

lute worthlessness and guilt, may be pronounced the most difficult thing in the world. It is not easy to come to such a state. The spirit of God can alone produce it. But this spirit of complete humility, this entire renunciation of self, this absence of all self-righteousness, this consciousness of our own guilt, is absolutely, must be, in the very nature of things, necessary, before we can come to Christ, and seek to enter Heaven by Him alone. It is thus a strait gate.—At the very moment when we seem to be renouncing all self-righteousness, we may be cherishing it. There is no delusion to which man is so prone as to think he is something, when he is nothing: there is nothing of which he is so incapable as to feel his nothingness. It requires a spiritual perception of God's law, which we do not naturally possess, a spiritual apprehension of sin, which is as foreign to us. We come to Christ, then, in spite of ourselves, and until the spirit of God renews us, with all our own righteousness about us; and no wonder that the gate is strait, too strait to admit us. It might admit us stripped of our own righteousness, but it cannot admit us with all our own righteousness still cleaving to us. And if such be the fact even with reference to those who are at least willing to *acknowledge* their own unrighteousness, and who may so far feel it, what must it be with those who make no disguise of justifying themselves, and who would part with life sooner than they would part with their claim to righteousness? There are many who cherish a proud and boastful confidence in their own merit, and this too before God, and even while they may be conscious of their many imperfections. Such are the contradictions of human nature. They think that their virtues, at least, outweigh their deficiencies, and that upon the whole they have reason to justify themselves, and to expect to be justified before God. If a debtor and creditor side were struck, the creditor would preponderate: they would deserve rather than be owing. There is no end to the ramifications of the self-righteous spirit. Proteus-like, it takes a thousand shapes—altho' these may be modifications of more generic forms. Man is "of contradictions infinite the sum":—but the grand contradiction is to think himself something, when he is nothing. With many, some splendid benefactions are laid against a life of sin. This, we all know, is Rome's grand engine, which she wields for her own

purposes. She knows how to turn it to account, to aggrandize herself, and deceive souls. With others a few good deeds, that stand out from the common herd, are thought to be enough, if there be no flagrant violation of God's law.—With others again the external act is supposed to betoken the internal spirit, and if there be *at least an external conformity to the law of God, it is imagined all is right, while the heart may not once think of God, or cherish towards him one truly pious sentiment.* To all such, the gate to heaven is strait, is narrow. All self-righteousness must be laid down there, otherwise there is no admission. It is impossible that we can go through with our righteousness upon us. What would admit us naked of merit, will not admit us covered with our own fancied perfection. It is these which render the gate strait. We would carry these with us. We cannot regard these as nothing. Let us but renounce these, and the gate is wide enough, but with these we can never enter. Christ has made the door no wider than his own righteousness, and that is wide as infinity; and therefore any other righteousness, any qualifications, any virtues, of our own, stop up the entrance. The law saith: "The man that doeth those things shall live by them." But if we do them not, then no other righteousness than that of Jesus Christ can avail us.

But if we would enter this gate we must renounce our sins. It is impossible to trust in Christ's righteousness and yet cherish sin. Why, the coming to Christ, or the trusting in Christ, is for what?—that we may be saved from our sins. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins." Not *with* their sins, but *from* their sins.—Whosoever comes to Christ comes with all his sins upon him—he can come in no other way,—but he lays them down at Christ's feet: he renounces them at the foot of the cross. At the same time that by faith he lays their guilt there, he lays the sins themselves there. The grave of the guilt of sin is the grave of sin itself. They are both entombed with Christ.—They are left in his sepulchre. When the sinner comes to this gate, he finds that he cannot pass with his sins: it is strait—and his sins must be laid aside. They must be left without before the sinner can get through. Hence, then, another very obvious reason why at once the gate is strait, and why so many are unable to enter. They would enter