

THE  
**GOSPEL-MYSTERY**  
OF  
**SANCTIFICATION,**

EDITED ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE WHO LABOR UNDER  
THE GUILT AND POWER OF INDWELLING SIN.

Originally published  
**1692**

TO WHICH IS ADDED

**A SERMON ON JUSTIFICATION**

**By Mr. Walter Marshall**

LATE PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL

“God has chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise,  
and God has chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things  
which are mighty,” etc. — 1Cor. 1.27-31

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## PREFACE

### Reader,

Mr. WALTER MARSHALL — composer of these directions how to attain to that practice and manner of life which we call holiness, righteousness, or godliness — was educated in New College of Oxford. He was a fellow of that college; and afterwards was chosen a fellow of the college of Winchester. But he was put under the Bartholomew Bushel, with nearly two thousand more lights (a sin not yet repented of) whose illuminations made the land a Goshen. He was esteemed a Presbyterian; and was called to be pastor to a people at Gosport in Hampshire, where he shined, though he did not yet have the public oil. The substance of these meditations was spun there out of his own experiences. He had been greatly exercised with troubled thoughts for many years, and had, by many mortifying methods, sought peace of conscience; but notwithstanding all this, his troubles still increased. He then consulted others, particularly Mr. Baxter, whose writings he had been very conversant with. He thereupon told Mr. Marshall that he took them too legally. He afterwards consulted an eminent divine, Dr. T. G.,<sup>1</sup> giving him an account of the state of his soul, and particularizing his sins which lay heavy on his conscience. In his reply, he told Mr. Marshall that he had forgotten to mention the greatest sin of all, the sin of unbelief, in not believing on the Lord Jesus for the remission of his sins, and sanctifying his nature. Upon this, he set himself to studying and preaching Christ, and he attained to eminent holiness, great peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Mr. Marshall's dying words were these, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord;" having just before said to those about him, that he now died in the full persuasion of the truth, and in the comfort of that doctrine which he had preached. The sum of this is contained in the ensuing discourse.

Some time since, Mr. Marshall was translated by death, Elijah-like, dropping these sheets as his mantle for succeeding Elishas to go forth with, for the conversion of sinners, and the comfort of drooping souls.

These papers are the profound experiences of a studious holy soul, learned of the Father, coming from his very heart; and they smell of no party or design, but for holiness and happiness. Yet it is to be feared that they will scarcely go down with the heady thinkers of this age, who are of the tribe of Reuben, wavering with every wind of modish doctrine; but in Judah they will be praised. And we hope that many shrubs and cedars may hereby advance in knowledge and comfort. But, not to detain you longer, read over all these directions, that you may fully understand the author, or read none of them. If you do it with the serious humble spirit in which they were written, it may be hoped (the matter being so weighty, and from so able a hand) that through the grace of God, they will sink into your conscience, and make you a solid Christian, full of faith, holiness, and consolation.

N. N.

July 21, 1692.

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<sup>1</sup> Probably Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680).

## RECOMMENDATION

ALEX. HAMILTON, EBENEZER ERSKINE, RALPH ERSKINE,  
J. WARDLAW, JO. GIB, AND JA. OGILVIE.

[*Prefixed to the Edition printed at Edinburgh, Anno 1733.*]

This excellent treatise of Mr. Marshall's is well-known among the godly in England, where it has undergone a twofold edition. Yet, this being the first time of its publication in Scotland, where it is known but to a few, we could not refuse, at the desire of those concerned in the publication of it among us, to declare that, as we have perused the book ourselves with great edification and pleasure, so we know it has had the high approval and testimony of many who are eminent for grace and holiness. And we judge that the publication of it at this time, is seasonable among us for promoting practical religion and godliness, and for giving a just view of the vast odds there are between heathenish morality — adorned with the finest flourishes of human rhetoric — and true Gospel holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. And this testimony of ours, we judged to be well-supported by the words of that great and evangelic person, Mr. Robert Traill, late minister of the Gospel in the city of London. He writes in his postscript to a pamphlet entitled, *A vindication of the Protestant doctrine concerning justification, and of its preachers and professors, from the unjust charge of Antinomianism.*

“I think that Dr. Owen's excellent book on Justification, and Mr. Marshall's book on the Mystery of Sanctification by faith in Jesus Christ, are such vindications and confirmations of the Protestant doctrine, that I fear no effectual opposition against them. Mr. Marshall was a holy and retired person, and is only known to most of us by his recently published book. The book is a deep, practical, well-jointed discourse, and requires more than ordinary attention in reading it with profit. And if it is singly used, I look upon it as one of the most useful books the world has seen for many years. Its excellence is that it leads the serious reader directly to Jesus Christ, and cuts the sinews and overturns the foundation of the *new* divinity by the same argument of Gospel holiness by which many attempt to overturn the *old*. And, as it has already had the seal of high approval by many judicious Ministers and Christians who have read it, I do not fear but that it will stand firm as a rock against all opposition, and will prove good seed, and food, and light to many hereafter.”

This testimony, abstracting from human frailties and escapes to which the greatest men are liable while they know but in part, we approve by our subscriptions.

## DIRECTION I

*So 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.*

### EXPLICATION

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 treated here. The scope of all is to teach you how you may attain to that practice and manner of life which we call holiness — i.e., righteousness, godliness, obedience, or true religion — and which God requires of us in the law; particularly in the moral law. That is summed up in the Ten Commandments, and more briefly in those two great commandments of love to God and our neighbor (Mat. 22:37, 39); it is 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 would delay my intent to help you to the knowledge of them, by any large exposition of them. This is a work already performed in several catechisms and commentaries. Yet, so that you may not miss the mark for lack of discerning it, take notice in a 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 which all other good works must flow, or else they are not acceptable to God. It consists not only in refraining from 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, or grudging at any duty, as if it were a grievous yoke and burden to you.

Take further notice that the law, which is your mark, is exceedingly broad (Psa. 119:96) and yet no easier to 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 (Jam. 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 the *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 so 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 neighbor, even *all* men, whether they are friends or foes to us; and so do to them — in all things that concern their honor, life, chastity, worldly wealth, credit, and content — whatever we would have men do to us in the same condition (Mat. 7:12). This universal spiritual obedience is the great end to the attainment of which I am directing you. And so 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 that our gracious, merciful God will certainly delight in it, and be pleased with, during our state of imperfection in this world; and such that it will end in the perfection of holiness, and all happiness in the world to come.

Before I proceed further, stay your thoughts a while in the contemplation of the great dignity and excellence of these duties of the law, so that you may aim at the performance of them as your end, with so high an esteem, that it may cast an amiable lustre on the ensuing revelation of the means. The principal duties of love to God above all, and to each other for His sake, from which 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, which was engraved upon man in the first creation, and for which that beautiful image is

renewed upon 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, so as to be commanded or forbidden, or left indifferent, or changed, or abolished at His pleasure like other works that belong either to the judicial or ceremonial law, or to the means of salvation prescribed by the Gospel. Rather, 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 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,<sup>1</sup> by the fruits which they produce, 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 honor of Mosaic ordinances, and now of evangelical ordinances, to be subservient to perform them, for they are means which will cease when their end, this never-failing charity, is perfectly attained (1Cor. 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. If they had been fully conformable, they would not have come short of eternal happiness (Mat. 5:19; Luk. 10:27-28), nor come under the penalty of the wrath of God for violating 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 who, these days, contend so highly for morality, understand nothing else than this, I dare join with them in asserting that the best, morally honest man is the greatest saint; and that morality is the principal part of true religion, and the test of all its other parts. Without it 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 to our neighbor, that there is no other commandment greater than these, and that on them “hang all the law and the prophets” (Mat. 22:36-40; Mar. 12:31).

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

Noting this is a very necessary caution, because many are apt to skip over the lesson concerning the *means* (which will fill up this whole treatise) as superfluous and useless. Once they know the nature and excellence of the duties of the law, they consider nothing lacking but diligent performances; and so they rush blindly into immediate practice, making more haste than good speed. They are quick in promising, “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do” (Exo. 19:8), without sitting down and counting the cost. They look at holiness only as the means to an end, eternal salvation, and not as an end itself, requiring any great means for attaining the practice of it. The inquiry of most, when they begin to have a sense of religion is, “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Mat. 19:16); not, “How will I be *enabled* to do anything that is good?” Indeed, many who are considered powerful preachers, spend all their zeal in earnestly 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 craftsmanship at all, but only industry and activity. So that you may not stumble at the threshold of a religious life by this common oversight, I will endeavor 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

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<sup>1</sup> *Conversation*: our public conduct or way life as we interact with other people.

powerful and effectual means of performance, before you can successfully apply yourselves to immediate practice. And for this end, I will lay before you the following considerations.

1. We are all, by nature, void of all strength and ability to acceptably perform that holiness and righteousness which the law requires. We 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 for the assertion that is now to be proved, and for 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 (Ecc. 7:29; Gen. 1:27), he could do the will of God sincerely as soon as he knew it. But once he had fallen, he was quickly afraid because of his nakedness. He could not help it at all, until God revealed 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 first know 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 to attain to holiness effectually; and so they 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 (Jdg. 16:20). Men show themselves strangely forgetful, or hypocritical, in professing original sin in their prayers, catechisms, and confessions of faith, and yet urging themselves and others to the practice of the law, without the consideration of any strengthening, enlivening means — as if there were no lack of ability, but only of activity.

2. All those who doubt or deny the doctrine of original sin, may know concerning themselves (if their consciences are not blind) that the exact justice of God is against them; and that they are under the curse of God, and the sentence of death for their actual sins, if God were to enter into judgement with them (Rom. 1:32; 2:2; 3:9; Gal. 3:10). Is it possible for a man who knows this is his case, and hasn't learned any means to get out of it, to immediately practice the law — 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, even though God might inflict sudden death on him? Is there no skill or craftsmanship at all required in this case, to encourage the fainting soul to the practice of universal obedience?

3. Though heathens might know much about 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. Therefore, they are to be wholly 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 his ability to walk holily once he lost it by sin; nor to assure him beforehand, that God would grant him any means of recovery. God had set nothing but death before his eyes in case of his transgression (Gen. 2:17). And therefore he hid himself from God when the shame of his nakedness appeared, expecting no favor from Him. We are like sheep gone astray, and don't know 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, unless we learn it from You.

4. Sanctification, by which our hearts and lives are conformed to the law, is a grace of God communicated to us by means, just like 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 (2Pet. 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 armor of God that are necessary to be known and put on, so 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 learning the way of *justification* has been thought worthy of 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” (2Tim. 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” (Luk. 1:78-79). If God condescends to us so very low, to teach us this way in the Scriptures, and by Christ, then it must 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 it out of the Holy Scriptures, that when it is plainly revealed there, we cannot learn it as easily as the duties of the law — which was known in part by the light of nature, and therefore more easily assented to. It is the way by which the dead are brought to live to God; and therefore it is doubtless far above all the thoughts and conjectures of human wisdom. It is the way to salvation, in which God will “destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent,” by revealing 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” (1Cor. 1:19, 21; 2:14). “Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness” (1Tim. 3:16). Learning it requires double work, because we must first 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, so 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” (Psa. 119:5, 33). “Teach me to do Your will” (Psa. 143:10). “The Lord direct your hearts to the love of God” (2The. 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 for avoiding errors that are contrary to them. For we cannot rationally doubt that the moral duties of love to God and to our neighbor, are so absolutely necessary to true religion, that it cannot subsist 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 practice them, should be believed as proceeding from God, because it has the image of His holiness and righteousness engraved on it. This is a sure test and touchstone, which those who are seriously religious will use to try their spirits and their doctrines, whether they are of God or not. And they cannot rationally approve any doctrine as religious, that is not according to godliness (1Tim. 6:3). By this touchstone Christ proves His doctrine to be of God, because in this He seeks the glory of God (Joh. 7:17-18). And He teaches us to know false prophets by their fruits (Mat. 7:15-16); and the fruits which their doctrine tends to, are especially to be considered.

Hence it appears that, until we know what the effectual means of holiness are, and what they are not, we lack a necessary touchstone of divine truth. We 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 in this, and think those means are effectual which are not, and think those that are effectual are weak or of a contrary effect, then your error in this will be a false touchstone to test other doctrines. By doing this, you will readily approve of errors, and refuse the truth. This has been a pernicious occasion of many errors in religion in recent days. If you get a true touchstone by learning this lesson, you will be able to test the various doctrines of Protestants, Papists, Arminians, Socinians, Antinomians, or Quakers. And you will be able to discover the truth and cling to it with much satisfaction to your judgement, amidst 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 recent 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 any hope of success, unless we have some faith concerning divine assistance. And we have no ground to expect it, if we don't use those means which God has appointed to work by. "God meets those who remember Him in His own ways" (Isa. 64:5); and He "makes a breach on those who do not seek Him in the due order" (1Chr. 15:13). He has chosen and ordained those means of sanctification and salvation which are for His own glory, and those alone He blesses to us; and He crowns no man who strives, unless he strives lawfully (2Tim. 2:5).

Experience shows plentifully, with both heathens and Christians, how pernicious our 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.

ii) Many reject the way of holiness as austere and unpleasant, because they didn't 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 putting off repentance for a time, as a rough thing.

(iii) Many others set about the practice of holiness with a fervent zeal, and run very fast; but they don't tread a step in the right way. Finding themselves frequently disappointed and overcome by their lusts, they at last give up the work, and turn to wallow again in the mire. This has occasioned several treatises to show how far a reprobate may go in the way of religion; many weak saints are discouraged by this, considering that these reprobates have gone further than themselves; whereas, most of them *never* knew the right way, nor did they tread even one right step in it for, "there are few who find it" (Mat. 7:14).

(iv) Some of the more ignorant zealots inhumanly macerate their bodies with fasting and other austerities, to kill their lusts. And when they see that their lusts are still too hard for them, they fall into despair and are driven by a horrified conscience, to do away with themselves wickedly, to the scandal of religion. Perhaps God will bless my revelation of the powerful means of holiness so far as to save some one or other from killing himself. And such a fruit as this would countervail my labor — 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.

## DIRECTION II

*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 heart for it; 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.*

### EXPLICATION

Those means that are next to the attainment of the great end aimed at, are the ones first to be revealed, so that we may learn how to get them by the other means expressed in the subsequent 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 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 come *before* our practice, not in any distance of time, but only as the cause comes before the effect. I do not say that I have named particularly all such necessary qualifications; but this much I dare say — that the one who gains these may, by the same means, gain any others 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 more excellent endowments, to enable Him for a *harder* task of obedience. And seeing that obedience has grown more difficult, because of the opposition and temptations that it meets with since the fall of Adam, we who are to be imitators of Christ, need to have very choice endowments, such as Christ had. They should be at least as good or somewhat *better* than Adam had at first, because our work is harder than his. “What king, going to make war against another king, doesn’t first sit down and consult whether he is able with ten thousand, to meet the one who comes against him with twenty thousand?” (Luk. 14:31) And would 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 armor to stand in the evil day? (Eph. 6:13) Yet many content themselves with the same ability to will and do their duty, that men are given universally — by which they are no better enabled for the spiritual battle than the world generally, a world which lies 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 many so earnestly contend for; and what it consists of; and by what means it is conveyed to us and maintained.

Bodily agility has spirits, nerves, ligaments, and bones to subsist by; but this universal spiritual ability seems to be some *occult* quality. No sufficient account can be given as to how it is conveyed, or of what it is constituted. So that none may deceive themselves, and miscarry in their enterprises for holiness by depending on such a weak occult quality, I have shown here 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 mentioned here is perfect or imperfect. And they are of such a mysterious nature that some — who admit the necessity of endowments to frame themselves for holiness — are prone to think that *less* than these will serve us; and that some of these frame us for *licentiousness* rather than holiness, because they are 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 will strive for such a demonstration of these endowments particularly, that it may gain the assent of right reason, insisting on them in the same order in which I have placed them in the direction.

## ***Inclination to Duties***

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 don't mean the sort of blind propensity that inanimate creatures and brutes have to their natural operations; but one that is suitable for intelligent creatures — one by which they are, by the conduct of their 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 this direction, are subservient to this one as the chief of all, which is sufficient to make it a *rational* propensity. This is contrary to those who, 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, once we are convinced of it, and of our obligation to it. They extol this endowment as the greatest benefit that universal redemption has blessed all mankind with, though they consider this free will to be without any actual inclination to good. Indeed, they must acknowledge that in most of mankind who have it, it is encumbered with an actual bent and propensity of the heart that is altogether to evil. Such a free will as this, can never free us from slavery to sin and Satan; nor can it fit us for the practice of the law. And therefore it is not worthy of the pains of those who contend so hotly for it. Neither is the will so free as necessary for the practice of holiness, until it is endued with an inclination and propensity for it. This 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 a mere indifference of the heart to perform them, and no good inclination and propensity toward practicing them. This is 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. All duties must be influenced by this love in their performance. We must *delight* to do the will of God; it must be sweeter to us than the honey or honeycomb (Psa. 40:8; Job 23:12; Psa. 63:1; 119:20; 19:10). And this love, liking, delight, longing, thirsting, or sweet relishing, must be continued to the end. The first indeliberate motion of lust must be regulated by love to God and our neighbor; and sin must be lusted *against* (Gal. 5:17), and *abhorred* (Psa. 36:4). If it were true obedience (as some would have it) to love our duty only as a market man loves the foul ways of 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 lack of inclination. But we must love it as the market man loves gain; and as the sick man loves health, as pleasant food and drink; and as the captive loves liberty. Doubtless there can be no power in the will for this kind of service, without an inclination that is agreeable to the will of God, a heart according to His own heart, an aversion of our hearts to sin, and a kind of antipathy against sin. For we know the proverb, "Like loves 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 *pure heart* (1Tim. 1:5), a heart cleansed from evil propensities and inclinations. And reason will tell us that the first motions of lust which don't fall 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; Ecc. 7:29). This consists in an actual bent and propensity of heart to *practice* holiness — not in a mere power of will to choose between good or evil. For in itself, that is neither holy nor unholy, but only a groundwork on which may be drawn either the image of God, or of Satan. Nor is it in an indifferent propensity to choose between duty or sin; for this is a wicked disposition in an intelligent creature who knows his duty; it fits us only to waver 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, just as we may be prevailed upon to do some things that are contrary to our natural inclinations. It is easy to fail in our duty, though great preparation and furnishing are required to perform it. The second Adam also, the Lord Jesus Christ, was born a holy thing (Luk. 1:35), with

a holy disposition of His soul, and a propensity to goodness. 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 that same propensity and inclination?

3. Original corruption, by which we are dead to God and to godliness from the birth, and made willing slaves to the performance of all actual sins, until the Son of God makes us free. It consists in a propensity and inclination of the heart to sin, and an 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? (Mat. 12:33) How can man be said to be abominable and filthy, that drinks iniquity like water? (Job 15:16) How can 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. And yet this propensity is *itself* the great evil — the indwelling sin which produces all actual sins. It must of necessity be removed or restrained, by restoring that contrary inclination in which the image of God consists. Otherwise we will be backward and reprobate to every good work; and whatever freedom the will has, it will be employed only in the service of sin.

4. God restores His people to holiness by giving 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” (Eze. 36:26-27). He circumcises their heart to love Him with their whole heart and soul. And He requires that we be transformed “in the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is His acceptable will” (Rom. 12:2). David prays to the same end, “that God would create in him a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within him” (Psa. 51:10). If anyone can judge that this new, clean, circumcised heart, this heart of flesh, this new right spirit, is such that it has no actual inclination and propensity to good, but only a power to choose good or evil (which is undeservedly called ‘free will’), with a present inclination to evil, or an indifferent propensity to both contraries — then it will not be worth my labor to convince them of such a judgement. Only let him consider whether David could account such a heart to be clean and upright when he prayed, “Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa. 119:36).

### ***Persuaded of Reconciliation with God***

The SECOND ENDOWMENT necessary to enable us for the immediate practice of holiness, and concurring with the other two 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 favor. And in this I include the great benefit of *justification*, as the means by which we are reconciled to God. This 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. Just as one act of illumination comprehends the expulsion of darkness and the 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 diverse names with respect to either of the two contrary terms — one of which is abolished, and 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, so that we may be enabled to practice it. They think that this doctrine tends to subvert a holy practice, and is a great pillar of Antinomianism. They believe that the only way to establish sincere obedience, is rather to make

it a condition to be performed before our actual justification and reconciliation with God. Therefore some recent divines have thought fit to bring to their anvil, the doctrine of former Protestants concerning justification, and to hammer it into another form, so that it might be freer from Antinomianism, and more effectual to secure a holy practice. But their labor is vain and pernicious, tending to Antinomian profaneness, or painted hypocrisy at best. Neither the true nor the painted practice can be secure, unless the persuasion of our justification and reconciliation with God is first obtained *without works of the law* (Rom. 3:28), so that we may be enabled in this way to do them. I will now prove this by several arguments, also intending to show in subsequent directions, that such a persuasion of the love of God as God gives to His people, tends only to holiness; even if a mis-persuasion of it is an occasion of licentiousness in many.

**Arg. 1.** When the first Adam was framed <sup>1</sup> for the practice of holiness at his creation, he was highly in the favor of God, and had no sin imputed to him. 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 that these qualifications were his advantage for a holy practice, and that the wisdom of God judged them good for that end. As soon as Adam 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 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, unless the like advantages are given to us by reconciliation, and remission of sins, and the imputation of a righteousness given by God to us, when we have none of our own?

**Arg. 2.** Those who know their natural deadness under the power of sin and Satan, are fully convinced that if God leaves them to their own hearts, they can do nothing but sin; and that they can do no good work unless it pleases God, of His great love and mercy, to work it in them (Joh. 8:36; Phi. 2:13; Rom. 8:7-8). Therefore, so 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 having a good persuasion of such a reconciliation and God's saving love to us, that does not depend on any precedent goodness of our works, but is a sufficient cause to effectually produce them in us. Indeed, 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 to us to free us from that dominion, unless this guilt and curse are removed from us 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 see ourselves under the curse and wrath of God, because our transgressions and sins are still upon us (Eze. 33:10).

**Arg. 3.** The nature of the duties of the law is such that it requires an apprehension of our reconciliation with God, and of His hearty love and favor towards us for doing them. The great duty is love to God with our whole heart, and not the sort of contemplative love that philosophers may have toward the object of the sciences; they are no further concerned in these than to please their fancies in their knowledge of them. It is rather a *practical* love, by which we are willing that God be the 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 be the only portion and happiness of all those who are happy. It is 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

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<sup>1</sup> To frame something, like a house, is to design and construct a framework within which the purpose of what is framed, may be fully developed, and finally realized. — WHG

delight in our obedience to Him, in doing His will, even 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 doing them while we see ourselves under the curse and wrath of God, or while we are under prevailing suspicions that God will prove to be 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, which was sorely against his will. But the duty of love cannot be extorted and forced by fear; 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 casts 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" (1Joh. 4:18-19).

Observe here, that we cannot love God before we apprehend His love to us. And consult your own experience, if you have any true love to God, whether it wasn't wrought in you by a sense of God's love towards you first? All the goodness and excellence of God cannot render Him an amiable object to us, unless we apprehend Him to be an agreeable good to us. I don't question that the devils know the excellence of God's nature, as well as our greatest metaphysical speculators; and that this only fills them more with tormenting horror and trembling, which is contrary to love (Jam. 2:19). The greater God's excellence and perfection, 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 what 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 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?

**Arg. 4.** Our conscience must first, of necessity, be purged from dead works, so that we may serve the living God. And this is done by the 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). That conscience by which we judge ourselves to be under the guilt of sin and the wrath of God, is called an *evil conscience* in Scripture (Heb 10.22), even though it performs its office truly. It is caused by the evil of sin; and it will itself be a cause of our committing more sin, until it can judge us to be justified from all sin, and received into the favor 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 (1Tim. 1:5).<sup>1</sup> David's mouth could not be opened to show forth the praise of God until he was delivered from blood-guiltiness (Psa. 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 because of our sins, strongly maintains and increases the dominion of sin and Satan in us. And it works most mischievous effects in the soul *against* godliness — even bringing the soul to hate God and to wish there was no God, no heaven, and no hell, so that 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 they 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 its mouth. It produces zeal in many external religious performances, and also false religion, idolatry, and the most inhuman superstitions in the world.

I have often considered, by what manner of working could any sin effectually destroy the whole image of God in the first Adam? And I conclude that it was by first working 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 in him a shameful nakedness by unruly lusts, to turn his

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<sup>1</sup> See also 1Tim 1.19; Heb 13.18; 1Pet 3.21.

love wholly from God to the creature, and to work a desire to be hidden from the presence of God (Gen. 3:8, 10). This was a total destruction of the image of God's holiness. And so we have cause to judge, that from that same cause, proceeds the continual malice, rancour, rage, and blasphemy of the devil, and of many notorious wicked men, against God and godliness. Some may think Job was 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 secretly wish that God did not exist, or that He wasn't so just a judge. This is a secret cursing of God, which cannot be avoided until our consciences are purged from the guilt of sin, by the offering of Christ for us; this was figured then, by the burnt offerings of Job for his sons.

**Arg. 5.** God has abundantly revealed 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 revealed Himself to be their God, who had given them a sure pledge of His salvation by their delivery from Egypt, in the preface (Exo. 20:2). And all during the time of the Old Testament, God was pleased to make the entrance into religion by circumcision. This was not only a sign, but a seal of the righteousness of faith, by which God justifies people while they are considered ungodly (Rom. 4:5, 11). And this seal was administered to children eight days old, *before* they could perform any condition of sincere obedience for their justification, so that their furnishing for a holy practice might be ready beforehand.

Furthermore, in the time of the Old Testament, God appointed diverse washings, and the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean. This was to prepare and sanctify them for other parts of His worship in His tabernacle and temple, to be figures of 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 was, I say, figurative sanctification, as the word *sanctification* is taken in a large sense. It comprehends all things that prepare us for the service of God, and chiefly, the remission of sin (Heb. 10:10, 14, 18). Though, if sanctification is taken in a strict sense, it respects only our conformity to the law; and thus it must necessarily be placed *after* justification, according to the usual method of Protestant divines. God also minded them of the necessity to purge away their guilt first, so that their service might be acceptable. He did this by commanding them to offer their personal sin offering, before the burnt offering (Lev. 5:8; 16:3, 11). And lest the guilt of their sins 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, so that He may make us priests to offer the sacrifices of praise and all good works to God, even the Father. He ushered 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 Christ also 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" (1Joh. 2:12, 15). I might quote abundant texts of the same nature. We may clearly see by all this, that God has accounted it a matter of great importance, and He has condescended to take wonderful care in providing plentiful means, both under the Old and New Testaments, that His people might first be 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!



## ***Persuaded of Heavenly Happiness***

The THIRD ENDOWMENT necessary to enable us to practice 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 which disposes and allures us to it. This assertion has several sorts of adversaries to oppose it. Some think 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 necessary condition to procure this persuasion. Others condemn all works that we are allured or stirred up to by the future enjoyment of the heavenly happiness, as somehow legal, mercenary, flowing from self-love, and not from any pure love to God. And so they symbolize sincere godliness by a man bearing fire in one hand, to burn up heaven; and water in the other, to quench hell. They intimate that 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 these errors that are so contrary to it and to each other, I will 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, has been sufficiently proved by all that I said concerning the necessity of our firm persuasion of 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 unless it is allured, encouraged, and supported by this persuasion. Let me therefore suppose there is a Sadducee who believes there is no happiness after this life. I put this question to you: “Can such a person love God with his whole heart, might, and soul?” Wouldn’t he instead think it reasonable to lessen and moderate his love towards God, than to be overly troubled by parting with God at death? We consider it most reasonable to hold loosely to our affections for things that we must part with. Can such a person be satisfied with the present enjoyment of God as his happiness? Wouldn’t he rather consider that the enjoyment of God, and all religious duties, as well as other things, are vanities, because in a little while we will have no more benefit by them than if they had never been? How can such a person 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 those other things? How can he willingly choose afflictions rather than sin, when he will only be more miserable in this life for it, and not at all happy hereafter? I grant that 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 such a virtue; and he will be prone to fret and murmur at his Creator, and to wish that he had never been, rather than endure such miseries, and be comforted only with vain, transitory enjoyments. I think I have said enough to show how unfurnished such a man is for holiness. And someone who would burn up heaven, and quench hell, so that he may serve God only out of love, thereby leaves himself little better furnished than the Sadducee. The one denies them, and the other will not consider them at all.

2. The sure hope of the glory of heaven is ordinarily made use of 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 wrought for them “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2Cor. 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. Without it, Christians would, of all men, be most miserable, and the doctrine of the Epicures would rather be chosen: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” And so he exhorts the Corinthians to be “abundant in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord” (1Cor. 15:58).

Just 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; 1Joh. 3:3). And it is such a sure hope that it will never make them ashamed (Rom. 5:5). Those who think it below the excellence of their love, to work from a hope of the heavenly reward, thereby 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 the way of holiness (1Joh. 3:1-3). Nor is it legal or mercenary to be moved by this persuasion, seeing that 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 working from self-love, it is certainly not that carnal self-love which the Scripture condemns as the mother of sinfulness (2Tim. 3:2). Rather, it is a holy self-love, inclining us to prefer God above the flesh and the world, such as God directs us to do when He exhorts us to save ourselves (Acts 2:40; 1Tim. 4:16). 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 that we apprehend God is to us unto all eternity, doubtless the more lovely God will be to us, and our affections will be more inflamed towards Him. God will not be loved as a barren wilderness, a land of darkness to us; nor will He be served for nothing (Jer. 2:31). He would think it a dishonor 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 unto eternal life” (Jude 21).

### ***Persuaded of Strength to Perform***

The LAST ENDOWMENT, for the same end as the former, is that we will be persuaded of sufficient strength both to will and to perform our duty acceptably, until we come to the enjoyment of the heavenly happiness. This is contrary to the error of those who consider it sufficient if we have strength to practice holiness *if we will*, or to will it *if we please*. 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 who think the practice of godliness and wickedness are equally easy, except for some difficulty in first altering vicious habits, and in bearing persecutions, which they think is a rare case since the kingdoms of the world have been brought to the profession of Christianity. Or they think that God requires men only to do their best; that is, what they *can* do; and that 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. To confirm our assertion against those errors, take these arguments.

1. We are, by nature, dead in trespasses and sins, unable to will or to 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 who are sufficiently enlightened and humbled, know themselves to be naturally in this case; and that they not only lack executive power to do good, but chiefly a heart to *will* it, and to be pleased with it; and that if God doesn’t “work in them both to will and to do,” they can neither will nor do anything pleasing to Him (Phi. 2:13); and that, if He leaves them to their own corruption after He has begun the good work, they will certainly prove to be vile apostates, and their “latter end will be worse than their beginning.” (2Pet. 2:20) We may

conclude from this, that whoever can courageously attempt to practice 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* once he is willing, until he has gone through the whole work of obedience acceptably — then he was never truly humbled and brought to know the plague of his own heart; nor does he truly believe the doctrine of original sin, whatever formal profession he may make of it.

2. Those who think that sincere conformity to the law in ordinary cases is so very easy, show that they know neither the law, nor themselves. Is it an easy thing to wrestle, not only against flesh, 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 even more *because* of the commandment (Rom. 7:7-8). Our work is not only to alter vicious habits, but to mortify the corrupt natural affections which bred these habits; not only to deny the fulfilling of sinful lusts, but to be full of holy love and desires. Yet even restraining the execution of corrupt lusts, and opposing them by contrary actings, is in many cases like “cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye” (Mat. 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) How is it that many among us seek to enter this strait gate, and are not able? (Luk. 13:24); and to break so many vows and purposes of obedience, and fall back into the practice of their lusts, though meanwhile, the fears of eternal damnation press hard on their consciences?

As for those who find persecution for religion so rare in recent days, they have cause to be suspected that they are “of the world, for the world loves its own” (Joh. 15:19). Otherwise, they would find that national profession of religion will not secure those who are truly godly, from several sorts of persecutions. And suppose men don’t persecute us for religion; there is still great difficulty in bearing great injuries from men on other accounts — losses, poverty, bodily pains, long diseases, and untimely deaths from the ordinary providence of God — and doing it with such a hearty love to God and 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 for those whom God rightly furnishes with endowments for it. But those who assert that it is easy for men in their common condition, show their imprudence in contradicting the general experience of heathens and Christians. Though many duties don’t require much labor of body or mind, and might be done with ease if we were willing, it is easier to remove a mountain than to move and incline the heart to will and to effect doing them. I needn’t concern myself with those who think that all have sufficient strength for a holy practice, because they can endeavor their best; that is, do what they can do; for God requires actually fulfilling His commands. What if by our endeavors we can do *nothing* that is in any measure according to the rule? Will the law be put off with no performance? And will such endeavors be accounted sufficient holiness? What if we cannot so much as endeavor in a right way? If a man’s ability were the measure of acceptable duty, then the commands of the law would mean 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 to 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 would be left to his own corruptions, because he had no corruptions in him — not until he had produced them in himself by sinning against his 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 would 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, and “therefore He would not be confounded” (Isa. 50:7). The Scripture shows what plentiful assurance of strength God gave to Moses, Joshua, and Gideon, when He called them to great employments; and to the Israelites when He called them to subdue the land of Canaan. Christ had the sons of Zebedee consider whether they were able “to drink of His cup,

and to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with” (Mat. 20:22). Paul encourages believers to the life of holiness by persuading them that sin shall not prevail to get 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” (1Joh. 2:14-15).

Those who were previously called by God to work miracles, were first acquainted with the gift of power to work them; and no wise man would attempt to do them without knowledge of the gift. Even so, when men who are dead in sin are called to do the works of a holy life, which are great miracles in them, God reveals the gift of power to them, so that He may encourage them in a *rational* way, to such a wonderful enterprise.

## DIRECTION III

*The way to get the 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 so that we may have this fellowship, we must be in Christ, and have Christ Himself in us, by a mystical union with Him.*

### EXPLICATION

Here, as much as anywhere, we have great cause to acknowledge with the apostle that, “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness” (1Tim. 3:16). It is 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. Indeed, though it is revealed clearly in the Holy Scriptures, the natural man has no eyes to see it there, for it is foolishness to him (1Cor. 2:9, 14). And if God expressed it ever so plainly and properly, he would think that God is speaking riddles and parables. I have no doubt that it is still a riddle and parable, even to many of the truly godly who have received a holy nature in this way. For the apostles themselves had the saving benefit of it, before the Comforter revealed it clearly to them (Joh. 14:20). And they walked in Christ as the way to the Father, *before* they clearly knew Him to be the way (Joh. 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 the immediate practice of the law, must be obtained by receiving it out of Christ’s fullness, as something already prepared and brought into existence for us in Christ, and treasured up in Him. And that, as we are *justified* by a righteousness wrought in Christ and imputed to us, so we are *sanctified* by a holy frame and qualifications that are first wrought 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 — *propagated* as it were. So that, we are not at all to work together with Christ in making or producing that holy frame in us; but we are only to take it to ourselves, and use it in our holy practice, as ready-made for our hands. Thus we have fellowship with Christ, in receiving that holy frame of spirit which was originally in Him. For fellowship is when several persons have the same thing in common (1Joh. 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 who 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 vehemently impressing on their hearts many motives for godliness. They labor importunately to squeeze good qualifications out of their hearts, *like oil out of a flint*. They think that even though they are justified by a righteousness wrought by Christ, they must be sanctified by a holiness wrought by themselves. And though, out of humility, they are willing to call it *infused grace*, they think they must get the infusion of it by the same manner of working, as if it were wholly acquired *by their own endeavors*. On this account, they acknowledge that the entrance into a godly life is harsh and displeasing, because it costs so much struggling with their own hearts and affections, to newly frame them. If only 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 produce a new nature in us, than we did to produce original sin, even though we do more to receive it. If they knew this, they might save themselves many a bitter agony, and a great deal of misspent burdensome labor; and they might employ their efforts to enter in at the strait gate, in such a way that it 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*; not merely by His universal presence as He is God, but by such a close union that we are one spirit and one flesh with Him. This is a privilege peculiar to those who are truly sanctified. I may well call this a *Mystical Union*, because the apostle calls it a *great mystery*, in an Epistle that is 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, who is both 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 — we yet have cause to believe them all. That is because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and they 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 in us, and “dwells in believers, and they in Him” (Joh. 6:56; 14:20; Gal. 2:20); and that they are so joined together, that they become one Spirit (1Cor. 6:17); and that believers are “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones;” and these 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, if there were no true and proper union between Christ and believers. They would seem to beguile us by *obscuring* the truth, rather than to instruct us by *illustrating* it. It resembles the union between God the Father and Christ (Joh. 14:20; 17:21-23); between the vine and its branches (Joh. 15:4, 5); between the head and body (Eph. 1:22, 23); between bread and the eater (Joh. 6:51, 53, 54). It is not only resembled by, but sealed in the Lord’s Supper, where neither the popish *transubstantiation*, nor the Lutherans’ *consubstantiation*, nor the Protestants’ *spiritual presence* of Christ’s body and blood to 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, then we make the bread and wine — joined with the words of institution — not only bare signs, but the sort of signs that are more apt to breed false notions in us, than to establish us in the truth. And there is nothing in this union that is so impossible, or repugnant to reason, that it 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 are on earth, 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 is 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 can unite us more closely to Christ than any material substance can do, and make a closer and more 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*. Nor will a believer be made God in this way, but only the *temple* of God, as Christ’s body and soul is; and be the Spirit’s lively instrument, rather than the principal cause. Nor 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 only so far as He dwells in them. And though this union seems 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 would dishonor God if we did not expect a miraculous advancement to the highest dignity that creatures are capable of, through the merits of that blood. Nor is there anything in this union contrary to the judgement of our sense, because the bond of the union, being spiritual, does not at all fall under the judgment of sense.

Several learned men of late acknowledge no other union between Christ and believers, than what persons or things which are wholly separated, may have by their mutual relations to each other. And they interpret accordingly the places of Scripture that speak of this union. When Christ is called *the Head of the church*, they think 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 the proper meaning is that Christ's law, doctrine, grace, salvation, or godliness is in them, and embraced by them; so that, Christ must not be taken here 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 as the agreement of their minds and affections — as if the greatness of the mystery of this union mentioned in Eph. 5:32, consisted in a harsh trope, or a dark and improper expression, rather than consisting in the depth and abstruseness of the thing itself. Or as if Christ and His apostles had affected obscure and intricate expressions when they speak to the church about things that are very plain, and easily understood. Thus that great mystery — the union of believers with Christ Himself — is now exploded out of the new model of divinity. Yet it is the glory of the church, and it was highly renowned previously, both by the ancient fathers and by many eminent Protestant divines, particularly writers concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper; and also by the general consent of the church in many ages. The reason for exploding it, as I judge it charitably, is not because our learned refiners of divinity think themselves less able to defend it than the other two mysterious unions; or because they seek to silence the objections of those proud sophisters who will not believe what they cannot comprehend. Rather, it is because they consider it to be one of the sinews of Antinomianism, which lay unobserved in the former use of the doctrine. It tends to puff men up with a persuasion that they are justified, and have eternal life in them already, and don't need to depend any longer on their uncertain performances of the condition of sincere obedience for salvation. They think the very foundation of a holy practice is subverted by it.

But the wisdom of God has laid another manner of foundation for a holy practice than what they imagine. And this union (which the builders refuse) is a principal stone of it, next to the head of the corner. 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 excellence of this union. It is not a privilege procured by our sincere obedience and holiness, as some may imagine; nor is it a reward for good works, reserved for us in another world. Rather, it is a privilege bestowed on believers in their very first entrance into a holy state, on which all our 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 will now show that even though the truth contained in it is above the reach of natural reason, it is evidently revealed to those whose understandings have been 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. "It pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in Him" (Col. 1:19). 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 a circumcision not done by hand, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, ...being buried with Him, ...being dead in your sins, ...He made alive together with Him" (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 be comprehended in this phrase, "in all spiritual blessings." And these are given to 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 it is 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 1Corinthians 1:30, which shows that “Christ is by God made to us sanctification,” by which we are able to walk holily; and also 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 plainly show that we receive our holiness out of His fullness by fellowship with Him (Joh. 1:16-17): “Of His fullness we all have received, and grace for grace.” And it is understood of grace corresponding to the law given by Moses, which must 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” (1Joh. 1:3, 5-7). Hence 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 this whole direction fully, showing not only that our holy endowments are first made ready for us in Christ, and received from Christ, but that we receive them by *union* with Christ: “You have put on the new man, which is renewed in the image of Him who created Him; where Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:10-11). “He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit” (1Cor. 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” (1Joh. 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 these are fixed in Him so inseparably, that we cannot have them unless we are 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 to us of His Son.

2. God is pleased to illustrate this mysterious manner of our sanctification by such a variety of similitudes and resemblances, that it may remove all doubt that it is truth, and such a truth that we are highly concerned to know and believe it. I will try to briefly contract the best of these resemblances and their force, into one sentence, leaving it to those who 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 the same way as,

- (1) Christ lived in our nature by the Father (Joh. 6:57);
- (2) we receive original sin and death propagated to us from the first Adam (Rom. 5:12-17);
- (3) the natural body receives sense, motion, and nourishment from the head (Col. 2:19);
- (4) the branch receives its sap, juice, and fructifying virtue from the vine (Joh. 15:4-5);
- (5) the wife brings forth fruit by virtue of her conjugal union with her husband (Rom. 7:4);
- (6) stones become a holy temple by being built on the foundation, and joined with the chief cornerstone (1Pet. 2:4-6);
- (7) we receive the nourishing virtue of bread by eating it, and of wine by drinking it (Joh. 6:51, 55, 57). This last resemblance is used to seal to us our communion with Christ in the Lord’s Supper.

Here seven resemblances are instanced. Some of them 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 and proper union and fellowship with Him. If some urged that the similitude of Adam and his seed, and of married couples, make for a relative rather 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 cf. Eph. 5:30-32). And yet it supposes both these resemblances in the nearness and fullness of them, because “those who are joined to the Lord” are not only one flesh, but “one spirit with Him” (1Cor. 6:17).



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. It was not to enable us to produce in ourselves the original of such a holy nature, by our own endeavors.

(1) *By His incarnation*, a man was 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 the first Adam's ever 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 with each other in their actions; and Christ was able to act in His human nature, by a power proper to the divine nature, in which He was one with God the Father (1Cor. 8:6). The words that He spoke while He was on earth, He didn't speak of Himself by any mere human power, but the Father who dwelt in Him did the works (Joh. 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 who would be born *of Him*, and *in Him*, by His Spirit, "as the last Adam, the quickening Spirit;" so that, "as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so we might also bear the image of the heavenly" (1Cor. 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, first dwelt in Him bodily, even in His human nature, so that we might be filled up with that fullness in Him (Mat. 1:23; Col. 2:9-10). Thus He came down from heaven as living bread, so that, just as He lives by the Father, so those who eat Him may live by Him (Joh. 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 His was, and also polluted with our 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. This 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 "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin (or *by a sacrifice for sin*, as it is in the margin), condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after 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; Phi. 3:9) — yet He also died that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, by walking after His Spirit, as those who 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 (Joh. 12:24); and to the Passover Lamb that was slain, that a feast might be kept upon it; and to bread that is broken, that it may be nourishment to those who eat it (1Cor. 5:7-8; 11:24); to the rock that was struck, that water may gush out of it for us to drink (1Cor. 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, those who 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 it is 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" — yes, and to be made "to sit together in heavenly places 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, just 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 thereby we are enabled to produce the fruits of it; as the Scripture shows by the likeness of a marriage union, Rom. 7:4: "We are married to Him who is risen from the dead, that we might produce fruit to God." Baptism signifies the application of Christ's resurrection to us as well as His death; in it we are raised up with Him to newness of life, as well as buried with Him. And we are thereby taught 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 Spirit, by whom we live and walk holily (Rom. 15:16; Gal. 5:25). Now, the Holy Spirit 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 likeness of the descending of a dove from the opened heavens, resting on Christ at His baptism (Joh. 1:32-33). And when He sanctifies us, He baptizes us unto Christ, and joins us to Christ by Himself, as the great bond of union (1Cor. 12:13). So that, according to the scriptural phrase, it is all the same, 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" (Joh. 16:14-15). He gives us an experiential 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 no longer be left under the power of sinful inclinations, nor indifferently inclined 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 favor with Him than the first Adam had in the state of innocency. This is because the righteousness that Christ wrought for us by His obedience unto death, is imputed to us for our justification. This is called "the righteousness of God," because it is wrought by One who 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 favor for us (2Cor. 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). Hereby we are persuaded of our future enjoyment of the everlasting happiness, and also persuaded 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 "the law of the spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death;" and nothing will be against us, "nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ;" but in all opposition and difficulties that we meet with, we will at last be "more than conquerors through Him who 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 by way of union with Christ; and 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, unless we receive Christ Himself *and* His holiness, as well as any other benefit. For as the Scripture testifies, "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

6. Whereas it may be doubted whether the saints who 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 who took our flesh “was before Abraham” (Joh. 8:58). “He was ordained 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 (1Pet. 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 (1Pet. 1:11; 3:18-19). Now, this Spirit was able and effectual to unite those saints to that flesh which Christ was to take upon Himself in the fullness of time, because He was the same in both; and to give 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 beforehand of Christ’s death and resurrection as his own, 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; nor will you allow your holy one to see corruption. You will show me the path of life” (Psa. 16:9-11). Yes, and saints *before* David’s time all ate of the same spiritual food, and drank of the same spiritual drink, even of the same Christ as we do; and therefore they were partakers of the same privilege of union and fellowship with Christ (1Cor. 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 departed saints whose spirits were then made perfect in heaven, as well as the saints who *then* were, or would *afterward* be on earth, were “gathered together in one,” and were comprehended in Christ as their Head (Eph. 1:10). And He was “the chief cornerstone, 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 into 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 ever be given to man — from the fall of Adam to the end of the world — and that is done by the mighty power of His Spirit, by which all saints who ever were, or ever shall be, are joined together to be members of that one mystical body of which He is the Head.

## DIRECTION IV

*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 in Christ, as He is revealed and freely promised to us in it, for all His salvation.*

### EXPLICATION

What I asserted 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 make us stand in our own endeavors for holiness. This is because we cannot imagine how we would 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 go forward when we are at a standstill. He reveals 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). He also invites us and commands us, to believe in Christ for His salvation; and He encourages us by a free promise of that salvation to all who 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 (2Cor. 3:6, 8, 9). Faith comes by hearing, and therefore it is a great instrument by which we are begotten in Christ, and Christ is formed in us (Rom. 10:16-17; 1Cor. 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, which 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 actually receiving Christ Himself, with all His fullness, into our heart. This is the principal subject of the present explanation.

The "faith" which philosophers commonly address, 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 believing the truth of things in religion, on the authority of Christ testifying of them. But the apostle shows that the faith by which we are justified, is *faith in Christ's blood* (Rom. 3:24-25), and not only in His authority as a testifier. And though a mere assent to a testimony would be sufficient faith for knowledge of things, which is what the philosophers aimed at, 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 in Christ, as he is promised freely to us in the Gospel, for all salvation. By the one act, faith receives the means in which Christ is conveyed to us; and by the other, it receives Christ Himself, and His salvation *in the means* — just as it is one act to receive the breast or cup in which milk or wine is conveyed, and another act to suck the milk in the breast or drink the wine in the cup. Both these acts must be performed heartily, with an unfeigned love of the truth, and a desire for Christ and His salvation above all things. *This is*

our spiritual appetite which is necessary for eating and drinking Christ, the food of life, just as a natural appetite is necessary 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 would rather it was false. Nor must our believing in Christ be constrained only 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 excellence of it; and we must “account all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and count them but dung, that we may win Christ and be found in Him” (2The. 1:10; Phi. 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 earnestly desire that God would create in us a clean heart and right spirit, as well as hide His face from our sins (Psa. 51:9-10) — not like many, who care for nothing in Christ, but only deliverance from hell. “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Mat. 5:6).

The former of these acts immediately unites us to Christ, because it is terminated only on the *means* of conveyance, THE GOSPEL. And yet it is a saving act if it is rightly performed, because it inclines and disposes the soul to the latter act, by which Christ Himself is immediately received into the heart. Whoever *believes the Gospel* with hearty love and liking, as the most excellent truth, will certainly with like heartiness, *believe in Christ* for salvation. “Those who know the name of the Lord will certainly put their trust in Him” (Psa. 9:10). Therefore in Scripture, SAVING FAITH is sometimes described by the former of these acts, as if it were a merely belief of the Gospel; and sometimes it is described by the latter, as 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” (1Joh. 5:1). “These things have I written to you who 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).

To better understand the nature of faith, let it be further observed that the second and principal act of it, *believing in Christ*, includes believing on God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is 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 yes and amen” (2Cor. 1:20). “By Him (as Mediator) we believe in God, who raised Him from the dead, and gave glory to Him, that our faith and hope might be in God” (1Pet. 1:21). And it is the same thing with trusting in God, or in the Lord, which is so highly commended in the whole Scripture, especially in the Old Testament. This may easily appear by considering that it has the same causes, effects, objects, adjuncts, opposites, and all the same circumstances, except that it had a respect to Christ as promised *before* His coming; and now it respects Him as having *already* come in the flesh. *Believing in the Lord*, and *trusting in His salvation* are equivalent terms that explain one another (Psa. 78:22). I confess that trusting in things seen or known by the mere light of reason — as in our own wisdom, power, riches, or princes, or any “arm of flesh” — may not so properly be called “believing on them.” But trusting in a Savior, as revealed by a testimony, is properly believing on Him. It is also the same thing expressed by the terms resting, relying, leaning, or staying ourselves on the Lord. It is called *hoping in the Lord*, because it is the ground of that expectation which is the proper act of hope, even though our believing and trusting is for the *present* as well as the *future* benefit of this salvation. The reason why it is so commonly expressed in the Scriptures of the New Testament by the term *believing in Christ*, is probably because, when that part of Scripture was written, there was cause in a special way, 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. It is the means and instrument by which we actually receive Christ and all His fullness 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 such great effects, just as Naaman thought washing in the Jordan was too small a matter for the cure of his leprosy. They condemn the true means of entering in at the strait gate, because these means seem too easy for such a purpose; and thereby they make the entrance not only difficult, but impossible for themselves. Some will allow that faith is the sole condition of our *justification*, the sole instrument by which to receive it, according to the doctrine maintained by the Protestants against the Papists. But they think it is not sufficient or effectual for *sanctification*, and 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 comforting cordial for persons on their deathbeds, or in agonies under terrors of conscience. But they think it is not good for ordinary food, and that it is wisdom in ministers to teach it seldom and sparingly, and not without some antidote or corrective to prevent the licentiousness toward which it tends. Their common antidote or corrective is that sanctification is necessary to salvation, as well as to justification; and though we are justified by faith, we are sanctified by our own performance of the law. Thus they set up salvation *by works*, and make the *grace* of justification to be of no effect, and not comforting at all.<sup>1</sup>

If faith indeed had 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 be ungrounded and deceitful. This consequence is well understood by some recent ‘refiners’ of the Protestant religion. Therefore they thought it fit to remodel this doctrine, and to make saving faith only a condition to procure a right and title to our justification by the righteousness of Christ. This must then be *performed* before we can lay any good claim to the enjoyment of it, and before we have a right to use any instrument to actually receive it. This they call *accepting* or *receiving* Christ. And, so that they may better secure the practice of holiness by their conditional faith, they would not have trusting in God or Christ for salvation counted as the principal saving act of it. This is because, it seems to them, many loose and wicked people trust as much in God and Christ for their salvation as others; but by their confidence, they are hardened more in their wickedness. They would rather that it be obedience to all of Christ’s laws, at least in resolve, or consent that Christ be their Lord — accepting His terms of salvation, and resigning themselves to His government in all things. It is a sign that the Scripture form of teaching has grown into disesteem with our great masters of reason, when trusting in the Lord (so much commended in Scripture) is considered a mean and ordinary thing. They endeavor to frighten us from owning faith as an instrument of justification, by telling us that by doing so, we who use the instrument, are made our own principal justifiers to the dishonor of God — though it might be easily answered that we are thereby made only the principal *receivers* of our own justification from God, who is the giver of it, and 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 will offer the following arguments.

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall addresses two extremes we often see: *antinomianism* and *legalism*. Each is thought to be a solution to the other, but both are errors. And we often equate *salvation* with *justification*. But indeed, *salvation* rests on two pillars, *justification* and *sanctification*; both are by grace alone. Those who are justified are also sanctified, by God (1Cor 6.11; Heb 10.14; 1Pet 1.2). Our works cannot justify us (Rom 3.28), but they are the expected fruit of our justification. Our justification is evidenced by our works of sanctification (Mat 7.17; Phi 2.12; 2Tim 2.21). For “faith without works is dead” (Jas 2.20). Marshall’s first argument below will clarify the distinction he’s making here. — WHG

1. By faith we have the actual enjoyment and possession of Christ Himself, 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 the everlasting life that is in Him” (1Joh. 5:12-13; Joh. 3:36). “He that hears Christ’s word, and believes on Him who sent Christ, has everlasting life, and has passed from death to life” (Joh. 5:24). These texts clearly express such a faith as I have described. Therefore, the efficiency or operation of faith necessary for the enjoyment of Christ and His fullness, cannot be the procurement of a bare right or title to this enjoyment. Rather, it must be an *entrance* into it, and a *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 we receive Christ by faith; we put Him on; we are rooted and grounded in Him; and we also receive the Spirit, remission of sins, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified (Joh. 1:12; Gal. 3:26, 27; Col. 2:6-7; Gal. 3:14; Acts 26:18). The Scripture illustrates this receiving by the similitude of eating and drinking: “He that believes in Christ, drinks the living water of His Spirit” (Joh. 7:37-39). “Christ is the bread of life; His flesh is food indeed, and His blood is drink indeed.” And the way to eat and drink these, is to believe in Christ. By doing so, we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; and we have everlasting life (Joh. 6:35, 47-48, 54-56). How can it be taught more clearly, that we properly receive Christ Himself into our souls by faith, just 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, any more than eating or drinking procures a mere right or title to our food. Rather, it is an instrument to receive it, like the mouth that eats and drinks the food.

3. Christ, with all His salvation, is freely given by the grace of God to all who 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 Spirit, 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, nor by works performed as a condition to get a right or title to it. Therefore, faith itself must not be considered 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 to *take*, and to *have*. In this sense, we readily acknowledge that faith is a condition, allowing liberty in the terms used where we agree in the meaning. But if you give a peppercorn in order 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 — indeed, it is sufficient to make it your *duty* — to receive Christ and His salvation as yours. And because we receive Christ by faith as a free gift, we may therefore account faith to be the instrument, and as it were, the hand by which we receive Him.

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

5. True saving faith, as I have described it, 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 produce a holy practice by union and fellowship

with Him. God has fitted natural instruments for their office, such as the hands, feet, etc., so that we may know by their nature and natural manner of operation, what use they were designed for.

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

1. The grace of faith is as well-fitted for the soul to receive Christ and union with Him, as any instrument of the body is fit to receive and close with the things it needs. By the very act of hearty trusting or believing in Christ for salvation and happiness, the soul casts and puts away from itself, everything that keeps it at a distance from Christ — such as all confidence in our strength, endeavors, works, privileges; or in any worldly pleasures, profits, honors; or in any human helps and succors 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 away 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” (Phi. 3:3, 5-9). The voice of faith is, “Assyria shall not save us. We will not ride on horses, nor will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our gods; for in You the fatherless finds mercy” (Hos. 14:3). “We have no might against this great company” of our spiritual enemies “that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do; but our eyes are on You” (2Chr. 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 in Christ, or in God, is the very manner of our soul’s coming to Christ (Joh. 6:35); “drawing near to the Lord” (Psa. 73:28); “making our refuge in the shadow of His wings” (Psa. 57:1); “staying ourselves and our minds on the Lord” (Isa. 50:10; 26:3); “laying hold on eternal life” (1Tim. 6:12); “lifting up our souls to the Lord” (Psa. 25:1); “committing our way, and casting our burden on the Lord” (Psa. 37:5; 55:22); and our eating and drinking Christ, as already appeared. Let us consider that Christ and His salvation cannot be seen, handled, or attained by any bodily motion; but these 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 activity in receiving this unseen promised salvation, besides believing the Word and trusting in Christ for the benefit promised. If Christ were to be earned by works, or any other kind of conditional faith, faith must still be instrumental to receive Him. Some think of love as fit to be the uniting grace; but I have shown that love for Christ’s salvation is an ingredient to faith. And though love is an appetite to union, we have no other likely way to fill this appetite while we are in this world, besides trusting in Christ for all His benefits, as He is promised in the Gospel.

2. In this saving faith, there is a natural tendency to furnish the soul with a holy frame and nature, and all the endowments necessary to it, out of the fullness of Christ. A hearty affectionate trusting in Christ for all His salvation, as freely promised to us, naturally has enough in it to work in our souls a rational bent and an inclination to, and ability for, the practice of holiness. This is 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); that “we live by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25); that we have forgiveness of sin; that God is our God (Psa. 48:14); that we have in the Lord righteousness and strength, by which we are able to do all things (Isa. 45:24; Phi. 4:13); and that we shall be gloriously happy in the enjoyment of Christ to all eternity (Phi. 3:20-21). When the saints in Scripture speak so highly of such glorious spiritual privileges as I have named here, they acquaint us with the familiar sense and language of their faith, trusting in 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. How can we judge otherwise, than that those who have a hearty love to Christ, and can, on good ground, think and speak such high things concerning themselves, must be heartily disposed and mightily strengthened for the practice of holiness?

3. Because faith has such a natural tendency to dispose and strengthen the soul for the practice of holiness, we have cause to judge that it is a suitable instrument to accomplish every part of that practice in an acceptable manner. Those who with a due affection believe steadfastly in Christ for the free gift of all His salvation, may find by experience that they are carried by that faith, according to the measure of its strength or weakness, to love God heartily, because God has loved them first (1Joh. 4:19); to praise Him; to pray to Him in the name of Christ (Eph. 5:20; Joh. 16:26-27); to be patient with cheerfulness, under all afflictions, giving thanks to the Father who 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 (1Joh. 5:1); to walk as Christ walked (1Joh. 2:6); and to give themselves up to live to Christ in all things, as constrained by His love in dying for them (2Cor. 5:14). We have a cloud of witnesses concerning the excellent works that were produced by faith (Heb. 11). And even if trusting in God were considered a slight and contemptible thing, I know of no work of obedience which it is not able to produce. And note the excellent manner of working by faith. By faith we live and act in all good works, as people in Christ, as raised above ourselves and 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 it is 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 given 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 in Jude 20; and that such a trusting in Christ as I 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 merely accepting any terms of salvation, and consenting to have Christ for our Lord, can do. And faith is more powerful to secure a holy practice than any of those resolutions of obedience, or resignating acts, that some would make the great conditions of our salvation. Indeed, they are 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 tends to licentiousness, don't let true faith be blamed for it. Rather, mark the description I have given of it, that you may not be deceived by a counterfeit faith in its place.

I will add something concerning the efficient cause of this excellent grace, and of our union with Christ by grace, 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" (1Cor. 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 just consider the great effect of faith — that we are raised by it to live above our natural condition by Christ and His Spirit living in us — then we cannot rationally conceive that it would 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, this could not have been done without supplying His own almighty power to quicken those who are dead in sin. How much more is this almighty power needed 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 — by Christ and His Spirit living and acting in us? The

natural man begets 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 begets His offspring new-born according to His image *only by the Spirit* (Joh. 3:5). “As many as received Him, even those who 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” (Joh. 1:12-13). Christ took His own human nature into personal union with Himself in the womb of the virgin Mary, by the Holy Spirit coming upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowing her — the same power by which the world was created (Luk. 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 for good works” (Eph. 2:10); and, “if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2Cor. 5:17).

To accomplish 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 came to us in word only, and not in power and in the Holy Spirit, Paul might labor to plant, and Apollos to water, but it would be without success, because we cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God — indeed, we count them foolishness — until the Spirit of God enables us to discern them (1The. 1:5; 1Cor. 3:6; 2:14). We will never come to Christ by any teaching of man, unless we also hear and learn from the Father, and are drawn to Christ by His Spirit (Joh. 6:44-45). And when saving faith is wrought in us, the same Spirit gives us fast hold of Christ by it. Just as He opens the mouth of faith to receive Christ, so He fills it with Christ. Otherwise, the acting of faith would be like a dream of someone who thinks he eats and drinks; but when he awakes, he finds himself empty. The same Spirit of God gave that faith by which miracles were wrought, and also worked the miracles by it; so too 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 ascribes all to the grace of God. And therefore, God saves us by faith, so 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 do, it would still not follow that he had strength enough to raise himself above his natural state into union with Christ. This is 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 we are first passive, and then active in this great work of mystical union; we are first apprehended by 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 — just 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 on that faith in receiving Him; because by this grace or spirit of faith, the soul is inclined and disposed to an active receiving of Christ. No doubt, Christ is thus united to many infants who have the spirit of faith, and yet cannot act on their faith, because they haven’t come to the use of their understandings. But those of riper years who are joined passively to Christ by the *spirit* of faith, will also join themselves with Him actively by the *act* of faith. But 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.

## DIRECTION V

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

### EXPLICATION

It is evident that all do not have that precious faith by which Christ dwells in our hearts. Indeed, the number of those who have it, is small compared to the whole world that lies in wickedness (1Joh. 5:19-20). And many of those who at length attain to it, 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 did, Luke 1:15, 44), even in them there is a *natural* being by generation, before there can be a *spiritual* being by regeneration (1Cor. 15:46). Thus arises the consideration of two states or conditions of the children of men in matters that pertain to God and godliness, one of which is vastly different from the other. Those who have the happiness of a new birth and creation in Christ by faith, are thereby placed in a very excellent state. It consists in the enjoyment of the righteousness of Christ for their justification, and the Spirit of Christ to live by in holiness here, and in glory forever — as made apparent already. Those who are not in Christ by faith, cannot be in a better state than what they received with their nature from the first Adam, once they've been born and created in him. Nor can it be better than they can attain to by the power of that nature, with any such help as God is pleased to afford. This latter I call a *natural state*, because it consists in those things that we have either received by natural generation, or that we can attain to by natural power through divine assistance. Scripture calls man in this natural state, the *natural man* (1Cor. 2:14). The justified state I call a *new state*, because we enter into it by a new birth in Christ. And I may call it a *spiritual state*, according to the Scripture, because it has received from Christ the quickening Spirit. The natural man and the spiritual man are opposed (1Cor. 2:14-15). Some call both these states *spiritual*, because the everlasting welfare or woe of the soul or spirit of man, is chiefly concerned in them.

It is a common error of those who 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, who 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 for God and godliness; and they endeavored to practice the written law, at least in external performances, while they were enemies to the faith of Christ. 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 (Phi. 3:6).

Some are so near to the kingdom of God, even while they continue in a natural state, that they are convinced of the spirituality of the law — that it binds us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves; and to perform universal obedience to God in all our inward thoughts and affections, as well as all our outward actions; and to do all the duties that we owe our neighbor out of this hearty love (Mar. 12:33-34). And so they struggle and labor with great earnestness to submit 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 of it. And they are so active and intent in their devout practice, that they overwork their natural strength; and their zeal is so fervent, that they are ready even to kill their bodies with fastings and other macerations, so that they may kill their sinful lusts. They are strongly convinced that holiness is absolutely necessary to salvation, and deeply affected with the terrors of damnation. And yet, they were never so enlightened in the mystery of the Gospel, as to know that a new state in Christ is necessary to a new life (Joh. 3:3). Therefore, they labor in vain to reform their natural state, instead of getting above it in Christ. Some of these, when they have misspent many years in striving against the

stream of their lusts, and had no success, at last fall miserably into despairing of ever attaining to holiness. They turn to wallowing in the mire of their lusts, or they are fearfully swallowed up with horror of conscience.

There are several false opinions by which such ignorant zealots encourage themselves in their fruitless endeavors. 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 so will. To this they add that Christ, by the merit of His death, has restored that freedom of will to do good, which was lost by the Fall. It has set nature on its legs again, so that, if they endeavor to do what it lies in them to do, Christ will do the rest, by assisting them with the supplies of His saving grace. So they trust upon the grace of Christ to help them in their own endeavors. 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 nominal Christians, who are unacquainted with the faith that I have described, and yet have attained great excellence in religious words and works.

My work at present is to deliver those ignorant zealots from their fruitless tormenting labors, by bringing them to despair of attaining holiness in a *natural* state, so they may seek it only in a *new* state, by faith in Christ. There they may certainly find it, without such tormenting labor and anxiety of spirit. To this end, I will confirm the truth asserted in the direction, and fortify it against the aforementioned 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, are only to be had in a state of union and fellowship with Christ by faith, and by 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. Then, who doesn't see that attaining true holiness by any of our most vigorous endeavors, is altogether hopeless, so long as we continue in our natural condition? I need add no more, were it not to show more fully what abundance of light the Scripture affords to guide us rightly in this part of our way. Then those who wander out of the way by following a false light of their own, or other corrupted judgements, may find themselves even less excusable.

2. It is evident that we cannot practice true holiness while we continue in a natural state, because we must be "born again of water and of the Spirit, or else we cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Joh. 3:3, 5); and "we are created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before ordained, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). If we could love God and our neighbor as the law requires, without a new birth and creation, we might live without them, for Christ has said, "Do this, and you shall live" (Luk. 10:28). Now, a new birth and creation are more than a mere reforming and repairing of our natural state. If we were put into a certain state and condition by the first birth and creation, then much more so by the second. For the first produces the *substance* of a man as well as a *state*; the second had nothing to produce except 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 a wholly new creature. As it is written, "old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2Cor. 5:17).

3. It is positively asserted by the apostle Paul, that those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8). Many are too remiss and negligent in considering the sense of this Gospel phrase, to be "in the flesh". They understand no more by it than to be sinful, or to be inordinately addicted to pleasing the sensual appetite. They should consider that the Apostle speaks here of "being in the flesh" as the *cause* of sinfulness; just as the next verse speaks of being "in the Spirit" as the *cause* of holiness; and whatever cause it is, it must be distinct from its effect. Sin is a property of the flesh, or something that dwells in the flesh (Rom. 7:18); and therefore it is not the flesh itself.

The flesh is what “lusts against the Spirit” (Gal. 5:17); and therefore it is not merely sinful lusting. The true interpretation is that *flesh* means 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; just 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” (Joh. 3:6). So the apostle, if he is rightly understood, has said enough to make us utterly despair of attaining true holiness while we continue in a natural state.

4. The apostle testifies that “those who have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus, have learned to avoid the former sinful conduct by putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and by putting on the new man, which is created after God, in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:21, 22, 24). Putting off the old man, and putting on the new man, is the same as not being in the flesh but in the Spirit, as 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 shows that the “new man” means that excellent state where Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11). Therefore, the “old man” must mean the natural state of man, in which he is without the saving enjoyment of Christ. It is called “old,” because of the new state to which believers are brought by their regeneration in Christ. This (as well as the former) is a manner of expression peculiar to the Gospel. It is slightly considered by those who think that the apostle’s meaning is only that they should put off sinfulness and put on holiness in their conduct. 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 gotten 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 will 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 will name, that make it 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 property belonging to our natural state is the *guilt of sin* — of Adam’s first sin, 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). Can we imagine, then, that a man would 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 all the more in our sins.

A third property is an *evil inclination*, tending only to sin. It is therefore 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, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). How vain is it, then, to plead that they *can* do good, if they *will*, when their mind and will are themselves enslaved to sin?

A fourth property is *subjection to the power of the devil*, who is the god of this world. He has blinded the minds of all who do not believe (2Cor. 4:4), and will certainly conquer all those 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 endeavors, 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 endeavors, because there is no strength in him to be stirred up (Rom. 5:6). Even if 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. While we continue in our natural state, we have no good ground to trust in Christ to help us to will or to do what is acceptable to Him; nor to imagine that our freedom of will to holiness is restored to us by the merit of His death. For as shown already, Christ aimed at a higher end in His incarnation, death, and resurrection, than to restore 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, so 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, who is the only Savior, did not aim at its recovery. As long as it remains, it is neither holy nor happy, but subject to sin and to all miseries. Even those who are in a new state in Christ, and serve the law of God with their mind, they yet serve the law of sin with their flesh (Rom. 7:25). As far as it remains in them, it lusts against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17); and it remains dead because of sin, even when the Spirit is life to them because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10). It 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 cherubim and a flaming sword to keep man out of Paradise. In this way, He was 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 it is 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 torn off as incurable, so that the garment might be clean (Lev. 13:56). If Christ is not in us, we are reprobates (2Cor. 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 who are in a natural state, from an obligation to holiness of life; nor does it render them excusable for their sins at the tribunal of God’s justice. For “God has made man upright, but they sought many inventions” (Ecc. 7:29). Observe well the words of this text, and you will find that all those who have sought out many inventions rather than upright walking, are comprehended in man who was at first made upright. And “man,” in the text, signifies all mankind. The first Adam was all mankind, just 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. The first willful 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 upon all” (Rom. 5:12). This is because all

mankind was 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. It is "yes 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; 2Cor. 1:20). Those who count their impotency as a sufficient plea to excuse them or others, shows that they were never truly humbled for that great and wilful transgression of all mankind in the loins of Adam. The inability to pay a debt does not excuse a debtor who has lavished away his estate. Nor does drunkenness excuse the mad actions of a drunkard; rather, it aggravates his sin.

And our impotency does not consist in a mere lack of executive power, but in the lack 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 (Joh. 3:20). If men in a natural state had a hearty love and liking for true holiness, and had a desire and made a serious endeavor to practice it out of a hearty love, and yet failed in the attempt, they might plead as 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 as their excuse, because none endeavor to practice true holiness out of hearty love for it, until the good work is begun in their souls. And when God has begun it, He will perfect it (Phi. 1:6). In the meantime, He will accept their ready mind, even though they fall short in performance (2Cor. 8:12). "How abominable and filthy is man, then, who drinks iniquity like water?" (Job. 15:16), who *cannot* practice holiness, because he *will not*? This is their just condemnation: that "they love darkness rather than light" (Joh. 3:19). They deserve to be partakers with the devils in torments, just as they partake with them in evil lusts. And their inability to do good will no more excuse them, than it excuses devils.

8. 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). 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 Spirit which accompanies the preaching of the Gospel. He quickens those who are dead in sin, and creates them anew in Christ, by giving them "repentance unto life" and a lively faith in Christ. The Gospel comes to the elect of God, not only in word, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in such assurance that they receive it "with joy of the Holy Spirit" (1The. 1:5-6). "The Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, who gives life" (2Cor. 3:6-8); it is "mighty through God" (2Cor. 10:4). It doesn't depend at all upon the power of our free will to make it successful for our conversion; but it conveys into the soul that life and power by which we receive and obey it. Christ can make those who are dead in sin to hear His voice and live (Joh. 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*," *arise* (Mar. 5:41); "Lazarus come forth" (Joh. 11:43, 44); and to those who are sick from the palsy, "Arise, take up your bed, and go into your house" (Mat. 9:6).

9. There is no reason that the examples of heathen philosophers, or of any Jews, or Christians by a mere outward profession — who 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. Do we not have cause to judge that the apostle Paul, while he was a zealous Pharisee — and at least a few of the great multitude of the Jews in his time who were zealous for 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, even though in the judgement of others, he was blameless regarding 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 (1Tim. 1:15; Phi. 3:6-8).

And of the great multitude of Jews who followed after the law of righteousness, none ever attained it without seeking it 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 (1Cor. 13:3). Men in a natural state may have strong conviction of the infinite power, wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, of the judgement to come, of the everlasting happiness of the godly, and of the 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 labor with great earnestness to avoid all known sin — to subdue their lusts; to perform universal obedience to God in all known duties; 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 — so that, if possible, they may escape the terrible torments of hell, and procure everlasting happiness by their endeavors. Yet all their love to God is but forced and feigned; they have no hearty liking for God or His service; they consider Him a hard Master, and His commandments grievous; they repine and fret inwardly at the burden of them. And if it were not for their fear of everlasting fire, they would little regard the enjoyment of God in heaven, and be glad if they might have the liberty to enjoy their lust without danger of damnation.

The highest preferment of those who 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, God does not accept their service because their best performances are slavish, without any childlike affections towards God, and no 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, nor for abstaining in the least from the grossest sins. If God were to 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. We would grow past all feeling in wickedness, and be like the cannibals, who are as good by nature as ourselves. But God, who 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 (Psa. 66:3), and do many good things (as to their matter), though they can do nothing in a right and holy manner. He has appointed several means to restrain our corruptions — such as the law, terrors of conscience, terrible judgements and rewards in this life, magistrates, human laws, and laboring for necessities such as food and clothing. And those Gospel means that are effectual for sanctification, also serve for the 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 those of them who are chosen, may be converted in due time; and that those who 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 not worse.



## DIRECTION VI

*Those who endeavor 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 in Him for the same, seek their salvation by the works of the law, and not by faith in Christ as He is revealed in the Gospel; and they shall never be able to perform sincere and true holy obedience by any such endeavors.*

### EXPLICATION

For understanding the terms of this direction, note that I take salvation as comprehending justification, as well as other saving benefits; and I take sincere obedience as comprehending holy resolutions, as well as fulfilling them. Most men who 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 favor 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 who violate several of the great duties owed to God and their neighbor, 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 for God to require us to perform these duties, so that we may avoid His wrath and enjoy His favor. And we cannot find any better way than this to obtain happiness, or to stir ourselves to our duty, without divine revelation. And yet, because our own consciences testify that we often fail in performing those duties, we are inclined by self-love, to persuade ourselves that our sincere endeavors to do the best we can, will be sufficient to procure God’s favor, and His pardon for all our failings.

Thus we see that our persuasion of salvation by the condition of sincere obedience, has its origin from our corrupt natural reason, and it 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” (1Cor. 2:6-7). 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” (1Cor. 2: 9, 14). It is none of “the foolishness of preaching,” by which it pleased God “to save those who believe” (1Cor. 1:21). We have a better way revealed to us in the Gospel, to enjoy the favor of God, and holiness itself, and all salvation, without any procuring condition of works. It is by the free gift of God’s grace, through faith in Christ. And yet it is very difficult to persuade men from the way they are naturally addicted to, which has forestalled and captivated their judgements, and is bred into their bone; and therefore it cannot easily be gotten out of the flesh. Most of those who live under the hearing and profession of the Gospel are not brought to hate sin *as sin*, and to love godliness *for itself* — even 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 themselves up to a hypocritical practice in their old *natural* way, so that they may avoid hell and get heaven by their works. Their own consciences witness that the zeal and love they have for God and godliness — their self-denial, sorrow for sin, and strictness of life — are in a way forced and extorted from them by a slavish fear and mercenary hope. So that, they are afraid that if they trusted in Christ for salvation by free grace without works, the fire of their zeal and devotion would be quickly extinguished; they would grow careless in religion, and let loose the reins to their lusts, and bring certain damnation on themselves. This moves them to listen only to the Boanerges <sup>1</sup> — powerful preachers who preach little or none of the doctrine of free grace, but instead 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.

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<sup>1</sup> That is, “sons of thunder” (Mar 3.17).

It has been further observed that some who 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, of late, greatly prevailed with some learned and zealous men among us. It has caused them to recede from the doctrine of justification by faith without works, which was 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, indeed, destructive to sanctification; and that the practice of sincere obedience cannot be established against Antinomian dotages and prevailing lusts, unless 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 the condition of our salvation. And they have endeavored to newly model the Protestant doctrine, and interpret the Holy Scriptures in a way that is agreeable and subservient to this, their only sure foundation of holiness.

But I hope to show that their imagined sure foundation of holiness was never laid by the holy God. Rather, it is an error in the foundation, pernicious to the true faith, and to holiness of life. I count it an error that is 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 men up to persecute it out of zeal for the law. It has since prevailed to set and maintain Popery, by which the mystery of iniquity works apace 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 works of the law*, and not by faith in Christ, as revealed in the Gospel. Its maintainers would have us believe that it is the only way of the Gospel, so that we may not doubt its power and efficacy for our justification, sanctification, and our whole salvation. Their reasons are these:

- Because the law, as a covenant of works, requires us to do all its commandments perfectly so that we may live; whereas, they plead only for a milder condition of *sincere doing* so that we may live.
- And they don't plead for doing duties, as though obliged to it by the authority of the law given by God to Moses — but only in obedience to the commands of Christ in the Gospel.
- Nor 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 it is all of grace.
- They also acknowledge that their salvation is by faith, because sincere obedience is wrought in them by believing the Gospel; and it is included in the nature of that faith, which is the entire condition of our salvation; some call it the *resignating act of faith*.

All these reasons are but a fallacious mask on a legal way of salvation, to make it look like the pure Gospel, as I will evince by the following particulars.

1. All who 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 mask from the condition of sincere obedience, and to make men abhor it as a damning *legal* doctrine, that deprives its followers of all salvation by Christ. The proof of this is not difficult for persons who warily consider a point of such great moment for their salvation.

The Jews and Judaizing Christians, against whom the apostle chiefly disputed in his whole controversy, did not profess any hope of being justified by perfect obedience, according to the

rigor of the law, but only by that obedience which they considered sincere, and not hypocritical. We have no cause to doubt that the Judaizing Galatians had learned by the Gospel, to distinguish sincere obedience from hypocrisy. The Jewish religion bound all who professed it, to acknowledge themselves to be sinners. This appears by their annual humiliation on the Day of Atonement, and several other rites of the law, and by many clear testimonies in the oracles of God which were committed to them (Psa. 143:2; Prov. 20:9; Ecc. 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 their sincere obedience. For this reason, they might better put it as the condition of the *law*, than we can put it as the condition of the *Gospel* (Psa. 51:6, 10; Deu. 6:5; 30:10). Thus, if the Apostle had disputed against those who held only perfect obedience is the condition of justification, he would have contended with his own shadow. 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.

Nor does the apostle condemn them merely for accounting sincere obedience to the law, as given by Moses, to be the condition of their justification; he more generally condemns them for seeking salvation by their own works. He alleges against them that Abraham, who lived *before* the law of Moses, was not justified by any of his works, even though he performed sincere obedience. And he alleges that David, who did live under the law of Moses, was not justified by his works, even though he performed sincere obedience. He was as much given to obey the law given by Moses, as we are to obey any commands of Christ in the Gospel (Rom. 4:2-6).

Nor does the Apostle 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, even though they thought that obedience to the law was a necessary condition for partaking of it, just as many other Judaizing believers thought. And doubtless they counted themselves obliged to it, not only by the authority of Moses, but of Christ also, whom they owned as their Lord and Savior. We may be sure it was not a damning error to consider that Moses' law was obliging at that time. For many thousands of the Jews who were sound believers, held that the ceremonies of Moses were still 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 in the promise made to Abraham, and on their priesthood and sacrifices, which were types of Christ. The most legal Pharisees would thank God for their works, as proceeding from His grace (Luk. 18:11). And they could acknowledge that their salvation was by faith, just 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, it must be included in the nature of faith, if faith were taken as the *condition* of their whole salvation.

Let those who assert this condition of sincere obedience, learn from this that they are building again that Judaism which the apostle Paul destroyed, and by which the Jews stumbled at Christ (Rom. 9:32), and by which 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 denounced on this very occasion, against any man or angel who preached any other Gospel than what he preached (Gal. 1:8-9).

2. The difference between the law and Gospel does not at all consist in this: that the one requires *perfectly* doing, and the other only *sincere* doing. Rather, it consists in this: that the one requires doing, and 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 *believing*, as the condition required in the Gospel, to *doing*, as required by the law (Gal. 3:12). "The law is not of faith; but the man who does them, shall live by them" (Rom. 10:5). "To him that does not work, but believes on Him who 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 bring ourselves under the terms of the law in this way, and become debtors to fulfil

the whole law in perfection, even 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 who do not despair of procuring their salvation by their own works, and will not receive salvation as a gift freely given to them by the grace of God in Christ. So that, all who seek salvation, right or wrong, knowingly or ignorantly, by any works — whether less or more, invented by their own superstition, or commanded by God in the Old or New Testaments — shall at last stand or fall according to these terms.

3. Sincere obedience cannot be given to all the commands of Christ in the Gospel, unless it is also given 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 gladly be free from the authority of the law of Moses, because it justifies none, but thunders out a curse against all those who seek salvation by its works (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 who were good Christians, considered 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 didn't know of any justification by sincere works, as commanded in the Gospel alone. Yet, if they had erred in anything that was absolutely necessary to salvation, the apostles would not have tolerated their weakness. And whether they would or not, 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 Mosaic authority of the moral law, for establishing it. He did "not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them," in the practice required by them. And He has declared that "Whoever therefore breaks one of these commandments, even the least, and teaches men to do so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever practices and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven" (Mat. 5:17, 19). He commands us to, "do unto men whatever we would have them do unto us, because this is the law and the prophets" (Mat. 7:12). This is sufficient to prove that He would have us consider the law authoritative to oblige us in this matter. He requires His disciples to observe and do whatever the scribes and Pharisees bid them to do, because they sat in Moses' seat (Mat. 23:2-3).

To come to the point in hand, when Christ had occasion to answer the questions of those who were guilty of the same error I am now dealing with, in seeking salvation by their own works, He showed them that they must obey the commands already established by Mosaic authority in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" "Do this and you shall live" (Luk. 10:26, 28). "If you would enter into life, keep the commandments," which are, "You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery," etc. (Mat. 19:17).

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 them to love one another, because "he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8); and to "honor our father and mother, which is the first command with promise" (Eph. 6:2). The apostle John exhorts us to "love one another," not as a new, but an old commandment (2Joh. 1:5). The apostle James exhorts us to "fulfil the royal law, according to the Scriptures. 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'; and to keep all the commandments of the law, one as well as another, because he that said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not kill'" (Jam. 2:8, 10, 11).

Sound Protestants have thought 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, which is justification by their sincere Gospel works. I think the name *Antinomians* arose from this error. The law of Moses had its authority at first from Christ. For Christ was the Lord God of Israel, who ordained the law by angels on mount Sinai in the hand of Moses. He was a mediator for the Israelites, who were then His only church. We

believing Gentiles are now joined with them as fellow members of one and the same body (Eph. 3:6). And though Christ has since abrogated some of the commandments that were then given by Moses — concerning figurative ceremonies, and judicial proceedings — yet He has not annulled the obligatory authority of the moral law. He has left it in full force, to oblige us in moral duties that are still to be practiced — as when some acts of a parliament are repealed, the authority of that 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”<sup>1</sup> written and engraved on stones,” are also done away with by Christ (2Cor. 3:7). But this argues altogether against their conditional covenant. For they are the ministration of death, and are done away with, not as they commanded perfect obedience — for even Christ Himself commands us to be perfect (Mat. 5:48) — but as they were conditions for procuring life and avoiding death, established by a promise of life to the doers of them, 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 if they were the *words* of that covenant (Exo. 34:28). I mean, they do not bind us as *conditions* of that covenant, unless we seek to be justified by works. For the law, as a covenant, still has force enough to curse those who seek salvation by their own works (Gal. 3:10); and if abolished, it is only abolished to those who are in Christ by faith (Gal. 2:16, 20; Acts 3:22-25; 15:10-11). But the Ten Commandments still bind us, because they were given to a people who 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 conduct. The result of it 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, and not as conditions of justification, they cannot be a ministration of death, nor a killing letter to us. Their perfection indeed makes them *harder terms* to procure life by, but a *better rule* to reveal all our imperfections, and 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 who endeavor to procure Christ’s salvation by their sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, act contrary to that way of salvation by Christ, free grace, and faith, revealed in the Gospel, though they own it ever so highly in their profession.

(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 favor — by performing sincere obedience *before* they would come to Christ, the only Physician and Savior. They lay their own obedience lowest in the foundation of their salvation, and then build the enjoyment of Christ on it, the one who should be the *only* foundation. They would sanctify themselves, before they have a sure interest in Christ. And going about establishing their own righteousness, they do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God in Christ (Rom. 10:3-4). Sometimes they call the righteousness of Christ their *legal* righteousness to let an evangelical righteousness of their own works, be the immediate procuring cause of their justification by Christ. Whereas the apostle Paul knew no evangelical righteousness except that of Christ, which he called “the righteousness of faith without the law” (Rom. 3:21-22), and not of the law (Phi. 3:9). Thus they make void Christ’s salvation while they pretend to own it, and Christ profits them nothing. He has become of no effect to them, so long as they would be justified by the law (Gal. 5:2, 4). If we would be saved by Christ, then we must own ourselves as dead, lost sinners, who can have no righteousness for justification except His, and no life or ability to do good, until God brings us into union and fellowship with Him.

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<sup>1</sup> The ministry or “ministration of death,” means that our disobedience to the Law *administers* death.

(2). They also act 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 this sense, we might be saved by grace, but it is by a covenant of works. This is like a servant whose master has given him money to purchase an annuity for him at a low rate; the master professes that he had the annuity given to him freely; and yet he purchased it, and may claim it as a due debt. Rather, we are saved by grace as the immediate and complete cause of our whole salvation — excluding procurement of our salvation on the condition of works, and claiming it as a debt due by any law.

The Scripture teaches us that there is a perfect opposition and utter irreconcilability 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 — even though it is of His own working in us — “lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9). He knows that when He heals men by medicine, or maintains them by the labor of their hands, they are prone to attribute the glory to the means they use, rather than to His sole bounty and goodness.

(3). They also act contrary to the way of salvation by FAITH. For as I showed already, the faith 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 is opposed to the law of faith (Rom. 4:5; 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9). Therefore, we must not consider faith here, 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; nor as the hand by which we work to earn Him as our bread and drink, or 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 proved earlier. 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, except lay hold of Him as a free gift. Thus 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).

5. Christ and His apostles never taught a Gospel that requires such a condition of works for salvation, as they plead. 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 will briefly instance only a few of those texts by which you may have some light to judge the true meaning of the rest. That obedience of faith which is 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 himself explains in Romans 10:16: “They have not all obeyed the Gospel; for Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed our report?’” Faith is to be imputed for righteousness, not because it is a work of righteousness itself, but because we thereby renounce all confidence in any righteous works whatsoever, and trust in Him who justifies the ungodly. This is made clear by that very text which they usually pervert for their purpose: “But to him who does not work, but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5) And they grossly pervert these words of Paul: “Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to those who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:6-7). They would have Paul 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. This appears by the tenor of his subsequent discourse in Romans 3:9-10. They join with the Papists, evidently, against the concurrent judgement of the

best Protestant divines in the interpretation of this text: “You see then, how a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24). They would have James deliver the doctrine of justification in more proper expressions than the apostle Paul, who teaches justification by faith *without works* — even though Paul treats this doctrine as his principal subject, and James only speaks of it occasionally as a motive for the practice of good works. By this we may easily judge which of their expressions are to be taken as the most proper.

Protestants have sufficiently shown that James does not speak 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. This appears by his citing the commandments of the law (Jam. 2:8, 11). Our contrivers of the *new divinity* would have nothing to do with this in their model of the doctrine of justification.

Another text alleged by them is “Blessed are those who 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 here which is translated “right,” is translated *power* or *privilege* in Joh. 1:12. Here it signifies 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 are freely given to us *without* any procuring condition of works. They also think that when the happiness of heaven is called a *reward*, it must imply a procuring condition of works, as in Rev. 22:12 and Mat. 5:12. But though it is called a reward, because it is given after doing good works, and because it recompenses good works better than any wages on earth can recompense the laborer, it is yet a reward of grace, and not of debt (Rom. 4:4); it is not properly *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 who endeavor to perform this *sincere* obedience as a condition to procure a right and title to Christ and His salvation, will never be able to sincerely perform any *true* obedience by all these endeavors. Even if they labor earnestly, and pray fervently, and fast frequently, and oblige themselves to holiness by many vows — and even if they press themselves to practice it by the most forcible *motives*, taken from the infinite power, justice, and knowledge of God, and from 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 will 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 and slavish performances, for which they may be esteemed among men as eminent saints; but they will not be able to mortify one corruption, nor perform one duty in such a holy manner as God approves.

Yet here I censure only an error, and not the life of the persons who maintain it. I have heard that some *preach legally*, and *pray evangelically*. I have no doubt that the frame of their hearts and lives is according to their prayers rather than their sermons. Though Peter complied with Judaism in an outward act of profession, yet he lived 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 this is to those who have attempted to alter Protestant doctrine, and to pervert and confound Law and Gospel, and have bred much contention in the church, so that they might secure the practice of sincere obedience, as against Antinomian errors, by making it the procuring condition of their salvation. After all this ado, the remedy will be found to be as bad as the disease — equally unserviceable and destructive to that great end for which they designed it. And it will be found that it has an Antinomian effect and operation, contrary to the power of godliness!

Much more might be said to confute this novel doctrine. But if this one thing is well proved, it may be sufficient to make the zealous contrivers of it ashamed of their craft, angry with themselves, and sorry that they have taken so many pains, and stretched their wits, to maintain such an unprofitable and unsanctifying opinion. It will be sufficient for the proof of it, to show that the practice of true holiness cannot possibly be attained by seeking to be saved by the works of the law. I already proved that this doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience is according to the terms of the Law, and *not* the Gospel. And in this way, those may also see their error, who 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 will, for their further conviction, sufficiently manifest that it is of no other nature and operation than any other doctrine that is proper to the law, and it 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, it may also be seen as unworthy 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 proven out of the Holy Scriptures. I made it apparent, that a hearty propensity to a holy practice cannot be attained without some good persuasion (1) of our reconciliation with God by justification; (2) of our everlasting happiness; (3) of sufficient strength both to will and to perform our duty; (4) 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 (5) 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 in 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 consist; so that, if we have them, everlasting life has begun in us already. Because they are the necessary means of a holy practice, it follows that the beginning of everlasting life in us must not be placed *after* such a practice, as the fruit and consequence of it; but it must go *before* it, as the cause goes 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 who does these things shall live by them” (Rom. 10:5). By these terms, you are 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 aforementioned 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 the effects and fruits of a holy practice. It would be in vain to ever expect such effects and fruits; for holiness itself, with all its effects, must 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. It frustrates the grace of God, as if Christ died in vain. And it makes Christ to be of no profit and no effect to us, as those who are fallen from grace (Rom. 4:14; Gal. 2:21; 5:2, 4).

If we examine the modern doctrine of salvation by the condition of sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, we will quickly find it to be a chip of the same block as the former *legal* way of salvation; and in the same way, it is destructive to the means of holiness, and to holiness itself. It requires us to perform sincere obedience before we have the means necessary to produce it, by making it antecedent to our justification, our persuasion of eternal happiness, our actual enjoyment of union and fellowship with Christ, and to 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. It knocks our hands away from laying hold of Christ and His salvation, by telling us, as Christ told the legalistic worker after all his labor, that we still lack something (Mar. 10:21); and that it is presumption to take Him as our own, until we perform the condition needed for our right and title to Him. This is another kind of saving faith altogether, called sincere



obedience. By this devised *conditional faith*, Satan keeps many poor souls at bay, by poring over their hearts for many years, to find whether they have performed the condition, and whether they have as yet any right to Christ for their salvation, not daring 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 the payment of a peppercorn for a great estate, it is enough to break the ablest man in the world — because it bars him from laying hold of the only effectual means of holiness, by which that peppercorn may be obtained.

2. Those who seek salvation by the works of the law, act according to their *natural state*. They live and walk according to the flesh, or old man; and not according to the *new state*, i.e., by Christ living in them. I have no doubt that several of those who live under the light of the Gospel, are partakers of a new state in Christ, and they walk holily in it. But the best in this world have flesh as well as spirit in them, and they may act according to either state in some measure. And in this matter, they act according to their carnal or natural state. When the believing Galatians were seduced to a legal way of salvation, the apostle Paul charges them with folly: that having begun in the Spirit, they would now be “made perfect in the flesh” (Gal. 3:3). He compares those who desire to be under the law, to Abraham’s son born of Hagar the bondwoman, to show that they walk as those who “are born after the flesh, and 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 is dead to his fleshly state by the body of Christ, and married to Him who has been 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 already fully proved that it is impossible to be godly while we are in the flesh, or in a natural state; and that, so 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 an opposing 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, accordingly, is that it gets nothing.

Neither do those take a better course, who would bring themselves to holiness by making sincere obedience to Christ’s commands the condition of their salvation. Their way is the same in substance as that of the Galatians mentioned before. They would be made perfect in the flesh, not by *perfect* obedience, but by *sincere* obedience; as shown before. Their endeavors to procure an interest in Christ by their sincere obedience testify against them, that they don’t act as people who are in Christ, but rather as people who judge themselves to be without an interest in Christ, and still seeking it. Sincere obedience is as impossible to attain as perfect obedience, if we act according to our dead natural state.

3. The law deprives us of all strengthening means that are to be had by faith in Christ, and it finds us without strength in our natural state. So too, of itself, it affords us no strength to fulfil its own commands: “If there had been a law given that could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law” (Gal. 3:21). It doesn’t so much as promise life, until we have performed the obedience required by it. “The man who does these things shall live by them” (Rom. 10:5). It is well-called a “voice of words” (Heb. 12:19), because its lofty and big words are not accompanied by an enlivening power. And the doctrine of life and salvation by *sincere* obedience is no better-natured, nor more bountiful to us. For it exacts from us the performance of the condition, before it allows us any life or salvation by Christ. Can any man rationally expect to have the strength to

obey sincerely, by following a doctrine that doesn't 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 put the laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts (Heb. 8:10), and cause us to "walk in His statutes, that we shall keep His judgements, and do them" (Eze. 36:27). This word of God's grace, that doesn't require holiness of us as a *condition*, but promises it to us as a *free gift*, must be the only doctrine that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among those who are sanctified (Acts 20:32). Seeing that it pleases God to bring us to holiness by believing a doctrine, we may reasonably expect that God will work on us suitably to the nature of the doctrine which we believe — that He will give by a giving doctrine, and exact by an exacting doctrine.

4. The way to procure life and happiness by the condition of perfect or sincere works, is not a rational method for the recovery of fallen man, even though it was good to preserve life before the Fall. For it prescribes the immediate practice of holiness to recover a man who is dead in sin — as if one said say to someone sick of the palsy, "Arise and walk, and then you will 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 said it to someone bound to his bed by a dead palsy, we would be guilty of mocking and of cruelly insulting the afflicted. Those who 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 inquire, "How will 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 that they have no sure ground to trust in God or Christ for any saving grace, according to this doctrine, not before they have performed this condition, or at least have 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 that, "You must love God first, and then, on that condition, He will love you back." Whereas, on the contrary, "We love God, because He first loved us" (1Joh. 4:19). If God suspends His love to us upon any condition, then our love to Him will not be absolute, but will be suspended upon the same condition, and in no way contrary to actually hating Him.

5. The Law is so far from healing our sinful corruption, that it proves rather an occasion for sinful motions and actions in those who seek salvation by the works of the Law. This comes to pass because of the power of our natural corruption, which is stirred up and rages 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 who do not find this by their own experience, should believe the apostle Paul who teaches it plainly, and 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," worked in him all manner of concupiscence, deceived him, slayed him, and became exceedingly sinful. He also affirms that without the law, he was alive, and sin was 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 result. Corrupt nature is contrary to sincere obedience, as well as to perfect obedience; and if we make it the condition of our salvation, then sin will take the same occasion to become exceedingly sinful in its motions and actions. 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, although man is generally addicted to the principle of salvation by works, yet multitudes of men hate all strict preachers and professors of true holiness, because they are a torment to their consciences. They endeavor to shelter themselves in ignorance

of the law, thinking that the less they know, the less they will answer for, and therefore they do not want right things prophesied to them (Isa. 30:10). They have generally prevailed in the world to darken the natural knowledge of moral duties to such a degree, that there is a need to learn them by divine revelation out of the Scriptures. We may find how prone legalistic writers are to corrupt the sense of the law (in that they leave starting-holes for their corruptions) by the corrupt glosses of the scribes and Pharisees, from which Christ vindicated it (Mat. 5). And as far as I have observed, none endeavor to discover the purity and perfection of the law, more than those who 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 mincing the perfection required in the law. And yet, how this doctrine is minced again and again, until it becomes 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 without any further practice of holiness, will pass with many for enough of a sincere obedience, both to enter them into a state of salvation, and to continue them in it. This is little more than ignorant men trust in when they say they hope God will save them because they mean well, even though they live in neglect of all religion. They will never be accounted breakers of the Gospel covenant, while so much can be pretended. The most that is made necessary for salvation, will be only to endeavor to do what we can to obey Christ's commands, even though all that most can do is nothing that is truly good. Those who have a little more zeal for their salvation by works, are prone to spend it in superstitious observances because they better suit their carnal nature than the spiritual commands of God and Christ. I have no doubt that this has been one reason for the prevailing of heathenish, Jewish, and popish superstitions in the world. We find by experience how Popery fell in several nations in recent years, when its great pillar, the doctrine of Justification by Works, was overthrown by the Protestant doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone.

If these legalistic zealots are forced by strong conviction to endeavor to practice spiritual duties in order to quiet their guilty consciences, they may be brought to strive and labor earnestly, and even to macerate their bodies with fasting, in order to kill their lusts. But their lusts are still alive, strong as ever, and they show their enmity against the law of God by inward fretting, repining, and grudging against the law as a grievous taskmaster, even if a slavish fear restrains their gross outward actions. 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 accept it for sincere obedience, then they fall into despairing of their salvation. They see that they have failed in their highest attempts to perform the condition; and they can easily discover that their hearts swell in anger and in manifest hatred against the law — indeed, against God and Christ — for prescribing such hard conditions of salvation, which they *cannot* keep; and yet they 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 doesn't in mercy reveal to them the way of salvation by free grace through faith alone, they will endeavor, if they can, to sear their consciences past any feeling of sin. They will fully 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, to murder themselves, rather than live any longer in the hatred of God, the spirit of blasphemy, and in the continual horror of their conscience.

This is the pestilent effect of legal doctrine upon a carnal heart. It only rouses and terribly enrages the sleeping lion, our sinful corruption, instead of killing it. This is too evident by the sad experience of many who have endeavored with all their might to practice it; and the Scripture shows a sufficient cause why it cannot be otherwise. Therefore, the doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience, which was invented against Antinomianism, may well be ranked among the worst of the Antinomian errors. For my part, I hate it with perfect hatred, and consider it my enemy, as I have indeed 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 destroyed by the curse which denounced the first Adam's sin; so that now it *cannot* work life or holiness in us, 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 to this end, if he had not transgressed in eating the forbidden fruit. But once he had 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 previously wrought continual life, was turned the contrary way by that cursing sentence. It then worked 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 though God had said, "All the light and knowledge that you have, will not be able to continue your life or restore it; but instead, it will 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 — indeed, all such knowledge of God and His attributes that a natural man may attain to — must likewise be accursed to us. And seeing that man did not use his natural knowledge and wisdom rightly, God is resolved to revenge its abuse, by giving us salvation in a way that is contrary to it, and seems foolishness to the natural man. It wholly abolishes the way of living by any of our works, or by any wisdom or knowledge that the natural man can attain to. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Hasn't God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom didn't know God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save those who believe" (1Cor. 1:19-21).

7. 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. It was a covenant of grace, promising all blessings freely through Christ, the Promised Seed, by which alone they would be saved. And the Covenant of the Law was added, that they might see their sinfulness; and their subjection to death and wrath; and the impossibility of attaining to life or holiness by their works; and be forced to trust in the free promise alone 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. The apostle Paul largely shows this in Gal. 3:15-24; Rom. 5:20-21; and Rom. 10:3-4.

None of the Israelites under the Old Testament were ever saved by the Sinai covenant; nor did any of them ever attain to holiness by its terms. Some did indeed perform its commandments 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. It was the same in substance as the new covenant or testament established by the blood of Christ. Had it not been for that better covenant, the Sinai covenant would not have proved to be an occasion of happiness for them, 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 (2Cor. 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 who would lay upon us a more grievous and terrible yoke, by turning our New Covenant into a covenant of sincere works, and leaving us a covenant that is no better than the Israelites had under their yoke, to relieve us in our extremity.

## DIRECTION VII

*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 in Christ for the sure enjoyment of Himself and His salvation.*

### EXPLICATION

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, we still endeavor to at least make them necessary preparatives to fit us for receiving Christ and His salvation by faith. Men are easily persuaded that this is not at all contrary to salvation by free grace, because all that is ascribed to our works in this way, or to good qualifications, is 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 dress ourselves first, 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 of the justice and holiness of God and of Christ — and to be an insufferable affront and indignity offered to the divine Majesty — when anyone dares presume to approach His presence in the nasty pickle of his sins, covered all over with putrefying sores that are not at all closed, bound up, or cleansed. And much more so when they endeavor to receive the Most Holy One into such an abominable stinking kennel as a sinner's heart, before it is at all reformed. The parable concerning the man who was 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 (Mat. 22:11, 13). Many who behold with terror the abominable filth of their own hearts, are kept from coming immediately to Christ by such imaginations, which Satan strongly maintains and increases in them by his suggestions. And so, 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, sometimes as long as they live in this world. They would be as likely to delay their baptism, if they had not been baptized in infancy. Against all such imaginations, I will propose the following considerations.

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

2. Any least change of our hearts and lives from sin to holiness, before receiving Christ and His salvation by faith, is not at all necessary according to the terms of the Gospel; nor is it required in the Word of God. Christ would have the vilest sinners come to Him for salvation *immediately*, without delaying to prepare themselves for Him. When the wicked jailer inquired, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul quickly directed him to believe in Christ, with a promise that in so doing he would be saved. And straightway, he and all his were baptized (Acts 16:30, 33). Paul didn't tell him that he must reform his heart and life first, even though he was in a very nasty pickle at the

time — having but a little earlier fastened Paul and Silas in the stocks, and just attempted a horrid, willful self-murder. Those three thousand Jews who 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 for a considerable time to prepare themselves for receiving Christ as others, because they had only recently polluted themselves with the murder of Christ (Acts 2:23). Christ commands His servants to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and to bring into His feast the poor, and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind (Luk. 14:13); yes, to go out into the highway and compel them to come in (Mat. 22:10), without allowing them to tarry until they had cleansed their sores, and shed their filthy rags, and swarms of lice. Christ would have us believe on Him who 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 doesn't expect them to recover their health, in the least degree, before they come to Him (Mat. 9:12). The vilest sinners are fitly prepared and qualified for this design, which is to show the exceeding riches of grace — pardoning our sins, and saving us freely (Eph. 2:5, 7).

The law of Moses entered for this end: that the offence might abound, so that where sin abounded, grace might abound much more (Rom. 5:20). He loved us in our most loathsome sinful pollution, so as to die for us; and He will love us much more 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, no slighting and contemning of the justice and holiness of God, to come to Christ while we are yet polluted sinners. Rather, it affronts and contemns the saving grace, merit, and fullness of Christ, if we endeavor to make ourselves righteous and holy before we receive Christ Himself, and all righteousness and holiness in Him, by faith. Christ didn't loathe to touch a leper or condescend to wash the feet of His disciples. He didn't expect them to 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 who receive Christ with an unfeigned faith will never lack a wedding garment to adorn them in the sight of God. Faith itself is very precious in the sight of God, and most holy (2Pet. 1:1; Jude 20). God loves faith, because it gives the glory of our salvation only to the free grace of God in Christ (Rom. 4:16), and it renounces all dependence on 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 Savior, 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 to their bountiful God, that is more delightful than this one, 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 they believe that He came from God (Joh. 16:27). Yet we see that the excellence of faith lies in this: that it doesn't account itself, or any work of ours, a sufficient ornament to make us acceptable in the sight of God. It won't be our wedding garment itself, but it buys from 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, 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 it puts on all things that pertain to life and godliness. Thus every true believer is "clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1), even the "Sun of righteousness," the Lord Jesus, who is pleased to be, in Himself, both our wedding garment and feast, and all our spiritual and eternal happiness.

For the fuller satisfaction and consolation of those distressed souls who lie under the terrible apprehensions of their own sinfulness and the wrath of God — those who don't dare venture to trust steadfastly in Christ for their salvation, until they can find in themselves some change from sin to holiness — I will mention several things in particular, that they think to find in themselves. And I will show that if some of them are not partly comprehended in faith itself, they are fruits

and consequences of faith. And therefore, they cannot rationally be expected before we trust in Christ for our salvation.

1. They think it necessary to *repent* before they believe in Christ for their salvation, because repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation: “Unless you repent you shall all likewise perish” (Luk. 13:3). And Christ places the duty of repentance before faith: “Repent, and believe the Gospel” (Mar. 1:15). But we are to know that Christ requires repentance first, as the end to be aimed at; and then faith in the next place, as the only means to attain it. And though the *end* is first in intention, the *means* are first in practice and execution, even though *both* are absolutely necessary to salvation. For what is repentance, if not a hearty turning from sin to God, and to 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? (Joh. 14:6) And what way is there of coming to Christ, if not 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 to effectually perform it. Repentance is indeed a duty which sinners owe naturally to God. But the great question is, “How will 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 in the One who would come after him; that is, in Christ Jesus (Acts 19:4).

2. Regeneration is also necessary to salvation (Joh. 3:3). And therefore, many desire to find it wrought in themselves before they trust in Christ for their salvation. But consider what regeneration is. It is a new begetting or creating of us in Christ (1Cor. 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 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.<sup>1</sup> Those who receive Christ by believing, and only those, are the sons of God, “who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Joh. 1:12-13).

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

Yet we must observe that they are not brought to this holy resignation, nor to any sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, *before* they receive His salvation, but rather *by* receiving it. Men who were never thoroughly sensible of their natural death in sin, easily resolve themselves to 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 — so that they may make their peace with God, and trust securely in Christ for His salvation. But all resolutions of that kind are vain and hypocritical, sooner broken than made. Those who know the plague of their own hearts, find that their mind is enmity to the law of God and Christ, and cannot be subject to it (Rom. 8:7). And so they would sooner remove a mountain, and give themselves to sincere obedience, before they

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<sup>1</sup> “You ARE regenerated” doesn’t mean believing *caused* your regeneration. Rather, you could not believe unless you had first been regenerated. Thus, believing is the evidence or fruit of regeneration. Arminians argue that regeneration follows faith; that’s what Marshall is refuting here. — WHG

would trust in 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 would have been 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, unless He first made us partakers of salvation; and we would never obey Him as a Lawgiver, until we first received Him as a Savior. He is a *saving* Lord. Trust Him first to save you from the guilt and power of sin and from the dominion of Satan, and to give you a new spiritual disposition. Then, and only then, will the love of Christ constrain you to resign yourself heartily to live to Him who died for you (2Cor. 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 bonds” (Psa. 116:16).

4. It seems evident to them that some good works are necessary *before* we can safely trust Christ for the forgiveness of sins — because our Savior teaches us that if we do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses. He directs us to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Mat. 6:12, 15). Restitution was also to be made of things wrongfully gotten 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 making restitution according to our ability (or at least a sincere desire and purpose to do so), are very closely joined with the forgiveness of our sins. And they 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 in faith pray, or partake of the sacraments, without them. Yet, if we strive to do either of these *before* we trust in Christ for our pardon and salvation, we do them slavishly and hypocritically, and not in a holy, acceptable manner. Forgiving others would not be accompanied with any hearty love toward them as to ourselves for the sake of God; and our restitution would be but a forced act — like Pharaoh letting the children of Israel go; or like Judas restoring the thirty pieces of silver, being compelled to do it by terror of spirit. And when the terror that forced us is removed, we would be as ready to recall our forgiveness, and to wrong others again, as Pharaoh was to bring the Israelites back into bondage after he let them go (Exo. 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 you. And then, according to the apostle’s instructions, you will be able to be kind and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God has forgiven you for Christ’s sake (Eph. 4:32). The readiness of Zacchaeus to make restitution, followed his discovery of Christ’s love to him. And his joyful receiving of Christ into his house, was the fruit by which he evidenced the truth of that faith that was already wrought in his heart.

5. I will reckon up together several other qualifications that distressed souls desire to find in themselves, so that they may be duly prepared to trust in Christ for their salvation. And when they have labored anxiously for a long time, and cannot get them, they will at last 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 is reached in any of them. “O you afflicted, who are tossed with tempests and not comforted” (Isa. 54:11), what good qualifications are these that you would have, so 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 first have 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, and holiness, so that I may be able to justify Him, though He damns 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 be cleansed a little. Let me have some holy reverential fear of God, and not just panic and 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 it, 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 want to 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 now.”

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 these things are good, but your desires are not well-timed. It is unreasonable for you to expect these holy qualifications while you are still in your natural state, under the guilt of sin and the apprehension of the wrath of God; and before you have received the atonement and the new spiritual life that is by Christ, through faith in His name. You only exasperate your corruption, and harden your heart, and make your wounds stink more, because of your foolishness. Such good qualifications are included in the nature of *faith*; and for the most part, they follow it. So that, they cannot possibly be obtained before you trust in Christ for your salvation, as I will show concerning them particularly, *in their order*.

A love for the salvation of God, and for the free gift of holiness, is included in the nature of *faith*, so that it cannot be hearty without it. Act faith *first*,<sup>1</sup> 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” (1Joh. 4:19). Before that, we cannot be with God in love. We must perceive His love, to make us love Him. For if we look at Him as a God who is against us, who hates us and will damn us, then 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 that is unfeigned (1Tim. 1:5). And if hatred works in you more than love, how can you expect good thoughts of God, or anything other than blaspheming, or at least murmuring thoughts of Him, in this condition? Ill-will never speaks or thinks well. The first right and holy thoughts you can have of God, are thoughts of His grace and mercy toward your soul in Christ, which are included in the grace of faith. Get these thoughts by first believing in Christ, and they will breed in you love to God, and all good thoughts of Him; and they will free you from blasphemous and murmuring thoughts by degrees, for “love thinks no evil” (1Cor. 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 bear 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, even if you prevail so far as to keep from fulfilling them. Beg for a holy fear of God, with fear of coming short of the promised rest because of unbelief (Heb. 3:19-4:1). Such a fear is an ingredient of faith; it will breed in us a reverential, indeed, a childlike fear of God and His goodness (Heb. 12:28; Hos. 3:5). We must have grace by which to serve God with reverence. It is written in the margin, “We must *have*, or *hold fast* grace.” There is no other way to hold fast grace, except 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. For their own quiet, they will endeavor to slight evils which they have no hope of preventing, according to the proverb, “Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die” (1Cor. 15:32). True humiliation for sin is either a part or a

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<sup>1</sup> This is a wonderful phrase used by Puritans, to *act faith*. We tend to put a preposition between the two, “act on” or “act with.” The Puritans felt it was more direct than that; faith is a God-given ability that itself acts. It doesn’t enhance or qualify some other action. It isn’t a mere belief or trust, inwardly experienced. It is belief *in action*; it acts in order to effectuate something; it operates on the world around us, to visibly and effectively glorify Christ. In Direction XIII, par. 6, Marshall will use “act grace” in the same way; not only God’s enabling, but empowerment. – WHG

fruit of faith. For upon our believing, we will remember our own evil ways and doings that were not good; and we will loathe ourselves in our own sight for all our abominations (Eze. 36:31). We will also then willingly renounce our own righteousness, and “account it but dung, that we may win Christ” by faith (Phi. 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 throw 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, a pardon from a prince will sometimes sooner draw tears from a stubborn malefactor, than the fear of a noose. Thus the sinful woman was brought to wash Christ’s feet with her tears (Luk. 7:37-38). We are not likely to be sorry for grieving God with our sins, while we look at Him as an enemy who will ease Himself well enough of His burden, and rectify Himself upon us, by our everlasting destruction.

Believing 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 by John in the Jordan, “for the remission of sins” (Mar. 1:4-5). The confession of despairers is *forced*, like the extorted confessions and cries 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, first believe that “God is faithful and just to forgive your sins” through Christ (1Joh. 1:9).

And if you would pray to God or praise Him, with lively affections, then you must first believe that God will hear you, and give you what is best for you for Christ’s sake (Joh. 16:23-24). Otherwise your praying will be only from the teeth outward; for how will you call upon Him “in whom you have not believed?” (Rom. 10:14) You must first come 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 these 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?” then 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 Savior’s words: “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent” (Joh. 6:28-29).

## DIRECTION VIII

*Be sure to seek 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 Spirit; and in that order, seek it earnestly by faith as a very necessary part of your salvation.*

### EXPLICATION

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 consist in the grace or act of faith particularly required by the Gospel. Though it is a saving gift of Christ, it is considered here as a means precedent to receiving Christ and all His salvation, rather 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, as if there had never been any Gospel, or any such duty as believing in Christ for salvation.

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

*First*, 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 it is 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 attaining our ends in worldly things. So also in spiritual things, “God has made an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure” (2Sam. 23:5). Its benefits have an orderly dependence upon each other, like links in the same golden chain — though several of them, and a title to them all, are given to us at one and the same time. I think enough has been said already to show in what order God brings us to the practice of the moral law. He first makes us to be in Christ by faith, as branches in the vine, so that we may produce much fruit (Joh. 15:4-5). He first purges our consciences from dead works by justification, so that we may serve the living God (Heb. 9:14). He first makes us live in the Spirit, and then walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). This is the order prescribed in the Gospel, which is “the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The law prescribes a quite contrary method: that we should first perform its commands, so that we may then be justified and live. And in this way, it proves to be a killing letter to us.

Now, mark well the great advantages you have, to attain 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 favor, giving you the spirit of adoption and the hope of His glory freely through Christ. These will persuade and constrain you by sweet allurements, to love God in return, who has so dearly loved you; and to love others for His sake; and to give yourselves to the obedience of all His commands out of a hearty love to Him. You will also enjoy the help of the Spirit of God to powerfully incline you to obedience, and to strengthen you to perform 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.

On the contrary, if you rush upon the immediate performance of the law, without taking Christ’s righteousness and His Spirit on the way to it, you will find both wind and tide are 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 yourselves up 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. After they have spent much labor in vain, God makes a breach on them, even to their everlasting destruction. He did this with Uzza, to his temporal destruction, because he didn’t seek Him in a due order (1Chr. 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 of making good works needless to salvation if we won't acknowledge they are necessary, either as conditions to procure an interest in Christ, or as preparatives to fit us for receiving Him by faith.

And others, when they are taught by the Scriptures that we are saved *by faith, through faith, without works*, begin to disregard all obedience to the law, as not at all necessary to salvation. They consider themselves obliged to it only in point of gratitude. And if it is wholly neglected, they have no doubt that free grace will keep them harmless. Indeed, some are given to such strong Antinomian delusions, that they consider it a part of their liberty from the bondage of the law — purchased by the blood of Christ — to feel no shame for breaking the law in their conduct.

One cause of these errors, which are so contrary to one another, is that many are prone to imagine nothing else to be meant by *salvation*, than 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, then they must also be a precedent means of our whole salvation. And if they are not a necessary means of our whole salvation, then they are not at all necessary to glorification. But even though salvation is often taken in Scripture as eminent for its perfection in the state of heavenly glory, yet according to its full and proper signification, we are to understand it as all that freedom from the evil of our natural corrupt state; and all those holy and happy enjoyments that we receive from Christ our Savior, 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, and the privileges of adoption, are all parts of our salvation which we partake of in this life. Thus too, 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 Spirit,” as well as from hell *hereafter* (Eze. 36:29; Titus 3:5).

Christ was called *Jesus*, that is, a Savior, because He saved His people from their sins (Mat. 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 is a proper part of our salvation by Christ, to be quickened, and 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 and dishonorable slavery to Satan and to our own lusts, and be made the servants of God; and to be honored so highly as to walk by the Spirit, and to produce the fruits of the Spirit? What is all this, if not holiness in heart and life?

We conclude, then, 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 of it, 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. Yet 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 (Jam. 2:8); and that we may serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Gal. 5:13; Rom. 7:6). Indeed, holiness in this life is such a part of our salvation, that it is a necessary means to make us fit “to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in heavenly light” and glory (Col. 1:12). Without holiness we can never see God (Heb. 12:14). We would be as unfit for His 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 (Mat. 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 judges every man according to His work; though some, possibly, may not have so much time to reveal their inward grace in any outward works, like the thief upon the cross (Luk. 23:40, 43).

The *third* and last thing to be noted in this direction, is that holiness of heart and life is to be earnestly *sought by faith*, as a very necessary part of our salvation. Great multitudes of ignorant people who live under the Gospel, harden their hearts in sin. They ruin their souls forever by trusting in Christ for an imaginary salvation that 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 much 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 in Christ for salvation is a saving act of faith; but rather to show that no one does or can trust in Christ for true salvation, unless they also trust in Him for holiness. Neither do they heartily desire true salvation, if they don't 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 doesn't wash you from the filth of your sins, you have no part with Him (Joh. 13:8).

What a strange kind of salvation they desire, who 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, being 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 who seek it, abuse the grace of God in Christ, and turn it into lasciviousness. They would be saved by Christ, and yet be *out of Christ*, in a fleshly state. Whereas, God frees none from condemnation, except those who are *in Christ*, “who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1). Or else they would divide Christ, and take only part of His salvation, and leave out the rest; but Christ is not divided (1Cor. 1:13). They would have their sins forgiven, not that they may walk with God in love in times 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” (Gal. 6:7). They don't understand what true salvation is; nor were they ever thoroughly sensible of their lost estate, and of the great evil of sin. That which they trust in Christ for, is but an imagination of their own brains; and therefore their trusting is gross presumption. True Gospel faith makes us come to Christ with a thirsty appetite, so that we may drink of living water, even of His sanctifying Spirit (Joh. 7:37-38); and so that we may cry out earnestly to save us, not only from hell, but from sin, saying, “Teach me to do Your will; Your Spirit is good” (Psa. 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” (Psa. 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 it by faith in Christ, as a substantial part of that salvation which is freely given to us through Christ.

## DIRECTION IX

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

### EXPLICATION

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 to ever again give man any comforts beforehand, to encourage him to his duty. Thus, the way to holiness being hedged 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. This may be seen in the Mount Sinai promulgation, explicated throughout Leviticus 26. We are, by nature, so strongly addicted to this legal method of salvation, that it is a hard matter to dissuade those who 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 depend on their own works, they will be sure to make all its comforts depend on them. They think it is as unreasonable to expect comfort before duty, as to expect wages before work, or the fruits of the earth before the husbandman's labor (2Tim. 2:6). They think that the only effectual way to secure the obedience we owe to the law of God, is to ground all our comforts on its performance; and that the contrary doctrine strengthens the hands of the wicked, by prophesying peace to them, where there is no peace (Eze. 13:16, 22) — that it opens the floodgates to licentiousness. Therefore, some preachers advise men not to be solicitous and hasty about getting comfort, but instead, to exercise themselves diligently to perform their duty. They tell them that in so doing, their condition will be safe and happy in the end, even if they never enjoy any comfort from their salvation so long as they live in this world.

So that you may rightly understand what I have asserted in the direction against such vulgar errors, take notice that I do not put Gospel comfort before the duties of the law. I acknowledge that God comforts His people on every side (Psa. 71:21), both before and after the performance of their duty; and that the greatest consolations follow after duty. Yet God gives some comforts to His people *beforehand*, as advance money, to furnish them for His service, even though most of the pay comes afterward. Nor do I hereby speak any peace to those who 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 produce *good fruit* (Mat. 7:17). Though comforts are given before the sincere practice of the law, they are not given to us in our corrupt sinful nature, but in and with the new holy nature. This immediately produces a holy practice, though it must necessarily go before, as the cause goes before the effect. And they are no other comforts than those spiritual benefits by which our new state and nature is produced, and of which it is constituted and made up — such as the comforts of redemption, justification, adoption, the gift of the Spirit, and the like. Nor do I intend here any transport or rapture of joy and delight, but only that manner of comfort which rationally strengthens us, in some measure, against the oppression of fear, grief, and despair, which we are liable to, because 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 clearly deducible from those principles of holiness that have already been confirmed. I have shown that we must have a good persuasion (1) of our reconciliation with God; (2) of our happiness in heaven; (3) of our sufficient strength both to will and to do that which is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ — so that we may be rationally inclined and bent to the

practice of holiness; (4) that these endowments must be had by receiving Christ Himself, with His Spirit, and all His fullness, by trusting in Him for all His salvation as He is freely promised to us in the Gospel; and (5) that by His faith we receive Christ, as really as we receive 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 of 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, and despair? Can the salvation of Christ be comfortless, or the bread and water of life be without any sweet relish, to those who feed on Him with hungering and thirsting appetites? God will not give such benefits as these, to those who do not desire and esteem them above the world. And certainly, the very receiving of them will be comfortable <sup>1</sup> to them, unless they receive them blindfolded — which they cannot do, when the very act of 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 spiritually sees and perceives the things that concern his present and future peace, and reaps some encouraging and strengthening comfort thereby to the practice of holiness.

2. Peace, joy, and hope are recommended to us in Scripture, as the spring of other holy duties; fear and oppressing grief are forbidden, as hindrances to true religion: “The peace of God keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phi. 4:7). “Do not be sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). “Every man who has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as He is pure” (1Joh.3:3). “Fear has torment: he who fears is not made perfect in love” (1Joh. 4:18). This is the reason why the apostle doubles the exhortation to rejoice in the Lord always; it is a duty of exceeding weight and necessity (Phi. 4:4). What are such duties, if not comfort itself? And can we think that those duties are necessary to our continuance in a holy practice, yet not necessary at its beginning, where the work is most difficult, and encouragement is most needed? Therefore, we must first make haste to get a comfortable frame of spirit, if we would make haste and not delay in keeping 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 thereby establish us in every good word and work (2The. 2:17). And it appears how clearly this method is employed 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 *then* they exhort them to a holy conversation in response to such privileges. It is not only the method of entire 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. These comfortable benefits must first be believed, and their comfort applied to our own souls, or else they won’t forcibly 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);
- “Sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14);
- 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);
- “Our bodies are the members of Christ” and the “temples of the Holy Spirit” (1Cor. 6:15, 19);
- “God has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2Cor. 5:21);

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<sup>1</sup> For Puritans, “comfortable” doesn’t mean complacent, indolent, or without adversity. It means we’re comforted by the grace of God, as revealed in the Gospel. Grace is *able to comfort* us, unlike the law. – WHG

- He promised that He “will dwell in us, and walk among us,” and “be a Father to us, and we shall be sons and daughters to Him” (2Cor. 6:16, 18);
- “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 “who were sometimes darkness, are now light in the Lord” (Eph. 4:32; 5:1, 2, 8);
- We are “risen with Christ;” and “when Christ, who is our life appears, then we will also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:1, 4);
- God has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5);
- And because of “the many promises made to us” (2Cor. 7:1).

Search the Scriptures, and you may see with delight, that this is the vein that runs through Gospel exhortations. And you may find the same 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 in it. But I may easily reply, “If it is a method needed for grown saints, then much more for beginners, who find the work of obedience most difficult, and have the most need of strong consolation.” And I hope to show how we may be able to lay hold of these consolations by faith, at the very beginning of a holy life. Besides, the Gospel proposes peace and comfort freely to those who 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 a house, they were first to say, “Peace be to this house” (Luk. 10:5). At their very first preaching to sinners, they acquainted them with glad tidings of salvation by Christ, for everyone who would receive it as a free gift by faith (Acts 3:26; 13:26, 32, 38; 16:30-31). They assured them that if they would only trust heartily in Christ for all His salvation, they would have it, even though they were at present the chief of sinners. This was sufficient comfort for all who duly esteemed 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, so that we may know that He gives us *everlasting* consolation and good hope through grace, and not through the procurement of our works (2The. 2:16).

4. The nature of the duties of the law requires a comfortable state of the soul for the performance of them. I sufficiently proved before, that they require a persuasion (1) of our reconciliation with God; (2) of our future happiness, and (3) of strength by which we may be able to walk in holy obedience. Joshua must be strong and very courageous, so that he might “observe to do according to the law that Moses, the servant of the Lord, commanded Him” (Josh. 1:7). I will briefly instance the comforts without which several great duties cannot be sincerely performed. Can we love God, and delight in Him above all, while we look at 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 a doleful melody the heart will make in the duty of praise, if we think that all those perfections for which we praise Him, will aggravate our misery rather than make us happy!

What a heartless work it would be to pray to Him, and offer ourselves up to His service, if we have no comfortable hope that He will accept us! Is it possible for us to free ourselves from troubling cares by casting our care upon the Lord, if we don’t apprehend that He cares for us? Can we, with cheerfulness, be patient in affliction and under persecutions, if we don’t have peace with God, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God? (Rom. 5:1-3; 12:12) What reason can persuade us to submit willingly to the blow of present death, according to our duty, if God is pleased to lay it on us when we have no comforts to relieve us against the horrible fear of intolerable torments in hell forever?

If we were called to suffer martyrdom for the Protestant religion, as our ancestors in this nation have done, we would 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, who by the grace of God, made so many courageous and joyful martyrs.

5. The state of those who are to be brought from sin to godliness, necessarily requires — after they are convinced of the vanity of their former false confidences, and of their deadness in original sin, and subjection to the wrath of God — that they have a supply of new Gospel comforts afforded them, to encourage their fainting souls to holy practices. How little do many physicians of souls consider the condition of their unconverted patients, who are altogether without spiritual life and strength, and are or must be *convinced* of it? Someone who prescribes bodily exercise to a man lying bedridden under a dead palsy, before any effectual means are used to strengthen him, deserves the name of a merciless and insulting tormentor, rather than a wise and tender-hearted physician. How reasonable 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 who see nothing but God's wrath and enmity towards them in their present condition? What is this, if not to require a man to work without strength, promising him that he will have strength when his work is done? For comfort or joy is so called, *because* it strengthens: "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10).

It is true 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 and miserable wretches, in order to receive salvation by Christ — not until 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 (Rom. 8:2). We may require a strong healthy person to work first, and then 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.

6. Both Scripture and experience show that this is the method by which God brings His people from sin to holiness. Some of them are brought under terrors for a while, so that sin may be more embittered, and the salvation of Christ may be rendered more precious and acceptable to them. Yet they are delivered again 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 favor, and the happiness of Paradise, to encourage him to obedience. And when Adam had lost these comforts by the Fall, he was no longer able to obey, until he was restored by new comfort from the Promised Seed. Christ, the second Adam, "set God always before His face." He knew that "because God was at His right hand, He would not be moved. Therefore His heart was glad, and His glory rejoiced" (Psa. 16:8-9). This made Him willing to bear His agony and bloody sweat, and to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phi. 2:8). God drew the Israelites to obedience "with the cords of a man, with the bonds of love, by removing the yoke from their necks and laying food before them" (Hos. 11:4). David tells us, for our instruction, how he was brought to a holy conversation: "Your lovingkindness is before my eyes; and I have walked in Your truth" (Psa. 26:3); "Lord, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments" (Psa. 119:166).

We have several examples in the New Testament of the joy sinners had in first receiving 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 Spirit" (1The. 1:4-6). "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 himself up to live to Christ (2Cor. 5:14-15).

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

7. What a comfortless religion is made by those who would allow people no comfort beforehand, to strengthen them for their holy performances — which are very cross, displeasing, and grievous to their natural inclinations, akin to plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand. But they would have them first do these holy performances with love and delight, under all their present fears, despondencies, and corrupt inclinations, and hope that by doing the work thoroughly and sincerely, they will 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 is suspended on the condition of our good works. That already appeared to be the condition of the law, which works no comfort, but wrath (Rom. 4:14-15). This is what makes the way of godliness so odious to many. They think they will never enjoy a pleasant hour in this world, if they walk in them; and they would rather comfort themselves with sinful pleasure, than to have no comfort at all.

Others labor for a while in such a comfortless religion, with inward fretting and repining at its bondage, until at last they grow weary and throw off all religion, because they know none that is better. Those who bind such heavy burdens on men, grievous to be borne, plead that they aren't to be blamed, because they only preach the Gospel of God and Christ. Whereas, they are indeed preaching 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 (Luk. 2:10). An uncomfortable Gospel cannot proceed from God the Father, who is "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (2Cor. 1:3); nor from Christ, who is "the consolation of Israel" (Luk. 2:25); nor from the Spirit, who is "the Comforter" (Joh. 14:16-17).

God "meets him who 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 the great numbers of musicians in the temple. Christ speaks to us by His Gospel, that His "joy may abide in us, and that our joy may be full" (Joh. 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. Those who are offended at the uncomfortableness of a religious life, never knew the true way of religion. Otherwise they would find that "the ways of wisdom are the ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:17).

## DIRECTION X

*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 endeavor to believe in Christ confidently, persuading and assuring ourselves, in the act of believing, that God freely gives us an interest in Christ and His salvation, according to His gracious promise.*

### EXPLICATION

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 (1) of our reconciliation with God; (2) of our future heavenly happiness; and (3) of strength both to will and to do that which is acceptable to God through Christ, as shown before. Hence it clearly follows that this assurance is very necessary to enable us for the practice of holiness, just as those comforts listed must go before the duties of the law in their order of nature (as cause goes before effect), though not in any distance of time. My present work is to show what this assurance is, that is so necessary to holiness, and which I have here asserted we must act — in that very faith by which we receive Christ Himself into our hearts — in *justifying* or *saving faith*. This doctrine seems strange to many who profess themselves Protestants in recent days. Whereas formerly, it was 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 is 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. This doctrine was one of the great engines by which they prevailed to overthrow the popish superstition, of which doubt about our 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. This innovation has been of longer standing among us than several other parts of our new divinity, and maintained by those who 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 labors they enjoy, and that they can see further than they could — the schoolmen might have thought the same about 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 this present case?

The eyes of men in recent years have been blinded by many false imaginations in this point of assurance. They think, because salvation is not promised to us absolutely, but on condition of believing in Christ for it, we must therefore first believe directly in Christ for our salvation, and after that, we must in our minds reflect 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 certainly that it is true saving faith, *then* — and not before — we may assuredly believe that we in particular will be saved. On this account, they say, our salvation is by a *direct* act of faith, and our assurance is by a *reflex* act of faith; and so, many have true faith, and will be saved, who never had 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 doubts about whether they will be saved, and whether their faith and obedience are sincere; and thus they cannot see assurance in themselves. Therefore, they conclude, assurance must not be counted as absolutely necessary to justifying faith and salvation, lest we make the hearts of doubting saints sad, and drive them to despair. They think that previous Protestants were guilty of a manifest absurdity, in making *assurance* of the nature and definition of *saving faith* — because, they say, all who hear the Gospel are bound to saving faith, and yet not all are bound to believe absolutely that they *themselves* will be saved. For then, many of them would be bound to believe what is not declared

in the Gospel concerning them in particular — indeed, it is a plain lie, because the Gospel shows that many of those who are called are *not* chosen to salvation, but perish forever (Mat. 20:16).

It is no wonder that the appearance of so great an absurdity, moves many to imagine that *saving faith* is trusting or resting in Christ, as the only sufficient means of salvation, *without any assurance*. Or that it is desiring and venturing to trust or rely on Him, in a state of suspense and uncertainty concerning our salvation — having only a probable opinion or a conjectural hope of it at best.

Another objection against this doctrine of assurance, is that it destroys self-examination, brings forth the evil fruits of pride and arrogance (as if believers already knew their place in heaven, before the Day of Judgement); and it causes careless duty, carnal security, and all kinds of licentiousness. This makes them commend doubtfulness about our salvation, as necessary to maintain our humility, religious fears, watchfulness, repeated searching and testing of our spiritual state and ways, diligence in good works, and all devotion.

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

1. Observe diligently, that the assurance referred to, is not a persuasion that we have already received Christ and His salvation; or that we have already been brought into a state of grace; but only that God is pleased to graciously give Christ and His salvation to us, and to bring us to a state of grace, even 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. It only encourages them to come to Christ confidently for a good state. I acknowledge that we may (indeed, many *must*) be taught to doubt whether their present state is good — and that it is humility so to do. And we must discover the certainty and sincerity of our faith and obedience by self-examination, before we can have a well-grounded assurance that we are in a state of grace and salvation already. Such an assurance belongs to what they call the *reflex act* of faith (if any act of faith can be made from it, since it is a spiritual sense or feeling of what is in myself). Assurance is not of the essence of that faith by which we are justified and saved. Many precious saints are without it, and subject to many doubts that are contrary to it. Thus, they may not know at all that it will go well with them at the Day of Judgement. Assurance may sometimes be intermitted after it is gotten, if not entirely lost. And so we should strive to walk holily, so that we may attain to assurance, 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 about assurance, mean only that which is by reflection. I have said enough to briefly show that what I assert is consistent with the doctrine commonly received concerning it; and that it is destructive to none of its good fruits. Therefore, it is not guilty of those evils that some falsely charge it with. This kind of assurance which I speak of, doesn't answer the question: "Am I already in a state of grace and salvation?" There is another great question that the soul must answer, so that it may get into a state of grace: "Is God graciously pleased now to bestow Christ and His salvation upon me, even though until now I have been 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 to graciously 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*, who were not *My people*; and call her *beloved*, who 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 they shall be called the children of the living God" (Rom. 9:25-26).

2. The assurance directed to isn't a persuasion of our salvation, based on whatever we do, or however we live and walk. But it is only in a limited way, through the 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 won't heartily desire or endeavor to assure ourselves of such a salvation as this, if we are not first brought 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 the 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 similar 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, unless anyone considers it pride to rejoice and glory in Christ, when we have no confidence in the flesh (Phi. 3:3). It won't destroy religious fear and breed carnal security; 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 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 continuing in the ark was his only safety from perishing in the flood. How can a persuasion of salvation in a way of holiness, breed slothfulness in duty, carelessness, and licentiousness? Rather, it mightily allures and stirs us up to "always abound in the work of the Lord, for we know that our labor will not be in vain in the Lord" (1Cor. 15:58).

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

3. Beware of thinking so highly of this assurance, as if it were inconsistent with doubt 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 anyone who is troubled with doubts — as they find many to be, whom they cannot accept as true believers and precious saints of God. It is true, indeed, that this assurance must be contrary to doubts in the nature of it. And so, if it is perfect, in the highest degree, it would exclude all doubt from the soul; and it now excludes it in some degree. But isn't there flesh as well as spirit in the best saints on earth? (Gal. 5:17) Isn't there a law in their members warring against the law of their minds? (Rom. 7:23) May not someone who truly believes say, "Lord, help my unbelief"? (Mar. 9:24) Can anyone on earth say they have received any grace in the highest degree, and that they are now wholly free from the contrary corruption? Why then should we think that *assurance* cannot be true, unless it is perfect, and frees the soul from all doubts? The apostle counts it a great blessing to the Thessalonians that they had much assurance — intimating that some true assurance might be had in a lesser degree (1The. 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 doubt, as his fear showed when he saw the wind become boisterous. He had some faith contrary to doubting, even though it was but a little, as Christ's words to him show: "O you of *little faith*, why did you doubt?" (Mat. 14:29-31)

It would be strange if the flesh and the devil never opposed true assurance, and assaulted it with doubts. A believer may sometimes be so overwhelmed with doubts, 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 says he doesn't know any assurance that he has of being there; he needs diligent self-examination to discover it. 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" (Psa. 42:11) — and if he can condemn his doubts as sinful, and say to himself, "This is my infirmity" (Psa. 77:10) — then these doubts are of the flesh, and of the devil. If he still

endeavors to call God *Father*, and complains to Him that he doubts whether He is indeed his Father, and prays that God will give him the assurance of His fatherly love (which he is not sensible of), and dispel those fears and doubts — I say that such a person has some true assurance, though he must strive to grow to a higher degree of it. 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 as sinful; nor could he rationally pray to God as his Father, or pray that God would assure him of that love which he doesn't think is true.

If you grant that it is the nature of saving faith to thus resist and struggle with slavish fears of wrath, and with doubting your own salvation, and you grant, in effect, that there is and *must* be some assurance of our salvation in saving faith, by which it resists doubts — then you are, in effect, of the same judgement as me in this assertion, however strange my expressions may seem to you. If what I have said concerning our imperfection in *assurance*, as well as in other graces, were well considered, this ancient Protestant doctrine would be greatly freed from prejudice, and it would 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 do believe it; and because it will never be true unless we persuade and assure ourselves, in some measure, that it is so. We have no absolute promise or declaration in Scripture, that God certainly will or does give Christ and His salvation to any one of us in particular. Nor do we know it to be true already, by Scripture, sense, or reason, before we assure ourselves of it absolutely. Indeed, we are without Christ's salvation at present, and in a state of sin and misery under the curse and wrath of God. Only, I will prove that we are bound by the command of God to thus assure ourselves; and the Scripture sufficiently warrants to us, that we should not deceive ourselves in believing a lie. But "according to our faith, let it be unto us" (Mat. 9:29). This is a strange kind of assurance, far different from other ordinary kinds. And therefore, it is no wonder if it is found weak and imperfect, and difficult to obtain, and assaulted with many doubts.

We are constrained to believe other things on the clear evidence we have that they are true; and they would remain true whether we believe them or not; 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; rather, we must work it out in ourselves by the assistance of the Spirit of God; and thereby 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 alone "calls those things that are not, as though they were" (Rom. 4:17). He alone can give existence to things that are not yet, and make a thing to be true upon our believing it, that was not true before. He alone can make good that promise, "Whatever things you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them" (Mar. 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 alone, and it greatly redounds to His glory. Men will often require a believing that is similar to this, when someone says, "I will forgive your offence, and be your friend, if I find that you believe it, and you take me for a friend." But their fallible word is not a sufficient ground to make us persuade ourselves absolutely, that we will have their promised favor.

The faith of miracles gives us some light in this matter. Christ assured those on whom they were worked, and who had power given to them to work them, that the miracles would be worked if they believed without doubting (Mar. 11:22-23). There is a reason for this similarity, 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 who come to them, to believe they will obtain what they desire from them, or at least that they are able to fulfil their desires. Hereby the devil, the

master of those wizards, shows himself to be God's ape,<sup>1</sup> and that he would gladly have that honor and glory ascribed to himself, that is due to God alone.

Having thus explained the nature of that assurance which I have directed you to, I will 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 given before of that faith by which we receive Christ and His salvation into our hearts. I described faith as a grace of the Spirit, by which we heartily believe the Gospel, and also believe in Christ as He is revealed and freely promised to us in it, for all His salvation. And I showed in the explanation, that believing in Christ is the same as resting, relying, leaning, or staying ourselves on Christ (or on God through Christ) for our salvation. It may be that some will like the description better, because faith was described there by terms that are ordinarily used, even by those who deny the necessity of assurance. But these ordinary terms sufficiently include assurance in the nature of faith, and cannot stand without it. And this shows that many hold the doctrine of assurance implicitly; they profess it, even if they think the contrary. Believing in Christ for salvation, as freely promised to us, must include a dependence on Christ, with a persuasion that salvation will be freely given because it is freely promised to us. We believe with a divine faith, grounded on the infallible truth of the promise. If this faith did not in some measure *exclude* mere suspense, and a wavering opinion or conjecture about it, then it wouldn't be worthy of being called *faith*. Some may be so absurd as to say that faith is only a belief that we will be saved by Christ, if we perform those conditions which He requires. If so, 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 precluded such an absurdity by showing that this believing in 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 have the same contraries to it, such as staggering (Rom. 4:20); wavering (Heb. 10:23); doubting (Mat. 14:31); and fearing (Mar. 5:36). These contraries clearly illustrate the nature of faith; and they show that believing must have some confidence in it, or else it would have doubting in its very nature. For what man who understands the preciousness of his immortal soul, and his danger of losing it, can ever avoid fear, doubt, and a troubled heart, by any believing which 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 our assurance of salvation, because they signify the same thing as believing in Christ. The soul must have its sufficient support to bear it up against oppressing fears, troubles, cares, and despair, so 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 doubts, that the Lord is our God, and He has become our salvation. "I trusted in You, O Lord: I said You are my God" (Psa. 31:14). "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust" (Psa. 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" (Psa. 42:11). True hope is grounded in God alone, 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 (Isa. 36:6). 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 would rest in the Lord, you must believe that He deals bountifully with you (Psa. 116:7) — or else, for all you know, you may make your bed in hell. And you will show little regard for Christ and your soul,

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<sup>1</sup> Ape: someone who copies the words or behavior of another.

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 and does not appear to be true faith, but is turned into shame. The soul that lives in such wavering and doubt concerning salvation, does not stay itself or rest at all, but is “like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind, and tossed; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (Jam. 1:6, 8).

If you continue in mere suspense and doubt about salvation by Christ, your desire to trust is but a lazy desire, without any fixed resolution, and you dare not yet venture to trust on Him steadfastly. If you call it only your *desire* to trust and rely on Jesus Christ, I may answer that you cannot do this much in a right manner, unless you desire and venture to persuade and assure yourselves of your salvation by Christ, notwithstanding all the causes you have to doubt and fear the contrary. If it is objected that we may trust in Christ alone as a sufficient *means* of salvation, without any assurance of the *effect*, I will acknowledge that the sufficiency of God and Christ is a good ground for us to rest on. But we must understand it to mean not only a sufficiency of power, but also of goodwill and mercy towards us. For without His goodwill towards us, what more do we have than fallen angels, regarding the sufficiency of God and of Christ’s power? If this goodwill is truly believed, it will exclude doubts 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 will produce some instances. We are exhorted to “draw near to God with full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:22). Many apply this text to what they call the *reflex* act of faith, because they imagine that all assurance must be by reflection. But the words of the text clearly teach us to understand it as 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 live, even justifying, saving faith (v. 38).

And this assurance must be full, at least in the true and proper nature of it, in opposition to mere doubt and uncertainty — though we are still to further labor for what 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 live, is a little after, in 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 that are hoped for? This makes them evident to the eyes of our mind, as if they were already present in their substance, though not yet visible to our physical 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 we are, if we hold fast the confidence, and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end” (Heb. 3:6, 14). What is confidence concerning anything, if not 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 are accustomed to say that we are not altogether confident of it. The faith by which we are justified must be in a like measure to the faith by which “Abraham, against hope, believed in hope,” that his seed would certainly be multiplied according to the promise of God (Rom. 4:18). Though, because 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. All appearances were rather to the contrary, as the apostle teaches clearly (Rom. 4:19, 23, 24). As absolute as this promise was thus made to Abraham, it was not to be fulfilled without this assurance of faith. And by a like faith, the free promises of salvation by Christ will be absolutely fulfilled to us.

The apostle James expressly requires that we ask good things of God in faith, doubting nothing; this manifestly includes assurance. And he tells us plainly that without it, a man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord. Therefore, we may firmly conclude that without faith, we will not receive the salvation of Christ (Jam. 1:6-7). And what the apostle James requires us not



to doubt, is obtaining the things we ask for. We may learn this 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" (Mar. 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. Otherwise, we are never likely to enjoy it. It would not be humility, but rather proud disobedience, to live in a state of mere suspense and doubt concerning our salvation. This assurance must be in the *direct* act of faith by which we are justified and saved. As for what is called the *reflex* act of faith, it is a certain truth, and generally owned [by its advocates], that assurance is not absolutely necessary to salvation for anyone; and that it is sinful and pernicious to many, to believe that they have 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 will 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 in Christ shall not be ashamed," without distinguishing 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" (Joh. 3:14-16). His invitation is free to any: "If *any* man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." This drink is promised to everyone who believes (Joh. 7:37, 39). The command of believing is propounded, not only in general, but in particular. And the promise of salvation upon believing is also applied personally, to those who before were in a state of sin and wrath, as with the wicked, persecuting, self-murdering jailer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, and your house" (Acts 16:31). God commanded those who walked altogether in sin before, to call Him their own Father, at their very first returning to Him (Jer. 3:4). God will say, "You are My people; and they will say, You are my God" (Hos. 2:23), confidently averring their personal interest in Him. God has inseparably joined confidence and salvation together: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; and quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15).

What a poor and slender use and improvement many make of these revelations of the rich grace of God towards sinners — those who say that if we see we performed the condition of believing, then we may take Christ confidently as our own! They skip over the first principal use that 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 in Him for our salvation. If an honest rich man said to a poor woman, "I promise to be your husband, if you will have me. Just say the word, and I am yours," — may she not quickly and confidently answer, "You *are* my husband, and I *claim* you for my husband"? Shouldn't she say this, rather than say, "I don't believe what you say"? If an honest man says to me, "Take this gift and it is your own. Just eat and drink, and you are freely welcome," — may not I take the gift, and eat and drink without any further ado, with assurance that it is mine freely? If I do that doubtingly, I disparage the honesty and credit of the donor, as if he were not a man of his word.

In the same way, if we fear being overly confident, lest we believe a lie, we would come to Christ doubtingly, and in suspense as to whether we will be freely entertained — doing so after all God's free invitations and promises — wouldn't we disparage the faithfulness of God? And wouldn't we be guilty of making God out to be a liar? This is what 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" (1Joh. 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 those who believe shall have it, and no one

else. He has absolutely intended to fulfil His word, so that none will find it to be a lie to them. And thus He has inseparably joined believing and salvation together.

On this ground, God may justly cause the promise of this salvation to be published to all. And He may justly require all to believe on Him assuredly for their own salvation, so that it will 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 dishonoring 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 the Israelites in the wilderness, that He would give them the land of Canaan, and would fight for them against their enemies. He required them not to fear or be discouraged, so that the promise might be fulfilled to them. Yet God never absolutely decreed or intended that all those Israelites would enter in, as the event quickly manifested (Deu. 1:20-21, 29-30). And yet, weren't they bound in this case to trust confidently in God, to give them victory over their enemies, and to give them possession of the land? Didn't they have sufficient ground for such a faith? Wasn't it *just* for 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 come short of it, and fall according to the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:1, 11).

4. The professors of true godliness, that we read about through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, commonly professed their assurance and persuasion of their interest in God and His salvation; and they were directed by the Word of God to do so; and true saints still had some true assurance of it. 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 a *direct* act of faith. We may judge the ordinary profession of the frame of spirit that was in saints, by some instances. I will begin with the profession that the church made when it was very corrupt, at its first coming out of Egypt. 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 sang that triumphant song of Moses, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God," etc. (Exo. 15:2). Moses taught them in this song, to assure them of their own personal interest in that salvation; and he guided them to the practice of their duty. They didn't find fault with Moses, as some do with ministers these days, for having them express more confidence in their song, than they can find ground for from their qualifications. But they applied themselves to exercising their faith agreeably to the song. Doubtless this faith was unfeigned in some of them, though feigned in others, for it was testified about them, that when "they believed His words, they sang His praise" (Psa. 106:12).

Several other psalms and songs were, by divine appointment, in common use under the Old Testament. They are as clear an evidence as we can desire of that assurance of faith which was commonly professed, and people were generally bound to, under the Old Testament; such as Psalms 23, 27, 44 and 46. Many other psalms, or expressions in the Psalms, might be alleged for this. The spirits of few, by comparison, could have thoroughly complied with such psalms, even if they were true believers — not if their assurance of the love of God must altogether depend on 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, who worked, suffered, and obtained great things by faith (Heb. 11). Their examples are produced on purpose, so that we can follow them in believing, to the saving of our souls (Heb. 10:39). And if we consider these examples particularly, we will find that many of them evidently guide us to such a saving faith, that it has an assurance of the *effect* contained in the nature of it. I confess, we read several times about the fears and doubts of the saints under the Old Testament; but we also read how their faith opposed such fears and doubts, and how they condemned them as contrary to faith, as in the Psalms (Psa. 42:11, 31:22; 78:7, 10). The most mournful psalm in Scripture, begins

with an expression of some assurance (Psa. 88:1). And we may note that the doubts we meet with from the saints of old, were usually occasioned by an extraordinary affliction, or some heinous transgression; and not by common failings, or the common original depravation of our nature, or the uncertainty of their election. Nor is there any thought that it is somehow humble to doubt, or 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 have 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 was poured forth plentifully, and the church was 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 Latin Vulgate render it, and as the same Greek phrase is rendered in Rom. 9:1) “that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs” (Rom. 8:15-17; Gal. 4:6). 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 time 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 this way of arguing might have driven some to despair, who lacked this witness, seal, and earnest.

Let us inquire 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 what they call the *reflex* act of faith? For we must not think it is done by an enthusiasm,<sup>1</sup> without any ordinary means;<sup>2</sup> nor can we reasonably imagine that no true believers can call God “Father” by the guidance of the Spirit, but only those few who are so sure of their own sincerity that, by reflecting on it, they can ground an act of faith on their own interest in Christ: no, surely. Therefore we may judge instead, that the Spirit works this in us by giving us saving faith itself. By the *direct* act of this faith, all true believers are enabled to trust assuredly in Christ for the enjoyment of (1) their adoption as children; (2) all His salvation, according to the free promise of God; and (3) 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 who receive Him. Those who 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, also commonly teach that you must again test whether the Spirit who thus witnesses, is the Spirit of *truth* or of *delusion*, by searching narrowly whether your inward grace is sincere or counterfeit. Hereby the testimony of the Spirit is rendered so hard to discern, that it is of no use to us; 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 (1Cor. 1:7; 2Tim. 4:8). They loved all the saints for the hope that was laid up for them in heaven (Col. 1:3-5). The Corinthians, who were very carnal, and but babes in Christ, were persuaded that they would judge the world and angels, and that their bodies were members of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 6:2-3, 15, 19). The first coming of the Gospel to the Thessalonians was “in the Holy Spirit,” and “in much assurance,” so that “they received it in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit,” when as yet they had little time to get assurance by reflecting on their good qualifications (1The. 1:5-6). Likewise, the believing Hebrews, when they were illumined at

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<sup>1</sup> At the time, *enthusiasm* meant an unreasoned purely emotional response, or an ecstatic outburst.

<sup>2</sup> “Ordinary means” refers to our natural faculties (mind, will, reason), even though enabled or freed by God.

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*. Therefore, it appears that this confidence necessarily belongs to justifying, saving faith (Heb. 10:34, 35, 38).

Now, let those who 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 Testaments. 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, who have deserted the doctrine of former Protestants in this point, and vented several errors against it, such as those already named. And they would now take advantage to confirm the truth of their doctrine, using those doubts in Christians which are chiefly occasioned by their teachings. However, the nature of saving faith is still the same. I assert that in these days, as well as formerly, saving faith always has in it some assurance of salvation by Christ. This does and will appear at least in resisting and condemning all doubts, and praying against them, and in endeavoring 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 don’t yet know by marks and signs, that they are in a state of grace already. Or it is because they think there is no assurance if there are many doubts; or because their assurance is so weak, and so oppressed with doubting, that it can hardly be discerned — like 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, who are not so, and judging this point by their experiences, which is a common error. The blind charity of some moves them to take all for true believers, who are full of doubts and troubles concerning their salvation. It may be that these doubters are only convinced of sin, and brought to some zeal for God that is not according to the knowledge of the way of salvation by Christ. And so these others think it is their duty to comfort such ignorant persons, by persuading them that their state is good, and their faith is right, even 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 those who are still in ignorance and unbelief. Instead of comforting them, they 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 forever.

5. The chief office of this faith, in its *direct* saving act, is to receive Christ and His salvation actually into our hearts, as proved. This office cannot be rationally performed unless, in some measure, we persuade our hearts and assure ourselves in the enjoyment of Him. Just as the body receives things into itself by the hands and mouth, so the soul receives these things into itself, and lays actual hold on them, by the faculty of the will. It chooses and embraces them in a way of present enjoyment and possession, as it sees and apprehends them by the faculty of the understanding. Thus the soul receives comfort from outward things. In the same way, a righteous person cannot receive inward comfort from outward things — such as from a worldly estate, wife, husband, friends, etc. — unless he *chooses* them as good, and *counts* them to be 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 receiving Him and closing with Him. If we don’t choose Christ as our only salvation and happiness, or if we are altogether in a state of suspense and doubt as to whether God will be pleased to give Christ to us or not, it is evident that our souls are quite loose from Christ, and can have no holdfast or enjoyment of Him. They don’t so much as pretend to any actual receiving, or laying hold of or choosing Him; nor are they fully satisfied that it is lawful for them so to do. Rather, they have yet to seek whether they have any good ground and right to lay hold on Him.

Let any rational man judge whether the soul does or can put forth any sufficient act to receive and enjoy Christ as its Savior, Head, or Husband, while it still doubts whether it is the will of Christ to be joined with the soul 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 don't rightly receive the benefit of remission of sins, for purging our consciences from that guilt that lies upon them, unless we have an assured persuasion of God's forgiving them. We don't actually receive into our hearts our reconciliation with God, and adoption as 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 to take us to be His children and heirs. We don't 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.

Hence, then, we may firmly conclude that whoever seeks to be saved by faith, and doesn't seek to have assurance or confidence of his own salvation, only deceives himself and deludes his soul with a mere fancy instead of saving faith. In effect, he seeks to be saved in his corrupt natural state, without receiving and laying actual hold of the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation.

6. 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 shown before. Faith is not able to perform this office unless some assurance of our own interest in Christ and His salvation is comprehended in the nature of it. If we would live to God, and not ourselves, only by Christ living in us — then 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 endeavored to walk above our natural strength and power *by the Spirit*, before we've made sure of our *living by the Spirit*. I 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, unless we have some confidence of our own interest in those saving benefits. If we don't assuredly believe that we are dead to sin, and alive to God through Christ, and risen with Christ — and that we are not under the law but under grace, members of Christ's body, the temple of His Spirit, the dear children of God — it would be hypocrisy to serve God on account of such privileges, as if we *did* reckon ourselves to be partakers of them.

Someone who thinks he should doubt 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 don't have faith enough to believe I have any interest in them. Some arguments taken from the justice and wrath of God against sinners, and His mercy towards those who perform the condition of sincere obedience, would work more powerfully on me." O what a miserable, worthless kind of saving faith this is, that cannot fit a believer to practise in a Gospel manner, upon the most pure and powerful principles of *grace*, but rather leaves him to work upon *legal* principles, which can never bring him to serve God acceptably out of love! And just as such a faith wholly fails in the right manner of obeying on Gospel principles, so it also fails in the very matter of some of the great duties. These are of such a nature, that they include assurance of God's love in rightly performing them. Such are those great duties of peace with God; rejoicing in the Lord always; hope that doesn't make one ashamed; owning the Lord as our God and our Savior; 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 is pleased to call for us; loving Christ's second appearing, and looking for it as that blessed hope.

When we fall into any sudden doubt as to whether we are in a state of grace already, when we are called to any present undertaking such as partaking of the Lord's Supper, or any duty that requires assurance as to the right performance of it, we must be relieved by trusting confidently in Christ for the present gift of His salvation. Otherwise, we will 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 don't find that we perform these duties (or at least several of them) sincerely; or if we don't find that we have such a holy faith that it enables or inclines us to perform them? And can we be thus enabled and inclined by any faith that is without some true assurance of our salvation? I therefore 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, on any good ground, assure ourselves that we are already in a state of grace by what we call the *reflex* act.

Give me a saving faith that will produce such fruits as these. No other faith will work by love; and therefore it will not avail to salvation in Christ (Gal. 5:6). The apostle James puts you to showing your faith by your works (Jam. 2:18). And in this trial, this faith of assurance comes off with high praise and honor. When God called His people to work outward miracles by it, all things were possible for them; and it has frequently produced such works of righteousness, that they may be deservedly esteemed great spiritual miracles. From this has proceeded that heroic fortitude of the people of God, by which their absolute obedience to God has shone 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 are ever called to the fiery trial, as Protestants formerly were, we will find that their doctrine of assurance will encourage us in suffering for the sake of Christ.

7. The contrary doctrine, which excludes assurance from the nature of saving faith, produces many evil fruits. It tends to deprive our souls of all assurance of our salvation, and of solid comfort (which is the life of religion) by placing them *after* sincere universal obedience. Whereas, if we don't have these first, we can never attain to this obedience, nor to any assurance that depends on it, as proved. And this, as far as it prevails, makes us subject to continual doubts concerning our salvation, and to tormenting fears of wrath, which casts out true love to God; and it can produce no better than slavish hypocritical service. It is one of the principal pillars by which manifold superstitions in Popery are supported, such as their monkish orders, their satisfactions for sin, works of penance, bodily macerations, whippings, pilgrimages, indulgences, trusting in the merits of saints, etc. Once men have lost the knowledge of the right way to assure themselves of salvation, they will snatch 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 who see themselves void of all holiness, under the wrath and curse of God, dead in sin, and not able to so much as think a good thought. You only increase their terror and anguish if you tell them they must first get faith and obedience, and when they have done that, they may persuade themselves that God will receive them into His grace and favor. Alas! They know they cannot believe or obey unless God assists them with His grace and favor. What if they're at the point of death, 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 speedier way to comfort them, which is by revealing to them the free promises of salvation to the worst of sinners, by faith in Christ; and by exhorting them to confidently apply those promises, and trust in Christ for remission of sins, holiness, and glory — assuring them also that God will help them to believe sincerely in 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 are better than they are, so that they may avoid despair. Others please and content themselves without any assurance of their interest in Christ, because they think it isn't necessary to salvation, and that only a few attain it. In thinking this, they show little love to Christ, or their own souls. Some promote doubts of salvation as signs of

humility, though they will hypocritically complain about them. Many spend their time in poring over their own hearts to find some evidence of their interest in Christ, when they should instead be employed in *receiving* Christ, and walking in Him, by a confident faith.

Some are troubled with doubts about whether they should call God “Father,” and what apprehensions they should have of Him in prayer. They are offended at ministers who, in their public prayers, use any expressions that the people cannot join in — such as when they own God as their God and Father, and Christ as their Savior. And on that same account, they are offended at the public singing of many of David’s psalms; they avoid partaking of the Lord’s Supper because they aren’t satisfied about their interest in Christ.

Though true believers have some assurance of salvation in saving faith itself, yet it is greatly weakened in many by this contrary doctrine; and they are assaulted with many doubts. Then other good qualifications must be made low and weak together with it, and so obscure that it is very hard to discern them. How hard it will be, then, 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 their only assurance of faith! Some prescribe the sort of marks and signs to distinguish sincerity from hypocrisy, that believers cannot sufficiently test themselves by them, unless they have more than ordinary knowledge and experience.

Thus many believers walk heavily in the bitterness of their souls, conflicted with fears and doubts all their days. This is the reason that they have so little courage and fervency of spirit in the ways of God, and that they so mind earthly things, and are so afraid of suffering and death. And if they get some assurance by the *reflex* act of faith, often they soon lose it again by sins and temptations. The way to avoid these evils is to get your assurance, and maintain it, and renew it on all occasions, by the *direct* act of faith — by trusting assuredly on the name of the Lord, staying yourself on your God when you walk in darkness, and seeing no light in any of your own qualifications (Isa. 50:10). I have no doubt that the experience of choice Christians will bear witness to this truth.

## DIRECTION XI

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

### EXPLICATION

Having already revealed 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. 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 was sufficiently proved before, 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 cornerstone 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, so that we may be established in every good word and work.

If we put the question: “What must we do to work the works of God?” Christ resolves it: we are to “believe on Him whom He has sent” (Joh. 6:28-29). He puts us first upon the work of *believing*, which is eminently the work of God, and the work of works, because all other good works proceed from it.

The FIRST thing in this present direction, is to put you upon performing this great work of believing in Christ, and to guide you in it. For you are to distinctly consider four things contained in it.

1. The first is, *you are to make it your diligent endeavor to perform the great work of believing in Christ*. Many are little conscientious about 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. They are sometimes terrified by apprehensions of *other* sins, and examine themselves concerning them; they may write them down to help their memories and devotion. But the great sin of *not believing in Christ* is seldom thought of in their self-examinations, or registered in the large catalogues of their sins. Even those who are convinced that believing in Christ is a duty necessary to salvation, neglect all diligent endeavors to perform it. This is either because they consider it a motion of the heart which may be easily performed at any time, without any labor or diligent endeavors; or on the contrary, they count it as difficult as all the works of the law, and utterly impossible for them to perform by their most diligent endeavors, unless the Spirit of God works it in them by His mighty power. Therefore it is in vain for them to work until they feel this working of the Spirit in their hearts; or they consider it a duty so peculiar to the elect, that it would be presumptuous for them to endeavor to perform it, until they know they are elected to eternal life through Christ.

But I urge you to a diligent performance of this duty, notwithstanding all these impediments, by the following consideration that it is worthy of our best endeavors, as appears by the preciousness, excellence, and necessity of it already revealed.

If the light of nature weren't darkened in the matters of salvation, it would show us that we cannot find the way of salvation ourselves. It would condemn those who despise the 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), so that we may be brought to Christ and all other obedience. Indeed, the great end of all revealed doctrines in the whole Scripture, is to “make us wise unto salvation by faith that is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim. 3:15). The “end of the law given by Moses, was for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4); and Christ was that end for righteousness. The moral law itself was revealed in order to our salvation by believing in Christ; or else the knowledge of it would have availed nothing for fallen man, who was unable to perform it.

Therefore, those who slight the duty of believing, and consider it foolishness, thereby despise and vilify the whole counsel of God revealed in the Scripture. The Law and the Gospel, and Christ Himself, are of no effect to the salvation of such persons (Rom. 4:14). The only fruit that they 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 on the great day (Isa. 64:6). However, many pay no attention to the sin of unbelief in their self-examinations, and don’t write it 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 (indeed, they would not prevail in their *conversation*) if it were not for their unbelief. This one prevailing sin makes it impossible for them to please God in any duty whatsoever (Heb. 11:6). If you will not mind this one main sin now, God will at last remind you of it with a vengeance. For “he who does not believe on the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him” (Joh. 3:36). “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2The. 1:7-8).

2. *Believing in Christ is a work that will require diligent endeavor and labor to perform it.* We must labor “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 those 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 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 that it is easy, pleasant, and delicious in its own nature, because it is a motion of the heart without any cumbersome bodily labor; and it is taking Christ and His salvation as our own, which is very comfortable and delightful. The soul is carried forth in this by love to Christ, and by its own happiness, which is an affection that makes even hard works seem easy and pleasant. And yet it is made difficult to us, because 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. This is especially so, when we have long been accustomed to seek salvation by the procurement of our own works; and to consider the way of salvation by free grace, foolish and pernicious; when our lusts strongly incline us to the things of the flesh and the world; when Satan does his utmost by his own suggestions, 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, and easily performed in its own nature. And yet, many who are convinced of their duty, find it a hard matter to bring their hearts to perform it. It is but a motion of the mind to cast our cares on God for worldly things, and rich men may think they can do it easily; but poor men who have large 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,

was not easily performed — “Fear not; stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show you today” (Exo. 14:13).

The very easiness of some duties makes their performance difficult — just as it was hard to bring Naaman the Syrian to wash and be clean, because he thought it was too slight and easy a remedy for the cure of his leprosy (2Kng 5:12-13). Even so in this case, people are offended at the duty of believing in Christ, as too slight and easy a remedy to cure the leprosy of their soul. They would have some harder thing enjoined of them, to attain so great an end as this everlasting salvation. The performance of all the moral law is not considered work enough for this end (Mat. 19:17, 20). However easy the work of believing may seem to many, common experience has shown that men are more easily brought to the most burdensome, unreasonable, and inhuman observations — as when the Jews and Christian Galatians were more easily brought to take the yoke of Moses’ law upon their necks, 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 (Deu. 12:31). The Papists are more easily brought 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.

Those who slight the work of faith for its easiness, show that they have not yet been made sensible of the innumerable sins, and the terrible curse of the law, and the wrath of God that they lie under — the darkness and vanity of their minds, the corruption and hardness of their hearts, and their bondage under the power of sin and Satan. They haven’t been truly humbled; and without that, 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 alone can make it absolutely easy to us. He can make it easy, or allow it to be difficult, according to whether He is pleased to communicate His grace in varying degrees to our souls.

3. Though we cannot possibly perform this great work in a right manner until the Spirit of God works faith in our hearts by His mighty power, *yet it is necessary that we endeavor to do it*; and that we do it *before* we can find the Spirit of God effectually working faith in us, or giving us strength to believe. We can perform no holy duty acceptably, unless the Spirit of God works it in us; and yet we are not hereby excused from working ourselves. Rather, we are stirred up to greater diligence: “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phi. 2:12-13). The way by which the Spirit works faith in the elect is by stirring them up to endeavor to believe. And this way is 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. Nor can we possibly find that the Spirit of God effectually works faith, or gives strength to believe, until we act it out. For all inward graces, as well as all other inward habits, are discerned by their acts, as seed in the ground is discerned by its springing up. We cannot see any such things as love to God or man in our hearts before we act it out.

Children don’t know their ability to stand on their feet until they have made a trial of it by endeavoring to do so; so we don’t know our spiritual strength until we have learned by experience, from the use and exercise of it. Nor 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 in part having faith itself; and whoever trusts in Christ assuredly for strength to believe by His Spirit, in effect, trusts in Christ for his own salvation. This 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 directly 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, nor 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 something 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 revealed by our actually believing.

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 will find that the Spirit of Christ has strengthened us to believe, even though we don’t know certainly beforehand that He will do it. The Spirit comes indiscernibly upon the elect to work faith within them, like the wind that “blows where it lists, and none knows where it comes from, and where it goes;” we only hear the sound of it, and thereby know it when it is past and gone (Joh. 3:8). We must therefore begin the work *before* we know that the Spirit *does work*, or *will work* in us savingly. And we will be willing to set about the work if we are Christ’s people, for “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power” (Psa. 110:3). It is enough that God reveals to us beforehand in the Gospel, what faith is, and the ground we have to believe in Christ for our own salvation; and that God requires this duty of us, and will help us in performing 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” (1Chr. 22:16). Therefore, whoever receives this Gospel revelation as the Word of God, in hearty love, is taught by the Spirit, and will certainly come to Christ by believing (Joh. 6:45). Everyone who does not receive it, despises God, makes Him out to be a liar, and justly deserves to perish for his unbelief.

4. The Spirit works saving faith only in the elect. Others do not believe because they are not of Christ’s sheep (Joh. 10:26); on that account it is called the faith of God’s elect (Tit. 1:1). Yet, all who hear the Gospel are obliged to the duty of believing, as well as to all the duties of the moral law. And that comes before they know their own particular election, and that they are liable to condemnation for unbelief, as well as for any other sin: “He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God” (Joh. 3:18). The apostle Paul shows that the elect Israelites obtained salvation; and the rest who 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 believe; it is hidden in the unsearchable counsel of God, until it is manifested by our effectual calling and believing in 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 Spirit, and in much assurance;” and that they had “received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Spirit” (1The. 1:4-6). We will see our calling if we find that God has chosen us (1Cor. 1:26-27). Therefore, we must believe in Christ before we know our election, or else we will never know it, and will never believe.

It is not presumption for us to trust confidently in Christ for everlasting life, before we have any good evidence of our election. This is because God, who cannot lie, has made a general promise “that whoever believes on Him, shall not be ashamed,” without making the least distinction among those who 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; therefore, it is a good and sufficient ground for our confidence. It is certain that all whom 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 way cast out any who come to Him, whoever he is (Joh. 6:37). And we need not fear that we will infringe God’s

decree of election by believing in Christ confidently for our salvation, before we know what God has decreed concerning us. For if we believe, we will at last be found among the number of the elect. And if we refuse to believe, we will thereby wilfully place ourselves among the reprobates, “who stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which they also were appointed” (1Pet. 2:8).

I will further add that, even if we have no evidence of our particular election before we believe, we are still to trust in 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 those whom God has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-4). Yet we must necessarily trust in Christ for those saving blessings, or have none at all. We are to pray in faith, doubting nothing, so that God will “remember us with the favor that He bears to His people; ...so that we may see the good of His chosen, and glory with His inheritance” (Psa. 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 bound duty, to apply yourselves to the great work of believing in Christ for salvation, without questioning at all beforehand whether you are elected or not. “Secret things belong to God, but those things that are revealed, belong to us, that we may do them” (Deu. 29:29).

The SECOND thing directed, is that you endeavor for a right manner of performing this duty. This is a point of great concern, because the lack 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 unfeigned faith (1Tim. 1:5). There is a *feigned* faith, that doesn’t really receive Christ into the heart, and will not produce love or any true obedience, such as Simon Magus had (Acts 8:13, 23). Notwithstanding his faith, he was in the “gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” This was what those Jews had, to whom Christ would not commit Himself; they didn’t confess Him lest they be put out of the synagogue (Joh. 2:24; 12:42). Such is what the apostle James speaks of: “What does it profit, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, and has no works? Can that faith save him? The devils also believe and tremble” (Jam. 2:14, 19). Take heed, therefore, lest you deceive your souls with a counterfeit faith, instead of the precious faith found in God’s elect.

The way to distinguish the one from the other is by considering well, the right manner of that believing which is effectual to salvation. Hypocrites may perform the same works for the matter, as true saints. But they are defective in the manner of their performance, in which the excellence of the work chiefly consists. One great reason why “many seek to enter in at the strait gate, and are not able” (Luk. 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 alone is able to guide us effectually in the right way of believing. And we have this great consolation, that when we see our own folly and proneness to mistake our way, and if we heartily desire and endeavor to believe in Christ rightly, we may confidently trust in Christ to guide us. God has promised that the “wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err” in the way of holiness (Isa. 35:8); and He will “teach sinners in the way. He will guide the meek in judgement, and He will teach the meek His way” (Psa. 25:8-9); He commands those who lack wisdom, to ask it of God in faith, doubting nothing (Jam. 1:5-6). We are, however, to know that God guides us only according to the rule of His Word; and we must endeavor to learn from the Word, the right way of believing, or else we are not able to so much as trust God rightly for guidance and direction in this great work.

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

In the **first** place, you are to be highly concerned to endeavor for a right *belief in the truth of the Gospel of Christ*, so that you may be well furnished, disposed, and encouraged to believe in Christ, as revealed and promised in the Gospel. Hereby you are to remove all discomfortable thoughts, and objections from 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 anyone fails in the *second* act of faith, the reason for 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. It must be pulled down before they can receive Christ into their hearts by believing in Him. If they knew the name of Christ, as He is revealed in the Gospel, and they rightly judged the truth and excellence of it, they would not fail to put their trust in Him. We are in great danger of entertaining false imaginations, and thinking that many truths of the Gospel are strange paradoxes — even foolish and pernicious ones — because of our ignorance, self-conceitedness, guilty consciences, corrupt affections, and the manifold errors with which our judgements are prepossessed in matters of salvation; and because Satan labors to beguile us, as he did Eve, “through his subtlety, to corrupt our minds from the simplicity of the Gospel that is in Christ” (2Cor. 11:3). I will therefore give you some particular instructions of the greatest moment, to prevent those defects which 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 — you as well as others — that you are 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 unto all eternity; that you cannot possibly procure your reconciliation with God, or obtain any spiritual life and strength to do any good work, by any endeavoring to get salvation according to the terms of the legal covenant; and that you cannot find any way to escape this sinful and miserable condition by your own reason and understanding, without supernatural revelation; nor can you 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. Nor must we be willing to think we are better than we are; but we must be heartily desirous and glad to know the worst of our own condition. Indeed, when we have discovered the worst that we can about 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 may suffer, rather than follow our own wisdom (Mat. 9:12). It was for lack of this humiliation that the scribes and Pharisees would not enter the kingdom of heaven ahead of publicans and harlots (Mat. 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 in 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, except those who 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, but then to seek holiness by our own endeavors, according to the terms of the law. Whereas, we can never live to God in holiness, unless we are dead to the law, and live only by Christ living in us by faith. That faith which doesn’t receive *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 who believe on Him; that His blood cleanses from all sin (1Joh. 1:7). Though our sins are

ever so great and horrible, and continued in ever so long, yet He is able to deliver us from the body of death, and mortify our corruptions, however strong they may be. We find in Scripture that abominable wicked persons have been saved by Him: idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, covetous, drunkards, extortioners, etc. (1Cor. 6:9-10); those who have sinned against the light of nature, such as the heathens, and the light of Scripture, such as the Jews; those who have denied Christ, such as Peter; and persecuted and blasphemed Him, such as Paul. Many who have fallen into great sins are ruined forever, because they don't think the grace of Christ is 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?" (Eze. 33:10). This despair works secretly in many souls, without such trouble and horror, and makes them careless about their souls and true religion. The devil fills some with horrid, filthy, blasphemous thoughts, with the purpose that they may think their sins are too great to be forgiven. And yet, such thoughts are often the least of the sins of those who are pestered with them; they are the devil's sin rather than theirs, because they are hurried into them sorely against their wills. But if their hearts are somewhat polluted within them, Christ testifies that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven, except the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" (Mat. 12:31). And as for those who are guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the reason why they are never forgiven, is not because of any lack 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 God for mercy through Christ; they 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 who seek Him for mercy, by believing.

There are others who despair of ever getting any victory over their lusts, because they formerly made many vows and resolutions, and used many vigorous endeavors against them in vain. They are to persuade themselves that the grace of Christ is sufficient for them, when all other means have failed — such as the woman who had the issue of blood, and was not bettered at all, but rather grew worse by any remedies that physicians could prescribe. Yet she persuaded herself that if she might but touch the clothes of Christ, she would be whole (Mar. 5:25-28). Those who despair because of the greatness of their guilt and corruption, greatly dishonor and undervalue the grace of God, His infinite mercy, the infinite merits of Christ's blood, and the power of His Spirit; and so they deserve to perish with Cain and Judas. An abundance of people who give themselves up to all licentiousness in this wicked generation, lie under secret despair, which makes them so desperate in their swearing, blaspheming, whoring, drunkenness, and all manner of wickedness. However horrid and heinous our sins and corruptions have been, we should learn to count them but a small matter compared 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 He can create us anew as easily as He created the world by speaking a word.

4. You are to be fully persuaded of the truth of the general free promise, *in your own particular case* — that if you believe in Christ sincerely, *you* will 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 does not exclude you, you must not exclude yourselves. Rather, peremptorily conclude that however vile, wicked, and unworthy you are, if you come, you will 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 the one principally concerned — or else it will do you little good to believe it about others. This is what hinders many broken, wounded spirits from coming to the great Physician: 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 it is in vain for someone like them to trust in Christ for salvation; and that Christ will never save such a person as they are. But why so? They can be but lost creatures at worst;

and Christ came to seek and save those who are lost (Luk. 19:10). If those 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 in Christ.

Some think they are worse than others, and none have such wicked hearts as they do; and though others may be accepted, they will be rejected. But they should know that “Christ came to save the chief of sinners” (1Tim. 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. It is but our ignorance to think we are like nobody else; 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 all have the same corrupt fountain of all abominations in their hearts, though we may have exceeded many others in several actual sins.

Others think they have outstayed their time, and therefore now they would find no place for repentance, even if they sought it carefully with tears (Heb. 12:17). But “Behold, *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation” (2Cor. 6:2), for as long as God calls on you by the Gospel. Although Esau was rejected, who sought the earthly rather than the spiritual blessings of his birthright, those who seek the enjoyment of Christ and His salvation as their only happiness, will not be rejected. If you come into Christ’s vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day, you will have your penny, as well as those who came early in the morning — because the reward is of grace, and not of merit (Mat. 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 who do not work to procure any right or title to Him, nor fitness or worthiness to receive Him, but only “believe on Him who 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 that you*, as well as any other, *should believe in Christ*, and have eternal life by Him; that your believing is a duty that is 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 cheerfully set about the work of believing, as when Jesus commanded the blind man to be called. They said to Him, “Be of good comfort, rise; He calls you” (Mar. 10:49). A command of Christ made Peter walk on the water (Mat. 14:29). And here we are not to meddle with God’s secret of predestination; nor with the purpose of His will in His gracious invitations and commands, by which we are required to believe in 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?” (Eze. 33:11) Christ testifies that He “would often have gathered the children of Jerusalem, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they would not” (Mat. 23:37). And the apostle Paul testifies that “God would have all men to be saved,” etc. (1Tim. 2:4).

You are to reject and abandon all thoughts that are contrary to this persuasion. What if few are saved? Your salvation will not make the number too great; for few will follow you in the duty of believing. What if the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against you in many terrible judgements; and the Word and your own conscience condemn you; and Christ seems to reckon you no better than a dog, as He did the woman of Canaan? (Mat. 15:26) You are to make a good interpretation of all these things, that their end is to drive you to Christ, as this was the end of the curses of the law, and all their terrible dispensations (Rom. 10:4). If a prophet or an angel from heaven were sent by God to declare that the sentence of everlasting damnation is declared against you, it would yet be your duty to believe that God sent him to give you a 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;” and yet He himself taught them, “if they turn from their evil ways, I will relent 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); and 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 yet in this world, must always be understood with a secret reserve of salvation for us, upon our faith and repentance. We are to reckon that the reason why God so terribly denounces His judgements against us by His Word, is that we may escape them by fleeing 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 of the grossest abominations that you were ever guilty of, because they obstruct your believing in 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 the teachings of His Spirit.

And what ground can we have to entertain such unbelieving thoughts? Has God included us in His privy council, that we should be able to know that God has decreed us to damnation, before it is 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 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 — those who counted Christ to be an impostor, and were most rancorous persecutors of Him and His ways (Heb. 6:4-5). Those who have committed that sin, continue implacable, malicious enemies to Christ and His ways to the end, without any repentance. Therefore, if you can only find that you seriously desire to get an interest in Christ, and to be better Christians than you are — if you are troubled and grieved that your hearts and lives are so wicked, and that you lack faith, love, and true obedience — indeed, if your hearts are not maliciously bent to persecute the Gospel, and to prefer atheism, licentiousness, or any false religion above it, then you have no cause to suspect you are guilty of this unpardonable sin.

6. Add to all these a *full persuasion of the incomparable glorious excellence 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 — such a happiness that it has in it, unsearchable riches of glory, and will make our cup run over with exceeding abundance of peace, and joy, and glory, to all eternity. We “must count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord,” etc. (Phi. 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 to never rest satisfied without the enjoyment of Him; and to reject everything that stands in competition with Him, or with the enjoyment of Him. Christ is precious in the esteem of all true believers (1Pet. 2:7). Their high esteem of His incomparable preciousness and excellence induces them to sell all, that they may buy this pearl of great price (Mat. 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” (Joh. 6:33, 34, 68). “Because of the favor of His good ointments, His name is like ointment poured out; therefore the virgins love Him” (Song. 1:3). They are lovesick for Him, because He is, in their eyes, “Chief among ten thousand” (Song. 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 excellence 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 excellence of Christ. And therefore, wherever 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 shine into them” (2Cor. 4:4). One who is convinced of the *truth* of the Gospel, may be averse to embracing it until he also sees 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. This is *believing in 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 assuredly believing those great things of the Gospel by which we are delivered, in “a form of doctrine” (Rom. 6:17). We are to obey it from our hearts, and follow it as our pattern in the manner of our acting faith in Christ for salvation. Therefore, I need only briefly exhort you to act your faith in Christ according to that form and pattern in which you have already been so largely instructed.

You are to believe in Christ alone as 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 whatsoever. We must be like dead people to all other confidences, and count them to be loss for Christ, according to the example of the blessed apostle (Phi. 3:3, 7, 8). We must not be grieved that we have nothing to trust in for our salvation besides Christ — 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 in no other way, whatever becomes of us.

If the cripple doesn’t lay the whole weight of his body on a strong staff, but lays part of it on a rotten one, he is likely to fall. If the swimmer won’t commit his body wholly to the water to bear him up, but catches at weeds, or struggles to feel out the ground, he may sink to the bottom. Christ will be *all* our salvation, or *nothing*. If we seek to be saved in 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 in “Him who justifies the ungodly;” and you will “buy Him without money,” and “without any price” whatsoever (Rom. 4:5; Isa. 55:2). Do not 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” (Psa. 36:7). For if you make your own faith, love, or good qualifications, 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 counting all things dung in comparison to

His excellence — so 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” (Psa. 73:25).

*Lastly*, you must endeavor to draw near with “full assurance of faith” (Heb. 10:22), trusting in Christ confidently for your own particular salvation, on account of that general promise “that whoever believes in Christ shall not be ashamed” (Rom. 9:33). You must check yourselves for all doubts, fears, or staggerings, concerning your own salvation by Christ, saying with the psalmist, “Why are you downcast, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” etc. (Psa. 42:11).

The **third** thing contained in this direction, is to avoid all delay in performing 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, but 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 manslayer 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” (Deu. 19:5-6). We should make haste, and not delay to keep God’s commandments” (Psa. 119:60), and “flee for refuge to the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18). God commands us to thus flee *by faith*, without which it is impossible to please God in other duties (Heb. 11:6). 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” (Psa. 18:44). “As soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children” (Isa.66:8). We have many examples of those who received the Word by faith at the first hearing of it. Three thousand were added to the church on the very same day in which Peter first published the Gospel in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41). So too, 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 Spirit” (1The. 1:5-6). If God opens the hearts of His people to attend diligently, they may be sufficiently instructed in the knowledge of the Gospel by one brief sermon, 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 wholly reject the duty of believing, his next attempt for the ruin of their souls, is to prevail with them to at least delay and put off performing 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 honors of this world, and are summoned to prepare for another world by infirmities, age, or sickness — praying and hoping that they will be granted a long time for repentance 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 honors of the world above God, Christ, and their own souls. Thus they unfit themselves more and more for this great duty, by their customary walking in sin, and by mispending the precious time of their health and strength, which is most fitting for the performance of this great work. They highly provoke God to never give them time or grace to repent hereafter. Others imagine that, after they have heard the Gospel of salvation by Christ, they may lawfully defer believing it until they have sufficiently examined the truth of some other different doctrine; or until God is pleased to afford them some other means to assure them fully of the truth of the Gospel. Thus, those who are called *Seekers* mispend the day of grace, “ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth” (2Tim. 3:7).

But the truth of the Gospel so clearly evidences itself by its own light, that if people don’t 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 engraved upon it. It is a sign that people are proud, when they don’t consent to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the “doctrine which is according to

godliness” (1Tim. 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 not” (Joh. 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 is wrought to confirm the divine authority of the Gospel (Luk. 16:31).

Another sort of people delay the great work of believing, to the ruin of their souls, resting in their attendance to the outward means of grace and salvation, instead of any endeavors to receive Christ by faith, though they are convinced of the truth of the Gospel. They call this *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.<sup>1</sup> But let them know, this is not the right waiting on God that Scripture requires. It is rather disobedience to God, and to the means of His appointment, who requires that we be “doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves” (Jam. 1:22); and that we should come into the spiritual feast (Luk. 14:23), and not just stand at the door, or sit under the droppings of the house of God, lest Christ repute us no better than eavesdroppers. The holy waiting on the Lord that is commended to us in Scripture, is ever accompanied with believing and hoping in the Lord, and it depends on that: “I would have 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” (Psa. 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 in 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 who lay at the pool of Bethesda, waiting for the time when the angel would come down and move the water. Know, then, that if you enter into Christ now by faith, you will find in Him *waters of life*, and the Spirit moving them for the healing and quickening of your soul. God has appointed by His word, that it is your duty to endeavor that the *present* time will be the time of your conversion: “As the Holy Spirit says, Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your heart” (Heb. 3:7-8). And you will 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 inflows of God’s saving love to your soul? Then the way to obtain it is to believe, so that the “God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing” (Rom. 15:13). You have a sufficient manifestation of God’s love to your soul, by the free promises of life and salvation by Christ. Do but “trust in 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 “you will have this from the Lord’s hand: you will lie down in sorrow” (Isa. 50:10-11).

Do you wait for any qualifications to prepare you for the work of believing? If they are good and holy qualifications, you cannot have them *before* faith; rather, they are included in the nature of faith, or they are fruits of it, as was largely proved. If they are bad and sinful, it is strange that anyone 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. They call these *the pangs of the new birth* — though, in their own nature, they are rather the pangs of spiritual death. They produce hatred to God, rather than holiness; and therefore we should strive to prevent them by

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<sup>1</sup> The leftovers, or crumbs that fall from the table for the dogs to eat, Mat 15:27.

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 the good of those who are delivered from them by faith in Christ; they are moved thereby to hate sin, and to prize Christ 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 were mentioned above, of those who received the Word with joy at the first hearing of it. We must not desire or wait for any evil or sin (which these despairing thoughts are), thinking that good may come of it; nor should we expect to be worse before we are better, when we may and should be made better quickly, by believing in Christ.

The **fourth** thing in the direction is that we should continue and increase in the most holy faith. That we may do this, we must not think that once we have attained to the grace of saving faith, and are thereby begotten anew in Christ, with our names up in heaven, we may therefore be careless. But as long as we continue in this life, we must endeavor 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 to the end" (Heb. 3:6, 14); and to "build ourselves up in our most holy faith" (Jude 20), "abounding in this with thanksgiving" (Col. 2:7). Though we receive Christ freely by faith, we are but "babes in Christ" (1Cor. 3:1). And we must not think that we have "already attained, or are already perfect" (Phi. 3:12, 13); but we must strive to be more rooted and built up in Him, until "we come to a perfect man, to the measure of the state of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

If the new nature is really in us by regeneration, it will have an appetite for its own continuance, and increase until it comes to perfection, "as new-born babes" (1Pet. 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;"<sup>1</sup> for we "are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation" (1Pet. 1:5). Just as all our Christian warfare is the good fight of faith (1Tim. 6:12), all spiritual life and holiness continue, grow, or decay in us, according to how our faith continues, grows, or decays in vigor. But when this faith begins to sink by fears and doubts, the man himself begins to sink with it (Mat. 14:29-31). Faith is like the hand of Moses — while it is held up, Israel prevails; and when it is let down, Amalek prevails (Exo. 17:11). This *continuance* and *growth* in faith will require as much labor and industry as at the *beginning*, even 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 as great difficulties in her marching through the wilderness of this world to the heavenly Canaan, as in her first deliverance from Egyptian bondage. Indeed, 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 order it that we should be exercised with the sharpest dispensations of providence, against the fiercest assaults of our own corruptions, and of Satan's temptations, after we have grace given to us to stand in the evil day (Eph. 6:13).

You must therefore endeavor to continue, and to go on in the same right manner as I have taught you to begin this great work of believing in Christ, so that your faith may be of the same nature from beginning to end, even if it increases only by degrees. For our faith is imperfect and joined with much unbelief in this world, and we need to pray still, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" (Mar. 9:24). Therefore, we 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 in the grace and merits of Christ, to trusting in your own works, which would

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<sup>1</sup> Jam. 4:7; Eph 6:16; 2Pet 3:18; 2Cor 7:1.

be according to the popish doctrine that our first justification is by grace and faith alone, but our second justification is only by works.

Beware also of trusting in faith itself, as a work of righteousness, instead of trusting *in Christ*, by faith. If you find that your believing in such a right manner as I have described, doesn't produce those fruits of holiness which you desire, then you shouldn't diminish, but rather *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 has begun in you, as David and Peter did, don't think that you must cast away your confidence and expect nothing but wrath from God and Christ; don't think that you must refuse to be comforted by the grace of Christ, at least for some time — for thus you would be even weaker, and prone to fall into other sins. 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" (1Joh. 2:1-2). And don't let the guilt of sin stay at all upon your conscience, but wash it away with all speed in the fountain of Christ's blood. That fountain is opened for us, so that it may be ready for our use on all such incidental occasions; and so that 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. If Peter's faith had not been upheld by the prayer of Christ, Peter might have been ruined forever by denying Christ, as Judas was ruined by betraying Him (Luk. 22:31-32).

If a cloud is cast over all your qualifications, so that you can see no grace at all in yourselves, yet still trust in Him who justifies the ungodly, and who came to seek and to save those who are lost. If God seems to deal with you as an enemy, bringing upon 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 my own ways before Him" (Job 13:15). Strive to keep and to increase faith *by faith*, that is, by acting faith frequently, by trusting in God to keep and to increase it, by "being confident, that He who has begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi. 1:6).

## DIRECTION XII

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

### EXPLICATION

Here I am guiding you to the *manner* of practice, in which you are to make use of faith, and of all other effectual means of holiness addressed earlier, which faith lays hold of 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 directions are subservient. As for the meaning of it, I have already shown that our old natural state is that which we derived from the first Adam by natural generation; in the Scripture it is called *the old man*; and while we are in it, we are said to be *in the flesh*. 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 in Scripture it is called *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 those which persons do or may attain and make use of *before* they are in Christ by faith. Those which properly belong to the new state, are the manifold holy endowments, privileges, and enjoyments which we partake of in Christ by faith — those which 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 according to the principles and means that belong to either of them — when we are moved and guided by virtue of them, to those actings which are agreeable to them. Thus kings act according to their state, in commanding authoritatively, and in their magnificent bounty; poor men act by way of service and obedience; and children act without discernment (Esther 1:7; Prov. 18:23; 1Cor. 13:11).

So too, the manner of practice directed to here, 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 away with shame and confusion, after they have labored a long time to attain true godliness, with much zeal and industry, is because they were never acquainted with this holy art; and they never endeavored 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* (1Tim. 3:16). This is because the means that are to be made use of in it, are deeply mysterious, as shown; and you are not a skilful artist till you know them, and can reduce them to practice. It is a manner of practice so far above the sphere of natural ability, that it would never have entered into the hearts of the wisest in the world, had it not been revealed to us in the Scriptures. And even when it is most plainly revealed there, it continues to be a dark riddle to those who are not inwardly enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit. It is such that many godly persons guided by the Spirit, in some measure walk in it; yet they but obscurely discern it. They can hardly perceive their own knowledge of it, and can hardly give any account to others of the way in which they walk. The disciples who walked in Christ, knew the way to the Father; and yet they didn't perceive that knowledge in themselves: "Lord, we don't know where You are going; how can we know the way?" (Joh. 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, to better acquaint you with a mystery of so high a concern, I will show, in the first place, that the Holy Scriptures direct you to this manner of practice, as the only effectual way to perform holy duties. And then I will lay before you some necessary instructions, so that you may

understand how to walk rightly in it, and continue and go forward in it, till you are made perfect in Christ.

For the **first** of these, the Holy Scriptures are very abundant and clear in directing us to this manner of practice, and to our continuance and growth in it. Here it is useful for us to observe the great variety of peculiar words and phrases by which the Holy Spirit teaches this mystery, which many who frequently read the Scriptures (indeed, who pretend to be preachers of the Gospel) little understand or regard. This shows that the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them — that they are not yet acquainted with “the form of sound words” (2Tim. 1:13), and are strangers to the very language of the Gospel which they profess, and pretend to teach.

I will therefore present to your view several of these peculiar words and phrases by which 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 will rank those together which agree in sense, so 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” (2Cor. 5:7); “faith working by love” (Gal. 5:6); “overcoming the world by faith” (1Joh. 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 stirring up and encouraging ourselves to our duty, by whatever principles we believe. Thus the Jews might think they lived by faith, because they professed and assented to the doctrine of Moses and the prophets, and were moved by it to a zeal for God, though they didn’t seek righteousness 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 was not of himself, but Christ living in him (Gal. 2:19-20). It is one and the same thing to be justified by faith, and to be justified by believing in Christ (Rom. 5:1; 4:5). And to live, walk, and work by faith, is the same as living, walking, and 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 phrases “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 conduct in Christ” (1Pet. 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” (Zec. 10:12); “going in the strength of the Lord; making mention of His righteousness, even of His alone” (Psa. 71:16). These phrases are frequent, and sufficiently explain one another, and show that we are to practice holiness, not only by virtue of Christ’s authority, but also by His strengthening endowments, which move us and encourage us to it.

3. It is also signified by the phrases “being strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim. 2:1); “conducting ourselves in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God” (2Cor. 1:12); “having or holding fast grace, that we may serve God acceptably” (Heb. 12:28); “laboring abundantly” in such a way that the whole work is not performed by us, but “by the grace of God that is with us” (1Cor. 15:10). By *grace*, therefore, we may well understand the privileges of our new state given to us in Christ, by which 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 man” and “put on the new;” indeed, to continue doing so, even though we have done it in some measure already; and that we avoid our “former sinful conduct” (Eph. 4:21, 22, 24); and to avoid sin, because we have “put off the old man, and put on the new” (Col. 3:9-10). I already showed that this twofold man doesn’t mean merely sin and holiness; but the former means our *natural state* with all its endowments, by

which we are furnished only for the practice of sin; and by the latter, our *new state* in Christ, by which 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,” so that we may be “free from the law of sin,” and “that the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us” (Rom. 8:1-3); and we may “by the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13); and “be led by the Spirit,” because we “live by the Spirit,” and have “crucified the flesh, with its 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 that 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. Thus, the meaning of, “that we may produce fruit unto God,” is that we must endeavor to produce the fruits of holiness — not by virtue of the law, that killing letter,<sup>1</sup> to which the flesh is married, and by which the motions of sin abide 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. 7:4-6); and by virtue of those principles which belong to the new state, as declared in the Gospel, by which the Holy Spirit is ministered to us (Gal. 3:5).

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 to the resurrection of the dead,” and to increase and press forward in this kind of knowledge (Phi. 3:10-12, 14). Certainly, he means such an experiential knowledge of Christ, and of His death and resurrection, that it effectually conforms us to them, in dying to sin and living to God. He would hereby guide us to make use of Christ, and of His death and resurrection, by faith, as the powerful means of all holiness in heart and life; and to increase in this manner of walking, until we attain to perfection in Christ.

The **second** thing proposed, was to lay before you some necessary instructions, so that your steps may be rightly guided to continue and go forward in this way of holiness, until you are made perfect in Christ. Seeing that we are naturally prone to mistake this way, and are utterly unable to discover or discern it by our own reason and understanding, we should 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 by it, and rightly walk in it, according to that gracious promise: “The wayfaring men, though fools, will not err in it” (Isa. 35:8).

1. Let us observe, and consider diligently, in our whole conduct of life, that even though we are partakers of a new holy state by faith in Christ, our natural state remains in some 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 that is contrary to Christ. And this faith is imperfect, so that true believers have cause to pray to God to help their unbelief (Mar. 9:24). Therefore, though we receive a perfect Christ by faith, the measure and degree of enjoying Him is imperfect. And so 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 (2Cor. 13:4); children in comparison to the perfection we expect in another world (1Cor. 13:10-11); and we must *still grow*, till we come to the perfect man (Eph. 4:13). Some are weaker babes than others, and have received Christ in so small a measure, that they may be counted carnal, rather than spiritual (1Cor. 3:1). And because all the blessings and perfections in our new state (such as justification, the gift of the Spirit, and of the

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<sup>1</sup> 2Cor 3:6-8.



holy nature, and our adoption as children) are seated and treasured up in Christ, and inseparably joined with Him, we can receive them no further than we receive Christ Himself by faith; which we can do only in an imperfect measure and degree in this life.

The apostle Paul proposes himself as a pattern for all to imitate, who are perfect in the truth of grace. And yet he professes that he was not yet made so perfect, in the degree and measure of saving endowments, that he did not still “press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;” that he was still laboring 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 experiential “knowledge of Christ, and of the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His resurrection, being conformed to it” (Phi. 3:8-10, 14). Believers are justified already; yet they “wait for the hope of righteousness, by faith” (Gal. 5:5); that is, for the full enjoyment of the righteousness of Christ. They have received but the “first fruits of the Spirit,” and must wait for the 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 the full enjoyment of adoption (Rom. 8:16, 23).

Now, seeing that the degree and measure of our reception and enjoyment of Christ, with all the blessings of our new state in Him, is imperfect in this life, it clearly follows that our contrary natural state, with its properties, still remains in us to some degree, and is not perfectly abolished. So that, all believers in this world partake in some degree, from 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). And yet they are to put off the old man and put on the new man more and more, because the old man still remains in some measure. They are said to be not *in the flesh*, but *in the Spirit*, because being in the Spirit is their best and lasting state; and these designations are usually taken from the better part. Yet the flesh is still in them, and they find work enough to mortify its deeds (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 — in which the one seems to contradict the other; and yet both are true in various respects. Thus holy Paul says truly about himself, “I live, and yet not I” (Gal. 2:20); because he lives 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” (Rom. 7:14); and yet on the contrary, he did not allow sin, but hated it. He shows how both these were true concerning himself, in various 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 who says he has no sin, deceives himself, and is a liar” (1Joh. 1:8); and it is also true that, “Whatever is born of God, does not commit sin; for his seed” — that is, Christ’s, the new spiritual nature — “remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1Joh. 3:9). It is true that we are weak and can do nothing; and yet we are strong and able to do all things (2Cor. 12:10-11; Phi. 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 (Joh. 11:25-26). They are sons who have the inheritance by their birthright; and yet in some respects, they don’t differ at all from servants; and so they may be under the law in a sense, and yet be 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 angry with them, nor rebuke them anymore (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 still need to pray that God would deliver them from their guiltiness, and forgive their debts (Psa. 51:14; Mat. 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 Scripture, 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 to some degree, seeing that all sound Protestants acknowledge this: that the sinful depravation and pollution of our natures, commonly called “original sin” (which is one principal part of this old state) remains in all as long as they live in the world? Now, even though some punishable evils may be said to remain in us, we cannot suppose that this original pollution is continued in us as we are considered *in Christ*; but only as we are considered *in our old state*, derived from the first Adam.

Therefore, the first sin of Adam is imputed in some respect even to those who are justified by faith; and they remain in some measure, as said before, under the punishment and curse that was denounced: “In the day you eat of it, you will surely die” (Gen. 2:17). On this account, the same original guilt and pollution is propagated to the children of believing parents, as well as others, 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 — then why should we not judge that other parts of the same state *likewise* continue in them, such 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? Why shouldn’t we judge that all the miseries of this life, and death itself, are inflicted on 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, greatly derogates 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 rightly understand it. For notwithstanding this twofold state, it still holds true that even while believers are on earth, they 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; believers 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. 2:5-6). And believers, 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 further.

Thus far they are in a new state, free from guilt, pollution, and punishment of sin, and so, from the wrath of God, from all miseries, and from death itself while they are in this world. Indeed, all the guilt, pollution, and punishments of sin, and all evils whatsoever, which they are subject to according to their natural state, do them no harm according to this new state, but work for their good (Rom. 8:28). They are not 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 also holds true that our reception and enjoyment of Christ Himself, and of all His perfections, is but in imperfect measure and degree, until faith is turned into heavenly vision and fruition of Christ. And therefore, our old sinful state, with its evils, is not perfectly abolished during this life. The kingdom of heaven, or the grace of Christ within us, is like leaven in meal, which doesn’t unite itself perfectly to the meal in an instant, but only by degrees, “until the whole is leavened” (Mat. 13:33); or it is “like the morning light that expels darkness, shining more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

This cannot be justly considered any derogation from the merits of Christ’s death, or from the power of His Spirit. For 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 further than we are *in Him* and *enjoy Him* by faith. Nor that we should be made holy or happy according to the flesh, by a reformation of our natural state, as shown. Nor does this diminish the consolation of believers in Christ. For

thereby they may know that they have 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 will 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 rightly frame our souls for 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, in which the Papists and Quakers triumph much. 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, even though we use our best endeavors?

They think that common reason will pass a verdict in their favor against our doctrine — that it discourages all endeavors 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. The Papists think that the concupiscence of the flesh against the spirit is not sin, but rather, it is good matter for the exercise of their virtues, because the most perfect in this life are not without it. Their doctrine also discourages those who labor to get holiness in the right way, by faith in Christ. It makes them think they labor 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 alone it can be found. For who would 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 now quite abolished and out of him, and 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 employed in as long as we live in this world. We must know that our old state, with its evil principles, still continues in some measure, or else we won't 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 for His justice — offering Him the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit, being poor in spirit, and 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. It is because they haven't well considered the twofold state of believers in this life. Unless we know this, and keep it in mind, we will never be fit to continually practice the great duties that tend toward putting off the old man and putting on the new, 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 to perfection, desiring the sincere milk of the Word, and enjoying the other ordinances. Christ has appointed that His church on earth be employed in such works. Perfectionists either do, or would, gladly think these are needless for themselves; and that they no longer need Christ to be their spiritual Physician and Advocate with the Father, and the 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, unless they can make a ladder, and climb up there before their time.

2. You must despair of purging the flesh or natural man of its sinful lusts and inclinations, and of practicing holiness by willing and resolving to do the best you can in *your own power*, and by trusting in the grace of God and Christ to help you in such resolutions and endeavors. Rather, resolve to trust in Christ "to work in you to will and to do by *His own power*, according to His own good pleasure." (Phi. 2:13) Those who are convinced of their own sin and misery, commonly

think *first* to tame the flesh, and to subdue and root out its lusts — to make their *corrupt* nature into a *better* nature, and more 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 they can, they hope that by such a resolution, they will be able to achieve great enterprises in the conquest of their lusts, and performing the most difficult duties. It is the great work of some zealous divines, in their preaching and writings, to stir people up to this resolution, in which they place the most important point on turning from sin to godliness. They think this isn't contrary to the life of faith, because they trust in the grace of God, through Christ, to help them in all such resolutions and endeavors. Thus they endeavor 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 in low carnal things for holiness, and on acts of their own will, on their own purposes, resolutions, and endeavors, instead of Christ. And so, they trust in Christ to help them in this carnal way.

Whereas, true faith would teach them that they are nothing, and that they labor in vain. They may as well wash the Ethiopian white, as to 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; it neither is, nor can be subject to it (Rom. 8:7). Those who would cure it and make it holy by their own resolutions and endeavors, 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). He died that we might live to God — not to ourselves, nor by any natural power of our own resolutions and endeavors, 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, just as we found it, until it is utterly abolished by death. Yet, we must not *allow* its wickedness, but rather groan to be delivered from this body of death, thanking God that there is a deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:24-25).

Our way to mortify sinful affections and lusts must not be by purging them out of the flesh, but by putting off the flesh itself, and getting above *into Christ*, by faith; and by 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 endeavoring 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 are 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 endeavors after holiness, as 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 deny Him, and to do all that he could by his own power for that end — but Christ made him quickly 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 in Christ to help us to act and endeavor only so far as creatures; for so the *worst* of men are helped. He is the JEHOVAH in whom they live, move, and have their being (Acts 17:28). And it is as likely that the Pharisee would trust in God to help him in his duty, as he would thank God for the performance of his duty (Luk. 18:11). And this is all the faith that many make use of for a holy practice.

But we must trust in 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 endeavors 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, just as light is maintained by the presence of the sun, and cannot subsist without it.

3. You must not seek to procure forgiveness of sins, the favor of God, a new holy nature, life, and happiness, by any works of the moral law, nor by any rites and ceremonies whatsoever. But rather, you must work as those who *already have* all these things, according to your new state in Christ; as those who will only receive them more and more by faith, because 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 who are still wholly seeking to procure 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 who are *still in the flesh*, and who would get salvation *in the flesh*, and by our carnal works and observances, instead of *living altogether in Christ by faith*.

This practice is according to the tenor of the covenant of works, as I showed before. And we have no ground to trust in 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 are 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 Mosaic law, the apostle Paul rebukes them for seeking to be made perfect *in the flesh*, directly contrary to their good beginning *in the Spirit*, and for rendering Christ of no effect to them, and for falling from grace (Gal. 3:3; 5:4). When some of the Colossians likewise sought perfection by observing circumcision, holy foods, holy times, and other rudiments of the world, the same apostle blamed them for not holding fast to the head, Jesus Christ, and for not being 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, walk according to their old natural state; and that the true manner of living by faith in Christ, is to walk as those who have all fullness in Christ by faith, and don’t need to seek 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 who are not procuring life by their works, but as those who have already received and derived life from Christ, and act from the power and virtue received from Him. Hereby it appears that the Papists and all others who think to justify, purify, sanctify, and save themselves by any of their own works, rites, or ceremonies whatever, walk in a carnal way, as those who are without any present interest in Christ, and will never attain to holiness or happiness until they learn a better way of religion.

4. Don’t think that you can effectually incline your heart to the immediate practice of holiness by any such practical principles, which only serve to bind, press, and urge you to the performance of holy duties. Rather, let those principles stir you up, to go to Christ first by faith, so that you may be effectually inclined to the immediate practice of holiness in Him by *Gospel principles*, which strengthen and enable you, as well as oblige you, to this practice.

There are some *practical principles* that 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, who by nature are dead in sin, and under the wrath of God, may have any strength and ability to perform them. For instance, the authority of God the Lawgiver, our absolute dependence on Him as our Creator, Preserver, and Governor, in whose hand is our life, breath, and all our happiness here and forever; 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 who obey Him, and to punish transgressors forever — the unspeakable joy of heaven, and the terrible damnation of hell. Such practical principles as these, 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, and 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, however difficult; and that the life of faith consists principally in our living to God in holiness, by a constant belief in and meditation upon them. And they account those things that serve to remind them of such principles, very effectual for holiness — such as looking at the picture of death,<sup>1</sup> or at a death's-head,<sup>2</sup> keeping a coffin nearby ready-made, walking among the graves, etc.

But this is *not* that manner of living to God which the apostle speaks of 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 makes use of *these* obliging principles to stir himself to go to Christ for strength to act holily, then he walks like one who 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, he is left to his own natural strength (or rather weakness), not being assured by any of these principles that God would give him strength to help him in the performance of these duties. And he can do nothing rightly until he gets 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.

There is no question that Paul was very diligent in it while he was a blinded Pharisee. Indeed, heathen philosophers might attain to it in some measure, by the light of common reason. The devils have principles which they assuredly believe, and yet they are never the better for them. It is a part of the natural wisdom by which the world did not know God, nor that “wisdom of God in a mystery,” revealed in the Gospel, which is the only sanctifying wisdom and “power of God unto salvation” (1Cor. 2:7; Rom. 1:16).

What can you produce but corruption, by pressing someone with motives to holiness, who has no soundness in him from the sole of the foot to the head, only wounds and bruises and putrefying sores? Someone who is made truly sensible of his own vileness and deadness by nature, will despair of ever bringing himself to holiness by principles that afford him no life and strength, but only lay an obligation upon him, and urge and press him to his duty. What are mere obligations to someone who is dead in sin? While the soul is without spiritual life, sin is further 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 the right *Gospel* use of them, as the apostle says about the law: that it is good if it is used lawfully (1Tim. 1:8). The humbled sinner knows well his obligations; it is life and strength that he lacks. And he despairs of walking according to such obligations, until he gets this life and strength by faith in Christ. Therefore, these obliging principles move him to go, in the first place, *to Christ*, so that he may be enabled to respond to their end by the strengthening and enlivening principles of God's grace in Christ.

There are some who make use of Gospel principles, only to oblige and urge us to duty, without affording any life and strength for its performance. 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. They don't

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<sup>1</sup> The Grim Reaper.

<sup>2</sup> Skull and cross-bones.

understand and receive the principles of the Gospel rightly, but pervert and abuse them, contrary to their true nature and design. And thereby they render these Gospel principles 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 of all spiritual and everlasting benefits through Him. Don't set yourselves on the performance of the law with any prevailing thoughts or apprehensions that you are still without an interest in Christ, and without the love of God through Him; or that, because of the curse of the law, and the power of sin and Satan, and having no better portion than this present world, you have no better strength than what is in the purposes and resolutions of your own free will. While such thoughts as these prevail and influence your actions, it is evident that you walk according to the principles and practices of your old natural state, and you will be moved by them to yield to the dominion of sin and Satan, and to withdraw yourselves from God and godliness — as Adam was moved by 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 in Christ — persuading yourself 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 will proceed to the performance of the law; and you will be strong against sin and Satan, and be able to do all things through Christ who strengthens you. This confident persuasion is of great necessity to the right framing and disposing of our hearts to walk according to our new state in Christ. The life of faith principally consists in it. And it eminently appears in this: that faith is a hand not only to *receive* Christ, but also to *work* by Him. And it cannot be effectual for our sanctification, unless it contains in it some assurance of our interest in Christ, as shown.

Thus we act as those who 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 Himself for him; and he was enabled by this to live to God in holiness, through Christ living in him by faith. He also teaches us that we must maintain the same 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. 6:10). 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 would not be moved” (Psa. 16:8).

How can it be rationally expected that a man will act according to his new state, without assurance that he is in it? It is a rule of common prudence in worldly callings and conditions, that every man must know and well consider his own state, lest he act proudly above it, or sordidly below it. 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 excellence 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” (Psa. 119:32) If Christians knew their own strength better, they would undertake greater things for the glory of God. But this knowledge is attained with difficulty: it is only by faith and spiritual illumination. The best know it but in part; and this is why the conduct of believers falls so far below their holy and heavenly calling.

6. Consider what endowments, privileges, or properties of your new state are most fit and forcible to incline and strengthen your heart to love God above all, and to renounce all sin, and to give yourself to universal obedience to His commands: and to strive to walk in the persuasion of them, so 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. It influences us to all obedience, with a hatred and detestation of all sin, because it is contrary and hateful to God. The same effectual means that produce the one, will also produce the other; and holiness chiefly consists in these. So the chief blessings of our holy state are most fit 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 favor by the blood of Christ; and that He is your God and Father, and altogether love to you; and He is your all-sufficient and everlasting portion and happiness through Christ.

Such apprehensions as these present God as a very lovely object to our hearts, and thereby they 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” (1Joh. 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 (Psa. 18:1-2). Love that causes obedience to the law, must proceed from unfeigned faith, by which we apprehend the remission of our sins, and our reconciliation with God by the merits of the blood of Christ (1Tim. 1:5; Heb. 9:14).

For the same end, so that your hearts may be rightly fitted and framed for performing these principal duties, the Holy Scripture directs you to walk in the persuasion of other principal endowments of your new state — such as, that you “have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1Joh. 1:3); that you are the temple of the living God (2Cor. 6:16); that you live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); that you are called to “holiness, and created in Christ Jesus for good works; that God would sanctify you wholly, and make you perfect in holiness at last” (1The. 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 have become the servants of righteousness, and have your fruit unto holiness, and the end is everlasting life” (Rom. 6:6, 22); “You are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you will 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, strongly arm and encourage us to practice universal obedience, in opposition to every sinful lust — because we look at it not only as our duty, but as our great privilege, to do all things through Christ strengthening us. And God certainly works 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 (2Cor. 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 fit and forcible to enable you to the love of God and universal obedience, but also those that have a particular force and aptitude suitable to the special nature of such duties. And you must endeavor to assure yourselves of them by faith, so that you may be encouraged and strengthened to perform the duties. I will give you some instances of this manner of practice in several duties, by which you may better understand how to guide yourselves in the rest.

As to the duties of the FIRST TABLET, if you would draw near to God in a duty of worshipping Him with a true heart, then you must do it in full assurance of faith concerning your enjoyment of Christ and His salvation. Would you perform the great duty of trusting in the Lord with all your heart, casting your care upon Him, and committing the disposal of yourself to Him in all your concerns? Then 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 work for your good. And thus you will be strong and courageous in the practice of this duty. Whereas, if you live in suspense concerning your interest in the privileges, you will be subject to carnal fears and disquieting cares, despite your heart. And you will be prone to trust in the arm of flesh, though your conscience plainly tells you that in doing so, 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, 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 allow you to be tempted above what you are able; and He 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? Then 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 reckon that His ordinances are sufficient, and men's traditions and inventions are needless in the worship of God. Whereas, if you don't 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? Then believe assuredly that God is faithful and just to forgive your sin through Christ; that you are made a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praises that are acceptable to God through Christ; 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 *afflicts* you in this life. If you are altogether in doubt, or otherwise persuaded concerning these privileges, then all your confessions, prayers, and praises will be but heartless lip-service — 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 impartially test and examine your ways by them — if you assuredly believe that the Word is the power of God unto salvation; and that Christ is your great Physician, who is willing and able to heal you, however bad the case; and that, where your sin abounds, His grace towards you abounds all the more. Whereas, without these comfortable apprehensions, all the works of hearing, meditation, and self-examination will only be coarse and heartless works. They will be performed negligently, and by halves; or hypocritically, out of slavish fear, with great reluctance, and without any good will or readiness of mind. So also, to rightly receive the sacraments, you will find yourself greatly 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 forever accepted before the Lord.

In the same way, you are to apply yourselves to all your duties towards your neighbor, required in the SECOND TABLE of the law. Do this by acting in a persuasion of those privileges of your new state, that have a peculiar force to encourage and strengthen you to perform them. According to the several commands in the second tablet of the Decalogue, you are to love your neighbor as yourself, and do to him in all things as you would have him do to you, without partiality and self-seeking. You are to give him his due honor, and abstain from injuring him in his life, chastity, worldly estate, good name, or from coveting anything that is his. To do this, 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 perform them, but that they are the will of your heavenly Father:

- that He has begotten you according to His own image, in righteousness and true holiness;
- that He has given you His Spirit, that you may be likeminded with Him in all things;
- that these things are of 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 toward men, whether good or bad, friends or enemies, poor or rich;
- 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 neighbors, can do you no harm;
- that you don't need to seek any good for yourselves by injuring them, because you have all desirable happiness in Christ; and
- that all things, even if 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 neighbor. 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 — in particular, 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” (Eph. 4:4-6).

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, and lechery, are filthy, swinish abominations, and that the pleasures, profits, and honors of the world are vain, empty things — but that *you* are crucified to the flesh and the world, quickened, raised, and sitting in heavenly places together with Christ; and that you have pleasures, profits, and honors 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, and 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 to mind fleshly, worldly things.

Thus I have given you enough instances to stir you up to acquaint yourselves with the manifold endowments, privileges, and properties of your new state in Christ, as they are revealed in the Gospel of your salvation, and by which the new nature is fitted for holy operations — just 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, because 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 to perfection in Jesus Christ.

8. If you endeavor to grow in grace and in all holiness, then 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 that obedience through Christ, which you are enabled to perform according to the measure of your faith; and He will pardon your failings, though you offend in many things, and fall short in many others, as to degrees of holiness and high acts of obedience. And therefore, don't attempt to perform your duty in any *other* way, even if you cannot yet do so much as you would in *this* way. This is a necessary instruction to establish us in the life of faith, so 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 if living and acting by faith were 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, even 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 whatever our weak faith can attain to by His grace. He doesn’t 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, in that Moses, the lawgiver allowed them — because of the hardness of their hearts — to put away their wives, even though from the beginning it was not so (Mat. 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, He is as eager as ever to bear with the failings of His weak saints who desire to obey Him sincerely.

We have another instance of God’s indulgence, more to our present purpose, in commanding that the fearful and faint-hearted should not be forced to enter into the battle against their enemies. He allowed them to return home to their houses, though fighting in battle against their enemies, without fear and faint-heartedness, was a duty that God greatly exercised His people in at that time (Deu. 20:3, 8). So too under the Gospel: it is an eminent part of Christ’s service, to courageously endure the greatest fight of afflictions and death itself for His name’s sake. Yet, if any are so weak in faith that they don’t have sufficient courage to venture into the battle, there is no doubt that Christ allows them to make use of an honest means by which they may escape the hands of their persecutors, with safety to their holy profession. He will accept them in this weaker kind of service; He will approve of them better than if they were to risk a denial of His name by venturing themselves upon the trial of martyrdom, when they might have escaped it. When Peter went after Christ to the high priest’s hall, he came away with sin and shame by venturing beyond the measure of his faith, into the hands of his persecutors. Whereas, he should rather have made use of that indulgent release which Christ gave to him and the rest of His disciples: “Let these go their way” (Joh. 18:8). Christ deals with His people as a good careful shepherd, who will not overdrive His sheep: “He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who 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 into an old garment, and new wine into old bottles, which spoils all in the end (Mat. 9:14-17).

That precept of Solomon, “Do not be overly righteous” (Ecc. 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 our *undoing*. Children who venture on their feet beyond their strength have many a fall, and so do babes in Christ when they venture unnecessarily upon those duties which are beyond the strength of their faith. We should be content at present to do the best we can, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, even 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, as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3).

## DIRECTION XIII

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

### EXPLICATION

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 by itself, as a distinct direction. Two things are observable in it.

*First*, though all holiness is 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 made void by this, but rather established. This is needful to be observed against the pride and ignorance of some professors of the Gospel 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*. It is also against the Papists, who run to the contrary extreme by heaping together a multitude of means of holiness, which God never commanded, nor did they ever come into His heart. They 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 a company of lazy Solifidians.<sup>1</sup> We 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 it is necessary in this life for our justification, sanctification, and eternal salvation. Yet we also assert and profess that several means are appointed by God for begetting, maintaining, and increasing this faith, and for acting and exercising it in order to attain 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 those who think they are above any need of them, reject the counsel of God against themselves, like those proud Pharisees and lawyers who thought it was beneath them and refused to be baptized by John (Luk. 7:30). Yet we count 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, those who think that men may or can invent any effectual means for attaining it, ascribe their salvation partly to men, and rob God of His glory in being our *only* Savior. And thereby they plainly show that though they “draw near to God with their mouth, and honor Him with their lips, yet their hearts are far from Him. And in vain they worship Him, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 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 obtaining and practicing it in no other way than that of believing in Christ, and walking in Him according to our new state by faith. This has already been demonstrated to be the only way in which we may effectually attain this great end. We must use them as helps to the life of faith in its beginning, continuance, and growth. These are instruments subservient to faith, the principal instrument, in all its acts and exercises by which the soul receives Christ, and walks in all holiness by Him. We must beware lest we use them in opposition rather 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 are made hindrances rather than helps to our faith. We must not idolize any of the means, putting them in the place of Christ (as the Papists do), by trusting in them — as if they were effectual to confer grace on the soul, by the work done in using them. Neither may we use them as works of righteousness, to be performed as conditions

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<sup>1</sup> *Solifidian* (from *solifide*): one who maintains that faith alone, *without works*, is all that is necessary to salvation.

to procure the favor of God and the salvation of Christ. Nor are they to be counted so absolutely necessary to salvation, that a true faith would be void and of no effect, if we were debarred from the enjoyment of several of them. The Holy Scriptures, with all the means of grace appointed in them, are able to make us wise unto salvation, in no other way than by faith in Jesus Christ (2Tim. 3:15). And therefore our wise endeavor must be, not to use them in any opposition to the grace of God in Christ. For God's ordinances are like the cherubim of glory, made with their faces looking towards the mercy-seat. They are made to guide us to Christ for salvation by faith alone. If any turn them to another use, it is a great violation of divine institutions, the same as if any sacrilegious person had presumed to turn the faces of the cherubim from the mercy-seat to some other way.

This right use of the means of grace is a point in which many are ignorant, who use them with great zeal and diligence. Thereby they not only lose their labor, and the benefit of the means, but they also twist 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 tablet became their snare. They fell miserably from God and Christ because the "veil of ignorance was on their hearts," so that, they could not look to the end of those ordinances — to the Lord Jesus Christ — and they didn't seek 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; 2Cor. 3:13-14). So that *you* may not stumble and fall by the same pernicious error, I will 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 endeavor 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" (2Tim. 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* means is absolutely necessary to its very being, because "faith comes by hearing the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17), and it receives Christ as manifested by the Word, as I proved before.

Rahab the Canaanite was justified by faith before she had any visible communion with the church in any of God's ordinances. And yet it was not without the word of God. It was the same word, for substance, which was written in the Scriptures, and was then extant in the books of Moses — though that word wasn't 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 receiving Christ, and walking in Him by faith. You must not be of the mind of those who think that the knowledge of the Ten Commandments is sufficient to salvation, or would have mysteries remain hidden from the understanding of the simple, and have nothing preached to them but what they can readily assent to, and receive by the light that is in all men. It may be that some ministers are of this mind, who unwittingly agree with the Quakers in a fundamental of their heresy. But you must endeavor chiefly to know the mystery of the Father and the Son, as it is revealed in the Gospel, "in which are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3). To know this, is life eternal; and ignorance of it is death eternal (Joh. 17:3; 2Cor. 4:3).

You must know that Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 10:4). And therefore, you must endeavor to know the commands of the law — not that you may be enabled by that knowledge to practice them immediately, and thereby procure salvation by your works. 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 you are under for breaking them, and the impossibility of being saved by your own works. All this, so that you may fly to Christ for refuge, and trust only to the free grace of God for justification, and for the strength to fulfil the law acceptably through Christ in your conduct. To this end, you must endeavor to learn the utmost strictness of the

commands, and the exact perfection and spiritual purity which they require. Thus you may be more convinced of sin, and stirred up to seek 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” (Mar. 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 sole sufficiency of the grace of God in Christ for your salvation. Then you may be abased as to the flesh, and exalted in Christ alone. To better understand 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*. 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; but cursed are you if you do not do them, and fail in the least point.” The latter (that is, the New Covenant) opens the gates of righteousness and life to all believers 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 will mind you particularly, that you will be proficient in Christian learning, if you get a good understanding of the sixth and seventh chapters of Paul’s letter to the Romans, where the powerful principles of sanctification are purposely treated, and distinguished from those weak and ineffectual principles by which we are most naturally prone to walk. I don’t need to 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 pertain to life and godliness. “And if in anything you think otherwise,” than what is according to saving truth, “God will reveal even this to you” (Phi. 3:15).

Yet let me caution you, lest instead of gaining Christ by your knowledge, you instead lose Him by putting your knowledge in the place of Christ, and trusting in it for your salvation. One cause of the Jews perishing was that they rested in a “form of knowledge and truth in the law” (Rom. 2:20). Doubtless, all that many Christians will gain by their knowledge, in the end, will only be this: to be beaten with more stripes, because they put their religion and salvation chiefly in the knowledge of their Lord’s will, and in their ability to talk and dispute about it, without preparing themselves to “do according to God’s will” (Luk. 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 any more than the Papists understand their lessons in the Latin mass and canonical hours. Sad experience shows that many seemingly devout and frequent hearers of the Word, nonetheless remain in lamentable and astonishing ignorance of the saving truth. This prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in them: “That in hearing, they will hear and not understand; and in seeing, they will see and not perceive.” (Mat. 13:14-15).

2. Another means to be used diligently for promoting the life of faith, is EXAMINATION of our state and ways according to the Word — whether we are, at present, in a state of sin and wrath, or of grace and salvation,

- so that, if we are in a state of sin, we may know our sickness and come to the great Physician while it is called today;
- so that, if we’re 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 (1Joh. 3:19, 21);

- so that our hearts may be more strongly comforted by faith, and established in every good work; and
- so that, if our ways are evil, we may turn from them to the Lord our God through Christ, without whom none come to the Father (Lam. 3:40; Joh. 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 who think they have made their peace with God merely because they examined themselves on their sick bed, or before receiving the Lord's Supper — even though they have found themselves destitute of holiness, and don't depend on Christ to make them better, but on their own deceitful purposes and resolutions.

Don't think that you must begin this work by doubting whether God will extend mercy to you and save you; or that you must leave this a wholly debatable question, 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 laid in the great sin of *unbelief*. As soon as it prevails, due to its great influence, it dashes and obscures all inward gracious qualifications of peace, hope, joy, and love to God and His people — even before they are tested to see whether they can give any good evidence for their salvation. It makes people willing to think that their own qualifications are better than they are, lest they fall into 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 those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure” (Tit. 1:15). You should rather begin the work with much assurance of faith, that even if at present you find your heart is ever so wicked and reprobate (as many of God's choicest servants have found), the door of mercy is open for you; and God will certainly save you forever, if you put your trust in His grace through Christ.

I formerly showed 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, even 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 discover 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, so they may be able to give clear evidence that we are at present in a state of grace.

Mark well the difference between these two questions: “Will God graciously accept and save me through Christ, though I am a vile sinner?” as said before; and “Have I already been brought into a state of salvation?” The former question, I say, is to be resolved affirmatively by a confident faith in Christ; only the latter is to be inquired into by self-examination. Don't misspend your time, as many do, in poring over your hearts to find whether you are good enough to trust in 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 know this: that even if you cannot find that you have any faith or holiness, if you will *now* “believe on Him who justifies the ungodly, it shall be accounted to you for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

And if you love Christ, and your own soul, don't misspend your time in examining whether you have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Spirit unless it is with a full purpose to assure yourself, more and more, that you are *not* guilty of it — for any doubtfulness in this point will but harden you in unbelief. Remember well, that the question to be resolved is whether you are at present in a state of grace. 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 take notice only of your corruptions. But your great work must be to find

whether there isn't some drop of saving grace in the ocean of your corruption. It will consist well with humility to take notice of, and to own, any spark of true holiness that is in you — because the praise and glory of it doesn't belong to you, but to God (Phi. 1:11). You must test inherent grace by the touchstone, and not by the measure; by its nature, and not by its degree — not denying any lustings of the Spirit in you, just because of the strong lustings of the flesh *against* the Spirit; or denying that you are spiritual in some degree, and babes in Christ, just because you find you are carnal in a more prevailing degree, and the old man is bigger than the new (Gal. 5:17; 1Cor. 3:1).

Especially, you are to examine and prove whether you are 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 the truth of any other qualifications, and will suspect them to be merely carnal and counterfeit. This is because it is a known truth that to the unbelieving, nothing is pure; and all who have not truly received Christ by faith, are at present in an unregenerate state, however pure and godly they may seem (2Cor. 13:5; Titus 1:15).

And don't let the result of this trial depend at all upon your knowledge of the time, or the sermon, conference, or place in Scripture, by which you were first converted to the faith — though that is good to know too, if it may be known. Some who formerly lived in gross ignorance, or in manifest opposition to true faith and holiness, may know those circumstances of their conversion, and they may reflect upon them comfortably. The apostle Paul did. He was suddenly turned from his persecuting rage, to be a disciple and an apostle of Christ. Yet others, sincere believers, may be wholly ignorant of them, such as John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luk. 1:15); and those who have been trained up religiously, and know the Holy Scripture from their childhood, as Timothy did (2Tim. 3:15). Many are first turned from gross ignorance and profaneness, to some external reformation. And then, in the process of time, they are brought nearer to the kingdom of heaven by insensible degrees, before they are really begotten anew by the spirit of faith. There are also some who deceive their souls by imagining they know at what time, and by what text of Scripture, they were converted. They can make large discourses about the workings of God upon their hearts, and are prone to talk unseasonably, with vain glorying 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, so 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 to ourselves questions such as these:

- Are we made thoroughly sensible of our sinfulness, and of the deadness and misery of our natural state, so as to absolutely despair 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 excellence of Christ, and the sole 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, whatever 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 in Him *alone*, and by endeavoring to trust in Him *confidently*, despite 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 by 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 test whether you can show your faith by your works, as you are taught (Jam. 2:18), so that you may be sure not to be deceived in your judgement concerning it. And though it is true, as I have noted, that doubts concerning your faith will breed doubts concerning the sincerity of other qualifications that are its fruits, yet you may possibly get such clear evidences of your sincerity, that they may overcome and expel all your doubts. Here you are not only to inquire whether your inclinations, purposes, affections, and actions are materially good and holy, but also by what principles they are bred and influenced; whether it is by slavish fears of hell, and mercenary hopes of getting to heaven by your works — which are legal and carnal principles that can never breed true holiness? Or is it by Gospel principles, such as love to God, because God has loved you first; and love to Christ, because He has died? Is it 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, the New Testament is the ministration of the Spirit (2Cor. 3:6), and the Spirit will sanctify us not by legal, but by Gospel principles.

Take further notice that you need not trouble yourself to discover a *multitude* of marks and signs of true grace, if you can find a few *good* ones. Particularly, you may know that you have passed from death to life, if you love the brothers (1Joh. 3:14) — that is, if you love all whom you can in charity judge to be true believers, and do so *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, that it may enable you to express your sincerity in these moderate terms: “Pray for us; for we trust that 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 feeds and ruminates on the Word as its spiritual food, digests it, and turns it into nourishment whereby we are strengthened for every good work. Our souls are satisfied with it, as with marrow and fatness, when we remember God upon our beds, and meditate on Him in the night watches (Psa. 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 day (Psa. 119:97); indeed, “day and night” (Psa. 1:2), even in our ordinary employment at home and abroad. A habitual knowledge of the Word will not profit us without an active consideration of it by frequent meditation. Some think that much preaching of the Word isn't needed where a people are already brought to the knowledge of those things that are necessary to salvation. But those who are regenerated by the Word, find by experience that their spiritual life is maintained and increased by often minding the same word. Therefore, “as new-born babes, they desire the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby” (1Pet. 2:2). And they would be put frequent in remembrance of the same things by the preachers, so that they may feed upon them by meditation, even though they know them already, and “are established in the present truth” (2Pet. 1:12).

But here our greatest skill and chief concern lies in practicing this duty in such a manner, that it may be subservient to, 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 to procure the favor of God, instead of relying on the righteousness of Christ. Indeed, we are prone to do this, catching at any straw, rather than trust alone in the free grace of God in Christ for our salvation. And the end of our meditation must not be mere contemplation and knowledge of the truth, but rather vigorously pressing it upon our consciences, and stirring up our hearts and affections to practice it. And in stirring ourselves up to a holy practice, we must carefully observe how far the several parts of the truth of God are powerful and effectual to attain this end, so that we may make use of them

accordingly. We must not imagine, as too many do — indeed, even some great masters in the art of meditation — that we can bring our hearts effectually to the love of God and holiness, and that we can work extraordinary 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 — of His sovereign authority, omniscience, perfect holiness, exact justice, the equity of His law, and the reasonableness of our obedience to it, the unspeakable happiness prepared for the godly, and the misery prepared for the wicked, unto 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 the 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 believingly on Christ’s saving benefits, as they are revealed in the Gospel. This is the only doctrine which is the power of God unto 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 those who are sanctified (Rom. 1:16; 2Cor. 3:6; Acts 20:32). You must take special care to act faith in your meditation, and mix the Word of God’s grace with it, or else it will not profit you (Heb. 4:2). 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 (Psa. 26:3). And by “beholding as in a mirror, 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” (2Cor. 3:18). This kind of meditation is sweet, and delightful to those that are guided to it by the spirit of faith; and it doesn’t need the help of any artificial methods that the simple cannot easily learn. You may let your thoughts run in it at liberty, without confining them to any rules or method. You will find your souls greatly enlivened by it, and enriched with the grace of God. This cannot be effected by any other kind of meditation, however methodical and elegantly framed it may be, according to the rules of art.

4. The sacrament of BAPTISM will be of great use to promote the life of faith, if it is used 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 beware of making it a seal of the contrary righteousness of works, as the carnal Jews did, who sought to be justified by the law of Moses. Many Christians do this, who transform the new covenant into a covenant of works — requiring sincere obedience to all the laws of Christ, as the condition of our justification. They think to enter into this newly devised covenant by their baptism. I may say of baptism, perverted and abused in this way, as the apostle says of circumcision: “Baptism truly profits if you keep the law; but if you are 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 will profit you nothing; Christ has become of no effect to you; you have 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 administering it. And many ignorant people do this, who trust in their baptism rather than in Christ — like the Pharisees, who placed their confidence in circumcision and other external privileges (Phi. 3:4-5). We are to know that God is not well pleased with many who are baptized (1Cor. 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 count all baptism as null and void, besides that which is administered to persons grown to years of discretion; and who say that those who 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, the lack of true baptism would be no damning matter to those who 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 lack of it (Josh. 5:6-7). Many precious saints in primitive times of persecution, have gone to heaven through a baptism of suffering for the name of Christ, before they had an opportunity to be baptized with water. And in those ancient times, when the custom of deferring baptism prevailed too much, we are not to think that none were in a state of salvation by faith in Christ, who deferred that ordinance, or neglected it.

Take further notice, that it is not sufficient to avoid the pernicious errors of those who pervert baptism, contrary to its institution; but you must also be diligent to improve 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? It may be feared that the simple sort of Christians, and indeed, many sincere converts, think so little upon their own baptism, and don't 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. Indeed, their sin is more aggravated by rendering such an ordinance of no effect to their souls through their own gross neglect. Even if baptism is administered to us but once in our lives, we ought to frequently reflect upon it, and on all occasions put the question to ourselves, *To what were we baptized?* (Acts 19:3) What does this ordinance seal? What did it engage us to?

Accordingly, we must stir up and strengthen ourselves by our baptism, to lay hold on the grace which it seals to us, and 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 — just as John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in Him who would come after him, that is in Christ Jesus. We should remember that our baptism sealed our putting on Christ, and being the children of God by faith in Christ, and no longer being under the former schoolmaster, the law (Gal. 3:25-27). It sealed to us, putting off the body of sin; our burial and resurrection with Christ by faith; the forgiving of our trespasses (Col. 2:12-13); being made members of one body, Christ; and drinking into one Spirit (1Cor. 12:12-13). We may find by such things as these, which are more fully revealed 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 be of great advantage to the life of faith.

5. The sacrament of the LORD'S SUPPER is like 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 is used according to the pattern Christ gave us in its first institution, recorded by the three evangelists (Mat. 26:26-28; Mar. 14:22-24; Luk. 22:19, 20). It was extraordinarily revealed from heaven by Christ Himself to the apostle Paul (1Cor. 11:23-25), so that we might be 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: such 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, so that we may receive and enjoy all the promises of the new covenant which are recorded (Heb. 8:10-12). Its end is to remind us that Christ's body and blood are bread and drink — all-sufficient food to nourish our souls to everlasting life. And to remind us that we ought to take, and eat, and drink Him by faith; and to assure us that, when we truly believe in 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, in John 6, more fully explains this mystery.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *After feeding the five thousand:* "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst...<sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (Joh 6:35, 38-40 <sup>NKJ</sup>)

Furthermore, this sacrament not only puts us in mind of the spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ, and our enjoyment of them by faith, but also that it is a means and instrument by which God really exhibits and gives Christ and His salvation to true believers, and by which He stirs up and strengthens 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 Christ as truly gives His body and blood to true believers in that ordinance, as the bread and the cup; and they as truly receive it by faith. It is like a prince who invests a subject with some honorable office, by delivering to him a staff, sword, or signet, saying, “Take this staff, sword, or signet; this is such and such an office or preferment.” Or it is like a father who delivers a deed to convey land to his son, saying, “Take it as your own; this is such and 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” (1Cor. 10:16). This shows that Christ’s body and blood are really communicated to us; and we partake of them as really as we partake of the bread and the cup. The chief excellence and advantage of this ordinance is that it is not only a figure and resemblance of our living upon a crucified Savior, but also a precious instrument whereby Christ, the bread and drink of life, is really conveyed to us, and received by us through faith. This makes it a love-token worthy of that ardent affection toward us which filled Christ’s heart at the time He instituted it — when He was at the point of finishing His greatest work of love, by laying down His life for us (1Cor. 11:23). And this is to be diligently observed, so that we may make a right improvement of this ordinance, and receive its saving benefits.

One reason why many little esteem, and seldom or never partake of this ordinance, and find little benefit by it, is because they falsely imagine that God only presents in it, bare signs and resemblances of Christ and His salvation. They think these are presented so plainly in Scripture, that they don’t need the help of such a sign. Whereas, if they understood that God really gives Christ Himself to their faith, by and with those signs and resemblances, they would prize it as the most delicious feast, and would desire to partake of it at every opportunity (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

Another reason why many seldom or never partake of this ordinance, and know so little of its benefit, is because they think it brings them into great danger of eating and drinking to 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” (1Cor. 11:29). Therefore, they consider it the safest way, to wholly abstain from such a dangerous ordinance; or at least, that once a year is enough to run so great a risk. And if they are sometimes brought to it by constraint of conscience, their slavish fears deprive them of all its comfortable fruit. So that, instead of striving to receive Christ and His salvation in it, they think they have succeeded well, if they come off without the sentence of damnation. This is like the Jewish Rabbis write, that the high priest’s life was so eminently risked by entering once a year into the Holy of Holies, that he stayed there as little time as he could, lest the people think he was struck dead by the hand of God. And when he came out alive, he usually made a feast of thanksgiving for the joy of such a great deliverance.

But there is no reason why we should be so terrified by those words of the apostle. For they were directed against a gross profanation of the Lord’s Supper among the Corinthians. We may easily avoid that, by observing its institution, which the apostle proposes as a sufficient remedy against its gross abuse — in not discerning or distinguishing the Lord’s body from other bodily food; and partaking of it like their *own* supper, with such disorder that one was hungry and another drunk. Besides, that terrifying word *damnation* may be rendered more mildly as *judgement*, as it is in

the margin. Even the apostle himself (v. 32) interprets it as a merciful, temporal judgement, by which we are chastened by the Lord, so that we will not be condemned with the world.

We are indeed prone to sin in receiving this ordinance unworthily; and so we are also prone 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 this one, if we didn't have a great High Priest to bear this iniquity of our holy things (Exo. 28:38).<sup>1</sup> Under the covert of His righteousness, we are to draw near to 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, just as the Jews were bound to do in their solemn feasts (Deu. 16:14-15).

There are other abuses of this ordinance, like those of baptism mentioned before, by which it is rendered *opposite to*, rather than *subservient to*, the life of faith. Some put it in the place of Christ, by trusting in it as a work of righteousness to procure God's favor, or an ordinance sufficient to confer grace to the soul by the very work that is wrought. Others make it so necessary that they think faith isn't sufficient without it. Therefore they partake of it, if they possibly can, though it is in a disorderly manner — on their sick-beds, when they are in fear of death, as their *viaticum*.<sup>2</sup> The Papists horribly idolize it by their figment of transubstantiation, and the adoration of their wafer god, and their sacrifice of the mass, for the sins of the quick and the dead. We should remember 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. It is making our requests with supplication and thanksgiving. It is apparent that it is to be used so, as an eminent means, because God requires it (1The. 5:17; Rom. 12:12); it is our priestly work (1Pet. 2:5; cf. Psa. 141:2); and the property of saints (1Cor. 1:2); and God is a God who hears prayer (Psa. 65:2). God will be prayed to by His people, for the benefit that He intends to bestow on them, once He has enabled them to pray. Though at first He is found by those who do not seek Him (Eze. 36:37; Phi. 1:19-20), this is done to prepare them for thanksgiving, and to make benefits, *double-benefits* to them (Psa. 66:16-19; 50:15; 2Cor. 1:10-11). Though His will won't be *changed* by prayer, it is ordinarily *accomplished* by it; and His purpose is to accomplish it in this way. Therefore, trusting assuredly shouldn't make us neglect this duty, but rather perform it (2Sam. 7:27). Christ the Mediator of the new covenant, by whom justification and sanctification are promised, is also the Mediator for the acceptance of our prayers (Heb. 4:15-16). The Spirit who sanctifies us, who begets us in Christ, and shows us the things of Christ, is a Spirit of prayer (Zec. 12:10; Gal. 4:6). He is as fire inflaming the soul, making it mount upward in prayer to God.

Prayerless people are dead to God. If they are children of Zion, they are yet but stillborn, dead children, who don't cry. They are not written among the living in Jerusalem; they are heathens in nature, though Christians in name (Jer. 10:25). Prayer is a duty so great, that it is put for all the service of God, as a fundamental duty. 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).<sup>3</sup> It is the great means by which faith exerts itself to perform its whole work, and pours itself out in all holy desires and affections (Psa. 62:8); and so it yields a sweet savor, like Mary's box of precious perfume (Mar. 14:3; Joh. 12:3); and so the same promises are made to *faith* and *prayer* (Rom. 10:11-13).<sup>4</sup> It is our continual incense and sacrifice, by which we offer ourselves, our hearts, affections, and lives to God (Psa.

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<sup>1</sup> Exo. 28:38 "So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; ...that they may be accepted before the LORD."

<sup>2</sup> *Viaticum*: last rites, in preparation for the journey (like a coin for the Ferryman, to cross the River Styx). – WHG

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 56:7 "Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices *will be* accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer..."

<sup>4</sup> Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

141:2). We act all grace in it, and *must* act it 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 (Psa. 138:3; Luk. 11:13; Heb. 4:16; Psa. 81:10). Our riches come in by it. Israel prevails while Moses holds up his hands (Exo. 17:11). By prayer Hannah is strengthened against her sorrows (1Sam. 1:15, 18); peace is continued (Phi. 4:6, 7); the disordered soul is set in order by it, as with Hannah (1Sam. 1:18; Psa. 32:1-5). Incense was still burnt, while the lamps were dressed (Exo. 30:7-8). It is added to the spiritual armor, not as a particular piece of it, but as a means of putting it all on, and rightly making use of it all, so 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 shine, just as Christ was transfigured bodily while He prayed (Luk. 9:29), and Moses' face shone while he talked with God (Exo. 34:29).

Hence, the frequent use of this duty is commended to us in Eph. 6:18 — praying always, at all seasons and opportunities. And it is commended by the example of the saints, praying in public with the congregation (Acts 2:42; 10:30-31). Solemn acts of prayer should be continued daily (Mat. 6:11); yes, several times a day, like the morning and evening sacrifice (Dan. 6:10; Psa. 92:2); or three times (Psa. 55:17); and this is in addition to special occasions (Jam. 5:13-14), and brief ejaculations that don't hinder our other business (Psa. 129:8; 2Sam. 15:31; Neh. 2:4). Prayers should be solemn, in private (Mat. 6:6), in our families (Acts 10:30, 31). And just as *sacrifices* were multiplied on Sabbath days, and Days of Atonement, and at other appointed seasons (Num. 28), besides the continual burnt offering, so *prayer* should be multiplied. In a word, a Christian should give himself eminently to this duty (Psa. 109:4), without limits (Psa. 119:164). But the great work is to practice this duty rightly for *holiness*, only by faith in Christ. Here we need to say, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luk. 11:1). That is not only as to *the matter* of it, but also the *manner* — both of which are taught by Christ, in some measure, in that brief pattern of prayer which He taught His disciples (Mat. 6:9-13). But for understanding it, we must consult the whole Word (2Tim. 3:16-17). And we need 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 alone guides and enables our souls to pray rightly. And that you may do so, take these rules:

(1). You must pray with your *hearts* and *spirits* (Isa. 26:9; Joh. 4:24), where the Spirit of Christ, and of prayer, principally resides (Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:17); pray with understanding (1Cor. 14:15-16); for we are renewed in knowledge (Col. 3:10; 2Pet. 1:3); thus, praying in ignorance cannot sanctify. And it must be with a sincere, hearty desire for the good things we ask in prayer; for God sees the heart (Psa. 62:8). Prayer is chiefly a heart-work (Psa. 27:8). God hears the heart without the mouth, but never hears the mouth acceptably without the heart (1Sam. 1:13). Your prayer is odious hypocrisy, mocking God, and taking His name in vain, when you utter petitions for the coming of His kingdom, and doing His will, while you hate godliness in your heart. This is lying to God, and flattering with your lips, but no true prayer. And that is how God takes it (Psa. 78:36). You must have a sense of your wants and necessities, and believe that only God can supply them (2Chr. 20:12). Fervency in those desires is required (Jam. 5:16).

And you must pray with attention, minding what you pray, or else you cannot expect that God will mind it (Dan. 9:3). Be watchful in it (1Pet. 4:7). Set yourselves to this duty intently. God sees where your heart is wandering when you pray without paying attention (Eze. 33:31). However many prayers you pray without understanding, attention, or affection, it is not praying at all, but sinning, and playing the hypocrite — like Papists who mumble over their Latin prayers on the beads by tally, prating like parrots, what they cannot understand. And thus ignorant people repeat their forms of English prayers, and think they have well discharged their duty, though their heart didn't pray at all, and was minding other things. This is mere lip-service, and bodily exercise, offering a dead carcass to God; it is plain deceit (Mal. 1:13-14); a form of godliness, but denying its power (2Tim. 3:5). By this means, 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 as hypocrites and profane

persons, for not knowing, minding, and approving what they themselves utter.” He takes no pleasure in fools (Ecc. 5:1, 4). They would not deal this way with an earthly prince.

(2). You must pray in the name of Christ, for the Spirit glorifies Christ (Joh. 16:14); and leads us to God through Christ (Eph. 2:18). Just as I have shown that walking in the Spirit and walking in Christ is the same thing, so praying in the Spirit is praying by and through Christ. And just as we are to walk in the name of the Lord, and to do all things in His name, so we are to pray in His name, as commanded in 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 depend upon His worthiness and strength for all.

So also, we must praise God for all things in Christ’s name, as things received for His sake, and by Him (Eph. 5:20). We must lay hold on His strength alone, and plead nothing, and own nothing for our acceptance, but Him. We must not plead our own works arrogantly, like the proud Pharisee (Luk. 18:10-11), but only as fruits of grace, and rewards of grace (Isa. 38:3). Praying in the Spirit is done upon *Gospel*, not *legal* principles (Rom. 7:6; 2Cor. 3:3), with great humiliation, and a sense of unworthiness (Psa. 51); with a broken spirit; with despair of acceptance other than on Christ’s account (Dan. 9:18). However great your gains, struggles, and heart-meltings have been, without *this*, all is abominable.

(3). Hence, you must not think you will be accepted for the goodness of your prayers, and trust in them as works of righteousness. This is making idols of your prayers and putting them in the place of Christ, quite contrary to praying in the name of Christ. Thus Papists hope to be saved by saying their tally of prayers upon their bead-rows, and they have indulgences granted upon saying so many prayers, of such a sort. Yes, some ignorant Protestants trust in their prayers as duties of righteousness. They think one prayer is more acceptable than another because of the holiness of the form, as if it were made by holy men — especially the Lord’s prayer, which they use to help them in any 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, like a spell or charm, to drive away the devil. Others think their prayers are more acceptable in one place than another, because of the holiness of the place (Joh. 4:21, 24; 1Tim. 2:8). Others trust in their lengthy speech (Mat. 6:7), which they call “enlarging their hearts.” They think to put off God with a few prayers, and to shut the mouth of their conscience, so that they may live as they please.

(4). Pray to God, as your *Father*, through Christ as your *Savior*, in faith of the remission of sins and of your acceptance with God, and obtaining all other things which you desire from Him, so far as necessary for your salvation (Jam. 1:5-7; 5:15; 1Joh. 5:14, 15; Mar. 9:24; Heb. 10:14; Psa. 62:8; 86:7; 55:16; 57:1; 17:6). This is praying in Christ (Eph. 3:12), and by the Holy Spirit, 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; Psa. 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 will have everything you ask, yet you will have everything that is good. This faith you must endeavor to *act*. And therefore, if any sin lies on your conscience, you must strive first to get pardon for it (Psa. 32:1, 5; 51:14-15), and purification from it by faith, so that you may lift up holy hands without anger and doubting (1Tim. 2:8). The sin of anger is especially mentioned there, because it is contrary to love and forgiving others. Here lies the strength, life, and powerfulness of prayer. Set faith to 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 perfumes will yield their aroma, as godly sorrow (Psa. 38:18); peace (Isa. 27:5); joy (Psa. 105:3); hope (Psa. 71:5); desire and love for God (Psa. 4:6); and love for all His commands (Psa. 119:4-5); and for all His people out of love for Him (Psa. 122:8). You must seek the Spirit Himself, in the first place (Luk. 11:13; Psa. 37:5); and all spiritual things (Mat. 6:33). Praying only for carnal things, shows a carnal heart, and leaves it carnal. Pray for

faith (Mar. 9:24) and for those things which may serve most for glorifying God (2Chr. 1:11-12). And for outward things, you must act faith in submission to His will. This prayer sets you in a holy frame (Mat. 26:42; Luk. 22:42-43). Hallowing God's name must be your aim (Mat. 6:9), and not your lusts (Jam. 4:3).

(6). Strive to bring your soul into order by this duty, however disordered by guilt, anguish, inordinate cares, or fears (Psa. 32:1, 5; 55:16, 17, 20, 22; 69:32; Phi. 4:6-7; 1Sam. 1). A watch must be wound often. You must wrestle in prayer against your unbelief, doubt, fears, cares, and the reluctance of the flesh to what is good. Pray against all evil lusts and desires, coldness of affection, impatience, trouble of spirit; everything that is contrary to a holy life, and to the graces and holy desires that are to be acted for yourselves or others (Col. 4:12; Rom. 15:30). Stir yourselves up to the duty (Col. 2:1-2; Isa. 64:7). Though the flesh is opposed and reluctant, we must not yield to it, but resist by the Spirit (Mat. 26:41). And thus we will find the Spirit helping our infirmities (Rom. 8:26-27). Though God seems to defer a long time, we must not faint or be discouraged (Luk. 18:1, 7). The greater our agonies are, the more earnestly we are to pray (Psa. 22:1-2; Luk. 22:42). This is what it means "to continue instant in prayer" (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18). Thus you will find that prayer is a great heart-work, and not something that may be done while you think about other things. 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 manners 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 which you have, as if you were only wicked before, and are now to begin again; that would hinder praise for the grace received in those who are already converted. In supplication, you must endeavor to work up your heart to a godly sorrow (Psa. 38:18), and a holy sense of your own sin and misery; and lay before you its aggravations (Psa. 51:3; 102). Complaint and lamentation are one great part of prayer, like the Lamentations of Jeremiah. And you must add pleadings to your petitions, with arguments that may serve to strengthen your faith, and stir up and kindle your affection (Job. 23:4). These pleadings are taken from God's attributes (Num. 14:17-18); from His promises (2Sam. 7:26, 28, etc.; Gen. 32:9, 12); the equity of our cause (Psa. 17:2, 3); the advantage and benefit of this thing to the glory of God, and our comfort (Psa. 115:1-2; 79:9, 10, 13). Bare petitions are insufficient, when the soul finds special cause in struggling and wrestling *against* corruptions and dangers, and wrestling *for* God's mercies. Christ's large prayer in John 17, is comprised of pleading, and very few petitions.

We must also make use of praise and thanksgiving to stir up peace, joy, love, etc. (Gen. 32:10; Psa. 18:1-3; 33:1; and 104:34). Especially be much in praising God for the mercies of the new state in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Then you will better give thanks for all benefits on this account (Eph. 5:20; 1The. 5:18); and plead those benefits to stir up your faith and duty. That brief ejaculation, "Lord, have mercy on me," is very good to use. But it won't satisfy the end and use of the whole duty of prayer, as some lazy carnal people would have it; and so they harden themselves in their neglect of the duty. Even so, the large improvement and use of all the matter of prayer, at all times, isn't required, but only as ordinary or extraordinary occasions may require.

(8). You must not confine and limit your prayers by any prescribed form, seeing that it is impossible that any such forms could be contrived, which would answer and fit all the various conditions and necessities of the soul at all times. I don't condemn all forms, like the one made by Christ, "the Lord's Prayer;" though it would be easy to show that Christ never intended it as a form of prayer, so as to bind anyone to the precise form of its words. It is plain that the Spirit of God expressed it in different words in Mathew 6 and Luke 11. But it is better to pray by that form, or other forms, than not to pray at all. It is uncharitable to take away crutches or wooden



legs from lame people; yet none would look upon them as anything but dead helps. I say, it is utterly unlawful to bind ourselves to any form, because none can answer this duty, fitly and suitably to particular occasions (Eph. 6:18; Phi. 4:6; Joh. 15:7; 1The. 5:18; Eph. 5:20). You must make the whole Scripture your common prayer-book, as the primitive church did. For it is the language of the Spirit, reaching all occasions and conditions, and the one most fitting to speak to God in. If you use a form, you must follow it by the Spirit further than the form goes, as He guides you by the Word; or else you will quench the Spirit (1The. 5:19). If you know the principles of prayer, and have a lively sense of your needs, and hearty desires for God's grace and mercies, you will be able to pray without forms; and your affections will bring forth words from the fullness of your heart. You don't need to be overly solicitous and timorous about words. For doubtless the Spirit, who is our help in speaking to men, will also much more help us to speak to God, if we desire it (1Cor. 1:5; Mar. 13:11; Luk. 12:11-12). God doesn't regard eloquent words, or artificial composure; nor do we need to regard it in private prayer (Isa. 38:14). If you limit yourself to forms, you will thereby grow formal, and limit the Spirit.

7. Another means appointed by God, is SINGING PSALMS; that is, songs about any sacred subject, that is composed to a tune — hymns or songs of praise, and spiritual songs of any sublime spiritual manner, such as Psalm 45 and the Song of Solomon. God has commanded it in the New Testament (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). Though these days, many question whether it is an ordinance or not, there were many commands for it under the Old Testament (Psa. 149:1-3; 96:1; 100).

Moses and the children of Israel sang before David's time (Exo. 15). David composed psalms by the Spirit, to be sung publicly (2Sam. 23:1, 2), and privately too (Psa. 40:3; 2Chr. 29:30; Psa. 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 (1Kng 4:32). Making songs upon an occasion, teaches that it is lawful for us to do so, if they are according to the Word (Isa. 38:9-14). The matter of Scripture may be sung (Psa. 119:54). Christ and His disciples sang a hymn (Mat. 26:30), presumably one of David's psalms. They were written for our instruction, as with other parts of Scripture (Rom. 15:4); and so they are 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 (2Cor. 3:16; Gal. 2:17).

Christians at the time practiced this duty as well as the Jews (Acts 16:25). Hence their *antelucani hymni* (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, as in James 5:13. But this text is not to be taken exclusively in singing, any more than in prayer (Psa. 38:18; 2Chr. 35:25).

But the right manner of this duty is chiefly to be noted. And here,

(i) Don't trust in the melody of the voice, as if that pleased God, who delights only in the melody of the heart (Col. 3:16). Nor let the refreshment of 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; not 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 our faith (2Chr. 20:21-22; Acts 16:25-26), and to joy and delight in the Lord, glorying in Him (Psa. 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 in a holy way (Jam. 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 in their title); that is, they are psalms of instruction.

And so, we are to sing such psalms as though spoken in the first person, even if we cannot apply them to ourselves, as words uttered by ourselves, concerning ourselves. We don't lie in doing this.

David speaks of Christ as he would speak of himself, as a pattern of affliction and virtue to instruct others. And we sing such psalms, not as our own words, but as words of instruction. And we don't lie in doing this, any more than the Levites, the sons of Korah, or Jeduthun, or other musicians lied, who were bound to sing them (Psa. 5; 39; 42). Though it is good to personalize all the good that we can, we have so much liberty in the use of psalms, that even if we cannot apply all of them to ourselves, as if speaking and thinking the same things, yet we will satisfy the end if we sing for our instruction, as in Psalms 6, 26, 46, 101 and 131.

Psalms have a peculiar fitness for teaching and instructing, because the pleasantness of metre, said or sung, is very helpful to the memory (see Deu. 31:19, 21). And there is a variety of artistic skill in placing words in the psalms on this account; some are *alphabetical* psalms, such as Psalms 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119 and 145. By the melody of the sound, the instruction comes in with delight, like a medicinal dose that is sugared; sorrow is naturally allayed to fit the mind for spiritual joy; and distempered passions are appeased (2Kng 3:15; 1Sam. 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. It is commended to us in the New Testament, in Mat. 9:15; 17:21; 1Cor. 7:5. We have examples of it in Acts 13:2-3; 14:23. In the Old Testament, there were frequent commands for it, and examples, chiefly on the occasion of extraordinary afflictions (1Sam. 7:6; Neh. 9:1; Dan. 9:3; 10:2-3; 2Sam. 12:16; Psa. 35:13; 2Sam. 3:31, 35; Joel 2:12-13) — beside the annual 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 (Zec. 8:19). It was used mostly on extraordinary occasions. And it is a help to holiness by faith, because it is a fit help for extraordinary prayer and humiliation (Joel 1:14; 2:12). But the great matter, is to use fasting rightly, as follows.

(1). Don't trust in it as meriting or satisfying anything, as Papists and Pharisees do (Luk. 18:12), putting it in the place of Christ; or as a means of conferring grace and mortifying lusts, as many do (they would sooner kill their bodies than their lusts); or as a purifying rite; or acceptable to God, in itself (1Tim. 4:8; Heb. 13:9; Col. 2:16, 17, 20, 23). Don't imagine that prayer is not acceptable without fasting, for this is against faith. Fasts as well as feasts, are not substantial parts of worship, for they are not spiritual, but bodily — though under the Old Testament they were parts of worship as instituted rites, figurative and teaching. But that use has now ceased, as with the Day of Atonement, and so many illustrative rites adjoined to fasting, like sackcloth, ashes, rending garments, pouring out water, and lying on the earth. The kingdom of God does not consist in these things (Rom. 14:17). And the soul is hardened by trusting in them (Isa. 58:3, 6; Zec. 7:5-6, 10).

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

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

9. You may expect something to be spoken here about VOWS. But I will only say this: don't think 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 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 it, so that he may further perplex your conscience (Ecc. 5:5; Jam. 5:12).

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

FIRST, *this means must be used diligently*. Whoever God saves should join 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 those who believe in Christ are always willing and desirous to so add and join themselves (Acts 2:41, 44, 47). "And they continued steadfastly in fellowship" (1Joh. 2:19). And God binds His people to leave the fellowship and society of the wicked, so far as possible (2Cor. 6:17). And so far as we are required to keep company with them, we ought to show charity to their souls and bodies (1Cor. 5:9). This communion with the saints is to be exercised in private converse (Psa. 101:4-7), and in public assemblies (Heb. 10:25; Zec. 14:16-17). And doubtless, it should be used to attain holiness, as may be proved:

*Firstly*, in general, because God ordinarily communicates all salvation to a people, by or in a church — either by taking them into fellowship, or proclaiming the light of truth by His churches to the world. A church is the temple of God, where God dwells (1Tim. 3:15). He has placed His name and salvation there, as in Jerusalem of old (Joel 2:32; 2Chr. 6:5-6). He has given to His churches those officers and ordinances by which He converts others (1Cor. 12:28). His springs or fountains are there (Psa. 87:7). He makes the several members of a church instruments to convey His grace and fullness from one to another, just 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 who would be saved should join a church. Those prosper who love the church, so as to stand in its gates and unite as members, brethren, and companions (Psa. 122:2, 4, 6). And wrath is denounced against those who are not members of it, at least, of the *mystical* body. They cannot have God as their Father, who do not have the church for their mother (Song. 1:7-8). This makes those who desire fellowship with God, take hold of the skirts of His people (Zec. 8:23).

*Secondly*, in particular, fellowship with the saints conduces to holiness in many ways. By the manifold helps to holiness which are received thereby, such as:

(1). The Word and sacraments (Acts 2:42; Isa. 2:3; Mat. 28:19-20); and all the ministerial office and labor in watching our souls (Heb. 13:17; 1The. 5:12-13; Isa. 25:6). None of these helps can be enjoyed without the fellowship of saints with each other. If believers had been able to stand singly by themselves, and had not maintained fellowship with each other for mutual assistance and the common good, then none of these things could have continued. Nor could any believer have been extant at this day, in an ordinary way — even the very name of *believers* would have been abolished.

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

(3). Mutual admonition, instruction, and consolation, to help each other when they are ready to fall, and to promote the good work in each other (1The. 5:14). "He that walks with wise men, shall be wise" (Prov. 13:20). "Woe to him who is alone when he falls" (see Ecc. 4:9-12). In church-fellowship there are many helpers, and many to watch. Soldiers have their security in being in a company; and the church is compared to an "army with banners" (Song. 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). Indeed, the wounds and reproofs of the righteous are like precious balm (Psa. 141:5).

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

(5). Excommunication, when offences are exceedingly heinous, or men continue obstinately in sin. This ordinance is appointed for the “destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved” (1Cor. 5:5). It is better, and more hopeful, to be cast out by the church for 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 is evident. It doesn’t absolutely abolish the title and relation of a brother and church member, even though it judges someone to be an unnatural brother, and a pernicious member at present, not fit for acts of communion. Besides, *admonition* is still to be afforded (2The. 3:15); and any means are to be used that may serve to cure and restore him. The church reaches out a hand to help such a person, even though it doesn’t join hands in fellowship with him — or it communicates *to* him, not *with* him. Yet, if he doesn’t have so much grace as to repent, “it would have been better if he had never known the way of righteousness” (2Pet. 2:21).

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

*Thirdly*, by those holy duties that are required and pertain to this fellowship and communion. All acts that belong to this fellowship are holy, such as hearing, receiving the sacrament, prayer, mutual admonitions, etc. I will consider some such holy acts, by which we are doers rather than receivers, and which we perform towards others, such as:

(1). Godly discourse, teaching, admonishing, comforting others in Christ, which we cannot perform in others, as we can towards those with whom we have strict fellowship in Christ. Others, like swine, trample those jewels underfoot; and saints are therefore 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 is to be practiced with them (Mal. 3:16), and is greatly to the advantage of holiness (Prov. 11:25).

(2). In helping, succoring, 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 outside, we do good only *for* Christ’s sake, but not *to* Christ (Mat. 25:35-46; Psa. 16:2-3). We have advantage, in general, to do all duties that belong to us as members of Christ, to our fellow members; which we cannot do if we are separate from them. Just as a natural member cannot perform its office to other members, if it is separate from them.

SECONDLY, *the means must be used rightly, for attaining holiness only in Christ.*

1. One rule is “Don’t trust in church membership,” or in churches, as if this or that relation in fellowship commended you to God of itself. Church communion is only a help to fellowship with Christ, and to walking in the duties of that fellowship. The Israelites stumbled at Christ by trusting in their carnal privileges, and set them in opposition to Christ; whereas, these should have made them subservient to Christ. Confidence in them should have been abandoned, as Paul’s example teaches (Phi. 3:3-5, etc.). We must not glory in Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, but in Christ; otherwise we glory in the flesh, and in men (1Cor. 1:12-13; 3:21). Trusting in church privileges is an inlet to formality and licentiousness (Jer. 7:4, 8-10), and from there comes the corruption of churches (Isa. 1:10; 2Tim. 2:20).

2. Follow no church any further than you may follow it in the way of Christ. And keep fellowship with it only on account of Christ — because it follows Christ, and has fellowship with Christ (1Joh.

1:3; Zec. 8:23). If a church revolts from Christ, we must not follow it, however ancient it may be — just as the Israelite church was not to be followed when it persecuted Christ and His apostles. Many, by adhering to that church, fell from Christ (Phi. 3:6; Acts 6:13-14; 21:28). We are indeed to hear the church, but not every church that calls itself so; and none any further than it speaks as a true church, according to the voice of the Shepherd (Joh. 10:27). We must subject ourselves to ministers of Christ, and stewards of His mysteries (1Cor. 4:1); but we must submit ourselves *first* to Christ absolutely, and to the church according to the will of Christ (2Cor. 8:5).

Our fear must not be taught by the precepts of men (Mat. 15). The doctrines of any body of men are to be tried by Scripture, whatever authority they pretend to (Acts 17:11). An unlimited following of 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* (1Cor. 1:13).

3. Don't think 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 yourself to Christ, and learned the duty of communion, give yourself up to a church of Christ, though you find much weakness and inability there. For church ordinances of special communion, serve to strengthen you. How can you get heat, being alone? As soon as they were converted, the disciples embraced all fellowship (Acts 2:42). And churches, to advance holiness in themselves and others, must be willing to receive Christ's weak ones, and to feed His *lambs* as well as the better-grown *sheep*, and bear them on their sides (Isa. 66:12). How else will Christ's weak ones grow strong by that nourishment that other parts supply? Those expecting Christians to grow from church-fellowship, to as high a degree of grace as those who are in pastures of tender grass,<sup>1</sup> are unreasonable; especially if they are unwilling to receive any they are likely to have occasion to bear with, since forbearing and long-suffering are great duties of church-fellowship (Eph. 4:2-3; Rom. 14:1). The weakest have the most need to be strengthened by church communion; 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 (1Cor. 12:23, 24), but put more honor and decorum on them. Admission into the churches in apostolic times was gained upon their profession, with a show of seriousness — even though tares got in among the wheat, and many scandals arose to the reproach of the ways of Christ. The greatest strictness will not keep out all hypocrites; yet the best care must be taken so far as not to hinder any who have the least truth of grace.

4. Keep communion with a church for the sake of communion with Christ (1Joh. 1:3; Zec. 8:23). Therefore, you must keep communion in Christ's pure ways only; and in them, seek Christ by faith. In the enjoyment of those advantages, you may receive and act the godliness and holiness mentioned before, and aim at spiritual flourishing and growth in grace. Therefore, choose fellowship with the most spiritual churches. Judge churches and men according to the rule of the new creature (2Cor. 5:16-17), and test them (Rev. 2:2; 3:9); otherwise a church may corrupt you. See that your communion answers its end, tending to your edification, not your destruction. You ought to take all the advantages of it, not only in the church where you are a member, but by communion with other churches, as providence occasionally casts you among them. For your communion with a particular church obliges you to communion with all churches of Christ in His ways, as you are called to it (1Cor. 10:17). It is an abuse to say, "We are members of a church in London, and therefore we refuse fellowship with a church in the country," seeing that, if we are members of Christ, we are members of one another, whether individual persons or churches.

And endeavor to join in fellowship with the godly of the place where you live, so that you may have more frequent and constant communion. Onesimus, though converted at Rome, must be a member of the church of the Colossians, because he lived there (Col. 4:9, cf. Philem. 10). The

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<sup>1</sup> Those raised in Christian homes, or in the church, have an advantage over those who knew nothing of Christ before their conversion. Fellowship on its own, cannot match individual instruction and mentorship. — WHG

union of the saints together in distant societies, according to the places where they lived, was the apostolic practice; and it 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, who seek a communion where they cannot have this benefit.

I only add to this topic, 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 them to invite others to their communion; and tyranny to compel them. Every Christian is bound to seek a better church-fellowship by reformation; and those who do so, are the best sons of Christ's church. They inquire, "Is this the way to enjoy Christ?" — church communion being appointed the means in which to enjoy Christ.

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

## DIRECTION XIV

*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.*

### EXPLICATION

This direction may serve as an epilogue or conclusion, by stirring us up to a lively and cheerful embracing of those Gospel rules mentioned before, by several weighty motives. Many are kept from seeking godliness because they don't know the way to it. Or the way 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 that is so good and excellent, that those who have the true knowledge of it, and heartily desire to be godly, cannot dislike it. I will show the excellence of it in several particulars. But you should first call to mind what is the way that I have taught, which is union and fellowship with Christ, by faith in Christ, as revealed in the Gospel — not by the law, or in a natural condition, or by thinking to get it before we come to Christ, or to procure Christ by it. These would be striving against the stream. Rather, we must first apply Christ and His salvation to ourselves for our comfort, and that is by confident faith; then we walk by that faith, according to the new man, *in Christ*, and not in a natural condition; and we rightly use all means of holiness for this end. Now, this is an excellent and advantageous way, as appears by the following desirable properties of it.

*First*, it has this property: that *it tends to the abasement of all flesh, and the exaltation of God alone*, in His grace and power through Christ. And so it is agreeable to God's design in all His works, and the end He aims at (Rom. 11:6; Isa. 2:17; Eze. 36:21-23, 31-32; Psa. 145:4). It is a fit means for attaining the end that we ought to aim at in the first place, which is the hallowing, sanctifying, and glorifying of God's name in all things. It is the first and chief petition (Mat. 6:9); it is the end of all our actions (1Cor. 10:31); and it was the end of giving the law (Rom. 3:19-20). God made all things for Christ, and He would have Christ have the preeminence in all (Col. 1:17-18), so that the Father may be glorified in the Son (Joh. 14:13). And this property of the way, is a great argument to prove that it is the way of God, and that it has the character of His image stamped on it. We may say that it is like Him, and it is a way according to His heart, because Christ proves His doctrine to be of God by this same argument (Joh. 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; 1Cor. 1:29-31; 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 by any power of the flesh; and that God will not enable us to do anything that way (Rom. 7:18), no matter how our nature is stirred up by the law, or by natural helps (Gal. 3:11, 21). And so it serves to work self-loathing and abasement, and to make us look at 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, even 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 (Acts 17:28). And they act by His universal support and maintenance of nature in its being and activity (Heb. 1:3); thus 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. They act not by their own power, but by the power of the Spirit of Christ in them, as

closely united to them, and being the living temples of His Spirit. Thus, Christ is the immediate principal agent of all their good works; and they are properly Christ's works, 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 act, and are acted (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:16-17; Col. 1:11). Thus, we are to ascribe all our works to God in Christ, and thank Him for them as free gifts (1Cor. 15:10; Phi. 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 not only belongs to Him, which the Pharisee could not help but ascribe to Him (Luk. 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 produce 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 (2Cor. 1:20).

*Secondly*, it has this property: that it *consists well with other doctrines of the Gospel*, which contrary errors do not. Hence, this is the way to confirm us in many other points of the Gospel. And therefore it appears to be true by its harmony with other truths, and its fit linking with them in the same golden chain of the mystery of godliness; and it evidences them to be true by their harmony with it. I have shown that men's mistaking the true way of sanctification is the cause of perverting the Scripture in other points of faith. It is the cause of declining from the truth to Popish, Socinian, and Arminian tenets, because men cannot seriously take for truth, what they judge is not 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 will instance this in some truths confirmed by it.

1. It confirms the doctrine of *ORIGINAL SIN* — not only the guilt of Adam's sin and of a corrupt nature, but utter impotency to do spiritual good, and proneness to sin, which is death to God, and to all people according to nature (Psa. 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 it, they will excuse their sins by it, be apt to despair of all striving to do good works, abandon all endeavors, and grow licentious. They think it would be more conducive to godliness, to hold and teach that there is no original sin or corruption derived from Adam; or at least, that it has ended either in the world by universal redemption, or in the church by baptism. And that free will has been restored, whereby people are able to incline themselves to do good; thus men may be more encouraged to set up good works, and their neglect is made inexcusable.

All this is indeed forcible against seeking and endeavoring for holiness by free will and the power of nature, which is the way of endeavoring which I directed you to *avoid*. Now, if there were no new way to holiness since the Fall, then original sin might make us despair. But there is a new birth, a new heart, and a new creature. And therefore we have directed you to seek holiness by the Spirit of Christ, and freely willing good by a spiritual power, as new creatures, partakers of a divine nature in Christ. Indeed, it is *necessary* to know the first Adam so that we may know the second (Rom. 5:12); and to believe in the Fall and original sin, so that we may be stirred up to fly to Christ *by faith* for holiness as a free gift, knowing that we cannot attain it by our own power and free will (2Cor. 1:9; Mat. 9:12-13; Rom. 7:24-25; 2Cor. 3:5; Eph. 5:14). There would be no need of a new man or a new creation, if the old were not without strength and life (Joh. 3:5-6; Eph. 2:8). But original deadness cannot hinder God's working faith, and hungering and thirsting after Christ, by the Spirit through the Gospel, in those whom God chooses to walk



holily and blamelessly before Him in love (1The. 1:4-5; Acts 26:18). 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 the doctrine of *PREDESTINATION*, which many deny. They say, by telling men that all events are predetermined, it dissuades them from endeavoring, as fruitless. This argument would be more forcible against endeavors by the power of our own free will, but not at all against endeavors for holiness by the operation of God, who gives us faith and all holiness by His own Spirit working in us through Christ. We are to trust in Christ for the grace of the elect, and God's good-will towards men (Mat. 3 17; Luk. 2:14; Psa. 106:4-5). Election by grace destroys seeking salvation by *works*, but not by *grace* (Rom. 11:5-6). Here we are taught to seek 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. This may move us to desire holiness by the will of God (Rom. 9:16; Psa. 110:3). And since it appears by this doctrine of sanctification through Christ, that we are God's workmanship as to all the good worked in us (Phi. 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 doesn't extend to good works (Acts 15:18, cf. 36). Thus man's natural free will may well consist with God's decree. As in paradise, *Decretum radix contingentiae*.<sup>1</sup>

3. It confirms 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 favor by the righteousness of the act, but only a hand to receive the gift, or as actually eating and drinking Christ, rather than any kind of condition entitling us to Him as our food. Many hate this great doctrine of the Gospel, as breaking the strongest bonds of holiness, and opening a way to all licentiousness. For they reckon that the conditionality of works to attain God's favor and avoid His wrath, and their necessity to salvation, are the most necessary and effectual motivations to all holiness; and they think that the other doctrine opens the floodgates to licentiousness. Truly, this consideration would have some weight if people were brought to holiness by moral persuasion, and their natural endeavors were stirred up by the terms of the law, and by slavish fears and mercenary hopes. For the force of these motives would be altogether enervated by the doctrine of justification by free grace.

But I have already shown that 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 endeavors to work holiness in ourselves, but rather by faith in Christ's death and resurrection — the same means by which we are justified. And that the urging of the law stirs up sin; and that freedom from the law is necessary to all holiness, as the apostle teaches in Romans 6:11, 14; and 7:4-5. This way of sanctification confirms the doctrine of justification by faith, as the apostle informs us in Romans 8:1. For if we are sanctified, and so restored to the image of God and life by the Spirit, *through faith*, then it is evident that God has taken us into His favor and pardoned our sins by that same faith, *without the law*. Otherwise we would not have the resulting fruits and effects of His favor to our eternal salvation (Rom. 8:2).<sup>2</sup> Indeed, His justice would not allow Him to give life without works, if we were not made righteous in Christ by the same faith. And we cannot trust to have holiness freely given to us by Christ upon any rational ground, unless we can also trust in the same Christ for free reconciliation and forgiveness of sins for our justification. Nor can guilty, cursed creatures, who cannot work because of their deadness under the curse, be brought to a rational love of God, unless they apprehend His loving them first *freely*, and without works (1Joh. 4:19).

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<sup>1</sup> That is, *The root of the Decree is contingent*.

<sup>2</sup> Rom 8:2 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom 5:16 "And the gift is not like *that which came* through the one who sinned. For the judgment *which came* from one *offense* resulted in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses resulted in justification."

The great objection and reason for so many controversies and books written about this, is that they think men will trust that they are saved, no matter how they live. But sanctification is an *effect* of justification, and flows from the same grace. We trust for them both by the same faith, —for justification *in order for* sanctification. Saving faith, however confident it is, does not tend to licentiousness, but to holiness. We grant that justification by grace destroys holiness by *legal* endeavors, but not by *grace*. So there is no need to live a Papist, and die an Antinomian.

4. It confirms the doctrine of *real UNION with Christ*, which is so plentifully held out in Scripture. Some think this doctrine is a vain notion, and cannot endure it because they think it doesn't work holiness, but presumption. Whereas I have shown that it is absolutely necessary for the enjoyment of spiritual life and holiness, which are treasured up in Christ — so inseparably, that we cannot have them without a real union with Him (2Cor. 13:5; 1Joh. 5:12; Joh. 6:53; 15:5; 1Cor. 1:30; Col. 3:11). The members and branches cannot live without union with the Vine and Head; nor can the stones be part of the living temple unless they are really joined, mediately or immediately, to the Cornerstone.

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

*Thirdly*, it has this excellent property: that it is the never-failing, effectually powerful, solely sufficient, and *sure way to attain true holiness*. Those who 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, lest you die (2Kng 7:1-9; Isa. 55:2-7). All other ways either stir up sin, or increase despair in you, as seeking holiness by the law, and working under the curse will do. It only breeds slavish and hypocritical obedience at best, and *restrains* sin instead of *mortifying* it (Gal. 4:25). The Jews sought another way and could not attain it (Rom. 9). All who seek it another way will lie down in sorrow (Isa. 50:11). And that is true,

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); it gives us no life by its obligation (Gal. 3:21); and we cannot work holiness in ourselves (Rom. 5:6). So that a humbled 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. There is no seeking a new nature from the law; for it bids us to make brick without straw; and it says to the cripple, "Walk," without giving him any strength.

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

*Fourthly*, it is a *most pleasant way* for those who are in it (Prov. 3:17), in several respects.

1. *It is a very plain way*, easily found, for someone who sees his own deadness under the law, and who is so renewed in the spirit of his mind, as to know and be persuaded of the truth of the Gospel. Though they may be troubled and pestered with many legal thoughts and workings, 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 in it” (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 as our guide in this way (1Joh. 2:27; Joh. 16:13). So that we need not be filled with such distracting thoughts about knowing our way, as legal spirits are distracted about thousands of cases of conscience, which so multiply that they despair of finding the way of religion, because of these various doubts and manifold intricacies. Here we may be sure that God will so far teach us our duties, that we won’t be misled by error, so as to continue in it to destruction (Psa. 25:8, 9, 14). What a trouble it is to a traveller, to doubt his way and be without a guide, when his business is of great importance, upon life and death! It is heart-breaking. But those who are in this way may be sure that, though they sometimes err, they will not err destructively, but will discern their way again (Gal. 5:7, 10).

2. *It is easy for those who walk in it, by the Spirit*, though it is difficult to get into it because of the opposition of the flesh or the 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. Whoever will, may come, take it, and drink freely; nothing is required but a willing mind (Joh. 7:38; Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17). But the law is an intolerable burden if duty is laid upon us by its terms (Mat. 23:4; Acts 15:10). We are not left in this way to conquer lusts by our own endeavors, which is a hopeless task. But what is duty, is *given*, and the law is turned into *promises* (Heb. 8:6-13; Eze. 36:25-26; Jer. 31:33; 32:40). We now have all in Christ (Col. 3:11; 2:9, 10, 15, 17). This is a universal medicine, instead of a thousand. How pleasant this free gift of holiness would be to us, if we knew our own wants, inabilities, and sinfulness! How ready some are to toil continually, and macerate their bodies in a melancholy legal way, to get holiness, rather than perish forever! And therefore, how ready we should be, when it is only *take* and *have*: believe, and be sanctified and saved! (2Kng 5:13). Christ’s burden is made light by His Spirit’s bearing it (Mat. 11:30). There is 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 about salvation that people have, arise from putting some condition of works between Christ and themselves, as made apparent in this discourse. But our walking in this way is *by faith*, which rejects such fears and doubts (Joh. 14:1; Mar. 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 (1Joh. 2:1-2; Phi. 4:6-7). Faith lays hold on infinite grace, mercy, and power to secure us: “The Lord is the keeper, and shade at the right hand” (Psa. 121:5). Free and powerful grace answers all objections.

4. *It is a way that is paved with love*, like Solomon’s chariot (Song. 3:10). We are to set God’s loving-kindness and all the gifts of His love steadily before our eyes (Psa. 26:3); and set Christ’s death, resurrection, and intercession before our eyes — which excite peace, joy, hope, and love (Rom. 15:13; Isa. 35:10). You must believe for your justification, adoption, the gift of the Spirit, and a future inheritance; for your death and resurrection with Christ. In believing for these things, your whole way is adorned with flowers, and it 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 or guide, to be our comforter, and not a spirit of bondage (Rom. 8:15). Peace and joy are great duties in this way (Phi. 4:4-6). God doesn’t drive us on with whips and terrors, or by the rod of the schoolmaster, the Law. Rather, He leads us, and wins us to walk in His ways, by allurements (Song. 1:3; Hos. 11:3-4). See such allurements in 2Cor. 5:15; 7:1; and Rom. 12:1.

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

*Fifthly*, it is a *high exalted way*, above all other ways. The prophet Habakkuk is exalted to this way 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 God being his strength by faith, "his feet will be as hinds' feet, and he will walk on 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 do not live after the flesh, but after the Spirit," and Christ is 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 (2Cor. 6:16, 18). Therefore our works are of a higher price and excellence than the works of others, because they are "wrought in God" (Joh. 3:21), and are the fruits of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:23; Phi. 1:11). And we may know that they are accepted and good, by our Gospel principles, which others do not have (Rom. 7:6).

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

3. We walk in an honorable state with God, and on honorable terms — not as guilty creatures, in order to get our pardon by works; not as bond-servants, in order to earn our food 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 those 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; Joh. 8:35-36). It is a kingly way; the law is a royal law to us, a law of liberty and our privilege — not a bond and yoke of compulsion.

4. It is the way only of those who are honorable and precious in the eyes of the Lord, even His elect and redeemed ones, whose special privilege it is to walk in it: "No unclean beast goes there" (Isa. 35:8-9). No carnal man can walk in this way, but only those who are taught of God (Joh. 6:44-46). Nor would it have come into their hearts without divine revelation.

5. Preparing this way cost Christ very dearly. It is a *costly* way (Heb. 10:19-20; 1Pet. 3:18).

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

7. It is the way to perfection. It leads to that holiness which, in a while, will be absolutely perfect. It differs from the holiness of heaven only in the degree and manner of its manifestation. *There* the saints live by the same Spirit; and the same God is all in all (1Cor. 15:28; Joh. 4:14); and they have the image of the same spiritual man (1Cor. 15:49). *Here* we have but "the first-fruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23); and we "live by faith, and not by sight" (2Cor. 5:7); and we are "not full-grown in Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

*Sanctification in Christ is glorification begun; just 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 who believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:23-26).*

The Apostle, in his preceding discourse, having confuted and overthrown all justification by works, either of Jew or Gentile, is now *proving* what he asserted in verses 21 and 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 in Jesus Christ to all, and upon all those who believe; for there is no difference.” (Rom. 3:21-22)

This shows that now, in Gospel times, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; but in the justification of both, the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. He proves this by showing what the Gospel teaches concerning the way of justification. For the Gospel alone reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16-17):

“I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.” <sup>1</sup>

So the words are a declaration of the Gospel way of justification by the righteousness of God. And that is done so clearly and fully, and the benefit spoken of is 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 reckoned to be *evangelium evangelii*,<sup>2</sup> a principal part of the written Gospel, briefly and yet fully expressing this excellent point more than any other text.

Note particularly in the words, the subject that is 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*; sanctification is *making holy*; glorification is *making glorious*. But it is not *making just* by the infusion of grace and holiness into a person, as the Papists teach — confounding justification and sanctification together. Rather, it is *making just* in a trial and judgement, by a radical sentence that discharges guilt, and frees from blame and accusation. It is approving, judging, owning, and pronouncing a person to be righteous. Use alters the signification, from the notation.<sup>3</sup> It is a juridical word, or law term, referring to trial and judgement: “With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged by you, or by man’s judgement; indeed, I don’t judge myself. For I know nothing by myself, and yet I am not hereby justified: but He who judges me is the Lord” (1Cor. 4:3-4).

And thus justification is opposed to condemnation in judgement: “If there is 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” (Deu. 25:1). And, “By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned” (Mat. 12:37). Justification is opposed both to accusation and condemnation: “Who shall lay anything 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 my own ways before him... I have ordered my cause; I know that I

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, “out of faith into faith.”

<sup>2</sup> The good news of the Gospel.

<sup>3</sup> Or the *connotation* from the *denotation*; how and when a word is used, may impart a special meaning to it.

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 passing the 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” (1Kng 8:32). In this sense, it is a sin to justify the wicked (Isa. 5:23; Prov. 17:15; Job 27:5). Actions must already exist, and be brought to trial, so that they may be justified (Job 33:32; Isa. 43:9, 26).

Justice or righteousness does not consist in the intrinsic nature of an action, but in its agreement to a rule of judgement. Thus, actions are called *just* and *righteous*, by an extrinsic denomination, with relation to God’s rule of judging. And this righteousness appears by testing the action against the rule, and making an estimation of it. This estimate is either approving or disapproving, justifying or condemning, finding it to be sin or no sin, or a breach of the law. We may say this about the righteousness of persons, with reference to such habits or actings. And because the righteousness of righteous persons appears when they are brought to trial and judgement, they are then said 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). In the same sense, we who are adopted at present, are said to wait for our adoption; that is, for the manifestation of it (Rom. 8:23).

And thus, even God is said to be justified, when we judge about His actions as we should, and deem them righteous (Job. 32:2; Psalms. 51:4; Luke. 7:29) — even though nothing can be added to the infinite righteousness of God. Wisdom is said to be “justified by her children” (Mat. 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. That is how the word is used in the text, and so too in matters of judicature throughout the Scripture. Indeed, some contend against the Papists, that nowhere in Scripture is it used otherwise, except by a trope <sup>1</sup> borrowed from this as the proper sense. And in the text, beyond all doubt, it means being deemed and accounted *just* in the sight of God. For only such a justification is treated here, as apparent in the text, and before (Rom. 3:19-20). I have taken longer to explain the sense of the word, because mistaking it, by reason of its composition, occasioned that popish error by which the benefit signified by it is obscured (indeed, overthrown); so that we need to contend here for the sense of the word.

In the text (Rom. 3:23-26), we have the following eight things:

1. The persons justified —
  - (i) Sinners;
  - (ii) Those sinners of all sorts who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles.
2. The justifier, or *efficient* cause — God.
3. The *impulsive* cause — grace.
4. The means effecting it, or the *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 these, 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 will make use of them altogether.*

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<sup>1</sup> Trope: language used in a figurative or nonliteral sense.

**OBSERV. I.** “They who are justified, are sinners, those who have come short of the glory of God,” that is, short of God’s approval (Joh. 5:44); of God’s image of holiness (2Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24); of eternal happiness (1The. 2:12; Rom. 5:2; 2Cor. 4:17).

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

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 acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1Tim. 1:15). “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mat. 9:13). “The Son of man is come to save what was lost” (Mat. 18:11). And God must be believed unto salvation, as a God who justifies the ungodly; he must believe as “one who does not work, on Him who justifies the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5).

**OBSERV. II.** “Sinners of all sorts, all who believe, without difference — whether Jews or Gentiles — are the subjects of this justification.” This is the scope of the apostle, to show that just as Jews and Gentiles were universally condemned by the light and law of nature, or by the written law, so the righteousness of God is upon all those who 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 those who were proselytes to the law and circumcision. And therefore, the apostle Paul vehemently urged it (Rom. 10:11-12).<sup>1</sup> And it was a point newly revealed to the apostles, that the Gentiles might be accepted without becoming Jews, and it was 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 breaking the law, they had as much need of free justification as the Gentiles, and no worthiness above the Gentiles by their works; rather, they were 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 the Jews (Rom. 3:29), as He promised (Rom. 4:9, 12, 13; Gal. 3:8; Isa. 19:25; Zec. 14:9).

3. Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, that he might be the father of those who believe, though uncircumcised, so 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 alike are capable of it.

**OBSERV. III.** “The justifier, or efficient cause of justification, is God.” It is an act of God. “It is God who justifies” (Rom. 8:33). He alone can justify authoritatively and irreversibly.

1. Because He is the lawgiver, and has power to save and destroy (Jam. 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 merely by ourselves (1Cor. 4:3-4).

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<sup>1</sup> Rom 10:11-12 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

2, To Him is owed the debt of suffering for sin, and acting righteousness; and therefore, He alone can give a discharge for payment, or release the debtor (Psa. 51:4; Mar. 2:7).

**OBSERV. IV.** “God justifies souls freely by His grace” — by His grace! (Rom. 3:24) <sup>1</sup> One of these expressions (either *freely*, or *by grace*) would have been enough, but redoubling it shows the importance of the truth, to waken our attention more. Here is the impulsive cause of justification, and His free manner of bestowing it accordingly. And this signifies God’s free, undeserved favor, in opposition to any works of our own righteousness by which it might be challenged as a debt to us: “Now to him who works, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Rom. 4:4). “If by grace, then is it no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is by works, then is it no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work” (Rom. 11:6). “By grace you are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not by works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). “Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. But now it is made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ” (2Tim. 1:9-10). Grace is mercy and love shown 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 there anything in us, except what might move God to condemn us; for we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23; Eph. 2:3; Eze. 16:6).

2. Because God would remove 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). And so, Rom. 3:27.<sup>2</sup>

**OBSERV. 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, a deliverance that is made by paying a price. And so the words *redeem* and *redemption* are frequently used (Exo. 13:13; Num. 3:48, 49, 51; Lev. 25:24, 51-52; Jer. 32:7-8; Neh. 5:8). It is borrowed from this proper signification, to signify a deliverance made *without* price (Luk. 21:28; Eph. 1:14; 4:30); or rather, by a metonymy <sup>3</sup> of the *cause*, it is put for the highest *effect*, which is the state of glory. So that, the state of glory is called “redemption,” being the completing and crowning effect of Christ’s redemption; and therefore it is called the “purchased possession” (Eph. 1:14).

By a *propitiation*, is meant that which appeases the wrath of God for sin, and wins His favor. And this propitiation of Christ is typified in two ways: 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, in which the law was placed. And the blood of the sacrifices for atonement was sprinkled by the high priest before it. This mercy-seat was a sign of God’s favor to a sinful people, in residing among them; and it was called the *hilasterion*, that is, the *propitiation* (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, from wrath and curse. “He gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity” (Tit. 2:14). He gave Himself to death for us; he was delivered for our offences; His death was

<sup>1</sup> The Greek phrase in the original, and the few others Marshall had, added little, and are left out. — WHG

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 3:27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.

<sup>3</sup> Substituting the name of an attribute or feature for the name of the thing itself (as in ‘they counted heads’).



the price of our redemption, that we might be justified in God's sight. God gave Him up to death, He did not spare Him, "that we might be righteousness" (2Cor. 5:21). "He gave His own life a ransom for many" (1Cor. 1:30; Mat. 20:28; 1Tim. 2:6). "He bought us with this price" (1Cor. 6:20). "He did not redeem us with silver and gold, but with His precious blood, as of a lamb without spot" (1Pet. 1:18-19; 2Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9). "He suffered the penalty due to us for sin" (1Pet. 2:24). "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (Gal. 3:13). "He was made a curse for us," and thereby redeemed us from the curse of the law. And that He might be made a curse, He was made sin for us (2Cor. 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 (Joh. 14:31; Heb. 10:7); and His obedience was for our justification. Compare Romans 5:10 with Philippians 3:8-9. So Christ satisfied both our debt of righteousness and our debt of punishment — for our faultiness, taint of sin, and lack of righteousness, as well as for our guilt, and liability 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 (2Cor. 8:9). We are righteous by Him, just as we were guilty by Adam (Rom. 5:12).

2. God accepted this price as a satisfaction of His justice, which He showed in raising Christ from the dead, and thus acquitting Him from all our sins: "He was justified in the Spirit" for us (1Tim. 3:16); "raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). "It is God who justifies: who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died; or rather, who is risen from the dead" (Rom. 8:33-34). And, "By one offering He has perfected forever those who are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). "This sacrifice was a sweet-smelling savor to God" (Eph. 5:2). If Christ had sunk under the weight of our sins, and not been raised, the payment would not have been "finished," and the debt would not have been discharged: "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father" (Joh. 16:10).

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

**OBSERV. VI.** "The formal cause of justification, or what it consists in, is the remission of sins; that is, not only are the guilt and punishment removed, but the fault; because it is a pardon grounded on justice, which also clears the fault. 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 (justification and remission) are used as equivalent: "Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all who believe are justified," etc. (Acts 13:38-39; Rom. 4:6-8; 2Cor. 5:19, 21; Rom. 5:17). This is through the blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Mat. 26:28).

**OBSERV. 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 believing in Christ, that we may be justified by Him: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in 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, as though earning and procuring our justification by its work, for this would have been justification by works, as under the law. That

is diametrically opposite to *grace*, and *free gift* — which excludes all consideration of any works of ours to be our righteousness, under any name or diminutive terms whatsoever; whether you call it *legal* or *evangelical*, even if you reckon it no more than the payment of a peppercorn (Rom. 11:6). Faith in this case is accounted *not working* (Rom. 4:5).<sup>1</sup> And it is not a faith that stands in place of the righteousness of the law; but it is the righteousness of Christ, which satisfies for what we should have done or suffered, as was 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, because of the righteousness received by it. To be justified by faith, and by Christ, is the same (Gal. 3:8; Rom. 5:19). By faith we receive remission of sins (Acts 26:18; 10:43). Its effect is the *receiving* of justification, not the *working* of it. It is like a man who is said to be maintained by his hands, or nourished by his mouth, when those only receive what nourishes, namely, his food and drink. The cup is put for the liquor in the cup (1Cor. 11:26-27). See Romans 1:17 and 3:22. Christ is in us by faith (Eph. 3:17); we thus receive, eat, and drink Him (Joh. 1:12; 6:51, 53, 54).

4. This faith is to be understood as *exclusive* of all our works for justification. We defend, *against* the Papists, justification by faith alone. There is nothing more fully expressed in the phrases of Scripture (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16; Phi. 3:8-9; Rom. 4:16).

5. We must understand faith in the *full* sense, of receiving remission of the fault, as well as of the punishment. We believe God does not account the fault to us of the least sin. And where faith is said to be accounted for righteousness, it is because of the *object* that faith receives (Rom. 4:5-8; 2Cor. 5:19, 21). We believe Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, just as our sins are imputed to Him, or else we don't receive remission of sins by believing. This is contrary to charging us with sin and condemnation, because *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 we have this in receiving Christ's redemption and bloodshed (Eph. 1:7; Mat. 26:28).

**OBSERV. VIII.** "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" — that is, 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; Mat. 18:26). The ground of these pardons is now revealed by Christ's coming (Isa. 51:5-6; 56:1; Dan. 9:24; 2Tim. 1:9-10), so that those pardons may be no blemish to the justice of God, which is now satisfied (Exo. 34:7; Psa. 85:10).

1. By this *righteousness* is meant that *righteousness of God* mentioned in the proposition of Romans 3:21-22.<sup>2</sup> The text is but a confirmation of this — namely, that it is the righteousness of God. It is not His essential righteousness, which is an essential property of God; but the righteousness which is upon all those who believe — *Christ's righteousness*, which is the end of the law (Rom. 10:3-4). And therefore it is called *God's righteousness*; that which Christ wrought for us, which is given to us, and we receive by faith. It is that by which Christ answered the law for us; and by which, as the price, He redeemed us. It is called *God's righteousness*, because it is of God's working, and it alone has God's acceptance and approval — just as Christ is called the *Lamb of God*, because God provided Him and accepts Him as an offering (Joh. 1:29). On the same 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 (Phi. 2:6, 8). And this is that righteousness which the Apostle opposes to his own — that which is in Christ; and which had had through faith. And

<sup>1</sup> To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.

<sup>2</sup> Rom 3:21-22 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

this is the righteousness of God here, and in other places; it is “the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi. 3:9).

2. God aimed at declaring, in Gospel times, His righteousness in forgiving sins that were past, in the time of God’s forbearance under the Old Testament (Rom. 3:25); and also in justifying those who 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; it was only foreshadowed 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 a present payment and satisfaction. He had patience, and did not exact the debt until Christ had paid it all (Mat. 18:26). But back then, God promised that He would reveal His righteousness in due time (Isa. 56:1; 51:5-6; Psa. 98:2; Dan. 9:24). And He has done this by the appearance of Christ (2Tim. 1:10).

**OBSERV. 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 who believes in Jesus.” Here, the essential property of God is exalted, and appears glorious, in justifying by the aforementioned righteousness of God.

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

2. God would have it appear that He alone is just. And therefore He saves us, not by our own righteousness, but by His — which is indeed 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 He is our justifier by way of procurement, as well as by way of judgement; and so He justifies 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 alone (1Cor. 1:30-31).

**Use I.** It serves for instruction — by way of encouragement and consolation — that the great happiness of those who are in Christ, is that their sins are forgiven, and they are accounted just in the sight of the Judge of all 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. “Blessed is the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works” (Rom. 4:6). It is such an extensive blessedness, in regard to the spiritual part, that Abraham had, comprehending all spiritual blessings in Christ. For those who 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 those who are made just by faith, and justified through that righteousness, 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). “Who shall lay anything to their charge, or be allowed to bring at God’s tribunal, any indictment, charge, or accusation against them? It is God who justifies them; and Christ died and rose again. They are redeemed from among men, being the first fruits to God and the Lamb. In their mouth there is no guile; and they are without fault 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, from 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, who delivered us from the wrath to come” (1The. 1:10). “You have taken away all Your wrath: You have turned Yourself from the fierceness of Your anger” (Psa. 85:3,

see vv. 5, 6). The wrath of God is an insupportable burden, and the foundation of all miseries. This foundation is razed, and a foundation of blessedness is laid, by which we have peace with God, and are fully reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1-2; 2Cor. 5:18-19). “You who once were 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 they 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 (2Cor. 3:6-9); from Mount Sinai, which engenders us to bondage (Gal. 4:24).

4. Hence they are delivered from a condemning conscience, which otherwise would still gnaw them like a worm. “If the blood of bulls and goats, and ashes of a 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 makes all services and duties dead works, unfit for the service of the living God. It is the blood of Christ, applied by faith, that removes the foulness of guilt from the conscience. Therefore the blood of Christ has the only efficacy to remove “the conscience of sin” (Heb. 10:1-4, etc.). Hence they come to have a good conscience (1Pet. 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 who were justified 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 they could not have a lasting delivery of their consciences from guilt. Here it is far otherwise; here is an effectual, complete, and perpetual redemption, reaching the conscience of the sinner, and purging away all sins — past, present, and to come (1Joh. 1:7).

6. It is a righteousness of infinite value, because it is the righteousness of one who 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 (1Cor. 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 (Psa. 130:7). It must be most plentiful, because it is 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 (Psa. 103:11-12).

7. God’s grace and justice are both engaged on our behalf in this righteousness. Justice is terrible, and it 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; it joins in with grace. And instead of pleading *against* us, it is altogether *for* us; it speaks contrary to what it speaks to sinners out of Christ (Josh. 24:19-20). We may also plead justice, for we have forgiveness through mercy in Christ (Rom. 3:26).<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> “to demonstrate His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

rules from there. But *here* we have our deliverance from sin and Satan; yes, from death too (Heb. 2:14-15; Hos. 13:14). And for the same reason, we are raised by this excellent righteousness to a better state than we had in Adam at the beginning. For Christ died that we might receive the adoption of sons, and receive 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; 1Joh. 4:19; Gal. 4:5; Heb. 9:15; Rom. 5:11; Luk. 1:74; Col. 2:13).

9. We may be sure, from this, 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 angry with us, nor rebuke us in anger anymore (Isa. 54:9; Rom. 5:2, 5).

10. Hence we may come before God without shame, indeed, come with boldness to the throne of grace in Christ's name (Joh. 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 so we may, and we are to plead boldly a satisfaction on His account.

11. We live in those times when this righteousness is fully revealed, and sin has been made an end of (Rom. 3:21-22; Heb. 9:26). This is our happiness above those who 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 of the old covenant, to be urged as a church ordinance, has now ceased. The law is not to be preached now in the same terms that Moses preached it — for justification (Rom. 10:5-8; 2Cor. 3:6-7; Gal. 3:13, 24). In its terms, it is contrary to faith, even if it were subservient.

**Use II.** For examining 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 of your condemnation by the law. This is necessary to make us fly to Christ. And the law was given for this as one great end (Gal. 3:22-24; Mat. 9:13; Acts 2:37). Without a sense of sin, there will be no prizing of Christ, nor a desire for holiness, but rather an abuse of grace to carnal security and licentiousness. Those who were stung with the fiery serpents, looked up to the bronze serpent.

2. Do you trust only in free mercy for justification in God's sight — renouncing all your works whatever in this point, as not being able to stand in them before God's exact justice — crying mercy with the poor publican? (Luk. 18:13-14). Perfectionists and self-righteous persons have no share in this matter. Paul, notwithstanding all that the world might think he had to plead for himself, "counted it 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 faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phi. 3:7-9; Rom. 4:5) — that is, the redeeming and propitiating righteousness of Christ, by which alone he desired to be justified, and which he believed in for that end, opposing it to anything inherent in himself, which he therefore calls his own righteousness.

3. Do you trust with any confidence in Christ, not continuing in a mere suspense? If we are in a way of mere doubting, we can receive nothing good from God (Jam. 1:6-7). Mere doubting will not loose the conscience from the guilt of sin (Heb. 10:22), but leaves the soul under terror. Abraham's confidence is the example and pattern of our justifying faith, one that we should endeavor to come up to — believing with a fullness of persuasion, hoping against hope (Rom. 4:18-24). Though a believing soul may be assaulted with many doubts, it fights against them, and doesn't surrender itself to their dominion (Psa. 42:11; Mar. 9:24). It always has something contrary to them, and striving against 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; Psa. 130; Titus 2:14; 1Pet. 2:24) If it is otherwise, then you don't receive it for the right end, and you don't really desire the favor 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* (1Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:1, 9; Joh. 13:8). If God has taken you into His favor, 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 — just as the eye alone sees, and yet it is not alone, without other members. So the apostle James declares that faith alone is dead, and he bids us show our faith by our works. This is to be understood, not as if works were the conditions for attaining justification, but as sure evidences of justification attained by faith, and very necessary (Jam. 2:14-15). The Gospel is no covenant of works, requiring another righteousness for justification by doing for life (Luk. 10:28). Works justify us from those accusations of men who deny that we have justification by faith, or that we have a true and lively faith, or are good trees (Mat. 12:33, 37). They are not our righteousness themselves, nor conditions of having Christ's righteousness, nor do they qualify us for it.<sup>1</sup>

**Use III.** It serves for exhortation to several duties.

**Exhortation I.** To the wicked. It is a dissuasion to them from their continuance in sin, under God's wrath, running headlong to damnation. For here a door of mercy is opened to them; a righteousness prepared that they may be freely accepted by God. Some men are *desperados*. "They have loved strangers, and will go after them" (Jer. 2:25). They are resolved to run the risk of it, and please themselves that they will speed as well as others do. And some men would be justified, but seek it in a wrong way. Some will go to the pope to quiet their consciences by his deceptions; some look to their own works and performances. But you are exhorted to look 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 (Luk. 24:47; Acts 2:38). Beware that you don't neglect this acceptable time, this day of salvation (Heb. 2:1, 3). For,

1. If you do, you remain under the wrath of God (Joh. 3:36), under the curse of the law which, like a flood, sweeps away all who are found outside this ark, the Lord Jesus Christ (Psa. 11:5-6).

2. Your condemnation will be aggravated by refusing so great a salvation (Heb. 2:3). You will have no cloak for your sins, when you refuse mercy (Joh. 15:22). You cannot say that you are undone by your past sins, and beyond recovery, and therefore it would be in vain to strive. For behold, remission of sins is proclaimed to you (Eze. 33:10-11). And what a horrid sin it is, to despise the blood of the Son of God! (Joh. 3:18, 36)

**Objection I.** "If God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), then why do I need to forsake ungodliness at all?" (Rom. 6:1)

**Ans.** You cannot seek justification truly, unless 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 to Him (2Cor. 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 in defiance to his prince? (1Pet. 2:24) Those who do not intend to return to obedience, seek pardon in a mocking way (Gal. 6:7-8).

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, works are the necessary proof of our faith, not the means of our salvation. — WHG

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

*Ans.* Christ’s righteousness is for all sorts of sinners who believe, whether Jew or Gentile; and how great were the sinners of both sorts! (Rom. 1; 2; 3) It is even for those who killed and murdered the Lord of glory (Acts 2:23, 36; 1Cor. 2:8); and for the chief of the sinners (1Tim. 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 (Joh. 6:37; Rom. 10:3, 11, 13).

**Exhortation II.** It exhorts those who 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, indeed, *pernicious* to a natural man. “Become a fool, that you may be wise” (1Cor. 3:18); otherwise you will labor in the fire, and weary yourselves for every 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, and before God has received you into His favor. For justification, in order of nature, comes before true holiness of heart and life (1Tim. 1:5; Heb. 9:14). Faith is the great work and mother duty (Joh. 6:29; Gal. 5:6; Isa. 55:2). And therefore, while you don’t believe, you dishonor Christ and His death (Gal. 2:21, 5:2-4). Therefore come boldly, even if you have been a great sinner (Acts 10:43), and seek righteousness in Christ with holiness (Rom. 8:1).

*Question.* But how will I get faith?

*Ans.* Faith is by 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 (1The. 1:5) — beyond what can be done by natural or human attainment (Joh. 6:63). Therefore, if you have no beginning of faith in you, your only way is to attend to the Gospel, and to meditate on your sin and misery, and on Christ’s excellence, so that you may be inclined in your heart to believe (Song. 1:3; Gal. 2:16; Psal. 9:10) — for this is the way God uses to beget faith (Isa. 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 (Song. 1:4; Luk. 11:13; Mar. 9:24).

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

*Ans.* If you have righteousness in Christ, God will make you holy. This confidence is the only way to get holiness, because of that righteousness (Rom. 5:21).<sup>1</sup> The new covenant, which promises a new heart, is confirmed in Him. If sin is forgiven, you will be delivered from its power, and quickened by the same death and resurrection of Christ, by which you are justified (Col. 2:12-13).

**Exhortation III.** It exhorts those who are justified by faith,

1. To walk humbly, as being nothing of themselves; to acknowledge they are 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 — indeed, that they are so far fallen, that the justice of God would have been against them, if it had not been satisfied (Psal. 71:16; Rom. 3:27). But now they see that Christ has satisfied it, and His righteousness is above their sins (Eze. 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; 1Joh. 4:9-10; 3:16; 2Cor. 8:9). And what a glorious and excellent righteousness God has given us in Christ! (Isa. 61:10)

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<sup>1</sup> Rom 5:21 so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

3. To walk comfortably on 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, then much more will He save you by His life, now that 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 bronze serpent; confess your sin and trust for pardon; meditate on Christ's righteousness and the abundance of grace in Him (Rom. 8:32). If you find ever so much ungodliness, and no good qualifications, yet Christ is at hand for your comfort (Isa. 50:10; 2The. 2:16-17). In all your sins, apply yourselves to this fountain (Zec. 13:1; 1Joh. 1:7). If sin lies on the conscience, it weakens peace and spiritual strength. Don't lie under guilt with a slavish fear; you have a righteousness to deliver you from it. Apply it by faith, so that you may have no more conscience of sin as condemning you (Heb. 10:2; Psa. 32). You have a better righteousness than any perfectionists can have.

4. Hold fast to 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 done by a spiritual bewitching (Gal. 3:1). He will strive to get you to trust in works, and tell you that it is for promoting holiness, and to trust in works to get Christ, and to lay works at the base of the foundation. If you lose this righteousness of Christ, under any color or pretence whatsoever, you lose all (Gal. 5:2-3). Do not so dishonor Christ as to think of procuring by works, what you have fully in Christ. Don't think that the Gospel requires another justification to gain this. For the Gospel is not a 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, and which is a great mark of its truth. Therefore, beware of carnal reason, which will go quite contrary to this, and make Christ's righteousness a stumbling stone to you (1Pet. 2:8; Rom; 9:32-33).

5. *Walk as one who enjoys the favor of God in Christ.* Let Him have the honor of it. Walk therefore in holiness, knowing by what price you are redeemed (1Pet. 1:17-18; 2Cor. 5:14-15; 1Pet. 1:5, 11; 1Cor. 6:20). Love God who has loved you first (1Joh. 4:19; Psa. 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 your own sins, and God's forgiveness of you will cause you to pity and forgive others; or else you cannot pray or trust in the forgiveness of your own sins on reasonable grounds (Eph. 4:31-32; Mat. 6:14-15; 18:21). Desire that grace may be exalted upon 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 will appear openly, and you will be dealt with according to it.

**THE END**