

THE
SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE:
OR,
A BRIEF SUM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE,
CONTAINED IN
THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND HELD FORTH IN THE
WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH
AND CATECHISMS;
TOGETHER WITH
THE PRACTICAL USE OF IT,
David Dickson
(c.1583-1663)
and
James Durham
(1622-1658)

JOHN 6.37. — All that the Father gives me shall come to me;
and him that comes to me I will in no way cast out.

EDINBURGH:
JOHNSTONE, HUNTER, & CO.

MDCCCLXXI.
1871

Originally published in 1650.

marked up by Lance George Marshall

Source: http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/dickinson/dickson_sumsaving.html

Also: <http://google.com/books?id=Pp4CAAAAQAAJ>

*Modernized and annotated, with original page numbers.
by William H. Cross www.onthewing.org July 2014*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	3
THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE	4
1. Our woeful condition by nature, through breaking the Covenant of Works.....	4
2. The remedy provided in Jesus Christ for the elect by the Covenant of Grace.....	4
3. The outward means appointed to make the elect partakers of this covenant, and all the rest that are called, to be inexcusable.....	5
4. The blessings which are effectually conveyed by these means to the Lord's elect, or chosen ones.....	6
THE PRACTICAL USE OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE.....	7
1. For convincing a man of sin by the Law, consider Jer. 17.9, 10.....	7
2. To convince a man of righteousness by the Law, consider Gal. 3.10.....	8
3. To convince a man of judgment by the Law, consider 2Thess. 1.7-10.....	8
4. For convincing a man of sin, righteousness, and judgment, by the gospel.....	9
5. To convince a man that righteousness is to be had only by faith in Jesus Christ, consider Rom. 10.3, 4,	10
6. For strengthening the faith of the man who has agreed to the Covenant of Grace:	11
WARRANTS TO BELIEVE.....	13
1. God's hearty invitation.....	13
2. His earnest request to be reconciled.....	15
3. His command, charging all to believe.....	17
4. Much assurance of life is given to believers, etc.....	19
THE EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH.....	20
1. Conviction of the believer's obligation to keep the moral law.....	20
2. That the believer practise the rules of godliness and righteousness.....	22
3. That obedience to the Law runs in the right channel of faith in Christ.....	22
4. Keeping strict communion with Christ, the fountain of all graces and good works.....	23
Practical conclusions for strengthening the believer in faith and obedience, by these evidences	24

PREFACE.

“THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE” was the joint production of the learned Mr. David Dickson, minister at Irvine, and of the no less famous Mr. James Durham — who succeeded Mr. Dickson as Professor of Divinity in Glasgow College. John Howie, in his “Lives of the Scots Worthies,”¹ thus describes its origin and object:-

“A very strict friendship subsisted between these two great lights of the Church, and among other effects of their religious conversation we have ‘The Sum of Saving Knowledge,’ which has been printed with our Confession of Faith and Catechisms. This, after several conversations upon the subject, and manner of handling it, so that it might be useful to common capacities, was dictated by Messrs. Dickson and Durham to a reverend minister about the year 1650; and though never judicially approved by the Church, yet it deserves to be much more read and practised than what it at present is.”

It was reading this treatise that brought the late Mr. M’Cheyne² to a clear understanding of the way of acceptance with God, as appears from the following extract from his diary: “March 11th, 1834. — Read in the ‘Sum of Saving Knowledge;’ the work which I think first of all wrought a saving change in me. How gladly I would renew reading it, if that change might be carried on to perfection!”

J.H.

Edinburgh, January 2, 1871

¹ Page 294 of the New Edition by the Re. W.H. Carslaw, M.A. Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter, & Co. 1870.

² Robert Murray M’Cheyne, or McCheyne (1813-1843) — a Scottish preacher, pastor, poet, and man of prayer.

THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE

THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE may be taken up in those four heads: —

1. The woeful condition all men are in by nature, through breaking the Covenant of Works.
2. The remedy provided for the elect in Jesus Christ by the Covenant of Grace.
3. The means appointed to make them partakers of this covenant.
4. The blessings which are effectually conveyed to the elect by these means.

These four heads are each set down in a few propositions.

1. Our woeful condition by nature, through breaking the Covenant of Works.

O Israel, you have destroyed yourself. — Hos. 13.9.

I. THE almighty and eternal God; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in the one and the same undivided Godhead,

8 THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE

equally infinite in all perfections; did, before time, most wisely decree, for his own glory, whatsoever comes to pass in time: and most holily and infallibly executes all his decrees, without being partaker of the sin of any creature.

II. This God, in six days, made all things out of nothing, very good in their own kind: in special, he made all the angels holy; and he made our first parents, Adam and Eve, the root of mankind, both upright and able to keep the Law written in their heart. They were naturally bound to obey this law under pain of death; but God was not bound to reward their service till he entered into a covenant or contract with them, and their posterity in them, to give them eternal life, upon condition of perfect personal obedience; and with this, threatening death in case they should fail. This is the Covenant of Works.

III. Both angels and men were subject to the change of their own freewill, as experience proved (God having reserved to himself the incommunicable property of being naturally unchangeable), for many angels of their own accord fell by sin from their first estate, and became devils. Our first parents, being enticed by Satan (one of these devils speaking in a serpent), broke the Covenant of Works in eating the forbidden fruit.

THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE 9

Thereby they and their posterity, being in their loins, as branches in the root, and comprehended in the same covenant with them, became not only liable to eternal death, but also lost all ability to please God; indeed, they became by nature enemies to God, and to all spiritual good, and inclined only to evil continually. This is our Original Sin, the bitter root of all our actual transgressions, in thought, word, and deed.

2. The remedy provided in Jesus Christ for the elect by the Covenant of Grace.

O Israel, you have destroyed yourself; but in me is your help. — Hos. 13.9.

I. EVEN THOUGH man, having brought himself into this woeful condition, is neither able to help himself, nor willing to be helped out of it by God, but rather inclined to lie still, insensible of it till he perishes; yet God, for the glory of his rich grace, has revealed in his word a way to save sinners; *viz.*, by faith in Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God; by virtue of, and according to

the tenor of the Covenant of Redemption, made and agreed upon between God the Father and God the Son, in the council of the Trinity, before the world began.

10 THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE

II. The sum of the Covenant of Redemption is this: God having freely chosen unto life a certain number of lost mankind; for the glory of his rich grace, gave them, before the world began, to God the Son, appointed Redeemer; that, upon the condition that he would humble himself so far as to assume the human nature, of a soul and a body, to personal union with his divine nature, and submit himself to the Law, as a surety for them, and satisfy justice for them, by giving obedience in their name, even unto the suffering of the cursed death of the cross, he should ransom and redeem them all from sin and death, and purchase for them righteousness and eternal life, with all the saving graces leading to them, to be effectually, by means of his own appointment, applied in due time to every one of them. This condition the Son of God (who is Jesus Christ our Lord) accepted before the world began, and in the fulness of time came into the world, was born of the Virgin Mary, subjected himself to the Law, and completely paid the ransom on the cross: But by virtue of the foresaid bargain, made before the world began, he is in all ages, since the fall of Adam, still upon the work of actually applying the purchased benefits to the elect; and that he does by way of entertaining a covenant of free

THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE 11

grace and reconciliation with them, through, faith in himself; by this covenant, he makes over to every believer a right and interest in himself, and to all his blessings.

III. To accomplish this Covenant of Redemption, and make the elect partakers of its benefits in the Covenant of Grace, Christ Jesus was clad with the threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King: made a Prophet, to reveal all saving knowledge to his people, and to persuade them to believe and obey the same; made a Priest, to offer himself as a sacrifice once for them all, and to intercede continually with the Father, for making their persons and services acceptable to him; and made a King, to subdue them to himself, to feed and rule them by his own appointed ordinances, and to defend them from their enemies.

3. The outward means appointed to make the elect partakers of this covenant, and all the rest that are called, to be inexcusable.

Many are called. — Matt. 22.14.

I. THE outward means and ordinances, for making men partakers of the Covenant of Grace, are so wisely dispensed, that the elect shall be

12 THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE

infallibly converted and saved by them; and the reprobate among whom they are, not to be justly stumbled.¹ The means are especially these four: 1. The word of God. 2. The sacraments. 3. Church-government. 4. Prayer. In the WORD of God preached by sent messengers, the Lord offers grace to all sinners, on condition of faith in Jesus Christ; whoever confesses their sin, and accepts the offered Christ, and submits themselves to his ordinances, will have both themselves and their children received into the honour and privileges of the Covenant of Grace. By the SACRAMENTS, God will have the covenant sealed to confirm the bargain on the foresaid condition. By CHURCH-government, he will have them hedged in and helped forward to keeping the covenant. And by PRAYER, he will have his own glorious grace, promised in the covenant,

¹ The reprobate justly stumble over the “rock of offense” (*i.e.* Jesus Christ, 1Pet 2.6-8), because they reject the outward means of Grace (Joh 3.36), and disobey the Law (Rom 6.23) – thus they are without excuse. But the elect, also justly, shall not stumble over Christ, because they believe in him through those same means of grace.

daily drawn forth, acknowledged, and employed. All these means are followed either really, or in profession only, according to the quality of the covenanters, as they are true or counterfeit believers.

II. The Covenant of Grace, set down in the Old Testament before Christ came, and in the New Testament since he came, is one and the same in substance, though different in outward administration: For

THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE 13

the covenant in the Old Testament, being sealed with the sacraments of Circumcision and the Paschal Lamb, set forth Christ's death to come, and the benefits purchased by it, under the shadow of bloody sacrifices and sundry ceremonies. But since Christ came, the covenant, being sealed by the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, clearly holds forth Christ already crucified before our eyes, victorious over death and the grave, and gloriously ruling heaven and earth, for the good of his own people.

4. The blessings which are effectually conveyed by these means to the Lord's elect, or chosen ones.

Many are called, but few are chosen. — Matt. 22.14.

I. BY these outward ordinances, as our Lord makes the reprobate inexcusable, so, by the power of his Spirit, he effectually applies to the elect all the saving graces purchased for them in the Covenant of Redemption, and makes a change in their persons. In particular, (1.) He converts or REGENERATES them, by giving spiritual life to them, in opening their understandings, renewing their wills, affections, and faculties, for

14 THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE

giving spiritual obedience to his commands. (2.) He GIVES THEM SAVING FAITH, by making them — in sensing their deserved condemnation — give their consent heartily to the Covenant of Grace, and embrace Jesus Christ unfeignedly. (3.) He GIVES THEM REPENTANCE, by making them — with godly sorrow in their hatred of sin, and love of righteousness — turn from all iniquity, to the service of God. And, (4.) He SANCTIFIES them, by making them go on and persevere in faith and spiritual obedience to the Law of God, manifested by fruitfulness in all duties, and doing good works, as God offers occasion.

II. Together with this inward change of their persons, God also changes their state: for as soon as they are brought by faith into the Covenant of Grace, (1.) He JUSTIFIES them, by imputing to them that perfect obedience which Christ gave to the Law, and also the satisfaction which, on the cross, Christ gave to justice in their name. (2.) He RECONCILES those who before were enemies to God, and he makes them friends to God. (3.) He ADOPTS them, so that they shall no longer be children of Satan, but children of God, enriched with all the spiritual privileges of his sons. And (last of all), after their warfare in this life is ended, he perfects the holiness and blessedness, first of their

THE SUM OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE 15

souls at their death, and then both of their souls and their bodies, being joyfully joined together again in the resurrection, at the day of his glorious coming to judgment, when all the wicked shall be sent away to hell, with Satan whom they have served. But Christ's own chosen and redeemed ones, true believers, students of holiness, shall remain with him forever, in the state of glorification.

THE PRACTICAL USE OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE.

THE chief general use of Christian doctrine is to convince a man of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, John 16.8. This is done partly by the Law or Covenant of Works, so that he may be humbled and become penitent; and partly by the gospel or Covenant of Grace, so that he may become an unfeigned believer in Jesus Christ, and be strengthened in his faith on solid grounds and warrants, and give evidence of the truth of his faith by good fruits, and so be saved.

The sum of the Covenant of Works, or of the Law, is this: "If you do all that is commanded,

16 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

and do not fail in any point, you shall be saved: but if you fail, you shall die." Rom. 10.5. Gal. 3.10, 12.

The sum of the gospel, or Covenant of Grace and reconciliation, is this: "If you flee from deserved wrath to the true Redeemer Jesus Christ (who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through him), you shall not perish, but "have eternal life." Rom. 10.8, 9, 11.

To convince a man of sin, righteousness, and judgment by the Law, or Covenant of Works, let these scriptures, among many more, be made use of:

1. For convincing a man of sin by the Law, consider Jer. 17.9, 10.

Ver. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

Ver. 10. *I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.*

Here the Lord teaches these two things:

1. The fountain of all our miscarriage, and actual sinning against God, is in the heart, which comprehends the mind, will, affections, and all the powers of the soul, as they are corrupted and defiled with original sin. The mind is not only

SAVING KNOWLEDGE 17

ignorant and incapable of saving truth, but it is also full of error and enmity against God. The will and affections are obstinately disobedient to all God's directions, and bent toward only that which is evil. *The heart* (he says) *is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; yes, and unsearchably wicked, so that no man can know it (Jer 17.9).* And Gen. 6.5, *Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually,* says the Lord, whose testimony we must trust in this and all other matters. And experience may also teach us that till God makes us deny ourselves, we never look to God in anything; rather, fleshly self-interest alone rules us, and moves all the wheels of our actions.

2. The Lord brings our original sin, or wicked inclination, with all its actual fruits, to a reckoning before his judgment-seat; "For he searches the heart, and tries the motives, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

Hence, let every man reason in thus:

"What God and my guilty conscience bear witness of, I am convinced it is true:

"But God and my guilty conscience bear witness that my heart is deceitful above all

18 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

things, and desperately wicked; and that all the imaginations of my heart, by nature, are only evil continually:

“Therefore I am convinced that this is true.”

Thus a man may be convinced of sin by the Law.

2. To convince a man of righteousness by the Law, consider Gal. 3.10.

As many as are under the works of the Law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that does not continue to do all things which are written in the book of the Law.

Here the apostle teaches us three things:

1. That by reason of our natural sinfulness, the impossibility of any man being justified by the works of the Law is so certain, that whoever seeks justification by the works of the Law, is liable to the curse of God for breaking the Law; *For as many as are under the works of the Law are under the curse*, he says.

2. That to perfectly fulfill the Law, keeping one or two of the precepts, or doing some or all duties (if it were possible) for a time, is not sufficient; for the Law requires, that a man continue to do *all things which are written in the book of the Law*.

SAVING KNOWLEDGE 19

3. That because no man can attain this perfection, every man by nature is under the curse; for the Law says, *Cursed is every one that does not continue to do all things which are written in the book of the Law*.

Now, to be under the curse comprehends all the displeasure of God, with the danger of his wrath breaking out more and more on soul and body, both in this life, and after death perpetually, if grace does not prevent its full execution.

Hence let every man reason thus:

“According to the Covenant of Works, whoever is liable to the curse of God for breaking the Law, innumerable times and ways, cannot be justified or find righteousness by the works of the Law:

“And (may every man say), according to the Covenant of Works, I am liable to the curse of God for breaking the Law innumerable times and ways:

“Therefore I cannot be justified, or have righteousness by the works of the Law.”

Thus a man may be convinced that righteousness is not to be had by his own works, or by the Law.

20 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

3. To convince a man of judgment by the Law, consider 2Thess. 1.7-10.

Ver. 7. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, Ver. 8. In flaming fire, taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Ver. 9. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; Ver. 10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired among all those who believe.

By this we are taught that our Lord Jesus, who now offers to be Mediator for those who believe in him, shall come at the last day, armed with flaming fire to judge, condemn, and destroy all those who have not believed God, have not received the offer of grace made in the gospel, nor obeyed its doctrine; but who remain in their natural state, under the Law or Covenant of Works.

Hence let every man reason thus:

“What the righteous Judge has forewarned me shall be done at the last day, I am sure is just judgment:

“But the righteous Judge has forewarned me that if I do not believe God in time, and do not obey
SAVING KNOWLEDGE 21

the doctrine of the gospel, I shall be secluded from his presence and his glory at the last day, and be tormented in soul and body forever:

“Therefore I am convinced that this is a just judgment:

“And I have reason to thank God heartily, who has forewarned me to flee from the wrath which is to come.”

Thus, by the Law or Covenant of Works, every man may be convinced of judgment, if he continues under the Covenant of Works, or if he does not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

4. For convincing a man of sin, righteousness, and judgment, by the gospel.

As for convincing a man of sin, righteousness, and judgment, by the gospel or Covenant of Grace, he must understand three things: 1. That not believing in Jesus Christ, or refusing the Covenant of Grace offered in him, is a greater and more dangerous sin than all other sins against the Law; because the hearers of the gospel, by not believing in Christ, reject God’s mercy in Christ, which is the only way of freedom from sin and wrath, and will not yield to be reconciled to God. 2. Next, he must understand that perfect remission of sin, and true righteousness, are to be had only by faith

22 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

in Jesus; because God requires no other conditions but faith; and he testifies from heaven that he is well pleased to justify sinners upon this condition, 3. He must understand, that upon righteousness received by faith, judgment shall follow, on the one hand, to destroy the works of the devil in the believer, and to perfect the work of sanctification in him with power: and on the other hand, that upon refusing to take righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ, judgment shall follow, to the condemnation of the misbeliever, and his destruction with Satan and his servants forever.

For this end, let these passages of Scripture, among many others, serve to make the greatness of the sin of not believing in Christ apparent; or to make apparent the greatness of the sin of refusing the Covenant of Grace offered to us in the offering of Christ to us; let the fair offer of grace be looked upon as it is made in Isa. 55.3: *Incline your ear and come to me (says the Lord). Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.* That is, If you will believe me, and be reconciled to me, I will, by covenant, give Christ to you, and all saving graces in him. This is repeated in Acts 13.34.

SAVING KNOWLEDGE 23

Again, consider that this general offer, in substance, is equivalent to a special offer made to every one in particular; as appears by the apostle’s making use of it in Acts 16.31. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house.* The reason for which this offer is given is John 3.16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Seeing then this great salvation is offered in the Lord Jesus, whoever does not believe in him, but looks for happiness some other way, what else does he do but *observe lying vanities, and forsake his own mercy* which he might have had in Christ? Jonah 2.8, 9. What else does he do but blaspheme God in his heart? As it says in 1John 5.10, 11. *He that does not believe God has*

made him a liar; because he does not believe the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record: that God has given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. And Christ testifies that no sin against the Law is like this sin, John 15.24. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sinned; but now they have no cloak for their sin. This may convince a man of the greatness of this sin of not believing in Christ.

24 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

5. To convince a man that righteousness is to be had only by faith in Jesus Christ, consider Rom. 10.3, 4,

It is said, that the Jews, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God (and so they perished). For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believes. And Acts 13.39. By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses. And 1John 1.7. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

To convince a man of judgment, if a man embraces this righteousness, consider 1John 3.8. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. And Heb. 9.14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

But if a man does not embrace this righteousness, his doom is pronounced. John 3.18, 19: He that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light

SAVING KNOWLEDGE 25

has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.

Hence let the penitent, desiring to believe, reason thus:

“What suffices to convince all the elect in the world of the greatness of the sin of not believing in Christ, or refusing to flee to him for relief from sins done against the Law, and from wrath due to it; and what suffices to convince them that righteousness and eternal life are to be had by faith in Jesus Christ, or by consenting to the Covenant of Grace in him; and what suffices to convince them of the judgment to be exercised by Christ, for destroying the works of the devil in the man, and sanctifying and saving all that believe in him — may suffice to convince me also:

“But what the Spirit has said in these or other like scriptures, suffices to convince the elect world of the foresaid sin, and righteousness, and judgment:

“Therefore what the Spirit has said in these and other like scriptures, also serves to convince me of it.”

Consequently, let the penitent desiring to believe, take words with him, and say heartily to the Lord,

26 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

Seeing that you say, Seek my face; my soul answers you, Your face, Lord, will I seek.^{Psa 27.8} I have hearkened to the offer of an everlasting covenant of all saving mercies to be had in Christ, and I heartily embrace your offer. Lord, let it be a bargain; Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.^{Mar 9.24} Behold, I give myself to you, to serve you in all things forever; and I hope your right hand shall save me: the Lord will perfect that which concerns me: your mercy, O Lord, endures forever; do not forsake the works of your own hands.^{Psa 138.8}

Thus may a man be made an unfeigned believer in Christ.

6. For strengthening the faith of the man who has agreed to the Covenant of Grace:

Because many true believers are weak, and doubt they shall ever be sure of the soundness of their own faith and effectual calling, or made certain of their justification and salvation, when they see that many who profess faith are found to deceive themselves — let us see how every believer may be made strong in the faith, and sure of his own election and salvation upon solid grounds, by sure warrants, and true evidences of faith. To this end, among many other scriptures, take these following:

SAVING KNOWLEDGE 27

I. For laying solid grounds of faith, consider 2Peter 1.10. *Therefore, brethren, rather be diligent to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things you shall never fall.*

In these words, the apostle teaches us four things to help and direct how to be made strong in the faith:

1. Those who believe in Christ Jesus, and have fled to him for relief from sin and wrath, even though they are weak in the faith, yet they are indeed children of the same Father with the apostles; for so he accounts them while he calls them *brethren*.
2. Even though we are not sure, for the time, of our effectual calling and election, yet we may be made sure of both if we are diligent; for he presupposes this saying, *be diligent to make your calling and election sure*.
3. We must not be discouraged when we see many seeming believers prove to be rotten branches, and defect; we must rather take better heed ourselves: *Therefore, brethren* (he says), *be all the more diligent*.¹
4. The way to be sure both of our effectual calling and our election, is to make sure work of our faith, by laying the grounds of it solidly, and bringing forth the fruits of our faith in new

28 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

obedience constantly: *for if you do these things* (he says), *you shall never “fall;”* meaning by *these things* what he said about sound faith in ver. 1- 4,² and what he said about bringing out of the fruits of faith, ver. 5-9.³

II. To this same purpose, consider Rom. 8.1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* Ver. 2. *For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death.* Ver. 3. *For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh;* Ver. 4. *That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

In this the apostle teaches us four things for laying the ground of faith solidly:

1. That everyone is a true believer who, in sensing his sin, and in fear of God's wrath, flees to Jesus Christ alone for full relief from both, as the only Mediator and all-sufficient Redeemer

¹ Douay-Rheims translation.

² **2Pet 1:1** Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

³ **2Pet 1:8** For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

of men; and having fled to Christ, he strives against his own flesh, or the corrupt inclination of his nature, and is careful to follow the

SAVING KNOWLEDGE 29

rule of God's Spirit, set down in his word: for the man whom the apostle blesses here as a true believer, is a man in Christ Jesus, who does not *walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit*.

2. That all those persons who have fled to Christ, and strive against sin, however disturbed they may possibly be under the sense of wrath, and fear of condemnation, yet they are in no danger; for *there is no condemnation* (he says) *for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit*.

3. That even though the apostle himself (brought in as an example here), and all other true believers in Christ, are by nature under the Law of sin and death, or under the Covenant of Works (called the Law of Sin and Death because it binds sin and death on us till Christ sets us free), yet the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, or the Covenant of Grace (so called, because it enables and quickens a man to a spiritual life through Christ), sets the apostle and all true believers free from the Covenant of Works, or the Law of sin and death: so that every man may say with him, *The law of the Spirit of life, or the Covenant of Grace, has made me free from the Law of sin and death, or the Covenant of Works*.

4. That the fountain and first ground

30 THE PRACTICAL USE OF

from which our freedom from the curse of the Law flows, is the Covenant of Redemption, passed between God and God the Son as incarnate. In this covenant, Christ takes the curse of the Law upon himself for sin, so that the believer, who could not otherwise be delivered from the Covenant of Works, may be delivered from it. And the apostle holds forth this doctrine in these four branches:

(1.) That it was utterly impossible for the Law, or the Covenant of Works, to bring righteousness and life to a sinner, because it was weak.

(2.) That this weakness and inability of the Law, or Covenant of Works, is not the fault of the Law, but the fault of sinful flesh, which is not able either to pay the penalty of sin, nor to give perfect obedience to the Law (presupposing bygone sins were forgiven): *The law was weak* (he says) *through, the flesh*.

(3.) That the righteousness and salvation of sinners, which were impossible to be brought about by the Law, are brought to pass by sending God's own Son, Jesus Christ, in the flesh, in whose flesh sin is condemned and punished, to make satisfaction on behalf of the elect, so that they might be set free.

(4.) That by his means the Law loses nothing, because the righteousness of the Law is best fulfilled this way: first, by Christ acting in our name, giving perfect active obedience to it

SAVING KNOWLEDGE 31

in all things; next, by paying in our name the penalty due for our sins in his death; and lastly, by working sanctification in true believers, who strive to give new obedience to the Law, and who *do not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit*.

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE.

FOR building our confidence on this solid ground, these four Warrants and special Motives may serve to believe in Christ.

1. God's hearty invitation.

The first of these is God's hearty invitation, held forth in Isa. 55.1-5.

Ver. 1. *Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money: come, buy and eat; yes, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.* Ver. 2. *Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.* Ver. 3. *Incline your ear, and come to me: hear, and*

32 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Ver. 4. *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people, etc.*

Here (after setting down the precious ransom of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ, and the rich blessings purchased to us thereby, in the two former chapters) the Lord, in this chapter,

1. Makes an open offer of Christ and his grace by the proclamation of a free and gracious market of righteousness and salvation, to be had through Christ to every soul, without exception, that truly desires to be saved from sin and wrath: *Ho, every one that thirsts*, he says.

2. He invites all sinners, who for any reason stand at a distance from God, to come and take from him riches of grace running in Christ as a river, to wash away sin and to quench wrath: *Come to the waters*, he says.

3. Lest any should stand back in the sense of his own sinfulness or unworthiness, and inability to do any good, the Lord specially calls upon such persons saying, *He that has no money, come.*

4. He craves no more of his merchant, but

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 33

that he be pleased with the wares offered, which are grace and more grace; and that he heartily consent to and embrace this offer of grace, so that he may close a bargain and a formal covenant with God: *Come, buy without money* (he says), *come, eat*: that is, consent to have, and take to yourself all saving graces; make the wares your own; possess them, and make use of all blessings in Christ; whatever makes for your spiritual life and comfort, use and enjoy it freely, without paying anything for it: *Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price*, he says.

5. Because the Lord knows how much we are inclined to seek righteousness and life by our own performances and satisfaction; to have righteousness and life as it were by the way of works; and how loath we are to embrace Christ Jesus, and to take life by way of free grace through Jesus Christ, on the terms which it is offered to us; therefore the Lord lovingly calls us off our crooked and unhappy way with a gentle and timely admonition, giving us to understand that we shall only lose our labour in this way: *Why do you spend your money* (he says) *for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which does not satisfy?*

34 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

6. The Lord promises us solid satisfaction in the way of taking the grace of Christ to ourselves, even true contentment, and fulness of spiritual pleasure, saying, *Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*

7. Because faith comes by hearing, he calls for listening to the explication of the offer, and calls for believing and listening to the truth which is able to beget the application of saving faith, and to draw the soul to trust in God: *Incline your ear, and come to me*, he says. To this end, the Lord promises that this offer, being received, shall quicken the dead sinner; and that upon welcoming this offer, he will close the Covenant of Grace with the man that consents to it, an indissoluble covenant of perpetual reconciliation and peace. *Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.* This covenant, he declares, shall be in substance the assignment and transfer of all the saving graces which David (who is Jesus Christ, Acts 13.34),¹ has bought for us in the Covenant of Redemption: *I will make a covenant with you* (he says), *even the sure mercies of David.* By *sure mercies*, he means saving graces, such as righteousness,

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 35

peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, adoption, sanctification, and glorification — whatever belongs to godliness and eternal life.

8. To confirm and assure us of the real grant of these saving mercies, and to persuade us of the reality of the covenant between God and the believer of this word, the Father has made a fourfold gift of his eternal and only begotten Son:

First, To be incarnate and born for our sake, of the seed of David, his type; for which reason he is called here, and Acts 13.34, DAVID, the true and everlasting King of Israel. This is the great gift of God to man, John 4.10.² And here, *I have given him to be David* (or born of David) *to the people.*

Secondly, He has made a gift of Christ to be a witness to the people, both of the sure and saving mercies granted to the redeemed in the Covenant of Redemption; and also of the Father's willingness and purpose to apply them, and to make them secure in the Covenant of Reconciliation made with those who embrace the offer: *I have given him* (says the Lord, Isa 55.4) *to be a witness to the people.* And truly he is a sufficient witness in this matter in many respects: (1) Because he is one of the blessed Trinity, and party-contractor for us in the Covenant of Redemption before the world existed. (2.) He is by office, as our *Mediator*, the Messenger

36 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

of the covenant, and he has received a commission to reveal it. (3.) He began actually to reveal it in paradise, where he promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. (4.) He set forth his own death and sufferings, and the great benefits that would come to us thereby, in the types and figures of sacrifices and ceremonies before his physical coming. (5.) He gave more and more light about this covenant, speaking by his Spirit from age to age in the holy prophets. (6.) He came himself, in the fulness of time, and bore witness of all things belonging to this covenant, and of God's willing mind to take believers into it — partly by uniting our nature in one person with the divine nature; partly by preaching the good tidings of the covenant with his own mouth; partly by paying the price of redemption on the cross; and partly by dealing with the people from the beginning to this day still, to draw the redeemed into this covenant, and to hold them in it.

¹ **Act 13:34** "And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'"

² **Joh 4:10** Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

Thirdly, God has made a gift of Christ as a leader to the people, to bring us through all difficulties, all afflictions and temptations, unto life, by this covenant: and he is the one, and no other, who indeed leads his own people to the covenant, and in the covenant, all the way to salvation. He does this (1.) By the direction of his word and Spirit,

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 37

(2.) By the example of his own life, in faith and obedience, even to the death of the cross. (3.) By his powerful working, bearing his redeemed ones in his arms, and causing them to lean on him while they go up through the wilderness.

Fourthly, God has made a gift of Christ to his people as a commander: he faithfully exercises this office by giving to his church and people, laws and ordinances, pastors and governors, and all the necessary officers; by keeping courts and assemblies among them, to see that his laws are obeyed; subduing by his word, Spirit, and discipline, his people's corruptions; and by his wisdom and power, guarding them against all their enemies whatsoever.

Hence, he who has closed the bargain with God may strengthen his faith by reasoning in this manner:

"Whoever heartily receives the offer of free grace made here to sinners, thirsting for righteousness and salvation — by an everlasting covenant, Christ the true David belongs to him, with all his sure and saving mercies.

"But I (may the weak believer say) heartily receive the offer of free grace made here to sinners, thirsting for righteousness and salvation:

38 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

"Therefore, by an everlasting covenant, Christ Jesus belongs to me, with all his sure and saving mercies."

2. His earnest request to be reconciled.

The second Warrant and special Motive to embrace Christ and believe in him, is the *earnest request* that God makes to us to be reconciled to him in Christ; held forth in 2Cor. 5.19-21.

Ver. 19. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Ver. 20. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God beseeched you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. Ver. 21. For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

In this, the apostle teaches us these nine doctrines:

1. That the elect world, or world of redeemed souls, are by nature in a state of enmity against God. This is presupposed in the word *reconciliation*; for reconciliation, or renewing of friendship, cannot occur except between those that have been at enmity.

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 39

2. That in all the time passed since the fall of Adam, Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, as Mediator, and the Father in him, has been about making friendship (by his word and Spirit) between himself and the elect world: *God* (he says) *was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.*

3. That the way of reconciliation in all ages was one and the same in substance, *viz.*, by forgiving the sins of those who acknowledge their sins and their enmity against God, and who seek

reconciliation and remission of sins in Christ: For *God* (he says) *was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, by way of not imputing their trespasses to them.*

4. That the end and scope of the gospel, and of the whole word of God, is threefold: (1.) It serves to make people sensible of their sins, and of their enmity against God, and of their danger if they stand out, and do not fear God's displeasure. (2.) The word of God serves to make men acquainted with the course which God has prepared for making friendship with them through Christ, *viz.*, That if men acknowledge their enmity, and will be content to enter into a covenant of friendship with God through Christ, then God will be content to be reconciled with them freely. (3.) The word of God serves to teach

40 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

men how to carry themselves towards God, as friends, after they are reconciled to him, *viz.*, to be loath to sin against him, and to strive heartily to obey his commandments: and therefore the word of God here is called *the word of reconciliation*, because it teaches us what need we have of reconciliation, and how to make it, and how to keep the reconciliation of friendship being made with God through Christ.

5. That even though hearing, believing, and obeying this word, belongs to all those to whom this gospel comes; yet the office of preaching it with authority, belongs to none except those whom God calls to his ministry, and sends out with a commission for this work. The apostle holds this forth in Ver. 19 in these words, *He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*

6. That the ministers of the gospel should behave themselves as Christ's messengers, and should closely follow their commission set down in the word, Matt. 28.19-20; and when they do so, they should be received by the people as ambassadors from God; for here the apostle, in all their names says, *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God beseeched you by us.*

7. That ministers, in all earnestness of affections should deal with people, to acknowledge

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 41

their sins, and their natural enmity against God, more and more seriously; and to consent to the Covenant of Grace and embassy¹ of Christ more and more heartily; and to evidence more and more clearly their reconciliation, by a holy carriage² before God. This he holds forth, when he says, *We pray you, be reconciled to God.*

8. That in the ministers' affectionate dealing with the people, the people should consider that they have to do with God and Christ, requesting them, by the ministers, to be reconciled. Now, there cannot be a greater inducement to break a sinner's hard heart, than God's making a request to him for friendship; for when it became us, who have done so many wrongs to God, to seek friendship of God, he prevents us: and (O wonder of wonders!) he requests us to be content to be reconciled to him; and therefore most fearful wrath must abide those who do set light by this request, and do not yield when they hear ministers with commission, saying, *We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God.*

9. To make it appear how it comes to pass that the Covenant of Reconciliation should be so easily made between God and a humble sinner fleeing to Christ, the apostle leads us to its

42 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

¹ The message or commission entrusted to an ambassador –which refers to the office of Christ as Mediator between God and men, and the message of the Gospel which he embodies.

² Holy living – to conduct ourselves in godliness.

cause, held forth in the Covenant of Redemption, the sum of which is this: "It is agreed between God and the Mediator Jesus Christ, the Son of God, surety for the redeemed, as parties-contractors, that the sins of the redeemed should be imputed to innocent Christ, and that he be both condemned and put to death for them, on this very condition: that whoever heartily consents to the Covenant of Reconciliation offered through Christ shall, by the imputation of his obedience to them, be justified and held righteous before God; for God has made Christ, *who knew no sin, to be sin for us* (says the apostle), *that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*"

Hence a weak believer may strengthen his faith by reasoning from this ground in this manner:

"He that upon the loving request of God and Christ made to him by the mouth of ministers (having a commission to that effect), has embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and purposes by God's grace, as a reconciled person, to strive against sin, and to serve God to his power constantly, may be as sure to have righteousness and eternal life given

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 43

to him, for the obedience of Christ imputed to him, as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed imputed to him:

"But I (may the weak believer say), upon the loving request of God and Christ, made to me by the mouth of his ministers, have embraced the offer of perpetual reconciliation through Christ, and purpose, by God's grace, as a reconciled person, to strive against sin, and to serve God to my ability constantly:

"Therefore I may be as sure to have righteousness and eternal life given to me, for the obedience of Christ imputed to me, as it is sure that Christ was condemned and put to death for the sins of the redeemed imputed to him."

3. His command, charging all to believe.

The third Warrant and special Motive to believe in Christ, is the strict and *awful command of God*, charging all the hearers of the gospel to approach to Christ in the order set down by him, and to believe in him; held forth in 1John 3.23.

This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

44 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

In this, the apostle gives us to understand these five doctrines:

1. That if any man is not taken with the sweet invitation of God, nor with the humble and loving request of God, made to him to be reconciled, he shall find he has to deal with the sovereign authority of the highest Majesty; *for this is his commandment, that we believe in him*, he says.
2. That if any man looks upon this commandment as he has previously looked upon the neglected commandments of the Law, he must consider that this is a command of the gospel, subsequent to the Law, given for making use of the remedy of all sins; if it is disobeyed, there is no other command to follow but this, "Go you cursed, into the everlasting fire of hell;" *for this is his commandment*; the obedience of which is most pleasant in his sight, Ver. 22, and without which it is impossible to please him, Heb. 11.6.¹

¹ **Heb 11:6** But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*.

3. That everyone who hears the gospel, must make the duty of lively faith in Christ a matter of conscience; the weak believer must not think it presumption to do what is commanded; the person inclined to desperation must gather himself, and think upon obedience to this sweet and saving command; the strong believer must dip yet more

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 45

in the sense of the need he has of Jesus Christ, and more and more grow in the obedience of this command; yes, the most impenitent, profane, and wicked person must not thrust out himself, or be thrust out by others, from orderly aiming at this duty, however desperate his condition seems to be; for he that commands all men to believe in Christ, thereby commands all men to believe that they are damned and lost without Christ; he thereby commands all men to acknowledge their sins, and their need of Christ, and in effect he commands all men to repent, that they may believe in him. And whoever refuses to repent of their bygone sins, are guilty of disobedience to this command given to all hearers, but especially to those that are within the visible church: *for this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ*, he says.

4. That he who obeys this commandment has built his salvation on solid ground: for (1.) He has found the promised Messiah, completely furnished with all perfections for the perfect execution of the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; for he is that Christ in whom the man believes. (2.) He has embraced a Saviour, who is able to save to the uttermost,^{Heb 7.25} yes, and who effectually saves everyone that comes

46 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

to God through him; for he is Jesus, the true Saviour of his people from their sins.^{Mat 1.21} (3.) He that obeys this command has built his salvation on the Rock, that is, on the Son of God, to whom it is not robbery to be called equal to the Father,^{Phil 2.6} and who is worthy to be the object of saving faith, and of spiritual worship: for *this is his command* (he says), *That we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ*.

5. That he who has believed on Jesus Christ, though he is freed from the curse of the Law, is not freed from the command and obedience of the Law, but tied to it by a new obligation, and a new command from Christ; this new command from Christ imports help to obey the command. And to this command from Christ, the Father adds his authority and command also; for *this is his commandment* (says John), *That we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he has commanded us*. The first part of this command, enjoining belief in him, necessarily implies love to God, and so obedience to the first tablet; for believing in God, and loving God, are inseparable; and the second part of the command enjoins love to our neighbour (especially to the household of faith),^{Gal 6.10} and so obedience to the second tablet of the Law.

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 47

Hence a weak believer may strengthen himself by reasoning from this ground in this manner:

“Whoever, in the sense of his own sinfulness, and in fear of God’s wrath, at the command of God has fled to Jesus Christ, the only remedy of sin and misery, and has engaged his heart to obey the Law of Love — his faith is not presumptuous or dead, but true and saving faith:

“But (may the weak believer say), in the sense of my own sinfulness, and in fear of God’s wrath, I have fled to Jesus Christ, the only remedy of sin and misery, and I have engaged my heart to obey the Law of Love:

“Therefore, my faith is not a presumptuous and dead faith, but true and saving faith.”

4. Much assurance of life is given to believers, etc.

The fourth Warrant and special Motive to believe in Christ, is *much assurance of life* given, in case men obey the command to believe; and it is a *fearful certification* of destruction, in case they do not obey, as held forth in John 3.35-36.

Ver. 35. *The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.* Ver. 36. *He that believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he*

48 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

that does not believe the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him.

In this are held forth to us these five following doctrines:

1. That the Father is well-satisfied with the undertakings of the Son, entered as Redeemer and Surety, to pay the ransom of believers and to perfect them in holiness and salvation: *The Father loves the Son*, he says; *viz.*, as he stands Mediator in our name, undertaking to perfect our redemption in all points: The Father loves him; that is, he heartily accepts his offer to do the work, and is well-pleased with him: his soul delights in him, and rests upon him, and makes him in this office, the “receptacle of love, and grace, and good will,” to be conveyed by him to believers in him.

2. That, for fulfilling of the Covenant of Redemption, the Father has given to the Son (as he stands in the capacity of the Mediator, or as he is God incarnate, the Word made flesh) all authority in heaven and earth. He has given him all furnishings of the riches of grace, and of spirit and life, with all power, and ability, which the union of the divine nature with the human, or which the fulness of the Godhead dwelling substantially in his human

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 49

nature, or which the indivisible all-sufficiency and omnipotency of the inseparable, everywhere present Trinity imports, or which the work of redemption can require: *The Father* (he says) has *given all things into his hand*, to wit, for accomplishing his work.

3. Great assurance of life is held forth to all who will heartily receive Christ, and the offer of the Covenant of Grace and reconciliation through him: *He that believes on the Son* (he says) has *everlasting life*; for it is made fast to him, (1.) In God’s purpose and irrevocable decree, as the believer is a man elected to life. (2.) By the effectual calling of him to life by God who, as he is faithful, so will he do it. (3.) By promise and everlasting covenant, sworn by God, to give the believer strong consolation in life and death, upon immutable grounds. (4.) By a pawn and infetment¹ under the great seal of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, as often as the believer comes to receive the symbols and pledges of life. (5.) In Christ, the fountain and head of life, who is entered in possession as attorney for believers; in whom our life is so laid up that it cannot be taken away. (6.) By the begun possession of spiritual life and regeneration, and a kingdom consisting in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,

50 WARRANTS TO BELIEVE

erected within the believer as earnest of the full possession of everlasting life.

4. A fearful certification is given if a man does not receive the doctrine concerning righteousness and eternal life to be had by Jesus Christ: *He that does not believe the Son shall not see life*; that is, he shall not so much as understand what it means.

¹ In Scottish law, this is the official or symbolic bestowal of heritable land on a person, the process of infetment.

5. He further certifies that if a man does not receive the doctrine of the Son of God, he shall be burdened *twice* with the wrath of God: once as a born rebel by nature, he shall bear the curse of the Law or the Covenant of Works; and next, he shall endure a greater condemnation in having rejected that light which has come into the world, and been offered to him: he loves darkness rather than light. And this double wrath shall be fastened and fixed immovably upon him, so long as he remains in this condition of misbelief: *The wrath of God abides on him*, he says.

Hence may the weak believer strengthen his faith by reasoning from this ground in this manner:

“Whoever believes the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and finds himself partly drawn powerfully to believe in him by the sight of life in him, and partly driven by the fear of

WARRANTS TO BELIEVE 51

God’s wrath to adhere to him, may be sure of a right and interest to eternal life through him:

“But sinful and unworthy (may the weak believer say), I do believe the doctrine delivered by the Son of God, and do feel myself partly drawn powerfully to believe in him by the sight of life in him, and partly driven by the fear of God’s wrath to adhere to him:

“Therefore I may be sure of my right and interest to eternal life through him.”

THE EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH.

So much for laying the grounds of faith, and the warrants to believe. Now, for evidencing true faith by fruits, these four things are requisite:

I. That the believer be soundly convinced in his judgment, of his obligation to keep the whole moral law all the days of his life; and to do that not less, but much more, because he is delivered by Christ from the Covenant of Works, and the curse of the Law.

II. That he endeavours to grow in the exercise and daily practice of godliness and righteousness.

III. That the course of his new obedience runs in

52 EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH

the right channel; that is, through faith in Christ, and a good conscience to all the duties of love towards God and man.

IV. That he keeps strict communion with the fountain Christ Jesus, from whom grace must run along, for furnishing good fruits.

1. Conviction of the believer’s obligation to keep the moral law.

For the first, viz., to convince the believer, in his judgment, of his obligation to keep the moral law, take Matt. 5.16-20 among many other passages:

Ver. 16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* Ver. 17. *Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* Ver. 18. *For truly I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the Law, till all is fulfilled.* Ver. 19. *Whoever therefore breaks one of these least commandments, and teaches men to do so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever does and teaches them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* Ver. 20. *For I say to you, that unless your*

righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH 53

In which our Lord,

1. Gives commandment to believers, justified by faith, to give evidence of the grace of God in them before men, by doing good works: *Let your light so shine before men* (he says), *that they may see your good works.*
2. He induces them to do so by showing that even though they are not justified by works, yet spectators of their good works may be converted or edified; and so glory may redound to God by their good works, when those who witness it shall *glorify your Father which is in heaven.*
3. He gives them no other rule for their new obedience than the moral law, set down and explicated by Moses and the prophets: *Do not think* (he says) *that I have come to destroy the Law, or the prophets.*
4. He gives them to understand that the doctrine of grace, and freedom from the curse of the Law by faith in him, is readily mistaken by men's corrupt judgments, as if it loosed or slackened the obligation of believers to obey the commands, and to be subject to the authority of the Law; and that this error is indeed to destroy the Law and the Prophets, which he will in no case ever endure in any of his disciples, because it is so contrary to the end of his coming, which is first to *sanctify*, and then

54 EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH

to *save* believers: *Do not think* (he says) *that I have come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets.*

5. He teaches, that the end of the gospel and Covenant of Grace is to procure men's obedience to the moral law: "I have come (he says) *to fulfil* the Law and the Prophets."
6. That the obligation of the moral law, in all points, unto all holy duties, is perpetual, and shall stand to the world's end; that is, till heaven and earth pass away.
7. That as God has taken care to the Scriptures from the beginning, so shall he take care to them to the world's end, so that there not one jot or tittle of its substance shall be taken away; so it says in the text, Ver. 18.
8. That just as breaking the moral law, and defending its transgressions as not sin, excludes men both from heaven, and justly also excludes men from the fellowship of the true church; so the obedience of the Law, and teaching others to do the same — by example, counsel, and doctrine, according to every man's calling — proves a man to be a true believer, and in great estimation with God, and worthy to be greatly esteemed by the true church, Ver. 19.
9. That the righteousness of every true Christian must be more than the righteousness of the

EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH 55

scribes and Pharisees; for the scribes and Pharisees, even though they took great pains to discharge many and various duties of the Law, yet they cut short its exposition, that it might less condemn their practice; they studied the outward part of the duty, but neglected the inward and spiritual part; they discharged some meaner duties carefully, but neglected judgment, mercy, and the love of God. In a word, they went about establishing their own righteousness, and rejected the righteousness of God by faith in Jesus. But a true Christian must have more than all this; he must acknowledge the full extent of the spiritual meaning of the Law, and have a respect for all the commandments, and labour to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and "not lay weight upon what service he has done, or shall do," but clothe himself with the

imputed righteousness of Christ, which alone can hide his nakedness, or else he cannot be saved; so says the text, *unless your righteousness*, etc., Ver. 20.

2. That the believer practise the rules of godliness and righteousness.

The second thing requisite to evidence true faith is that the believer endeavour to put the rules of godliness and righteousness into practice, and to grow in the daily exercise of it, as held forth in *2Pet.* 1.5-8.

56 EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH

Ver. 5. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; Ver. 6. And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; Ver. 7. And to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity. Ver. 8. For if these things are in you, and abound, they make you such that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this, 1. The apostle teaches believers to evidence precious faith in themselves, to endeavour to add to their faith seven other sister graces. The first is Virtue, or the active exercise and practice of all moral duties, so that faith may not be idle, but put itself forth in work. The second is Knowledge, which serves to furnish faith with information of the truth to be believed, and to furnish virtue with direction as to what duties are to be done, and how to go about them prudently. The third is Temperance, which serves to moderate the use of all pleasant things, that a man is not clogged with them, nor made unfit for any duty to which he is called. The fourth is Patience, which serves to moderate a man's affections, when he meets with any difficulty or unpleasant thing, so that he neither wearies from pains required in well-doing,

EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH 57

nor faints when the Lord chastises him, nor murmurs when he crosses him. The fifth is Godliness, which may keep him in all the exercises of religion, inward and outward, whereby he may be furnished from God for all other duties which he has to do. The sixth is Brotherly-kindness, which keeps an estimation of and affection for all the household of faith, and to the image of God in every one, wherever it is seen. The seventh is Love, which keeps the heart in readiness to do good to all men, whatever they are, on all occasions which God offers.

2. Even though it is true that there is much corruption and infirmity in the godly, yet the apostle would have men uprightly endeavouring and doing their best, as they are able, to join all these graces to one another, and to grow in the measure of exercising them: *Giving all diligence* (he says), *add to your faith*, etc.

3. He assures all professed believers that as they profit in the obedience of this direction, so they will profitably prove the soundness of their own faith; and if they lack these graces, they will be found to be blind deceivers of themselves, Ver. 9.

58 EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH

3. That obedience to the Law runs in the right channel of faith in Christ

The third thing requisite to evidence true faith is that obedience to the Law runs in the right channel; that is, through faith in Christ, etc., as held forth in *1Tim.* 1.5.

Now the end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and from a good conscience, and from unfeigned faith.

In this, the apostle teaches these seven doctrines:

1. That the obedience of the Law must flow from love, and love from a pure heart, and a pure heart from a good conscience, and a good conscience from unfeigned faith —he makes this the only right channel of good works: *The end of the Law is love*, etc.

2. That the end of the Law is not that men may be justified by their obedience of the Law, as the Jewish doctors falsely taught; for it is impossible for sinners to be justified by the Law which condemns them for every transgression: For *the end of the Law is* (not as the Jewish doctors taught, but) *love, out of a pure heart*, etc.

3. That the true end of the Law, preached to the people, is that being made to see their deserved condemnation, by the Law, they should flee to Christ unfeignedly, to be justified by faith in him; so says the text, as it makes love flow through faith in Christ.

EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH 59

4. That no man can set himself in love to obey the Law, excepting as far as his conscience is quieted by faith, or as he is seeking to be quieted in Christ; for *the end of the Law is love, ...out of a good conscience, and unfeigned faith*.

5. That feigned faith goes to Christ without reckoning with the Law, and so it lacks an errand; but unfeigned faith reckons with the Law, and it is forced to flee to Christ for refuge, as the end of the Law for righteousness, and to do so as often as it finds itself guilty for breaking the Law: For *the end of the Law is... unfeigned faith*.

6. That the fruits of love may come forth particularly in acts, it is necessary for the heart to be brought to the hatred of all sin and uncleanness, and to a steadfast purpose to follow all holiness universally: For *the end of the Law is love, out of a pure heart*.

7. That unfeigned faith is able to make the conscience good, and the heart pure, and the man lovingly obedient to the Law; for when Christ's blood is seen by faith to quiet justice, then the conscience becomes quiet also, and will not allow the heart to entertain the love of sin, but sets the man at work to fear God for his mercy, and to obey all his commandments out of love to God, for his free gift of justification, bestowed

60 EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH

on him by grace: For *this is the end of the Law* indeed, whereby it obtains from a man more obedience than any other way.

4. Keeping strict communion with Christ, the fountain of all graces and good works.

The fourth thing requisite to evidence true faith is *keeping strict communion with Christ*, the fountain of all graces, and of all good works, as held forth in *John 15.5*.

I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.

In this similitude from a vine-tree, Christ teaches us,

1. That by nature we are wild barren briars, till we are changed by coming to Christ; and that Christ is that noble vine-tree, having all life and sap of grace in himself, and able to change the nature of everyone that comes to him, and to communicate spirit and life to as many as will believe in him: *I am the vine* (he says), *and you are the branches*.

2. That Christ loves to have believers so united to him, that they are not separated at any time by unbelief: and that there may be a mutual inhabitation of them in him, by faith and love; and of him in them, by his word and

EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH 61

Spirit; for he joins these together as inseparable things: *If you abide in me, and I in you...*

3. That unless a man is ingrafted into Christ, and united to him by faith, he cannot do any of the least good works from his own strength; indeed, except in as far as a man draws spirit and life from Christ by faith, the work which he does is nothing, and null as to its goodness in God's estimation: *For without me (he says) you can do nothing.*

4. That this mutual inhabitation is the fountain and infallible cause of constant continuing and abounding in well-doing: *For he that abides in me, and I in him (he says), bears much fruit.* Now, our abiding in Christ presupposes three things: (1.) That we have heard the joyful sound of the gospel, making the offer of Christ to us, who are lost sinners by the Law; (2.) That we have heartily embraced the gracious offer of Christ; (3.) That by receiving him, we have become the sons of God, John 1.12, and we are incorporated into his mystical body, that he may dwell in us as his temple, and that we may dwell in him as in the residence of righteousness and life: so our abiding in Christ imports other three things: (1.) Employing Christ in all our addresses to God, and in all our undertakings of whatever

62 EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH

piece of service to him; (2.) Contentedness with his sufficiency, without going out from him in any case to seek righteousness, life, or furnishings in our own or any creature's worthiness; (3.) Fixedness in our believing in him, fixedness in employing and making use of him, and fixedness in our contentment in him, and adhering to him — so that no allurements, no temptation of Satan or the world, no terror or trouble, may be able to drive our spirits from firm adherence to him, nor from constantly avowing his truth, and obeying his commands. For he has loved us, and given himself for us; and in him not only is our life laid up, but also the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, by reason of the substantial and personal union of the divine and human nature in him.

Practical conclusions for strengthening the believer in faith and obedience, by these evidences

Hence let every watchful believer, for strengthening himself in faith and obedience, reason in this manner:

“Whoever daily employs Christ Jesus for cleansing his conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the Law, and for enabling him to give obedience to the Law in love, has the evidence of true faith in himself:

EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH 63

“But (may every watchful believer say) I daily employ Jesus Christ for cleansing my conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the Law, and for enabling me to give obedience to the Law in love:

“Therefore I have the evidence of true faith in myself.”

And hence also let the sleepy and sluggish believer reason this way to stir himself up:

“Whatever is necessary to give evidence of true faith, I study to do it, unless I would deceive myself and perish:

“But to employ Christ Jesus daily for cleansing my conscience and affections from the guiltiness and filthiness of sins against the Law, and for enabling me to give obedience to the Law in love, is necessary to evidence true faith in me:

“Therefore I must study to do this, unless I would deceive myself and perish.”

And, *lastly*,

Seeing that Christ himself has pointed this out as an undoubted evidence of a man elected by God to life, and given to Jesus Christ to be redeemed, “if he comes to him,” that is, closes covenant with him, and keeps communion with him — as he

64 EVIDENCES OF TRUE FAITH

teaches us in John 6.37, saying, *All that the Father has given me shall come to me; and the one that comes to me I will in no way cast out*; let every person, who does not in earnest make use of Christ for remission of sin, and amendment of life, reason from this and from the entire premise in this manner, so that his conscience may be awakened:

“Whoever is neither by the Law, nor by the gospel, so convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make him come to Christ, and employ him daily for remission of sin, and amendment of life, lacks not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all appearance of his election, so long as he remains in this condition:

“But (may every impenitent person say) I am neither by the Law nor by the gospel, so convinced of sin, righteousness, and judgment, as to make me come to Christ, and employ him daily for remission of sin, and amendment of life:

“Therefore I lack not only all evidence of saving faith, but also all appearance of my election, so long as I remain in this condition.”