

~Other Speakers S-Z: Victory Over Sin:

Many people strive and work to achieve true obedience to all the commands of Christ, as the condition by which they are to acquire for themselves a right and title to salvation. These people seek their salvation by the works of the law, and not by the faith of Christ, as He is revealed in the gospel. They shall never be able to perform sincere and true holy obedience by these efforts.

Now I take salvation to include justification, as well as other saving benefits, and sincere obedience to include holy decisions, as well as the fulfilling of them. Most men that have any sense of religion are likely to imagine that the way to establish the practice of holiness and righteousness is to make it the obtaining condition of the favor of God and all happiness. This is why various false religions have prevailed in the world. In this way the Heathens were brought to their best devotion and morals by the knowledge of the judgment of God, that those that violate several of the great duties to God and their neighbor are worthy of death, and by their consciences accusing or excusing them, according to the practice of them. Our consciences are informed by the common light of natural reason that it is just for God to require us to perform these duties, to avoid His wrath and enjoy His favor. We cannot find any better way than this to obtain happiness, or to stir up ourselves to duty, without divine revelation. Yet, because our own consciences testify that we often fail in the performance of those duties, we are inclined by self-love to persuade ourselves that our sincere efforts to do the best we can shall be sufficient to procure the favor of God, and pardon for all our failings.

Thus we see that our idea of salvation by the condition of sincere obedience comes from our corrupt natural reason, and is part of the wisdom of this world. It is not the wisdom of God in a mystery, that hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world to our glory. It is not of the Spirit of God which 'have not entered the heart of man,' and which the 'natural man cannot receive; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor. 2:6, 7, 9, 14). It is not of 'the foolishness of preaching,' by which it pleased God 'to save them that believe' (1 Cor. 1:21). We have a better way revealed to us in the gospel, for the enjoyment of the favor of God, and holiness itself, and all salvation, without any procuring condition of works, by the free gift of God's grace through faith in Christ. It is very difficult to persuade men out of a way they are naturally addicted to, and that has hindered and captivated their judgments, and is bred in their bone, and therefore cannot easily be removed from the flesh. Most of those that live under the hearing and profession of the gospel are not brought to hate sin as sin, and to love godliness for itself, though they are convinced of the necessity of it to salvation, and therefore they cannot love it heartily. The only way they can take to bring themselves to it is to stir up themselves to a hypocritical practice in their old natural way, that they may avoid hell, and get heaven, by their works. Their own consciences witness that the zeal and love that they have for God and godliness, their self-denial, sorrow for sin, strictness of life, are in a manner forced and extorted from them by slavish fear and mercenary hope. They fear that, if they should trust on Christ for salvation by free grace without works, the fire of their zeal and devotion would be quickly extinguished, and they should grow careless in religion, and let loose the reins to their lusts, and bring certain damnation on themselves. This moves them to consider powerful preachers that preach little or none of the doctrine of free grace, but rather spend their efforts in rebuking sin and urging people to get Christ and His salvation by their works, and thundering hell and damnation against sinners.

It has been further observed that some that have so greatly insisted for salvation by free grace, without any condition of works, have fallen into licentious practices. The experience of these things has caused some learned and zealous men to withdraw from the doctrine of justification by faith without works, formerly professed unanimately. They have persuaded themselves that such a way of justification is ineffectual, and even destructive to sanctification. They also think that the practice of sincere obedience cannot be established against prevailing lusts, except it is made the necessary condition of our justification, and so of our eternal salvation. Therefore they conclude that God has certainly made sincere obedience to be the condition of our salvation. They have made efforts to interpret the Holy Scriptures in a way agreeable and subservient to this their only sure foundation of holiness.

I hope to show that this their imagined sure foundation of holiness was never laid by the holy God, but that it is rather an error in the foundation, pernicious to the true faith, and to holiness of life. I consider it an error that needs to be hated and detested, because we are so prone to be seduced by it. It is an error by which Satan, transforming himself into an angel of light, has greatly withstood the gospel in the apostles' times, and stirred up men to persecute it out of zeal for the law.

The fundamental error is that it is a way of salvation by the works of the law, and not by the faith of Christ, as revealed in the gospel. The maintainers of it would have us believe it is the only way of the gospel, so we may

not doubt its power and efficacy for our justification, sanctification and our whole salvation. Their reasons are because the law, as a covenant of works, requires us to do all its commandments perfectly that we may live; whereas they plead only for a milder condition of sincere doing, that we may live. They plead not for doing duties, as obliged to it by the authority of the law given of God by Moses, but only in obedience to the commands of Christ in the gospel. They do not plead for salvation by sincere obedience without Christ, but only by Christ, and through His merit and righteousness. They acknowledge that both salvation itself and sincere obedience are given to them freely by the grace of Christ: so that all is of grace. They acknowledge also that their salvation is by faith, because sincere obedience is wrought in them by believing the gospel, and is included in the nature of that faith, which is the entire condition of our salvation, and some call it the resignation act of faith. All these reasons are but a false presumption on a legal way of salvation, to make it look like pure gospel, as I will show by the following points.

All that seek salvation by the sincere performance of good works, as the procuring condition, are condemned by the apostle Paul for seeking righteousness by the works of the law, and not by faith. These are seeking to be justified by the law, and falling from the grace of Christ (Gal. 5:4). This one assertion, if it can be proved, is enough to cast down this deception, and to make men hate it, as a damning legal doctrine, that strips its followers of all salvation by Christ. The proof of it is not difficult to persons that warily consider a point of so great moment for their salvation.

The Jews and judaizing Christians, against whom the apostle chiefly disputes in his whole controversy, did not profess any hope of being justified by perfect obedience, according to the rigor of the law, but only by such obedience as they considered to be sincere, and not hypocritical. We have no cause to doubt, but that the judaizing Galatians had learned by the gospel to distinguish sincere obedience from hypocrisy. The Jewish religion bound all that professed it to acknowledge themselves to be sinners, as appears by their anniversary humiliation on the day of atonement, and several other rites of the law, and many clear testimonies in the oracles of God that were committed to them. Yet they knew they were bound to turn to the Lord with all their hearts, in sincerity and uprightness, and that God would accept of sincere obedience; for which cause they might better put it for the condition of the law, than we can of the gospel. So that if the apostle had disputed against those that held only perfect obedience to be the condition of justification, he had contended with his own shadow. They might as readily judge sincere obedience to be the condition of justification under the law, as we can judge it to be the condition under the gospel.

Neither does the apostle condemn them merely for considering sincere obedience to the law, as given by Moses, to be the condition of their justification, but more generally for seeking salvation by their own works. He alleges against them that Abraham, who lived before the law of Moses, was not justified by any of his works, though he did perform sincere obedience; and that David, who lived under the law of Moses, was not justified by his works, though he performed sincere obedience, and was as much given to obey the law given by Moses, as we are to obey any commands of Christ in the gospel.

Neither does he condemn them for seeking their salvation only by works, without respecting at all the grace and salvation that is by Christ, for the judaizing Galatians were yet professors of the grace and salvation of Christ, though they thought obedience to the law a necessary condition for the partaking of it, as also many other judaizing believers did. Doubtless, they considered themselves obliged to it, not only by the authority of Moses, but of Christ also, whom they owned as their Lord and Savior. We may be sure it was no damning error to consider Moses' law obliging at that time, for many thousands of the Jews that were sound believers held the ceremonies of Moses to be in force at that time, and Paul was tender towards them in it. Other Jews sought justification, not only by their sincere works, but also by trusting on the promise made to Abraham and on their priesthood and sacrifices, which were types of Christ. The most legal Pharisees would thank God for their works, as proceeding from His grace. They could as well acknowledge their salvation to be by faith as the asserters of salvation by sincere obedience can in these days, for they believed that their sincere obedience was worked in them by believing the Word of God, which contained gospel, as well as legal doctrine, in it and therefore that it must be included in the nature of faith, if faith were taken for the condition of their whole salvation.

Let them [not build again] that Judaism which the apostle Paul destroyed, by which the Jews stumbled at Christ, and the Galatians were in danger of falling from Christ and grace. Let them beware of falling under the curse, which Paul has denounced on this very occasion against any man or angel that shall preach any other gospel than that which he has preached.

The difference between the law and gospel is that the law requires perfect doing and the gospel requires only sincere doing. The law requires doing, the gospel requires, not doing, but believing for life and salvation. Their terms are different, not only in degree, but in their whole nature. If we seek salvation by a condition of works we

It is impossible to be holy by our own efforts to keep the law.

bring ourselves under the terms of the law, and do become debtors to fulfill the whole law in perfection. Salvation is a free gift, freely given by the grace of God in Christ. **THE LAW WAS NEVER INTENDED TO MAKE ANY PERSON HOLY.** The reason why the law was given was to show the impossibility of attaining life, holiness or salvation by our own efforts, energy or strength.

The apostle Paul opposes the believing required in the gospel to all doing for life, as the condition proper to the law. The law is not of faith, but the man that does them shall live in them. To him that does not work, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. If we seek salvation by ever so easy and mild a condition of works, we do in this way bring ourselves under the terms of the law, and become debtors to fulfill the whole law in perfection, though we intended to engage ourselves only to fulfill it in part. The law is a complete declaration of the only terms by which God will judge all that are not brought to despair of procuring salvation by any of their own works, and to receive it as a gift freely given to them by the grace of God in Christ. All that seek salvation, right or wrong, knowingly or ignorantly, by any works, less or more, whether invented by their own superstition, or commanded by God in the Old or New Testament, shall at last stand or fall according to these terms.

Gal. 3:14-27 "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. The scripture has concluded that all are under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. We were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed before faith came. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. We are no longer under a schoolmaster after that faith is come for we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Once we see the impossibility of being holy by the law or by our own efforts to keep it then we are ready to receive God's free promise for all our salvation and holiness. **NO ONE HAS EVER BEEN SAVED OR EVER ATTAINED ANY HOLINESS ACCEPTABLE TO GOD BY WORKS OF THE LAW.** Those that were made partakers of life and holiness did so **ONLY** by faith in God's free promise and provision for holiness.

Sincere obedience cannot be performed to all the commands of Christ in the gospel, except it is also performed to the moral law, as given by Moses, and as obliging us by that authority. The law of Moses justifies no one, but it thunders out a curse against all those that seek salvation by the works of it. If sincere works at all justified people, their respect to Moses' authority would not hinder their success. Many that were good Christians considered themselves bound to obey, not only the moral, but also the ceremonial law; and if they had sought justification by any works, they would have sought it by those. They did not know of any justification by sincere works, as commanded only in the gospel; yet, if they had erred in anything absolutely necessary to salvation, the apostles would not have tolerated their weakness. They must seek their salvation by the works of the moral law, as given by Moses, or else they can never get it by sincere obedience to the commands of Christ. Christ never loved their new condition so well as to abolish the Mosaic authority of the moral law, for the establishment of it. He came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them, in the practice required by them, and has declared that 'Whoever then shall break one of these commandments, even the least, and shall teach men so, that one shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall practice and teach them, that one shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven' (Matt. 5:19). He commands us to 'do to men whatever we would they should do to us, because this is the law and the prophets' which is sufficient to prove that He would have us to consider the law authoritative to oblige us in this matter. He requires His disciples to observe and do whatever the scribes and Pharisees bid them, because they sat in Moses' seat.

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

In like manner the apostles of Christ urged the performance of moral duties on believers by the authority of the

law given by Moses. The apostle Paul exhorts to love one another, because he that loves another has fulfilled the law, and to honor our father and mother, which is the first command with promise. The apostle John exhorts to love others, as no new, but an old commandment. The apostle James exhorts to fulfill the royal law, according to the Scriptures. You shall love your neighbor as yourself; and to keep all the commandments of the law, one as well as another, because he that said, 'Do not commit adultery', said also, 'Do not kill'. Some people have considered the denial of the authority of the moral law of Moses to be an error. Others establish a worse error, justification by their sincere gospel works. The law of Moses had its authority at first from Christ, for Christ was the Lord God of Israel, that ordained the law by angels on mount Sinai in the hand of Moses, a mediator for the Israelites, who were then His only church, and with whom we believing Gentiles are now joined, as fellow members of one and the same body. Though Christ has since abrogated some of the commandments, then given by Moses, concerning figurative ceremonies and judicial proceedings, yet He has not annulled the obligative authority of the moral law, but has left it in its full force, to oblige in moral duties that still are to be practiced, as, when some acts of any parliament are repealed, the authority of the same parliament remains inviolable in other acts that are not repealed.

I know they object that the Ten Commands of the moral law, the ministration of death, written and engraved on stones, are also done away by Christ (2 Cor. 3:7). This makes altogether against their conditional covenant, for they are the ministration of death, and done away, not as they commanded perfect obedience, for even Christ Himself commands us to be perfect, but as they were conditions for procuring life and avoiding death, established by a promise of life to the doers, and a curse to the breakers of them. The covenant made with Israel on Mount Sinai is abolished by Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant. The Ten Commandments do not bind us as they were words of that covenant. I mean, they do not bind us as conditions of that covenant, except we seek to be justified by works. For the law, as a covenant, still stands in force enough to curse those that seek salvation by their own works and, if abolished, it is only to those that are in Christ by faith. The Ten Commandments bind us still, as they were then given to a people that were at that time under the covenant of grace made with Abraham, to show them what duties are holy, just and good, well-pleasing to God, and to be a rule for their conversation. The result of all is that we must still practice moral duties as commanded by Moses, but we must not seek to be justified by our practice. If we use them as a rule of life, not as conditions of justification, they can be no ministration of death, or killing letter to us. Their perfection indeed makes them to be harder terms to procure life by, but a better rule to discover all imperfections, and to guide us to that perfection which we should aim at. It will be our wisdom not to part with the authority of Ten Commandments, until our new divines can furnish us with another system of morality as complete as that and as excellently composed, and ordered by the wisdom of God, and more authentic than that is.

Those that make efforts to acquire Christ's salvation by their sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ do act completely contrary to that way of salvation by Christ, free grace and faith, revealed in the gospel, though they own it in profession ever so highly.

They act contrary to the way of salvation by Christ, for they would heal themselves, and save themselves from the power and pollution of sin, and procure God's favor, by performing sincere obedience, before they are come to Christ, the only Physician and Savior. They lay their own obedience lowest in the foundation of their salvation, and build the enjoyment of Christ on it, who ought to be the only foundation. They would sanctify themselves, before they have a sure interest in Christ and, going about to establish their own righteousness, they do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God in Christ. Sometimes they will call the righteousness of Christ their legal righteousness, that they may make room for an evangelical righteousness of their own works, to be the immediate procuring cause of their justification by Christ, whereas the apostle Paul knew no evangelical righteousness but that of Christ, which he called the righteousness of faith without the law and not of the law. Thus they make void Christ's salvation, while they pretend to own it, and Christ profits them nothing. Christ is become of none effect to them, while they would be justified by the law. If we would be saved by Christ, we must own ourselves dead, lost sinners, that can have no righteousness for justification but His, no life or ability to do good, until God bring us into union and fellowship with Him.

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

The Scripture teaches us that there is a perfect opposition and utter irreconcilableness between salvation by grace and works: 'If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but, if it is of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work' (Rom. 11:6). So also, there is an opposition between a reward reckoned of grace and of debt (Rom. 4:4); between a promise of happiness by the law, and by

grace (Rom. 4:13, 16). God is so jealous of the glory of His free grace that He will not save us by any works, though of His own working in us, lest any man should boast. He knows when He heals men by physic, or maintains them by the labor of their hands, they are prone to attribute the glory rather to the means they use than to His sole bounty and goodness.

They do also act contrary to the way of salvation by faith, for, as I have shown already, the faith which is required for our salvation in the gospel is to be understood in a sense contrary to doing good works as a condition to procure our salvation, and so the true difference between the terms of the law and the gospel may be maintained. Believing is opposed to all working for salvation, and the law of works to the law of faith (Rom. 4:5; 3:27; Eph. 2:8, 9). Therefore, we must not here consider faith as a work of righteousness, as comprehending any works of righteousness performed or done, as a condition to procure a right and title to Christ, as the hand by which we work, to earn Him as our bread and drink, as our wages. Faith must be considered a hand by which we receive Christ, as freely given to us, or as the mouth by which we eat and drink Him. God gives a sufficient right to receive Christ and His salvation by the free gospel offer and invitation, so that He leaves nothing for our faith to do, but to lay hold of Him as a free gift. The reason for this is that the glory of our salvation may not be associated at all to our faith or works, but only to this free grace of God in Christ: 'It is of faith, that it may be by grace' (Rom. 4:16).

Christ or His apostles never taught a gospel that requires such a condition of works for salvation as they plead for. The texts of Scripture which they usually allege for this purpose are either contrary to it, or widely distant from it. I shall show a few of those texts by which you may have some light to judge of the true meaning of the rest. That obedience of faith, mentioned by the apostle Paul, as the great design of gospel preaching (Rom. 1:5), is as contrary to their condition of sincere obedience for salvation, as the law of faith is to the law of works (Rom. 3:27). It is an obedience that consists in believing the report of the gospel, as the apostle explains himself: 'They have not all obeyed the gospel; for Esaias says, Lord, who has believed our report?' (Rom. 10:16.) Faith is to be imputed for righteousness, not because it is a work of righteousness itself, but because we do by it renounce all confidence in any righteous works whatever, and trust on Him that justifies the ungodly, as is clear by that very text which they usually pervert for their purpose (Rom. 4:5). They grossly pervert those words of Paul: 'Who will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality eternal life' (Rom. 2:6, 7), where they will have Paul to be declaring the terms of the gospel, when he is evidently declaring the terms of the law to prove that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin, and that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law.

Another text alleged by them is 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city' (Rev. 22:14). The Greek word which is here translated 'right' is translated 'power' or 'privilege' (John 1:12). It signifies here a rightful possession of the fruit of the tree of life, and not a mere title to it. So this text proves that good works are the way in which we are to walk to the enjoyment and possession of the glory of Christ, though a title to Christ and His glorious salvation be freely given us without any procuring condition of works. They consider also that when the happiness of heaven is called a reward, it must imply a procuring condition of works, as Revelation 22:12; Matthew 5:12. Though it is called a reward, because it is given after the doing of good works, and because it recompenses good works better than any wages on earth can recompense the laborer, yet it is a reward of grace, not of debt (Rom. 4:4); it is not proper wages, but a free gift: 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom. 6:23).

Those that make efforts to perform this sincere obedience as a condition to procure a right and title to Christ and His salvation shall never be able to perform sincerely any true obedience by all such efforts. Though they labor earnestly, and pray fervently, fast frequently, and oblige themselves to holiness by many vows, and press themselves to the practice of it by the most forcible motives taken from the infinite power, justice and knowledge of God, the equity and goodness of His commands, the salvation of Christ, everlasting happiness and misery, or any other motive improved by the most affectionate meditation - yet they shall never attain to the end which they aim at in such an erroneous way. They may restrain their corruptions, and bring themselves to many hypocritical slavish performances, by which they may be esteemed among men as eminent saints, but they shall not be able to mortify one corruption, or to perform one duty in such a holy manner as God approves. Yet here I criticize only an error, not the life of the persons that maintain it. I have heard that some preach legally and pray evangelically. No doubt the frame of their hearts and lives is rather according to their prayers than their sermons. Though Peter complied with Judaism in an outward act of profession, yet he lived himself like a Christian. I affirm only that no godly person did or could attain to his godliness in this erroneous way. What a shameful disappointment is this to those that have attempted to pervert and confound law and gospel, and have bred much contention in the church, that they might secure the practice of sincere obedience against contradictory errors, by making it the procuring condition of their salvation, when, after all this ado, the remedy is found to be as bad as the disease, equally unserviceable and destructive to that great end for which they designed it, and that it has an Antinomian effect and operation, contrary to the power of godliness!

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

The way of salvation by the works of the law is contrary and destructive to those necessary means of a holy practice that have been laid down in the foregoing instructions, and manifestly proved out of the Holy Scriptures. I have made it appear that a tendency to a holy practice cannot be attained without some good persuasion of our reconciliation with God by justification, and of our everlasting happiness, and of sufficient strength both to will and to perform our duty; and that these, and all other endowments necessary to the same end, are to be had only in Christ, by union and fellowship with Him; and that Christ Himself, with all His fullness, is united to us by faith; which is not a condition to obtain a right and title to Christ, but an instrument by which we receive Him actually into our hearts, by trusting on Him for all salvation freely promised us in the gospel. All these means of a holy practice are things in which our spiritual life and happiness consists, so that, if we have them, everlasting life is begun in us already. Because they are the necessary means of a holy practice, therefore the beginning of everlasting life in us must not be placed after such a practice, as the fruit and consequence of it; but must go before it, as the cause before the effect. Now, the terms of the law are directly contrary to this method. They place the practice of holiness before life and make it to be the means and procuring cause of life, as Moses describes them: 'The man that does these things shall live by them' (Rom. 10: 5). By these terms, you are first to do the holy duties commanded, before you have any interest in the life promised, or any right to lay hold of it as yours by faith. You must practice holiness without the aforementioned means, or else you can never attain to them. Thus the true means are turned out of their office and, instead of being causes, they are made to be effects and fruits of a holy practice. It will be in vain ever to expect such effects and fruits, for holiness itself, with all its effects, needs to be destroyed, when its necessary causes are taken away. Therefore, the apostle Paul testifies that the way of salvation by the works of the law makes faith void, and the promises of no effect, and frustrates the grace of God, as if Christ died in vain, and makes Christ to be of no profit, and of none effect to us, as those that are fallen from grace (Rom. 4:14; Gal. 2:21; 5:2, 4). Let us now examine the modern doctrine of salvation by the condition of sincere obedience to all the commands of Christ, and we shall quickly find it to be a chip of the same block with the former legal way of salvation, in the same manner destructive to the means of holiness and to holiness itself. It requires of us the performance of sincere obedience, before we have the means necessary to produce it, by making it precede our justification, and persuasion of eternal happiness, and our actual enjoyment of union and fellowship with Christ, and of that new nature which is to be had only in Him by faith. It destroys the nature of that saving faith by which we actually receive and enjoy Christ and all His benefits, and knocks off our hands from laying hold of Christ and His salvation by telling us still, as Christ told the legal worker, after all his labor, that yet we lack something (Mark 10:21); that it is presumption to take Him as our own, until we have performed the condition for our right and title to Him, which is another kind of saving faith, otherwise called sincere obedience. By this devised conditional faith, Satan keeps many poor souls at bay, studying their own hearts for many years together, to find whether they have performed the condition, and whether they have as yet any right to Christ for their salvation, not daring to venture to take Him as their own. It is a strong partition wall, that will certainly hinder the soul from coming to Christ, until it is thrown down by the knowledge of salvation by grace without any attempt to earn salvation by works. Though it is considered but as the payment of a peppercorn for a great estate, yet it is enough to break the ablest man in the world, because it debars him from laying hold of the only effectual means of holiness, by which that peppercorn may be obtained.

Those that seek salvation by the works of the law do act according to their natural state. They live and walk according to the flesh, or old man; not according to the new state, by Christ living in them. I doubt that many of them that live under the light of the gospel are partakers of a new state in Christ, and walk holily in it; but the best in this world have in them flesh as well as spirit, and may act according to either state in some measure, and in this matter they do act according to their carnal natural state. When the believing Galatians were seduced to a legal way of salvation, the apostle Paul charges it on them as their folly that, having begun in the Spirit, they would now be 'made perfect in the flesh' (Gal. 3:3). He resembles those that desire to be under the

law to Abraham's son born of Hagar the bondwoman to show that such do walk as those that are born after the flesh, not after the Spirit. The law was first given to Adam in his pure natural state, to prescribe terms for his continuance in the happiness which he then enjoyed. Ever since that time the flesh, or natural man, is married to the law, and the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives, that is, until he be dead to his fleshly state by the body of Christ, and married to Him that is raised from the dead (Rom. 7:1, 4). We are not at all under the law as a covenant of works, according to our new state in Christ, as the apostle testifies: 'You are not under the law, but under grace' (Rom. 6:14) and 'If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law' (Gal. 5:18). From this, we may firmly conclude that none can possibly attain to true godliness by acting according to legal terms, because I have fully proved already that it is impossible to be godly while we are in the flesh, or in a natural state, and that, as long as we act according to it, we can do nothing but sin. The law is so weak through the flesh, that it cannot bring us to fulfill its own righteousness (Rom. 8:3, 4). It is married to a cross piece of flesh, that is enmity to it, and can never be subject to it (Rom. 8:7). It sues the natural man for an old debt of obedience, that he is utterly unable to pay since the Fall, and the success is accordingly: it gets nothing.

Neither do those take a better course, that would bring themselves to holiness by making sincere obedience to Christ's commands the condition of their salvation. Their way is the same for substance with that of the Galatians before mentioned, who would be made perfect in the flesh, not by perfect obedience, but sincere; as has been shown before. Their efforts to procure an interest in Christ by their sincere obedience do testify against themselves, that they do not act as people that are in Christ, but rather as people that judge themselves to be without an interest in Christ, and to be yet to seek for it. Sincere obedience is as impossible to be attained to as perfect obedience; if we act according to our dead natural state.

As the law deprives of all strengthening means that are to be had by faith in Christ, and finds us without strength in our natural state, so, of itself, it affords us no strength to fulfill its own commands: 'If there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law' (Gal. 3:21). It does not so much as promise life until we have performed the obedience required by it. The man that does these things shall live by them. It is well called a voice of words, because its high and big words are not accompanied with an enlivening power. The doctrine of life and salvation by sincere obedience is no better-natured, or more bountiful to us, for it exacts of us the performance of the condition, before it allows us any life or salvation by Christ. Can any man rationally expect strength to obey sincerely by following a doctrine that does not so much as promise it? The true gospel is of a more benign nature, for it promises that God will pour out of His Spirit on all flesh, and will put the laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts (Heb. 8:10), and will cause us to walk in His statutes, that we shall keep His judgments, and do them (Ezek. 36:27). This word of God's grace, that requires not holiness of us as a condition, but promises it to us as a free gift, must needs be the only doctrine that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified (Acts 20: 32). Seeing it pleases God to bring us to holiness by believing a doctrine, we may reasonably expect that God should work on us suitably to the nature of the doctrine which we believe, that He should give by a giving doctrine, and exact by an exacting doctrine.

The way of procuring life and happiness by the condition of perfect or sincere works is not a rational method for the recovery of fallen man, though it were good for the preserving of life before the Fall, for it prescribes the immediate practice of holiness to recover a man dead in sin - as if one should say to the sick of the palsy, 'Arise and walk, and then you shall be whole and able to walk.' We sometimes say jestingly to a child that is fallen on the ground, 'Come here, and I will help you up', but if we should say so to one that is cast on his bed by a dead palsy we should be guilty of mocking and cruelly insulting the afflicted. Those that are humbled by their sin and deadness know that they must first live by the Spirit, before they can act holily (Gal. 5:25). They will enquire, 'How shall we have strength to perform the duty required?' If you answer, that they must trust in God and Christ to help them, they may readily reply, they have no sure ground to trust in God or Christ for any saving grace according to this doctrine, before they have performed this condition, at least in a sincere resolution of obedience, and that they are as unable to bring their hearts to such a resolution as a dead man is to raise himself out of the grave. Take another instance. The method of the doctrine of works is 'You must love God first, and then, on that condition, He will love you again', whereas, on the contrary, 'We love God, because He loved us first' (1 John 4:19). If God suspend His love to us upon any condition, our love to Him will not be absolute, but suspended upon the same condition, and no way contrary to an actual hating of Him.

The law is so far from healing our sinful corruption that it proves rather an occasion of sinful motions and actions in those that seek salvation by the works of it. This comes to pass by reason of the power of our natural corruption, which is stirred up and rages the more when the holy and just law of God is set in opposition against it, so that the fault is not in the law, but in our own hearts. Those that find not this by their own experience should believe the apostle Paul, who teaches it plainly, and that from his own experience (Rom. 7:5, 14). He affirms that there are motions of sin by the law in a fleshly state, and that sin, taking occasion by the commandment, 'You shall not covet', wrought in him all manner of concupiscence, deceived him, slew him, became exceeding sinful; and that without the law, he was alive, and sin dead but, when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died. He shows the cause of this irreconcilable enmity and contrariety between his

sinful nature and the law: 'The law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin.' Take notice here, from the reason given by the apostle, that the doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience will have the same event. Corrupt nature is contrary to sincere obedience, as well as perfect and, if we make it the condition of our salvation, sin will take the same occasion by it to become exceeding sinful in its motions and actions. The success of legal doctrine upon the natural man is according to the proverb, 'Do not reprove a scorner, lest he hate you' (Prov. 9:8). Rebuking a madman is the way to enrage him, and such is the natural man in spiritual things, since he fell out of his right mind by the sin of Adam.

We find by many experiences that, though man is generally addicted to the principle of salvation by works, yet multitudes of them hate all strict preachers and professors of true holiness, because they are a torment to their consciences. They make efforts to shelter themselves in ignorance of the law, considering that the less they know, the less they shall answer for, and therefore they would not have right things prophesied to them. They have prevailed generally in the world to darken the natural knowledge of moral duties in such a degree that there is a necessity of learning them by divine revelation out of the Scriptures. We may find how prone legal writers are to corrupt the sense of the law, that they may leave starting-holes for their corruptions, by the corrupt glosses of the scribes and Pharisees, from which Christ did vindicate it.

As far as I have observed, none more make efforts to discover the purity and perfection of the law than those that seek holiness and salvation without any legal condition, by the mere free grace of God in Christ. The doctrine of salvation by sincere obedience is but a mincing the perfection required in the law, and yet how is this doctrine minced again and again, until it is become so small, that the substance of all true obedience is lost? A willingness to be saved according to Christ's terms, or a consent that Christ should be our Lord, or a resolution to obey His commandments (which is little more than ignorant men trust on, when they say they hope God will save them because they have a good meaning, though they live in the neglect of all religion) without any further practice of holiness, shall pass with many for enough of sincere obedience, both to enter them into a state of salvation, and to continue them in it; so that they shall never be considered breakers of the gospel covenant, while so much can be pretended. The most that is made necessary for salvation shall be only to endeavor to do what we can to obey Christ's commands, though all that the most can do is nothing that is truly good. Those that have a little more zeal for their salvation by works are prone to spend it in superstitious observances, because they suit better with their carnal nature than the spiritual commands of God and Christ. I doubt not but this has been one occasion of the prevailing of heathenish, Jewish and popish superstitions in the world. We find by experience how Popery fell in several nations of late years, when the great pillar of it, the doctrine of justification by works, was overthrown by the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone.

If these legal zealots be forced by strong conviction to make efforts to the practice of spiritual duties for the quieting of their guilty consciences, they may be brought to strive and labor earnestly, and even to macerate their bodies with fasting, that they may kill their lusts; but still their lusts are alive, and as strong as ever they were, and do show forth their enmity against the law of God by inward fretting, repining and grudging at it, as a grievous taskmaster, though a slavish fear restrain their gross outward actions. If once these zealots are enlightened with the knowledge of the spiritual nature of the law to discern that God rejects all their slavish service, and will not own it for sincere obedience, then they fall into despair of their salvation, because they see they have failed in their highest attempts to perform the condition, and they can easily discover themselves, that their hearts swell in anger and manifest hatred against the law, yea, and against God and Christ, for prescribing such hard conditions of salvation, which they cannot keep, and yet must expect to be damned eternally for breaking them. This fills them with blasphemous thoughts against God and Christ, and they can hardly refrain from blaspheming with their tongues. When they are brought to this horrible condition, if God does not in mercy reveal to them the way of salvation by free grace, through faith alone, they will endeavor, if they can, to sear their consciences past feeling of sin, and fully to abandon all religion, which has proved such an insufferable torment to them. If they cannot sear their consciences, some of them are easily prevailed with by Satan, rather to murder themselves than to live longer in the hatred of God, the spirit of blasphemy and continual horror of conscience.

This is the pestilent effect of legal doctrine upon a carnal heart, that does but awaken and terribly enrage the sleeping lion, our sinful corruption, instead of killing it. This is all too evident by the sad experience of many that have made efforts with all their might to practice it, and by the Scripture, that shows a sufficient cause why it cannot be otherwise. For my part, I hate it with perfect hatred, and consider it mine enemy, as I have found it to be. I have found by some good experience the truth of the lesson taught by the apostle, that the way to be freed from the mastery and dominion of sin is not to be under the law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14).

The way of salvation by works was blasted by the curse denounced against the first Adam's sin, so that now it cannot work life in us, or holiness, but only death, for the law, which requires both sincere and perfect obedience to God in all things, was made known to Adam at his first creation, as the means of continuing the

It is impossible to be holy by our own efforts to keep the law.

happy life that was then bestowed on him, and it would have been effectual for this end, if he had not transgressed in eating the forbidden fruit. When he had once brought himself and his posterity under the terrible sentence, 'You shall surely die', all that knowledge of God or His law that before wrought continuance of life was turned by that cursing sentence the contrary way, to work for his death, even for the death of the soul in sin, as well as for the death of his body; and therefore it quickly moved him to hide himself from God as an enemy. It was as if God should say, 'All the light and knowledge that you have shall not be able to continue your life, or restore it; but it shall rather tend to your death.' Therefore, while we continue in our corrupted sinful condition, the knowledge of the law, yea, and all such knowledge of God and His attributes as natural man may attain to, must needs be in like manner accursed to us. Seeing man did not use his natural knowledge and wisdom aright, God is resolved to revenge the abuse of it by giving us salvation in a way contrary to it that seems foolishness to the natural man, and wholly to abolish the way of living by any of our works, or by any wisdom or knowledge that the natural man can attain unto. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For, after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe' (1. Cor. 1:19-21).

Hence we may conclude that the goal which God aimed at in giving the law to Moses was not that any should ever attain to holiness or salvation by the condition of perfect or sincere obedience to it, though, if there had been any such way of salvation at that time, it must have consisted in the performance of that law, which was then given to the church to be a rule of life, as well as a covenant. There was another covenant made before that time with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a covenant of grace, promising all blessings freely through Christ, the promised seed, by which only they were to be saved. The covenant of the law was added that they might see their sinfulness and subjection to death and wrath, and the impossibility of attaining to life or holiness by their works, and be forced to trust on the free promise only for all their salvation, and that sin might be restrained by the spirit of bondage until the coming of that promised seed Jesus Christ, and the more plentiful pouring out of the sanctifying Spirit, by Him. None of the Israelites under the Old Testament were ever saved by the Sinai covenant; neither did any of them ever attain to holiness by the terms of it. Some of them did indeed perform the commandments of it sincerely, though imperfectly, but those were first justified, and made partakers of life and holiness, by virtue of that better covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which was the same in substance with the new covenant or testament established by the blood of Christ. Had it not been for that better covenant, the Sinai covenant would have proved to them an occasion of no happiness, but only of sin, despair and destruction. Of itself it was only a killing letter, the ministration of death and condemnation, and therefore it is now abolished (2 Cor. 3:6, 8, 9, 11).

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