

CHAPTER 14.

The general use of the foregoing directions — The great direction for the accomplishment of the work aimed at: Act faith on Christ — The several ways whereby this may be done — Consideration of the fullness in Christ for relief proposed — Great expectations from Christ — Grounds of these expectations: his mercifulness, his faithfulness — Event of such expectations; on the part of Christ; on the part of believers — Faith peculiarly to be acted on the death of Christ, ^{<508>}Romans 6:3-6 — The work of the Spirit in this whole business.

NOW, the considerations which I have hitherto insisted on are rather of things *preparatory* to the work aimed at than such as will *effect* it. It is the heart's due preparation for the work itself, without which it will not be accomplished, that hitherto I have aimed at.

Directions for the work itself are very few; I mean that are peculiar to it. And they are these that follow: —

1. Set faith at work on Christ for the *killing* of thy sin. His blood is the great sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls. Live in this, and thou wilt die a conqueror; yea, thou wilt, through the good providence of God, live to see thy lust dead at thy feet.

But thou wilt say, “How shall faith act itself on Christ for this end and purpose?” I say, Sundry ways: —

(1.) By faith fill thy soul with a due consideration of that *provision* which is laid up in Jesus Christ for this end and purpose, that all thy lusts, this very lust wherewith thou art entangled, may be mortified. By faith ponder on this, that though thou art no way able in or by thyself to get the conquest over thy distemper, though thou art even weary of contending, and art utterly ready to faint, yet that there is enough in Jesus Christ to yield thee relief, ^{<304B>}Philippians 4:13. It staid the prodigal, when he was (^{<2157>}Luke 15:17.) ready to faint, that yet there was bread enough in his father's house; though he was at a distance from it, yet it relieved him, and staid him, that there it was. In thy greatest distress and anguish, consider that fullness of grace, those riches, those (^{<241B>}Isaiah 40:28-31.) treasures of strength, might, and help, that are laid up in him for our support, ^{<3116>}John 1:16, ^{<301B>}Colossians 1:19. Let them come into and abide in thy mind.

Consider that he is “exalted and made a Prince and a Savior to give repentance unto Israel,” ^{<4451>}Acts 5:31; and if to give repentance, to give mortification, without which the other is not, nor can be. Christ tells us that we obtain purging grace by abiding in him, ^{<615B>}John 15:3. To act faith upon the fullness that is in Christ for our supply is an eminent way of abiding in Christ, for both our insition and abode is by faith, ^{<511D>}Romans 11:19, 20. Let, then, thy soul by faith be exercised with such thoughts and apprehensions as these: “I am a poor, weak creature; unstable as water, I cannot excel. This corruption is too hard for me, and is at the very door of ruining my soul; and what to do I know not. My soul is become as parched ground, and an habitation of dragons. I have made promises and broken them; vows and engagements have been as a thing of nought. Many persuasions have I had that I had got the victory and should be delivered, but I am deceived; so that I plainly see, that without some eminent succor and assistance, I am lost, and shall be prevailed on to an utter relinquishment of God. But yet, though this be my state and condition, let the hands that hang down be lifted up, and the feeble knees be strengthened. Behold, (^{<4116>}John 1:16; ^{<4188>}Matthew 28:18.) the Lord Christ, that hath all fullness of grace in his heart, all fullness of power in his hand, he is able to slay all these his enemies. There is sufficient provision in him for my relief and assistance. He can take my drooping, dying soul and make me more than a conqueror. (^{<4837>}Romans 8:37.)

‘Why sayest thou, O my soul, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint,’ ^{<2417>}Isaiah 40:27-31.

He can make the ‘dry, parched ground of my soul to become a pool, and my thirsty, barren heart as springs of water;’ yea, he can make this ‘habitation of dragons,’ this heart, so full of abominable lusts and fiery

temptations, to be a place for ‘grass’ and fruit to himself,” ^{<281>}Isaiah 35:7. So God staid Paul, under his temptation, with the consideration of the sufficiency of his grace: “My grace is sufficient for thee,” ^{<471>}2 Corinthians 12:9. Though he were not immediately so far made partaker of it as to be freed from his temptation, yet the sufficiency of it in God, for that end and purpose, was enough to stay his spirit. I say, then, by faith, be much in the consideration of that supply and the fullness of it that is in Jesus Christ, and how he can at any time give thee strength and deliverance. Now, if hereby thou dost not find success to a conquest, yet thou wilt be staid in the chariot, that thou shalt not fly out of the field until the battle be ended; thou wilt be kept from an utter despondency and a lying down under thy unbelief, or a turning aside to false means and remedies, that in the issue will not relieve thee. The efficacy of this consideration will be found only in the practice.

(2.) Raise up thy heart by faith to an *expectation of relief* from Christ. Relief in this case from Christ is like the prophet’s vision, ^{<318>}Habakkuk 2:3,

“It is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, yet wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

Though it may seem somewhat long to thee, whilst thou art under thy trouble and perplexity, yet it shall surely come in the appointed time of the Lord Jesus; which is the best season. If, then, thou canst raise up thy heart to a settled expectation of relief from Jesus Christ, — if thine eyes are towards him “as the eyes of a servant to the hand of his master,” (^{<933>}Psalm 123:2.) when he expects to receive somewhat from him, — thy soul shall be satisfied, he will assuredly deliver thee; he will slay the lust, and thy latter end shall be peace. Only look for it at his hand; expect when and how he will do it. (^{<210>}Isaiah 7:9.) “If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.”

But wilt thou say, “What ground have I to build such an expectation upon, so that I may expect not to be deceived?”

As thou hast necessity to put thee on this course, thou must be relieved and saved this way or none. To (^{<316>}John 6:68) whom wilt thou go? So

there are in the Lord Jesus innumerable things to encourage and engage thee to this expectation.

For the necessity of it, I have in part discovered it before, when I manifested that this is the work of faith and of believers only. “Without me,” says Christ, “ye can do nothing,” ^{<B15>}John 15:5; speaking with especial relation to the purging of the heart from sin, verse 2. Mortification of any sin must be by a supply of grace. Of ourselves we cannot do it. Now, “it hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell,” ^{<S19>}Colossians 1:19; that “of his fullness we might receive grace for grace,” ^{<B16>}John 1:16. He is the head from whence the new man must have influences of life and strength, or it will decay everyday. If (^{<S11>}Colossians 1:11.) we are “strengthened with might in the inner man,” it is by “Christ’s dwelling in our hearts by faith,” ^{<B17>}Ephesians 3:16, 17. That this work is not to be done without the Spirit I have also showed before. Whence, then, do we expect the Spirit? from whom do we look for him? who hath promised him to us, having procured him for us? Ought not all our expectations to this purpose to be on Christ alone? Let this, then, be fixed upon thy heart, that if thou hast not relief from him thou shalt never have any. All ways, endeavors, contendings, that are not animated by this expectation of relief from Christ and him only are to no purpose, will do thee no good; yea, if they are anything but supportments of thy heart in this expectation, or means appointed by himself for the receiving help from him, they are in vain.

Now, farther to engage thee to this expectation, —

(1.) Consider his *mercifulness*, tenderness, and kindness, as he is our great High Priest at the right hand of God. Assuredly he pities thee in thy distress; saith he, “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you,” ^{<B13>}Isaiah 66:13. He hath the tenderness of a mother to a sucking child. ^{<S17>}Hebrews 2:17, 18, “Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted.” How is the ability of Christ upon the account of his suffering proposed to us? “In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able.” Did the sufferings and temptations of Christ

add to his ability and power? Not, doubtless, considered absolutely and in it itself. But the ability here mentioned is such as hath readiness, proneness, willingness to put itself forth, accompanying of it; it is an ability of will against all dissuasions. He is able, having suffered and been tempted, to break through all dissuasions to the contrary, to relieve poor tempted souls: **Δύναται βοηθῆσαι**, — “He is able to help.” It is a metonymy of the effect; for, he can now be moved to help, having been so tempted. So chapter ^{<SO15>}4:15, 16:

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

The exhortation of verse 16 is the same that I am upon, — namely, that we would entertain expectations of relief from Christ, which the apostle there calls **χάριν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν**, “grace for seasonable help.” “If ever,” says the soul “help were seasonable, it would be so to me in my present condition. This is that which I long for, — grace for seasonable help. I am ready to die, to perish, to be lost forever; iniquity will prevail against me, if help come not in.” Says the apostle, “Expect this help, this relief, this grace from Christ.” Yea, but on what account? That which he lays down, verse 15. And we may observe that the word, verse 16, which we have translated to “obtain,” is **λάβωμεν. Ἰνα λάβωμεν ἔλεον**, “That we may receive it;” suitable and seasonable help will come in. I shall freely say, this one thing of establishing the soul by faith in expectation of relief from Jesus Christ, (^{<4128>}Matthew 11:28.) on the account of his mercifulness as our high priest, will be more available to the ruin of thy lust and distemper, and have a better and speedier issue, than all the rigidest means of self-maceration that ever any of the sons of men engaged themselves unto. Yea, let me add, that never any soul did or shall perish by the power of any lust, sin, or corruption, who could raise his soul by faith to an expectation of relief from Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 1-3; ^{<618>}Revelation 3:18.)

(2.) Consider His *faithfulness* who hath promised; which may raise thee up and confirm thee in this waiting in an expectation of relief. He hath promised to relieve in such cases, and he will fulfill his word to the

utmost. God tells us that his covenant with us is like the “ordinances” of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, which have their certain courses, ^{<2813>}Jeremiah 31:36. Thence David said that he watched for relief from God “as one watched for the morning,” (^{<3106>}Psalm 130:6.) — a thing that will certainly come in its appointed season. So will be thy relief from Christ. It will come in its season, as the dew and rain upon the parched ground; for faithful is he who hath promised. Particular promises to this purpose are innumerable; with some of them, that seem peculiarly to suit his condition, let the soul be always furnished.

Now, there are two eminent advantages which always attend this expectation of succor from Jesus Christ: —

[1.] It engages him to a full and speedy assistance. Nothing doth more engage the heart of a man to be useful and helpful to another than his expectation of help from him, if justly raised and countenanced by him who is to give the relief. Our Lord Jesus hath raised our hearts, by his kindness, care, and promises, to this expectation; certainly our rising up unto it must needs be a great engagement upon him to assist us accordingly. This the Psalmist gives us as an approved maxim, “Thou, LORD, never forsakest them that put their trust in thee.” When the heart is once won to rest in God, to repose himself on him, he will assuredly satisfy it. He will never be as water that fails; nor hath he said at any time to the seed of Jacob, “Seek ye my face in vain.” If Christ be chosen for the foundation of our supply, he will not fail us.

[2.] It engages the heart to attend diligently to all the ways and means whereby Christ is wont to communicate himself to the soul; and so takes in the real assistance of all graces and ordinances whatever. He that expects anything from a man, applies himself to the ways and means whereby it may be obtained. The beggar that expects an alms lies at his door or in his way from whom he doth expect it. The way whereby and the means wherein Christ communicates himself is, and are, his ordinances ordinarily; he that expects anything from him must attend upon him therein. It is the expectation of faith that sets the heart on work. It is not an idle, groundless hope that I speak of. If now there be any vigor, efficacy, and power in prayer or sacrament to this end of mortifying sin, a man will assuredly be interested in it all by this expectation of relief from Christ.

On this account I reduce all particular actings, by prayer, meditation, and the like, to this head; and so shall not farther insist on them, when they are grounded on this bottom and spring from this root. They are of singular use to this purpose, and not else.

Now, on this direction for the mortification of a prevailing distemper you may have a thousand “*probatum est*’s.” Who have walked with God under this temptation, and have not found the use and success of it? I dare leave the soul under it, without adding any more. Only some particulars relating thereunto may be mentioned: —

First, Act faith *peculiarly upon the death*, blood, and cross of Christ; that is, on Christ as crucified and slain. Mortification of sin is peculiarly from the death of Christ. It is one peculiar, yea, eminent end of the death of Christ, which shall assuredly be accomplished by it. He died to destroy the works of the devil. Whatever came upon our natures by his first temptation, whatever receives strength in our persons by his daily suggestions, Christ died to destroy it all.

“He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,”
Titus 2:14.

This was his aim and intendment (wherein he will not fail) in his giving himself for us. That we might be freed from the power of our sins, and purified from all our defiling lusts, was his design.

“He gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish,”
Ephesians 5:25-27.

And this, by virtue of his death, in various and several degrees, shall be accomplished. Hence our washing, purging, and cleansing is everywhere ascribed to his blood, 1 John 1:7; Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 1:5. That being sprinkled on us, “purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God,” Hebrews 9:14. This is that we aim at, this we are in pursuit of, — that our consciences may be purged from dead works, that they may be rooted out, destroyed, and have place in us no more. This shall certainly be brought about by the death of Christ; there will

virtue go out from thence to this purpose. Indeed, all supplies of the Spirit, all communications of grace and power, are from hence; as I have elsewhere ^{f6} showed. Thus the apostle states it; ~~and~~ Romans 6:2, is the case proposed that we have in hand: “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” — “Dead to sin by profession; dead to sin by obligation to be so; dead to sin by participation of virtue and power for the killing of it; dead to sin by union and interest in Christ, in and by whom it is killed: how shall we live therein?” This he presses by sundry considerations, all taken from the death of Christ, in the ensuing verses. This must not be: verse 3, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” We have in baptism an evidence of our implantation into Christ; we are baptized into him: but what of him are we baptized into an interest in? “His death,” saith he. If indeed we are baptized into Christ, and beyond outward profession, we are baptized into his death. The explication of this, of one being baptized into the death of Christ, the apostle gives us, verses 4, 6: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” “This is,” saith he, “our being baptized into the death of Christ, namely, our conformity thereunto; to be dead unto sin, to have our corruptions mortified, as he was put to death for sin: so that as he was raised up to glory, we may be raised up to grace and newness of life.” He tells us whence it is that we have this baptism into the death of Christ, verse 6; and this is from the death of Christ itself: “Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed;” **συνεσταυρώθη**, “is crucified with him,” not in respect of time, but causality. We are crucified with him *meritoriously*, in that he procured the Spirit for us to mortify sin; *efficiently*, in that from his death virtue comes forth for our crucifying; in the way of a *representation* and *exemplar* we shall assuredly be crucified unto sin, as he was for our sin. This is that the apostle intends: Christ by his death destroying the works of the devil, procuring the Spirit for us, hath so killed sin, as to its reign in believers, that it shall not obtain its end and dominion.

Secondly, Then act faith on the death of Christ, and that under these two notions, — first, In expectation of *power*; secondly, In endeavors for *conformity*. (^{PHI}Philippians 3:10; ^{COL}Colossians 3:3; ^{PET}1 Peter 1:18, 19.) For the first, the direction given in general may suffice; as to the latter, that of the apostle may give us some light into our direction, ^{GAL}Galatians 3:1. Let faith look on Christ in the gospel as he is set forth dying and crucified for us. Look on him under the weight (^{1COR}1 Corinthians 15:3; ^{PET}1 Peter 1:18, 19, 5:1, 2; ^{COL}Colossians 1:13, 14.) of our sins, praying, bleeding, dying; bring him in that condition into thy heart by faith; apply his blood so shed to thy corruptions: do this daily. I might draw out this consideration to a great length, in sundry particulars, but I must come to a close.

2. I have only, then, to add the heads of the work of the Spirit in this business of mortification, which is so peculiarly ascribed to him.

In one word: This whole work, which I have described as our duty, is effected, carried on, and accomplished by the power of the Spirit, in all the parts and degrees of it; as, —

(1.) He alone *clearly and fully convinces* the heart of the evil and guilt and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin to be mortified. Without this conviction, or whilst it is so faint that the heart can wrestle with it or digest it, there will be no thorough work made. An unbelieving heart (as in part we have all such) will shift with any consideration, until it be overpowered by clear and evident convictions. Now this is the proper work of the Spirit: “He convinces of sin,” ^{JOH}John 16:8; he alone can do it. If men’s rational considerations, with the preaching of the letter, were able to convince them of sin, we should, it may be, see more convictions than we do. There comes by the preaching of the word an apprehension upon the understandings of men that they are sinners, that such and such things are sins, that themselves are guilty of them; but this light is not powerful, nor doth it lay hold on the practical principles of the soul, so as to conform the mind and will unto them, to produce effects suitable to such an apprehension. And therefore it is that wise and knowing men, destitute of the Spirit, do not think those things to be sins at all wherein the chief movings and actings of lust do consist. It is the Spirit alone that can do, that doth, this work to the purpose. And this is the first thing that the

Spirit doth in order to the mortification of any lust whatever, — it convinces the soul of all the evil of it, cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its pretences, makes the soul own its abomination, and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this be done all that follows is in vain.

(2.) The Spirit alone reveals unto us *the fullness of Christ* for our relief; which is the consideration that stays the heart from false ways and from despairing despondency, ^{<408>}1 Corinthians 2:8.

(3.) The Spirit alone *establishes* the heart in expectation of relief from Christ; which is the great sovereign means of mortification, as hath been discovered, ^{<402>}2 Corinthians 1:21.

(4.) The Spirit alone brings the *cross* of Christ into our hearts with its sin-killing power; for by the Spirit are we baptized into the death of Christ.

(5.) The Spirit is the author and finisher of our *sanctification*; gives new supplies and influences of grace for holiness and sanctification, when the contrary principle is weakened and abated, ^{<406>}Ephesians 3:16-18.

In all the soul's addresses to God in this condition, it hath *supportment* from the Spirit. Whence is the power, life, and vigor of prayer? whence its efficacy to prevail with God? Is it not from the Spirit? He is the "Spirit of supplications" promised to them "who look on him whom they have pierced," ^{<320>}Zechariah 12:10, enabling them "to pray with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered," ^{<312>}Romans 8:26. This is confessed to be the great medium or way of faith's prevailing with God. Thus Paul dealt with his temptation, whatever it were: "I besought the Lord that it might depart from me." (^{<418>}2 Corinthians 12:8.) What is the work of the Spirit in prayer, whence and how it gives us in assistance and makes us to prevail, what we are to do that we may enjoy his help for that purpose, is not my present intendment to demonstrate.