

due homage to the truth, is *sin*. However common and fashionable this spurious candor may be among men, it is an abomination to God, whose truth it, in fact, denies. For those who believe not, we are required to feel the tenderest pity; for them we are to use our best efforts, to offer up our most fervent prayers. Perhaps the passage which will best explain our duty in this respect, is found in the epistle to Timothy;—"The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." Now this passage, so far from warranting indifference to the truth, represents the truth as a matter of the greatest importance; the very end of our instructions is here stated to be that such persons may be brought to *repentance and acknowledging the truth*; and it is only as they repent and acknowledge the truth, which they before denied, that they can be recovered out of the snare of the devil, and brought to true repentance. That is a false love, a fictitious tenderness, which represents error as not dangerous; and which declares that it matters not what we believe, though God declares that he that believeth not the gospel,—the pure unmutated gospel,—shall be damned. Let us not hide the truth, which we are called by God as a church to exhibit. It is not for the support of light and unimportant truths, that the church is called "the pillar and ground of the truth;" and that the truth is of importance; it is essential to salvation; and men should see in our whole manner that we consider the truth as nothing less than a matter of life and death.

3. *The neglecters of the gospel*, as well as its rejecters and corrupters, are guilty of unbelief, though in a more mitigated form, I grant. These hold the truth, but they hold it in unrighteousness; like a man who holds a torch, only to convince those who behold him that the person who bears it is going sadly out of the way. Our Lord condemns all such; and it is evident they deserve condemnation, because no salutary effects are produced by their profession of faith. Such persons are unbelievers, and it is necessary that the truth should be told them. Faith works by love: the faith of God's elect is not a mere opinion; it implies a belief of the excellency, the suitableness, the efficacy of the gospel; such a conviction of this as will lead men to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as the chief subject, the substance of the gospel; such a conviction as leads to the use of Christ for the ends for which God has given him, namely, for "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

Now, if such persons are not believers at all, how awfully prevalent is the sin of unbelief! Among those who call our Savior

Lord, and who, generally speaking, receive his truth, how many are there who do not believe with the heart unto righteousness! They have no clear view of their need of Christ as a Savior; no decided reliance upon him; no clear application of his merits and atonement. They hear and read of Christ: they join in hymns to his praise; they approach him with their lips;—but there is no affectionate trust of the heart. These, then, are unbelievers: God the Judge will not admit that this faith is saving; it is dead faith, and cannot save them.

4. *Even in those who are perfectly renewed by grace*, there are the secret workings of this principle. Though it is in a form more mild, it is yet to be discovered; and, in proportion as it exists, it mars the progress of the work of grace in their souls. I may instance a case or two.

There is *the penitent sinner*, who is seeking, but has not yet found, the pardon of his sins. In such persons there is to be perceived some good thing toward the God of Israel; and much that, if followed up, will lead to good. They are not far from the kingdom of God: they have some knowledge, and some faith. Now, to such, God's word holds out the most gracious promises;—"Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." And yet, in many cases, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, the effect of all these kind promises and gracious invitations is baffled by a secret something, which refuses to be comforted when God would comfort; which puts away the mercy which God waits to bestow; which still exclaims, "The mercy of the Lord is clean gone for ever! he will be merciful to others, but not to me! Now, what is this secret something, which keeps the man who is convinced of sin, and who wishes for pardon, and who knows that without it he shall be ruined for ever?—what is it, I say, which keeps him out of the possession of pardoning mercy?—what is it? Satan calls it *humility* and diffidence; and he keeps you out of the blessing, by telling you it is not proper for one so sinful and so worthless to lay hold on the blessings of salvation, and that you are only acting the part of a humble man to keep aloof from these blessings. This Satan tells you: but he is a liar and the father of lies. O listen not to that arch fiend, when he pretends to preach humility! No: the real name of the principle that keeps you back is *pride*, and not humility. Real humility will not lead to unbelief; it will rather lead men to cry for mercy, and cause them to flee to the only refuge that is set before them.

And even those who believe, but are not yet made perfect in love, are under the influence of unbelief in part. As unbelief prevents the sinner from entering into God's family; so unbelief, in one who is a child,