

own way. Wherever, therefore, pride or sensuality reigns in the hearts of men, they will be for separating personal obedience and a dependence upon the merits of Christ alone for salvation.

This fatal division Satan will use all his influence to procure and promote. If you are endeavouring to obtain salvation by your own works, he will be at much pains to gild and emblazon your supposed excellencies, and hold them before your eyes to produce in you self-admiration; that you may perform your works without a knowledge of yourself as a defiled sinful creature, and without humility; and that, "continuing ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish your own righteousness, you may never submit to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3.

And if you now begin to depend on Christ for salvation, the deceiver immediately changes his method of assault; he will join with you in beating down all merit in man, and whisper perverted truth into your ears: he will help you to vilify all human righteousness as filthy rags, and endeavour to the utmost to push you on to that dreadful error of fancying that Christ is most exalted, when personal obedience is least regarded: that by this device you may be so infatuated as to build your house (all your eternal hopes) upon the sandy foundation of a dead notional faith, till it fall upon you, and you perish under the ruins of it for ever.

To guard you in this important matter against the corruptions of your fallen nature, and the temptations of Satan, I proceed to lay before you the

mischievous effects of separating personal holiness and the merits of Christ's blood and righteousness. If you place your dependence for salvation upon your own performances, lightly esteeming the merits of Christ, then the better you suppose yourself to be, the more self-sufficient you will be. And though you acknowledge that your obedience is performed by the help of God's grace, this will not prevent you, any more than it did the Pharisee, from trusting in yourself that you are righteous, and despising others. But though your good qualities make you highly esteemed amongst men; if this be your case, God, who knoweth your heart, in utter abhorrence of that self-conceit which reigns in it, hath declared that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased. For thus you oppose the most solemn declarations of God concerning the way of salvation. God hath laid upon Christ the iniquity of us all. He was made to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And to prove the absolute necessity of receiving salvation in and through Christ, as the purchase of his blood, and the free gift of his grace, "I have sworn, saith he, by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," Isa. xlv. 23. That no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for the justified shall live by faith in Christ, Gal. iii. 10. The consequence of such a denial of the truth is, in the end, eternal death; "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse," Gal. iii. 9.