

# Trusting in Christ

## The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification – Direction 11

*Direction 11:* Endeavour diligently to perform the great work of believing on Christ in a right manner, without any delay; and then also continue and increase in your most holy faith, that so your enjoyment of Christ, union and fellowship with Him, and all holiness by Him, may be begun, continued and increased in you.

*Thesis:* Believe on Christ and grow in your faith.

### **I. Believe on Christ**

- A. Make it your diligent endeavor to perform the great work of believing on Christ.
- B. Believing on Christ is a work that will require diligent endeavor and labor for the performance of it.
- C. Though we cannot possibly perform this great work in a right manner, until the Spirit of God work faith in our hearts by His mighty power, yet it is necessary that we should endeavor it; and that before we can find the Spirit of God working faith effectually in us, or giving strength to believe.
- D. Though the Spirit works saving faith only in the elect, and others do not believe because they are not of Christ's sheep (John 10:26), and on that account it is called the faith of God's elect (Titus 1:1); yet all that hear the gospel are obliged to the duty of believing, as well as to all the duties of the moral law, and that before they know their own particular election, and they are liable to condemnation for unbelief, as well as for any other sin: 'He that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God' (John 3:18). The apostle Paul shows that the elect Israelites obtained salvation, and the rest that were not elected were blinded; and yet even these were broken off from the good olive tree, because of their unbelief (Rom. 11:7, 20).

### **II. Believe on Christ the right way.**

- A. You must believe with a full persuasion that you are a child of wrath by nature, as well as others, fallen from God by the sin of the first Adam; dead in trespasses and sins, subject to the curse of the law of God, and to the power of Satan, and to insupportable misery to all eternity; and that you cannot possibly procure your reconciliation with God, or any spiritual life and strength to do any good work, by any endeavoring to get salvation according to the terms of the legal covenant; and that you cannot find any way to escape out of this sinful and miserable condition by your own reason and understanding, without supernatural revelation, nor be freed from it, except by that infinite power that raises the dead.
- B. You are to believe assuredly that there is no way to be saved without receiving all the saving benefits of Christ: His Spirit as well as His merits, sanctification as well as remission of sins, by faith.
- C. You are to be fully persuaded of the all-sufficiency of Christ for the salvation of yourself, and of all that believe on Him; that His blood cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). Though our sins be never so great and horrible, and continued in ever so long, yet He is able to deliver from the body of death, and mortify our corruptions, be they never so strong.
- D. You are to be fully persuaded of the truth of the general free promise, in your own particular case, that if you believe on Christ sincerely, you shall have everlasting life, as

well as any other in the world, without performing any condition of works to procure an interest in Christ, for the promise is universal: 'Whoever believes on Him, shall not be ashamed' (Rom. 9:33), without exception.

- E. You are to believe assuredly that it is the will of God you should believe in Christ, and have eternal life by Him, as well as any other; and that your believing is a duty very acceptable to God; and that He will help you, as well as any other, in this work, because He calls and commands you by the gospel to believe in Christ.
- F. Add to all these a full persuasion of the incomparable glorious excellency of Christ, and of the way of salvation by Him.

### **III. Believe on Christ without delay.**

- A. Until we have performed it, we continue under the power of sin and Satan and under the wrath of God, and there is nothing between hell and us besides the breath of our nostrils.
- B. When Satan cannot prevail with people to reject wholly the duty of believing, his next attempt for the rum of their souls is to prevail with them at least to delay and shift off the performance of it, from time to time, by several false reasonings and imaginations which he puts into their minds.
- C. Others imagine that, after they have heard the gospel of salvation by Christ, they may lawfully defer the believing it until they have sufficiently examined the truth of some other different doctrine, or until God be pleased to afford them some other means to assure them fully of the truth of the gospel. Thus they that are called 'seekers' misspend the day of grace, 'ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth' (2 Tim. 3:7).
- D. Another sort of people there are that delay the great work of believing, to the rum of their souls, resting in an attendance upon the outward means of grace and salvation, instead of any endeavors to receive Christ by faith, though they be convinced of the truth of the gospel.
  - 1. What is it that these deluded ones wait for, before they perform the duty of believing? Is it for more knowledge of the gospel? The way to increase your knowledge, as well as any other talent, is to make use of what you have received already.
  - 2. Do you wait for any manifestations or flowings in of God's saving love to your soul? Then the way to obtain it is to believe that the 'God of hope may fill you with all joy and peace in believing' (Rom. 15:13).
  - 3. Do you wait for any qualifications to prepare you for the work of believing? If they be good and holy qualifications, you cannot have them before faith, but they are rather included in the nature of faith, or they are fruits of it - as has been largely proved.

### **IV. Continue in and increase your faith.**

- A. And that we may, we must not think that, when we have once attained to the grace of saving faith, and thereby are begotten anew in Christ, our names are up in heaven, and therefore we may be careless, but, as long as we continue in this life, we must endeavor to continue in the faith, grounded and settled, not moved away from the hope of the gospel (Col. 1: 23);

1. [We must] ‘hold the beginning of our confidence, and rejoicing of hope steadfast unto the end’ (Heb. 3:6, 14); and to ‘build up ourselves in our most holy faith’ (Jude 20), ‘abounding therein with thanksgiving’ (Col. 2:7).
  2. Though we receive Christ freely by faith, yet we are but ‘babes in Christ’ (1 Cor. 3:1).
  3. And we must not account that we have ‘already attained, or are already perfect’ (Phil. 3:12, 13); but we must strive to be more rooted and built up in Him, until ‘we come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the state of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph. 4:13).
- B. If the new nature be really in us by regeneration, it will have an appetite to its own continuance and increase until it come to perfection, as the new-born babe (1 Peter 2:2).
1. And we are not only to receive Christ and a new holy nature by faith, but also to live and walk by it, and to ‘resist the devil’, and to ‘quench all his fiery darts’ by it; and also to ‘grow in grace’, and to ‘perfect holiness in the fear of God’; for we ‘are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation’ (1 Peter 1:5).
  2. As all our Christian warfare is the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12), all spiritual life and holiness continue, grow or decay in us, according as faith continues, grows or decays in us, but when this faith begins to sink by fears and doubtings, the man himself begins to sink together with it (Matt. 14: 29-31).
  3. Faith is like the hand of Moses; while it is held up, Israel prevails; when it is let down, Amalek prevails (Exod. 17:11).
  4. This continuance and growth in faith will require our labour and industry as well as the beginning, though we are to ascribe the glory of all to the grace of God in Christ, who is the finisher, as well as the author of it (Heb. 12:2).
- C. Beware also of trusting on faith itself, as a work of righteousness, instead of trusting on Christ by faith.
- D. If you do not find that your believing in such a right manner as I have described does produce such fruits of holiness as you desire, you ought not to diminish, but rather to increase your confidence in Christ, knowing that the weakness of your faith hinders its fruitfulness.
- E. The greater your confidence is concerning the love of God to you in Christ, the greater will be your love to God and to His service.
- F. If you fall into any gross sin, after the work is begun in you, as David and Peter did, think not that you must cast away your confidence and expect nothing but wrath from God and Christ, and that you must refuse to be comforted by the grace of Christ, at least for some time; for thus you would be the more weak, and prone to fall into other sins; but rather strive to believe more confidently that you have ‘an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous’, and that ‘He is the propitiation for our sins’ (1 John 2:1, 2).
- G. Let not the guilt of sin stay at all upon your conscience, but wash it away with all speed in the fountain of Christ’s blood, which is opened for us, that it may be ready for our use on all such incident occasions; that so you may be humbled for your sins in a gospel way, and may hate your own sinfulness, and be sorry for it with godly sorrow, out of love to God. Peter might have been ruined forever by denying Christ, as Judas was by betraying Him, if Peter’s faith had not been upheld by the prayer of Christ (Luke 22: 31, 32).

