

ABS. 1. 80. 252 (1-10)



9.

THE
CLOSET COMPANION;

OR
A HELP TO SERIOUS PERSONS,

IN THE
THE
Important Duty of SELF-EXAMINATION.

- To be kept in the Christian's usual Place of Retirement, in order to *remind* him of, as well as to *assist* him in that important Work.

Psaln lvi. 4. *Commune with your own heart.*

I John iii. 21. *Behold, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*

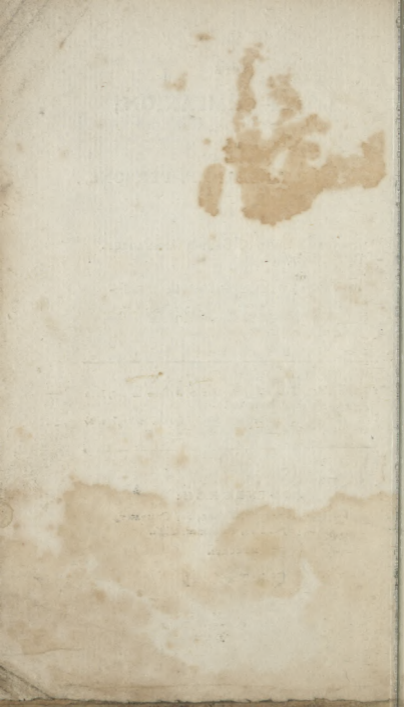
Rom. viii. 16. *For the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.*

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DIRECTIONS

FOR

SELF-EXAMINATION.

I.

MAKE conscience of performing this duty. The necessity of it will appear, if you consider. God has repeatedly commanded it. The people of God have always practised it. There is a great danger of being deceived; for every grace in the Christian has its counterfeit in the hypocrite. Many professors have been deceived, by neglecting it, and are ruined for ever. Your comfort and holiness depend, in a great measure, upon knowing your real state.

II. *Be very serious in the performance of it.* Set your heart to the solemn work, as in the presence of the Searcher of Hearts; who will judge the secrets of all men, in the great day. Heaven and hell are no trifles. The question before you is no less than this,—am I a child of wrath, or a child of God? If I should

die when I have done reading this, where would this precious soul of mine be for ever, for ever, for ever?

III. *Be impartial*, or you loose your labour; nay, you confirm your mistakes. On the one hand, resolve to know the worst of yourself, the very worst. Some are afraid to know the worst, lest they should fall into despair; and this fear makes them partial. Suppose the worst, and that, after serious examination, it should appear, that you have neither faith nor holiness, yet remember, your case is not desperate. The door of mercy is ever open to the returning sinner. It remains a blessed truth, that *whoever cometh to Christ shall in no wise be cast out*, John vi. 37.—On the other hand, be willing to know the *best* of yourself as well as the *worst*. Do not suppose that humility requires you to overlook your graces, and notice only your corruptions.

IV. Judge of your graces by their *nature* rather than their *degree*. You are to try to inherit graces by the *touchstone*, not by the *measure*. The greatest degree is to be desired and aimed at, but the smallest degree is matter of praise and rejoicing. Don't conclude there is no grace, because there is some corruption; or, that the spirit does not strive
against

against the flesh, because the flesh strives against the spirit.

V. Let not the issue of this trial depend at all upon your knowledge of the exact time of your conversion, or the particular minister or sermon first instrumental in it. Some, yea many, are wrought upon by slow and insensible degrees. Grace increases like the day-light. No man doubts whether the sun shines at noon because he did not see the day break.

VI. Take this caution, lest you stumble at the threshold. Think not that you must begin this work with doubting whether God will extend mercy to you, and save you; and that you must leave this a question wholly under debate, till you have found out how to resolve it, by self-examination. This is a common and pernicious error, laying the very foundation of this work in the great sin of unbelief. The question before you is not, will God accept and save me, though a vile sinner, if I believe in Christ? but you are to enquire, *am I now, at this time, in an accepted state?* The former question is already resolved by God himself, who cannot lie. His word positively declares, that every coming sinner shall be accepted and saved. This being determined, it is not to
 .be

be questioned. But you are to try, whether you are now in a state of grace?

VII. Take care that you do not *trust* on your self-examination, rather than on Christ. There is a proneness in our natures to put duties in the place of Christ.

VIII. Be not content merely to read over the following questions, but stop and dwell on each; nor suffer yourself to proceed to another, till you have put the first home to your conscience, and have got an honest answer to it.

IX. Examine yourself *frequently*; at least once a week. The Lords-day evening is a most suitable season. The oftener you perform this work, the easier it will become. If you do not obtain satisfaction at first, you may, by repeated endeavours; and a scriptural, solid hope, will amply repay your utmost labour.

N. B. The above directions are taken, in part, from that excellent book, Marshal on Sanctification.

Q U E S T I O N S,

With Respect to *Faith*, and the *Fruits of Faith*.

I.

DO I believe in the Son of God? Surely this is an important question. My Bible assures me, that *He that believeth shall be saved*. Do I then believe? and here let me carefully distinguish between faith, and its fruits. *What is faith?* The simple meaning of faith, is believing; and believing, always refers to something spoken or written. Divine faith is the belief of a divine testimony, as *John* speaks, *He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that GOD IS TRUE*, *John* iii. 33. And on the contrary, the apostle *John* says, *He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, and this life, is in his Son*, 1 *John* v. 10, 11. I must first believe the truth of God, as revealed in his word, I must credit his report, and believe his testimony concerning Christ; and then, *receive*, and *trust upon Christ*, so revealed, for my own personal salvation. But, to be more particular,

I. Do

1. Do I really believe that I am a fallen creature—that I derived from *Adam* a nature wholly corrupt, depraved, and sinful—and that I am a child of wrath, by nature, even as others?—Have I ever considered the unspotted and infinite purity and holiness of God's nature, and that he abhors, detests and hates sin, wherever he sees it?—Have I considered that his law, contained in the ten commandments, is a copy and transcript of that holy nature; and by comparing myself with that eternal rule of right and wrong, have I been led to see my horrible wickedness and vileness. —O what multitudes of sins have I committed, in thought, word, and deed!—am I really sick of sin, sorry for sin, and do I abhor myself as a vile sinner?

2. Have I duly considered what my sins have deserved?—Do I sincerely think, that if God were to send *me* to hell, because I am a *sinner*, he would do justly?

3. Do I see my utter *helplessness*, as well as my sin and misery?—Am I perfectly assured, that I cannot by any works, duties, or sufferings of my own, in the least help myself; but that, if ever I am saved, it must be the effect of free mercy?

4. Are

4. Are the eyes of my understanding enlightened, to know Christ?—What do I think of Christ? Who is he?—Do I believe that he is *God manifest in the flesh*; uniting in his *one* person the human and divine natures; *man*; that he might suffer; and *God* that he might redeem?—Do I know *why* he suffered; that it was to make satisfaction to divine justice, for the injury done to God's law and government by man's sin?—Do I believe that *the father is well pleased for his righteousness sake*; and that he has magnified the law, both by his obedience and sufferings, and made it honourable?—Do I therefore look upon Christ, as the only way to the Father; as the only FOUNDATION to build on, the only FOUNTAIN to wash in?—Am I persuaded of his ability to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him?

5. Am I satisfied from God's own word and promise, that whoever, let them be ever so vile and wicked, coming to Christ by faith, shall be saved? the promise being without exception, *Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed.*

6. Am I led and assisted by the spirit of God to believe this general promise in *my own particular case*? As God has made no exceptions, why should I except myself?—True, no tongue

can tell how vile I have been ; only God knows the greatness of my sins, and the wickedness of my heart ! But shall I then *despair*, and so add, to my other sins, the *worst* and *greatest* sin of all, UNBELIEF ? God forbid ! *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of my acceptation, that Christ came to save the chief of sinners.* Do I then, sensible of my sin, misery, and helplessness, look upon Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, and commit my precious, immortal soul to him, relying upon him only, and endeavouring to rely on him *confidently* for eternal salvation ? if so, surely I am a believer, and shall receive the end of my faith, the salvation of my soul.

HAVING thus examined my faith, let me proceed impartially to examine the FRUITS AND EFFECTS OF MY FAITH ? Many pretend to faith, whose works give the lie to their pretensions ; let me, therefore, *show my faith by works*, James ii. 18.

II. Quest. WHAT ARE THE FRUITS OF MY FAITH ? Does it produce those effects which the word of God points out as the proof and evidence of its sincerity, with respect to my *conscience, my heart, and my life* ?

I. *What*

1. *What are the effects of my faith, as to my conscience?* The Scripture says, *we have believed, and do enter into rest*, Heb. iv. 3. Do I rest from my former legal *attempts*, to justify myself; going about to establish my own righteousness? Am I satisfied with Christ's righteousness, as a complete title to glory?—I read of *peace in believing*: have I peace in my conscience? Being justified by faith, have I *peace with God*?—When my soul is alarmed with the remembrance of former sins, or those lately committed, how do I obtain peace? Is it by forgetting them as soon as I can, and then fancying that God has forgotten them too.—It is by resolving to do so no more, and so making future obedience atone for past offences?—Is it by performing religious duties, and so making amends?—or, is it, by a fresh application to the pardoning, peace-speaking blood of Christ?—When my sins stare me in the face, and my duties themselves appear sins, whence, O my soul, proceeds thy comfort?—*Is it the blood of Christ, my sacrifice, that purges my conscience from dead works?*—Does faith, in the atonement of his death, free me from the dreadful apprehensions of condemnation and wrath, due to sin?—Do I, or do I not, believe that *God is reconciled*, through the death of

his son, and therefore look up to him with freedom and delight? If I have not this peace, why is it? What hinders? Either I do not clearly understand the nature of the gospel, or I do not fully believe it; for it provides for every possible case. If I have this, blessed be God for it! Lord help me to keep it, that it may keep me! Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

II. *I should try, what are the effects of my faith, as to my HEART, and its affections.*

(1.) *Do I love God, God the father?—Do I think of him, and go to him as a loving father, in Christ? Have I the spirit of adoption, so that I cry, abba father?—Do I love him as the father of mercies, the God of hope, the God of peace, the God of love?*

(2.) *Do I love Christ?—To those who believe he is precious. Is he precious to me?—Do I see infinite beauty in his person? Is he the chief among ten thousand to me, and altogether lovely?—Do I admire the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of his love?—Is it the language of my very soul, none but Christ, none but Christ?—Is it my grief and shame, that I love him no more?*

(3.) *Do I love the Holy Spirit? (Rom. xv. 30.)*
do I honour him, as the great author of light,
life,

life, grace, and comfort? Do I maintain a deep sense of my dependance on his divine agency, in all my religious performances? Do I desire my heart to be his temple?—Am I cautious lest I quench his holy motions, or grieve him by my sins?—Am I sensible, that without his influences I cannot pray, hear, read, communicate, nor examine myself as I ought?

(4.) *Do I love God's law?*—Do I delight in the law of the Lord, after the inward man, not wishing it less strict and holy, but loving it because it is holy?—Am I as willing to take Christ for my king to rule over me as for my priest to atone for me?—Do I hunger and thirst after righteousness?—Do I pant, and long, and pray to be holy?—Do I wish to be holy, as I wish to be happy? Do I hate all sin, especially that sin which most easily besets me, and labour daily to mortify it, and to deny myself? Do I sigh for complete deliverance from remaining corruption, and rejoice in the hope of it, through a holy Jesus? Do I long for heaven, that there I may be satisfied with his likenesses?

(5.) *Do I love God's people?*—Can I say to Christ, as *Ruth to Naomi, thy people shall be my people?*—Do I love them, because they love Christ, and bear his image?—Do I feel an
 union

union of spirit with them, though they may not be of my party, or think exactly as I do?—Can I say, *I know that I have passed from death to life, because I love the brethren?*

III. *What are the effects of my faith, as to my daily WALK and CONVERSATION?*—The word of God tells me, that he who is in Christ, is a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are become new. *If ye love me, said Christ, keep my commandments.* Let me review the decalogue, and see how my love to Christ is manifested by my obedience.

(1.) Do I know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and *my* God, and do I worship and glorify him accordingly? Is he the supreme object of *my* desire and delight?—Do I trust him, hope in him, love to think of him?—Do I pray to him, do I praise him, am I careful to please him?

(2.) Do I receive, observe, and keep pure and entire all such religious worship, and ordinances, as God hath appointed in his word? How is it with me in secret prayer, in family prayer, in public prayer?—With what views do I go to hear the preached gospel; and what good do I get by it?

(3.) Do I make a holy and reverend use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word,

word, and works, avoiding the profanation or abuse of any thing whereby God makes himself known ?

(4.) Do I keep holy to God the Sabbath-day ; resting *all* that day from worldly employments, recreations, and conversation ? And do I spend *the whole time* in public and private exercises of divine worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy ? Is the Sabbath my delight ; and are the ordinances of God's house very precious to my soul ?

(5.) Do I endeavour to preserve the honour, and perform all the duties which I owe to my *superiors, inferiors, or equals* ; remembering, that true religion makes good husbands, wives, children, masters and servants ? If I am *really* holy, I am *relatively* holy.

(6.) Do I use all lawful means to preserve my own life, and the life of others ?—Do I avoid all intemperance ?—Do I resist a passionate temper ?—Do I labour to promote the welfare of men's souls ?—Do I exercise love, compassion, and succour to the poor and distressed, according to my ability ? Can I, and do I freely forgive those who have injured me, can I, and do I pray for them ; and instead of hating, do I love my very enemies ?

(7.) Do

(7.) Do I earnestly strive to preserve my own and my neighbour's chastity, in *heart*; *speech*, and *behaviour*;, avoiding all the incentives of lust, such as intemperance in food, lascivious songs, books, pictures, dancings, plays, and debauched company; remembering that my body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?

(8.) Do I use the lawful means of moderately procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of myself, and others?—Do I abhor every species of robbery and injustice?—Am I strictly and conscientiously honest in all my dealings, not over-reaching or defrauding any person, in any degree?

(9.) Do I studiously maintain and promote TRUTH, between man and man; not only abhorring perjury, but hating all falshood? And do I, as a professor of religion, avoid both ludicrous and pernicious lies, being as tender of my neighbour's character, as of my own?—Am I very *cautious* of making promises, and very *careful* to keep them?

(10.) Am I contented with the condition God has allotted me, believing that he orders all things for the best?—And do I avoid, as much as possible, envying my neighbour's happiness

pinefs, or inordinately defiring any thing that is his ?

And now, dear reader, what is the refult of your enquiry? Have you made a folemn paufe, at the clofe of every queftion, and obtained an honeft answer? And are you, notwithstanding many unallowed imperfections, able to conclude, that your faith is of God's operation; and proved fo to be, by its holy fruits of peace, love, and obedience?—Then take the comfort; and give God the glory.

But if, on the other hand, the evidence of Scripture and confcience is againft you, and you are forced to conclude, that your heart is not right with God;—then, for God's fake, and for your foul's fake, cry instantly, and mightily to him, to have mercy upon you, and change your heart; remembering, that though your cafe is awful, it is not desperate; and that ftill, you, even you, coming to Chrift, fhall in no wife be caft out.

On maintaining COMMUNION with GOD.

THE first object of solicitude to an awakened soul is *safety*. The law speaks, the sinner hears and fears: a holy God is revealed, the sinner sees and trembles; every false hope is swept away, and an earnest inquiry takes place; What shall I do to be saved? In proportion as faith is given, Jesus is discovered as the only Saviour, the question is answered; and as faith increases, fear subsides, and a comfortable hope of life and immortality grows as we grow, and strengthens with our strength. When we have thus a good hope, through grace, that heaven shall be our home, I think the next enquiry is or should be, how we may possess as much of heaven by the way as is possible: in other words, how a life of communion with our Lord and Saviour may be maintained in the greatest power, and with the least interruption, that is consistent with the present imperfect state of things.

It is plain from Scripture and experience, that all our abatements, declensions, and languors arise from a defect of faith; from the imperfect manner in which we take up the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ in

the Scriptures. If our apprehensions of him were nearly suitable to the character he bears in the word of God, if we had a strong and abiding sense of his power and grace always upon our hearts, doubts and complaints would cease: this would make hard things easy, and bitter things sweet, and dispose our hearts with cheerfulness to do and suffer the whole will of God, living upon and to him, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, joy, and supreme end; we should live a heaven upon earth. The face of the question is therefore a little changed, and amounts to this: what are the means to increase and strengthen our faith? My reason for thus changing it is, that many, who speak well of a life of faith in general, seem to understand it as if faith could be produced, or at least increased, by sudden efforts of our own power and will; whereas I apprehend that the growth of faith (no less than of all other graces of which faith is the root) is gradual, and ordinarily effected in the use of appointed means; yet of means not altogether arbitrary, but appointed by him who knows our frame, and therefore works in us in a way suited to those capacities and faculties he has endued us with.

If it arises from the knowledge of Christ, and this knowledge is only contained in the word of God, it follows, that a careful and frequent perusal of the Scriptures, which testify of him, is a fit and necessary means of improving our faith.

If, besides the outward revelation of the word, there must be a revelation of the Spirit of God likewise, whose office it is to take of the things of Jesus, and shew them to the soul, by, and according to the written word, John xvi. 14. 2 Cor. iii. 18.; and if this Spirit is *promised* and *limited* to those who ask it, then it follows likewise that secret prayer is another necessary means of strengthening faith.

Indeed these two I account the prime ordinances.—If we were (providentially and not wilfully) restrained from all the rest, the word of grace and the throne of grace would supply their want; with these we might be happy in a dungeon or in a desert; but nothing will compensate for the neglect of these.

Another means to this purpose is faithfulness to light already received, John xiv. 15. 26. It is worth observation, that faith and fidelity, the act of dependence and the purpose of obedience, are expressed in the Greek by the same word. Though the power is of God,
and

and blessing of mere grace; yet if there is any secret reserve, any allowed evil connived at in heart and life, this will shut up the avenues to comfort, and check the growth of faith. The Lord is gracious to the weakness of his people: many involuntary mistakes will not interrupt their communion with him; he pities their infirmity, and teaches them to do better. But if they dispute his known will, and act against the dictates of conscience, they will surely suffer for it; this will weaken their hands, and bring distress into their hearts: wilful sin sadly perplexes our progress; may the Lord keep us from it! It raises a dark cloud, and hides the Sun of Righteousness from our view; and till he is pleased freely to shine forth again we can do nothing, and for this perhaps he will make us wait, and cry out often, "how long, O Lord, how long!"

Thus, by reading the word of God, by frequent prayer, by a simple attention to the Lord's will, together with the use of public ordinances, and the observation we are enabled to make upon what passes within us and without us, which is what we call *experience* (the Lord watering and blessing with the influences of his Holy Spirit) may we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour;

be more humbled in our own eyes, more weaned from self, more fixed on him as our All in All, till at last we shall meet before his throne.

A P O E M,

BY A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT.

*Composed from his own Experience, one Night
when he could not sleep.*

MY guilty soul, how long beset
With terrors all around,
While law and justice claim'd their debt,
And I no payment found.

In works and duties, long I tried
Some inward peace to find,
The more I strove the more I cry'd,
Ah! much is left behind.

My weary'd soul the task renew'd,
And fain the prize would won;
But when my righteous deeds I view'd,
I found each deed was sin.

Now Sinai's thunders louder roll,
And sense declared me lost ;
Distracting anguish seiz'd my soul,
And hope gave up the ghost !

At length I heard the gospel found ;
O ! joyful sound to me.
Jehovah Just may still be found,
And set th' ungodly free.

That precious blood which faith applies,
In spite of hell and sin,
My guilty conscience pacifies,
And spreads sweet peace within.

My spotless Saviour liv'd for me,
On him my sins were laid ;
And raised from the tomb, I see
Each mite was fully paid.

Exalted now, at God's right-hand,
For me he intercedes,
The purchas'd spirit now demands,
To answer all my needs.

Say, dearest shepherd, tell me why,
To me such mighty love ;

That such a poor lost sheep as I
Such wond'rous grace should prove,

Reasons I seek, but seek in vain,
For none I e'er shall know;

The deep, the searchless cause, is plain
That God would have it so,

