

THE PRACTICAL USE OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE.

THE chief general use of Christian doctrine is, to convince a man of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, John xvi. 8, partly by the law or covenant of works, that he may be humbled and become penitent; and partly by the gospel or covenant of grace, that he may become an unfeigned believer in Jesus Christ, and be strengthened in his faith upon solid grounds and warrants, and give evidence of the truth of his faith by good fruits, and so be saved.

The sum of the covenant of works, or of the law, is this: "If thou do all that is commanded, and not fail in any point, thou shalt be saved: but if thou fail, thou shalt die." Rom. x. 5. Gal. iii 10, 12.

The sum of the gospel, or covenant of grace and reconciliation, is this: "If thou flee from deserved wrath to the true Redeemer Jesus Christ, (who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God through him,) thou shalt not perish, but "have eternal life." Rom. x. 8, 9, 11.

For convincing a man of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment by the law, or covenant of works, let these scriptures, among many more, be made use of.

I. For convincing a man of sin by the law, consider *Jer. xvii. 9, 10.*

Ver. 9. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? Ver. 10. I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Here the Lord teacheth these two things:

1. That the fountain of all our miscarriage, and actual sinning against God, is in the heart, which comprehendeth the mind, will, affections, and all the powers of the soul, as they are corrupted and defiled with original sin; the mind being not only ignorant and incapable of saving truth, but also full of error and enmity against God; and the will and affections being obstinately disobedient unto all God's directions, and bent toward that only which is evil: *The heart* (saith he) *is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; yea, and unsearchably wicked, so that no man can know it; and Gen. vi. 5, Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually,* saith the Lord, whose testimony we must trust in this and all other matters; and experience also may teach us, that, till God make us deny ourselves, we never look to God in any thing, but fleshly self-interest alone doth rule us, and move all the wheels of our actions.

2. That the Lord bringeth our original sin, or wicked inclination, with all the actual fruits thereof, unto reckoning before his judgment-seat ; "For he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

Hence let every man reason thus:

"What God and my guilty conscience beareth witness of, I am convinced that it is true:

"But God and my guilty conscience beareth witness, that my heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and that all the imaginations of my heart, by nature, are only evil continually:

"Therefore I am convinced that this is true."

Thus a man may be convinced of sin by the law.