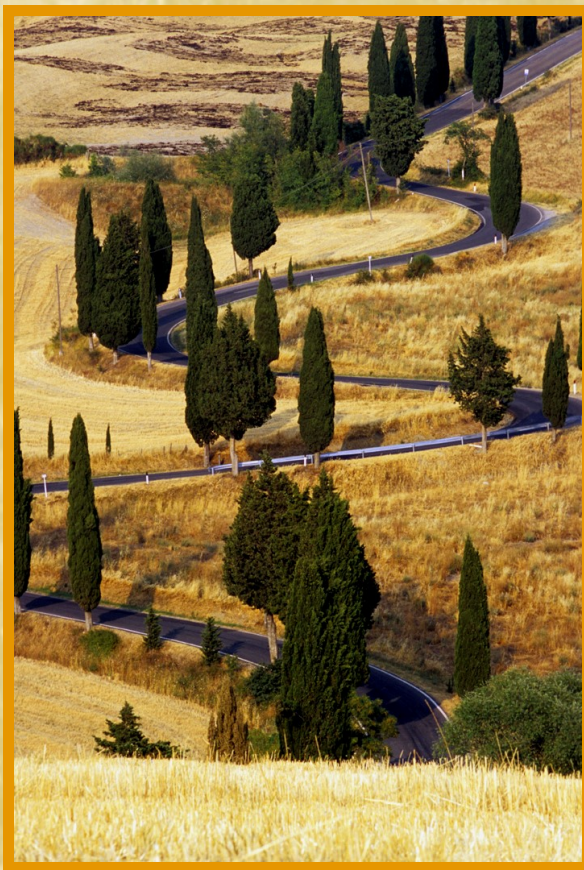


# The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification

## Part Three



Walter Marshall

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### Direction 6

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

### Explication

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

testify that we often fail in the performance of these duties, we are inclined, by self-love, to persuade ourselves that our sincere endeavours to do the best we can, shall be sufficient to procure the favour of God, and pardon for all our *failings*.

Thus, we see that our persuasion of salvation, by the condition of sincere obedience, hath its original from our corrupt natural reason, and is part of the wisdom of this world. It is none of “the wisdom of God in a mystery, that hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory:” it is none of those things of the Spirit of God which “have not entered into the heart of man,” and which “the natural man cannot receive; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned,” (1 Cor. 2:6, 7, 9, 14). It is none of *the foolishness of preaching*, whereby it pleased God “to save them that believe,” (1 Cor. 1:21). And though we had a better way revealed to us in the gospel, for the enjoyment of the favour of God, and holiness itself, and all salvation, without any procuring condition of works, by the free gift of God’s grace through faith in Christ; yet it is very difficult to persuade men out of a way they are naturally addicted to, and that hath forestalled and captivated their judgments, and is bred in their bone, and therefore cannot easily be gotten out of the flesh. Most of those that live under the hearing and profession of the gospel, are not brought to hate sin as sin, and to love godliness for itself, though they be 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 a hypocritical practice in their old natural way, that they may avoid hell, and get heaven, by their works. And their own consciences witness, the zeal and love that they have for God and godliness, their self-denial, sorrow for sin, strictness of life, are in a manner forced and extorted from them by slavish fear and mercenary hope; so that they are afraid that if they should trust on Christ for salvation, by free grace without works, the fire of their zeal and devotion would be quickly extinguished, and they should grow careless in religion, and let loose the reins to their lusts, and bring certain damnation upon

themselves. This moveth them to account them the only Boanergesses who preach little or none of the doctrine of free grace, but rather spend their pains in rebuking sin, and urging people to get Christ and his salvation by their works, and thundering hell and damnation against sinners.

It hath been farther observed, that some that have contended much for salvation by free grace, without any condition of works, have fallen into antinomian opinions, and licentious practices. The experience of these things hath much prevailed with some learned and zealous men of late amongst ourselves, to recede from the doctrine of *justification of faith without works*, formerly professed unanimously, and strongly defended by the protestants against the papists, as a principal article of true religion. They have persuaded themselves, that such a way of justification is ineffectual, yea, destructive to sanctification; and that the practice of sincere obedience cannot be established against antinomian dotages and prevailing lusts, except it be made the necessary condition of our justification, and so of our eternal salvation. Therefore they conclude, that God hath certainly made sincere obedience to be the condition of our salvation. And they have endeavoured to new-model the protestant doctrine, and to interpret the Holy Scriptures in a way agreeable and subservient to this their sure foundation of holiness.

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

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

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

controversy, did not profess any hope of being justified by perfect obedience, according to the rigour of the law, but only by such obedience as they accounted to be sincere, and not hypocritical. And we have no cause to doubt but that the judaizing Galatians had learned, by the gospel, to distinguish sincere obedience from hypocrisy.

The Jewish religion bound all that professed it, to acknowledge themselves to be sinners; as appeareth by their anniversary humiliation on the day of atonement, and several other rites of the law, and many clear testimonies in the oracles of God, that were committed to them, (Psa. 143:2; Prov. 10:9; Eccl. 7:20). Yet they know they were bound to turn to the Lord with all their hearts, in sincerity and uprightness, and that God would accept of sincere obedience; for which cause they might better put it for the condition of the law, than we can of the gospel, (Psa. 2:9, 10; Deut. 6:5; 30:10). So that if the apostle had disputed against those that held only *perfect obedience* to be the condition of justification, he had contended with his own shadow. And they might as readily judge *sincere* obedience to be the condition of justification under the law, as we can judge it to be the condition under the gospel. Neither doth the apostle condemn them merely for accounting sincere obedience to the law, as given by Moses, to be the condition of their justification; but, more generally, for *seeking* salvation by their own works. And he allegeth against them, that Abraham, who lived before the law of Moses, was not justified by any of his works, though he did perform sincere obedience; and that David, who lived under the law of Moses, was not justified by his works, though he performed sincere obedience, and was as much given to obey the law given by Moses, as we are to obey any commands of Christ in the gospel (Rom. 4:2, 3, 5, 6). Neither doth he condemn them for seeking their salvation only by works, without respecting at all the grace and salvation that is by Christ; for the judaizing Galatians were yet professors of the grace and salvation of Christ, though they thought obedience to the law a necessary condition for the partaking of it, as also many other judaizing believers did, And

doubtless, they accounted themselves obliged thereunto, not only by the authority of Moses, but of Christ also, whom they owned as their Lord and Saviour. And we may be sure it was no damning error, to account Moses's law obliging at that time; for many thousands of the Jews, that were found believers, held the ceremonies of Moses to be in force at that time; and Paul was tender towards them in it (Acts 21:20, 26; 15:5). And other Jews sought justification, not only by their sincere works, but also by trusting on the promise made to Abraham, and on their priesthood and sacrifices, that were types of Christ. And the most legal Pharisees would thank God for their works, as proceeding from his grace, (Luke 18:11). And they could as well acknowledge their salvation to be by faith, as the asserters of salvation, by sincere obedience, can in these days; for they accounted that their sincere obedience was wrought in them by believing the word of God, which contained gospel as well as legal doctrine in it; and therefore that it must be included in the nature of faith, if faith were taken for the condition of their salvation. Let the asserters of the condition of sincere obedience learn from hence, that they are building again that judaism which the apostle Paul destroyed, whereby the Jews stumbled at Christ, (Rom. 9:32); and the Galatians were in danger of falling from Christ and grace (Gal. 5:2, 4); and let them beware of falling under that curse which he hath denounced, on this very occasion, against any man, or angel, that shall preach any other gospel than that which he hath preached (Gal. 1:8, 9).

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

The apostle Paul opposeth the believing required in the gospel, to all doing for life, as the condition proper to the law. "*The law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them, shall live in them*" (Gal. 3:12). "*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for*

*righteousness*” (Rom. 4:5). If we seek salvation by ever so easy and mild a condition of works, we do thereby bring ourselves under the terms of the law, and become debtors to fulfil the *whole* law in perfection, though we intended to engage ourselves only to fulfil it *in part* (Gal. 5:3); for the law is a complete declaration of the only terms whereby God will judge all that are not brought to despair of procuring salvation by any of their own works, and to receive it as a gift freely given to them by the grace of God in Christ. So that all that seek salvation, right or wrong, knowingly or ignorantly, by any works, less or more, whether invented by their own superstition, or commanded by God in the Old or New Testament, shall at last stand or fall according to these terms.

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



commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:17, 19). He commanded us to “do to men whatsoever we would they should do to us, because this is the law and the prophets: which is sufficient to prove, that he would have us to account the law authoritative to oblige us in this matter. He requireth his disciples to observe and do whatsoever the Scribes and Pharisees bid them, because they *sat in Moses’s seat* (Matt. 23:2, 3).

And, to come to the point in hand, when Christ had occasion to answer the questions of those that were guilty of the same error, that I am now dealing with, in seeking salvation by their own works, he shewed them that they must obey the commands as they were already established by the Mosaical authority, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: “*What is written in the law? how readeest thou? This do, and thou shalt live*” (Luke 10:26, 28). “*If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;*” which are, “*thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery,*” & c.

In like manner the apostles of Christ urged the performance of moral duties upon believers, by the authority of the law given by Moses. The apostle Paul exhorteth to “*love one another,*” because “*he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*” (Rom. 13:8); and to “*honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise*” (Eph. 6:2). The apostle John exhorteth to *love others*, as no *new*, but an *old* commandment. The apostle James exhorteth to “*fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,*” and to keep all the commandments of the law, one as well as another, because he that said, “*do not commit adultery,*” said also, “*do not kill*” (James 2:8, 10, 11). Sound protestants have accounted the denial of the moral law of Moses to be an antinomian error. And though our late prevaricators against antinomianism maintain not this error; yet they establish a worse error, *justification by their sincere gospel works*, I think the denomination of the antinomians arose from this error. The law

of Moses had its authority at first from Christ; for Christ was the Lord God of Israel, that ordained the law by angels on mount Sinai, in the hand of Moses, a mediator for the Israelites, who were then his only church, and with whom we believing Gentiles are now joined, as *fellow-members of one and the same body* (Eph. 3:6). And though Christ hath since abrogated some of the commandments, then given by Moses, concerning figurative ceremonies and judicial proceedings, yet he hath not annulled the obligative authority of the moral law, but hath left it in its full force, to oblige in moral duties, that still are to be practised; as, when some acts of any parliament are repealed, the authority of the same parliament remaineth inviolable in other acts that are not repealed.

I know they object, that the ten commands of the moral law, *the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones*, are also done away by Christ (2 Cor. 3:7). But this maketh altogether against their conditional covenant: for they are the ministration of death, and done away, not as they commanded perfect obedience, for even Christ himself commandeth us to be *perfect* (Matt. 5:48); but as they were conditions for procuring life, and avoiding death, established by a promise of life to the doers, and a curse to the breakers of them (Gal. 3:10, 12). The covenant made with Israel on mount Sinai, is abolished by Christ, the mediator of the new covenant (Heb. 8:8, 9, 13). And the ten commandments bind us not as they were words of that covenant (Exod. 34:28). I mean, they bind us not as conditions of that covenant, except we seek to be justified by works: for the law, as a covenant, doth still stand in force enough to curse those that seek salvation by their own works (Gal. 3:10); and, if abolished, it is only to those that are in Christ by faith (Gal. 2:16, 20; Acts 3:22-25; 15:10, 11). But the ten commandments bind us still, as they were then given to a people that were at that time under the covenant of grace made with Abraham, to shew them what duties are holy, just and good, well-pleasing to God, and to be a rule for their conversation. The result of all is, that we must still practise moral duties, as commanded by Moses; but we must not seek to

be justified by our practice. If we use them as a rule of life, not as conditions of justification, they can be no *ministration of death*, or *killing letter* unto us. The perfection indeed maketh them to be harder terms to procure life by, but a better rule to discover all imperfections, and to guide us to that perfection which we should aim at. And it will be our wisdom, not to part with the authority of the decalogue of Moses, until our new divines can furnish us with another system of morality, as complete as that, and as excellently composed, and ordered by the wisdom of God, and more authentic than that is.

4. Those that endeavour to procure God's salvation, by their sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, do *act contrary* to that way of salvation by *Christ, free grace* and *faith*, discovered in the gospel, though they own it in profession ever so highly.

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

lost sinners, that can have no righteousness for justification but his; no life or ability to do good, until God bring us into union and fellowship with him.

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

The scripture teacheth us, that there is a perfect opposition, and utter irreconcilableness, between salvation by grace and works: "*If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work*" (Rom. 11:6). So also, there is an opposition between a reward reckoned of grace and of debt (Rom. 4:4); between a promise of happiness by the law, and by grace (Rom. 4:13, 16). God is so jealous of the glory of his *free grace*, that he will not save us by any works, though of his own working in us, "*lest any man should boast*" (Eph. 2:9). He knoweth when he healeth men by physic, or maintaineth them by the labour of their hands, they are prone to attribute the glory, rather to the means they use, than to his sole bounty and goodness.

Thirdly, they do also act contrary to the way of salvation by *faith*: for, as I have shewn already, the faith which is required for our salvation in the gospel, is to be understood in a sense contrary to doing good works, as a condition to procure our salvation, and so the true difference between terms of the law and the gospel may be maintained. *Believing* is opposed to all *working* for salvation, and the *law of works* to the *law of faith* (Rom. 2:5;

3:27; Eph. 2:8, 9). Therefore, we must not here consider faith as a work of righteousness, as comprehending any works of righteousness performed or done, as a *condition* to procure a right and title to Christ, as the hand whereby we work, to earn him as our bread and drink, as our wages: but only as the *hand* whereby we receive Christ, as freely given to us, or as the *mouth* whereby we eat and drink him; as hath been proved. God giveth a sufficient right to receive Christ and his salvation, by the free gospel-offer and invitation; so that he leaveth nothing for faith to do, but to lay hold of him as a free gift, that the glory of our salvation may not be ascribed at all to our *faith* or *works*, but only to this *free grace* of God in Christ: “*It is of faith, that it might be by grace*” (Rom. 4:16).

5. Christ, or his apostles, never taught a gospel that requireth such a condition of works for salvation as they plead for. The texts of scripture which they usually allege for this purpose, are either contrary to it, or widely distant from it; as they might learn from many protestant interpreters, if their affection to a popish tenet, had not blinded them. I shall instance briefly only in a few of these texts, whereby you may have some light to judge of the true meaning of the rest. That *obedience of faith*, mentioned by the apostle Paul, as the great design of *gospel preaching* (Rom. 1:5) is as contrary to their condition of sincere obedience for salvation, as the *law of faith* is to the *law of works* (Rom. 3:27). It is an obedience that consisteth in *believing the report of the gospel*; as the apostle explaineth himself (Rom. 10:16). “*They have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*” Faith is to be *imputed* for righteousness, not because it is a *work of righteousness itself*, but because we do by it *renounce* all confidence in any righteous works whatsoever, and trust on him that justifieth the ungodly; as is clear by that very text which they usually pervert for their purpose (Rom. 4:5). They grossly pervert those words of Paul (Rom. 2:6, 7). “*Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life:*” Where they will have Paul to be

declaring the *terms of the gospel*, when he is evidently declaring the *terms of the law*, to prove that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law, as appeareth by the tenor of his following discourse (Rom. 3:9, 10). They join evidently with the papists, against the concurrent judgment of the best protestant divines, in the interpretation of that text (James 2:24). "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" Where they will have James to deliver the doctrine of justification in more proper expressions than the apostle Paul, who teacheth justification by faith without works; though Paul treateth on this doctrine as his principal subject, and James doth only speak of it occasionally, as a motive to the practice of good works; whereby we may easily judge which of their expressions are to be taken for the most proper.

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

Another text alleged by them, is (Rev. 22:14). "*Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*" But the Greek word, which is here translated *right*, is translated *power or privilege* (John 1:12). It signifieth here, a *rightful possession* of the fruit of the tree of life, and not a mere title to it. So this text proveth no more than what the protestants generally acknowledge, that good works are the way wherein we are to walk to the enjoyments and possession of the glory of Christ; though a title to Christ, and his glorious salvation, be freely given us without any procuring condition of works. They account also, that when the happiness of heaven is called a reward, it must needs imply a *procuring condition of works*, as (Rev. 22:12;

Matt. 5:12). But though it be called a *reward*, because it is given after the doing of good works, and because it recompenseth good works, better than any wages on earth can recompense the labourer: yet it is a reward of *grace*, not of *debt* (Rom. 4:4); it is no proper wages, but a free gift (Rom. 6:23); “*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

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

when, after all this ado, the remedy is found to be as bad as the disease, equally unserviceable and destructive to that great end for which they designed it; and that it hath an antinomian effect and operation, contrary to the power of godliness!

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

1. The way of salvation by the works of the law, is contrary and destructive to those *necessary means* of a holy practice, that have been laid down in the foregoing directions, and manifestly proved out of the holy scriptures. I have made it appear, that a hearty propensity to a holy practice cannot be attained without some good persuasion of our reconciliation with God by justification, and of our everlasting happiness, and of sufficient strength both to will and to perform our duty; and that these and all other endowments necessary to the same end, are to be had only in Christ, by union and fellowship with him; and that Christ himself, and all his fulness, is united to us by faith; which is not a



condition to procure a right and title to Christ, but an instrument whereby we receive him actually in our hearts, by trusting on him for all salvation freely promised to us in the gospel.

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

Let us now examine the modern doctrine of salvation, by the condition of sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, and we shall quickly find it to be a chip of the same block with the former legal way of salvation, in the same manner destructive to the means of holiness itself. It requireth of us the performance of sincere and complete obedience, before we have the means necessary to produce it, by making it antecedent to our justification, and persuasion of eternal happiness, and our actual

enjoyment of union and fellowship with Christ, and of that new nature which is to be had only in him by faith. It destroyeth the nature of that saving faith whereby we actually receive and enjoy Christ and all his benefits, and knocketh off our hands from laying hold of Christ and his salvation, by telling us still, as Christ told the legal worker, after all his labour, that yet we lack something (Mark 10:21); that it is presumption to take him as our own, until we have performed the condition for our right and title to him; which is another kind of saving faith, otherwise called sincere obedience. By this devised conditional faith, Satan keepeth many poor souls at bay, poring upon their own hearts for many years together, to find whether they have performed the condition, and whether they have as yet any right to Christ for their salvation, not daring to venture to take him as their own. It is a strong partition-wall, that will certainly hinder the soul from coming to Christ, until it be thrown down by the knowledge of salvation by grace, without any procuring condition of works. And though it be accounted but as the payment of a pepper-corn for a great estate; yet it is enough to break the ablest man in the world, because it debarreth him from laying hold of the only effectual means of holiness, whereby that pepper-corn may be obtained .

2. Those that seek salvation by the works of the law, do therein act according to their *natural state*. They live and walk according to the flesh, or old man; not according to the new state, by Christ living in them. I doubt not but several of them that live under the light of the gospel, are partakers of a new state in Christ, and do walk holily in it; but the best in this world have in them flesh as well as spirit, and may act according to either state in some measure; and in this matter they do act only according to their carnal natural state. When the believing Galatians were seduced to a legal way of salvation, the apostle Paul chargeth it upon them as their folly, that, having began in the Spirit, they would now be “made perfect in the flesh” (Gal. 3:3). And he resembleth those that desire to be under the law, to Abraham’s son, born of Hagar, the bond woman, to shew, that such do walk as those that *are*

*born after the flesh, not after the Spirit* (Gal. 4:22, 23, 29). The law was first given to Adam in his pure natural state, to prescribe terms for his continuance in the happiness which he then enjoyed. And ever since that time, the flesh, or natural man, is married to the law, and the *law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?* that is, until he be dead to his fleshly state by the body of Christ, and *married to him* that is “*raised from the dead*” (Rom. 7:1, 4). We are not at all under the law as a covenant of works, according to our new state in Christ; as the apostle testifieth (Rom. 6:14). “*Ye are not under the law, but under grace:*” and (Gal. 5:18). “*If ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*” From hence, we may firmly conclude, that none can possibly attain to true godliness by acting according to legal terms; because I have fully proved already, that it is impossible to be godly. while we are in the flesh, or in a natural state; and that, as far as we act according to it, we can do nothing but sin. The law is so weak through the flesh, that it cannot bring us to fulfil its own righteousness, (Rom. 8:3, 4). It is married to a cross piece of flesh, that is enmity to it, and can never be subject to it (Rom. 8:7). It sueth the natural man for an old debt of obedience, that he is utterly unable to pay since the fall: and the success accordingly; it gets nothing. Neither do those take a better course, that would bring themselves to holiness, by making sincere obedience to Christ’s commands, the condition of their salvation. Their way is the same for substance with that of the Galatians before mentioned, who would be made perfect in the flesh, not by perfect obedience, but sincere; as hath been shewed before. Their endeavours to procure an interest in Christ, by their sincere obedience, do testify against themselves, that they do not act as people that are in Christ, but rather as people that judge themselves to be without an interest in Christ, and to be yet to seek for it. And sincere obedience is as impossible to be attained unto, as perfect obedience, if we act according to our dead natural state.

3. As the law bereaveth of all strengthening means that are to be had by faith in Christ, and findeth us without strength in our

natural state, so of itself, it affordeth us no strength to fulfil its own commands: *“If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law”* (Gal. 3:21). It doth not so much as promise life, until we have performed the obedience required by it. *The man that doth these things shall live by them* (Rom. 10:5). It is well called a *“voice of words”* (Heb. 12:19); because its high and big words are not accompanied with an enlivening power. And the doctrine of life and salvation by sincere obedience is no better natured, or more bountiful to us; for it exacteth of us the performance of the condition, before it alloweth us any life or salvation by Christ. Can any man rationally expect strength to obey sincerely, by following a doctrine that doth not so much as promise it? The true gospel is of a more benign nature; for it promiseth, that *God will pour out his Spirit upon all flesh* (Acts 2:17); *and will put his laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts* (Heb. 8:10); *and will cause us to walk in his statutes, that we shall keep his judgments, and do them* (Ezek. 36:27). This word of God’s grace, that requireth not holiness of us as a condition, but promiseth it to us as a free gift, must needs be the only doctrine, *that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified* (Acts 20:32). Seeing it pleaseth God to bring us to holiness by believing a doctrine, we may reasonably expect that God should work upon us suitably to the nature of the doctrine which we believe; that he should give by a giving doctrine, and exact by an exacting doctrine.

4. The way of procuring life and happiness, by the condition of perfect or sincere works, is not a *rational method*, for the recovery of fallen man; though it were good for the preserving of life before the fall: for, it prescribeth the immediate practice of holiness to recover a man dead in sin; as if one should say to the sick of the palsy, *Arise and walk, and then thou shalt be whole and able to walk*. We sometimes say jestingly to a child that is fallen on the ground, *Come hither, and I will help thee up*: but if we should say so to one that is cast on his bed by a dead palsy, we should be guilty of mocking and cruelly insulting the

afflicted. Those that are humbled and made sensible of their original sin, and natural deadness, know that they must first live by the Spirit, before they can act holily (Gal. 5:25). They will inquire, *How shall we have strength to perform the duty required?* If you answer, that they must trust in God and Christ to help them; they may readily reply, they have no sure ground to trust on God or Christ, for any saving grace, according to this doctrine, before they have performed this condition, at least in a sincere resolution of obedience, and that they are as unable to bring their hearts to such a resolution, as a dead man is to raise himself out of the grave. Take another instance. The method of the doctrine of works is, you must love God first, and then, on that condition, he will love you again; whereas, on the contrary, *“we love him, because he first loved us”* (1 John 4:19). And if God suspend his love to us upon any condition, our love to him will not be absolute, but suspended upon the same condition, and no way contrary to an actual hating of him.

5. The law is so far from healing our sinful corruption, that it proveth rather an *occasion of sinful motions and actings*, in those that seek salvation by the works of it. This cometh to pass by reason of the power of our natural corruption; which is stirred up and rageth the more, when the holy and just law of God is set in opposition against it; so that the fault is not in the law, but in our own hearts. Those that find not this by their own experience, should believe the apostle Paul, who teacheth it plainly, and that from his own experience (Rom. 7:5, 7, 14). He affirmeth, that there are *motions* of sin by the law, in a fleshly state: *“Thou shalt not covet,”* wrought in him all manner of concupiscence, deceived him, slew him, became exceeding sinful; and that without the law, he was alive, and sin died; but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. He sheweth the cause of this irreconcilable enmity and contrariety between his sinful nature and the law: *The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.* Take notice here, from the reason given by the apostle, that the doctrine of salvation, by sincere obedience, will have the same event. Corrupt nature is contrary to sincere

obedience, as well as perfect; and, if we make it the condition of our salvation, sin will take the same occasion by it, to become exceeding sinful in its motions and actings.

The success of legal doctrine upon the natural man, is according to the proverb, “reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee” (Prov. 9:8). Rebuking a madman, is the way to enrage him; and such is the natural man in spiritual things, since he fell out of his right mind by the sin of Adam. We find, by manifold experience, that though men be generally addicted to the principle of salvation by works, yet multitudes of them hate all strict preachers and professors of true holiness, because they are a torment to their consciences. They endeavour to shelter themselves in ignorance of the law: accounting, that the less they know, the less they shall answer for; and therefore they would not have right things prophesied unto them (Isa. 30:10). And they have prevailed generally in the world, to darken the natural knowledge of moral duties, in such a degree, that there is a necessity of learning them by divine revelation out of the scriptures. We may find how prone legal writers are to corrupt the sense of the law, that they may leave starting holes for their corruptions, by the corrupt glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees, from which Christ did vindicate it, as we see, Matthew fifth. And, as far as I have observed, none more endeavour to discover the purity and perfection of the law, than those that seek holiness and salvation, without any legal condition, by the mere free grace of God in Christ. The doctrine of salvation, by sincere obedience, is but a mincing the perfection required in the law: and yet how is this doctrine minced again and again, until it is become so small, that the substance of all true obedience is lost? A willingness to be saved according to Christ’s terms, or a consent that Christ should be our Lord, or a resolution to obey his commandments (which is little more than ignorant men trust on, when they say, they hope God will save them because they have a good meaning, though they live in the neglect of all religion) without any further practice of holiness, shall pass with many for enough of sincere obedience, both to enter them into a state of salvation,

and to continue them in it; so that they shall never be accounted breakers of the gospel covenant, while so much can be pretended. The most that is made necessary for salvation, shall be only to endeavour to do what we can to obey Christ's commands; though all that the most can do, is nothing that is truly good.

Those that have a little more zeal for their salvation by works, are prone to spend it in superstitious observances, because they suit better with their carnal nature, than the spiritual commands of God and Christ. I doubt not but this hath been one occasion of the prevailing of heathenish, Jewish and popish superstitions in the world. We find, by experience, how popery fell in several nations of late years, when the great pillar of it, the doctrine of justification by works, was overthrown by the protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone. If these legal zealots be forced, by strong conviction, to endeavour the practice of spiritual duties, for quieting their guilty consciences, they may possibly be brought to strive and labour earnestly, and even to macerate their bodies with fasting, that they may kill their lusts; but still their lusts are living, and strong as ever they were; and do shew forth their enmity against the law of God, by inward fretting, repining, and grudging at it, as a grievous task-master, though a slavish fear restrain their gross outward actings. And, if once these zealots be enlightened with the knowledge of the spiritual nature of the law, to discern that God rejecteth all their slavish service, and will not own it for sincere obedience; then they fall into despair of their salvation, because they see they have failed in their highest attempts to perform the condition, and then they can easily discover themselves, that their hearts swell in anger and manifest hatred against the law, yea, and against God and Christ, for prescribing such hard conditions of salvation, which they cannot keep, and yet must expect to be damned eternally for breaking them. This filleth them with blasphemous thoughts against God and Christ, and they can hardly refrain from blaspheming him with their tongues. And when they are brought to this horrible condition, if God doth not in mercy discover to them the way of salvation, by free grace, through faith alone,

they will endeavour, if they can, to sear their consciences past feeling of sin, and fully to abandon all religion, which hath proved such an unsufferable torment to them: or, if they cannot sear their consciences, some of them are easily prevailed with by Satan, rather to murder themselves, than to live longer in the hatred of God, the spirit of blasphemy, and continual horror of conscience. This is the pestilent effect of the legal doctrine upon a carnal heart, that doth but rouse up, and terribly enrage the sleeping lion, our sinful corruption, instead of killing it: as is too evident by the experience of many that have endeavoured, with all their might, to practise it; and, by the scripture, that sheweth a sufficient cause why it cannot be otherwise, Therefore, the doctrine of salvation, by sincere obedience, that was invented against antinomianism, may well be ranked among the worst antinomian errors. For my part, I hate it with perfect hatred, and account it mine enemy, as I have found it to be. And I have found, by some good experience, the truth of the lesson taught by the apostle, that the way to be freed from the mastery and dominion of sin, is, *not to be under the law, but under grace* (Rom. 6:14).

6. The way of salvation by works was *blasted by the curse* denounced against the First Adam's sin; so that now it cannot work life in us, or holiness, but only death; for the law, which requireth both sincere and perfect obedience to God in all things, was made known to Adam at his first creation, as the means of the continuing the happy life that was then bestowed upon him; and it would have been effectual for this end, if he had not transgressed in the forbidden fruit. But, when he had once brought himself and his posterity under the terrible sentence, "*thou shalt surely die*" (Gen. 2:17); all that knowledge of God, or his law, that before wrought for continuance of life, was turned by that cursed sentence the contrary way, to work for his death, even for the death of the soul in sin, as well as for the death of his body; and therefore it quickly moved him to hide himself from God as an enemy. It was, as if God should say, *all the light and knowledge that thou hast, shall not be able to continue thy life, or*



*restore it; but it shall rather tend to thy death.* Therefore, while we continue in our natural state, under the first Adam's guilt and curse, the knowledge of the law, yea, and all such knowledge of God and his attributes, as natural men attain to, must needs be, in like manner, accursed to us. And seeing man did not use his natural knowledge and wisdom alike, God is resolved to revenge the abuse of it, by giving us salvation in a way contrary to it, that seemeth foolishness to the natural man; and wholly to abolish the way of living by any of our works, or by any wisdom or knowledge that the natural man can attain unto. "*For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (1 Cor. 1:19, 20, 21). Hence we may conclude, that no truth, known by the light of nature, can be an effectual principle, or motive, to work holiness in us; and gospel principles and motives are but abused, when they are applied to a legal way of salvation.

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, a covenant of grace, promising all blessings freely through Christ, the promised seed. And the covenant of the law was added, that they might see their sinfulness, and subjection to death and wrath, and the impossibility of attaining to life or holiness by their works, and be forced to trust on the free promise only for all their salvation, and that sin might be restrained by the spirit of bondage, until the coming of that promised seed, Jesus Christ, and the more plentiful pouring out of the sanctifying Spirit, by him. This the apostle sheweth largely (Gal. 3:15-24; Rom. 5:20, 21, and 10:3,

4). None of the Israelites under the Old Testament were ever saved by the Sinai covenant; neither did any of them ever attain to holiness by the terms of it. Some of them did, indeed, perform the commandments of it sincerely, though imperfectly: but those were first justified, and made partakers of life and holiness, by virtue of that better covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which was the same, in substance, with the new covenant, or testament, established by the blood of Christ. Had it not been for that better covenant, the Sinai covenant would have proved to them an occasion of no happiness, but only of sin, despair and destruction. Of itself it was only a *killing letter, the ministration of death and condemnation*: and therefore it is now abolished (2 Cor. 3:6-11).

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

### **Direction 7**

*We are not to imagine that our hearts and lives must be changed from Sin to Holiness, in any measure, before we may safely venture to trust on Christ for the sure enjoyment of himself, and his salvation.*

### **Explication**

We are naturally so prone to ground our salvation upon our own works, that if we cannot make them *procuring* conditions and *causes* of our salvation by Christ, yet we shall endeavour at least to make them *necessary preparatives*, to fit us for receiving Christ and his salvation by faith. And men are easily persuaded, that this is not at all contrary to salvation by free grace, because all that is hereby ascribed to our works, or good qualifications, is only, “That they put us in a *fit posture* to receive a free gift. If we

were to go to a prince for a free gift, good manners, and due reverence, would teach us to trim ourselves first, and change our slovenly clothes, as Joseph did, when he came out of the dungeon into the presence of Pharaoh. It seemeth to be an impudent slighting and contemning the justice and holiness of God and Christ, and an insufferable affront and indignity offered, to the divine Majesty, when any dare presume to approach his presence. in the nasty pickle of his sins, covered all over with putrifying sores, not at all closed, bound up, or cleansed; much more when they endeavour, to receive the Most Holy ONE, into such an abominable stinking kennel, as a sinner's heart is, before it be at all reformed. The parable concerning the man that was to be bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness, for coming to the royal wedding, without a wedding garment, seemeth to be intended against all such presumption" (Matt. 22:11, 13). Many that behold with terror, the abominable filth of their own hearts, are kept off from coming immediately to Christ, by such imaginations, which Satan strongly maintaineth and increaseth in them by his suggestions; so that they can by no means be persuaded out of them, until God teacheth them inwardly, by the powerful operation of his Spirit, They delay the saving act of faith, because they think they are not yet duly qualified for it. On the same account, many weak believers delay coming to the Lord's Supper, for many years together, even as long as they live in this world; and would be as likely to delay their baptism, if they had not been baptized in their infancy. Against all such imaginations, I shall propose the following considerations.

1. This error is pernicious to the *practice* of holiness, and to our *whole salvation*, in the same manner with that treated of in the foregoing Direction, and may be confuted by the same arguments which are there produced. Whether holiness be made a procuring condition of our salvation through Christ, or only a condition necessary to qualify us for the reception of Christ, we are equally brought under those legal terms, of doing first the duties required in the law, that so we may live. Therefore, we are equally bereaved of the assistance of those means of holiness, mentioned

in the foregoing directions, as union and fellowship with Christ, and the enjoyment of all his sanctifying endowments by faith, which should go before the practice of holiness, that they may enable us for it; and we are equally left to labour in vain for holiness, while we are in our accursed natural state, whereby our sinful corruption will rather be exasperated, than mortified, so that we shall never be duly prepared for the reception of Christ, as long as we live in the world. Thus, while we endeavour to prepare our way to Christ, by holy qualifications, we do rather fill it with stumbling-blocks, and deep pits, whereby our souls are hindered from ever attaining to the salvation by Christ.

2. Any the least change of our hearts and lives from sin to holiness, before our receiving of Christ and his salvation by faith, is not at all *necessary*, according to the terms of the gospel, nor *required* in the word of God. Christ would have the vilest sinners come to him for salvation immediately, without delaying the time to prepare themselves for him. When the wicked jailer inquired, *What he must do to be saved?* Paul directed him forthwith to *believe* on Christ, with a promise, that in so doing *he should be saved*; and straight way, he and his were baptized (Acts 16:30, 33). Paul doth not tell him, that he must reform his heart and life first, though he was in a very nasty pickle at that time, having but a little before fastened Paul and Silas in the stocks, and newly attempted a horrid wilful self-murder. Those three thousand Jews that were converted by Peter's preaching, and added the same day to the church by baptism (Acts 2:41), seemed to have as much need of some considerable time to prepare themselves for receiving Christ as others, because they had but lately polluted themselves with the murder of Christ himself, verse 23. Christ commands his servants to go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and to bring in to his feast, the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind; yea, to go out into the highway, and to compel them to come in, without allowing them to tarry until they had cleansed their sores, and shifted off their filthy rags, and swarms of lice (Matt. 22:10; Luke 14:23). Christ would have us to believe on him that justifieth the ungodly; and

therefore he doth not require us to be godly before we believe (Rom. 4:5). He came as a physician for the sick, and doth not expect that they should recover their health, in the least degree, before they come to him (Matt. 9:12). The vilest sinners are fitly prepared and qualified for this design; which is, to shew forth the exceeding riches of his grace, pardoning our sins, and saving us freely (Eph. 2:5, 7). For this end the law of Moses entered that the *offence might abound*; that is, *where sin abounded, grace might much more abound* (Rom. 5:20). He loved us in our most loathsome sinful pollution, so as to die for us; and much more will he love us in it, so as to receive us when we come to him for the purchased salvation. He hath given full satisfaction to the justice of God for sinners, that they might have all righteousness and holiness, and all salvation only by fellowship with him through faith. Therefore, it is no affront to Christ, or slighting or contemning the justice and holiness of God, to come to Christ, while we are polluted sinners; but rather it is an affronting and contemning the saving grace, merit, and fulness of Christ, if we endeavour to make ourselves righteous and holy before we receive Christ himself, and all righteousness and holiness in him by faith. Christ loathed not to touch a leper, and condescended to wash the feet of his disciples, and did not expect that they should be washed and perfumed beforehand, as some great ones of the world are said to do, when they wash the feet of poor men, in imitation of Christ.

3. Those that receive Christ, with an unfeigned faith, shall never want a *wedding garment* to adorn them in the sight of God. *Faith* itself is very *precious* in the sight of God, and *most holy* (2 Pet. 1:1; Jude verse 20). God loveth it, because it giveth the glory of our salvation on the free grace of God in Christ (Rom. 4:16); and renounceth all dependence upon any conditions, that we can perform, to procure a right to Christ, or to make ourselves acceptable to him. It containeth in it a hearty love to Christ as a Saviour, and a hungering and thirsting appetite for his salvation; and it is the mouth whereby the soul feedeth hungrily upon him. What wedding garment can sinners bring with them, more

delightful than this to their bountiful God; whose great design is to manifest the abundant riches of his glorious grace and bounty in this wedding-feast? The Father himself loveth them, because they love Christ, and believe that he came out from God (John 16:27). But yet we see that the excellency of faith lieth in this, that it accounteth not itself, nor any other work of ours, a sufficient ornament to make us acceptable in the sight of God. It will not be our wedding garment itself, but it buyeth of Christ, *white raiment, that we may be clothed*, and that *the shame of our nakedness may not appear* (Rev. 3:18). Though it loveth and desireth the free gift of holiness; yet it abandons all thoughts of practising holiness immediately, before we come to Christ for a holy nature. It putteth on Christ himself, and in him all things that pertain to life and godliness. Thus every true believer is "*clothed with the sun*" (Rev. 12:1). even with the *Sun of righteousness*, the Lord Jesus; who is pleased to be himself both our wedding garment and feast, and all our spiritual and eternal happiness.

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

1. They think it necessary to *repent* before they believe on Christ for their salvation, because repentance is absolutely necessary to salvation (Luke 13:3). "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;*" and Christ placeth the duty of repentance before faith, (Mark 1:15). "*Repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" But we are to know, that Christ requireth repentance first as the end to be aimed at, and faith in the next place, as the only means of attaining to it; and though the end be first in intention, yet the means are first in practice and execution, though both be

absolutely necessary to salvation. For, what is repentance, but a hearty turning from sin to God, and his service? and what way is there to turn to God, but through Christ, *who is the way, the truth, and the life; without whom none cometh to the Father?* (John 14:6); and what way is there of coming to Christ, but by faith? Therefore, if we would turn to God in the right way, we must first come to Christ by faith, and faith must go before repentance, as the greatest instrument afforded us by the grace of God, for the effectual performance of it. Repentance is indeed a duty which sinners owe naturally to God; but the great question is, how shall sinners be able to perform it? This question is solved only by the gospel of Christ, *repent and believe*. The way to repent is to begin with believing. Therefore, the great doctrine of John, in his baptism of repentance; was, that they *should believe on him that should come after him*, that is, on Christ Jesus, (Acts 19:4).

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

3. They account it necessary to receive Christ, as their *Lord* and *Lawgiver*, by a sincere resignation of themselves to his government, and a resolution to obey his law, before they receive him as their Saviour. This is one principal lesson of the new divinity, and such a receiving Christ, as Lord, is made to be the great act of saving faith: without which, such faith as I have described, whereby we trust on Christ for salvation is reckoned no better than presumption. They teach, that Christ will not

bestow his salvation on those that do not first yield their subjection to his kingly authority; but he calleth them his *enemies*, because they would not that he should *reign over them*, and requires that they be brought and *slain before them* (Luke 19:27). I own it is a certain truth, that Christ will save nothing but those that are brought to resign themselves sincerely to the obedience of his royal authority and laws. But yet we must observe, that they are not brought to this holy resignation, or to any sincere purpose and resolution of obedience, before they receive his salvation, but rather by receiving it. Men that were never thoroughly sensible of their natural death in sin, do easily bring themselves to resolve universal obedience to God, when they are on their death-beds, or in any imminent danger, or when they would prepare themselves for the Lord's Supper, that so they may make their peace with God, and trust securely on Christ for his salvation. But all resolutions of that kind are vain and hypocritical, sooner broken than made. Those who know the plague of their own hearts, do find that their mind is *enmity* unto the law of God and Christ, and cannot be *subject* unto it (Rom. 8:7); and that they can as soon remove a mountain, as give up themselves sincerely to obedience, before they trust on Christ for his salvation, and for the gift of a new heart, whereby they may be enabled both to will and to do any thing that is acceptable to God.

We should have been sufficiently obliged to all obedient purposes, resolutions, and resignations, if Christ had never come into the world to save us: but he knew that we could perform nothing holily, except he made us first partakers of salvation, and that we shall never obey him as a *Law-giver*, until we receive him as a *Saviour*. He is a saving Lord; trust on him first to save you from the guilt of power and sin, and dominion of Satan, and to give you a new spiritual disposition; then, and not till then, the love of Christ will constrain you to resign yourself heartily to *live to him* that *died for you* (2 Cor. 5:14); and you will be able to say, with an unfeigned resolution, "*O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed*



*my bonds*” (Psa. 116:16).

4. It seemeth to them evident, that some *good works* are necessary, before we can trust on Christ safely for the forgiveness of sin; because our Saviour teacheth us, that, if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our trespasses; and directeth us to pray, “*forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*” (Matt. 6:12). 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 restitution, according to our ability, or at least a sincere desire and purpose so to do, are very closely joined with the forgiveness of our sins, and are very necessary to fit us for prayer, and for sacramental applications of pardoning grace to ourselves. A lively faith cannot be without these fruits; and therefore, we cannot pray, or partake of the sacraments, in faith, without them; but yet, if we strive to do either of these before we trust on Christ for our pardon and salvation, we shall do them slavishly and hypocritically, not in a holy acceptable manner. Our forgiving others will not be accompanied with any hearty love to them as to ourselves, for the sake of God; and our restitution will be but a forced act, like Pharaoh’s letting the children of Israel go; or, like Judas restoring the thirty pieces of silver, being compelled thereunto by terror of spirit; and when the terror that forced us is removed, we shall be as ready to recall our forgiveness, and to wrong others again, as Pharaoh was to bring the Israelites again into bondage, after he had let them go (Exod. 14:5). If you would forgive others heartily, so as to love them again, you must first, by faith in Christ, apprehend the love and mercy of God towards yourselves, and then you will be able, according to the apostle’s instructions, to *be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph. 4:32). The readiness of Zaccheus to make restitution, followed upon a discovery of Christ’s love to him; and his joyfully receiving Christ into his house, was fruit whereby he evidenced the truth of that faith that was already

wrought in his heart.

5. I shall reckon up together *several other qualifications*, that distressed souls would find in themselves, that they may be duly prepared to trust on Christ for their salvation; and when they have laboured anxiously a long time, and cannot get them, at last they lie down in sorrowful despondence, not daring to apply the consolations of the grace of God in Christ to their wounded consciences. Let perplexed souls mark the particulars, and observe whether the condition of their own souls be reached in any of them. "*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted,*" what good qualifications are they that thou wouldst have, that thou mayest be encouraged to lay hold on Christ for salvation! It is likely thou wilt answer, in the bitterness of thy soul: "let me have first some love to God and godliness in mine heart, and freedom from mine hateful heart-risings against him and his service! Let me have some good thoughts of God, his justice, mercy, and holiness, that I may be able to justify him, though he damn me; and that I may not be filled with murmuring and hellish blasphemies in my mind against him. Let the raging of my lust be abated, and the stinking kennel of my wicked heart a little cleansed. Let me have some holy reverential fear of God, and not only a panic tormenting horror. I would be more affected with the wrath of God, and not be of a slighting heedless spirit. I would be more humbled for sin, loath it, and be ashamed of, and be sorry for it with a godly sorrow, not merely because of the punishment, but because it grieveth and vexeth the Holy Spirit of God. I would be able to make a willing and ingenious 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 like a lifeless stone in the duty of prayer, as I am." Are these the things thou desirest, poor distressed soul? The best reply I can make for thy speedy comfort, is to inform thee, that the things are good, but thy desires are not well-timed. It is unreasonable for thee to expect these holy qualifications, whilst thou art in thy natural state, under the guilt of sin, and the apprehensions of the wrath of God, before thou hast received the atonement, and the

new spiritual life that is by Christ, through faith in his name. Thou dost but exasperate thy corruption, and harden thy heart, and make thy wounds to stink the more, because of thy foolishness. Such good qualifications are included in the nature of faith, and, for the most part, they follow after it; so that they cannot possibly be obtained before thou trustest on Christ for thy salvation: as I shall shew concerning them particularly in their order.

A love to the salvation of God, and to the free gift of holiness, is included in the nature of faith; so that it cannot be hearty without it. Act faith first, and the apprehension of God's love to thy soul will sweetly allure and constrain thee to love God and his service universally: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). We cannot be beforehand with God in love; and we must perceive his love, to make us love him: for, if we look upon him as a God contrary to us, that hateth us, and will damn us, our own innate self-love will breed hatred and heart-risings against him, in spite of our hearts. That love, which is the end of the law, must flow from "*faith unfeigned*" (1 Tim. 1:5). And, if hatred work in thee more than love, how canst thou expect good thoughts of God, or any other than blaspheming, or, at least, murmuring thoughts of him, in this condition? Ill-will never speaketh or thinketh well. The first right holy thoughts thou canst have of God, are thoughts of his grace and mercy to thy soul in Christ, which are included in the grace of faith. Get these thoughts first by believing in Christ, and they will breed in thee love to God, and all good thoughts of him, and free thee from blasphemous and murmuring thoughts by degrees; for, *love "thinketh no evil"* (1 Cor. 13:5). Then wilt thou be able to account God just and merciful, if he had damned thee, and extended his grace to others; and thou wilt be able to think well of his holiness, and of his decrees, which many cannot endure to hear of.

The way to get rid of *raging lusts*, is by *faith*, that *purifieth the heart, and worketh by love* (Acts 15:9; Gal. 5:6). The soul must be brought to take pleasure in God and Christ by faith, or else it

will lust after fleshly and worldly pleasures. And the more you strive against lusts without faith, the more they are stirred up, though you prevail so far as to restrain the fulfilling of them. Beg a holy fear of God, with fear of coming short of the promised rest through unbelief (Heb. 4:1). Such a fear is an ingredient of faith, and it will breed in us a reverential, yea, a child-like fear of God and his goodness (Heb. 12:28); Hosea 3:5). *We must "have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence."* It is in the margin, *we must have; or hold fast grace.* And there is no other way to *hold fast grace*, but by faith; and this will quickly calm all panic and tormenting horror.

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

The belief of God's pardoning and accepting grace, is a necessary means to bring us to an ingenuous confession of sins.

The people freely *confessed their sins*, when they were baptized of John in Jordan, “*for the remission of sins*” (Mark 1:4, 5). The confession of despairers is forced, like the extorted confessions and cryings out of malefactors upon the rack. A pardon sooner openeth the mouth of an ingenuous confession, than, *confess, and be hanged*; or, *confess, and be damned*. Therefore, if we would freely confess our sins, believe first, that “*God is faithful and just to forgive your sins*” through Christ (1 John 1:9). And, if you pray to God, or praise him with lively affections, you must first believe that God will hear you, and give you what is best for Christ’s sake (John 16:23, 24). otherwise your praying will be only from the teeth outward; for, “*how then shall they call on him in whom they 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 particulars, to the general assertion laid down in the Direction; if you ask, *what shall we do, that we may work the works of God*, or get any saving qualifications? I must direct you first to *faith*, as the *work of works*, and the great saving preparatory to all good qualifications, by answering in our Saviour’s words, “*this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*” (John 6:28, 29).

The third of seven booklets.

To be continued.

