

Though these thoughts look as if they were intended to make believers always question their state, yet it will be found far otherwise; because they serve only to lead and keep them close to that foundation which alone is secure, and where they will find rest. But, however, in a case of so great importance, there is no room for flattery or compliment. Either you *do*, or do *not*, question your state: if you do, there is no other way that I know of to obtain satisfaction, but by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ directly, as standing forth to view in the gospel; for it is in this way, and through this medium that God conveys to his people a sense of his favour. If you do *not* question your state, but are well assured concerning it, then this assurance, if solid, will bear the trial; neither need you be afraid to look into the worst of it. But if a suspicion arising in the mind upon this should shake your confidence, it then becomes evident, that so far it was not placed upon Christ, but upon some good opinion you had formed concerning yourselves.

I shall therefore conclude the whole with an indubitable maxim, which it becomes all Christians constantly to retain. It is this: on *uncertain* foundation is an *unsafe* foundation. However these Christians are of the number of the elect, redeemed and adopted; however they may, or ought to be esteemed such, by themselves or others, agreeable to their profession, practice, or experience; and however it be their duty to be thankful for any experiences or comforts which they have felt, all which is readily allowed; yet there is no *absolute* certainty to be gathered upon this plan, by reason of the deceitfulness of the heart. From whence it is plain, that God never intended his people should take their rest herein, but that they should, in the midst of all their hopes and fears about their personal interest, be led, driven, and kept to that hope and refuge that is in itself safe and sure. Nothing is more necessary than this, nor is there anything that we are naturally more averse to. Some make the world their portion, others make crim-

inal indulgences their delight, and many make their own righteousness, in some shape or other, their confidence; and shall I add, that some are for placing it upon their experiences, and upon what they call the work of the Spirit in their hearts, and upon anything, rather than on the freeness of gospel grace, which the work of the Spirit is designed to lead us to.

But if we are led and taught by the Holy Spirit to rest directly upon Christ *alone*, then we have the anchor of our souls both sure and steadfast; then the superstructure of gospel experience and obedience, built upon this foundation, will be good and solid, receiving all its solidity and firmness from its immediate connection with the foundation whereon it was built.\* Neither can we attain to any steady hope concerning our own interest, but in working upon this plan, and resting upon this prop. If a person looks upon the hope held forth in the gospel, to be only an uncertain, conditional hope, apprehending he may not securely rest upon it, unless through the consciousness of something previously wrought in him, or done by him; he is of course induced to seek after or look to something in himself, for the reason or immediate ground of his confidence before God; and while this sentiment prevails in his heart, every duty he performs is legalised, and every experience he may have felt is perverted, by being placed exactly in the room of a revealed Christ. But if, on the contrary, the person sees that God's love in Christ, as revealed in the free gospel, points directly towards him for his only foundation, then the more he is apprehensive of his own guilt and danger, the more he is obliged to trust in Christ, and constrained to love him; and so the gospel hope becomes a spur to all cheerful obedience. The believer then does not take his comfort *from* his obedience; but taking it immediately from Christ, he enjoys comfort *in* the exercise of love and obedience. For every exercise of evangelical love, and every act of gospel obedience, has some comfort attending it;

\* "I would have you close with Christ in the promise without making any question whether you are in Christ or no; for there is an assurance which ariseth from the exercise of faith by a direct act; and that is when a man by faith directly lays hold upon Christ and concludes assurance therefrom.—*Marrow of Modern Divinity*. Ch. 3. Sect. 13.

given in his word and promise, and not on anything of Him to be given here, but what we are to receive in heaven. The conclusion was this, my grace is sufficient, when I am weak then am I strong; and here is rest and life."