

house of God. What can be the reasons that this supposed doctrine of salvation exerts no influence and finds no place in any part of the worship of the saved? One may be mentioned, and there needs not another. This doctrine is wholly unknown to the worship of the saved, because it is utterly alien from every worshipping sentiment which they feel, and from every exercise in which they engage. Not only does not any man who is saved by grace, with any reference to his own salvation, ever render any worship to God according to, and under the influence of this doctrine, but from the very nature of the thing no man can, because the thing is practically impossible.

We hear, indeed, Nehemiah saying to God, "Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people." Neh. v. 19. And again, "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof." Chap. xiii. 14. See also verses 22 and 31. Nothing, however, of all this related to salvation, but to matters connected with the Jewish economy, and the governing principle in force between Nehemiah and his God respecting all the things mentioned here was the law of works, not the law of faith. Hence, unusual as are these prayers, there was a perfect propriety in their use by him. But while Nehemiah spoke thus with a complete warrant, no man who is not a fanatic or a maniac would ever dare to say to God, *Think upon me, my God, for good, because I have discharged the duty of believing in Christ unto salvation.* But if believing in Christ unto salvation were a duty, and any man had discharged the obligation, he would be neither fanatical nor maniacal if he adopted Nehemiah's style in speaking to God about it. He would be without rebuke. He would be entirely within his privilege. But if any man of sound mind will attempt as an experiment to worship God under the guidance of this doctrine, I will venture to predict with the utmost confidence that he will not only find himself wholly outside of his privilege, but that

a sense of horror will make him speechless, and that nothing on earth would ever induce him to repeat, what he would come to regard as, the most offensive and damnable of all presumptuous sins.

That two and two make four is a fact not more simple and clear than is the truth that this doctrine is wholly alien from the worship of them who are saved. But can this be said in truth of any proved doctrine of salvation? Is not every such doctrine a prevailing incentive, an instructive guide, and a living energy in the soul of the saved worshipper when he is engaged in the several acts of his worship? I lay it down as a self-evident truth that every doctrine of salvation which refuses to guide and influence saved sinners in their personal worship of God is self-condemned as false by its refusal. I charge such a refusal on the doctrine that it is a duty to believe in Christ unto salvation, and I pray judgment on the false, injurious, and presumptuous offender to proceed accordingly.

Nowhere in the whole field of religion is this doctrine to be found, save in the several walks of the teacher, and here it stands condemned as unsound and alien from its being without example. For it may also be laid down as a self-evident truth that every presumptive doctrine of salvation which cannot justify its pretensions by example is a false one. I challenge the advocates of the doctrine in question to make good its claims according to this rule. One of the readiest methods available by the Christian teacher, and one of his most precious helps, in his teaching of all matters of personal religion, is a referenee to his own example and to that of others. But who ever heard a preacher illustrate and enforce the doctrine that it is a duty to believe in Christ unto salvation by any saving right or benefit which ever arose to himself or to others from the discharge of this supposed obligation? What Christian teacher has ever had the hardihood and effrontery to point to his own discharge of this supposed duty as a contribution to his salvation, and to urge an imitation of his example upon others? Or,

if any man professing to be a Christian teacher may have been guilty of such a monstrous anomaly, can there have been a people silly enough to have been deceived by the preposterous pride and insolence? If there have been such instances, if any Christian teacher has been known to enforce the discharge of this supposed duty by his own example, and a people have been known to accept the teaching, a clear case has been presented, to this extent at least, of the blind leading the blind. The leader blinded by presumption; the led by ignorance.

Further evidence against any doctrine of personal religion than has been here offered against this, would be wholly unnecessary. If any presumptive doctrine of salvation has never been embodied in the experience of the saved; if it has never been known, and if in the nature of the thing it is impossible that it should ever be able, to guide and influence their worship; and if its most ardent teacher cannot support and defend it by any reference to his own example or to that of others, this will be abundantly sufficient to complete the case against it. Precisely in this condition the notion in question now stands at the bar. Call, therefore, no more witnesses. Upon this evidence the jury may be charged to decide and give their verdict. Venerable as this doctrine may be for its age, solemnly sanctioned and fondly favoured as it may be by whatever great names, and whatever else may be advanced and pleaded on its behalf, having been on fair trial according to admitted rules proved untrue, it is evidently guilty of the damning fault of inherent falseness, and this fact ought to seal its condemnation and to secure execution to proceed accordingly.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

## OF THE WARRANT TO BELIEVE.

WHAT has been called the warrant of faith has exercised and perplexed men's minds a great deal more as theologians than as sinners. Whatever different opinions and contentions there may have been about this subject, but very little practical difficulty has ever been experienced about a warrant to believe by any that have desired to exert a depending belief on Christ for salvation. Practically, awakened and humbled sinners experience a vast deal more anxiety and doubt about the quality of their faith in Christ than about their warrant to believe.

On this point the excellent Abraham Booth seems to have been led into a mistake. Speaking of the discouragements of the awakened sinner in the matter of believing, he says, "He wants to find himself *distinguished* from others by holy tempers and sanctified affections as a proper object of mercy. This is his grand embarrassment. In other words, he considers himself as not sufficiently humbled under a sense of sin; as not having a suitable abhorrence of it; and as not possessing those fervent breathings after holiness which, as he supposes, are necessary before he can be warranted to believe in Jesus with a well-grounded hope of success." This is clearly a mistake. All these exercises, and many more, it is well enough known, do take place in the awakened sinner about believing; but at the same time they in nothing hinder him from exerting a depending act of belief on Christ for salvation. The distinctions which are so painfully, and, indeed, so justly sought by him, are not desired to encourage a dependence for salvation, but to certify him that he bears the description of those whom the promise of salvation assures that they shall be saved. In other words, he seeks for these distinctions in himself, not that he may believe God's testimony of fact and truth concerning his Son as the Saviour of sinners, and

dependingly trust on the word believed, but that he may find in himself the peculiar features of character belonging to those that come within the promise of salvation, and of whom it is said that they "shall be saved."

Anxious as every godly minister of Christ ought to be to preserve the doctrine of the freeness of grace from the least taint of corruption and from any weakening of the warrant of a sinner to believe, in a practical sense, in Christ for salvation; it will yet be a mistake to suppose that all subjective considerations are unnecessary, and to be denied. On this point, too, Mr. Booth does not seem quite clear. Zealous to preserve the warrant of faith in its purity, he seems to have been drawn into a mistake of the meaning of an author, Dr. Hopkins, whom he rather severely criticises. Dr. Hopkins said, it appears, "A hearty submission to, and acquiescence and delight in the law of God, rightly understood, and so a true hatred of sin, must take place in order to any degree of true approbation of the gospel, and faith and trust in Christ. The sinner who comes to Christ for salvation, comes as a true penitent; and that repentance is necessary to this faith." Against these statements Mr. Booth enters upon a very long argument which it is not necessary to follow. So far as the sentiments of Dr. Hopkins may be gathered from this quotation, he never supposed that these things were required, as being the germs of a true holiness, before a sinner is warranted to dependingly believe on the word of salvation, but as forming that peculiar condition of mind, the want of which, in the very nature of things, renders a depending faith on Christ in his remedial character simply impossible. Supposing this to have been the opinion of Dr. Hopkins, there can be no just exception taken against it; but if he demanded these things as including a holy disposition, or, indeed, any holiness, as such, at all, as a warrant for a sinner to believe in Christ for salvation, he was clearly in error. A good deal of argument too is wasted by Mr. Booth upon the repentance requisite to precede faith.

He acknowledges, indeed, that repentance goes before faith, but only in part. Taken as a change of mind and a conviction of sin, he allows repentance to go before faith ; but not as a sorrow for sin, and an aversion from it. This seems to be a fiddling observation, that is quite unworthy of that good man. It would be wholly useless to follow him seeing that the whole matter is so plain and may be disposed of very briefly.

It is beyond doubt that the most unrighteous, unholy, and evil sinner in the world is warranted to come to Christ, if he can come to him in truth. If he has the power to appreciate in any degree, only one of the remedial excellencies of the character of Christ, of which God has borne testimony in the Word, the gracious Saviour will not cast him out. In other words, if he has ears to hear, he may hear. If he can come to Christ, he may. He will be accepted as graciously and forgiven as freely as was the woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee. But while a conscious need in any degree of only one known form of the excellency of Christ will be a sufficient warrant for the guiltiest of mankind to exert a depending faith on him for salvation, it must be obvious that the Saviour of sinners neither welcomes nor receives untruthful applicants, nor mimics, nor triflers. All such will be dealt with as was the man who presumed to enter into the marriage feast without having on him a wedding garment. Sick persons may apply to the great Physician with the fullest assurance, because they have the most complete warrant in the Word ; but let imitators of persons spiritually sick know that God has no heavier woes than those that are pronounced on hypocrites.

Those, therefore, who may contend for this warrant of faith without limit, that is, independently of all subjective considerations, are clearly in error. It has been said, and perhaps is commonly, and that, too, in a very offhand manner, when speaking of the testimony of God to unbelievers, "Never mind your feelings, believe it." Persons who speak thus, it is quite evident, have yet to learn the very elements of moral and re-

ligious truth. They speak as if it were possible to realize forgiveness without a consciousness of wrong; or that a consciousness of wrong, coupled with a desire that the wrong may be pardoned, could exist without repentance. They seem to imagine that the truths of salvation can be appreciatively believed independently of any sensibleness of the evil of the term from which the deliverance takes place. They appear to ignore the fact that man is a moral being. With a deplorable ignorance, however commendable their zeal, they are heard saying, "Believe! Only believe! Believe now!" and the like; and if a response is made by any one to their passionate address, such as, "I believe," this is thought to be enough to set a whole congregation singing Hallelujahs that another sinner is saved. But if these persons could perceive the force of their notions, they would see that they were singing Hallelujahs, because such a one had, in the discharge of a supposed duty, and according to an imaginary warrant, raised himself out of the surrounding mass of unbelievers by the exercise of believing; or, what seems to be taken as equal, by the simple utterance of a kind of cabalistic saying. What such a person is exhorted to believe, and what he means when he says, "I believe," are things which do not very clearly appear; and, indeed, seem to be regarded as inconsiderable trifles. But are they such?

Unquestionably, testimony is the object of faith, is that which is to be believed. In this case, it is the testimony that God hath testified concerning his Son. Therefore, the question first to be considered in the warrant of faith, if this is to be taken without limit, is, what of this testimony are all men indiscriminately, and independently of all subjective considerations, warranted to believe? Not that they are saved, because this great fact is not in evidence before faith. Not that they shall be saved, for there is no promise of salvation made to men indiscriminately, but to those only who bear a distinct description; consequently, the promise of salvation can be no evidence that any shall be saved who

are without the described distinction. Neither, apart from all subjective considerations, that is, apart from all feeling, are they warranted to believe, in the sense of trusting, in order to their being saved. One of the first requisites of calling upon the name of the Lord, and in coming to Christ, is truth. But as the whole need not a physician, so for such to apply for healing is to mimic and to lie ; and no man can be warranted to put on the hypocrite's garb, and to speak lies in coming to Christ. All the mediatorial fulness of Christ is remedial, and a remedy is for a real and an experienced mischief. Christ is made of God unto sinners, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. But these are all appreciable remedies. In the nature of things it is impossible for any man to come to Christ in truth for any one of these things while he remains unconscious that he wants it ; and it is utterly unwarrantable for him to render to the Saviour of sinners a lip homage of mimicry, by asking the Lord Jesus to be, or to do, or to give, something to him for which no need is felt. The completion of a gift is its reception ; but God's gifts are saving ones, and for these to be asked for and received in truth, they must be begged and accepted as what they are. Pardon, for instance, can only be asked for in truth, and received as what it is, by one who has a moral conviction of his guiltiness, and this cannot exist without some feeling. So of all the rest. In sum, then, the truth is, that men, indiscriminately, are not warranted to believe the testimony of God concerning his Son beyond what it is their duty to believe ; and this is, all the facts and truths, as such, which are therein revealed. But this inevitable conclusion in nothing hampers or hinders those who would believe the promise of salvation in Christ. For it may be said with the greatest confidence, and accepted with the fullest assurance, that the warrant of faith is as wide as the want and the wish to believe. He that neither wants to experience, nor, for this reason wishes to obtain the blessings of salvation, is not warranted to ask God, nor to depend on Christ for them ;



but he that from any consciousness of need does, may ask, and WELCOME—depend, and WELCOME. Moreover, he that so asks and depends may be reminded that he already believes, that all who believe are now justified, and that all who are justified shall be glorified.

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