

# The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification



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Walter Marshall

Introduction by Joel R. Beeke



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Introduction to *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*

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## INTRODUCTION

### The Secret Of Sanctification: Union With Christ

The primary secret of sanctification is a personal and vital union with Jesus Christ. In this introduction, we will look at that subject through the writing of Walter Marshall. First, we will look at who Marshall was, then at the context and some of the content of his famous book *The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*. Finally, I will suggest several practical lessons we can learn from Marshall.

#### *Who was Walter Marshall?*

Walter Marshall was born at Bishops Wearmouth in Durham, England, in 1628. At age eleven, he went to study at Winchester College, after which he became a Fellow at New College, Oxford. In 1654 he was approved for the living of Fawley; in 1656 he was appointed to the vicarage of Hursley in Hampshire. He married and had two daughters. From 1657 to 1661 he also served as a Fellow at Winchester College.

When the Act of Uniformity was adopted by the government in 1662, all ministers of the Church of England were asked to give proof of Episcopal ordination and of conformity to the *Book of Common Prayer*. Like hundreds of his Puritan colleagues, Marshall decided as a matter of conscience not to conform. He and those ministers were ejected from their parishes on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1662, which would thereafter be called Black Bartholomew's Day. In the preface to Marshall's work on sanctification, a friend wrote of the effect of that day: "He [Marshall] was put under the Bartholomew Bushel with near two thousand more lights whose illumination made the land a Goshen."

Soon after this, Marshall was installed as minister of an independent congregation at Gosport in Hampshire, where he served the last eighteen years of his life. At Gosport he wrote his book on sanctification, titling it *Gospel Mystery* from Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 3:16: "Great is the mystery of godliness."

During this time, Marshall also experienced profound spiritual distress. For years he sought after holiness and peace. He read Richard Baxter extensively, then questioned Baxter, who said that Marshall had taken him too legalistically. He went to Thomas Goodwin next, telling him about the sins that weighed heavily on his conscience. Goodwin's response was that Marshall had forgotten to mention the greatest sin of all, of not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins and the sanctifying of his nature.

Marshall began to focus more on studying and preaching Christ. He realized that he had been trying to make his own righteousness the basis of his dealings with God as well as the ground of his peace. Consequently he had not submitted himself to the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. When he focused upon Christ, he found holiness, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost. *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification* was the fruit of such experience. In this book he gave to posterity the lessons he had learned over many years about how to find and enjoy union with Christ.

Marshall's preaching was edifying though he was not known for his preaching. He ministered over a fairly wide area; there are records of his preaching in Winchester, Alton, Winton, Taunton, and Crewkerne.

Marshall died at Gosport in 1680. Before he died, he said to his visitors, "I die in the full persuasion of the truth, and in the comfort of that doctrine which I have preached to you." He then offered his last words, "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). The funeral sermon was preached by Samuel Tomlyns. In the preface to that sermon, Tomlyns said of his friend, "He wooed for Christ in his preaching, and allured you to Christ by his walking."

Marshall's book was not printed until twelve years after his death. It has been reprinted often over the centuries and praised by many, including Adam Gib, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Chalmers, Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine. Robert Traill wrote of the work: "Mr. Marshall's treatise on the *Mystery of Sanctification* by faith in Jesus Christ is such a vindication and confirmation of that Protestant doctrine, that I fear no effectual opposition against it." William Cowper wrote, "Marshall is an old acquaintance of mine: I have both read him and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under

the influence of the divine Spirit, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness.”

James Hervey was even more enthusiastic. “Were I to be banished on to some desolate island possessed of only two books beside my Bible, this should be one of the two, perhaps the first that I would choose,” he wrote.

### *The Context of Marshall's Book*

To understand why Marshall wrote as he did, we need to know the context in which he wrote. He repeatedly argued against antinomianism as well as neonomianism, particularly the neonomian teaching of Richard Baxter. It's hard at times to know for sure whose teaching Marshall was opposing, however, because he never directly named those whose errors he was repudiating.

Antinomianism derives from *anti*, which means “against,” and *nomos*, which means “law.” An antinomian is thus someone who says that it is not essential for Christians to use the law as a rule of conduct for daily life. Antinomians believe that Christians are not bound to obey the law because they think that all Old Testament law was abolished in the New Testament.

The term *antinomian* was coined by Luther in his dispute with a former student, Johann Agricola. Agricola believed that repentance should not be prompted by the law but by the preaching of the gospel through faith in Christ. This dispute, along with a controversy surrounding Anne Hutchinson in New England Puritanism, were the most famous antinomian controversies of church history. Anne Hutchinson, who claimed to have special revelations from God, said that most of the Puritan pastors in New England were under the law even though Christians were supposed to be free from the law.

In refuting antinomianism, Marshall was in good company. Many seventeenth-century divines, including Samuel Rutherford, wrote against antinomianism. No one reacted to antinomianism as strongly as Richard Baxter, however. Baxter taught that antinomianism was rooted in gross ignorance and led to gross wickedness. James I. Packer writes of Baxter's opposition, “Baxter had no doubt that the impulse and the theology behind the Antinomian quest for ‘comfort’ at all costs came from the pit, for its outcome in practice was this; men went to the Antinomians troubled about their sins and all the advice they received was to be troubled about them no longer for Christ had taken them away. Where the Puri-

tan had said, Put sin out of your life, the Antinomian said, Put it out of your mind. Look at the law, consider your guilt, learn to hate sin and fear it and let it go, said the Puritan. Look away from the law and forget your sins and guilt, look away from yourself and stop worrying, said the Antinomian.”

Though right in refuting antinomianism, Baxter went too far and developed, with Daniel Williams, what has become known as neonomianism. Neonomians said that the gospel is a “new law” (*neonomos*) that replaces the Old Testament law. The new law of the gospel is that a sinner must obey the gospel by faith, and that this faith, together with the righteousness of Christ, is the ground of justification. Baxter used neonomianism to propagate his peculiar views on the atonement and justification.

Marshall gracefully attacked both antinomianism and neonomianism. In some ways he agreed with Baxter more than the antinomians, while in other ways he agreed more with people such as Tobias Crisp, who had mild antinomian sympathies.

### *The Content of Marshall's Book*

Marshall divided his work into fourteen sections that he called *directions*. Briefly, here's what those directions said.

Direction #1: *“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.”*

Marshall introduced his work by explaining that “holiness consists not only in external works of piety and charity, but in the holy thoughts, imaginations and affections of the soul, and chiefly in love; from whence all other works must flow or else they are not acceptable to God.”

Against the antinomians, Marshall went on to state that we must keep the law. To do that, we must learn how and what will help us, Marshall said. That need is especially urgent because of our radical inability to keep the law due to original sin, and because of our position before God as law breakers. Marshall therefore argued that “sanctification, whereby our hearts and lives are conformed to the law, is a grace of God communicated to us by means.” That means is Holy Scripture. We must sit at Christ's feet, to learn from Him the way of holiness, Marshall said.



Direction #2: *“Several Endowments and Qualifications are necessary to enable us for the immediate Practice of the Law.”*

Four of those qualifications are: 1. We need “an inclination and propensity of heart to the duties of the law” in order to practice the law. In opposition to those who teach universal redemption and ascribe free will to man, Marshall said that that inclination can only be granted to us by God giving us a new heart.

2. “We must be well-persuaded of our reconciliation with God. Herein I include the great benefit of justification as the means whereby we are reconciled to God,” Marshall said. He added that some people (probably Baxter and his followers) believed that the only way to establish sincere obedience was to make it a requirement for justification and reconciliation with God. Marshall disagreed. “Consult your own experience, if you have any true love to God, whether it were not wrought in you by a sense of God’s love first to you,” he wrote. If our works are not motivated by God’s love to us and do not flow out of reconciliation with Him, then we are still at enmity with Him. And if we are at enmity with Him, how can our works be done out of obedience? All good works therefore demand that our conscience first be purged from dead works, and that can only be done by God revealing to us that all our sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ’s blood.

3. We must be “persuaded of our future enjoyment of the everlasting heavenly happiness,” Marshall said. This persuasion, he added, will allure us, dispose us, and encourage us to sincere obedience. If Christ, the great pattern of holiness, was encouraged to obey for the joy that was set before him (Heb. 12:2), shouldn’t the Christian be similarly motivated? Marshall concluded that such motivation produces neither licentiousness (as neonomians fear), nor legalism (as antinomians fear).

4. We must be “persuaded of sufficient strength both to will and perform our duty acceptably, until we come to the enjoyment of the heavenly happiness,” Marshall wrote. Such persuasion consists of trusting in God’s strength and wisdom. God encourages His people to find that strength, which then encourages them to pursue what Marshall called the wonderful enterprise of holiness.

Direction #3: *“The way to get holy Endowments and Qualifications necessary to frame and enable us for the immediate Practice of the Law, is to receive them out of the Fullness of Christ, by fellowship with him; and that we may have this Fellowship, we must*

*be in Christ, and have Christ himself in us, by a mystical Union with him."*

Marshall explained that just as we are justified by Christ's righteousness worked out by Him and imputed to us, so we are sanctified by holiness accomplished in Christ, then imparted to us. As our corruption was produced in the first Adam, then passed on to us, so our holiness is first produced in Christ, then passed on to us. We don't actually work with Christ in producing holiness, but we receive holiness from Christ. We put holiness into practice by using what we already received from Christ.

Many people go through great agony trying to mortify their sins in order to become Christians. Martin Luther was a notable example. They do not realize that sanctification, like justification, results from union with Christ. It is impossible to become a Christian by works, Marshall said. The only way to be holy is to receive a new nature out of the fullness of Christ, then practice holiness out of Christ's holiness.

This union between Christ and the believer is one of three mystical unions presented in Scripture. The other two are the union of three Persons in one Godhead, and the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. Scripture speaks most of the union between Christ and the believer, Marshall said. For example, Scripture says Christ dwells in believers and they in Him (John 6:56, 14:20). They are joined together so as to become one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). Believers are members of Christ's body, of His flesh and bones. The two, Christ and the church, are one flesh (Eph. 5:30-31).

Scripture likens this union to many others: to the union between *God the Father* and *Christ* (John 14:20, 17:21-23); the union between the *vine* and its *branches* (John 15:4-5); the union between the *head* and *body* (Eph. 1:22-23); and the union between *bread* and the *eater* (John 6:51- 53-54). Furthermore, that union is signified and sealed in the Lord's Supper.

Marshall warns against misunderstanding this mystical union, however, by stating that a believer is not made God but only the temple of God. Furthermore the believer would not become perfect in holiness, nor would Christ be made a sinner. As Marshall wrote, "Christ knoweth how to dwell in believers by certain measures or degrees, and to make them holy so far only as he dwelleth in them."

Marshall went on to say that the believer's union with Christ

was the goal of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection. Consequently, Christ's sacrifice was "the cause of all the holiness that ever was, or shall be given to man, from the fall of Adam, to the end of the world."

The believer discovers this union through the work of the Holy Spirit. "Our sanctification is by the Holy Ghost, by whom we live and walk holily," Marshall wrote. "Now, the Holy Ghost first rested on Christ in all fullness, that he might be communicated from him to us.... And, when he sanctifieth us, he baptizes us into Christ, and joins us to Christ by himself, as the great bond of union (1 Cor. 12:13)."

Direction #4: *"The Means or Instruments whereby the Spirit of God accomplishes our Union with Christ, and our Fellowship with him in all holiness, are the Gospel, whereby Christ enters into our hearts to work faith in us; and faith, whereby we actually receive Christ himself, with all his fullness, into our hearts. And this faith is a grace of the Spirit, whereby we heartily believe the gospel, and also believe on Christ, as he is revealed and freely promised to us therein, for all his salvation."*

Faith not only assents to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, but also receives Christ and His salvation as offered freely in the gospel, Marshall explained. Both actions must be performed from the heart "with an unfeigned love to the truth, and a desire of Christ and his salvation above all things."

Marshall argued against those who consider this a dangerous doctrine and seek to correct it by teaching that in addition to justification, sanctification is also necessary to salvation. "Though we be justified by faith; yet we are sanctified by our own performance of the law; and so they set up salvation by works," Marshall said. He also argued against those who teach that faith is not the principal saving act of the soul.

Marshall then very carefully stated how faith is related to salvation. Faith is not a work of merit but a gift of grace, he said. Faith itself doesn't save, only faith in Christ. Faith is a self-emptying grace that is devoid of human strength and human works. Faith finds all its confidence in Christ. We don't have faith in our faith; rather, faith is the means, by which we receive, and put on Christ. Faith rests on Christ as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Marshall wrote, "When saving faith is wrought in us, the same

Spirit giveth us fast hold of Christ by it. As he openeth the mouth of faith to receive Christ, so he filleth it with Christ."

Finally, Marshall proved from Scripture that faith leads to holiness, not licentiousness. Faith prompts love, praise, prayer, patience, communion with the saints, Christlikeness, and self-denial, he said. He then concluded, "Thus we are first passive, and then active, in this great work of mystical union: we are first apprehended of Christ, and then we apprehend Christ. Christ entereth first into the soul to join himself to it, by giving it the spirit of faith; and so the soul receiveth Christ and his Spirit by their own power."

Direction #5: *"We cannot attain to the Practice of true holiness, by any of our endeavours, while we continue in our natural state, and are not partakers of a new state, by union and fellowship with Christ through faith."*

The person who seeks to reform his life according to the law without considering that his state before God must first be changed commits a grievous error. As Marshall wrote, "We have no ground to trust on Christ to help us to will or to do that which is acceptable to him while we continue in our natural state; or to imagine that freedom of will to holiness is restored to us by the merits of his death." It is worth noting that Arminians teach that Christ's death has restored the freedom of the will for all men.

Direction #6: *"Those that endeavour to perform sincere obedience to all the 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 any true holy obedience by all such endeavours."*

Baxter's neonomianism, which requires sincere though imperfect obedience, is another expression of the old Galatian heresy, Marshall said. "The difference between the law and the gospel does not at all consist in this, that the one consists in *perfect* doing; the other, only in *sincere* doing: but [the difference lies] in this, that the [law] requires *doing*, [whereas the gospel requires] *not* doing, but *believing* for life and salvation," Marshall wrote. "The terms [of law and gospel] are different not only in degree, but in their whole nature."

Furthermore, those who try to win salvation by sincere obedi-

ence act contrary to Christ Himself, to free grace, to faith, and to the personal experience of God's people, Marshall said. The effect of such efforts only stirs up the corruption of the human heart and makes sinners hate God and rebel against him, then forces them to sink into unutterable despair. "Therefore the doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience, that was invented against Antinomianism, may well be ranked among the worst Antinomian errors," Marshall concluded. "For my part, I hate it with perfect hatred, and account it mine enemy, as I have found it to be."

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."*

Here Marshall addressed the issue of what comes prior to faith. He argued that what people think of as preparation for faith is either faith itself or the result of faith. To try to make ourselves fit for Christ is to be led away from Christ by a satanic delusion, Marshall said.

People stumble when they try to say that certain conditions are necessary prerequisites to salvation, Marshall explained. Those conditions include the need for repentance prior to believing in Christ, the need for regeneration as something separable in time from faith, the need to receive Christ as Lord and lawgiver before receiving Him as Savior, the need for some good works before trusting in Christ for forgiveness of sins, and the need for more evidences of grace before laying hold on Christ for salvation. Such people become spiritually distressed when they think they must have more love for God, more godliness of heart, more thoughts of God's attributes, more victory over lusts, more cleansing of their hearts, more impressions of the wrath of God, more confession of sin, and more heart-felt prayer and praise before they may trust in Christ for their salvation. Such erroneous ideas only keep people away from Christ.

What people really need is union with Christ by faith, for all marks of grace are included in faith. Such marks do not precede faith; they accompany and follow faith. Marshall concluded, "While we endeavour to prepare our way to Christ by holy qualifications, we do rather fill it with stumblingblocks, and deep pits, whereby our souls are hindered from ever attaining to salvation of Christ."

Direction #8: *“Be sure to seek for Holiness of Heart and Life only in its due order, where God has placed it, after Union with Christ, Justification, and the gift of the Holy Ghost; and, in that order, seek it earnestly by Faith, as a very necessary part of your salvation.”*

After emphasizing the importance of getting faith and holiness in the right order, Marshall issued a stern warning against antinomianism. The best way to oppose antinomianism, he said, is “not to deny as some do that trusting on Christ for salvation is a saving act of faith, but rather to show that none do or can trust on Christ for true salvation, except they trust on him for holiness; neither do they heartily desire true salvation if they do not desire to be made truly righteous in their hearts and lives.”

Direction #9: *“We must first receive the Comforts of the Gospel, that we may be able to perform sincerely the Duties of the Law.”*

By nature we are addicted to a legal approach to salvation, Marshall said. We don’t expect a paycheck before working, so we also don’t expect comfort before doing our duty. But God comforts His people before they win His favor. That is the only way they can come to salvation. As Marshall wrote, “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?”

Direction #10: *“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 Salvation, in that very Faith whereby Christ himself is received into our Hearts: therefore we must endeavor to believe on Christ confidently, persuading and assuring ourselves, in the Act of believing, that God freely giveth to us an Interest in Christ and his Salvation, according to his gracious promise.”*

Assurance of salvation is necessary for growth in holiness, Marshall said. The early Reformers taught that faith was a persuasion or confidence of our 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 whereby they prevailed to overthrow the Popish superstition, whereof doubtfulness of salvation is one of the principle pillars,” Marshall wrote.

Marshall then discussed the direct and reflex actions of faith, arguing that those two acts of faith represent two kinds of assurance. The direct act of faith assures a sinner that he can get into a



state of grace. It says yes to the question: Can God bestow salvation upon me immediately even if I have been very sinful? That kind of assurance accompanies saving faith, Marshall said. That is the kind of assurance that the early Reformers were talking about when they defined saving faith in terms of assurance.

The reflex act of faith, which the Puritans focused on, answers a different concern. It says yes to the question: Am I truly saved? Many of God's people lack this kind of assurance, Marshall said. They are not sure how they will fare on the Day of Judgment.

According to Marshall, believers who have the direct act of faith without the reflex act of faith still have a measure of assurance. Marshall said this because he was concerned that some of his colleagues were treating the reflex act of faith as if it were the only kind of assurance that existed. Marshall feared that they were discouraging many precious saints by ignoring the assuring element in the direct act of faith as well as by demanding more marks of grace than the ordinary Christian discovers in the reflex act of faith.

Marshall also held that many of his contemporaries mistakenly thought that assurance of salvation could not be accompanied by doubt. We are creatures of flesh, Marshall wrote. As such, even believers who have the highest degree of assurance must continue to wage war against the corruption of unbelief and doubts, as the weakness of the flesh.

The direct act of faith is granted by the Holy Spirit to the ordinary Christian, Marshall wrote. Believers are sealed with the Spirit from the moment they savingly believe. Thus, the witness and seal of the Spirit are not reserved for only a few of God's people. Marshall concluded by saying: "Therefore we may judge rather, that the Spirit worketh this in us by giving saving faith itself, by the direct act of which all true believers are enabled to trust assuredly on Christ for the enjoyment of the adoption of children, and all his salvation according to the free promise of God; and to call God Father without reflecting on any good qualifications in themselves, for the Spirit is received by the *direct* act of faith (Gal. 3:2); and so he is the Spirit of adoption, and comfort, to all that receive him."

*Direction #11: "Endeavour diligently to perform the great Work of believing on Christ, in a right Manner, without any Delay; and then also continue and increase in your most holy Faith; that so your*

*Enjoyment of Christ, Union and Fellowship with him, and all Holiness by him, may be begun, continued, and increased in you."*

The purpose of Scripture is to bring men to faith in Christ. Yet, faith is difficult because of our corruption and Satan's temptations, Marshall said. Consequently, the believer must strive to believe on Christ in the right way. To believe on Christ rightly means to receive the truth of the gospel and to come to the Christ of the gospel. To come to Christ rightly means to receive Him as a free gift with ardent affection, trusting in Him alone for salvation. We must not delay, but come to Christ immediately, with full assurance of faith for a new heart and holy life.

Having pressed the urgency of faith, Marshall then stressed the importance of continuing and increasing in faith. The believer ought never think that he may grow careless because his name is written in heaven. Marshall particularly warned against trusting in faith as a work of righteousness instead of trusting in Christ alone by faith.

*Direction #12: "Make diligent use of your most holy Faith, for the immediate performance of the duties of the law, by walking no longer according to your old natural state, or any principles or means of practice that belong unto it; but only according to that new state, which you receive by Faith, and the principles and means of practice that properly belong thereunto; and strive to continue and increase in such manner of practice. This is the only way to attain to an acceptable performance of those holy and righteous duties, as far as it is possible in this present life."*

Marshall said that believers should strive to obey the law by "gospel principles and means." He stressed the need for prayerful study of Scripture for a proper understanding of the way of holiness. He also stressed that though we receive a perfect Christ by faith, our enjoyment of Him is imperfect.

Marshall explained how corruption dampens our enjoyment of spiritual blessings. He also warned against perfectionism, which looks like a friend of holiness but is really its enemy. Perfectionism motivates people to seek holiness by false principles and means, he said.

We must remember that the flesh is irremediable in this life. Death is its destiny. The only answer for the flesh is a new nature in Christ. But a new nature does not come through the law. Rather, it comes by faith in Christ, who is the fountain of holi-



ness. "Believers should not act *for* life, but *from* life," Marshall wrote. Some people use the effects of God's attributes of power, knowledge, and justice, as well as the joy of heaven and the damnation of hell, as motives for holiness. But as Marshall taught, that way is doomed. Rather, we are to live upon Christ Himself in all his excellencies and beauty, and out of the fullness of His provision for us.

Marshall concluded this section by reminding us that Christ will not overdrive his sheep. "He will gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young (Is. 40:11)," Marshall said. "So we are to beware of being too rigorous in exacting righteousness of ourselves and others beyond the measure of faith and grace."

"Children that venture on their feet beyond their strength, have many a fall; and so have babes in Christ, when they venture unnecessarily upon such duties as are beyond the strength of their faith," he went on. "We should be content, at present, to do the best we can, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, though we know that others are enabled to do much better."

*Direction #13: "Endeavour diligently to make the right use of all means appointed in the word of God, for the obtaining and practicing Holiness only in this way of believing in Christ, and walking in him, according to your new state by faith."*

In thirty pages of text, Marshall explained how we must use the means of grace in striving for holiness. We must endeavor diligently to know the Word of God, to examine our state and daily life by the Word, and to meditate regularly on the Word. We are to use the sacraments as spiritual feasts to promote the life of faith. We are to pray in such a way that we can live by faith in Christ, according to the new man. We must pray from the heart by faith in the name of Christ, looking to God as our Father, believing in the remission of our sins for Christ's sake, and using every sanctifying grace we can lay hold of to stir ourselves into a holy frame of mind. All of that must be accompanied by heartfelt singing of the Psalms, periodic fasting, and frequent fellowship with the saints. In all those means, however, we must take care that we *use* them but not *abuse* them by putting them in the place of Christ.

*Direction #14: "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."*

In other words, Marshall said that holiness grounded in union with Christ, along with the diligent use of the means of grace, will reap a fruitful and blessed life. Such a pursuit will abase our flesh, exalt God, and coalesce with all the doctrines of grace. This is the only pleasant and sure way to attain true holiness.

### *Lessons from Marshall for Today*

There are at least five lessons that Marshall's book can teach us today:

#### 1. The Inseparability of Union with Christ and Sanctification

We learn from Marshall that all sanctification, indeed, all spiritual life, is inseparable from spiritual union with Jesus Christ. Union with Christ is the foundation of our entire spiritual life.

Union with Christ became such an important doctrine to Paul that he mentioned it on nearly every page of his epistles. He uses such phrases as "in Christ" and "in the Lord" 164 times in his epistles — 16 times in Ephesians 1 alone. In Ephesians 1 Paul tells us that union with Christ is a vast, all-embracing truth for His people — a truth that runs from eternity past to eternity future and spans all the time between.

Paul says that Christ manifested this unity in the accomplishment of redemption. He did not act as a private person, but as the representative of His people. He acted as their agent so that in the mind of God what He accomplished was reckoned to the account of the elect as if they themselves had done it. That is such an important concept to Paul that he coins new words to express it. He takes Greek verbs and adds to them a prefix that means "together with." He says in Galatians 2:20, "I am *crucified with Christ*"; in Romans 6:4, "Therefore we *are buried with him*"; in Ephesians 2:5-6, "Even when we were dead in sins, [God] hath *quickened us together with Christ*, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath *raised us up together*, and *made us sit together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus"; and in Romans 8:17 that we shall "be also *glorified together*" with Christ.

Paul is saying that our union with Christ is so intimate that, in a sense, when He was crucified, we were crucified; when He died, we died; when He was buried, we were buried; when He was raised from the dead, we were raised; when He ascended into

heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father, we were also glorified. Being in His body, believers are united with Christ on the throne today. Who can explain that? It is as a poet wrote:

*One in the tomb, one when He rose,  
One when He triumphed o'er His foes,  
One when in heaven He took His seat  
While seraphs sang all hell's defeat,  
With Him our Head we stand or fall,  
Our Life, our Surety, our All.*

Union with Christ is all-embracing because it encompasses all divine blessing in Christ. In Ephesians 1:3 Paul declares how all-embracing this really is, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in* Christ." Paul is not saying that all blessings are made available to us in such a way that Christ only parcels them out piecemeal, with a little wisdom here and a bit of strength there. Rather, Paul stresses that Christ gives us Himself. *He* is our wisdom, *He* is our strength, *He* is our compassion, *He* is our sanctification. The secret of the Christian life is to more intimately know the Christ to whom the believer is bound forever. If we are true believers, we know that every spiritual blessing that He possesses He will share with us because we are by grace united with Him. That's why it is important never to separate the benefits of Christ from His Person.

What Marshall basically wrote was this: As long as Christ remains outside of us, all that He has suffered for the salvation of sinners is meaningless to us. Conversely, everything that God wants to give His people is given to them in Christ. So only in Christ are we created anew and sanctified. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." Spiritual life from start to finish is grounded in union with Christ.

Apart from Christ, we cannot view our past, present, or future with anything but dread. But as faith enables us to see our union with Christ, we are assured that He who has begun the good work of sanctification within us will carry on to the end (Phil. 1:6). Our sanctification cannot be aborted because our union with Christ is unbreakable. If you are a believer, Christ is in you and you are in Him forever.

In ancient days sailing vessels at times could not get close enough to shore to dock. So while the ship waited off shore the

crew would place the ship's anchor in a small boat called a fore-runner, bring it to shore, and tie up the small boat at the place where the sailing vessel was supposed to dock. When weather conditions permitted, the crew would pull in that anchor chain and slowly draw the ship into shore.

Jesus is our anchor. He is also our forerunner. He is in heaven, the safe haven. But we are connected to Him by a bond that no storm can ever snap. One day His almighty hands will pull us to safety where He is.

The believer may be sure that the Father will respond to him just as the Father responds to His Son. Is Jesus acceptable in heaven? Then so is the believer. Is Jesus worthy to sit at the right hand of the Father? Then so is the believer.

Union with Christ is the primary secret of our sanctification. Union with Christ will help us steer between cold intellectualism and unbiblical mysticism, and between antinomianism and neonomianism as we pursue holiness.

In 1890 at a funeral service for a senior deacon at his church, C.H. Spurgeon cited the favorite expression of that brother, which was, "Lord Jesus, we are one with Thee. We feel that we have a living, loving, lasting union with Thee." Said Spurgeon, "Those three words have stuck by me; and ever since he has gone, I have found myself repeating them to myself involuntarily — 'a living, loving, lasting union.' He owed everything to that." So also do we.

## 2. The Inseparability of Justification and Sanctification

We learn from Marshall that our union with Christ means that justification and sanctification are inseparable in our spiritual life. Union with Christ in our status before God (i.e. justification) must bring us closer to Christ in daily living (i.e. sanctification). As Thomas Chalmers wrote about Marshall, "I do not know an author who sets forth the gospel in a way so suited to promote the conjoint interests of peace and holiness."

The entire Puritan movement, of which Marshall was an important part, was as inevitably an outgrowth of the Reformation as sanctification inevitably flows out of justification. Marshall's book teaches us that sanctification cannot increase in our lives and churches without the Word-centered teaching of gracious justification by faith.

In this, two extremes must be avoided: First, justification em-

phasized at the expense of sanctification (as was generally true for the antinomians); and second, sanctification emphasized at the expense of justification (as was generally true for the neonomians). Like Marshall, we must strive for a healthy balance of both.

We must also vigorously promote a biblically based religion in which both justification and sanctification are experienced. As it is essential to be united with Christ in justification, so is it essential that we know Him experientially in sanctification. The religion of Marshall and the Puritans was filled with vitality because it encompassed both.

### 3. The Inseparability of Christ and His Word

We need to learn from Marshall and the Puritans how to entrench ourselves in the eternal truths of Holy Scripture. The Puritans found all they needed in the Bible. Here was a system of doctrine, a manual for worship, a church order that was God-breathed, comprehensive, all-sufficient, and utterly compelling in its power and authority. We too must relish this Word-centered authority. We must aim for what Thomas Boston says is “strictly scriptural,” neither adding an unending cycle of works to Scripture, nor subtracting from Scripture to soften the demands of Christ’s lordship.

We learn to know the personal Word, Christ Jesus, from the written Word, the Bible. Marshall calls us to cherish once again the vision of God spread across the pages of Scripture. He calls us to love the Lord Jesus in all His fullness. In Christ there is majesty and glory, justification and sanctification. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom. In Him are mercy and love beyond degree (Col. 2:9). Marshall would have us bow before Christ as Lord of all salvation; he would have us know that there is no knowledge of Jesus apart from His Word and Spirit.

### 4. The Inseparability of Mind and Soul

We need to learn from Marshall that holiness involves the mind as well as the heart. Much has already been said about the necessity of the heart in religion. It must now be stressed that the mind also plays an important role.

Unfortunately, many people forget this today. The 1980 Gallup Poll on religion reported, “We have a revival of feelings but not of the knowledge of God. The church today is more guided by feelings than by convictions. We value enthusiasm more than informed commitment.”

Marshall showed that we do need to think in order to be holy. He challenged the idea that holiness is only a matter of emotions. Many people today think that holiness is only a matter of the emotions. Churches promote that kind of thinking, too, by offering mindless entertainment rather than thoughtful worship. Many also forgo the teaching of solid, biblical doctrine, even though the Holy Spirit admonishes us to pay attention to doctrine (1 Tim. 4:13). Paul tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2).

The Puritans worshipped and loved God with their minds. They viewed the mind as the palace of faith. They agreed with Pascal who wrote, "Man is but a reed, the weakest thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed." Many antinomians, like many charismatics today, set mind and heart against each other. They thus attacked the Puritan stress on reason. One of Anne Hutchinson's followers wrote: "I would rather have such a one that speaks from the mere motions of the Spirit without any study at all, than any of your learned scholars, although they may be fuller of Scriptures."

The Puritans believed that knowledge was the soil in which the Spirit planted the seed of regeneration in the soul. They taught that it was our duty to fill our minds with knowledge while praying that God would bless that knowledge to our souls. Head-knowledge and heart-knowledge are thus to be regarded as friends, not enemies. So John Preston wrote, "In conversion, reason is elevated." And Cotton Mather said, "Ignorance is the mother not of devotion but of Heresy."

Marshall insisted on combining the affections with reason. No one could accuse him of cold intellectualism or of a lack of emphasis on experimental religion. But he believed that holiness is to be promoted by addressing the mind; therefore he wrote meticulously about the biblical teaching on union with Christ.

God gave us minds for a reason. It is crucial that we become like Christ in the way we think. Our minds must be disciplined by the Word and enlightened by faith, then put into God's service in the world. We ought to be challenged by Puritans such as Marshall to use our intellect to further God's kingdom through worship, evangelism, apologetics, and vocation. Without clear thinking, we will never be able to counter the culture in which we live, work, and minister. We will become empty in ourselves, non-productive, and narcissistic, lacking a developing interior



life. Beware of those who in the supposed interests of spirituality ignore or even deny the place the mind has in the teaching of Scripture, in the man Christ Jesus, and in mankind in general, created in God's image.

A flabby mind is no badge of honor. A mindless Christianity will foster a spineless Christianity. An anti-intellectualistic gospel will spawn an irrelevant gospel that doesn't get beyond "felt needs." That's what is happening in our churches today. We've lost our Christian mind, and for the most part we don't see the necessity of recovering it. We don't understand that where there is little difference between the Christian and non-Christian in what we think and believe, there will soon be little difference in how we live.

### 5. The Inseparability of the Sacred and the Secular

Finally, we need to learn from Marshall to aim for spiritual balance in all of life. The Puritans longed for the Spirit's work in their mind and heart, but they yearned no less for the Spirit's fruits in every aspect of their lives. For them there was no disjunction between the sacred and the secular; their entire lives were devoted to divine service as a fruit of union with Christ. Everything must be done to the glory of God.

Our calling has not changed. Out of union with Christ, we are called, like Caleb, to follow the Lord fully all our life (Nu. 14:24). We will grow in intimacy with Christ, only when we live, out of union with Christ, balanced and sanctified lives. And that is what we urgently need.

May I ask you in closing: Are you diligently using the means of grace to foster spiritual intimacy with Christ? What do the Scriptures mean to you? Do you know, love, and live the Scriptures in Christ? Is the preached Word food for your soul because it leads you to Christ? Are you using the sacraments profitably, experiencing, as one Puritan put it, that Christ becomes most familiar in them? Are your prayers punctuated with Christ-centered praises and groanings? Are you singing the Psalms christologically and communing with the saints about your altogether lovely Savior? Is Christ the desire, goal, and substance of all your use of the means of grace?

To you who do not know Christ, who are not spiritually and intimately united with Him, you are in a dire condition. Thomas Boston said, "You are sitting in the region and shadow of death, and in the suburbs of hell." Yet, even there, Christ offers to unite

with you, even if you were the greatest sinner on earth. He declares to you, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" (1 Tim 1:15). He sends out His ambassadors to win your consent to His gospel offer. He invites you to be wedded to Him. He announces to you, "All things are ready; come unto the marriage" (Mt. 22:4). Oh, that you would see your need, repent of your sin, believe in the Son of God, and embrace Him! Pray for grace that your entire soul may say "amen" to Christ's blessed offer to enter into union with you. Then your soul would be transferred to the suburbs of heaven.

### *Appendix: Marshall and the Second Blessing*

Second blessing teaching often results from an inadequate view of the law, if not outright hostility to the law. Its adherents don't appear to have read Paul's saying that "the law is holy, just, and good." Their inadequate view of the law shows in their reluctance to preach the law to sinners and by ignoring the law as a rule of life for believers. Against such teaching, Marshall insisted that we must strive to perform works of the law by gospel principles and means.

Second blessing teaching also derives from deficient preaching of the gospel. Under that kind of preaching, large numbers of people are brought to a decision and experience that comes far short of true faith and repentance. Mistakenly thinking they have become Christians when they really have no saving knowledge of Christ, such people often feel empty. Their experience does not correspond with the picture of the believer given in Scripture. Instead of telling such people that they need to be converted, some preachers tell them that what they lack is further experience. Against that Marshall warned, "When any fail in the second act of faith, the reason is commonly some defect in the first act. If they knew the name of Christ as he is discovered in the gospel, and judged aright of the truth and excellency of it, they would not fail to put their trust in him."

Second blessing teaching often produces intense dislike of the necessity of self-examination. Against such views, Marshall wrote, "We must find out 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."

Second blessing teaching thrives among those who are troubled



about personal assurance of salvation. Marshall dealt with this issue in two ways. First, by considering the relationship of faith to assurance he promoted teaching that strengthens assurance. He also showed that assurance is an integral part of faith by saying that it should be the normal experience of those who believe. Second, by affirming the direct witness of the Spirit, he argued against those who accuse the Puritans of promoting a cold, unfeeling religion. Clearly, Marshall, like most Puritans, advocated a warm, experimental religion.

Marshall also combatted the second blessing teaching that implies Christ is insufficient. Second blessing teaching says that though you may be justified by faith, regenerated by the Spirit, forgiven and adopted, indwelt by the Holy Spirit and united with Christ Jesus, you still lack the kind of experience without which you can never lead a victorious life, never know true deliverance from sin, and never have full assurance. Without such experience, your spiritual life will be stunted. Such teaching encourages people to be dissatisfied with what they have in Christ. It prompts them to look for something extra.

It is true, of course, that we are to press for increasing knowledge of our Savior, and ought never be satisfied with what we have attained. Nevertheless, as Marshall repeatedly emphasized, if you are a believer, you are united with Christ. What you need is not a new experience, but to draw more deeply upon Christ. The emphasis in Marshall's writing is always upon understanding and living by that which God has already so gloriously given in Jesus Christ. Marshall did not proceed by promoting dissatisfaction. Rather, he started and ended with satisfaction in and with Christ. Christ alone is sufficient.



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## DIRECTION I

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* whereby 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. And

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

Take notice farther, that the law, which is your mark, is

*exceeding broad*, (Ps. cxix. 96) and yet not the more easy to be hit; because you must aim to hit it, in every duty of it, with a performance of equal breadth, or else you cannot hit it at all (Jas. ii. 10). The Lord is not at all loved with that love that is due to him as Lord of all, if he be 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, judgments, and all his doings. We are to love him, not only better than other things, but singly, as only good, the fountain of all goodness; and to reject all fleshly and worldly enjoyments, even our own lives, as if we hated them, when they stand in competition with our enjoyment of him, or our duty towards him. We must love him as to yield ourselves wholly up to his constant service in all things, and to his disposal of us as our absolute Lord, whether it be for prosperity or adversity, life or death. And, for his sake, we are to love our neighbour, even all men, whether they be friends or foes to us; and so do to them in all things, that concern their honour, life, chastity, worldly wealth, credit, and content, whatever we would that men should do to us in the like condition (Matt. vii. 12). This spiritual universal obedience is the great end, to the attainment whereof I am directing you. And that you may not reject mine enterprise as impossible, observe, that the most I promise is no more than an acceptable performance of these duties of the law, such as our gracious merciful God will certainly delight in, and be pleased with, during our state of imperfection in this world, and such as will end in perfection of holiness, and all happiness in the world to come.

Before I proceed farther, stay your thoughts a while in the contemplation of the great dignity and excellency of these duties of the law, that you may aim at the performance of them, as your end, with so high an esteem, as may cast an amiable lustre upon the ensuing discovery of the means. The principal duties of love to God above all, and to each other, for his sake, from whence all the other duties flow, are so excellent, that I cannot imagine any more noble work for the holy angels in their glorious sphere. They are the chief works for which we were at first framed in the image of God, engraven upon man in the first creation, and for which that beautiful image is renewed 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, to be commanded or forbidden, or left indifferent, or changed, or abolished at his pleasure, as other works that belong either to the judicial or ceremonial law, or to the means of salvation prescribed by the gospel; but they are, in their own nature, *holy, just, and good* (Rom. vii. 12), and meet for us to perform because of our natural relation to our Creator and fellow creatures; so that they have an inseparable dependence upon the holiness of the will of God, and an indispensable establishment thereby. They are works sufficient to render the performers holy in all manner of conversation, by the fruits which they bring forth, if no other duties had ever been commanded; and by which the performance of all other duties is sufficiently established as soon as they are commanded; and without which, there can be no holiness of heart and life imagined; and to which, it was one great honour of Mosaical, and is now of evangelical ordinances, to be subservient for the performance of them, as means which shall cease when their end, this never-failing charity, is perfectly attained (1 Cor. xiii). 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 meet 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. ii. 14, 15). Therefore they are called *natural religion*: and the law that requireth them, is called the *natural law*, and also the *moral law*; because the manners of all men, infidels as well as Christians, ought to be conformed to it (and, if they had been fully conformable, they would not have come short of eternal happiness (Matt. v. 19; Luke x. 27, 28) ), under the penalty of the wrath of God for the violation of it. This is the true morality which God approveth of, consisting in a conformity of all our actions to the moral law. And, if those that, in these days, contend so highly for morality, do understand no other than this, I dare join with them in asserting, that the best morally honest man is the greatest saint; and that, morality is the principal part of true religion, and the test of all other parts, without which, faith is dead, and all other religious performances are a vain show, and mere hypocrisy: for the faithful and true Witness hath testified, concerning the two great moral commandments of *love to God*; and *our neighbour*, that there is none

other commandment greater than these, and that on them *hang all the law and the prophets* (Matt. xxii. 36, 38, 39, 40; Mark xii. 31).

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

This is an advertisement very needful; because many are apt to skip over the lesson concerning the *means* (that will fill up this whole treatise) as superfluous and useless. When once they know the nature and excellency of the duties of the law, they account nothing wanting but diligent performances; and they rush blindly upon immediate practice, making more haste than good speed. They are quick in promising (Exod. xix. 8). *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do*, without sitting down, and counting the cost. They look upon holiness as only the means of an end, of eternal salvation: not as an end itself, requiring any great means for attaining the practice of it. The enquiry of most, when they begin to have a sense of religion, is, *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* (Matt. xix. 16); not How shall I be enabled to do anything that is good? Yea, many that are accounted powerful preachers, spend all their zeal in the earnest pressing the immediate practice of the law, without any discovery of the effectual means of performance: as if the works of righteousness were like those servile employments, that need no skill and artifice at all, but industry and activity. That you may not stumble at the threshold of a religious life, by this common oversight, I shall endeavour to make you sensible, that it is not enough for you to know the matter and reason of your duty, but that you are also to learn the powerful and effectual means of performance, before you can successfully apply yourselves to immediate practice. And, for this end, I shall lay before you the considerations following.

*First:* We are all, by nature, void of all strength and ability to perform acceptably that holiness and righteousness which the law requireth, and are dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath, by the sin of our first father, Adam, as the scripture witnesseth (Rom. v. 12, 15, 18, 19; Eph. ii. 1, 2, 3; Rom. viii. 7, 8). This doctrine of original sin, which Protestants



generally profess, is a firm basis and ground-work to the assertion now to be proved, and to many other assertions in this whole discourse. If we believe it to be true, we cannot rationally encourage ourselves to attempt an holy practice, until we are acquainted with some powerful and effectual means to enable us to do it. While man continued upright, in the image of God, as he was at first created (Eccles. vii. 29; Gen. i. 27), he could do the will of God sincerely, as soon as he knew it; but, when he was fallen, he was quickly afraid, because of his nakedness; but could not help it at all, until God discovered to him the means of restoration (Gen. iii. 10, 15). Say to a strong healthy servant, Go, and he goeth; Come, and he cometh; Do this, and he doth it: but a bed-ridden servant must know first how he may be enabled. No doubt the fallen angels knew the necessity of holiness, and trembled at the guilt of their sin; but they knew of no means for them to attain to holiness effectually, and so continue still in their wickedness. It was in vain for Samson to say, *I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself*, when he had sinned away his strength (Judges xvi. 20). Men show themselves strangely forgetful, or hypocritical, in professing original sin in their prayers, catechisms, and confessions of faith; and yet urging upon themselves and others the practice of the law, without the consideration of any strengthening, enlivening means; as if there were no want of ability, but only of activity.

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

*Thirdly:* Though Heathens might know much of the work of the law by the common light of natural reason and under-

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

*Fourthly*: Sanctification, whereby our hearts and lives are conformed to the law, is a grace of God, communicated to us by means, as well as justification; and by means of teaching, and learning something that we cannot see without the word (Acts xxvi. 17, 18). There are several things pertaining to life and godliness that are given through knowledge (2 Pet. i. 2, 3). There is a form of doctrine made use of by God, to make people free from sin, and servants of righteousness (Rom. vi. 17, 18). And there are several pieces of the whole armour of God necessary to be known and put on, that we may stand against sin and Satan in the evil day (Eph. vi. 13). Shall we slight and overlook the way of sanctification, when the learning the way of justification hath been accounted worth so many elaborate treaties?

*Fifthly*: God hath given, in the holy scriptures by his inspiration, plentiful instruction in righteousness, *that we may be thoroughly furnished for every good work* (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17), especially since *the day-spring from on high hath visited us*, by the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, *to guide our feet in the way of peace* (Luke i. 78, 79). If God condescend to us so very low, to teach us this way in the scriptures, and by Christ, it must needs be greatly necessary for us, to sit down at his feet and learn it.

*Sixthly*: The way of attaining to godliness is so far from being known without learning out of the holy scriptures, that, when

it is here plainly revealed, we cannot learn it so easily as the duties of the law; which are known in part by the light of nature, and therefore the more easily assented to. It is the way whereby the dead are brought to live unto God; and therefore doubtless it is far above all the thoughts and conjectures of human wisdom. It is the way of salvation, wherein God will *destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent*, by discovering things by his Spirit, that *the natural man receiveth not; for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (1 Cor. i. 19, 21 and ii. 14). *Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness* (1 Tim. iii. 16). The learning of it requireth double work; because we must unlearn many of our former deeply rooted notions, and *become fools, that we may be wise*. We must pray earnestly to the Lord to teach us, as well as search the scriptures, that we may get this knowledge. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end* (Ps. cxix. 5, 33). *Teach me to do thy will* (Ps. cxliii. 10). *The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God* (2 Thess. iii. 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 whereby they might do them.

*Seventhly:* The certain knowledge of these powerful and effectual means, is of the greatest importance and necessity for our establishment in the true faith, and avoiding errors contrary thereunto; for we cannot rationally doubt, that the moral duties of love to God and our neighbour, are absolutely necessary to true religion, so that it cannot submit without them. And, from this principle we may firmly conclude, that nothing repugnant to the practice of these holy duties, ought to be received as a point of faith, delivered to us by the most holy God; and that whatsoever is truly necessary, powerful, and effectual, to bring us to the practice of them, ought to be believed as proceeding from God, because it hath the image of his holiness and righteousness engraven upon it. This is a sure test and touchstone, which those that are seriously religious will use, to try their spirits and their doctrines, whether they be of God or no; and they cannot rationally approve any doctrine as religious, that is not according to godliness (1 Tim. vi. 3). By this touchstone Christ proveth his doctrine to be of God,

because therein he seeketh the glory of God (John vii. 17, 18). And he teacheth us to know false prophets by their fruits (Matt. vii. 15, 16), wherein the fruits which their doctrine tendeth unto, are especially to be considered. Hence it appeareth, that, until we know what are the effectual means of holiness, and what not, we want a necessary touchstone of divine truth, and may be easily deceived by false doctrine, or brought to live in mere suspense concerning the truth of any religion, like the seekers. And, if you mistake, and think those means to be effectual that are not, and those that are effectual to be weak, or of a contrary effect, your error in this will be a false touchstone to try other doctrines, whereby you will readily approve of errors, and refuse the truth; which hath been a pernicious occasion of many errors in religion in late days. Get but a true touchstone, by learning this lesson, and you will be able to try the various doctrines of Protestants, Papists, Arminians, Socinians, Antinomians, Quakers: and to discover the truth, and cleave to it, with much satisfaction to your judgment, amongst all the janglings and controversies of these times. Hereby you may discover whether the Protestant Religion, established among us, hath in it any sinews of Antinomianism; whether it be guilty of any insufferable defect in practical principles, and deserves to be altered, and turned almost upside down, with new doctrines and methods; as some learned men, in late times, have judged by their touchstones.

*Eighthly:* It is also of great importance and necessity for our establishment in holy practice; for we cannot apply ourselves to the practice of holiness, with hope of success, except we have some faith concerning the divine assistance, which we have no ground to expect, if we use not such means as God hath appointed to work by. *God meeteth them that remember him in his own ways* (Isa. lxiv. 5); and *makes a breach upon them that seek him not after the due order* (1 Chron. xv. 13). He hath chosen and ordained such means of sanctification and salvation, as are for his own glory, and those only he blesseth to us; and he crowneth no man that striveth, except he *strive lawfully* (2 Tim. ii. 5).

Experience sheweth plentifully, both of Heathens and Christians, how pernicious ignorance or mistaking of those effectual means, is to an 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: (1) Many Christians content themselves with external performances, because they never knew how they might attain to spiritual service. (2) And many reject the way of holiness as austere and unpleasant, because they knew not 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. iii. 17). This occasioneth the putting off repentance from time to time, as an uncouth thing. (3) Many others set upon the practice of holiness with a fervent zeal, and run very fast; but tread not a step in the right way; and finding themselves frequently disappointed and overcome by their lusts, they at last give over the work and turn to wallow again in the mire: which hath occasioned several treatises, to show how far a reprobate may go in the way of religion; whereby many weak saints are discouraged, accounting that these reprobates have gone farther than themselves: whereas most of them never knew the right way, nor trod one step aright in it; for, *few there be that find it* (Matt. vii. 14). (4) Some of the more ignorant zealots do inhumanly macerate their bodies with fasting, and other austerities, to kill their lusts; and, when they see their lusts are still too hard for them, they fall into despair, and are driven, by horror of conscience, to make away with themselves wickedly, to the scandal of religion.—Peradventure God may bless my discovery of the powerful means of holiness so far, as to save some one or other from killing themselves. And such a fruit as this would countervail my labour; though, I hope, God will enlarge the hearts of many by it, to run with great cheerfulness, joy, and thanksgiving in the ways of his commandments.