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SERMON XI.

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**HARMONY OF THE DUTY WITH THE PROMISE
IN THE WORK OF REGENERATION.**

EZEKIEL 18:31. *Make you a new heart and a new spirit.....*

Ch. 36:26. *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.*

THERE is no inconsistency, but the most perfect harmony between these two passages. The one is the command, the other is the promise of the same **JEHOVAH**; made known to us by the same prophet. The one is from Mount Sinai, the other from Mount Zion. The one is the voice of justice, the other of mercy. The one is an exhibition of supreme authority, the other of infinite condescension and kindness. The one is the law, the other is the gospel. Both require our special attention separately, and in their connection. We must not derive from the command a train of thought, or a course of conduct, inconsistent with the promise; nor are we to suppose for a moment, that the promise is intended to exempt from the claims of the command. Our wisdom and our safety consist in receiving both, according to the letter and spirit. This is not the only instance, in which the same thing is commanded and promised. God now *commandeth all men every where to repent*, and yet Christ is exalted a *Prince and Saviour to give repentance and remission of sin*. We are commanded to believe in the Lord Jesus, and yet faith is the gift and the work of God: Wash you, make you clean, and yet the kind promise is, "*I will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean.*"

These and other passages, which need not be mentioned, con-

tain, like the text, both a command and a promise relating to the same thing. It will be our object then,

I. To consider what is implied in the **COMMAND**.

II. What is implied in the **PROMISE**, and,

III. What course we should pursue under the **COMBINED INFLUENCE OF BOTH**.

I. What is implied in the command, make you a new heart and a new spirit? Here it will be proper to ascertain the meaning of the term *heart*. In Scripture, this term in its metaphorical sense, is frequently used as nearly, if not quite, synonymous with mind, including the operations of the understanding and the exercise of the affections. No person who reads the Bible with attention, will doubt the truth of this statement. The current meaning of the term, however, with us, is more limited, including the affections only. In either sense, therefore, it includes the exercise of the affections, or what is called in other words, the moral character. A change of heart is a change in the objects of the affections, or a change of moral character. But the heart may be frequently, and greatly changed, and yet not become that *new heart* which God commands us to make. *Wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse*. There is a progress in wickedness as well as in holiness. One sinful pursuit is relinquished for the sake of another, not less, perhaps more criminal than the former. When a new heart is mentioned, as in the text, there is a reference to the old, or former state of the heart. This reference is carried out by the Apostle Paul. "Put off the old man, &c. and put on the new man," &c. The old heart is that which we all possess by nature, the thoughts of the imagination of which are evil and that continually; which is *deceitful above all things*, &c. in which the ruling principles are the love of sin and *enmity against God*. In the new heart, these things are reversed; sin becomes the cause of unfeigned sorrow, and the object of ceaseless hatred; God becomes the object of supreme love and desire. The new heart, in short, is the heart of a Christian; of one who is *born of God*; in whom old things, &c.; of one in whom the principles of spiritual life exert a supreme control, in whom the spirit of prayer, of meekness, of humility, of submission, of heavenly devotion habitually prevails. This is the new heart and new spirit, which God commands us to make; this is the work we are required to perform.

Another observation is necessary: according to the constitution of the human mind, every affection must have an object,

without which the affection cannot exist. If we cherish the affection of love, there is an object that is beloved; of hope, there is some object which we both expect and desire; of fear, there is some object from which we apprehend danger. These affections can be excited only through the understanding. No man can call forth his affections by a simple act of volition, as he can move his hand: To love an object, it is necessary that he first believe that the object is amiable; that there is in it something good, the possession of which would contribute to his happiness. Where the mind thus believes, the affection springs up spontaneously, without an effort designed to call it forth.

If, then, we would obey the command of God by making a new heart, we must do it according to the constitution which he himself has given to the mind: in no other way can the work ever be done.

Having seen what the new heart is, which we are required to make, and the manner in which the work is to be accomplished, we are now prepared to inquire, what is implied in this command, what useful instruction does it furnish?

1. It implies that God has an undoubted right to that which he commands, to this new heart, which he requires us to make. *His commandment is holy and just as well as good.* The Psalmist declares that "*the statutes of the Lord are right:*" "*Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.*" When his character is considered, he can demand nothing of his creatures but what is perfectly right; for he is *a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* No proposition in mathematics can be plainer than that God has a right to the new heart and new spirit which he commands us to make.

If infinite excellence deserves to be loved, then it is right that we should love God supremely: for such are the attributes which compose his character. If unbounded goodness, exercised towards sinful and unworthy creatures, towards wilful and determined enemies; if long-suffering and patience, exercised towards those who deserve the deepest perdition; ought to be loved, the great Jehovah deserves our most ardent affection: for both in the dispensations of his providence and in his word he has proclaimed himself, from day to day, and from year to year, *the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth.* With the deepest sincerity, our hearts should correspond with the devout exhortation of the psalmist, *O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his mercy endureth forever. O, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!*

The first and great commandment to all intelligent creatures is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. We have ceased to obey, ceased to love God; yet this law is not repealed, and never will be repealed. It flows from the character of God, which is immutable, and from the relation we sustain to him as his creatures. We have apostatized from God, we have rebelled against him, but no sinfulness, no wickedness of ours, can possibly dissolve this relation; it will forever be a truth that he created us, and has done us good through the whole of life. We may prove incorrigible and perish through our wilful unbelief and impenitence; but even in the pit of perdition it will not be less true than it is now, that God is our Creator; and that we ought to love him supremely. The command to make a new heart, is but an additional claim for that love which is required by this first and immutable precept of the moral law. To the lost spirits from Adam's family, to the apostate angels, even to Satan himself, while infinite ages of misery and despair are rolling on, the command, make you a new heart and a new spirit, with undiminished authority, will continue to present the claims of God.

Whatever they may think, and however they may feel, it will forever be right that they should love God. This right is founded not on their thoughts and their feelings, but on the immutable perfections of his character and on the relation they sustain to him as intelligent creatures.

2. The command in the text implies, that it is our duty to obey; to exercise towards God all that is included in the new heart, which we are required to make. This command is adapted to us as sinful, depraved and condemned creatures, for whom, at the same time, a Saviour is provided, and to whom, through this Saviour, pardon is offered.

Our hearts will never be what God requires, until they are deeply and fully impressed with those doctrines and facts, which constitute the grand peculiarities of the gospel; until in their exercises there is a special reference to Christ, as the only, the all-sufficient Saviour. The new heart required of us, can never be complete without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and repentance towards God. It is our duty then, it is our interest, it is, indeed, the only way in which we can secure our happiness for time and eternity, to believe in this divine, this crucified Saviour, and to repent of our sins with a godly sorrow. Being guilty and condemned, can any thing be more obvious than that we should believe in that Saviour through whom alone pardon can be obtained?

Having sinned against God, sinned when at the very moment, we knew better, sinned from design, can any thing be more reasonable than that we should be sorry for these wanton offences? Nothing can be more reasonable; for God commands us thus to believe and repent. Even our love to God will be modified by the truth of the gospel. If we love him as we ought, it will be as Immanuel, as *manifest in the flesh*, as in Christ, as having first loved us. In the exercises of the new heart are included, gratitude to God for the numberless unmerited favors received from his hand; hope, through his mercy, of eternal blessedness and glory; joy in the Lord; peace of conscience; hatred to sin; an earnest and habitual desire for greater degrees of holiness; together with the firm purpose to live in obedience to all the precepts of the Bible. The man who cherishes these devout and spiritual affections is the happy man; you may bind him with fetters, cast him into the dungeon, break his bones on the rack, consume his body at the stake; but if the love of God warms his heart, if the hope of heaven lives in his soul, he will still be happy. When earthly sources of pleasure are dried up, he will *joy in God through the Lord Jesus Christ*. Even the bitterest sorrows of repentance will be commingled with joys more pure and elevating than earth*can yield. It is, therefore, our duty to make this new heart, to exercise these devout affections; because God commands it, and he commands it because it is our interest and our chief happiness.

It is our duty, then, that we should make not only a *new heart*, but also a *new spirit*; that we should not only be pious, but eminently so; that we should not only believe, but be *strong in faith, giving glory to God*; that we should not only love God, but love him with all the heart; that we should not only serve the Lord, but be *fervent in spirit* in his service; that we should not only commence a religious life, but *persevere, grow in grace, and go on to perfection*.

3. If we disobey this command, and neglect this duty, we are, most assuredly, guilty; and this guilt, with all its aggravations, will lie at our own door, and, without repentance, will be visited upon our own head. Every day, every month, and every year, that we spend in disobedience to this command, in the neglect of this duty, is a day, a month, and a year of guilt; increasing, not according to the simple ratio of addition, but according to the compound ratio which includes all the aggravations of this guilt. Though they exceed our comprehension, these aggravations are estimated with perfect accuracy, by the mind of our infinite

Judge. They arise from a great variety of sources; from the time spent in this wicked rebellion, from the goodness, the kindness, the long-suffering of God towards us; from the solemn warnings, the loud and earnest calls, the precious promises, the gracious invitations addressed to us, from the authority which we resist.

Refusing to make a new heart, is refusing to believe in Christ that divine Saviour who died for us; is refusing to accept of that pardon which is purchased with his blood, which we so much need, and without which we must forever perish. To reject the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father, with a voice from Heaven, has declared himself to be *well pleased*; to reject this *unspeakable gift of God*, the evidence and pledge of divine love to our sinful and miserable world; to reject this Saviour, who has endured the agonies of the garden and the cross for us, this compassionate, this Almighty, this only Saviour; is perilous beyond the conception of all created minds. Yet this is implied in refusing to make a new heart. For that faith by which the Saviour is received, and with whom all the blessings purchased by his death, is an essential exercise of the new heart. Can God look with complacency, or without the strongest indignation on the heart from which his beloved Son is excluded? Christ dwells in the heart by faith; where faith does not exist, there Christ does not dwell, and where Christ does not dwell, there the approbation and love of God cannot be enjoyed. Refusing to obey this command, is refusing to love God; for this love is another essential exercise of the new heart. That which he demands of us is a *reasonable service*. As our Creator, as our Preserver, as our Father, we ought to love him. And above all, we ought to love him, *because he first loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*. To refuse, therefore, to love him, is most unreasonable, most criminal, most dangerous. Repentance for sin, is another exercise of the new heart. And have we sinned against God our Creator, our Preserver and Redeemer, as all of us will confess we have, and yet refuse to be sorry for it? And can we persevere in this refusal, and be guiltless? Can we expect that God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold evil*, will approve of this impenitence? Most assuredly he will not.

But further: there can be no neutrality in this case. The Lord Jesus admits of none. *He that is not for me is against me, he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad*. The heart that is not made new, remains a sinful and wicked heart; for such it is by nature. If the Saviour is not received by faith, he is rejected;

designedly rejected by unbelief. Where the love of God is not cherished, there is *enmity against God*. Where there is no sincere repentance, no *godly* sorrow for sin, there is the approbation and love of sin. If it were possible for the work of making a new heart to progress so far as to destroy all sinful principles, extinguish all sinful affections, efface all sinful impressions, and stop at this point, this heart could not receive the approbation of God. There must be positive spiritual affections in exercise. There must be an active living faith, *working by love, purifying the heart, and overcoming the world*. There must be supreme love of God, resulting in cheerful obedience to all his precepts. There must be a repentance so deep and so permanent as to endear the *blood of Christ which cleanses from sin*, and will produce unceasing watchfulness against it. The want of this faith, and of these affections, though there were no sinful principles or affections, would be criminal in the sight of God; how much more criminal and guilty will the heart be in which there is a practical unbelief, which rejects the Saviour; an active enmity which resists the Spirit and truth of God; a determined impenitence, which not only loves and delights in sin, but refuses to forsake it! To suppose that such a heart is not most deeply criminal, is to suppose that God can look with approbation on the deliberate rejection of his beloved Son; on the workings of deep-rooted enmity against himself; on that impenitence which implies the supreme love of sin. This he cannot do, unless he can repeal the law which he has given, can recall the declaration, that in his beloved Son he is *well pleased*, can divest himself of infinite holiness. As he is *the Lord and changes not*; as he cannot *deny himself*, cannot become a co-worker with his enemies in obscuring his own glory, in destroying the happiness of the universe; so certain is it, so absolutely certain is it, that all men, every where, are deeply criminal in refusing to make a new heart and a new spirit; in refusing to believe in Christ, to love God and to repent of sin.

But it is not more certain that we are guilty in disobeying this command, than it is that God has promised to *give a new heart and a new spirit*: and *he is faithful who has promised*; he will accomplish the work; he will redeem his pledge.

II. Let us, then, consider what is implied in this promise:

1. It certainly implies, that *we need that which is promised*. We may, and often do, promise to each other, that which is not indispensably necessary. A man may promise assistance to his neighbor, when this neighbor could accomplish the object without this aid, though not with the same facility, nor within the

same time. Not so with God; he promises that, and that only, which is needed, and without which the purpose would not be accomplished. When he promised to make Ishmael *a great nation*, it is certain that without the constant support and protection of Jehovah, Ishmael never would have multiplied into a great nation. When the kind and cheering promise was given to Paul, *My grace is sufficient for thee*; we see clearly, and he felt deeply, the necessity of this grace to sustain him under the numerous trials which awaited him in every place. It is further implied, that none but God can accomplish his own promise. He may employ the instrumentality of second causes; but these can accomplish nothing without the wise and powerful agency of the Great First Cause. Had the highest angel in heaven been required, by his own wisdom and power to preserve Ishmael, his posterity never would have equalled the stars of heaven in number. Had this angel, or an host of such angels, been required to protect, to comfort, to animate, to preserve Paul, till the appointed hour of his departure should come, they must have utterly failed. Although they may and do *minister for those who are heirs of salvation*, yet it is the *power of God alone* by which these heirs are to be kept through faith unto salvation.

We need the new heart and the new spirit which God has promised; that is, we need divine assistance that we may believe in Christ, love God and repent of our sins. The promise implies also, that God alone can produce this faith and excite these affections; and that without his omnipotent aid, we never would believe, or love, or repent. But the promise is *yea and amen*, sure and steadfast. He can and will work in his people *the work of faith with power*; he will *shed abroad his love in their hearts by the Holy Spirit*; he will, by his goodness, melt their hearts and lead them to repentance. That they may *work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*, he will, of his good pleasure, *work in them to will and to do*.

It is divine assistance, then, that is promised, and it is divine assistance that we need, by which we are enabled to believe, to love, to repent, and to exercise all spiritual affections included in the new heart. Faith is the act, and love and repentance are the exercises of our own mind. The Holy Spirit does not believe for us, or in our stead; but he enables us to *believe through grace*; he does not love or repent for us, but he calls into exercise these affections in our own mind.

This is the doctrine of the Bible, plainly taught in a great variety of passages; especially in all those which refer the work of

regeneration to God. *We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus; born of God; born of the Spirit; you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sin.*

This is a doctrine, too, respecting which we hope and believe there is no diversity of opinion among Christians. However they may differ respecting the mode of the Spirit's operations, all will agree that they need his aid, that through the grace of God they are what they are; that *by grace they are saved through faith, and that not of themselves, it is the gift of God*; all will unite in the devout exclamation, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." That professed disciple of Christ, who believes that he needs not divine aid, is not prepared for the songs of the redeemed in heaven.

2. This promise implies our entire dependence on God for the new heart and the new spirit which he has promised to give. We have the utmost assurance that God will accomplish his promise; yet he was under no obligation to make this promise: it is, therefore, a most gracious promise, arising from his infinite mercy and compassion, yearning over our sinful and miserable race. We do not and cannot deserve the blessings included in this promise. At the moment when they are bestowed, we deserve the displeasure of God on account of our sins. Although we are permitted to pray for these blessings, we cannot demand them on the principle of justice, as our right. For all the exercises of the new heart and the new spirit, we are entirely dependent on the mercy and compassion of God.

This truth is plainly taught in connection with the promise. "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." If the promise itself should fail to convince us of this truth, these declarations will produce the conviction. The same truth is implied in the devout and grateful acknowledgments offered to God by the pious in all ages. Passages containing these expressions of praise, are too numerous to be cited. Thanksgiving and praise are offered to God for blessings both temporal and spiritual, under both the old and new dispensation. The exercises of the new heart have been the same in all ages and will continue the same till the last hour.

All these grateful acknowledgments imply the conviction of entire dependence on God for the blessings received. Prayer, and especially prayer in the name of Christ, as all prayer ought to be, implies our entire dependence. It is this deep sense of dependence which gives to prayer that character of humility and earnestness without which, however eloquent and appropriate may be the words, it will be, in the ear of God, worse than *a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal*. If any thing was due to us on the ground of merit, or as the reward of service, we might demand it of God on the principle of justice; but this demand would not be prayer. Many other passages with clearness teach the same truth. *Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou, that thou didst not receive?* is language which can be used, in its true sense, by those only who feel and acknowledge their entire dependence on God.

3. If the promise implies that we need all the blessings included in the new heart, and that God alone can bestow them, and of course that we are entirely dependent on his good pleasure for these blessings; the fact is also clearly implied that we are *helpless* in ourselves, as it regards the accomplishment of this work. If it be admitted, as we presume it will, that God does nothing in vain; that when he produces an effect, this effect could not be produced without his power; that when he promises to accomplish any purpose, this purpose could not be accomplished without his agency; then it will follow, that the promise, solemnly made, to give us a new heart, implies that we are helpless, that we could not possess this heart in any other way; for if we could, then the promise of God, and the agency of God in performing this, would be in vain. It is perfectly accordant with the common sense of all men, that that which we receive as a gracious gift, as an unmerited favor, cannot be the product of our own efforts; that which is the work of God, cannot, in the same sense, be our work. Regeneration is ascribed to God, as his work, and as his alone, in language so clear, so unequivocal as to exclude all other agencies. If we are *born of God*, then it is neither *of blood*, nor *of the will of the flesh*, nor *of the will of man*. If we are *his workmanship*, then we are not our own. The new heart includes faith; and faith is the act of our own mind; yet this act never would be performed without divine aid. It is both the gift and the work of God.

But a truth of such deep interest ought not to rest on the common sense or the common opinion of men. *What saith the*

scriptures? How readeſt thou? Without me, ſaid the Saviour, ye can do nothing. The truth is doubted by no man, that the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine: no more can ye, except ye abide in me. No man can come to me except the Father which hath ſent me draw him. Can a work, which requires divine power to accompliſh it, be done by thoſe who are without ſtrength? Our prayers to God are nothing but mockery, unleſs they imply our helpleſſneſs. When we aſk God to help us, to cleanſe our hearts, to ſtrengthen, protect, defend, deliver, guide, and ſave us, do we believe that we ourſelves can do theſe things? or do we believe that our ſufficiency is of God; that he is our ſtrength, our ſupport, our defence, our ſalvation?

Let it not, for a moment, however, be ſuppoſed, that this helpleſſneſs is inſenſibility or hardneſs of heart, as it regards ſpiritual things. Whenever you hear a man ſay that he is helpleſs, and ſee him remain as unmoved as the rock, be aſſured that man neither underſtands nor believes what he ſays; he is merely alleging this as an excuſe for his neglect of duty, and for the love of ſin which he does not intend to forſake. The truth that we are *without ſtrength*, is one of thoſe *things of the Spirit* which the *natural man* neither underſtands nor believes. It is the real feeling produced by this truth, that completes the work of preparation for the reception of Chriſt; that humbles us in the duſt, that brings us, with entire ſubmiſſion, to the foot of the croſs. The want of this belief and of this feeling is the cauſe of that inſenſibility which ſo much prevails. Bring ſinners to feel that they are guilty and that they are helpleſs, and it is impoſſible for them to remain unmoved. The more deeply conſcious we are of our helpleſſneſs, the more earneſtly will we pray that we may receive the help of God. If we *pray with the Spirit and with the underſtanding*, we pray for that, and that only, which we do not poſſeſs, which we need, which God has promiſed to give.

Nor, let it, for a moment, be ſuppoſed, that there is the ſhadow of excuſe for this inability. It is a criminal inability. So far as we are helpleſs, ſo far we are criminal. That we cannot, without divine aſſiſtance, believe in Chriſt, love God, and repent of our ſins, is, at once, the meaſure and the proof of our guilt. To ſay that we cannot believe in Chriſt, who has died for us, and whoſe atoning blood is eſſential to our ſalvation; is to ſay, that we cannot believe and confeſs that we are ſinners.

To say that we cannot love God, is to say, that we cannot cease to hate him. To say that we cannot repent, is to say, that we approve of sin, and are determined to persevere in the practice of it. That is, though the plain and positive declarations of God have decided otherwise, yet that it is right to reject the only Saviour, to hate and disobey God, to love and pursue sin.

These are two facts, therefore, the conviction of which should exist and operate together in our minds; that, as it regards the work of our own salvation, we are utterly helpless; and that this helplessness in its very nature, is sinful. Both of these facts are pressed upon our minds by the testimony of clear and numerous passages of scripture. Nor can we, for a moment, admit the painful suspicion, that any intelligent Christians will doubt either of them; or will not say from the heart, that they accord with their own experience.

III. Finally; in securing the great interests of eternity, what course should we pursue, under the influence of that instruction derived from this command and this promise of God?

The command, if we mistake not, teaches us, that he has a right to all the spiritual exercises of our hearts; that this is our imperious duty; and that we are guilty, in not thus *giving him our hearts*. The promise teaches us, that we need divine assistance in making this new heart; that for this we are entirely dependent on God; and that without this aid we are utterly helpless. The course of safety is marked out by the combined instruction and influence of both together. What God has joined we must not separate. We cannot receive the one, as it ought to be received, without the other; we must receive both, or we receive neither. If from a professed regard to the one, we forget and neglect the other, we only prepare for ourselves the cup of bitter disappointment.

The course, then, seems to be this: as guilty and helpless sinners, we should go immediately and directly to God, confessing, most humbly and sincerely, our sins, and pleading most earnestly for his mercy. By confessing our sins, we acknowledge the authority, the justice, the goodness of the law which we have transgressed, and by which we are condemned for these transgressions. By pleading for his mercy, we acknowledge our need, our dependence, and our helplessness. This is the way pointed out in scripture. *He that covereth his sins shall not pros-*

per; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. The confession flows from the belief and feeling that sin is an evil, which deserves the punishment of eternal death. Confessing our sins, with this contrition of soul, we will forsake them. By pleading for mercy, we admit that the justice of God would be eternally glorified in our condemnation; that we do not deserve the blessings for which we pray; that if we are saved it will be *to the praise of the glory of his grace*. The more deep and vivid these convictions of our guilt and helplessness become, the nearer we should approach the cross of Christ, and with the more humble importunity should we pray. If we feel so much of the old heart of stone, that we can neither confess nor pray as we ought, this is but the clearer proof of our perishing need, of our dependence and helplessness; and presents to us the more urgent motives to come to God, that he may give a new heart and a new spirit. If it appears impossible to feel, even in the faintest degree, the desire that God would give us a new heart; it is but the still more clear and alarming proof, flashing into the soul, of our great and imminent danger. We should come to Christ as we are; guilty, that we may be forgiven; helpless, that we may receive strength; vile and polluted, that we may be purified; insensible, even dead in sin, that we may be quickened and made alive. The sick, not the whole, need the physician; need him, because they are sick, and cannot help themselves.

Were we not both guilty and helpless sinners, we would not need the Saviour. Without the deep conviction of this truth, we never will come to the Saviour; because the motives to bring us would not operate on the mind.

The Psalmist pursued the very course pointed out by this command and this promise. No person can read, in the 51st Psalm, the confessions which he makes, and the prayers which he offers up, without perceiving that they flow from a very deep and humbling sense of his need, his dependence and his helplessness. The sins of his nature and his life are confessed with shame and contrition. "For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." In whatever pursuit he was engaged, to whatever object he turned his attention, his sin met his view, occupied his thoughts, grinding him down into the very dust before God. Does he behold the robes and the throne of royalty? he is reminded of his vileness, his need of cleansing. Does he reign over an extensive empire? sin has had dominion

over him. Does he receive the adulation of his subjects? his conscience reproaches him with his own baseness. Does he sit in judgment on the different cases brought before him? his own case is decided, and he is condemned by the *Judge of all the earth*. He renounces all merit of his own, from any source, in any sense, or in any degree, and pleads for mercy according to a rule of proportion entirely different, according to the *loving kindness* and *tender mercies* of God. The very blessings which God has promised to bestow, are the blessings of which he feels his perishing need, and for which he prays. The Lord has promised to give a new heart and a new spirit; his prayer is, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." "Then, saith the Lord, will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you;" his prayer is, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Taught by painful experience his own weakness, when left to himself, his earnest prayer to God is, *take not thy holy Spirit away from me, but uphold me with thy free Spirit*.

Such is then the course we should pursue under the combined influence and instruction of this command and this promise of God; that is, to come directly and immediately to Christ, and to God through him. Coming to Christ is a movement of the mind, under the deep conviction of our guilt and helplessness. While the command requires us to make a new heart, the promise assures us that God will give this heart. As the Lord fulfills his promise in us, then do we obey his command. As the Lord takes away the heart of stone, then does the heart of flesh, that is the new heart, cherish its spiritual and devout affections. As the Lord draws us, then do we run after him. When the Lord turns us, then are we turned. When the Lord exerts his gracious power, then are we his willing people. This is the *new and the living way*, the only way of safety for guilty and helpless sinners to return to God. If we attempt to obey the command to make a new heart, in our own strength, without dependence on divine aid, nothing but disappointment and final perdition will be the result. *No man, says the Saviour, cometh to the Father but by me; and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out*. We cannot call into exercise those affections included in the new heart by an act of volition; suitable objects alone can produce this effect. These objects are found concentrated in the cross of Christ.

1. From this subject, we see how thankful all Christians should be. For that faith which unites us to Christ, through whom we

obtain pardon; for that love which fills and warms and expands and elevates the soul; for that repentance which extinguishes the love of sin; for that hope which sheds the light of heaven over the darkest scenes of earth; we are indebted to the rich and sovereign mercy of God. He sought us and found us when we were lost; he justified us when we were ungodly; he quickened us when we were dead; he saved us when we were helpless. *Eternal life is the gift of God to us; to us, who deserved the deepest perdition.* Gratitude should fill our hearts and control our lives: *We should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again.* If it cannot be infinite in degree, it can be eternal in duration. In no small degree is it the joy of earth; it will be the joy of heaven. Without ceasing, we will ascribe *blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, unto our God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

2. Impenitent sinners are left entirely inexcusable. To say, indeed, that there can be an excuse for sin, is a plain contradiction in terms; yet a great many are alleged, either publicly or secretly, by those who are determined to reject the gospel and live in sin. These excuses are frequently derived from the perversion of important truth. It is a truth, that, as it regards the great work of salvation, we are helpless; yet no careless, impenitent sinner on earth believes this. He has heard and learned to repeat the word; but to him, remaining unconcerned in his guilt, it is a word without meaning. While he alleges this as an excuse, he is conscious to himself, that this is not the reason why he lives in sin, but because he loves it. Against the conviction of this truth, his proud spirit makes the hardest and longest effort. It is the last work of the Spirit, in preparing the heart for the reception of Christ, to produce this conviction. Every truth, when believed, will produce its appropriate effects. The effect of this truth is as far from that provoking indifference, which so generally prevails, as the east is from the west. The belief of this truth will produce a state of the most deep and intense feeling. The want of this feeling proves the want of belief in this truth. You are helpless, indeed, O ye impenitent sinners! but this is one powerful reason why you should come to Christ, that you may obtain mercy. You are indeed sinful and depraved, your hearts are hard as the rock; surely, then, you ought to come to that blood which cleanses from sin, to that God who has promised to give a new heart, to take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh. Your excuses imply, that if they

were removed out of the way, you would come; if you were not sinful, not guilty, not helpless, would you then come? But for what would you then come? For pardon?—the guilty alone need pardon. For the cleansing blood of Christ?—the sinful and defiled alone need this blood. For the quickening power of the Spirit?—the helpless alone need this aid. The excuses you allege for not coming, are the reasons why you should come. Come, then, to the Saviour who has died for you, and *who is able to save unto the uttermost all who come to God through him.* God, for Christ's sake, will pardon your sins, *purify your hearts by faith, strengthen you with might, by his Spirit in the inner man,* and will bring you in safety, through all the trials of life *to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven.*