Christ Himself, with all endowments necessary to enable us to a holy practice, is received actually into our hearts by faith. This is the uniting grace by which the Spirit of God knits the knot of mystical marriage between Christ and us, and makes us branches of that noble vine; members of that body, joined to that excellent head; living stones of that spiritual temple, built on the precious living corner-stone, and sure foundation; partakers of the bread and drink that came down from heaven and gives life to the world. This is the grace by which we pass from our corrupt natural state to a new holy state in Christ; also from death in sin to the life of righteousness, and by which we are comforted, that we so may be established in every good word and work.

If we put the question: 'What must we do that we work the works of God?' Christ resolves it, that we 'believe on Him whom He has sent' (John 6:28, 29). He puts us first on the work of believing, which is the work of God by way of eminency, the work of works, because all other good works proceed from it.

The first thing in the present direction is to put you upon the performance of this great work of believing on Christ and to guide you therein, for you are to consider distinctly four things contained in it.

1. The first is, *you are to make it your diligent endeavour to perform the great work of believing on Christ.* Many make little conscience of this duty. It is not known by natural light, as many moral duties are, but only

by supernatural revelation in the gospel, and it is foolishness to the natural man. These are sometimes terrified with apprehensions of other sins and will examine themselves concerning them and, it may be, will write them down to help their memories and devotion. But the great sin of not believing on Christ is seldom thought of in their self-examinations, or registered in the large catalogues of their sins. And even those who are convinced that believing on Christ is a duty necessary to salvation do neglect all diligent endeavours to perform it: either because they account that it is a motion of the heart which may be easily performed at any time, without any labour or diligent endeavours; or, on the contrary, because they account it as difficult as all the works of the law, and utterly impossible for them to perform by their most diligent endeavours, except the Spirit of God work it in them by His mighty power; and that therefore it is vain for them to work until they feel this working of the Spirit in their hearts; or, because they account it a duty so peculiar to the elect, that it would be presumption for them to endeavour the performance of it until they know themselves to be elected to eternal life through Christ. I shall urge you to a diligent performance of this duty, notwithstanding all these impediments, by the following consideration. It is worthy of our best endeavours, as appears by the preciousness, excellency and necessity of it already discovered.

If the light of nature were not darkened in the matters of salvation, it would show us that we cannot ourselves find out the way of salvation, and would condemn those that despise that revelation of the way of salvation that God has given us in the gospel, declared in the Holy Scriptures. The great end of preaching the gospel is for the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5), that so we may be brought to Christ and all other obedience. Yea, the great end of all revealed doctrines in the whole Scriptures is to 'make us wise unto salvation by faith that is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 3:15). The 'end of the law given by Moses, was for righteousness to every one that believes' (Rom. 10:4); and Christ was that end for righteousness. The moral law itself was revealed in order to our salvation by believing on Christ; or else the knowledge of it had nothing availed fallen man that was unable to perform it. Therefore, they that slight the duty of believing, and account it foolishness, do in this way slight, despise and vilify the whole counsel of God revealed in the Scripture. The law and the gospel and Christ Himself are become of none effect to the salvation of such. The only fruit that such

a one can attain to, by all the saving doctrines of the Scripture, is only some hypocritical moral duties, and slavish performances, which will be as filthy rags in the sight of God in the great day. However, many do not mind the sin of unbelief in their self-examinations, and write it not in their scrolls; yet let them know that this is the most pernicious sin of all. All the sins in their scrolls would not prevail in their condemnation, yea, they would not prevail in their conversation, were it not for their unbelief. This one sin prevailing makes it impossible for them to please God in any duty whatever (Heb. 11:6). If you will not mind this one main sin now, God will at last mind you of it with a vengeance, for 'he that does not believe on the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him' (John 3:36). 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

2. *Believing on Christ is a work that will require diligent endeavour and labour for the performance of it.* We must labour 'to enter into that rest, lest any man fall by unbelief' (Heb. 4:11). We must 'show diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end, that we may be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises' (Heb. 6:11, 12). It is a work that requires the exercise of might and power, and therefore we have need to be 'strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inward man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith' (Eph. 3:16, 17). I confess it is easy, pleasant and delicious in its own nature, because it is a motion of the heart, without any cumbersome bodily labour; and it is a taking Christ and His salvation as our own, which is very comfortable and delightful; and the soul is carried forth in this by love to Christ and its own happiness, which is an affection that makes even hard works easy and pleasant; yet it is made difficult to us by reason of the opposition that it meets with from our own inward corruptions, and from Satan's temptations.

It is no *easy* matter to receive Christ as our happiness and free salvation, with true confidence and lively affection, when the guilt of sin lies heavily on the conscience and the wrath of God is manifested by the Word and terrible judgements – especially when we have been long accustomed to seek salvation by the procurement of our own works, and to account the way of salvation by free grace foolish and pernicious; when our lusts incline us strongly to the things of the flesh and the world; when Satan

does his utmost, by his own suggestions, and by false teachers, and by worldly allurements and terrors, to hinder the sincere performance of this duty.

Many works that are easy in their own nature prove difficult for us to perform in our circumstances. To forgive our enemies, and to love them as ourselves, is but a motion of the mind, easy to be performed in its own nature; and yet many that are convinced of their duty find it a hard matter to bring their hearts to the performance of it. It is but a motion of the mind to cast our care on God for worldly things, and rich men may think they can do it easily, but poor men that have great families find it a hard matter. That easy comfortable duty, which Moses exhorted the Israelites to, when Pharaoh, with his chariots and horsemen, overtook them at the Red Sea, 'Fear not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today' (Exod. 14:13), was not easily performed.

The very easiness of some duties makes their performance difficult, as Naaman the Syrian was hardly brought to wash and be clean, because he thought it to be too slight and easy a remedy for the cure of his leprosy (2 Kings 5:12, 13). Even in this very case, people are offended at the duty of the believing on Christ, as too slight and easy a remedy to cure the leprosy of the soul; they would have some harder thing enjoined them to the attainment of so great an end as this everlasting salvation. The performance of all the moral law is not accounted work enough for this end (Matt. 19: 17, 20). However easy the work of believing seems to many, yet common experience has shown that men are more easily brought to the most burdensome, unreasonable and inhuman observations – as the Jews and Christian Galatians were more easily brought to take upon their necks the yoke of Moses' law, which none were able to bear (Acts 15:10). The heathens were more easily brought to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods (Deut. 12:31). The Papists are brought more easily to their vows of chastity and poverty and obedience to the most rigorous rules of monastic discipline, to macerate and torture their bodies with fastings, scourges and pilgrimage, and to bear all the excessive tyranny of the papal hierarchy, in a multitude of burdensome superstitious and ridiculous devotions.

They that slight the work of faith for its easiness show that they were never yet made sensible of innumerable sins, and the terrible curse of the law and

wrath of God they lied under, and of the darkness and vanity of their minds, the corruption and hardness of their hearts, and their bondage under the power of sin and Satan; and have not been truly humbled, without which they cannot believe in a right manner. Many sound believers have found by experience that it has been a very hard matter to bring their hearts to the duty of believing; it has cost them vigorous struggles and sharp conflicts with their own corruptions and Satan's temptations. It is so difficult a work that we cannot perform it without the mighty working of the Spirit of God in our hearts, who only can make it to be absolutely easy to us, and does make it easy, or allow it to be difficult, according as He is pleased to communicate His grace in various degrees to our souls.

3. Though we cannot possibly perform this great work in a right manner, until the Spirit of God work faith in our hearts by His mighty power, *yet it is necessary that we should endeavour it*; and that before we can find the Spirit of God working faith effectually in us, or giving strength to believe. We can perform no holy duty acceptably, except the Spirit of God work it in us; and yet we are not hereby excused from working ourselves, but we are the rather stirred up to the greater diligence: 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure' (Phil. 2:12, 13). The way by which the Spirit works faith in the elect is by stirring them up to endeavour to believe. And this is a way suitable to the means that the Spirit uses, that is, the exhortations, commands and invitations of the gospel, which would be of no force, if we were not to obey them, until we find faith already wrought in us.

Neither can we possibly find that the Spirit of God effectually works faith, or gives strength to believe, until we act it; for all inward graces, as well as all other inward habits, are discerned by their acts, as seed in the ground by its springing. We cannot see any such things as love to God or man in our hearts before we act it. Children do not know their ability to stand on their feet until they have made trial by endeavouring to do so; so we know not our spiritual strength until we have learned by experience from the use and exercise of it.

Neither can we know, or assure ourselves absolutely, that the Spirit of God will give us strength to believe before we act faith; for such a knowledge and assurance, if it is right, is having faith itself in part, and whoever trusts

on Christ assuredly for strength to believe by His Spirit, in effect, trusts on Christ for his own salvation, which is inseparably joined with the grace of saving faith. Though the Spirit works other duties in us by faith, yet He works faith in us immediately by hearing, knowing and understanding the Word: 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' (Rom. 10:17). And, in the Word, He makes no absolute promise or declaration that He will work faith in this or that unbelieving heart, or that He will give strength to believe to anyone in particular, or begin the work of believing in Christ, for faith itself is the first grace by which we have a particular interest in any saving promise. It is a thing hidden in the secret counsel and purpose of God concerning us whether He will give us His Spirit and saving faith until our election is discovered by our believing actually.

Therefore, as soon as we know the duty of believing, we are to apply ourselves immediately to the vigorous performance of the duty and, in so doing, we shall find that the Spirit of Christ has strengthened us to believe, though we know not certainly that He will do it beforehand. The Spirit comes indiscernibly upon the elect to work faith within them, like the wind that blows where it lists and none knows whence it comes, and where it goes, but only we hear the sound of it, and thereby know it when it is past and gone (John 3:8). We must therefore begin the work before we know that the Spirit does, or will work in us savingly; and we shall be willing to set on the work, if we are Christ's people, for 'Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power' (Ps. 110:3). It is enough that God discovers to us beforehand in the gospel what faith is, and the ground we have to believe on Christ for our own salvation; and that God requires this duty of us, and will help us in the performance of it, if we apply ourselves heartily to it: 'Fear not, I command you; be strong, and of good courage' (Josh. 1:6). 'Arise, and be doing, and the Lord will be with you' (1 Chron. 22: 16). Therefore, whoever receives this gospel discovery as the Word of God, in hearty love, is taught by the Spirit, and will certainly come to Christ by believing (John 6:45). Everyone that receives it not despises God, makes Him a liar and deserves justly to perish for his unbelief.

4. Though the Spirit works saving faith only in the elect, and others do not believe because they are not of Christ's sheep (John 10:26), and on that account it is called the faith of God's elect (Titus 1:1); yet all that hear the

gospel are obliged to the duty of believing, as well as to all the duties of the moral law, and that before they know their own particular election, and they are liable to condemnation for unbelief, as well as for any other sin: 'He that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God' (John 3:18). The apostle Paul shows that the elect Israelites obtained salvation, and the rest that were not elected were blinded; and yet even these were broken off from the good olive tree, because of their unbelief (Rom. 11:7, 20).

We cannot have a certain knowledge of our election to eternal life before we do believe; it is a thing hidden in the unsearchable counsel of God, until it be manifest by our effectual calling and believing on Christ. The apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians by finding the evidence of their faith that the gospel came to them, 'not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance,' and that they had 'received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost' (1 Thess. 1:4, 5, 6). We are to see our calling, if we would find that out that God has chosen us (1 Cor. 1:26, 27). Therefore, we must believe on Christ before we know our election, or else we shall never know it, and shall never believe.

And it is no presumption for us to trust confidently on Christ for everlasting life, before we have any good evidence of our election, because God, that cannot lie, has made a general promise 'that whoever believes on Him, shall not be ashamed', without making the least difference among them that perform this duty (Rom. 10:11, 12). The promise is as firm and sure to be fulfilled as any of God's decrees and purposes, and therefore it is a good and sufficient ground for our confidence. It is certain that all that the Father has given to Christ, by the decree of eternal election, shall come to Christ; and it is as really certain that Christ will in no wise cast out any that come to Him, whosoever he is (John 6:37). And we need not fear that we shall infringe God's decree of election by believing on Christ confidently for our salvation, before we know what God has decreed concerning us, for, if we believe, we shall at last be found among the number of the elect and, if we refuse to believe, we shall thereby wilfully sort ourselves among the reprobates, 'that stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they are appointed' (1 Peter 2:8).

I shall add further that, though we have no evidence of our particular election before we believe, yet we are to trust on Christ assuredly to make it evident to us, by giving us that salvation which is the peculiar portion of the elect only. All spiritual saving blessings, with which God blesses His people in Christ, are the peculiar portion of them whom God has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3, 4); yet we must necessarily trust on Christ for those saving blessings, or have none at all. We are to pray in faith, nothing doubting, that God will 'remember us with the favour that He bears to His people; that we may see the good of His chosen, and glory with His inheritance' (Ps. 106:4, 5). Therefore we are to trust assuredly on God that He will deal with us as His chosen people.

Thus it appears that it is not presumption, but your bounden duty, to apply yourselves to the great work of believing on Christ for salvation, without questioning at all beforehand whether you are elected or no: 'Secret things belong to God, but those things that are revealed, belong to us, that we may do them' (Deut. 29:29).

The second thing directed to is that you shall endeavour for a right manner of performing this duty. This is a point of great concernment, because the want of it will render your faith ineffectual to sanctification and salvation. The great duty of love, which is the end of the law, and the principal fruit of sanctification, must flow from faith unfeigned (1 Tim. 1:5). There is a feigned faith, that does not really receive Christ into the heart, and will not produce love, or any true obedience, such as Simon Magus had (Acts 8:13, 23), for, notwithstanding his faith, he was in the 'gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity'; and such as those Jews had, to whom Christ would not commit Himself, who did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue (John 2:24; 12:42); and such as the apostle James speaks of: 'What does it profit, my brothers, if a man say he has faith, and has no works? Can that faith save him? The devils also believe and tremble' (James 2:14, 19). Take heed, therefore, lest you deceive your souls with a counterfeit faith, instead of the precious faith in God's elect.

The way to distinguish the one from the other is by considering well what is the right manner of that believing which is effectual to salvation. Hypocrites may perform the same works for the matter, with true saints, but they are defective in the manner of performance, wherein the excellency of the work does chiefly consist. One great reason why 'many

seek to enter in at the strait gate, and are not able' (Luke 13:24) is because they are ignorant and defective in the right manner of acting this faith by which they are to enter. Now I confess that God is only able to guide us effectually in the right way of believing. And we have this great consolation, when we see our own folly and proneness to mistake our way, and if we heartily desire and endeavour to believe on Christ aright, we may confidently trust on Christ to guide us. God has promised that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err in the way of holiness; and that He will 'teach sinners in the way. The meek will He guide in judgement, and the meek will He teach His way' (Ps. 25:8, 9); and He commands them that lack wisdom to ask it of God in faith, nothing doubting (James 1:5, 6). But, however, we are to know that God guides us only according to the rule of His Word; and we must endeavour to learn the right way of believing out of the Word, or else we are not able so much as to trust rightly on God for guidance and direction in this great work.

To help you here, I have given you before in this treatise a description of saving faith, and have shown that it contains two acts in it: the one is believing the truth of the gospel; the other is believing on Christ as revealed and freely promised to us in the gospel, for all His salvation. Now, your great endeavour must be to perform both these acts in a right manner, as I shall show concerning each of them in particular.

In the first place, you are highly concerned to endeavour for a right belief in the truth of the gospel of Christ, that so you may be well furnished, disposed and encouraged to believe on Christ, as revealed and promised in the gospel. In this way you are to remove all discomfortable thoughts and objections of Satan and your own conscience, and to overcome all corrupt inclinations that hinder a cheerful embracing of Christ and His salvation. It is found by experience that when any fail in the second act of faith, the reason of the failing is commonly some defect in this first act. There is some false imagination or other in them, contrary to the belief of the truth of the gospel, which is a stronghold of sin and Satan that must be pulled down before they can receive Christ into their hearts by believing on Him. If they knew the name of Christ, as He is discovered in the gospel, and judged aright of the truth and excellency of it, they would not fail to put their trust in Him. And we are in great danger of entertaining such false imaginations, and to account many truths of the gospel strange paradoxes,

yea, foolish and pernicious, because of our ignorance, selfconceitedness, guilty consciences, corrupt affections and manifold errors, with which our judgements are prepossessed in matters of salvation; and because Satan labours to beguile us, as he did Eve, 'through his subtilty, to corrupt our minds from the simplicity of the gospel that is in Christ' (2 Cor. 11:3). I shall therefore give you some particular instructions that are of greatest moment to prevent such defects as we are most liable to in the first act of our faith.

1. You must believe with a full persuasion that you are a child of wrath by nature, as well as others, fallen from God by the sin of the first Adam; dead in trespasses and sins, subject to the curse of the law of God, and to the power of Satan, and to insupportable misery to all eternity; and that you cannot possibly procure your reconciliation with God, or any spiritual life and strength to do any good work, by any endeavouring to get salvation according to the terms of the legal covenant; and that you cannot find any way to escape out of this sinful and miserable condition by your own reason and understanding, without supernatural revelation, nor be freed from it, except by that infinite power that raises the dead. We must not be afraid, as some are, to know our own vileness and sinfulness, neither must we be willing to think ourselves better than we are, but must be heartily desirous and glad to know the worst of our own condition; yea, when we have found out the worst that we can of ourselves, we must be willing to believe that our hearts are deceitful, and desperately wicked, beyond all that we can know and find out (Jer. 17:9). This is all necessary to work in us true humiliation, self-despair and self-loathing, that we may highly esteem, and earnestly seek the salvation of Christ as the one thing necessary. It makes us sick of sin, and sensible of our need of the great Physician, and willing to be ordered according to any of His prescriptions, whatever we suffer, rather than to follow our own wisdom (Matt. 9:12). It was for want of this humiliation that the scribes and Pharisees were not so forward to enter into the kingdom of heaven as the publicans and harlots (Matt. 21:31).

2. You are to believe assuredly that there is no way to be saved without receiving all the saving benefits of Christ: His Spirit as well as His merits, sanctification as well as remission of sins, by faith.

It is the ruin of many souls that they trust on Christ for the remission of sins, without any regard to holiness; whereas these two benefits are inseparably joined in Christ, so that none are freed from condemnation by Christ, but those that are enabled to walk holily, that is, 'not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (Rom. 8:1). It is also the ruin of souls to seek only remission of sins by faith in Christ, and holiness by our endeavours, according to the terms of the law; whereas we can never live to God in holiness, except we be dead to the law, and live only by Christ living in us by faith. That faith which receives not holiness, as well as remission of sins from Christ, will never sanctify us, and therefore it will never bring us to heavenly glory (Heb. 12:14).

3. You are to be fully persuaded of the *all-sufficiency of Christ* for the salvation of yourself, and of all that believe on Him; that His blood cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). Though our sins be never so great and horrible, and continued in ever so long, yet He is able to deliver from the body of death, and mortify our corruptions, be they never so strong.

We find in Scripture that abominable wicked persons have been saved by Him: idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, covetous, drunkards, extortioners, etc. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10); such as have sinned against the light of nature, as the heathens, and the light of Scripture, as the Jews; such as have denied Christ, as Peter, and persecuted and blasphemed Him, as Paul. Many that have fallen into great sins are ruined for ever, because they do not account the grace of Christ sufficient for their pardon and sanctification, when they think they are gone, and past all hope of recovery, that their 'sins are upon them, and they pine away in them, how shall they live? (Ezek. 33:10). This despair works secretly in many souls, without much trouble and horror, and makes them careless of their souls and true religion. The devil fills some with horrid, filthy, blasphemous thoughts, on purpose that they may think their sins too great to be forgiven; though commonly such thoughts are the least of the sins of those that are pestered with them, and rather the devil's sin than theirs, because they are hurried into them sore against their wills; but, if their hearts be somewhat polluted within them, Christ testifies that 'all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost' (Matt. 12:31). And as for those that are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, the reason why they are never forgiven is not because of any want of sufficiency in the blood of Christ,

or in the pardoning mercy of God; but because they never repent of that sin, and never seek to God for mercy through Christ, but continue obstinate until death; for the Scripture testifies that 'it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance' (Heb. 6:5, 6). So that the merits of Christ are sufficient for all that seek to Him for mercy by believing.

There are others that despair of ever getting any victory over their lusts, because they have formerly made many vows and resolutions, and have used many vigorous endeavours against them in vain. Such are to persuade themselves that the grace of Christ is sufficient for them, when all other means have failed, as the woman that had the issue of blood, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse by any remedies that physicians could prescribe, yet persuaded herself that, if she might but touch the clothes of Christ, she should be whole (Mark 5:25-28). Those that despair, by reason of the greatness of their guilt and corruption, do greatly dishonour and undervalue the grace of God, His infinite mercy and the infinite merits of Christ's blood and power of His Spirit, and deserve to perish with Cain and Judas. Abundance of people, that give up themselves to all licentiousness in this wicked generation, lie under secret despair, which makes them so desperate in swearing, blaspheming, whoring, drunkenness and all manner of wickedness. How horrid and heinous soever our sins and corruptions have been, we should learn to account them a small matter in comparison to the grace of Christ, who is God as well as man, and offered up Himself by the eternal Spirit as a sacrifice of infinite value for our salvation, and can create us anew as easily as He created the world by a word speaking.

4. You are to be fully persuaded of the truth of the general free promise, in your own particular case, that if you believe on Christ sincerely, you shall have everlasting life, as well as any other in the world, without performing any condition of works to procure an interest in Christ, for the promise is universal: 'Whoever believes on Him, shall not be ashamed' (Rom. 9:33), without exception. And, if God exclude you not, you must not exclude yourselves, but rather conclude peremptorily that, how vile, wicked and unworthy you are, yet, if you come, you shall be accepted as well as any others in the world. You are to believe that great article in the Creed, the remission of sins, in your own case, when you are principally concerned, or else it will little profit you to believe it in the case of others. This is that

which hinders many broken wounded spirits from coming to the great Physician, when they are convinced of the abominable filthiness of their hearts, that they are dead in sin, without the least spark of true grace and holiness in them. They think that it is in vain for such as they are to trust on Christ for salvation, and that Christ will never save such as they are. Why so? They can be but lost creatures at worst, and Christ came to seek them that are lost. If they who are dead in sin cannot be saved, then all must despair and perish, for none have any spiritual life until they receive it by believing on Christ.

Some think themselves to be worse than others, and that none have such wicked hearts as they, and though others be accepted, yet they shall be rejected. But they should know that 'Christ came to save the chief of sinners' (1 Tim. 1:15); and that the design of God is to 'show the exceeding riches of His grace in our salvation' (Eph. 2:7), which is most glorified by pardoning the greatest sinners. And it is but our ignorance to think ourselves like nobody, for all others, as well as we, are naturally 'dead in trespasses and sins'; their 'mind is enmity to God, and is not subject to His law, nor indeed can be' (Rom. 8:7); and 'every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil,' and continually so (Gen. 6:5); they have all the same corrupt fountain of all abominations in their hearts, though we may have exceeded many others in several actual sins.

Others think that they have out stayed their time, and therefore now they should find no pace for repentance, though they should seek it carefully with tears (Heb. 12: 17). But, 'Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation' (2 Cor. 6:2), even as long as God calls on you by the gospel. And, although Esau was rejected, who sought rather the earthly than the spiritual blessings of the birthright, yet they shall not be rejected that seek the enjoyment of Christ and His salvation as their only happiness. If you come into Christ's vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day, you shall have your penny, as well as those that came early in the morning, because the reward is of grace, and not of merit (Matt. 20:9, 10). And here you must be sure to believe steadfastly that Christ and all His salvation is bestowed as a free gift upon those that do not work to procure any right or title to Him, or meetness or worthiness to receive Him, but only 'believe on Him that justifies the ungodly' (Rom. 4:5). If you put any

condition of works, or good qualifications between yourselves and Christ, it will be a partition-wall which you can never climb over.

5. You are to believe assuredly that it is the *will of God you should believe in Christ*, and have eternal life by Him, as well as any other; and that your believing is a duty very acceptable to God; and that He will help you, as well as any other, in this work, because He calls and commands you by the gospel to believe in Christ. This makes us to set cheerfully upon the work of believing, as when Jesus commanded the blind man to be called, they said unto Him, 'Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you' (Mark 10:49). A command of Christ made Peter walk on the water (Matt. 14:29). And here we are not to meddle with God's secret of predestination; or the purpose of His will in His gracious invitations and commands, by which we are required to believe on Christ. This will of God is confirmed by His oath: 'As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live; turn, turn from your evil ways; for, why will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezek. 33:11.) Christ testifies that He 'would often have gathered the children of Jerusalem, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and they would not' (Matt. 23:37). And the apostle Paul testifies that 'God will have all men to be saved', etc. (1 Tim. 2:4).

You are to reject and abandon all thoughts that are contrary to this persuasion. What if few be saved? Thy salvation will not make the number too great, for few will follow you in the duty of believing. What if the wrath of God be revealed from heaven against you in many terrible judgements, and the Word and your own conscience condemn you, and Christ seem to reckon you no better than a dog, as He did the woman of Canaan? (Matt. 15:26.) You are to make a good interpretation of all these things, that the end of them is to drive you to Christ, as this was the end of the curses of the law and all the terrible dispensations of them (Rom. 10:4). If a prophet or an angel from heaven were sent of God on purpose to declare that the sentence of everlasting damnation is declared against you, it would be your duty to believe that God sent him to give you timely warning for this very end, that you might believe and turn to God by faith and repentance. Jeremiah prophesied against the Jews that God would 'pluck them up, pull them down, and destroy them for their sins'; yet he himself taught them, 'if they turned from their evil ways, God would repent

him of the evil' (Jer. 18:7, 8, 11). Jonah preached nothing but certain destruction to Nineveh, to be executed upon them within forty days (Jonah 3:4); yet the intent of that terrible message was that those heathenish people might escape destruction by repentance.

The most absolute and peremptory denunciations of divine vengeance against us, while we are in this world, must be always understood with a secret reserve of salvation for us, upon our faith and repentance. And we are to account that the reason why God so terribly denounces His judgements against us by His Word is that we may escape them by flying for refuge to His free mercy in Christ.

Take heed of fostering any thoughts that God has absolutely decreed to show no saving mercy to you, or that you have already committed the unpardonable sin, or that it is in vain for you to attempt the work of believing, because God will not help you in it. If such thoughts prevail in your hearts, they will do you more hurt than the most blasphemous thoughts that terrify you, or any the grossest abominations that ever you were guilty of, because they obstruct your believing on Christ for salvation. 'The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.' Christ says, 'Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely' (Rev. 22:17). Therefore, we are to abandon all thoughts that hinder our coming to Christ, as very sinful and pernicious, arising in us from our own corruptions and Satan's delusions, and utterly opposite to the mind of Christ, and teachings of His Spirit.

And what ground can we have to entertain such unbelieving thoughts? Has God made us of His privy council, that we should be able to know that God has decreed us to damnation, before it be manifest by our final unbelief and impenitence? As for the unpardonable sin, it consists 'in renouncing the way of salvation by Christ with the whole heart, after we have attained to the knowledge of it, and are convinced of the truth of it by the gospel'. It is the sin that the Christian Hebrews would have been guilty of, if they had revolted from Christianity to the religion of the unbelieving Jews that accounted Christ to be an impostor, and were most rancorous persecutors of Him and His ways (Heb. 6:4, 5). They that have committed that sin continue implacable, malicious enemies to Christ and His ways to the end, without any repentance. Therefore, if you can but find that you desire seriously to get an interest in Christ, and to be better Christians than you are, if you be troubled and grieved that your hearts and lives are so

wicked, and that you want faith, love and true obedience, yea, if your hearts are not maliciously bent to persecute the gospel, and prefer atheism, licentiousness or any false religion before it, you have no cause to suspect yourselves to be guilty of this unpardonable sin.

6. Add to all these a *full persuasion of the incomparable glorious excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by Him*. You are to esteem the enjoyment of Christ as the only salvation and true happiness, and such happiness as has in it unsearchable riches of glory, and will make our cup to run over with exceeding abundance of peace, and joy, and glory, to all eternity. We 'must account all things but loss or the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord' etc. (Phil. 3:8). Such a persuasion as this will allure and incline your wills and affections to choose and embrace Christ as the chief good, and never to rest satisfied without the enjoyment of Him, and to reject everything that stands in competition with Him, or the enjoyment of Him. Christ is precious in the esteem of all true believers (1 Peter 2:7). Their high esteem of His incomparable preciousness and excellency induces them to sell all, that they may buy this pearl of great price (Matt. 13:46). This makes them say, 'Lord, evermore give us this bread, that comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world. Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life' (John 6:33, 34, 68). 'Because of the favour of His good ointments, His name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love Him' (S. of S. 1:3). They are sick of love to Him, because He is, in their eyes, the chiefest among ten thousand (S. of S. 5:8, 10).

As the glory of God, that appeared in the wonderful beauty of the temple and in the wisdom and glory of Solomon, drew worshippers to God from the utmost parts of the earth, so the unparalleled excellency of Christ, which was prefigured by the glory of Solomon and the temple, more powerfully draws believers in these gospel days. The devil, who is the god of this world, knows how necessary it is for our salvation to discern all the glory and excellency of Christ and, therefore, where the gospel is preached, he makes it his great work to eclipse the glory of Christ in the ministry and to blind the minds of the people, 'lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine into them' (2 Cor. 4:4). One that is convinced of the truth of the gospel may be averse to the embracing of it until he see also the goodness of it, that Christ is altogether lovely and excellent.

I come now to 'the second principal act of faith by which Christ Himself, and His Spirit, and all His saving benefits, are actually received into the heart, which is believing on Christ, as revealed and freely promised to us in the gospel, for all His salvation'. The Spirit of God habitually disposes and inclines our heart to a right performance of this act, by enabling us to perform the first act, according to the former instructions, by believing assuredly those great things of the gospel by which we are delivered into a form of doctrine (Rom. 6:17), which we are to obey from our hearts, and to follow as our pattern in the manner of our acting faith in Christ for salvation. Therefore, I need only exhort you briefly to act your faith in Christ according to that form and pattern, in which you have been already so largely instructed.

You are to believe in Christ as alone sufficient, and all sufficient for your happiness and salvation, despairing altogether of any attainment of happiness by our own wisdom, strength, works of righteousness, or any fleshly, worldly confidences whatever. We must be as dead people to all other confidences, and account them to be loss for Christ, according to the example of the blessed apostle (Phil. 3:3, 7, 8). We must not be grieved that we have nothing to trust upon besides Christ for our salvation; but rather we are to rejoice that we need nothing else, and that we have a sure foundation to rely on, incomparably better than any other that can be imagined. And we must resolve to cast the burden of our souls wholly on Christ, and to seek salvation no other way, whatever becomes of us.

If the cripple lay not the whole weight of his body upon a strong staff, but part of it upon a rotten one, he is like to receive a fall. If the swimmer will not commit his body wholly to the water to bear him up, but catch at weeds, or struggle to feel out ground, he may sink to the bottom. Christ will be all our salvation, or nothing. If we seek to be saved any other way, as the Galatians did by circumcision, Christ will profit us nothing (Gal. 5:2).

You are also to receive Christ merely as a free gift, given to the chief of sinners, resolving that you will not perform any conditions to procure yourselves a right and title to Him, but that you will come to Him as a lost sinner, an ungodly creature, trusting on 'Him that justifies the ungodly', and that you will 'buy Him without money', and 'without any price' whatever (Rom. 4:5; Isa. 55:2) Look not on your faith or love, or any good

qualifications in yourselves, as the grounds of your trusting in Christ, but only to the free grace and loving-kindness of God in Christ: 'How excellent is Your loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings' (Ps. 36:7). For if you make your own faith, love or good qualifications to be your first and principal foundation, and you build Christ on them, instead of building all on Christ, you invert the order of the gospel, and Christ will profit you nothing.

Another thing to be observed diligently is that you must come to Christ for a new holy heart and life and all things necessary for this, as well as for deliverance from the wrath of God and the torments of hell. You must also come to Him with an ardent love and affection to Him, and esteem Him better than a thousand worlds, and the only excellent portion, loathing and abhorring yourself as a vile, sinful and miserable creature, and accounting all things dung in comparison of His excellency; that you may be able to say from the bottom of your heart, 'Whom have I in heaven but You? There is none on earth that I desire besides You' (Ps. 73:25).

Lastly, you must endeavour to draw near with 'full assurance of faith' (Heb. 10:22), trusting on Christ confidently for your own particular salvation, upon the account of that general promise 'that whoever believes on Christ shall not be ashamed' (Rom. 9:33). You must check yourselves for all doubtings, fears, staggerings, concerning your own salvation by Christ, saying with the psalmist, 'Why are you cast down, O my soul? and why are you disquieted within me?' etc. (Ps. 42: 11).

The third thing contained in this direction is the avoiding all delay in the performance of this great work of believing in Christ. Until we have performed it, we continue under the power of sin and Satan and under the wrath of God, and there is nothing between hell and us besides the breath of our nostrils. It is dangerous for Lot to linger in Sodom, lest fire and brimstone come down from heaven upon him. The man-slayer must flee with all haste to the city of refuge, 'lest the avenger of blood pursue him, while his heart is hot, and slay him' (Deut. 19:5, 6). We should make haste, and not delay, to keep God's commandments' (Ps. 119:60), and 'flee for refuge to the hope set before us' (Heb. 6:18). And God commands us to flee thus by faith, without which it is impossible to please God in other duties. The work is of such a nature that it may be performed .as soon as you hear the gospel. 'As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me' (Ps.

18:44). 'As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children' (Isa. 66:8). We have many examples of those that received the Word by faith at the first hearing of it. Three thousand were added to the church on the very same day wherein Peter first published the gospel in Jerusalem (Acts 2: 41). So many Jews and Gentiles were converted at the first hearing of the apostle Paul at Antioch (Acts 13:48). The jailer and all his house believed, and were baptized, the same night in which Paul first preached to them (Acts 16: 33, 34). The gospel came at first to the Thessalonians, 'not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost' (1 Thess. 1:5, 6). If God open the hearts of His people to attend diligently, they may be instructed in the knowledge of the gospel by one brief sermon sufficiently to begin the practice of saving faith. And, when they know their duty, God requires immediate performance, without allowing us the least respite in the state of unbelief.

When Satan cannot prevail with people to reject wholly the duty of believing, his next attempt for the ruin of their souls is to prevail with them at least to delay and shift off the performance of it, from time to time, by several false reasonings and imaginations which he puts into their minds. The most ignorant and sensual are easily prevailed with to deter this duty, until they have taken their fill of the pleasure, profits and honours of this world, and are summoned to prepare for another world by infirmities, age, sickness, praying and hoping that a large time of repentance will be granted unto them before they die. But such delays show that they are really unwilling to repent and believe, until they are forced by necessity, and that they prefer the pleasures, profits and honours of the world above God, and Christ, and their own souls. Thus they unfit themselves more and more for this great duty by their customary walking in sin, and by misspending the precious time of their health and strength, which is most meet for the performance of this great work. They highly provoke God never to give them time or grace to repent of it.

Others imagine that, after they have heard the gospel of salvation by Christ, they may lawfully defer the believing it until they have sufficiently examined the truth of some other different doctrine, or until God be pleased to afford them some other means to assure them fully of the truth of the gospel. Thus they that are called 'seekers' misspend the day of grace, 'ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth' (2 Tim.

3:7). But the truth of the gospel so clearly evidences itself by its own light that, if people do not wilfully shut their eyes, or blind themselves by their own pride, and love their lusts, they would easily perceive that it is the truth of God, because the image of His grace, mercy, power, justice and holiness appears manifestly engraven upon it. It is a sign people are proud when they consent not to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the 'doctrine which is according to godliness' (1 Tim. 6:3). If they were humble and sincerely inclined to do the will of God, they would 'know whether the doctrine is of God, or no' (John 7:17); they would quickly be persuaded of the truth by Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, spoken to them in the Scripture. And if they will not hear them, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead, or whatever other miracle be wrought to confirm the divine authority of the gospel (Luke 16:31).

Another sort of people there are that delay the great work of believing, to the rum of their souls, resting in an attendance upon the outward means of grace and salvation, instead of any endeavours to receive Christ by faith, though they be convinced of the truth of the gospel. This they call waiting upon God at the doors of His grace and salvation, in the use of means appointed by Him, and sitting under the droppings of the sanctuary. But let them know that this is not the right waiting on God required in Scripture. It is rather disobedience to God, and to the means of His appointment, who requires that we should be 'doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves' (James 1:22), and that we should come in to the spiritual feast (Luke 14:23), and not only stand at the door, or sit under the droppings of the house of God, lest Christ repute us no better than eavesdroppers. That holy waiting on the Lord commended to us in Scripture is ever accompanied with believing and hoping in the Lord, and depends thereon: 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord' (Ps. 27: 13, 14). 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord' (Lam. 3:26).

What is it that these deluded ones wait for, before they perform the duty of believing? Is it for more knowledge of the gospel? The way to increase your knowledge, as well as any other talent, is to make use of what you

have received already. Believe heartily on Christ for all your salvation, according to that little knowledge of the gospel which you have, and you will have an interest in the promise of knowledge contained in the new covenant: 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them, says the Lord' (Jer. 31:34). Is it for the appointed time of your conversion that you wait? Then you wait as those impotent folk that lay at the pool of Bethesda, waiting for the season when the angel will come down and move the water. Know, then, that if you enter into Christ now by faith, you shall find in Him waters of life, and the Spirit moving them for the healing and quickening of your soul. God has appointed, by His work, that it shall be your duty to endeavour that the present time shall be the time of your conversion: 'As the Holy Ghost says, Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your heart' (Heb. 3:7, 8). And you shall never know at what time God has purposed, in His secret council, to give faith to you, until you actually believe.

Do you wait for any manifestations or flowings in of God's saving love to your soul? Then the way to obtain it is to believe that the 'God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing' (Rom. 15:13). You have sufficient manifestation of God's love to your soul by the free promises of life and salvation by Christ. Do but 'trust on the name of the Lord, and stay upon your God', when you 'walk in darkness, and see no light' of sensible comforts any other way, otherwise you wait for comforts in vain, and this shall 'you have at the Lord's hand, you 'shall lie down in sorrow' (Isa. 50:10, 11).

Do you wait for any qualifications to prepare you for the work of believing? If they be good and holy qualifications, you cannot have them before faith, but they are rather included in the nature of faith, or they are fruits of it – as has been largely proved. If they be bad and sinful, it is strange that any should wait for them, and yet no more strange than true. Some foolishly wait to be terrified with a sense of God's wrath, and despairing thoughts, and these they call the pangs of the new birth; though, in their own nature, they are rather the pangs of spiritual death, and bring forth hatred to God, rather than holiness, and, therefore, we should strive to prevent them by believing God's love in Christ, rather than to wait for them. It is true, God makes these despairing thoughts, as well as other sins, work for good to them that are delivered from them by faith in Christ; they

are moved thereby to hate sin, and to prize Christ the more and the comforts of His gospel, and to loathe and abhor themselves; yet many are brought to Christ without them, by God's giving them the knowledge of their own sins and of Christ's salvation together. Several examples of these were above-mentioned, who received the Word with joy at the first hearing of it. And we must not desire or wait for any evil or sin, such as these despairing thoughts are, that good may come of it; neither should we expect to be worse before we be better, when we may and ought to be better presently, by believing on Christ.

The fourth thing in the direction is that we should continue and increase in the most holy faith. And that we may, we must not think that, when we have once attained to the grace of saving faith, and thereby are begotten anew in Christ, our names are up in heaven, and therefore we may be careless, but, as long as we continue in this life, we must endeavour to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, not moved away from the hope of the gospel (Col. 1: 23); and to 'hold the beginning of our confidence, and rejoicing of hope steadfast unto the end' (Heb. 3:6, 14); and to 'build up ourselves in our most holy faith' (Jude 20), 'abounding therein with thanksgiving' (Col. 2:7). Though we receive Christ freely by faith, yet we are but 'babes in Christ' (1 Cor. 3:1). And we must not account that we have 'already attained, or are already perfect' (Phil. 3:12, 13); but we must strive to be more rooted and built up in Him, until 'we come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the state of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13).

If the new nature be really in us by regeneration, it will have an appetite to its own continuance and increase until it come to perfection, as the newborn babe (1 Peter 2:2). And we are not only to receive Christ and a new holy nature by faith, but also to live and walk by it, and to 'resist the devil', and to 'quench all his fiery darts' by it; and also to 'grow in grace', and to 'perfect holiness in the fear of God'; for we 'are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation' (1 Peter 1:5). As all our Christian warfare is the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12), all spiritual life and holiness continue, grow or decay in us, according as faith continues, grows or decays in us, but when this faith begins to sink by fears and doubtings, the man himself begins to sink together with it (Matt. 14: 29-31). Faith is like the hand of Moses; while it is held up, Israel prevails; when it is let down, Amalek prevails (Exod. 17:11). This continuance and growth in

faith will require our labour and industry as well as the beginning, though we are to ascribe the glory of all to the grace of God in Christ, who is the finisher, as well as the author of it (Heb. 12:2).

The church meets with great difficulties in her marching through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, as well as in her first deliverance from Egyptian bondage; yea, we often meet with greater difficulties in going to perfection than we did in the beginning of the good work, the wisdom and mercy of God so ordering it that we should be exercised with the sharpest dispensations of providence, and the fiercest assaults of our own corruptions, and Satan's temptations, after we have grace given to us to stand in the evil day.

You must therefore endeavour to continue and go on in the same right manner as I have taught you to begin this great work of believing in Christ, that your faith may be of the same nature from the beginning to the end, though it increase in degrees, for our faith is imperfect and joined with much unbelief in this world and we have need to pray still, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief' (Mark 9:24), and therefore we have need to strive for more faith, that we may receive Christ in greater perfection. If you find that your faith has produced good works, you should thereby increase your confidence in Christ, for salvation by His mere grace. But take heed of changing the nature of your faith, from trusting on the grace and merits of Christ, to trusting on your own works, according to the popish doctrine 'that our first justification is by grace and faith only, but our second justification is only by works'.

Beware also of trusting on faith itself, as a work of righteousness, instead of trusting on Christ by faith. If you do not find that your believing in such a right manner as I have described does produce such fruits of holiness as you desire, you ought not to diminish, but rather to increase your confidence in Christ, knowing that the weakness of your faith hinders its fruitfulness. And the greater your confidence is concerning the love of God to you in Christ, the greater will be your love to God and to His service. If you fall into any gross sin, after the work is begun in you, as David and Peter did, think not that you must cast away your confidence and expect nothing but wrath from God and Christ, and that you must refuse to be comforted by the grace of Christ, at least for some time; for thus you would be the more weak, and prone to fall into other sins; but rather strive

to believe more confidently that you have 'an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous', and that 'He is the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 2:1, 2). And let not the guilt of sin stay at all upon your conscience, but wash it away with all speed in the fountain of Christ's blood, which is opened for us, that it may be ready for our use on all such incident occasions; that so you may be humbled for your sins in a gospel way, and may hate your own sinfulness, and be sorry for it with godly sorrow, out of love to God. Peter might have been ruined for ever by denying Christ, as Judas was by betraying Him, if Peter's faith had not been upheld by the prayer of Christ (Luke 22:31, 32).

If a cloud be cast over all your qualifications, so that you can see no grace at all in yourselves, yet still trust on Him that justifies the ungodly, and came to seek and to save them that are lost. If God seems to deal with you as an enemy, bringing on you some horrible affliction, as He did upon Job, beware of condemning your faith and its fruits, as if they were not acceptable to God, but rather say, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him; but I will maintain mine own ways before Him' (Job 13:15). Strive to keep and to increase faith by faith, that is, by acting faith frequently, by trusting on God to keep and to increase it, 'being confident, that He which has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:6).

CHAPTER TWELVE

Make diligent use of your most holy faith for the immediate performance of the duties of the law, by walking no longer according to your old natural state, or any principles or means of practice that belong unto it; but only according to that new state which you receive by faith, and the principles and means of practice that properly belong thereunto; and strive to continue and increase in such manner of practice. This is the only way to attain to an acceptable performance of those holy and righteous duties, as far as it is possible in this present life.

Here I am guiding you to the manner of practice, wherein you are to make use of faith, and of all other effectual means of holiness before treated of, which faith lays hold on, for the immediate performance of the law, which is the great end aimed at in this whole treatise. And therefore this deserves to be diligently considered, as the principal direction, to which all the foregoing and following are subservient. As for the meaning of it, I have already showed that our old natural state is that which we derived from the first Adam by natural generation, and it is called in the Scripture 'the old man'; and while we be in it, we are said to be 'in the flesh'. And our new state is that which we receive from the second Adam, Jesus Christ, by being new-born in union and fellowship with Him through faith; and it is called in Scripture 'the new man' and, when we are in it, we are said to be 'in the Spirit'. The principles and means of practice belonging to a natural state are such as persons do or may attain and make use of before they are in Christ by faith. Such as belong properly to the new state are the manifold holy endowments, privileges and enjoyments which we partake of in Christ by faith, such as have already appeared to be the only effectual means of a holy life.

We are said to walk according to either of these states, or to the principles and means that belong to either of them, when we are moved and guided by virtue of them to such actings as are agreeable to them. Thus kings act according to their state in commanding authoritatively, and in magnificent bounty; poor men, in a way of service and obedience, and children, indiscriminately (Esther 1:7; Prov. 18:23; 1 Cor. 13:11). So the manner of practice here directed to consists in moving and guiding ourselves in the performance of the works of the law by gospel principles and means. This is the rare and excellent art of godliness, in which every Christian should

strive to be skilful and expert. The reason why many come off with shame and confusion after they have a long time laboured with much zeal and industry for the attainment of true godliness, is because they were never acquainted with this holy art, and never endeavoured to practice it in a right gospel way. Some worldly arts are called mysteries, but above all this spiritual art of godliness is, without controversy, a great mystery (1 Tim. 3:16), because the means that are to be made use of in it are deeply mysterious, as has been shown; and you are not a skilful artist till you know them and can reduce them to practice. It is a manner of practice far above the sphere of natural ability, such as would never have entered into the hearts of the wisest in the world, if it had not been revealed to us in the Scriptures and, when it is there most plainly revealed, continues a dark riddle to those that are not inwardly enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit; such as many godly persons guided by the Spirit do in some measure walk in, yet do but obscurely discern: they can hardly perceive their own knowledge of it and can hardly give any account to others of the way wherein they walk; as the disciples that walked in Christ, the way to the Father, and yet perceived not that knowledge in themselves: 'Lord, we know not whither You go, and how can we know the way?' (John 14:5). This is the reason why many poor believers are so weak in Christ and attain so small a degree of holiness and righteousness. Therefore, that you may the better be acquainted with a mystery of so high concernment, I shall show, in the first place, that the Holy Scriptures do direct you to this manner of practice, as only effectual for the performance of holy duties; and then I shall lay before you some necessary instructions, that you may understand how to walk aright in it, and continue and go forward therein, until you be made perfect in Christ.

For the first of these, the Holy Scriptures are very large and clear in directing us to this manner of practice, and to continuance and growth therein. And here it is useful for us to observe the great variety of peculiar words and phrases whereby the Holy Ghost teaches this mystery, which many that frequently read the Scriptures, yea, that pretend to be preachers of the gospel, do little understand or regard – showing thereby that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them, and that they are not yet acquainted with the form of sound words, and are strangers to the very language of the gospel which they profess and pretend to teach.

I shall, therefore, present to your view several of these peculiar words and phrases, whereby this mysterious manner of practice is expressed in the Holy Scriptures and commended to you as the only way for the sure attainment of all holiness in heart and life. I shall rank such of them together as agree in sense, that the multitude of them may not breed confusion in your thoughts.

1. This is the manner of practice in Scripture, which is expressed by 'living by faith' (Hab. 2:4; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 10: 38); 'walking by faith' (2 Cor. 5:7); 'faith working by love' (Gal. 5:6); 'overcoming the world by faith' (1 John 5:4); 'quenching all the fiery darts of the wicked, by the shield of faith' (Eph. 6:16). Some make no more of living and walking by faith than merely a stirring up and encouraging ourselves to our duty by such principles as we believe. Thus the Jews might account that they lived by faith, because they professed and assented unto the doctrine of Moses and the prophets, and were moved thereby to a zeal of God, though they sought righteousness not by faith, but as it were by the words of the law (Rom. 9:32). Thus Paul might think he lived by faith while he was a zealous Pharisee, but afterwards he knew that the life of faith consisted in dying to the law and living to God, and that not himself, but Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:19, 20). As it is one and the same thing to be justified by faith, and by Christ believed on (Rom. 5:1), so to live, walk and work by faith, is all one with living, walking, working by means of Christ and His saving endowments, which we receive and make use of by faith, to guide and move ourselves to the practice of holiness.

2. The same thing is commended to us by the terms of 'walking, rooted and built up in Christ' (Col. 2:6, 7); 'living to God, and not to ourselves but to have Christ living in us' (Gal. 2:19, 20); 'good conversation in Christ' (1 Peter 3:16); 'putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, that we may walk honestly, as in the day' (Rom. 13:13, 14); 'being strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might' (Eph. 6:10); 'doing all things in the name of Christ' (Col. 3:17); 'walking up and down in the name of the Lord' (Zech. 10:12); 'going in the strength of the Lord; making mention of His righteousness, even of His only' (Ps. 71:16). These phrases are frequent and do sufficiently explain one another, and do show that we are to practice holiness, not only by virtue of Christ's authority, but also of His strengthening endowments moving us and encouraging us thereunto.

3. It is also signified by the phrases of 'being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim. 2:1); 'having our conversation in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God' (2 Cor. 1:12); 'having or holding fast grace, that we may serve God acceptably, labouring abundantly,' in such manner as that the whole work is not performed by us, but 'by the grace of God that is with us' (1 Cor. 15:10). By 'grace', therefore, we may well understand the privileges of our new state given to us in Christ, whereby we ought to be influenced and guided in the performance of holy duties.

4. It is also signified when we are to 'put off the old' and 'put on the new man'; yea, to continue in so doing, though we have done it in a measure already; and that we avoid our 'former sinful conversation' (Eph. 4:21, 22, 24); and to avoid sin, because we have 'put off the old', and 'put on the new man' (Col. 3:9, 10). I have already showed that by this twofold man is not meant merely sin and holiness; but by the former is meant our natural state, with all its endowments, whereby we are furnished only to the practice of sin; and by the latter, our new state in Christ, that whereby we are furnished with all means necessary for the practice of holiness.

5. We are to understand the same thing when we are taught not 'to walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit', that we may be 'free from the law of sin', and 'that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us' (Rom. 8:1, 2, 3); and, 'through the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body'; and 'to be led by the Spirit', because we 'live by the Spirit', and have 'crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts' (Gal. 5:24). The apostle shows by these expressions not only that we are to practice holiness, but also by what means we may do it effectually. By 'flesh' is meant our old nature, derived from the first Adam; and by 'Spirit' is meant the Spirit of Christ and that new nature which we have by Him dwelling in us. We are said to walk after either of these natures, when we make the properties or qualifications of either of them to be the principles of our practice. So, 'that we may bring forth fruit unto God', the meaning is that we must endeavour to bring forth the fruits of holiness, not by virtue of the law, that killing letter, to which the flesh is married, and by which the motions of sin are in us; but by virtue of the Spirit and His manifold riches, which we partake of in our new state by a mystical marriage with Christ (Rom. 7:4, 5, 6); and by

virtue of such principles as belong to the new state declared in the gospel, whereby the Holy Spirit is ministered to us.

6. This is the manner of walking which the apostle Paul directs us to, when he teaches us, by his own example, that the continual work of our lives should be 'to know Christ, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death; if by any means we may attain unto the resurrection of the dead,' and to increase and press forward in this kind of knowledge (Phil. 3:10-12, 14). Certainly, he means such an experimental knowledge of Christ, and His death and resurrection, as effectually makes us conformable thereunto in dying unto sin and living unto God. And he would hereby guide us to make use of Christ and His death and resurrection by faith, as the powerful means of holiness in heart and life, and to increase in this manner of walking until we attain unto perfection in Christ.

The second thing proposed was to lay before you some necessary instructions, that your steps may be guided aright to continue and go forward in this way of holiness, until you be made perfect in Christ. And, seeing we are naturally prone to mistake this way, and are utterly unable to find it out, or discern it, by our own reason and understanding, we should the more diligently attend to these instructions taken out of the Holy Scriptures. And we should earnestly pray that God would give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that we may discern the way of holiness thereby and walk aright in it, according to that gracious promise: 'The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein' (Isa. 35:8).

1. Let us observe, and consider diligently, in our whole conversation that though we are partakers of a new holy state by faith in Christ, yet our natural state remains in a measure with all its corrupt principles and properties. As long as we live in this present world, our apprehension of Christ and His perfections in this life is only by faith; whereas by sense and reason we may apprehend much in ourselves contrary to Christ, and this faith is imperfect, so that true believers have cause to pray to God to help their unbelief (Mark 9:24). Therefore, though we receive a perfect Christ by faith, yet the measure and degree of enjoying Him is imperfect; and we hope still, so long as we are in this world, to enjoy Him in a higher degree of perfection than we have done. We are yet but weak in Christ (2 Cor. 13:4); children in comparison to the perfection we expect in another

world (1 Cor. 13:10, 11); and we must grow still, till we come to the perfect man (Eph. 4:13); and some are weaker babes than others, and have received Christ in so small a measure that they may be accounted carnal, rather than spiritual (1 Cor. 3:1). And because all the blessings and perfections in our new state – as justification, the gift of the Spirit, and of the holy nature, and the adoption of children – are seated and treasured up in Christ and joined with Him inseparably, we can receive them no further than we receive Christ Himself by faith, which we only do in an imperfect measure and degree in this life.

The apostle Paul proposes himself as a pattern for all those that are perfect in truth of grace to imitate, and yet he professes that he was not yet made so perfect in the degree and measure of saving endowments but that he did still 'press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus', labouring still to 'apprehend and win Christ more perfectly, and to be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith', and to gain more experimental 'knowledge of Christ, and of the fellowship of His sufferings, and power of His resurrection, being made conformable thereunto' (Phil. 3:8, 10, 14). Believers are justified already, yet 'wait for the hope of righteousness, by faith', that is, for the full enjoyment of the righteousness of Christ (Gal. 5:5). They have received but the 'first fruits of the Spirit', and must wait for a more full enjoyment of it. The Spirit witnesses now to them that 'they are the children of God', and yet they groan within themselves, waiting for more full enjoyment of adoption (Rom. 8:23).

Now, seeing the degree and measure of our reception and enjoyment of Christ, with all the blessings of our new state in Him, in this life is imperfect, it follows clearly that our contrary natural state, with its properties, remains still in us in some degree and is not perfectly abolished; so that all believers in this world do in some degree partake of these two contrary states. Believers have, indeed, put off the old man, and put on the new, where Christ is all and in all (Col. 3:10, 11); yet they are to put the old man off and the new man on more and more, because the old man remains still in a measure. They are said to be, 'not in the flesh', but 'in the Spirit', because their being in the Spirit is their best and lasting state; as denominations are usually taken from the better part; but yet the flesh is in them, and they find work enough to mortify the deeds of it (Rom. 8:9, 13).

Therefore several things which are contrary to each other are frequently attributed to believers in the Scripture with respect to these two contrary states, wherein one place seems to contradict another, and yet both are true in divers respects. Thus holy Paul says truly of himself, 'I live, yet not I' (Gal. 2:20); because he did live to God by Christ living in him, and yet in another respect, according to his natural state, he did not live to God. Again, he professes that he was 'carnal, sold under sin', and yet, on the contrary, that he 'allowed not sin', but 'hated' it. He shows how both these were true concerning himself in divers respects. He says, 'In me (that is in my flesh) dwells no good thing', and 'I delight to do the will of God according to the inward man', 'With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but, with the flesh, the law of sin' (Rom. 7:14, 15, 18, 22, 25). John says, 'He that says he has no sin, deceives himself, and is a liar' (1 John 1:8); and also that it is true that 'Whatever is born of God, does not commit sin; for his seed, [that is Christ, the new spiritual nature] remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God' (1 John 3:9). It is true that we are weak and can do nothing, and yet strong and able to do all things (2 :Cor. 12:10, 11; Phil. 4:13). It is true that believers are dead, because of sin, but alive, because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10); and that, when they die a natural death, they shall never die (John 11:25, 26). They are sons, that have the inheritance by their birthright, and yet in some respects may differ nothing from servants; and so they may be under the law in a sense, and yet under grace and heirs, according to the free promise at the same time (Gal. 4:1, 2). They are redeemed from the curse of the law, and have forgiveness of sins, and a promise, that God will never be wrath with them, nor rebuke them any more (Gal. 3:13; Eph. 1:7; Isa. 54:9); and yet, on the contrary, the curse written in the law is sometimes poured out upon them (Dan. 9:11); and they have need still to pray that God would deliver them from their guiltiness, and forgive their debts (Ps. 51:14; Matt. 6:12); and they may expect that God will punish them for all their iniquities (Amos 3:2).

These contrary things asserted concerning believers in Scriptures do sufficiently manifest that they partake of two contrary states in this life. And this is a plain, easy and ready way to reconcile these seeming contradictions, whatever other ways may be used to reconcile some of them. And what reason is there to question that the old state remains in believers in some degrees, seeing all sound Protestants acknowledge that

the sinful depravation and pollution of our natures, commonly called 'original sin', which is one principal part of this old state, does remain in all as long as they live in the world? Now, though some penal evils may be said to remain in us, yet we cannot suppose that this original pollution is continued in us as considered in Christ, but as considered in our old state, derived from the first Adam.

Therefore, the first sin of Adam is imputed in some respect even to those that are justified by faith; and they remain in some measure, as aforesaid, under the punishment and curse denounced: 'In the day you eat thereof, you surely will die' (Gen. 2:17). And, on this account, the same original guilt and pollution is propagated to the children of believing parents, as well as other, by natural generation. And, if such a great and fundamental part of our natural state continues in believers as subjection to the guilt of the first sin and corruption, which is one great part of the punishment and death threatened, and by which we are prone and inclined to all actual sins, why should we not judge that other parts of the same state do likewise continue in them, as the guilt of their own actual sins, and subjection to the wrath of God, and the curses and punishments denounced against them in the law? And why should we not judge that all the miseries of this life, and death itself, are inflicted upon believers at least in some respect as punishments of sin?

It may be objected that this doctrine of a twofold state of believers in this life derogates much from the perfection of our justification by Christ, and from the fullness of all the grace and spiritual blessings of Christ, and from the merits of His death, and the power of His Spirit, and that it greatly diminishes the consolation of believers in Christ. But it may be easily vindicated from this objection if we understand it rightly, for, notwithstanding this twofold state, it still holds true that believers while they are on earth have all perfections of spiritual blessings, justification, adoption, the gift of the Spirit, holiness, eternal life and glory, in and with Christ (Eph. 1:3). In the person of Christ, who is now in heaven, the old man is perfectly crucified; they are dead to sin and to the law and its curse, and they are quickened together with Him, and raised up with Him, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). And believers do in their own persons receive and enjoy by faith all these perfect spiritual

blessings of Christ, as far as they receive and enjoy Christ Himself dwelling in them, and no farther.

Thus far they are in a new state, free from guilt, pollution and punishment of sin, and so from the wrath of God, all miseries and death itself, while they are in this world; yea, all the guilt, pollution and punishments of sin, and all evils whatever, which they are subject to according to their natural state, do them no harm according to this new state but work for their good, and are no evils, but rather advantages to them, tending to the destruction only of the flesh, and to the perfection of the new man in Christ. Yet it holds true also that our reception and enjoyment of Christ Himself and all His perfections is but in an imperfect measure and degree, until faith be turned into heavenly vision and fruition of Christ and therefore, our old sinful state, with the evils thereof is not perfectly abolished during this life. The kingdom of heaven, or the grace of Christ within us is like leaven in meal, which does not unite itself perfectly to the meal in an instant, but by degrees until the whole be leavened (Matt. 13:33); or, like the morning light that expels darkness, shining more and more unto the perfect day (Prov. 4:18).

This cannot be justly accounted any derogation from the merits of Christ's death or from the power of His Spirit, seeing Christ never intended to bring to pass by His death, or by the power of His Spirit, that we should enjoy His spiritual blessings any farther than we are in Him, and enjoy Him by faith; or that we should be made holy or happy according to the flesh, by a reformation of our natural state, as has been shown. Neither does this diminish the consolation of believers in Christ, for thereby they may know that they have the perfection of grace and happiness in Christ, and that they enjoy it in this world, as far as they enjoy Christ Himself by faith; and that they shall enjoy it in a perfect measure, and be fully freed from their sinful and miserable state, when that frame of nature, which they received from the first Adam, is dissolved by death.

This instruction is very useful to frame our souls aright for the practicing holiness only by those gospel principles and means that belong to our new state, which we are partakers of by faith in Christ. And thus it is easily vindicated from another great objection, wherein the Papists and Quakers do much triumph. They appeal to men's consciences to answer this question: 'Which doctrine is most likely to bring people to the practice of

true godliness?' Theirs, which teaches that perfect holiness may be attained in this life; or ours, which teaches that it is impossible for us to keep the law perfectly, and to purge ourselves from all sin, as long as we live in this world, though we use our best endeavours?

They think that common reason will make the verdict pass for them against this doctrine, as that which discourages all endeavours to perfection and hardens the hearts of people to allow themselves in sin, because they cannot avoid it. But, on the contrary, the doctrine of the perfectionists hardens people to allow themselves in sin, and to call evil good: as the Papists account that the concupiscence of the flesh against the spirit is no sin, but rather good matter for the exercise of their virtues, because the most perfect in this life are not without it. It also discourages those that labour to get holiness in the right way, by faith in Christ, and makes them to think that they labour in vain because they find themselves still sinful and far from perfection, when they have done their best to attain it. It hinders our diligence in seeking holiness by those principles and means by which only it can be found; for who will be diligent and watchful to avoid walking according to his own carnal principles, if he thinks that his own carnal state, with its principles, is quite abolished and is out of him, so that at present he is in no danger of walking according to them? Whatever good works the doctrine of the perfectionists may serve to promote, I am sure it hinders a great part of that work which Christ would have us to be employed in as long as we live in this world. We must know that our old state, with its evil principles, continues still in a measure, or else we shall not be fit for the great duties of confessing our sins, loathing ourselves for them, praying earnestly for the pardon of them, a just sorrowing for them with a godly sorrow, accepting the punishment of our sins and giving God the glory of His justice, and offering to Him the sacrifice of a glory and contrite spirit, being poor in spirit, working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

Some have doubted how it can consist with our justification by Christ that we should be still liable to be punished for our sins, and obliged to pray for the pardon of them, because they have not well considered the twofold state of believers in this life. And, except we know this, and keep it in mind, we shall never be fit to practice continually the great duties that tend to the putting off the old man, and putting on the new man, and mortifying

the deeds of the body by the Spirit, praying continually that God would renew a right spirit in us, and sanctify us throughout, pressing forward unto perfection, desiring the sincere milk of the Word, and the enjoyment of other ordinances. Christ has appointed that His church on earth should be employed in such works, and perfectionists either do, or feign would account them needless for them, and that they have no longer need of Christ Himself to be their spiritual Physician and Advocate with the Father, and propitiation for their sins; therefore, they are not fit to be members of the church on earth, and are never likely to be members of the church in heaven, except they can make a ladder and climb up thither before their time.

2. Despair of purging the flesh, or natural man of its sinful lusts and inclinations, and of practicing holiness by your willing and resolving to do the best that lies in your own power, and trusting on the grace of God and Christ to help you in such resolutions and endeavours: rather resolve to trust on Christ, 'to work in you to will and do, by His own power, according to His own good pleasure'. They that are convinced of their own sin and misery do commonly first think to tame the flesh, and to subdue and root out its lusts, and to make their corrupt nature to be better natured and inclined to holiness by their struggling and wrestling with it. And if they can but bring their hearts to a full purpose and resolution to do the best that lies in them, they hope that, by such a resolution, they shall be able to achieve great enterprises in the conquest of their lusts and the performance of the most difficult duties. It is the great work of some zealous divines, in their preaching and writings, to stir up people to this resolution, wherein they place the chiefest turning-point from sin to godliness. And they think that this is not contrary to the life of faith, because they trust on the grace of God, through Christ, to help them in all such resolutions and endeavours. Thus they endeavour to reform their old state and to be made perfect in the flesh, instead of putting it off and walking according to the new state in Christ. They trust on low carnal things for holiness, and upon the acts of their own will, their purposes, resolutions and endeavours, instead of Christ; and they trust on Christ to help them in this carnal way; whereas true faith would teach them that they are nothing, and that they do but labour in vain. They may as well wash the blackamoor white as purge the flesh, or natural man, from its evil lusts and make it pure and holy. It is desperately wicked, past all cure. It will

unavoidably lust against the Spirit of God, even in the best saints on earth (Gal. 5:17). Its mind is enmity to the law of God and neither is, nor can be subject to it (Rom. 8:7). They that would cure it and make it holy by their own resolutions and endeavours do act quite contrary to the design of Christ's death, for He died, not that the flesh, or old natural man, might be made holy, but that it might be crucified, and destroyed out of us (Rom. 6:6), and that we might live to God, not to ourselves, or by any natural power of our own resolutions and endeavours, but by Christ living in us, and by His Spirit bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in us (Gal. 2:20; 5:24, 25). Therefore, we must be content to leave the natural man vile and wicked as we found it, until it be utterly abolished by death; though we must not allow its wickedness, but rather groan to be delivered from the body of this death, thanking God that there is a deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our way to mortify sinful affections and lusts must be, not by purging them out of the flesh, but by putting off the flesh itself and getting above into Christ by faith, and walking in that new nature that is by Him. Thus 'the way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath' (Prov. 15:24). Our willing, resolving and endeavouring must be to do the best, not that lies in ourselves, or in our own power, but that Christ and the power of His Spirit shall be pleased to work in us; for in us (that is, in our flesh) there dwells no good thing (Rom. 7:18). We have great ground to trust in God and Christ for help in such resolutions and endeavours after holiness, as in things that are agreeable to the design of Christ in our redemption, and to the way of acting and living by faith. It is likely that Peter sincerely resolved to die with Christ, rather than to deny Him, and to do all that he could by his own power for that end; but Christ made him quickly to see the weakness and vanity of such resolutions. And we see by experience what many resolutions made in sickness and other dangers mostly come to. It is not enough for us to trust on Christ to help us to act and endeavour so far only as creatures; for so the worst of men are helped: He is the JEHOVAH in whom we live, move and have our being (Acts 17:28). And it is likely the Pharisee would trust on God to help him in duty, as he would thank God for the performance of duty (Luke 18: 11). And this is all the faith that many make use of in order to a holy practice.

But we must trust on Christ to enable us above the strength of our own natural power, by virtue of the new nature which we have in Christ and by His Spirit dwelling and working in us; or else our best endeavours will be altogether sinful, and mere hypocrisy, notwithstanding all the help for which we trust upon Him. We must also take heed of depending for holiness upon any resolution to walk in Christ, or any written covenants, or any holiness that we have already received; for we must know that the virtue of these things continues no longer than we continue walking in Christ, and Christ in us. They must be kept up by the continual presence of Christ in us; as light is maintained by the presence of the sun, and cannot subsist without it.

2. You must not seek to procure forgiveness of sins, the favour of God, a new holy nature, life and happiness, by any works of the moral law, or by any rites and ceremonies whatever; but rather you must work as those that have all these things already, according to your new state in Christ; as such who are only to receive them more and more by faith, as they are ready prepared and treasured up for you, and freely given to you, in your spiritual Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. If we walk as those that are yet wholly to seek for the procurements of such enjoyments as these, it is a manifest sign that at present we judge ourselves to be without them, and without Christ Himself, in whose fullness they are all contained; and therefore we walk according to our old natural state, as those that are yet in the flesh, and that would get salvation in it, and by our carnal works and observances, instead of living altogether on Christ by faith.

This practice is according to the tenor of the covenant of works, as I have before showed. And we have no ground to trust on Christ and His Spirit to work holiness in us this way, for we are dead to the legal covenant by the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4). and, if we be led by the Spirit, we are not under the law (Gal. 5:18). When the Galatians were seduced by false teachers to seek the procurement of justification and life by circumcision and other works of the Mosaical law, the apostle Paul rebuked them for seeking to be made perfect in the flesh, directly contrary to their good beginning in the Spirit, for rendering Christ of none effect to them, and for falling from grace (Gal. 3:3; 5:4). And when some of the Colossians sought perfection in like manner by observation of circumcision, holy meats, holy times and other rudiments of the world, the same apostle blamed them for not

holding the head Jesus Christ, and as such as were not dead and risen with Christ, but living merely in the world (Col. 2:19, 20; 3:1). He clearly shows that those who seek any saving enjoyments in such a way do walk according to their old natural state; and that the true manner of living by faith in Christ is to walk as those that have all fullness in Christ by faith and need not seek for them any other way to procure them for themselves.

In this sense it is a true saying that believers should not act *for* life, but *from* life. They must act as those that are not procuring life by their works, but as such who have already received and derived life from Christ, and act from the power and virtue received from Him. And hereby it appears that the Papists and all others that think to justify, purify, sanctify and save themselves by any of their own works, rites or ceremonies whatever, do walk in a carnal way, as those that are without any present interest in Christ and shall never attain unto holiness or happiness until they learn a better way of religion.

4. Think not that you can effectually incline your heart to the immediate practice of holiness by any such practical principles as do only serve to bind, press and urge you to the performance of holy duties; but rather let such principles stir you up to go to Christ first by faith, that you may be effectually inclined to the immediate practice of holiness in Him by gospel principles that strengthen and enable you, as well as oblige you thereunto. There are some practical principles that do only bind, press and urge us to holy duties, by showing the reasonableness, equity and necessity of our obedience, without showing at all how we that are by nature dead in sin, under the wrath of God, may have any strength and ability for the performance of them: as, for instance, the authority of God the lawgiver, our absolute dependence on Him as our Creator, Preserver, Governor, in whose hand is our life, breath and all our happiness here, and for ever; His all-seeing eye, that searches our heart, discerns our very thoughts and secret purposes; His exact justice, in rendering to all according to their works; His almighty and eternal power, to reward those that obey Him, and to punish transgressors for ever; the unspeakable joy of heaven, and terrible damnation of hell.

Such principles as these do bind our consciences very strictly, and work very strongly upon the prevalent affections of hope and fear, to press and urge our hearts to the performance of holy duties, if we believe them

assuredly, and work them earnestly upon our hearts, by frequent, serious, lively meditation. And therefore, some account them the most forcible and effectual means to form any virtue in the soul, and to bring it to immediate performance of any duty, though never so difficult; and that the life of faith consists principally in our living to God in holiness, by a constant belief and meditation on them. And they account those things that serve to mind them of such principles very effectual for holiness – as looking on the picture of death, or on a death's-head, keeping a coffin by them ready made, walking about among the graves, etc. But this is not that manner of living to God of which the apostle speaks when he says, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me' (Gal. 2:20).

If a man make use of these obliging principles to stir him to go to Christ for strength to act holily, he walks like one that has received Christ as his only life by faith; otherwise he walks like other natural men. For the natural man may be brought to act by these principles, partly by natural light, and more fully by Scripture light, without any true knowledge of the way of salvation by Christ, as if Christ had never come into the world. And he may be strictly bound by them, and vehemently urged and pressed to holy duties; and yet, all this while, is left to his own natural strength, or rather weakness, being not assured by any of these principles that God would give him strength to help him in the performance of these duties; and can do nothing aright until he get new life and strength by Christ, by a more precious saving faith. There would be no need of a new life and strength by Christ, if these principles were sufficient to bring us to a holy conversation. Therefore, this manner of practice is no better than walking after the flesh, according to our corrupt state, and seeking to be made perfect in the flesh. No question but Paul was very diligent in it while he was a blinded Pharisee. Yea, the heathen philosophers might attain to it, in some measure by the light of common reason. The devils have such principles, as they do believe assuredly, yet they are never the better for them. It is a part of the natural wisdom, whereby the world knew not God, not that wisdom of God in a mystery, discovered in the gospel, which is the only sanctifying wisdom and power of God unto salvation.

What can you produce but corruption, by pressing with motives to holiness one that has no soundness in him, from the sole of the foot, even to the head, only wounds and bruises and putrefying sores? He that is made truly sensible of his own vileness and deadness by nature will despair of ever bringing himself to holiness by such principles that afford him no life and strength, but only lay an obligation upon him to urge and press him to duty.

What are mere obligations to one that is dead in sin? While the soul is without spiritual life, sin is the more moved and enraged by pressing and urging upon the soul the obligations of the law and its command. The motions of sin are by the law; and sin, taking occasion by the commandment, works in us all manner of concupiscence (Rom. 7:5, 8). And yet these obliging principles are very good and excellent in this right gospel use of them; as the apostle says of the law, that it is good, if it be used lawfully (1 Tim. 1:8). The humbled sinner knows well his obligations; but it is life and strength that he wants, and despairs of walking according to such obligations until he get this life and strength by faith in Christ. Therefore, these obliging principles do move him to go, in the first place, to Christ, that so he may be enabled to answer their end by the strengthening and enlivening principles of God's grace in Christ.

Some there are that make use of gospel principles, only to oblige and urge to duty, without affording any life and strength for the performance; as they that think 'that Christ died and rose again to establish a new covenant of works for our salvation, and to give us a pattern of good works by His own obedience, rather than to purchase life, obedience and good works for us'. Such as these do not understand and receive the principles of the gospel rightly, but they pervert and abuse them, contrary to their true nature and design; and thereby they render them as ineffectual for their sanctification, as any other natural or legal principles.

5. Stir up and strengthen yourself to perform the duties of holiness by a firm persuasion of your enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and all spiritual and everlasting benefits through Him. Set not yourselves on the performance of the law with any prevailing thoughts or apprehensions that you are yet without an interest in Christ, and the love of God through Him; and the curse of the law, the power of sin and Satan, having no better portion than this present world; no better strength, than that which is in the purposes

and resolutions of your own free will. While such thoughts as these prevail and influence your actings, it is evident that you walk according to the principles and practices of your old natural state, and you will be moved thereby to yield to the dominion of sin and Satan, to withdraw yourselves from God and godliness, as Adam was moved, from the sight of his own nakedness, to hide himself from God (Gen. 3:10). Therefore, your way to a holy practice is first to conquer and expel such unbelieving thoughts by trusting confidently on Christ, and persuading yourselves by faith that His righteousness, Spirit, glory and all His spiritual benefits are yours, and that He dwells in you, and you in Him. In the might of this confidence, you shall go forth to the performance of the law; and you will be strong against sin and Satan, and able to do all things through Christ that strengthens you. This confident persuasion is of great necessity to the right framing and disposing our hearts to walk according to our new state in Christ. The life of faith principally consists in it. And herein it eminently appears that faith is a hand, not only to receive Christ, but also to work by Him, and that it cannot be effectual for our sanctification except it contain in it some assurance of our interest in Christ, as has been shown.

Thus we act as those that are above the sphere of nature, advanced to union and fellowship with Christ. The apostle maintained in his heart a persuasion that Christ had loved him, and given Him for him; and hereby he was enabled to live to God in holiness, through Christ living in him by faith. He teaches us also that we must maintain the like persuasion, if we would walk holily in Christ. We must know that our old man is crucified with Him, and we must reckon ourselves 'dead indeed to sin, and alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 6:6, 11). This is the means by which we may be 'filled with the Spirit, strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might', which God would not require of us, if He had not appointed the means (Eph. 6:20). Christ Himself walked in a constant persuasion of His excellent state; He 'set the Lord always before Him,' and was persuaded that because 'God was at His right hand He should not be moved' (Ps. 16:8).

How should it be rationally expected that a man should act according to his new state, without assurance that he is in it? It is a rule in common prudence, in worldly callings and conditions, that every man must know and well consider his own state, lest he should act proudly above it, or

sordidly below it. And it is a hard thing to bring some to a right estimate of their own worldly condition. If the same rule were observed in spiritual things, doubtless the knowledge and persuasion of the glory and excellency of our new state in Christ would more elevate the hearts of believers above all sordid slavery to their lusts, and enlarge them to 'run cheerfully in the way of God's commandments'. If Christians knew their own strength better, they would enterprise greater things for the glory of God. But this knowledge is difficulty attained: it is only by faith and spiritual illumination. The best know but in part; and hence it is, that the conversation of believers falls so much below their holy and heavenly calling.

6. Consider what endowments, privileges or properties of your new state are most meet and forcible to incline and strengthen your heart to love God above all, and to renounce all sin, and to give up yourself to universal obedience to His commands; and strive to walk in the persuasion of them, that you may attain to the practice of these great duties. I may well join these together, because 'to love the Lord with all our heart, might, and soul', is the first and great commandment, which influences us to all obedience, with a hatred and detestation of all sin, as it is contrary and hateful to God. The same effectual means that produces the one will also produce the other; and holiness chiefly consists in these. So the chief blessings of our holy state are most meet and forcible to enable us for the immediate performance of them, and are to be made use of to this end by faith. Particularly, you must believe steadfastly that all your sins are blotted out, and that you are reconciled to God, and have access to His favour by the blood of Christ; and that He is your God and Father, and altogether love to you, and your all sufficient everlasting portion and happiness through Christ.

Such apprehensions as these do present God as a very lovely object to our hearts, and do thereby allure and win our affections, that cannot be forced by commands or threatenings, but must be sweetly won and drawn by allurements. We must not harbour any suspicions that God would prove a terrible everlasting enemy to us, if we would love Him; for 'there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear; because fear has torment; he that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 John 4:18, 19). David loved the Lord, because he was persuaded that He

was his strength, rock, fortress, his God, and the horn of his salvation (Ps. 18:1, 2). Love, that causes obedience to the law, must proceed from faith unfeigned, whereby we apprehend the remission of our sins, our reconciliation with God by the merits of the blood of Christ (1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 9:14).

For the same end, that your hearts may be rightly fitted and framed for the performance of these principal duties, the Holy Scripture directs you to walk in the persuasion of other principal endowments of your new state – as that you have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3); that you are the temple of the living God (2 Cor. 6:16); that you live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); that you are called to holiness, and created in Christ Jesus to good works; that God would sanctify you wholly, and make you perfect in holiness at the last (1 Thess. 5:23; Eph. 2:10); that your old man is crucified with Christ; and through Him you are dead to sin, and alive to God; and, being made free from sin, you are become the servants of righteousness, and have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life (Rom. 6:6, 22); 'You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in glory' (Col. 3:3, 4).

Such persuasions as these, when they are deeply rooted, and constantly maintained in our hearts, do strongly arm and encourage us to practice universal obedience, in opposition to every sinful lust; because we look on it, not only as our duty, but our great privilege, to do all things through Christ strengthening us: and God does certainly work in us both to will and to do by these principles, because they properly belong to the gospel, or New Testament, which is the ministration of the Spirit, and the power of God unto salvation (2 Cor. 3:6, 8; Rom. 1:16).

7. For the performance of other duties of the law, you are to consider not only these endowments, privileges and properties of your new state, which are meet and forcible to enable you to the love of God and universal obedience, but also those that have a peculiar force and aptitude suitable to the special nature of such duties, and you must endeavour to assure yourselves of them by faith, that you may be encouraged and strengthened to perform the duties. I shall give you some instances of this manner of practice in several duties, by which you may the better understand how to guide yourselves in the rest.

And as to the duties of the first table, if you would draw near to God in a duty of His worship with a true heart, you must do it in full assurance of faith, concerning your enjoyment of Christ and His salvation. And would you perform the great duty of trusting on the Lord with all your heart, casting your care upon Him and committing the disposal of yourself to Him in all your concerns? Persuade yourself through Christ that God, according to His promise, will never fail you or forsake you; that He takes a fatherly care of you; that He will withhold no good thing from you, and will make all things to work for your good. And thus you will be strong and courageous in the practice of this duty, whereas, if you live in a mere suspense concerning your interest in the privileges, you will be subject to carnal fears and carking cares, in despite of your heart; and you will be prone to trust on the arm of flesh, though your conscience tell you plainly that, in so doing, you incur the heinous guilt of idolatry.

Would you be strengthened to submit to the hand of God with a cheerful patience in bearing any affliction, and death itself? The way to fortify yourselves is to believe assuredly that your 'afflictions, which are but for a moment, do work for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory'; that Christ is your gain in death and life; that His grace is sufficient for you, and His strength made perfect in your weakness; and that He will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able: and will, at last make you more than conquerors over all evil. Until you attain to such persuasions as these, you will be prone to fret and murmur under the burden of affliction and to use indirect means to deliver yourselves, notwithstanding the clearest convictions to the contrary.

Would you limit yourselves to the observation of God's own institutions in His worship? Believe that you are complete in Christ, and have all perfection of spiritual blessings in Him, and that God will build you up in Christ by the ordinances of His own appointment. This will make you account His ordinances sufficient, and men's traditions and inventions needless in the worship of God, whereas, if you do not apprehend all fullness in Christ, you will be like the Papists, prone to catch at every straw and to multiply superstitious observations without end for the supply of your spiritual wants.

Would you confess your sins to God, pray to Him and praise Him heartily for His benefits? Would you praise Him for affliction, as well as

prosperity? Believe assuredly that God is faithful and just to forgive your sin through Christ, and that you are made a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praises that are acceptable to God through Christ; and that God hears your prayers, and will fulfil them so far as they are good for you; and that all God's ways are mercy and truth towards you, whether He prosper or afflict you in this life. If you be altogether in doubt, or otherwise persuaded concerning these privileges, all your confessions, prayers and praises will be but heartless lip-labours, slavish or pharisaical works.

In like manner you will be enabled to hear and receive the Word as the Word of God, and to meditate on it with delight; and you will be willing to know the strictness and spirituality of the commands of God, and to try and examine your ways impartially by them, if you believe assuredly that the Word is the power of God unto salvation; and that Christ is our great Physician, willing and able to heal you, be the case never so bad; and, where your sin abounds, His grace towards you does so much the more abound; whereas, without these comfortable apprehensions, all the works of hearing, meditation, self-examination will be but uncouth, heartless works; and they will be performed negligently, and by halves, or hypocritically, and out of slavish fear, with much reluctancy, without any good will, or readiness of mind. So also, for the right receiving the sacraments, you will find yourself much strengthened by believing that you may have communion with God and Christ in them, and that you have a great High Priest to bear the iniquity of your holy things, and to make you for ever accepted before the Lord.

In the same way you are to apply yourselves to all duties towards your neighbour required in the second table of the law, by acting in a persuasion of such privileges of your new state as have a peculiar force to encourage and strengthen you for the performance of them. That you may 'love your neighbour as yourself, and do to him in all things as you would he should do to you, without partiality and self-seeking; that you may give him his due honour, and abstain from injuring him in his life, chastity, worldly estate, good name, or from coveting anything that is his, according to the several commands in the second table of the decalogue,' you must walk in a persuasion, not only that these things are just and equitable towards your fellow creatures, and that you are strictly bound to the performance of

them, but that they are the will of your 'heavenly Father, who has begotten you according to His own image, in righteousness and true holiness, and has given you His Spirit, that you may be likeminded in Him in all things; and that they are the mind of Christ, who dwells in you, and you in Him'; that God and Christ are kind, tender-hearted, long-suffering, full of goodness to men, whether good or bad, friends or enemies, poor or rich; and that Christ came into the world, not to destroy, but to save; and that you are of the same spirit; that injuries done to you by your neighbour can do you no harm; and you need not seek any good for yourselves by injuring them, because you have all desirable happiness in Christ; and all things, though intended by your enemies for your hurt, certainly work for your good through Christ.

Such apprehensions as these, wrought in us by the spirit of faith, will certainly beget in us a right frame of spirit, thoroughly furnished for every good work towards our neighbour. Likewise your hearts will be purified to unfeigned love of the brethren in Christ; and you will walk towards them with all lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, if you maintain a steadfast belief and persuasion of those manifold bonds of love by which you are inseparably joined with them through Christ; as particularly, that there is 'one body, and one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all'. Finally, you will be able to abstain from all fleshly and worldly lusts that war against the soul, and hinder all godliness, by an assured persuasion, not merely that gluttony, drunkenness, lechery are filthy swinish abominations, and that the pleasures, profits and honours of the world are vain, empty things; but that you are crucified to the flesh and the world, and quickened, raised, and sit in heavenly places together with Christ; and that you have pleasures, profits, honours in Christ, to which the best things in the world are not worthy to be compared; and that you are 'members of Christ, the temple of His Spirit, citizens of heaven, children of the day, not of the night, nor of darkness,' so that it is below your state and dignity to practice deeds of darkness, and mind fleshly worldly things.

Thus I have given instances enough to stir you up to acquaint yourselves with the manifold endowments, privileges, properties of your new state in Christ, as they are discovered in the gospel of your salvation, by which the

new nature is fitted for holy operations, as the common nature of man is furnished with the endowments necessary for those functions and operations to which it is designed; and also to stir you up to make use of them by faith, as they serve to strengthen you either for universal obedience, or for particular duties. And by this manner of walking, your hearts will be comforted and established in every good word and work, and you will grow in holiness until you attain unto perfection in Jesus Christ.

8. If you endeavour to grow in grace and in all holiness, trust assuredly that God will enable you by this manner of walking to do everything that is necessary for His glory, and your own everlasting salvation; and that He will graciously accept of that obedience through Christ, which you are enabled to perform, according to the measure of your faith, and pardon your failings, though you offend in many things and fall short of many others, as to degrees of holiness and high acts of obedience. And therefore, attempt not the performance of duty in any other way, though you cannot yet attain to do so much as you would in this way. This is a necessary instruction to establish us in the life of faith, that the sense of our manifold failings and defects may not move us either to despair or to return to the use of carnal principles and means for help against our corruptions, as accounting this way of living and acting by faith to be insufficient for our sanctification and salvation. The apostle Paul exhorts the Galatians to 'walk in the Spirit', though 'the flesh lusts against the Spirit', so that 'they cannot do the things they would' (Gal. 5:16, 17). We are to know that though the law requires of us the utmost perfection of holiness, yet the gospel makes an allowance for our weakness, and Christ is so meek and lowly in heart that He accepts of that which our weak faith can attain to by His grace, and does not exact or expect any more of us for His glory and our salvation until we grow stronger in grace. God showed His great indulgence to His people under the Old Testament, that Moses, the lawgiver, suffered them, because of the hardness of their hearts, to put away their wives, though from the beginning it was not so (Matt. 19:8), and also in tolerating the customary practice of polygamy. Though Christ will not tolerate the continuance of such practices in His church, since His Spirit is more plentifully poured forth under the gospel, yet He is as forward as ever to bear with the failings of His weak saints that desire to obey Him sincerely.

We have another instance of God's indulgence, more full to our present purpose, in His commanding that the fearful and faint-hearted should not be forced to enter into the battle against their enemies, but suffered to return home to their houses, though fighting in battle against their enemies, without fear and faint-heartedness, was a duty that God did much exercise His people in at that time (Deut. 20:3, 8). So under the gospel, though it be an eminent part of Christ's service to endure the greatest fight of afflictions and death itself courageously for His name's sake, yet if any be so weak in faith that they have not sufficient courage to venture into the battle, no doubt but Christ allows them to make use of an honest means whereby they may escape the hands of persecutors, with safety to their holy profession. He will accept them in this weaker kind of service, and will approve of them better than if they should hazard a denial of His name by venturing themselves upon the trial of martyrdom when they might have escaped it. Peter came off with sin and shame by venturing beyond the measure of his faith into the hands of his persecutors, when he went after Christ to the high priest's hall, whereas he should rather have made use of that indulgent dismissal that Christ gave to him and the rest of His disciples: 'Let these go their way' (John 18:8). Christ deals with His people as a good careful shepherd that will not overdrive His sheep: 'He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young' (Isa. 40:11). He would not have His disciples urged rigorously upon the duty of fasting when their spirits were unfit for it, because He knew that imposing duties above their strength is like putting a piece of new cloth in an old garment, and new wine into old bottles, which spoils all at last (Matt. 9:14-17).

That precept of Solomon, 'Be not righteous over much' (Eccles. 7:16) is very useful and necessary, if rightly understood. We are to beware of being too rigorous in exacting righteousness of ourselves and others beyond the measure of faith and grace. Overdoing commonly proves undoing. Children that venture on their feet beyond their strength have many a fall, and so have babes in Christ when they venture unnecessarily upon such duties as are beyond the strength of their faith. We should be content at present to do the best that we can, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, though we know that others are enabled to do much better; and we are not to despise the day of small things, but to praise God that He works in us anything that is well-pleasing in His sight, hoping that He will

sanctify us throughout and bring us at last to perfection of holiness through Jesus Christ our Lord. And we should carefully observe in all things that good lesson of the apostle: 'Not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith' (Rom. 12:3).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Endeavour diligently to make the right use of all means appointed in the Word of God for the obtaining and practicing holiness only in this way of believing in Christ and walking in Him, according to your new state by faith.

This might have been added to the instructions in the explication of the former direction, because its use is the same – to guide us in the mysterious manner of practicing holiness in Christ by the life of faith, but the weight and comprehensiveness of it makes it worthy to be treated of by itself, as a distinct direction. Two things are observable in it.

First, that though all holiness be effectually attained by the life of faith in Christ, yet the use of any means appointed in the Word for attaining and promoting holiness is not hereby made void, but rather established. This is needful to be observed against the pride and ignorance of some carnal gospellers who, being puffed up with a conceit of their feigned faith, imagine themselves to be in such a state of perfection that they are above all ordinances except singing, 'Hallelujahs'; and also against the Papists, that run into the contrary extreme by heaping together a multitude of means of holiness, which God never commanded, neither ever came they into His heart, and that slander the Protestant doctrine of faith and free grace, as if it tended to destroy all diligent use of the means of holiness and salvation, and to breed up a company of lazy Solifidians. We do indeed assert and profess that 'A true and lively faith in Christ is alone sufficient and effectual, through the grace of God, to receive Christ and all His fullness, so far as is necessary in this life, for our justification, sanctification and eternal salvation,' but yet we also assert and profess that 'Several means are appointed of God for the begetting, maintaining and increasing this faith, and the acting and exercising it, in order to the attainment of its end; and that these means are to be used diligently,' which are mentioned in the sequel.

True believers find by experience that their faith needs such helps, and they that think themselves above any need of them do reject the counsel of God against themselves, like to those proud Pharisees and lawyers that thought it a thing beneath them and refused to be baptized by John (Luke 7:30). Yet we account no means necessary or lawful to be used for the

attainment of holiness, besides those that are appointed by God in His Word. We know that holiness is a part of our salvation and, therefore, they that think men may, or can invent any means effectual for the attainment of it do ascribe their salvation partly to men, and rob God of His glory in being our only Saviour; and they do thereby plainly show that though they 'draw nigh unto God with their mouth, and honour Him with their lips, yet their hearts are far from Him. And in vain do they worship Him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' (Matt. 15:7-9).

The second thing observable and principally designed in this direction is the right manner of using all the means of holiness for the obtaining and practicing it no other way, besides that of believing in Christ and walking in Him, according to our new state by faith, which has been already demonstrated to be the only way in which we may effectually attain to this great end. We must use them as helps to the life to faith in its beginning, continuance and growth; and as instruments subservient to faith, the principal instrument, in all its acts and exercises, in which the soul receives Christ, and walks in all holiness by Him. We must beware lest we use them rather in opposition than in subordination to the way of sanctification and salvation by free grace in Christ through faith; and lest, by our abuse of them, they be made rather hindrances than helps to our faith. We must not idolize any of the means and put them into the place of Christ, as the Papists do, by trusting in them – as if they were effectual to confer grace to the soul by righteousness, to be performed as conditions for the procuring the favour of God and the salvation of Christ. Neither must they be accounted so absolutely necessary to salvation as if a true faith were void, and of none effect, when we are debarred from the enjoyment of several of them. The Holy Scriptures, with all the means of grace appointed therein, are able to make us wise unto salvation, no other way than by faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:15). And, therefore, our wise endeavour must be not to use them in any opposition to the grace of God in Christ. For God's ordinances are like the cherubims of glory, made with their faces looking towards the mercy-seat. They are made to guide us to Christ.

This right use of the means of grace is a point wherein many are ignorant, that use them with great zeal and diligence; and thereby they do not only lose their labour, and the benefit of the means, but also they wrest and pervert them to their own destruction. The Jews, under the law of Moses,

enjoyed many more ordinances of divine worship than we do under the gospel, but their table became their snare, and they fell miserably from God and Christ, because the 'veil of ignorance was upon their hearts', that they could not look to the end of those ordinances, even to the Lord Jesus Christ, and they sought not salvation by faith, but by the ordinances, as works of righteousness, and by other works of the law, for they stumbled at the stumbling-stone (Rom. 9:31, 32; 10:4, 5; 2 Cor. 3:13, 14). That you may not stumble and fall by the same pernicious error, I shall show particularly how several of the principal means of holiness appointed in the Word of God are to be made use of in that right manner expressed in the direction.

1. We must endeavour diligently to know the Word of God contained in the Holy Scripture, and to improve it to this end that we may be made wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15). Other means of salvation are necessary to the more abundant well-being of our faith, and of our new state in Christ; but this is absolutely necessary to the very being thereof, because faith comes by hearing the Word of God, and receives Christ as manifested by the Word, as I have before proved. Rahab the Canaanite was justified by faith before she had any visible communion with the church in any of God's ordinances, yet not without the Word of God, even the same Word, for substance, which was written in the Scriptures, and was then extant in the books of Moses; though that Word was not brought to her by any book of the Holy Scripture, nor by the preaching of any holy minister, but by the report of the heathens (Josh. 2:9, 11). But here our great work must be to get such a knowledge of the Word as is necessary and sufficient to guide us in the receiving Christ, and walking in Him by faith. You must not be of their minds that think the knowledge of the Ten Commandments to be sufficient to salvation, or that would have mysteries to remain hid from the understanding of the vulgar, and nothing to be preached to them but what they can readily assent to and receive by the light that is in all men; of which mind it may be some ministers are, who unwittingly agree with the Quakers in a fundamental of their heresy. But you must endeavour chiefly to know the mystery of the Father and the Son, as it is discovered in the gospel, 'in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2:2, 3); which to know is life eternal, and the ignorance of it is death eternal (John 17:3; 2 Cor. 4:3). You must know that Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4) and,

therefore, you must endeavour to know the commands of the law, not that you may be enabled by that knowledge to practice them immediately, and so to procure salvation by your works; but rather, by your knowledge of them, you may be made sensible of your inability to perform them and of the enmity that is in your heart against them, and the wrath that you are under for breaking them, and the impossibility of being saved by your own works; that so you may fly to Christ for refuge and trust only to the free grace of God for justification, and strength to fulfil the law acceptably through Christ in your conversation. And for this end, you must endeavour to learn the utmost strictness of the commands, the exact perfection and spiritual purity which they require, that you may be the more convinced of sin and stirred up to seek unto Christ for remission of sin, for purity of heart and spiritual obedience, and be brought nearer to the enjoyment of Him; as Christ testifies that the scribe, who understood the greatness of that command of loving the Lord with all the heart and soul, was not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34).

The most effectual knowledge for your salvation is to understand these two points: the desperate sinfulness and misery of your own natural condition, and the alone sufficiency of the grace of God in Christ for your salvation, that you may be abased as to the flesh and exalted in Christ alone. And, for the better understanding these two main points, you should learn how the first Adam was the figure of the second (Rom. 5:14); how sin and death came upon all the natural seed of the first Adam by his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, and how righteousness and everlasting life come upon all the spiritual seed of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, by His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. You also should learn the true difference between the two covenants, the old and the new, or the law and the gospel: that the former shuts us up under the guilt and power of sin, and the wrath of God and His curse, by its rigorous terms: 'Do all the commandments, and live; and, cursed are you if you do not do them, and fail in the least point'; the latter opens the gates of righteousness and life to all believers (i.e. the new covenant) by its gracious terms: 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and live,' that is, all your sins shall be forgiven, and holiness and glory shall be given to you freely by His merit and Spirit.

Furthermore, you should learn the gospel principles that you are to walk by for the attainment of holiness in Christ. And here I shall mind you particularly that you would be a good proficient in Christian learning, if you get a good understanding of the sixth and seventh chapters of the apostle Paul to the Romans, where the powerful principles of sanctification are purposely treated of, and differenced from those weak and ineffectual principles, which we are most naturally prone to walk by.

I need not particularly commend any other points of religion to your learning, for if you get the knowledge of these principal points, which I have mentioned, and improve it to a right end, which is, to live and walk by faith in Christ, your own renewed mind will cover the knowledge of all other things that appertain to life and godliness, and if in anything you be otherwise minded than is according to saving truth, God shall reveal even this to you (Phil. 3:15).

Yet let me caution you lest, instead of gaining Christ by your knowledge, you rather lose Him by putting your knowledge in the place of Christ, and trusting on it for your salvation. One cause of the Jews perishing was that they rested in a form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law (Rom. 2:20). And, doubtless, all that many Christians will gain by their knowledge in the end will only be to be beaten with more stripes, because they place their religion and salvation chiefly in the knowledge of their Lord's will, and in their ability to talk and dispute it, without preparing themselves to do according thereunto (Luke 12:47). Much less are you to place your religion and hope of salvation in a daily task of reading chapters, or repeating sermons, without understanding more than the Papists do their lessons in the Latin mass and canonical hours; as sad experience shows that many seemingly devout and frequent hearers of the Word do notwithstanding remain in lamentable and wonderful ignorance of the saving truth. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias: 'That in hearing, they shall hear, and not understand; and, in seeing, they shall see,' etc. (Matt. 13:14, 15).

2. Another means to be used diligently for the promoting the life of faith is examination of our state and ways according to the Word, whether we be at present in a state of sin and wrath, or of grace and salvation; that, if we be in a state of sin, we may know our sickness and come to the great Physician while it is called today; and, if we be in a state of grace, we may

know that we are of the truth, and assure our hearts before God with greater confidence, by the testimony of a good conscience (1 John 3:19, 21); that so our hearts may be more strongly comforted by faith and established in every good work; and that, if our ways be evil, we may turn from them to the Lord our God through Christ; without whom none come to the Father (Lam. 3:40; John 14:6). But your great care in this work of self-examination must be to perform it in such a manner that it may not hinder and destroy the life of faith, as it does in many, instead of promoting it. Therefore, beware lest you trust upon your self-examination, rather than upon Christ, as some do, that think they have made their peace with God merely because they have examined themselves upon their sick bed, or before the receiving of the Lord's Supper, though they have found themselves stark naught, and do not depend on Christ to make them better, but on their own deceitful purposes and resolutions.

Think not that you must begin this work with doubting whether God will extend mercy to you, and save you, and that you must leave this a question wholly under debate, until you have found out how to resolve it by self-examination. This is a common and very pernicious error in the very foundation of this work, which is hereby laid in the great sin of unbelief, which, as soon as it prevails, does by its great influence dash and obscure all inward gracious qualifications of peace, hope, joy, love to God and His people, before they be all tried, whether they can give any good evidence for their salvation. And it makes people willing to think their own qualifications better than they are, lest they should fall into an utter despair of their salvation; and thus it wholly mars the good work of self-examination, and makes it destructive to our souls, for 'to them that are defiled and unbelieving, there is nothing pure' (Titus 1:15). You should rather begin the work with much assurance of faith that, though you may at present find your heart never so wicked and reprobate (as many of God's choicest servants have found), yet the door of mercy is open for you, and that God will certainly save you for ever, if you put your trust in His grace through Christ.

I have formerly shown that this confident persuasion is of the nature of saving faith, and that we have sufficient ground for it in the free promises of the gospel, when we walk in darkness and can see no light shining forth in our gracious qualifications. If we begin the work with this confidence, it

will make us impartial, and not afraid to find out the worst in ourselves, and willing to judge that our hearts are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, beyond what we can find out (Jer. 17:9). And if we have any holy qualifications, this confidence will preserve them in their vigour and brightness, that they may be able to give clear evidence that we are at present in a state of grace.

Mark well the difference between those two questions: 'Whether God will graciously accept and save me, though a vile sinner, through Christ?' as before was said, and 'Whether I am already brought into a state of salvation?' The former of these, I say, is to be resolved affirmatively by a confident faith in Christ; the latter only is to be enquired into by self-examination. Misspend not your time, as many do, in poring upon your hearts to find whether you be good enough to trust on Christ for your salvation, or to find whether you have any faith, before you dare be so bold as to act faith in Christ. But you know that though you cannot find you have any faith or holiness, yet, if you will now believe on Him that justifies the ungodly, it shall be accounted to you for righteousness (Rom. 4:5).

And if you love Christ and your own soul, misspend not your time in examining whether you have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, except it be with a full purpose to assure yourself, more and more, that you are not guilty thereof, for any doubtfulness in this point will but harden you in unbelief. Remember well, that the question to be resolved is whether you be at present in a state of grace and, to resolve it, you must be willing to know the best of yourself, as well as the worst; and you must not think that humility binds you to overlook your good qualifications, and to take notice only of your corruptions. But your great work must be to find whether there be not some drop of saving grace in the ocean of your corruption. And it will consist well with humility to take notice of, and own any spark of true holiness that is in you, because the praise and glory of it belongs not to you but to God (Phil. 1:11). And you must try inherent grace by the touchstone, not by the measure; by its nature, not its degree; not denying any lustings of the Spirit in you, because of the strong lustings of the flesh against the Spirit; or denying that you are spiritual in some degree and babes in Christ, because you find

yourselves carnal in a more prevailing degree, and the old man bigger than the new (Gal. 5:17; 1 Cor. 3:1).

Especially you are to examine and prove whether you be in the faith? For if you make sure of this, you make sure of all the things that pertain to life and godliness, and if you doubt this, you will certainly doubt of the truth of any other qualifications, and will suspect them to be merely carnal and counterfeit, because it is a known truth that to the unbelieving there is nothing pure, and that all that have not truly received Christ by faith are at present in an unregenerate state, though they seem never so pure and godly (2 Cor. 13:5; Titus 1:15).

And let not the issue of this trial depend at all upon your knowledge of the time when, or of the sermon, conference or place of Scripture, by which you were first converted to the faith; though that is good to know, too, if it may be. And some who have formerly lived in gross ignorance, or in a manifest opposition to true faith and holiness, may know such circumstances of their conversion, and may reflect upon them comfortably, as the apostle Paul did, who was turned of a sudden from his persecuting rage to be a disciple and an apostle of Christ; yet others, sincere believers, may be wholly ignorant of them, as John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15); and they that have been trained up religiously, and know the Holy Scripture from their childhood, as Timothy (2 Tim. 3:15), yes, and many that are first turned from gross ignorance and profaneness to some external reformation and then, in process of time, brought nearer to the kingdom of heaven by insensible degrees, before they be really new-begotten by the spirit of faith. There are also some that deceive their souls by imagining they know at what time, and by what text of Scripture, they were converted, and can make large discourses of the workings of God upon their hearts, and are prone to talk unreasonably, with vain glorifying of their own experiences; when, at last, all their experiences are not sufficient to evidence that they ever attained to the least measure of true saving faith.

Therefore, that we may not unjustly condemn or justify our faith by proceeding on insufficient evidences in its trial, our best way is to examine it by the inseparable properties of a true saving faith, by putting ourselves such questions as these: Are we made thoroughly sensible of our sinfulness, and of the deadness and misery of our natural state, so as to

despair absolutely of ever attaining to any righteousness, holiness or true happiness, while we continue in it? Are the eyes of our understanding enlightened to see the excellency of Christ, and the alone sufficiency and all sufficiency of His grace for our salvation? Do we prefer the enjoyment of Him above all things, and desire it with our whole heart, as our only happiness, whatsoever we may suffer for His sake? Do we desire with our whole heart to be delivered from the power and practice of sin, as well as from the wrath of God, and the pains of hell? Do our hearts come to Christ and lay hold on Him for salvation, by trusting Him only, and endeavouring to trust on Him confidently, notwithstanding all fears and doubts that assault us?

If you find in yourself a faith that has these properties, though as small as a grain of mustard seed, and opposed with much unbelief and manifold corruptions in your soul, you may conclude that you are in a state of salvation at present, and that your remaining work is to continue and grow in it more and more, and to walk worthy of it.

You should also examine the fruits of your faith, and try whether you can show your faith by your works, as you are taught (James 2:18), that you may be sure not to be deceived in your judgement concerning it. And though it be true, as I have noted, that doubts concerning your faith will breed doubtings concerning the sincerity of other qualifications that are fruits thereof, yet possibly you may get such clear evidences of your sincerity as may overcome and expel all your doubts. And here you are not only to inquire whether your inclinations, purposes, affections and actions be materially good and holy, but also by what principles they are bred and influenced? Whether it be by slavish fears of hell, and mercenary hopes of getting heaven by your works, which are legal and carnal principles that can never breed true holiness, or by gospel principles, as by love to God because God has loved you first, and to Christ because He has died; and by the hope of eternal life, as the free gift of God through Christ, and dependence on God, to sanctify you by His Spirit, according to His promises? Remember that the New Testament is the ministration of the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:6), and the Spirit will sanctify us, not by legal, but by gospel principles.

Take notice further that you need not trouble yourself to find out a multitude of marks and signs of true grace, if you can find a few good

ones. Particularly, you may know that you are passed from death to life, if you love the brothers (1 John 3:14); that is, if you love all whom you can in charity judge to be true believers, and that because they are true believers, and for the truth's sake, that dwells in them. As Solomon discerned the true mother of the child by her affection towards her child, so the mother-grace of faith may be discerned by the love that it breeds in us towards all true believers.

To conclude this point, happy are you if you can find so much evidence of the fruits of your faith as may enable you to express your sincerity in these moderate terms: 'Pray for us; for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly' (Heb. 13:18).

3. Meditation on the Word of God is of very great use and advantage for the attainment and practice of holiness through faith in Christ. It is a duty by which the soul does feed and ruminate upon the Word as its spiritual food, and digests it, and turns it into nourishment, by which we are strengthened for every good work. Our souls are satisfied therewith, as with marrow and fatness; when we remember God upon our beds, and meditate on Him in the night watches (Ps. 63:5, 6). The new nature may well be called 'the mind' (Rom. 7:25), because it lives and acts by minding and meditating on spiritual things. Therefore, it is a duty to be practiced, not only at some limited times, but all the day (Ps. 119:97); yes, 'day and night' (Ps. 1:2), even in our ordinary employment at home and abroad. A habitual knowledge of the Word will not profit us, without an active minding of it by frequent meditation. Some think that much preaching of the Word is not needful, where a people are already brought to the knowledge of those things that are necessary to salvation. But they that are regenerated by the Word find by experience that their spiritual life is maintained and increased by often minding the same Word, and therefore, 'as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby' (1 Peter 2:2), and would by the preachers be put often in remembrance of the same things, that they may feed upon them by meditation, though they know them already and are established in the present truth (2 Peter 1:12).

But here our greatest skill and chiefest concernment lies in practicing this duty in such a manner as that it may be subservient, and not at all opposite to the life of faith. We must not rely upon the performance of a daily task

of meditation as a work of righteousness for the procurement of the favour of God, instead of relying on the righteousness of Christ – as indeed we are prone to do, to catch at any straw, rather than to trust only on the free grace of God in Christ for our salvation. And the end of our meditation must not be mere speculation and knowledge of the truth, but rather the vigorous pressing it upon our consciences, and the stirring up our hearts and affections to the practice of it. And, in stirring up ourselves to a holy practice, we must warily observe how far the several parts of the truths of God are powerful and effectual for the attainment of this end, that we may make use of them accordingly. We must not imagine, as too many do – yea, and some great masters in the art of meditation – that we can bring our hearts effectually to the love of God and holiness, and can work strange alterations, and frame in our hearts any holy qualifications or virtue, merely by working in ourselves strong apprehensions of God's eternal power and Godhead, His sovereign authority, omniscience, perfect holiness, exact justice, the equity of His law, and reasonableness of our obedience to it, the unspeakable happiness prepared for the godly, and misery for the wicked, to all eternity.

Meditation on such things as these is indeed very useful to press upon our consciences the strictness of our obligation to holy duties, and to move us to go by faith to Christ for life and strength to perform them. But, that we may receive this life and strength, by which we are enabled for immediate performance, we must meditate believing on Christ's saving benefits, as they are discovered in the gospel; which is the only doctrine which is the power of God to our salvation, and by which the quickening Spirit is ministered to us, and that is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Rom. 1:16; 2 Cor. 3:6; Acts 20:32). You must take special care to act faith in your meditation; mix the Word of God's grace with it, or else it will not profit you (Heb. 4:2). And if you set the lovingkindness of God frequently before your eyes, by meditating on it believingly, you will be strengthened to walk in the truth (Ps. 26:3); and, by beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, you will be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3: 18). This kind of meditation is sweet, and delightful to those that are guided to it by the spirit of faith, and it needs not the help of such artificial methods as the vulgar cannot easily learn. You may let your thoughts run in it at liberty, without confining them to any rules of method.

You will find your souls much enlivened by it, and enriched with the grace of God; which cannot be effected by any other kind of meditation, though it be never so methodical, and curiously framed according to the rules of art.

4. The sacrament of baptism must needs be of great use to promote the life of faith, if it be made use of according to its nature and institution, because it is a seal of the righteousness of faith, as circumcision was formerly (Rom. 4: 11). But then we must take heed of making it a seal of the contrary righteousness of works, as the carnal Jews did, that sought to be justified by the law of Moses; and as many Christians do, that 'transform the new covenant into a covenant of works; requiring sincere obedience to all the laws of Christ, as the condition of our justification', into which new-devised covenant they think themselves to be entered by their baptism. I may say of baptism, thus perverted and abused, as the apostle says of circumcision, 'Baptism verily profits, if you keep the law: but, if you be a breaker of the law, your baptism is made no baptism' (Rom. 2:25). If you are baptized, so long as you continue in the abuse of that holy ordinance, 'Christ shall profit you nothing; Christ is become of none effect to you; you are fallen from grace' (Gal. 5:2, 4).

Beware also of making an idol of baptism, and putting it in the place of Christ, as the Papists do, who hold that it confers grace by the very work that is performed in the administration of it, and as many ignorant people do, that trust rather on their baptism than on Christ – like the Pharisees, who placed their confidence on circumcision and other external privileges (Phil. 3:4, 5). We are to know that God is not well pleased with many that are baptized (1 Cor. 10:2, 5), and the time will come when He will punish the baptized with the unbaptized, as well as the circumcised with the uncircumcised (Jer. 9:25).

Beware also of advancing baptism to an equal partnership with faith in your salvation, as some do, who account all baptism null and void, besides that which is administered to persons grown up to years of discretion; and they that refuse to be rebaptized at those years are to be accounted aliens from the true church, from Christ and His salvation, notwithstanding all their faith in Christ. If the baptism of infants were null and void, yet the want of true baptism would be no damning matter to those that are otherwise persuaded. Circumcision was as necessary as baptism in its time,

and yet the Israelites omitted it for the space of forty years in the wilderness without fearing that any would fall short of salvation for want of it (Josh. 5:6, 7). Many precious saints, in the primitive times of persecution, have gone to heaven through a baptism of suffering for the name of Christ, before they had opportunity to be baptized with water. And in those ancient times when the custom of deferring baptism too much prevailed, we are not to think that none were in a state of salvation by faith in Christ that deferred that ordinance, or neglected it.

Take notice further that it is not sufficient to avoid the pernicious errors of those that pervert baptism, contrary to its institution; but you must be also diligent in improving it to the ends for which it was instituted. And here let me desire you to put the question seriously to your souls: 'What good use do you make of your baptism? How often, or seldom, do you think upon it? The vulgar sort of Christians, yes, it may be feared, many sincere converts, do so little think upon their own baptism and study to make a due improvement of it, that it is of no more profit to their souls than if they never had been baptized; yes, their sin is the more aggravated by rendering such an ordinance of none effect to their souls through their own gross neglect. Though baptism be administered to us but once in our lives, yet we ought frequently to reflect upon it, and upon all occasions to put the question to ourselves: 'Unto what were we baptized?' (Acts 19:3.) What does this ordinance seal? What did it engage us to? And accordingly we must stir up and strengthen ourselves by our baptism to lay hold on the grace which it seals to us, and to fulfil its engagements. We should often remember that we are made Christ's disciples by baptism, and engaged to hear Him, rather than Moses, and to believe on Him for our salvation; as John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to people that they should believe on Him that should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus. We should remember that our baptism sealed our putting on of Christ, and our being the children of God by faith in Christ, and our being no longer under the former schoolmaster, the law (Gal. 3:25-27); and that it sealed to us the putting off the body of sin, and our burial and resurrection with Christ by faith, and the forgiving of our trespasses (Col. 2:12, 13); our being made members of one body, Christ; and to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12, 13).

We may find by such things as these, which are more fully discovered in the gospel, that it is the proper nature and tendency of baptism to guide us to faith in Christ alone for remission of sins, holiness and all salvation, by union and fellowship with Him; and that a diligent improvement of this ordinance must needs be of great advantage to the life of faith.

5. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is as a spiritual feast to nourish our faith, and to strengthen us to walk in all holiness by Christ living and working in us, if it be used according to the pattern which Christ gave us in its first institution recorded by three evangelists (Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19, 20), and was extraordinarily revealed from heaven by Christ Himself to the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:23-25), that we might be the more obliged and stirred up to the exact observation of it. Its end is not only that we may remember Christ's death in the history, but in the mystery of it: as that His body was broken for us, that His blood is the blood of the New Testament, or covenant, shed for us, and for many, for the remission of sins, that so we may receive and enjoy all the promises of the new covenant which are recorded (Heb. 8:10-12). Its end is to mind us that Christ's body and blood are bread and drink, even all-sufficient food to nourish our souls to everlasting life; and that we ought to take, and eat, and drink Him by faith; and to assure us that, when we 'truly believe on Him, He is as really and closely united to us by His Spirit, as the food which we eat and drink is united to our bodies'. Christ Himself (John 6) does more fully explain this mystery.

Furthermore, this sacrament does not only put us in mind of the spiritual blessings wherewith we are blessed in Christ, and our enjoyment of them by faith, but also it is a means and instrument by which God does really exhibit and give forth Christ and His salvation to true believers, and by which He does stir up and strengthen believers to receive and feed upon Christ by present actings of faith, while they partake of the outward elements. When Christ says, 'Eat, drink; this is My body, this is My blood', no less can be meant than that Christ does as truly give His body and blood to true believers in that ordinance as the bread and cup, and they do as truly receive it by faith. As if a prince invest a subject in some honourable office, by delivering to him a staff, sword or signet and say to him, 'Take this staff, sword or signet; this is such an office or preferment' or if a father should deliver a deed for conveyance of land to his son, and say, 'Take it

as your own; this is such a farm or manor' – how can such expressions import anything less, in common sense and reason, than a present, gift and conveyance of the offices, preferments and lands, by and with those outward signs? Therefore the apostle Paul asserts that the bread in the Lord's Supper 'is the communion of the body of Christ', and the 'cup is the communion of His blood' (1 Cor. 10:16); which shows that Christ's body and blood are really communicated to us, and we do really partake of them, as well as of the bread and cup.

The chief excellency and advantage of this ordinance is that it is not only a figure and resemblance of our living upon a crucified Saviour, but also a precious instrument to us, and received by us, through faith. This makes it to be a love-token worthy of that ardent affection towards us, which filled Christ's heart at the time when He instituted it, when He was on the point of finishing His greatest work of love by laying down His life for us (1 Cor. 11:23). And this is diligently to be observed, that we may make a right improvement of this ordinance, and receive the saving benefits of it.

One reason why many do little esteem, and seldom or never partake of this ordinance, and do find little benefit by it, is because they falsely imagine that God in it only holds forth naked signs and resemblances of Christ and His salvation, which they account to be held forth so plainly in Scripture that they need not the help of such a sign; whereas if they understood that God does really give Christ Himself to their faith, by and with those signs and resemblances, they would prize it as the most delicious feast, and be desirous to partake of it on all opportunities (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

Another reason why many partake seldom or never of this ordinance, and know little of the benefit of it is because they think themselves brought by it into great danger of eating and drinking their own damnation, according to those terrifying words of the apostle: 'For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body' (1 Cor. 11:29). Therefore they account it the safest way, wholly to abstain from such a dangerous ordinance or, at least, that once a year is enough to run so great a hazard. And if they be brought to it sometimes by constraint of conscience, their slavish fears bereave them of all comfortable fruit of it. So that instead of striving to receive Christ and His salvation therein, they account themselves to have succeeded well, if they come off without the sentence of damnation; as the Jewish Rabbis write

that the high priest's life was so eminently hazarded by his entering once a year into the Holy of Holies, that he stayed there as little time as he could, lest the people should think him to be struck dead by the hand of God; and when he was come forth alive, he usually made a feast of thanksgiving for joy of so great a deliverance.

But there is no reason why we should be so much terrified by those words of the apostle; for they were darted against such a gross profanation of the Lord's Supper among the Corinthians as we may easily avoid by observing the institution of it which the apostle proposes to them as a sufficient remedy against the gross abuse, in not discerning or differencing the Lord's body from other bodily food, and partaking of it as their own supper, with such disorder that one was hungry and another drunken. Besides, that terrifying word 'damnation' may be rendered more mildly judgement, as it is in the margin; yes, the apostle himself (v. 32) does interpret it of a merciful, temporal judgement, by which we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

We are indeed prone to sin in receiving this ordinance unworthily, and so we are also to pollute, more or less, all other holy things that we meddle with. So that the consideration of our danger might fill us with slavish fear in the use of all other means of grace, as well as of this, were it not that we have a great High Priest, to bear this iniquity of our holy things (Exod. 28:38), under the covert of whose righteousness we are to draw near unto God, without slavish fear, in the full assurance of faith, in this as well as in other holy ordinances; and we are to rejoice in the Lord in this spiritual feast, as the Jews were bound to do in their solemn feasts (Deut. 16:14, 15).

There are other abuses of this ordinance, like to those of baptism fore-mentioned, by which it is rendered opposite, rather than subservient to the life of faith. Some put it in the place of Christ, by trusting on it as a work of righteousness for the procuring of God's favour, or an ordinance sufficient to confer grace to the soul by the very work wrought. Others make it so necessary that they account faith is not sufficient without it; and therefore they will partake of it, if they can possibly, though it be in a disorderly manner, upon their sick-beds, when they are in fear of death, as their viaticum. The Papists do horribly idolize it by their figment of transubstantiation, and the adoration of the breaden god, and their sacrifice

of the mass for the sins of the quick and the dead. We ought warily to conceive that the true body and blood of Christ are given to us, with the bread and wine, in a spiritual mysterious manner, by the unsearchable operation of the Holy Spirit, uniting Christ and us together by faith, without any transubstantiation in the outward elements.

6. Prayer is to be made use of as a means of living by faith in Christ, according to the new man. And it is the making our requests with supplication and thanksgiving. That it is to be used so, as an eminent means, appears because God requires it (1 Thess. 5:17; Rom. 12:12); it is our priestly work (1 Peter 2:5; compared with Ps. 141:2); and the property of saints (1 Cor. 1:2); and God is a God of hearing prayer (Ps. 65:2). God will be prayed to by His people for the benefit that He is minded to bestow upon them, when once He has enabled them to pray, though at first He is found of them that seek Him not (Ezek. 36:37; Phil. 1:19, 20), that He may prepare them for thanksgiving and make benefits double benefits to them (Ps. 66:16, 18, 19; 50:15; 2 Cor. 1:10, 11). Though His will will not be changed by this means, yet it is accomplished ordinarily and His purpose is to accomplish it this way. And therefore, trusting assuredly should not make us neglect but rather perform this duty (2 Sam. 7:27).

Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, by whom justification and sanctification are promised, is also the Mediator for acceptance of our prayers (Heb. 4:15, 16). The Spirit that sanctifies us, begets us in Christ and shows the things of Christ to us, is a Spirit of prayer (Zech. 12:10; Gal. 4:6). He is as fire inflaming the soul, and making it to mount upward in prayer to God. Prayerless people are dead to God. If they are children of Zion, yet they are but stillborn, dead children, they cry not (Acts 9:11), not written among the living in Jerusalem; heathens in nature, though Christians in name (Jer. 10:25).

It is a duty so great that it is put for all the service of God, as a fundamental duty which, if it is done, the rest will be done well, and not without it, and other ordinances of worship are helps to it (Isa. 56:7). It is the great means by which faith exerts itself to perform its whole work, and pours itself forth in all holy desires and affections (Ps. 62: 8); and so yields a sweet savour, as Mary's box of precious spikenard (Mark 14:3; John 12:3); and so the same promises are made to faith and prayer (Rom. 10:11-13). It is our continual incense and sacrifice, by which we offer ourselves,

our hearts, affections and lives to God (Ps. 141:2). We act all grace in it, and must act in this way, or else we are not likely to act it any other way. And as we act grace, so we obtain grace by it, and all holiness (Ps. 138:3; Luke 11:13; Heb. 4:16; Ps. 81:10). Our riches come in by it. Israel prevails while Moses holds up his hands (Exod. 17:11). By prayer Hannah is strengthened against her sorrows (1 Sam. 1:15, 18), peace is continued (Phil. 4:6, 7), the disordered soul is set in order by it, as Hannah (1 Sam. 1:18; Ps. 32:1-5). Incense was still burnt, while the lamps were dressed (Exod. 30:7, 8). It is added to the spiritual armour, not as a particular piece of it but as a means of putting on all, and making use of all aright, that we may stand in the evil day (Eph. 6:18). It is a means of transfiguring us into the likeness of Christ in holiness and making our spiritual faces to shine, as Christ was transfigured bodily while He prayed (Luke 9:29), and Moses' face shone while he talked with God (Exod. 34:29).

Hence the frequent use of this duty is commended to us (Eph. 6:18): praying always, on all seasons and opportunities and, by the example of the saints, in public with the congregation (Acts 2:42; 10:30, 31). Solemn acts of prayer should be continued daily (Matt. 6:11); yes, several times in a day, as morning and evening sacrifice (Dan. 6:10; Ps. 92:2); or thrice (Ps. 55:17); besides special occasions (James 5:13, 14), and brief ejaculations that hinder not other business (Ps. 129:8; 2 Sam. 15:31; Neh. 2:4). Prayers should be solemn, in our closets (Matt. 6:6), in families (Acts 10:30, 31). And as sacrifices were multiplied on the Sabbath days and days of atonement and at other appointed seasons (Num. 28), besides the continual burnt-offering, so ought prayer also.

In a word, a Christian ought to give up himself eminently to this duty (Ps. 109:4), without limits (Ps. 119:164). But the great work is to practice this duty rightly for holiness, only by faith in Christ. Here we had need say, 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1); and that not only as to the matter, but as to the manner – both which are taught by Christ, in some measure, in that brief pattern of prayer which He taught His disciples. But for the understanding of it we must consult the whole Word (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). And we have need of the Spirit of Christ to guide us in the duty, and therefore we are taught to pray by the Spirit, that is, the Holy Ghost (Jude 20; Eph. 2:18). The Spirit of God only guides and enables our souls to pray aright. And, that you may do so, take these rules.

1. You must pray with your hearts and spirits (Isa. 26: 9; John 4:24); where the Spirit of Christ, and of prayer, principally resides (Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:17); with understanding (1 Cor. 14:15, 16); for we are renewed in knowledge (Col. 3: 10; 2 Peter 1:3); so that praying in ignorance cannot sanctify. And it must be with sincere hearty desire of the good things we ask in prayer; for God sees the heart (Ps. 62:8). Prayer is chiefly a heart-work (Ps. 27:8). God hears the heart without the mouth, but never hears the mouth acceptably without the heart (1 Sam. 1:13). Your prayer is odious hypocrisy, mocking of God and taking His name in vain, when you utter petitions for the coming of His kingdom, and doing of His will, and yet hate godliness in your heart. This is lying to God and flattering with your lips, but no true prayer, and so God takes it (Ps. 78:36). And you must have a sense of your wants and necessities, and that God only can supply them (2 Chron. 20:12).

And fervency in those desires is required (James 5:16). And you must pray with attention, minding yourselves what you pray, or else you cannot expect that God should mind it (Dan. 9:3). Watch it (1 Peter 4:7). Set yourselves to this duty intently. God sees where your heart is wandering, when you pray without attention (Ezek. 33:31). When you say never so many prayers without understanding, attention, affection, it is not praying at all, but sinning and playing the hypocrite, as Papists mumble over their Latin prayers upon the beads by tale, prating like parrots what they cannot understand. And thus ignorant people say over their form of English prayers and account they have well discharged their duty, though their heart prayed not at all, and they were minding other things. This is a mere lip-labour, and bodily exercise, offering a dead carcass to God, plain deceit (Mal. 1:13, 14), a form of godliness, but denying the power (2 Tim. 3:5), by which Popery has cheated the world of the power of this and all other holy ordinances. They say, 'God minds and knows what they speak, and approves it.' I answer, 'He sees them so as to judge them for hypocrites and profane persons, for not knowing, minding and approving what they utter themselves.' He has no pleasure in fools (Eccles. 5:1, 4). They would not deal so with an earthly prince.

2. You must pray in the name of Christ for the Spirit glorifies Christ (John 16:14); and leads us to God through Christ (Eph. 2:18). As I have shown that walking in the Spirit and walking in Christ is all one, so praying in the

Spirit and by and through Christ. And as we are to walk in the name of the Lord, and to do all things in His name, so to pray in His name, as is commanded (John 14:13, 14). It is not enough to conclude our prayers, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord', but we must come for blessings in the garments of our Elder Brother, and must depend upon His worthiness and strength for all.

So also we must praise God for all things in His name, as things received for His sake and by Him (Eph. 5:20). We must lay hold on His strength only, and plead nothing, and own nothing for our acceptance, but Him. We must not plead our own works arrogantly, like the proud Pharisee (Luke 18: 11, 12), except only as fruits of grace and rewards of grace (Isa. 38:3). Praying in the Spirit is on gospel, not legal principles (Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:3), with great humiliation and sense of unworthiness (Ps. 51), with a broken spirit, with despair of acceptance otherwise than upon Christ's account (Dan. 9:18). If your enlargements, strugglings, meltings, have been never so great, yet without this all is abominable.

3. Hence you must not think to be accepted for the goodness of your prayers, and trust on them as works of righteousness, which is making idols of your prayers and putting them into the place of Christ – quite contrary to praying in the name of Christ. Thus Papists hope to be saved by saying their tale of prayers upon their bead-rows, and they have indulgences granted upon their saying so many prayers, and of such a sort. Yea, some ignorant Protestants trust on their prayers as duties of righteousness, and they think one prayer to be more acceptable than another by reason of the holiness of the form, if it were made by holy men; especially the Lord's prayer, which they use to help them in an exigence or danger; however little they can apply it to their own case, they make an idol of it. And some use it and other places of Scripture as a spell or charm to drive away the devil. And others think their prayers more acceptable in one place than in another by reason of the holiness of the place (John 4:21, 24; 1 Tim. 2:8). Others trust on their much speaking (Matt. 6:7), which they call the enlarging of their hearts. They think to put off God and to stop the mouth of conscience with a few prayers, and so to live as they list.

4. Pray to God as your Father, through Christ as your Saviour, in faith of remission of sins and your acceptance with God and the obtaining of all other things which you desire of Him, as far as is necessary for your

salvation (James 1:5-7; 5:15; 1 John 5:14, 15; Mark 9:24; Heb. 10:14; Ps. 62:8; 86:7; 55:16; 57:1; 17:6). This is praying in Christ (Eph. 3:12), and by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). Without this, prayer is lifeless and heartless, and but a dead carcass (Rom. 10:14; Ps. 77:1, 2). By this you may judge whether you have prayed rightly, more than by your melting affection, or largeness in expression. Though you are not assured that you shall have everything that you ask, yet everything that is good. This faith you must endeavour to act, and therefore, if any sin lie on your conscience, you must strive first to get the pardon of it (Ps. 32:1, 5; 51:14, 15), and purification of it by faith, that you may lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:8). The sin of wrath there is especially mentioned because that is contrary to love and forgiving others. Here lies the strength, life and powerfulness of prayer. Set faith on work, and you will be powerful and prevail.

5. You must strive in prayer to stir up and act every other sanctifying grace, through faith moving you to this. Thus your spikenards will yield their smell: as godly sorrow (Ps. 38:18); peace (Isa. 27:5); joy (Ps. 105:3); hope (Ps. 71: 5); desire, and love to God (Ps. 4:6); and love to all His commands (Ps. 119:4, 5); and to all His people out of love to Him (Ps. 122:8). You must seek the Spirit Himself, in the first place (Luke 11:13; Ps. 37:5); and all spiritual things (Matt. 6:33). Praying only for carnal things shows a carnal heart and leaves it carnal. Pray for faith (Mark 9:24) and for such things as may serve most for the glorifying God (2 Chron. 1:11, 12). And for outward things you must act faith in submission to His will. And this prayer sets you in a holy frame (Matt. 26:42; Luke 22:42, 43). Hallowing God's name must be your aim (Matt. 6:9), not your lusts (James 4:3).

6. Strive to bring your soul into order by this duty, however disordered by guilt, anguish, inordinate cares or fears (Ps. 32:1, 5; 55:16, 17, 20, 22; 69:32; Phil. 4:6, 7; 1 Sam. 1). A watch must be often wound up. You must wrestle in prayer against your unbelief, doubting, fears, cares, reluctancy of the flesh to that which is good; against all evil lusts and desires, coldness of affection, impatience, trouble of spirit; everything that is contrary to a holy life and the graces and holy desires to be acted for yourselves or others (Col. 4:12; Rom. 15:30). Stir up yourselves to the duty (Col. 2:1, 2; Isa. 64:7). Though the flesh is cross and reluctant, we

must not yield, but resist by the Spirit (Matt. 26:41). And thus we shall find the Spirit helping our infirmities (Rom. 8:26, 27). Though God seem to defer long, we must not faint or be discouraged (Luke 18:1, 7). The greater our agonies be, the more earnestly we are to pray (Ps. 22:1, 2; Luke 22:42). This is to continue instant in prayer (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18). Thus you will find prayer a great heart-work, and not such a thing as may be done while you think on other things, and that it requires all the strength of faith and affection that you can possibly stir up. Thus you may get a holy frame.

7. You must make a good use of the whole matter and all the manner of prayer, as ordinary and extraordinary exigencies may require, to stir up grace in you by wrestling, and to bring your hearts into a holy frame. As in confession, you must condemn yourself according to the flesh, but not as you are in Christ. You must not deny that grace that you have, as if you were only wicked before, and now to begin again – which hinders praise for grace received in those that are already converted. In supplication, you must endeavour to work up your heart to a godly sorrow (Ps. 38: 18), and a holy sense of your own sin and misery, and lay before you the aggravations thereof (Ps. 51:3; 102). Complaint and lamentation are one great part of prayer, as the Lamentations of Jeremiah. And you must add pleadings to your petitions, with such arguments as may serve to strengthen faith and to stir up and kindle affection (Job. 23: 4). Which pleadings are taken from attributes (Num. 14:17, 18); promises (2 Sam. 7:26, 28, etc.; Gen. 32:9, 12); the equity of our cause (Ps. 17:2, 3); the advantage and benefit of the thing to the glory of God and our comfort (Ps. 115:1, 2; 79:9, 10, 13). Naked petitions are not sufficient when the soul finds special cause of struggling and wrestling against corruptions and dangers, and for mercies. Christ's urge prayer (John 17) is made up of pleading and very few petitions.

And we must make use also of praise and thanksgiving to stir up peace, joy, love, etc. (Gen. 32:10; Ps. 18:1, 2, 3; 33:1; 104:34). Especially be much in praising God for mercies of the new state in Christ (Eph. 1:3), and then you will the better give thanks for all the benefits on this account (Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18), and plead those benefits to stir up to faith and duty. That brief ejaculation, 'Lord, have mercy on me', is very good to be used; but it will not answer the end and use of the whole duty of prayer, as

some lazy carnal people would have it, and so harden themselves in the neglect of the duty; though the large improvement and use of all the matter of prayer, and at all times, is not required, but only as ordinary or extraordinary occasions may require.

8. You must not confine and limit your prayers by any prescribed form, seeing it is impossible that any such forms should be contrived as should answer and fit all the various conditions and necessities of the soul at all times. I do not condemn all forms, as that made by Christ, the Lord's prayer; though it were easy to show that Christ never intended it for a form of prayer, so as to bind any to the precise form of words; and it is plain the Spirit of God has expressed it in different words (Matt. 6; Luke 11). But better to pray by that form, or other forms, than not at all. It is uncharitable to take away crutches, or wooden legs, from lame people; yet none will look upon them but as dead helps. I say, it is utterly unlawful to bind ourselves to any form, because none can answer the duty fitly and suitably to particular occasions (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; John 15:7; 1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20). You must make the whole Scripture your common prayer-book, as the primitive church did, being the language of the Spirit, reaching all occasions and conditions, and fittest to speak to God in. And if you use a form, you must follow it by the Spirit farther than the form goes, according as He shall guide you by the Word; or else you quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). If you know the principles of prayer, and have a lively sense of your necessities, and hearty desires of God's grace and mercies, you will be able to pray without forms, and your affections will bring forth words out of the fullness of your heart. And you need not be over solicitous and timorous about words, for doubtless, the Spirit, who is the help to us in speaking to men, will also much more help us to speak to God, if we desire it (1 Cor. 1:5; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11, 12). And God does not regard eloquent words, nor artificial composure; neither do we need to regard it in private prayer (Isa. 38:14). If you limit yourself to forms, you will in this way grow formal and limit the Spirit.

7. Another means appointed of God, is singing of psalms, that is, songs of any sacred subject composed to a tune, hymns or songs of praise and spiritual songs of any sublime spiritual manner, as Psalm 45 and the Song of Solomon. God has commanded it in the New Testament (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5: 19), though now in these days many question whether it is an

ordinance or not. And there were many commands for it under the Old Testament (Ps. 149:1-3; 96:1; 100).

Moses and the children of Israel sang before David's time (Exod. 15). David composed psalms by the Spirit, to be sung publicly (2 Sam. 23:1, 2), yea, privately too (Ps. 40:3; 2 Chron. 29:30; Ps. 105:2). Other songs also were made upon several occasions and used, whether they were parts of the Scripture or not, as Solomon made a thousand and five (1 Kings 4:32). And they made songs upon occasion, which teaches that it is lawful for us to do so, if they be according to the Word (Isa. 38:9-14).

The matter of Scripture may be sung (Ps. 119:54). Christ and His disciples sung a hymn (Matt. 26:30), supposed to be one of David's psalms; and they were written for our instruction, as well as other parts of Scripture (Rom. 15:4), and so to be used now in singing. They speak of the things of the New Testament, either figuratively or clearly, and we may understand them better now than the Jews could under the Old Testament (2 Cor. 3:16; Gal. 2:17).

Christians before practiced this duty as well as Jews (Acts 16:25). Hence their *antelucani hymni* [the hymns they sang before daylight] were noted by Pliny a heathen. These songs or hymns may be used at all times, especially for holy mirth or rejoicing (James 5:13). But this text is not to be taken exclusively in singing, any more than in prayer (Ps. 38: 18; 2 Chron. 35:25).

But the right manner of this duty is chiefly to be noted. And here, (i) Trust not upon the melody of the voice, as if that pleased God, who delights only in the melody of the heart (Col. 3:16). Neither let the recreating your senses be your end, which is but a carnal work: *Non musica chordula, sed cor; non clamans, sed amans, psallit in aure Dei*: 'Not a musical string, but the heart; nor crying, but loving sounds in the ear of the Lord.' This spiritual music was typified by musical instruments of old. (ii) You must use it for the same end as meditation and prayer, according to the nature of what is sung, that is, to quicken faith (2 Chron. 20:21, 22; Acts 16:25, 26), and joy and delight in the Lord, glorying in Him (Ps. 104:33, 34; 105:3; 149:1, 2; 33: 1-3). You are never right until you can be heartily merry in the Lord, to act joy and mirth holily (James 5:13; Eph. 5:19), and also to get more knowledge and instruction in heavenly mysteries, and in your

duty, teaching and admonishing (Col. 3:16). Many psalms are *Maschils* (as their title is), that is, psalms of instruction.

Thus we are to sing such psalms as speak in the first person, though we cannot apply them to ourselves, as words uttered by ourselves concerning ourselves; and in this we do not lie. David speaks of Christ as of Himself, as a pattern of affliction and virtue, to instruct others; and we sing such psalms, not as our words, but as words of our instruction. And therein we do not lie, any more than the Levites, the sons of Korah, or Jeduthun or other musicians bound to sing them (Ps. 5; 39; 42). Though it is good to personate all the good that we can, yet we have so much liberty in the use of psalms that though we cannot apply all to ourselves, as speaking and thinking the same, yet we shall answer the end if we sing for our instruction, as in Psalms 6, 26, 46, 101 and 131.

And psalms have a peculiar fitness for teaching and instructing, because the pleasantness of metre, said or sung, is very helpful to the memory (see Deut. 31:19, 21). And there is a variety of curious artifice in the placing of words in the psalms upon this account, and there are some alphabetical psalms, as Psalms 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119 and 145. And by the melody of the sound, the instruction comes in with delight, as a physical dose sugared, and sorrow is naturally allayed to fit the mind for spiritual joy, and distempered passions appeased (2 Kings 3:15; 1 Sam. 16: 14-16). So Orpheus, Amphion and others were famous for civilizing rude and barbarous people by music.

8. Fasting is also an ordinance of God to be used for the same purpose and end and is commended to us under the New Testament (Matt. 9:15; 17:21; 1 Cor. 7:5). And we have examples of it (Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23). Under the Old Testament there were frequent commands for it and examples, chiefly upon occasion of extraordinary afflictions (1 Sam. 7:6; Neh. 9:1; Dan. 9:3; 10:2, 3; 2 Sam. 12: 16; Ps. 35:13; 2 Sam. 3:31, 35; Joel 2:12, 13); besides the anniversary great day of atonement (Lev. 16: 29, 31), when everyone was to fast on pain of being cut off. There is a prophecy of the same for the times of the New Testament (Zech. 12:12). It was used most on extraordinary occasions, and it is a help to holiness by faith, because it is a meet help for extraordinary prayer and humiliation (Joel 1:14; 2:12). But the great matter is to use it rightly, as follows.

1. Trust not in it as meriting or satisfying, as Papists and Pharisees do (Luke 18:12), putting it in the place of Christ; or as a means of itself conferring grace and mortifying lusts, as many do, who may sooner kill their bodies than their lusts; or as any purifying rite; yea, or in or for itself acceptable to God (1 Tim. 4:8; Heb. 13:9; Col. 2:16, 17, 20, 23). Imagine not that prayer is not acceptable without it, for this is against faith. Fasts, as well as feasts, are no substantial parts of worship, because not spiritual, but bodily; though under the Old Testament they were parts, as instituted rites, figurative and teaching. But that use is now ceased, as that on the day of atonement, and so many figurative rites adjoined to fasting, as sackcloth, ashes, rending garments, pouring out water, lying on the earth. The kingdom of God consists not in these things (Rom. 14:17). The soul is hardened by trusting in them (Isa. 58:3, 6; Zech. 7:5, 6, 10).

2. Use it as a help to extraordinary prayer and humiliation, that the mind may not be unsuited for it by eating, drinking or bodily pleasures (Joel 2:13; Isa. 22:12, 13; Zech. 12:10-14). It is good only as a help to the soul, removing impediments. The best fast is when the mind is taken off from delights, as in John the Baptist's case (Matt. 3:4), when heaven and godly sorrow take off the soul (Zech. 12:10-14).

3. Use it in such a measure as may be proper for its end, without which it is worth nothing. If abstinence divert your mind, by reason of a gnawing appetite, then you had better eat sparingly, as Daniel in his great fast (Dan. 10:2, 3). Some have not enough of spiritual-mindedness to give up themselves to fasting and prayer without great distraction; and such had better eat than go beyond their strength in a thing not absolutely necessary, which produces only a slavish act, as in the case of virginity (1 Cor. 7:7-9, 34-36). Christ would not have His weak disciples necessitated to the duty (Matt. 9:14, 15). In the meantime, such should strive to be sensible of the weakness and carnality that hinders their use of this excellent help.

9. You may expect here something to be spoken of vows. But I shall only say this of them. Think not to bring yourselves to good by vows and promises, as if the strength of your own law could do it when the strength of God's law does it not. We bring children to make promises of amendment, but we know how well they keep them. The devil will urge you to vow, and then to break, that he may perplex your conscience the more.

10. Another great mean is fellowship and communion with the saints (Acts 2:42).

First, this mean must be used diligently. Whosoever God saves should be added to some visible church and come into communion of other saints and, if they have no opportunity for it, their heart should be bent towards it. Sometimes the church is in the wilderness and hindered from visible communion and ordinances, but they that believe in Christ are always willing and desirous so to add and join themselves (Acts 2:41, 44, 47). And they continued steadfastly in fellowship (1 John 2:19). And God binds His people to leave the fellowship and society of the wicked as much as may be (2 Cor. 6:17). And, so far as we are necessitated to accompany them, we ought to show charity to their souls and bodies (1 Cor. 5:9).

This communion with saints is to be exercised in private converse (Ps. 101:4-7), and in public assemblies (Heb. 10: 25; Zech. 14:16, 17). And doubtless, it ought to be used for the attainment of holiness as may be proved.

Firstly, in general, because God communicates all salvation to a people ordinarily by, or in a church, either by taking them into fellowship, or holding forth the light of truth by His churches to the world. A church is the temple of God, where God dwells (1 Tim. 3:15). He has placed His name and salvation there, as in Jerusalem of old (Joel 2: 32; 2 Chron. 6:5, 6). He has given to His churches those officers and ordinances whereby He converts others (1 Cor. 12:28). His springs are there (Ps. 87:7). He makes the several members of a church instruments for the conveyance of His grace and fullness from one to another, as the members of the natural body convey to each other the fullness of the head (Eph. 4:16). All the newborn are brought forth and nourished by the church (Isa. 66:8, 11; 49:20; 60:4), and therefore all that would be saved should join to a church; they shall prosper that love the church, so as to stand in its gates and unite as members, brethren and companions (Ps. 122:2, 4, 6). And wrath is denounced against those that are not members of it, at least, of the mystical body: they cannot have God for their Father, that have not that for their mother (S. of S. 1:7, 8). This makes those that desire fellowship with God to take hold of the skirts of His people (Zech. 8:23).

Secondly, in particular, fellowship with the saints conduces to holiness many ways.

1. By manifold helps to holiness, which are received thereby, as:

1. The Word and sacraments (Acts 2:42; Isa. 2:3; Matt. 28:19, 20), and all the ministerial office and labour in watching our souls (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Isa. 25: 6). None of these helps can be enjoyed without fellowship of saints, each with other. And if believers had been to have stood single by themselves, and not maintained fellowship with each other for mutual assistance and common good, none of these things could have continued; neither could any believer have been extant at this day, in any ordinary way, but even the very name of believers had been abolished.

2. Mutual prayer, which is the more forcible when all pray together (Matt. 18:19, 20; 2 Cor. 1:10, 11; James 5:16; Rom. 15:30).

3. Mutual admonition, instruction, consolation, to help each other when they are ready to fall, and to promote the good work in each other (1 Thess. 5:14). 'He that walks with wise men, shall be wise' (Prov. 13:20). Woe to him that is alone 'when he falls' (see Eccles. 4:9-12). In church fellowship there are many helpers, many to watch. Soldiers have their security in company, and the church is compared to an 'army with banners' (S. of S. 6:4, 10). So, for quickening affections, iron sharpens iron (Prov. 27:17). Likewise, the counsel of a friend, like ointment and perfume, rejoices the heart (Prov. 27:9), yea, the wounds and reproofs of the righteous are as precious balm (Ps. 141:5).

4. External supports, which mitigate afflictions, and are to be communicated mutually (Eph. 4:28; 1 Peter 4:9, 10). The affliction is increased, when none care for our souls (Ps. 142:4).

5. Excommunication, when offences are exceeding heinous or men obstinate in sin. This ordinance is appointed for the 'destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved' (1 Cor. 5:5). Better and more hopeful it is to be cast out by the church for a person's amendment than to be wholly without the church at all times; and better to be a lost sheep, than a goat or swine; for excommunication cuts off actual communion only until repentance be evident, and not absolutely abolishes the title and relation of a brother and church member, though it judges one to be an unnatural

brother and a pernicious rotten member at present, not fit for acts of communion. Besides, admonition is still to be afforded (2 Thess. 3:15), and any means are to be used that may serve to cure and restore him. The church reaches forth a hand to help such a person, though it does not join hands in fellowship with him; or it communicates to him, not with him. Yet, if he have not so much grace as to repent, it were better he had never known the way of righteousness (2 Peter 2:21).

6. The lively examples of saints are before our eyes in church fellowship, to teach and encourage (Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 2 Tim. 3: 10, 11; 2 Cor. 9:2).

2. By those holy duties that are required and do appertain to this fellowship and communion. All acts that belong to this fellowship are holy; as, hearing, receiving the sacraments, prayer, mutual admonitions, etc. I shall consider some such holy acts, by which we are rather doers than receivers, and which we perform towards others, as:

1. Godly discourse, teaching, admonishing, comforting others in Christ, which we cannot so perform towards others as towards those we have strict fellowship with in Christ. Others, like swine, trample these jewels under foot, and saints therefore are forced to refrain from godly discourse in their company (Amos 5:10, 13; 6:10). But holy discourse is most acceptable to the saints, and to be practiced with them (Mal. 3:16), and is greatly to the advantage of holiness (Prov. 11:25).

2. In helping, succouring and conversing with Christ in His members. We do good to Christ in His members in church fellowship; and we ourselves as members of Christ act as well from Christ as towards Christ; whereas, if we do good to others without, we do good only for Christ's sake, but not to Christ (Matt. 25:35-46; Ps. 16:2, 3). We have advantage in general to do all duties that belong to us as members of Christ to fellow members – which we cannot do, if separate from them, as a natural member cannot perform its office to other members, if separate from them.

Secondly, the means must be used rightly, for the attaining of holiness only in Christ.

1. One rule is 'Do not trust in church membership', or on churches, as if this or that relation in fellowship commended you to God of itself, whereas, a church way is but a help to fellowship with Christ and walking

in the duties of that fellowship. The Israelites stumbled at Christ by trusting on their carnal privileges, and set them in opposition to Christ, whereas they should have only made them subservient to Christ. Confidence in them should have been abandoned, as Paul's example teaches (Phil. 3:3-5, etc.). We must not glory in Paul, Apollos, Cephas, but in Christ; else we glory in the flesh, and in men (1 Cor. 1:12, 13; 3:21). Trusting on church privileges is an inlet to formality and licentiousness (Jer. 7:4, 8-10), and thence the corruption of churches (Isa. 1:10; 2 Tim. 2:20).

2. Follow no church any farther than you may follow it in the way of Christ, and keep fellowship with it only upon the account of Christ, because it follows Christ and has fellowship with Christ (1 John 1:3; Zech. 8:23). If a church revolts from Christ, we must not follow it, however ancient it may be; as the Israelitish church was not to be followed, when it persecuted Christ and His apostles, and many by adhering to that church fell from Christ (Phil. 3:6; Acts 6: 13, 14; 21:28). We are indeed to hear the church, but not every one that calls itself so, and none any farther than it speaks as a true church, according to the voice of the Shepherd (John 10:27). We must subject ourselves to ministers of Christ and stewards of His mysteries (1 Cor. 4:1), but must give up ourselves first to Christ absolutely, and to the church according to the will of Christ (2 Cor. 8:5).

Our fear must not be taught by the precepts of men (Matt. 15). The doctrines of any men are to be tried by Scripture, whatever authority they pretend to (Acts 17: 11). An unlimited following church guides brought the church into Babylon and into all manner of spiritual whoredoms and abominations. You are not baptized into the name of the church, but into the name of Christ (1 Cor. 1:13).

3. Do not think that you must attain this or that degree of grace, before you join yourself in full communion with a church of Christ in all ordinances. But when you have given up yourself to Christ, and learned the duty of communion, give up yourself unto a church of Christ, though you find much weakness and inability. For church ordinances of special communion serve to strengthen you, and how can you get heat, being alone? The disciples, as soon as converted, embraced all fellowship (Acts 2:42). And churches, that they may forward holiness in themselves and others, must be willing to receive Christ's weak ones, and to feed His

lambs as well as better-grown sheep, and bear them on their sides (Isa. 66:12). How else shall Christ's weak ones grow strong by that nourishment that other parts supply? They are very unreasonable that expect Christians should grow out of church fellowship to as high a degree of grace as these that are in those pastures of tender grass, and are unwilling to receive any that they are like to have occasion to bear with, whereas bearing and long-suffering are great duties of church fellowship (Eph. 4:2, 3; Rom. 14:1). The weakest have most need to be strengthened by church communion, and we are bound to receive them, as Christ has received us (Rom. 15:7). We do not reject or separate the weaker parts of the body (1 Cor. 12:23, 24), but put more honour and comeliness on them.

Admission into the churches in the apostolic times was gained upon profession with a show of seriousness, though tares got in among the wheat, and many scandals arose to the reproach of the ways of Christ; and the greatest strictness will not keep out all hypocrites, yet the best care must be taken so far as not to hinder any that have the least truth of grace.

4. Keep communion with a church for the sake of communion with Christ (1 John 1:3; Zech. 8:23). Therefore, you must keep communion in Christ's pure ways only, and in them seek Christ by faith that, in the enjoyment of those advantages, you may receive and act the godliness and holiness forementioned and aim at spiritual flourishing and growth in grace. Choose therefore fellowship with the most spiritual churches. Judge of churches and men according to the rule of the new creature (2 Cor. 5:16, 17), and try them (Rev. 2:2; 3:9); otherwise a church may corrupt you.

See that your communion answer its end, tend to your edification, not to destruction; which you ought to take all the advantages of, not only in the church where you are a member, but by communion with other churches, as occasionally providence casts you among them, for your communion with a particular church obliges to communion with all churches of Christ in His ways, as you are called to it (1 Cor. 10:17). And it is an abuse to say, 'We are members of a church in London, and therefore refuse fellowship with a church in the country,' seeing, if we are members of Christ, we are members of one another, whether single persons or churches.

And endeavour to join in fellowship with the godly of the place where you live, that you may have the more frequent and constant communion. Onesimus, though converted at Rome, must be one of the church of the Colossians, because he lived there (Col. 4:9, cf. Philem. 10). The union of the saints together in distant societies, according to the places where they lived, was the apostolic practice, and cannot be violated without sin. Such can best watch over one another, admonish, comfort and edify each other – which is the benefit of communion. And they indeed destroy communion that seek a communion where they cannot have this benefit.

I only add to this head that church fellowship without practicing the ways of Christ is but a conspiracy to take His name in vain, and a counterfeit church fellowship of hypocrites. It is impudence for such to invite others to their communion; tyranny to compel them. Every Christian is bound to seek a better church fellowship by reformation; and those that do so are the best sons of Christ's church, who inquire, 'Is this the way to enjoy Christ?' a church way being appointed to enjoy Christ therein.

5. Especially, leave not the church in persecution, when you need its help most and are then most tried whether you will cleave to it. This is a sign of apostasy (Heb. 10:25, 26; Matt. 24:9-14). We should cleave to one another as one flesh, even to prisons and death, or else we deny Christ in His members (Matt. 25:43).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

That you may seek holiness and righteousness only by believing in Christ and walking in Him by faith, according to the former directions, take encouragement from the great advantages of this way and the excellent properties of it.

This direction may serve as an epilogue or conclusion by stirring us up unto a lively and cheerful embracing those gospel rules forementioned by several weighty motives. Many are kept from seeking godliness because they know not the way to it; or the way that they think of seems uncouth, unpleasant, disadvantageous and full of discouragement, like the way through the wilderness to Canaan, which wearied the Israelites and occasioned their many murmurings (Num. 21:4).

But this is a way so good and excellent that those that have the true knowledge of it, and desire heartily to be godly, cannot dislike it. I shall show the excellency of it in several particulars. But you should first call to mind what is the way I have taught, namely, union and fellowship with Christ, and by faith in Christ, as discovered in the gospel; not by the law, or in a natural condition, or by thinking to get it before we come to Christ, to procure Christ by it – which is striving against the stream; but that we must first apply Christ and His salvation to ourselves for our comfort, and that by confident faith; and then walk by that faith, according to the new man, in Christ, and not as in a natural condition; and use all means of holiness rightly for this end. Now, that this is an excellent advantageous way appears by the following desirable properties of it.

Firstly, it has this property that it tends to the abasement of all flesh and exaltation of God only, in His grace and power through Christ. And so it is agreeable to God's design in all His works and the end that He aims at (Rom. 11:6; Isa. 2:17; Ezek. 36:21-23, 31, 32; Ps. 145:4); and a fit means for the attaining the end that we ought to aim at in the first place, which is the hallowing, sanctifying and glorifying God's name in all things; and is the first and chief petition (Matt. 6:9); and is the end of all our actings (1 Cor. 10:31); and was the end of giving the law (Rom. 3:19, 20). God made all things for Christ, and would have Him have the preeminence in all (Col. 1:17, 18), that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13). And this property of it is a great argument to prove that it is the way of

God, and has the character of His image stamped on it. We may say that it is like Him and a way according to His heart, as Christ proves His doctrine to be of God by this argument (John 7:18). And Paul proves the doctrine of justification, and of sanctification, and salvation by grace through faith to be of God, because it excludes all boastings of the creature (Rom. 3:27, 28; 1 Cor. 1:29, 30, 31; Eph. 3:8, 9). This property appears evidently in the mystery of sanctification by Christ in us through faith. For

1. It shows that we can do nothing by our natural will, or any power of the flesh, and that God will not enable us to do anything that way (Rom. 7:18), however nature is stirred up by the law or natural helps (Gal. 3:11, 21). And so it serves to work self-loathing and abasement, and to make us look on nature as desperately wicked, and past cure, and not to be reformed, but put off by putting on Christ. It remains wicked, and only wicked, after we have put on Christ.

2. It shows that all our good works and living to God are not by our own power and strength at all, but by the power of Christ living in us by faith; and that God enables us to act, not merely according to our natural power, as He enables carnal men and all other creatures, but above our own power by Christ united to us and in us through the Spirit. All men live, move and have their being in Him and, by His universal support and maintenance of nature in its being and activity, they act (Heb. 1:3), so that the glory of their acting as creatures belongs to God. But God acts more immediately in His people, who are one flesh and one Spirit with Christ, and act not by their own power, but by the power of the Spirit of Christ in them, as closely united to Him, and being the living temples of His Spirit; so that Christ is the immediate principal agent of all their good works, and they are Christ's works properly, who works all our works in us and for us; and yet they are the saints' works by fellowship with Christ, by whose light and power the faculties of the saints do act, and are acted (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:16, 17; Col. 1:11); so that we are to ascribe all our works to God in Christ and thank Him for them as free gifts (1 Cor. 15:10; Phil. 1:11). God enables us to act, not by ourselves, as He does others, but by Himself. The wicked are supported in acting only according to their own nature, so they act wickedly; thus all are said to live, move and have their being in God (Acts 17:28). But God enables us to conquer sin, not by ourselves, but by Himself (Hos. 1:7); and the glory of enabling us does not only belong to

Him, which the Pharisee could not but ascribe to him (Luke 18:11), but also the glory of doing all in us. And yet we work as one with Christ, even as He works as one with the Father, by the Father working in Him. We live as branches by the juice of the vine, act as members by the animal spirits of the head, and bring forth fruit by marriage to Him as our husband, and work in the strength of Him as the living bread that we feed on. He is all in the new man (Col. 3:11), and all the promises are made good in Him (2 Cor. 1:20).

Secondly, it has this property that it consists well with other doctrines of the gospel; which contrary errors do not. And hence this is the way to confirm us in many other points of the gospel, and therefore appears to be true by its harmony with other truths, and fit linking with them in the same golden chain of the mystery of godliness, and evidences them to be true by their harmony with it. I have showed that men's mistaking the true way of sanctification is the cause of perverting the Scripture in other points of faith, and of declining from the truth to Popish, Socinian and Arminian tenets, because men cannot seriously take that for truth which they judge not to be according to godliness. But this way of holiness will evidence that these gospel doctrines, which they refuse, are according to godliness; and that those tenets, which a blind zeal for holiness moves them to embrace, are indeed contrary to holiness, however Satan appears to their natural understandings as an angel of light in such tenets. Whatever men say, it is certain that legalists are indeed the Antinomians, I shall instance in some truths confirmed by it.

1. The doctrine of *original sin*, that is, not only the guilt of Adam's sin and a corrupt nature, but utter impotency to do spiritual good, and proneness to sin, which is death to God, in all people according to nature (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12). There is an utter inability to keep the law truly in any point. Many deny this doctrine, because they think that if people believe this they will excuse their sins by it, and be apt to despair of all striving to do good works and leave off all endeavours and grow licentious, and they think it will be more conducing to godliness to hold and teach either that there is no original sin or corruption derived from Adam, or at least, it is done away, either in the world by universal redemption, or in the church by baptism; and that there is free will restored, whereby people are able to incline themselves to do good, that men may be more encouraged to set

upon good works and their neglect made inexcusable. All this is indeed forcible against seeking and endeavouring for holiness by the free will and power of nature, which is the way of endeavouring, which I directed you to avoid, and if there were no new way to holiness since the Fall, original sin might make us despair; but there is a new birth, a new heart, a new creature, and therefore we have directed you to the seeking of holiness by the Spirit of Christ, and willing good freely by a spiritual power, as new creatures, partakers of a divine nature in Christ. Yea, it is necessary to know the first Adam, that we may know the second (Rom. 5:12); to believe the Fall and original sin, that we may be stirred up to fly to Christ by faith for holiness by free gift, knowing that we cannot attain it by our own power and free will (2 Cor. 1:9; Matt. 9:12, 13; Rom. 7:24, 25; 2 Cor. 3:5; Eph. 5:14). There were no need of a new man or a new creation, if the old were not without strength and life (John 3:5, 6; Eph. 2:8).

But original deadness cannot hinder God's working faith, and hungerings and thirstings after Christ by the Spirit through the gospel, in those that God chooses to walk holily and blamelessly before Him in love (1 Thess. 1:4, 5 ; Acts 26:18). And so we are made alive in a new head and become branches of another vine, living to God by the Spirit, not by nature.

2. It confirms us in the doctrine of *predestination*, which many deny, because they say it takes men off from endeavours, as fruitless, by telling men that all events are predetermined. This argument would be more forcible against endeavours by the power of our own free will, but not at all against endeavours for holiness by the operation of God, giving us faith and all holiness by His own Spirit working in us through Christ. We are to trust on Christ for the grace of the elect and God's goodwill towards men (Matt. 3 17; Luke 2:14; Ps. 106:4, 5). Election by grace destroys seeking by works, but not by grace (Rom. 11:5, 6). And we are here taught to seek for salvation only in the way of the elect; and we may conclude that holiness is to be had by God's will, and not by our own; and it may move us to desire holiness by the will of God (Rom. 9:16; Ps. 110:3). And seeing it appears by this doctrine of sanctification through Christ that we are God's workmanship, as to all the good wrought in us (Phil. 2:12, 13; Eph. 2:10), we may well admit that He has appointed His pleasure from eternity without infringing the natural liberty of our corrupt wills, which reach not

unto good works (Acts 15:18, cf. 36). Man's natural free will may well consist with God's decree, as in paradise, *Decretum radix contingentiae*.

3. It confirms us in the true doctrine of *justification* and *reconciliation* with God by *faith*, relying on the merits of Christ's blood, without any works of our own, and without considering faith as a work to procure favour by the righteousness of the act, but only as a hand to receive the gift, or as the very eating and drinking of Christ actually, rather than any kind of condition entitling us to Him as our food.

This great doctrine of the gospel many hate, as breaking the strongest bounds of holiness and opening a way to all licentiousness; for they reckon that the conditionality of works to attain God's favour and avoid His wrath, and the necessity of them to salvation are the most necessary and effectual impulsives to all holiness; and they account that the other doctrine opens the floodgates to licentiousness. And truly this consideration would be of some weight, if people were to be brought to holiness by moral suasion, and their natural endeavours stirred up by the terms of the law and by slavish fears and mercenary hopes; or the force of these motives would be altogether enervated by the doctrine of justification by free grace.

But I have already shown that a man, being a guilty dead creature, cannot be brought to serve God out of love by the force of any of these motives; and that we are not sanctified by any of our own endeavours to work holiness in ourselves, but rather by faith in Christ's death and resurrection, even the same whereby we are justified; and that the urging of the law stirs up sin; and that freedom from it is necessary to all holiness, as the apostle teaches (Rom. 6:11, 14; 7:4, 5). And this way of sanctification confirms the doctrine of justification by faith, as the apostle informs (Rom. 8:1). For if we are sanctified, and so restored to the image of God and life by the Spirit, through faith, it is evident that God has taken us into His favour and pardoned our sins by the same faith, without the law; or else we should not have the fruits and effects of His favour thereby to our eternal salvation (Rom. 8:2). Yea, His justice would not admit His giving life without works, if we were not made righteous in Christ by the same faith. And we cannot trust to have holiness freely given us by Christ upon any rational round, except we can also trust on the same Christ for free reconciliation and forgiveness of sins for our justification; neither can guilty cursed creatures, that cannot work by reason of their deadness under the curse, be

brought to a rational love of God, except they apprehend His loving them first freely, without works (1 John 4:19).

The great objection and reason of so many controversies and books written about it is because they think that men will trust to be saved, however they live. But sanctification is an effect of justification, and flows from the same grace; and we trust for them both by the same faith, and for the latter in order to the former. And such a faith, be it ever so confident, tends not to licentiousness, but to holiness; and we grant that justification by grace destroys holiness by legal endeavours, but not by grace. So that there is no need to live a Papist, and die an Antinomian.

4. It confirms us in the doctrine of *real union with Christ*, so plentifully held forth in Scripture, which doctrine some account a vain notion, and cannot endure it, because they think it works not holiness, but presumption; whereas I have shown that it is absolutely necessary for the enjoyment of spiritual life and holiness, which is treasured up in Christ – and that so inseparably that we cannot have it without a real union with Him (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 5:12; John 6:53; 15:5; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:11). The members and branches cannot live without union with the vine and head; nor the stones be part of the living temple, except they be really joined mediately or immediately to the cornerstone.

5. It confirms us in the doctrine of *certain final perseverance* of the saints (John 3:36; 6:37; 5:24; 1 John 3:9; 1 Thess. 5:24; Phil. 1:6; John 10:28, 29; 4:14). They think this doctrine makes people careless of good works. I answer, it makes people careless of seeking them by their own natural strength and in a way of slavish fear, but careful and courageous in trusting on the grace of God for them, when they are brought by regeneration heartily to desire them (Rom. 6:14; Num. 13:30), setting upon the doing of them in that grace (1 Thess. 5:8-11). And I have shown that all fears of damnation will never bring persons to work out of love, and that nothing will do it, but a comfortable doctrine.

Thirdly, it has this excellent property, that it is the never-failing, effectually powerful, alone sufficient and sure way to attain to true holiness. They that have the truth in them find it; and the truly humbled find it. People strive in vain, when they seek it any other way; therefore venture with the lepers, else you die (2 Kings 7; Isa. 55:2, 3, 7). All other

ways either stir up sin, or increase despair in you: as seeking holiness by the law and working under the curse does, and breeds but slavish and hypocritical obedience at best, and restrains sin only instead of mortifying it (Gal. 4:25). The Jews sought another way and could not attain it (Rom. 9). And all that seek it another way shall lie down in sorrow (Isa. 50:11). And that,

1. Because as we are under the law in our natural state, we are dead and children of wrath (Eph. 2:1, 3). And the law curses us, instead of helping us (Gal. 3:10), and gives no life by its obligation (Gal. 3:21). And we cannot work holiness in ourselves (Rom. 5:6). So that a humble person finds it in vain to seek holiness by the law or his own strength, for the law is weak through our flesh. Seeking a pure life without a pure nature is building without a foundation. And there is no seeking a new nature from the law, for it bids us make brick without straw, and says to the cripple, 'Walk', without giving any strength.

3. In this way only God is reconciled of us, even in Christ (2 Cor. 5:19; Eph. 1:7). And so He loves us and is a fit object of our love (1 John 4:19). And so in this way only we have a new and divine nature by the Spirit of Christ in us, effectually carrying us forth to holiness with life and love (Rom. 8:5; Gal. 5:17; 2 Peter 1:3, 4), and have new hearts according to the law, so that we serve God heartily according to the new nature, and cannot but serve Him (1 John 3:9). So that there is a sure foundation for godliness and love to God with all our heart, might and soul; and sin is not only restrained, but mortified; and not only the outside made clean, but the inside, and the image of God renewed; and holy actings surely follow. We sin not according to the old nature, though we are not perfect in degree because of the old nature.

Fourthly, it is a most pleasant way to those that are in it (Prov. 3:17), and that in several respects.

1. It is a most plain way, easy to be found, to one that sees his own deadness under the law, and is so renewed in the spirit of his mind as to know and be persuaded of the truth of the gospel. Though such may be troubled and pestered with many legal thoughts and workings, yet, when they seriously consider things, the way is so plain that they think it folly and madness to go any other way, so that the 'wayfaring men, though

fools, shall not err therein' (Isa. 35: 8; Prov. 8:9). The enlightened soul cannot think of another way, when truly humbled (Prov: 4:18). And when we are in Christ, we have His Spirit to be our guide in this way (1 John 2:27; John 16:13). So that we need not be filled with such distracting thoughts about knowledge of our way, as legal spirits are about thousands of cases of conscience, which do so multiply upon them that they despair of finding out the way of religion by reason of so various doubts and manifold intricacies. Here we may be sure that God will so far teach us our duties as that we shall not be misled with error, so as to continue in it to destruction (Ps. 25:8, 9, 14). What a trouble it is to a traveller to be doubtful of his way and without a guide, when his business is of great importance, upon life and death! It is even a heart-breaking. But those that are in this way may be sure that, though they sometimes err, yet they shall not err destructively, but shall discern their way again (Gal. 5:7, 10).

2. It is easy to those that walk in it by the Spirit, though it be difficult to get into it by reason of the opposition of the flesh, or devil, scaring us or seducing us from it. Here you have holiness as a free gift received by faith, an act of the mind and soul. Whosoever will may come, take it and drink freely, and nothing is required but a willing mind (John 7:38; Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17). But the law is an intolerable burden (Matt. 23:4; Acts 15:10), if duty be laid on us by its terms. We are not left in this way to conquer lusts by our endeavours, which is a successless work, but what is duty is given, and the law is turned into promises (Heb. 8: 6-13; Ezek. 36:25, 26; Jer. 31:33; 32:40). We have all now in Christ (Col. 3:11; 2:9, 10, 15, 17). This is a catholic medicine, instead of a thousand. How pleasant would this free gift, holiness, be to us, if we knew our own wants, inabilities and sinfulness? How ready are some to toil continually and macerate their bodies in a melancholy legal way to get holiness, rather than perish for ever? And therefore, how ready should we be, when it is only, 'Take, and have; believe, and be sanctified and saved?' (2 Kings 5:13). Christ's burden is light by His Spirit's bearing it (Matt. 11:30). No weariness, but renewing of strength (Isa. 40:31).

3. It is a way of peace (Prov. 3:17), free from fears and terrors of conscience that those meet with unavoidably, who seek salvation by works, for the 'law works wrath' (Rom. 4:15). It is not the way of mount Sinai, but of Jerusalem (Heb. 12:18, 22). The doubts of salvation that

people meet with arise from putting some condition of works between Christ and themselves, as has appeared in this discourse. But our walking in this way is by faith, which rejects such fears and doubtings (John 14:1; Mark 5:36; Heb. 10:19, 22). It is free from fears of Satan or any evil (Rom. 8:31, 32), and free from slavish fears of perishing by our sins (1 John 2:1, 2; Phil. 4:6, 7), faith laying hold on infinite grace, mercy and power to secure us: 'The Lord is the keeper and shade on the right hand' (Ps. 121:5). Free and powerful grace answers all objections.

4. It is a way that is paved with love, like Solomon's chariot (S. of S. 3:10). We are to set God's loving-kindness and all the gifts of His love still before our eyes (Ps. 26:3), Christ's death, resurrection, intercession before our eyes, which breed peace, joy, hope, love (Rom. 15:13; Isa. 35: 10). You must believe, for your justification, adoption, the gift of the Spirit and a future inheritance, your death and resurrection with Christ. In believing for these things, your whole way is adorned with flowers and has these fruits growing on each side, so that it is through the garden of Eden, rather than the wilderness of Sinai (Acts 9:31). It is the office of the Spirit our guide, to be our comforter, and not a spirit of bondage (Rom. 8:15). Peace and joy are great duties in this way (Phil. 4:4-6). God does not drive us on with whips and terrors, and by the rod of the schoolmaster, the law, but leads us and wins us to walk in His ways by allurements (S. of S. 1:3; Hos. 11:3, 4). See such allurements (2 Cor. 5:15; 7:1; Rom. 12:1).

5. Our very moving, acting, walking in this way is a pleasure and delight. Every good work is done with pleasure; the very labour of the way is pleasant. Carnal men wish duties were not necessary, and they are burdensome to them; but they are pleasant to us, because we do not gain holiness by our own carnal wrestling with our lusts and crossing them out of carnal fear, with regret and grief, and setting conscience and the law against them, to hinder their actings; but we act naturally, according to the new nature and perform our new spiritual desires by walking in the ways of God through Christ; and our lusts and pleasures in sin are not only restrained, but taken away in Christ, and pleasures in holiness freely given us and implanted in us (Rom. 8:5; Gal. 5:17, 24; John 4:34; 40:8; 119:14, 16, 20). We have a new taste and savour, love and liking by the Spirit of Christ, and look on the law not as a burden, but as our privilege in Christ.

Fifthly, it is a high exalted way, above all other ways. Unto this way the prophet Habakkuk is exalted when, upon the failure of all visible helps and supports, he resolves to 'rejoice in the Lord', and 'joy in the God of his salvation', and making God his strength by faith, 'his feet should be as hinds' feet', and 'should walk upon His high places' (Hab. 3:18, 19). These are the 'heavenly places in Christ Jesus' that God has set us in, being quickened and raised up together with Him (Eph. 2:5, 6).

1. We live high here, for 'we live not after the flesh, but after the Spirit', and Christ in us with all His fullness (Rom. 8: 1, 2; Gal. 2:20; 5:25). We walk in fellowship with God dwelling in us and walking in us (2 Cor. 6:16, 18). And therefore our works are of higher price and excellency than the works of others, because they are 'wrought in God' (John 3:21), and are the fruits of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:23; Phil. 1:11). And we may know that they are accepted and good by our gospel principles, which others have not (Rom. 7:6).

2. We are enabled to the most difficult duties (Phil. 4: 1, 3), and nothing is too hard for us. See the great works done by faith (Heb. 11; Mark 9:23) – works that carnal men think folly and madness to venture upon (they are so great), and honourable achievements in doing and suffering for Christ.

3. We walk in an honourable state with God, and on honourable terms – not as guilty creatures, to get our pardon by works; not as bond-servants, to earn our meat and drink; but as sons and heirs, walking towards the full possession of that happiness to which we have a title, and so we have much boldness in God's presence (Gal. 4:6, 7). We can approach nearer to God than others, and walk before Him confidently without slavish fear, not as strangers, but as such who are of His own family (Eph. 2:19, 20). And this prompts us to do greater things than others, walking as free men (Rom. 6:17, 18; John 8:35, 36). It is a kingly way; the law to us is a royal law, a law of liberty and our privilege – not a bond and yoke of compulsion.

4. It is the way only of those that are honourable and precious in the eyes of the Lord, even His elect and redeemed ones, whose special privilege it is to walk therein: 'No unclean beast goes there' (Isa. 35:8, 9). No carnal man can walk in this way, but only those that are taught of God (John

6:44-46). Nor would it have come into their hearts without divine revelation.

5. The preparing this way cost Christ very dear. It is a costly way (Heb. 10:19, 20; 1 Peter 3:18).

6. It is a good old way, wherein you may follow the footsteps of all the flock.

7. It is the way to perfection. It leads to such holiness which shall, in a while, be absolutely perfect. It differs only in the degree and manner of manifestation from the holiness of heaven: there the saints live by the same Spirit, and the same God is all in all (1 Cor. 15:28; John 4:14); and have the image of the same spiritual man (1 Cor. 15:49). Only here we have but 'the first-fruits of the Spirit' (Rom. 8:23); and 'live by faith, and not by sight' (2 Cor. 5:7); and are 'not full grown in Christ' (Eph. 4:13). Sanctification in Christ is glorification begun, as glorification is sanctification perfected.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION OPENED AND APPLIED

Walter Marshall

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:23-26).

The apostle having confuted and overthrown all justification, either of Jew or Gentile, by works, in the foregoing discourse, is now proving what he asserted (v. 21, 22): 'That the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference,' showing that now in the gospel times there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, but that in the justification of both the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. This he proves by showing what the gospel teaches concerning the way of justification, for the gospel only reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16, 17): 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.'

So the words are a declaration of the gospel way of justification by the righteousness of God, and that so clearly and fully, and the benefit spoken of so great and glorious, being the first benefit that we receive by union with Christ and the foundation of all other benefits, that my text is accounted to be *evangelium evangelii*, a principal part of the written gospel, as briefly and yet fully expressing this excellent point more than any other text.

Note in the words particularly the subject declared and explained, namely, justification of persons, or their being justified; and the meaning of it here is to be cleared and freed from all ambiguities and misunderstanding.

Justification signifies 'making just' as sanctification is 'making holy', glorification 'making glorious'; but not making just by infusion of grace and holiness into a person, as the Papists teach, confounding justification and sanctification together, but making just in trial and judgement, by a radical sentence discharging guilt, freeing from blame and accusation – approving, judging, owning and pronouncing a person to be righteous. Use alters the signification. It is a juridical word, or law term and has reference to trial and judgement: 'With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgement; yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judges me is the Lord' (1 Cor. 4:3, 4). And it is so opposed to condemnation in judgement: 'If there be a controversy between men, and they come into judgement, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked' (Deut. 25:1). And, 'By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned' (Matt. 12:37). And it is opposed both to accusation and condemnation: 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemns?' (Rom. 8:33, 34.) And so 'if I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me' (Job 9:20). 'I will maintain mine own ways before him . . . I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified ... Who is he that will plead with me?' (Job 13:15-19.) Here justification is plainly opposed to the accusation or fault. And it is as plainly opposed to the passing sentence of condemnation: 'Do, and judge your servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head, and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness' (1 Kings 8:32). In this sense it is a sin to justify the wicked (Isa. 5:23; Prov. 17:15; Job 27:5). Actions must be existent already and brought to trial that they may be justified (Job 33:32; Isa. 43:9, 26).

Justice of righteousness consists not in the intrinsic nature of an action, but in its agreeableness to a rule of judgement, so that actions are called just and righteousness by an extrinsical denomination with relation to God's rule of judging. And this righteousness appears by trying the action according to the rule, and by making an estimate of it; which estimate is either approving or disapproving, justifying or condemning, finding it to be sin or no sin, or breach of the law. So we may say of the righteousness of persons with reference to such habits or actions. And because the righteousness of righteous persons appears when they are brought to trial

and judgement, therefore they are said then to be in a special manner justified, as if they were then made righteous, that is, when their righteousness is declared: as Christ was said to be begotten the Son of God at the resurrection (Acts 13:33), because He was then declared to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4). And in the same sense we that are adopted at present are said to 'wait for our adoption', that is, the manifestation of it (Rom. 8:23). And thus even God is said to be justified, when we judge of His actions as we ought to do and deem them to be righteous (Job. 32:2; Ps. 51:4; Luke 7:29), though nothing can be added to the infinite righteousness of God. And wisdom is said to be 'justified of her children' (Matt. 11:19). So justification is not a real change of a sinner in himself (though a real change is annexed to it) but only a relative change with reference to God's judgement. And thus the word is used in the text, and so also in matters of judicature throughout the Scripture. Yea, some contend against the Papists that it is nowhere in Scripture used otherwise, except by a trope borrowed from this as the proper sense. And in the text it is beyond all doubt meant of being deemed and accounted just in the sight of God; for such a justification is here only treated of as appears in the text (Rom. 3:19, 20). And I have been the longer explaining the sense of the word because the mistaking it, by reason of its composition, occasioned that popish error whereby the benefit signified by it is obscured, yea, overthrown, so that we had need to contend for the sense of the word.

In the text we have the eight following things:

1. The persons justified – (i) Sinners; (ii) Such sinners of all sorts that shall believe, whether Jews or Gentiles.
2. The justifier, or efficient cause – God.
3. The impulsive cause – grace.
4. The means effecting, or material cause – the redemption of Christ.
5. The formal cause – the remission of sins.
6. The instrumental cause – faith.
7. The time of declaring – the present time.
8. The end – that God may appear just.

From hence, therefore, will arise several useful observations, all tending to explain the nature of justification, which shall be laid down and cleared out of the text and confirmed particularly, and then I shall make use of them altogether.

I. They who are justified are sinners, such who are come short of the glory of God, that is, of God's approbation (John 5:44); of God's image of holiness (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24); of eternal happiness (1 Thess. 2:12; Rom. 5:2; 2 Cor. 4:17).

1. The law condemns all sinners and strikes them dead as with a thunderbolt (Rom. 3:20), and adjudges them to shame, confusion and misery, instead of glory and happiness, by the strict terms of it (Rom. 2:6-12), which none fulfils, neither can do (Rom. 8:7) – neither Jews nor Gentiles. There is no hope, if free grace restore them not.

2. Christ came only to save sinners and died for this end: 'When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly' (Rom. 5:6). And 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief' (1 Tim. 1:15). 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Matt. 9:13). 'The Son of man is come to save that which was lost' (Matt. 18:11).

And God must be believed on to salvation, as a God that 'justifies the ungodly'. He must believe, as one that works not, on Him that justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5).

II. Sinners of all sorts, without difference, whether Jews or Gentiles, that believe are the subjects of this justification. This is the scope of the apostle, to show that whereas Jews and Gentiles were universally condemned by the light and law of nature, or the law written, so 'the righteousness of God is upon all them that believe' (Rom. 3:21, 22) without difference. This was a great point to be defended against the Jews in the apostle's time, who appropriated justification to themselves in a legal way, and to such as were proselytes to the law and circumcision, and therefore the apostle Paul vehemently urged it (Rom. 10:11, 12). And it was a point newly revealed to the apostles, that the Gentiles might be accepted without turning Jews, and much prized as a very glorious revelation (Acts 10:28, 45; Eph. 3:4, 5, 8; Col. 1:25-27). And it is confirmed,

1. Because, notwithstanding the Jews' privilege of the law, by reason of breaking the law they had as much need of free justification as the Gentiles, and no worthiness above the Gentiles by their works, but were rather greater sinners (Rom. 2:23, 24). And when there is equal need and worth, God might righteously justify one as well as another (Rom. 3:9).
2. God is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews (Rom. 3:29), as He promised (Rom. 4:9, 12, 13; Gal. 3:8; Isa. 19:25; Zech. 14:9).
3. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, that he might be the father of those that believe, though uncircumcised, that they might inherit the same blessing (Rom. 4:10-12).
4. This will appear further by showing that justification is only by faith and without dependence upon the law, merely by the righteousness of another, and so Jews and Gentiles are alike capable of it.

III. That the justifier, or efficient cause of justification is God. It is an act of God (Rom. 8:33). It is God that justifies. He only can justify authoritatively and irreversibly.

1. Because He is the lawgiver, and has power to save and destroy (James 4:12). This case concerns God's law, and can only be tried at His tribunal. He is the judge of the world (Gen. 18:25). It is a small worthless thing to be justified by man, or by ourselves merely (1 Cor. 4:3, 4).
2. To Him the debt of suffering for sin and acting righteousness is owed and therefore He only can give a discharge for payment, or a release of the debtor (Ps. 51:4; Mark 2:7).

IV. 'God justifies souls freely by His grace (δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι), freely by His grace.' One of these expressions had been enough, but this redoubling it shows the importance of the truth, to quicken our attention the more. Here is the impulsive cause of justification and His free manner of bestowing it accordingly. And this signifies God's free undeserved favour, in opposition to any works of our own righteousness whereby it might be challenged as a debt to us: 'Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt' (Rom. 4:4). 'If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works,

then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work' (Rom. 11:6). 'By grace are you saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast' (Eph. 2:8, 9). 'Who has saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ' (2 Tim. 1:9, 10). Grace is mercy and love showed freely, out of God's proper motion showing mercy, because He will show mercy, and loving us, because He will love us (Rom. 9:15). And this is confirmed,

1. Because there was not, nor is anything in us, but what might move God to condemn us, for we have all sinned (Eph. 2:3; Ezek. 16:6).

2. Because God would take away boasting and have His grace glorified and exalted in our salvation. He will have all the praise and glory, though we have the blessedness. 'That in the ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus' (Eph. 2:7, 9; Rom. 3:27).

V. 'God justifies sinners through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.' This is the effecting means, or material cause of our justification, namely, redemption and propitiation through the blood of Christ, which is the righteousness of God treasured up in Him.

By 'redemption' is meant properly such a deliverance as is made by paying a price, and so the words 'redeem' and 'redemption' are frequently used (Exod. 13:13; Num. 3:48, 49, 51; Lev. 25:24, 51, 52; Jer. 32:7, 8; Neh. 5:8). From this proper signification it is borrowed to signify a deliverance without price (Luke 21:28; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), or rather, by a metonymy of the cause, put for the highest effect, the state of glory; so that the state of glory is called 'redemption', as being the completing and crowning effect of Christ's redemption; therefore it is called the 'purchased possession'.

By a 'propitiation' is meant that which appeases the wrath of God for sin and wins His favour. And this propitiation of Christ is two ways typified: first, in the propitiatory sacrifices, whose blood was shed; and, secondly by the mercy seat, which was called the propitiation, because it covered the ark wherein was the law, and the blood of the sacrifices for atonement was

sprinkled by the high priest before it. And this mercy-seat was a sign of God's favourableness to a sinful people in residing among them as was called ἱλαστήριον· (Heb. 9:5).

Now this doctrine appears confirmed for these reasons:

1. Because Christ, by the will of God, gave Himself a ransom for us to redeem us from sin and punishment, wrath and curse. 'He gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity' (Titus 2:14). He gave Himself to death for us, was delivered for our offences; His death was the price of our redemption, that we might be justified in God's sight. God gave Him up to death, He spared Him not, that He might be made righteousness. 'He gave His own life a ransom for many' (1 Cor. 1:30; Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6). 'He bought us with this price' (1 Cor. 6:20). 'He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with His precious blood, as of a lamb without spot' (1 Peter 1:18, 19; 2 Peter 2:1; Rev. 5:9). 'He suffered the penalty due to us for sin' (1 Peter 2:24). 'He bare our sins in His own body on the tree' (Gal. 3:13). 'He was made a curse for us,' and in this way redeemed us from the curse of the law and, that He might be made a curse, He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:5, 6). He subjected Himself to the law, in active as well as passive obedience (Gal. 4:4), and obeyed His Father even to death, doing and suffering at His commandment (John 14:31; Heb. 10:7), and His obedience was for our justification. Compare Romans 5:19 with Philippians 3:8, 9. So Christ satisfied both our debt of righteousness and debt of punishment, for our faultiness, taint of sin and want of righteousness, as well as for our guilt and obnoxiousness to punishment, that we might be free from wrath and deemed righteous in God's sight. His suffering was the consummating act of redemption, and so all is attributed to it (Heb. 2:9, 10) – even to His blood, though other doings and sufferings concur (2 Cor. 8:9). We are righteous by Him as we were guilty by Adam (Rom. 5:12).

2. God accepted this price as a satisfaction to His justice, which He showed in raising Christ from the dead and so accepting Him for all our sins: 'He was justified in the Spirit' (1 Tim. 3:16), for us, 'raised for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). 'It is God that justifies: who is he that condemns? Is it Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen from the dead' (Rom. 8:33, 34). And 'By one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified' (Heb. 10:14). And 'This sacrifice was a sweet-smelling

savour to God' (Eph. 5:2). If Christ had sunk under the weight of our sins and had not been raised, the payment had not been finished and so the debt not discharged: 'of righteousness, because I go to my Father' (John 16:10).

3. This redemption is in Christ, as to the benefit of it, so that it cannot be had except we be in Christ and have Christ; so the text expresses and shows that He is the propitiation and, as such, He is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). We have redemption and righteousness in Him (Eph. 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:21), and therein our freedom from condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Christ died that His seed might be justified (Isa. 53:10, 11) – those that are in Him by spiritual regeneration (1 Cor. 4:15).

VI. 'The formal cause of justification, or that wherein it consists, is the remission of sin, that is, not only the guilt and punishment is removed, but the fault; because it is a pardon grounded on justice, which clears the fault also. By Him we are justified from all things that the law charges us with' (Acts 13:39). In men, subject to a law, there is no middle condition between not imputing sin and imputing righteousness, and so these terms are used as equivalent: 'Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified' (Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Rom. 5:17). This is through the bloodshed of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Matt. 26:28).

VII. God justifies a sinner through faith in Christ's blood. Faith is the instrumental cause of receiving this benefit, faith in the blood of Christ.

1. This faith is a believing on Christ, that we may be justified by Him: 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law' (Gal. 2:16). We believe in Christ for justification, out of a sense of our inability to obtain justification by works.

2. This faith does not justify us as an act of righteousness, earning and procuring our justification by the work of it, for this would have been justification by works, as under the law, diametrically opposite to grace and free gift; which excludes all consideration of any works of ours to be our righteousness, under any denomination or diminutive terms whatever, whether you call it 'legal' or 'evangelical', though you reckon it no more than the payment of a peppercorn (Rom. 11:6). Faith in this case is

accounted a not-working (Rom. 4:5). And it is not faith that stands instead of the righteousness of the law, but the righteousness of Christ, which satisfies for what we ought to have done or suffered, as has been shown.

3. God justifies by faith, as the instrument by which we receive Christ and His righteousness, by which we are justified properly; and we are justified by faith only metonymically, by reason of the righteousness received by it; and to be 'justified by faith' and 'by Christ' is all one (Gal. 3:8; Rom. 5:19). By faith we receive remission of sins (Acts 26:18; 10:43). Its effect is the reception of Justification, not the working it; as a man may be said to be maintained by his hands, or nourished by his mouth, when those do but receive that which nourishes – his food and drink. The cup is put for the liquor in the cup (1 Cor. 11:26, 27). See Romans 1:17 and 3:22. Christ is in us by faith (Eph. 3: 17); received, ate, drunk (John 1:12; 6:51, 53, 54).

4. This faith is to be understood exclusively to all our works for justification. We defend against the Papists justification by faith only, and there is nothing more fully expressed in Scripture phrase (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:8, 9; Rom. 4:16).

5. We must understand faith in a full sense of receiving remission of the fault, as well as of the punishment. We believe God accounts not the fault to us of the least sin. And, where faith is said to be accounted for righteousness, it is because of the object it receives (Rom. 4:5-8; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21). We believe Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as our sins are to Him, or else we receive not remission of sins by believing; which is contrary to charging us with sin and condemnation, which charging signifies imputing sin (Rom. 8:33, 34). Together with the removal of the charge of sin, we receive the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5: 17). And this we have in the reception of Christ's redemption and bloodshed (Eph. 1:7; Matt. 26:28).

VIII. That God, in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, aimed to declare His righteousness now under the gospel, for the remission of sins that are past as well as present – of those sins that were past and committed under the Old Testament, which was God's time of forbearing in pardoning, long before His justice was actually satisfied by Christ's atonement (Heb. 13:8; Rev. 13: 8; Matt. 18:26). The ground of these pardons is now revealed by Christ's coming (Isa. 51:5, 6; 56:1; Dan.

9:24; 2 Tim. 1: 9, 10), that those pardons may be no blemish to the justice of God now satisfied (Exod. 34:7; Ps. 85:10).

1. By this righteousness is meant that righteousness of God mentioned in the proposition (Rom. 3:21, 22), of which the text is but a confirmation – namely, the righteousness of God: not His essential righteousness, that which is an essential property of God, but righteousness, which is upon all them that believe – Christ's righteousness, which is the end of the law (Rom. 10:3, 4), and therefore called 'God's righteousness', that which Christ wrought for us, which is given to us and we receive by faith; that by which Christ answered the law for us, by which as the price, He redeemed us; which is called 'God's righteousness' because it is of God's working, and it only has God's acceptance and approbation – as Christ is called the 'Lamb of God' because God provided Him and accepts Him as an offering (John 1:29). Upon the like account, Christ's kingdom is called the 'kingdom of God' because God's own hand set it up, and maintains it, and rules it (Eph. 5:5). Christ, who became obedient to death to work this righteousness, was God as well as man (Phil. 2:6, 8). And this is that righteousness of God here, and in other places: the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phil. 3:9).

2. God aimed at declaring in gospel times His righteousness in forgiving sins past, in the time of God's forbearance under the Old Testament (Rom. 3:25), and also in justifying those that believe in Christ at present, for it was by the righteousness of the same Christ that sins were pardoned under the Old Testament, as well as now (Heb. 13:8). Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8); only the righteousness was not actually fulfilled and revealed then, but it was shadowed out then by the sacrifices, ransoms, redemptions, etc. (Heb. 10:1-3, 9, 10). So this was a time of God's forbearance, because He pardoned sins, as it were, without present payment and satisfaction. He had patience and did not exact the debt, until Christ paid all (Matt. 18:26). But then God promised that He would reveal His righteousness in due time (Isa. 56:1; 51:5, 6; Ps. 98:2; Dan. 9:24). And this He has done by the appearance of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10).

IX. The end of this manifestation is that God may appear just, in forgiving sins past as well as present, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus.

Here the essential property of God is exalted and appears glorious in justifying by the forementioned righteousness of God.

1. As God justifies freely by grace, He would appear in this way just in justifying sinners, for it would be a blemish to God's justice to forgive without a satisfaction and righteousness performed, and therefore, though He is gracious and merciful, yet He will not clear the guilty (Exod. 34:7; Gen. 18:25; Exod. 23:7). And so the saints of God concluded that God had a righteousness and redemption by which He forgave sin, though it was not then revealed (Ps. 51:14; 130:7, 8; 143:1, 2). God would have justice and mercy to meet in our salvation (Ps. 85:10).

2. God would have it appear that He only is just, and therefore saves us, not by our own righteousness, but by His, which is indeed the more exalted by our unrighteousness occasionally, though God is not therefore unrighteous in taking vengeance (Rom. 3:4, 5; Dan. 9:7).

3. God would appear to be the only procurer and worker of our righteousness, and so our justifier by way of procurement, as well as by way of judgement, and so He will justify us by a righteousness of His own, and not by our own (Isa. 54:17; 45:22, 24, 25), that we may glory in the Lord only (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

Use I. It serves for instruction, by way of encouragement and consolation, that the great happiness of those that are in Christ is that their sins are forgiven, and they accounted just in the sight of the judge of the world through the redemption that is by the blood of Christ; and this benefit contains all blessedness of life and the consequences of it (Rom. 4:6). That man to whom God imputes righteousness without works has a blessedness in it, and such an extensive blessedness, in regard of the spiritual part, as Abraham had, comprehending all spiritual blessings in Christ, for they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (Gal. 3:9). For this righteousness, being the fundamental blessing, is revealed from faith to faith; and they that are by faith just, and justified through that righteousness, do live by faith, always receiving it and receiving nourishment and comfort by it (Rom. 1:17).

1. They are delivered from the charge of sin and fault before God (Rom. 8:33, 34). τίς ἐγκαλέσει: Who shall lay anything to their charge, or be suffered to bring in at God's tribunal any indictment, charge or accusation

against them? It is God that justifies them, and Christ has died and rose again. They are redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits to God and the Lamb. In their mouth there is no guile, and they are without fault [ἄμωμοί] before the throne of God (Rev. 14:4, 5. See also Col. 1:22).

2. They are delivered from all condemnation in sentence and execution, the curse and wrath of God: 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us' (Gal. 3:13). 'Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come' (1. Thess. 1:10). 'You have taken away all Your wrath: You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger' (Ps. 85:3, see vv. 5, 6). The wrath of God is an unsupportable burden and the foundation of all miseries, which foundation is razed and a foundation of blessedness laid, by which we have peace with God and are fully reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1, 2; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19). 'You that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled, in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in His sight' (Col. 1:21, 22). Now, where there is no blame before God, there can be no wrath from God.

3. They have no need to seek salvation by the works of the law, and so are delivered from a yoke that cannot be borne, from endless observances that Pharisees and Papists have heaped up; from continual frights, doubts, fears and terrors by the law (Acts 15: 10; Rom. 8:15); from a wrath-working law (Rom. 4:15); from a sin-irritating law (Rom. 6: 5); from a killing law, a ministration of death and condemnation (2 Cor. 3:6, 7, 9); Mount Sinai, which genders to bondage (Gal. 4:24).

4. Thus they are delivered from a condemning conscience, which otherwise would still gnaw them as a worm.

'If the blood of bulls and of goats, and ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' (Heb. 9:14.) A guilty conscience is a foul conscience, and it will make all services and duties dead works, unfit for the service of the living God; it is the blood of Christ applied by faith that takes off the foulness of guilt from the conscience; therefore the blood of Christ has the only efficacy this way to take off the conscience of sin (Heb. 10:1-4, etc.). Thus

they come to have a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21), void of offence towards God Acts 24:16).

5. It is an everlasting righteousness by which their standing in Christ is secured (Dan. 9:24). It is an eternal redemption that is obtained (Heb. 9:12), whereas by the law those that were justified today typically might fall under condemnation so far as to need another sacrifice for sin tomorrow, they had no real purgation of conscience from sin by those sacrifices, and therefore could not have a lasting delivery of their consciences from guilt by them. Here it is far otherwise; here is an effectual, complete and perpetual redemption, reaching the conscience of the sinner, and for the purging away all sins, present and to come (1 John 1:7).

6. It is a righteousness of infinite value, because it is the righteousness of one that is God, and His Name is JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 23:6; Heb. 9:14). It is therefore more powerful to save than Adam's sin was to destroy or condemn (Rom. 5). Christ is here the power of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Hence we are powerful, and conquer by faith. Likewise there is a marvellous plenty of mercy and grace that is brought to us by JEHOVAH our Righteousness, plenteous redemption (Ps. 130:7). It must be most plentiful, because infinite. Though no creature could satisfy for sin, yet Jehovah could do it abundantly, and therefore in Christ God's mercy prevails high above our sins (Ps. 103:11, 12).

7. God's grace and justice are both engaged on our behalf in this righteousness. Justice is terrible and seems to be against mercy and dreadful to natural people, but it is otherwise to believers; it is pacified and appeased through this righteousness; it is satisfied by Christ for our sins. Justice becomes our friend, joins in with grace and, instead of pleading against us, it is altogether for us, and it speaks contrary to what it speaks to sinners out of Christ (Josh. 24:19, 20). We may also plead justice for forgiveness through mercy in Christ (Rom. 3:26).

8. We may be sure of holiness and glory, delivery from the power and dominion of sin, as well as the charge of it before God, and guilt in our consciences, for this was the end of Christ's death (Titus 2:14; Rom. 6:6, 14; 8:3, 4, 30). 'Whom He justified, them He also glorified.' The law was the strength of sin, for sin had its title to rule in us by reason of the curse,

and then Satan also rules; but here is our deliverance from sin and Satan, yea, from death too (Heb. 2:14, 15; Hos. 13:14). And, by the same reason, we are raised by this excellent righteousness to a better state than we had in Adam at first, for Christ died that we might receive the adoption of sons, and the Spirit; that we might be brought under a new covenant, and be set in the right way of holiness, serving out of love (Gal. 3:14; 1 John 4:19; Gal. 4:5; Heb. 9:15; Rom. 5: 11; Luke 1:74; Col. 2:13).

9. We may be sure, hence, of a concurrence of all things for our good. All things shall work for good through grace to bring us to glory, because God is for us, who is the Creator and Governor of all things (Rom. 8:28, 31, 33). God will never be wroth with us, nor rebuke us in anger any more (Isa. 54:9; Rom. 5:2, 5).

10. Hence we may come before God without confusion of face, yea, with boldness to the throne of grace in Christ's name (John 14:13, 14) and expect all good things from Him. 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him' (Eph. 3:12). 'Let us draw near with full assurance of faith' (Heb. 20:22, 23). Christ's blood pleads for us in heaven (Heb. 12:24); and we may, and are to plead boldly a satisfaction on His account.

11. We live in those times when this righteousness is fully revealed, and sin made an end of (Rom. 3:21, 22). This is our happiness above those that lived before Christ's coming, who were under types and shadows of this righteousness, whereas we have the substance in its own light, and so we are not under the law, which they were under as a schoolmaster. We are not servants, but sons, called to liberty (Gal. 3:23, 26; 4:7; 5:13). The preaching the old covenant, as a church ordinance to be urged, now is ceased; the law is not to be preached now in the same terms as Moses preached it, for justification (Rom. 10:5-8; 2 Cor. 3:6, 7; Gal. 3:13, 24); it is contrary in terms of faith, though it were subservient.

Use 11. For examination whether we are in Christ and have received this justification by faith with all our hearts.

1. Consider whether you are made really sensible of sin and your condemnation by the law. This is necessary to make us fly to Christ, and for this as one great end was the law given (Gal. 3:22-14; Matt. 9:13; Acts 2:37). Without sense of sin, there will be no prizing of Christ or desire of

holiness, but rather abuse of grace to carnal security and licentiousness. Those that were stung with the fiery serpents looked up to the brazen serpent.

2. Do you trust only on free mercy for justification in God's sight, renouncing all your works whatever in this point, as not able to stand in them before God's exact justice, crying mercy with the poor publican? Perfectionists and self-righteous persons have no share in this matter (Luke 18:13, 14). Paul, notwithstanding all that the world might think he had to plead for himself, 'counted all but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,' that is, the redeeming and propitiating righteousness of Christ, by which he desired only to be justified and which he believed in for that end, opposing it to anything inherent in himself, which therefore he calls his own righteousness (Phil. 3:6, 8, 9; Rom. 4:5).

3. Do you trust with any confidence in Christ, not continuing in a mere suspense? In a way of mere doubting, we can receive no good thing from God (James 1:6; 7). Mere doubting will not loose the conscience from the guilt of sin (Heb. 10:22), but leaves the soul under terrors. Abraham's confidence is the example and pattern of our justifying faith, that we should endeavour to come up to, believing with a fullness of persuasion, in hope against hope (Rom. 4: 20, 24). Though a believing soul may be assaulted with many doubtings, yet it fights against them and does not give up itself to the dominion of them (Ps. 42:11; Mark 9:24). It has always something contrary to them and striving with them.

4. Do you come to Christ for remission of sins for the right end, namely, that you may be freed from the dominion of sin before the living God (Heb. 9:14; Ps. 130; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24). If otherwise, you do not receive it for the right end and do not desire really the favour and enjoyment of God and to be in friendship with Him.

5. Do you walk in holiness and strive to evidence this justification by the fruits of faith in good works? If otherwise, your faith is but a dead faith, for a true faith purifies the heart (Acts 15:9). If Christ is yours, He will be sanctification as well as righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:1, 9; John 13:8). If God has taken you into His favour, He will doubtless cleanse you.

Though faith alone justifies, without the concurrence of works to the act of justification, yet that faith is not so alone as not to be accompanied with good works, as the eye alone sees, yet it is not alone without other members. So the apostle James declares faith that is alone to be dead, and bids us show our faith by our works; which is to be understood, not as if works were the conditions of attaining justification, but sure evidences of justification attained by faith, and very necessary (James 2: 14, 15). The gospel is no covenant of works, requiring another righteousness for justification by doing for life. Works justify us from such accusations of men as will deny us to have justification by faith, or that we have a true and lively faith, or are good trees (Matt. 12:33, 37); not as being our righteousness themselves, or conditions of our having Christ's righteousness, or qualifying us for it.

Use III. It serves for exhortation to several duties.

I. To the wicked. It is dehortation to them from continuance in sin, under God's wrath, running headlong to damnation; for here is a door of mercy opened to them, a righteousness prepared that they may be freely accepted of God. Some men are desperadoes: 'They have loved strangers, and after them they will go' (Jer. 2:25). They are resolved to run the risk of it, and please themselves that they shall speed as well as others. And some men would be justified, but seek for it in a wrong way. Some will go to the pope, to quiet their consciences by his deceits; some to their own works and performances, but you are exhorted to look out for the true righteousness. Christ says in the gospel, 'Behold Me, Behold Me', the kingdom of heaven is open, mercy and righteousness are freely offered (Isa. 55:6, 7; Jer. 3:12). Repentance is preached with remission of sins (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38). Beware you do not neglect this acceptable time, this day of salvation (Heb. 2:1, 3). For,

1. If you do, you remain under the wrath of God (John 3:36), under the curse of the law, which, like a flood, sweeps away all that are found out of this ark, the Lord Jesus Christ (P s. 11:5, 6).

2. Your condemnation will be aggravated by refusing so great salvation (Heb. 2:3). You will have no cloke for your sins, when you refuse mercy (John 15:22). You cannot say you are undone by your past sins beyond recovery, and therefore it is in vain to strive, for, behold, remission of sins

is proclaimed to you (Ezek. 33:10, 11). And what a horrid sin is it, to despise the blood of the Son of God! (John 3: 18, 36.)

Objection I. If God justify the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), what need I forsake ungodliness at all? (Rom. 6:1.)

Answer. You cannot seek justification truly, except you have a mind to live to God in friendship with Him, for justification is God's way of taking us into friendship with Him (Rom. 5:1, 2), and of reconciling us (2 Cor. 5:19). The use you are to make of it is to seek God's friendship by it, and the enjoyment of Him. Why does a man seek a pardon, if he intends to go on in rebellion and stand out in defiance to his prince? (1 Peter 2:24.) They seek pardon in a mocking way, that intend not to return to obedience (Gal. 6:7, 8).

Objection II. My sins are so great, that I have no encouragement to hope.

Answer. Christ's righteousness is for all sorts of sinners that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles (and how great sinners were of both sorts!) (Rom. 1; 2; 3) and even for those that killed and murdered the Lord of glory (Acts 2:23, 36; 1 Cor. 2:8), for the chief of the sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Acts 16). 'Where sin abounds, grace super-abounds' (Rom. 5:20). Your sins are but the sins of a creature, but His righteousness is the righteousness of God (John 6:37; Rom. 10:3, 11, 13).

Exhortation II. It exhorts those that have a mind to turn to God to turn the right way by faith in Christ for justification. Let them not seek by works, as most in the world do, and all are prone to do (Rom. 9:31, 32). But this doctrine seems very foolish, yea, pernicious to a natural man. 'Become a fool, that you may be wise' (1 Cor. 3:18); otherwise you will labour in the fire, and weary yourselves for very vanity, and be under continual discomforts and discouragements, for you can do no good work while you are in the flesh, under the law and its curse, before God has received you into favour, for justification is in order of nature before true holiness of heart and life (1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 9:14). Faith is the great work and mother duty (John 6:29; Gal. 5:6; Isa. 55:2), and therefore while you believe not, you dishonour Christ and His death (Gal. 2: 21, 5:2-4). Therefore come boldly, though you have been a great sinner (Acts 10:43), and seek righteousness in Christ with holiness (Rom. 8:1).

Question. But how shall I get faith?

Answer. Faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8), and by the gospel (Rom. 1:15-17). Faith comes by hearing the gospel preached (Rom. 10:17), and that comes in working faith, not in word only, but in power (1 Thess. 1:5), beyond what can be done by natural or human attainment (John 6:63). Therefore, if you have no beginning of it in you, your only way is to attend to the gospel and to meditate on your sin and misery and Christ's excellency, that so you may be inclined in your heart to believe (S. of S. 1:3; Gal. 2:16; Ps. 9:10), for this is the way God uses to beget faith (Isa. 55: 3). But if you have a desire and inclination to fly from yourself to Christ, in the bent of your heart, so that you prefer Christ above all, then the Spirit has begun and will carry on the work, so that now you may pray confidently for faith (S. of S. 1:4; Luke 11:13; Mark 9:24).

Objection III. But without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). And how shall I get holiness? I cannot sanctify myself, and this confidence you speak of may slacken my diligence.

Answer. If you have righteousness in Christ, God will make you holy, and this confidence is the only way to get holiness, because of that righteousness (Rom. 5:21). The new covenant is confirmed in Him, which promises a new heart. If sin is forgiven you shall be delivered from its power and quickened by the same death and resurrection of Christ whereby you are justified (Col. 2:12, 13).

Exhortation III. It exhorts them that are justified by faith.

1. To walk humbly, as being nothing of themselves; to acknowledge themselves enemies to God by nature, and acknowledge their sins in the greatness and heinousness of them, that they are saved freely by the righteousness of another, not by their own – yea, that they are so far fallen that the justice of God would have been against them, if it had not been satisfied (Ps. 71:16; Rom. 3:27), but now they see that Christ has satisfied, and His righteousness is above their sins (Ezek. 36:31).

2. To praise and glorify God through Christ for His grace. Oh, what abundant grace and love appears in God's washing and cleansing us by His Son's blood! (Rev. 1:5; Gal. 2:20) and in making His Son sin and a curse

for us! (Rom. 5:5, 8; 1 John 4:9, 10; 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:9). And what a glorious and excellent righteousness has God given us in Christ! (Isa. 61:10.)

3. To walk comfortably, upon the account of this righteousness (Isa. 40:1, 2). Triumph over sin and affliction (Rom. 8:33, 39). Be confident in expecting great things from God (Heb. 10:22), for though you may be unworthy and grace will show you your own unworthiness, yet you stand upon the righteousness of Christ. Glory in the hope of God's glory, for if Christ died to reconcile you when you were enemies, much more will He save you by His life, now you are reconciled (Rom. 5:3, 10). Ask boldly for what you want, for God is in Christ's manhood as the mercy seat. Whenever sin stings you and objections trouble you, look to the brazen serpent, confess sin and trust for pardon, meditate on Christ's righteousness and the abundance of grace in Him (Rom. 8:32). If you find never so much ungodliness, no good qualifications, yet Christ is at hand for your comfort (Isa. 50:10; 2 Thess. 2:16, 17). In all your sins apply yourselves to this fountain (Zech. 13:1; 1 John 1:7). If sin lie on the conscience, it weakens peace and spiritual strength. Lay not under guilt with a slavish fear; you have a righteousness to deliver you from it; apply it by faith, that you may have no more conscience of sin as condemning (Heb. 10:2; Ps. 32). You have a better righteousness than any perfectionists can have.

4. Hold fast this way of justification, notwithstanding all the noise that is made in the world against it, for the devil will strive to scare you out of it or steal it from you, as he did from the Jews, from the Galatians, the Papists and many Protestants (Gal. 1:6). And the apostle reckons it is by a spiritual bewitchery. He will strive to get you to trust on works, and tell you it is for the promoting of holiness, and to trust on works to get Christ, and to lay works lowest in the foundation. If you lose this righteousness of Christ, under any colour or pretence whatever, you lose all (Gal. 5:2, 3). Do not so dishonour Christ as to think of procuring that by works which you have fully in Christ. Think not that the gospel requires another justification to gain this, for the gospel is no legal covenant, but a declaration of the righteousness of faith and we, being justified, are heirs by adoption and promise (Gal. 3:24-26; 4:7). This is the doctrine which glorifies God and abases the creature, which is a great mark of its truth. Beware therefore of carnal reason, which will go quite contrary, and make

Christ's righteousness a stumbling-stone to you (1 Peter 2:8; Rom; 9:32, 33).

5. Walk as one that enjoys the favour of God in Christ. Let Him have the honour of it. Walk therefore in holiness, knowing by what price you are redeemed (1 Peter 1:17, 18; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Peter 1:5, 11; 1 Cor. 6:20). Love God that has loved you first (1 John 4:19; Ps. 116:16). Believe that God will enable you for the practice of holiness (Rom. 6:14). Particularly, walk in love to the saints; exercise forgiveness to your enemies. Sense of your own sins and God's forgiving you will cause you to pity and forgive others, else you cannot pray or trust for forgiveness of your own sins upon reasonable grounds (Eph. 4:31, 32; Matt. 6:14, 15; 18:21). Desire grace may be exalted on others, and wait patiently for the full declaration of justification at the great day (Gal. 5:5; Acts 3:19), for here your justification is known only by faith, but in outward things you are dealt with as a sinner; then your righteousness shall appear openly and you shall be dealt with according to it.

THE END
