

Justification by an Imputed Righteousness

Justification is to be diversly taken in the scripture. Sometimes it is taken for the justification of persons. Sometimes for the justification of actions. And sometimes for the justification of the person and action too. It is taken for the justification of persons, and that,

(1.) As to justification with God; or,

(2.) As to justification with men.

As to justification with God, that is, when a man stands clear, quit, free, or, in a saved condition before him, in the approbation of his holy law.

As to justification with men, that is, when a man stands clear and quit from just ground of reprehension with them. Justification also is to be taken with reference to actions; and that may be when they are considered,
As flowing from true faith; or,

Because the act done fulfils some transient law.

(1.) As actions flow from faith, so they are justified, because done before God in, and made complete through, the perfections of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15; Rev. 8:1-4.

(2.) As by the doing of the act some transient law is fulfilled; as when Jehu executed judgment upon the house of Ahab 'Thou hast done well,' said God to him, 'in executing that which is righteous in mine eyes, and hast done to the house of Ahab all that was in mine heart,' 2 Kings 10:30.

As to such acts, God may or may not look at the qualification of those that do them; and it is clear that he had not respect to any good that was in Jehu, in the justifying of this action; nor could he, for Jehu stuck close yet to the sins of Jeroboam, but 'took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel,' 2 Kings 10:29, 31.

I might hence also shew you, that a man may be justified even then when his action is condemned; also that a man may be in a state of condemnation, when his action may be justified. But with these distinctions I will not take up time, my intention being to treat of justification, as it sets a man free or quit from sin, the curse and condemnation of the law in the sight of God, in order to eternal salvation.

And that I may with the more clearness handle this point before you, I will lay down and speak to this proposition

That there is no other way for sinners to be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God, than by the imputation of that righteousness long ago performed by, and still residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.

The terms of this proposition are easy; yet if it will help, I will speak a word or two for explication.

(1.) By a sinner, I mean one that has transgressed the law; for 'sin is the transgression of the law,' 1 John 3:4.

(2.) By the curse of the law, I mean that sentence, judgment, or condemnation which the law pronounceth against the transgressor, Gal. 3:10.

(3.) By justifying righteousness, I mean that which stands in the doing and suffering of Christ when he was in the world; Rom. 5:19.

(4.) By the residing of this righteousness in Christ's person, I mean, it still abides with him as to the action, though the benefit is bestowed upon those that are his.

(5.) By the imputation of it to us, I mean God's making of it ours by an act of his grace, that we by it might be secured from the curse of the law.

(6.) When I say there is no other way to be justified, I cast away to that end the law, and all the works of the law as done by us.

Thus I have opened the terms of the proposition.

Now the two first, to wit, What sin and the curse is, stand clear in all men's sight, unless they be atheists, or desperately heretical. I shall therefore in few words, clear the other four.

First, Therefore justifying righteousness is the doing and suffering of Christ when he was in the world. This is clear, because we are said to be 'justified by his obedience,' Rom. 5:19; by his obedience to the law. Hence he is said again to be the end of the law for that very thing 'Christ is the end of the law for righteousness,' &c., Rom. 10:4. The end, what is that? Why, the requirement or demand of the law. But what is it? Why, righteousness, perfect righteousness, Gal. 3:10. Perfect righteousness, what to do? That the soul concerned might stand spotless in the sight of God, Rev. 1:5: Now this lies only in the doings and sufferings of Christ; for 'by his obedience many are made righteous'; wherefore as to this Christ is the end of the law, that being found in that obedience, that becomes to us sufficient for our justification. Hence, we are said to be made righteous by his obedience; yea, and to be washed, purged, and justified by his blood, Heb. 9:14; Rom. 5:18, 19.

Secondly, That this righteousness still resides in and with the person of Christ, even then when we stand just before God thereby, is clear, for that we are said when justified to be justified 'in him' 'In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified.' And again; 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness,' &c. And again; 'For him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us of God righteousness,' Isa. 45:24, 25; 1 Cor. 1:30.

Mark, the righteousness is still 'in him,' not 'in us'; even then when we are made partakers of the benefit of it, even as the wing and feathers still abide in the hen when the chickens are covered, kept, and warmed thereby.

For as my doings, though my children are fed and clothed thereby, are still my doings, not theirs, so the righteousness wherewith we stand just before God from the curse still resides in Christ, not in us. Our sins when laid upon Christ were yet personally ours, not his; so his righteousness when put upon us is yet personally his, not ours. What is it, then? Why, 'he was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. 5:21.

Thirdly, It is therefore of a justifying virtue only by imputation, or as God reckoneth it to us; even as our sins made the Lord Jesus a sinner, nay, sin, by God's reckoning of them to him.

It is absolutely necessary that this be known of us; for if the understanding be muddy as to this, it is impossible that such should be sound in the faith; also in temptation, that man will be at a loss that looketh for a righteousness for justification in himself, when it is to be found nowhere but in Jesus Christ.

The apostle, who was his craftsman as to this, was always 'looking to Jesus,' that he 'might be found in him' (Phil. 3:6-8), knowing that nowhere else could peace or safety be had.

And indeed this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world, namely, that a righteousness that resides with a person in heaven should justify me, a sinner, on earth.

Fourthly, Therefore the law and the works thereof, as to this must by us be cast away; not only because they here are useless, but also they being retained are a hindrance. That they are useless is evident, for that salvation comes by another name, Acts 4:12. And that they are a hindrance, it is clear, for the very adhering to the law, though it be but a little, or in a little part, prevents justification by the righteousness of Christ, Rom. 9:31, 32.

What shall I say? As to this, the moral law is rejected, the ceremonial law is rejected, and man's righteousness is rejected, for that they are here both weak and unprofitable, Rom. 8:2, 3; Gal. 3:21; Heb. 10:1-12.

Now if all these and their works as to our justification are rejected, where but in Christ is righteousness to be found?

Thus much, therefore, for the explication of the proposition, namely, that there is no other way for sinners to be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God than by the imputation of that righteousness long ago performed by, and still residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, from this proposition I draw these two positions

First, That men are justified from the curse of the law before God while sinners in themselves.

Secondly, That this can be done by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by, and residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.

Let us, then, now enter into the consideration of the first of these, namely, That men are justified from the curse of the law before God while sinners in themselves.

This I shall manifest,

By touching upon the mysterious acts of our redemption.

By giving of you plain texts which discover it; and,

By reasons drawn from the texts.

For the first of these; to wit, the mysterious act of our redemption: and that I shall speak to under these two heads

I shall shew you what that is; and,

How we are concerned therein.

That which I call, and that rightly, the mysterious act of our redemption, is Christ's sufferings as a

common, though a particular person and as a sinner, though always completely righteous.

That he suffered as a common person is true. By common, I mean a public person, or one that presents the body of mankind in himself. This a multitude of scriptures bear witness to, especially that fifth chapter to the Rom., where by the apostle he is set before us as the head of all the elect, even as Adam was once head of all the world. Thus he lived, and thus he died; and this was a mysterious act.

And that he should die as a sinner, when yet himself did 'no sin, nor had any guile found in his mouth,' made this act more mysterious, 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22; 3:18. That he died as a sinner is plain 'He hath made him to be sin. And the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all,' Isaiah, 53. That, then, as to his own person he was completely sinless is also as truly manifest, and that by a multitude of scriptures.

Now, I say, that Christ Jesus should be thus considered, and thus die, was the great mystery of God. Hence Paul tells us, that when he preached 'Christ crucified,' he preached not only the 'wisdom of God,' but the 'wisdom of God in a mystery,' even his 'hidden wisdom,' for, indeed, this wisdom is hidden, and kept close from the 'fowls of the air,' 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:7, 8; Job 28:20, 21.

It is also so mysterious, that it goes beyond the reach of all men, except those to whom an understanding is given of God to apprehend it, 1 John 5:20.

That one particular man should represent all the elect in himself, and that the most righteous should die as a sinner, yea, as a sinner by the hand of a just and holy God, is a mystery of the greatest depth.

Secondly, And now I come to shew you how the elect are concerned therein; that is, in this mysterious act of this most blessed One; and this will make this act yet more mysterious to you.

Now, then, we will speak of this first, as to how Christ prepared himself thus mysteriously to act. He took hold of our nature. I say, he took hold of us, by taking upon him flesh and blood. The Son of God therefore, took not upon him a particular person, though he took to him a human body and soul; but that which he took was, as I may call it, a lump of the common nature of man, and by that, hold of the whole elect seed of Abraham; Heb. 2:16, 'For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.'

Hence he, in a mystery, became us, and was counted as all the men that were or should be saved. And this is the reason why we are said to do, when only Jesus Christ did do. As for instance

First, When Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteousness of the law, it is said it was fulfilled in us, because indeed fulfilled in our nature: 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,' &c. But because none should appropriate this unto themselves that have not had passed upon them a work of conversion, therefore he adds, 'Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' For there being a union between head and members, though things may be done by the head, and that for the members, the things are counted to the members, as if not done only by the head. The 'righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us'; and that truly, because fulfilled in that common nature which the Son of God took of the Virgin. Wherefore, in this sense we are said to do what only was done by him; even as the client doth by his lawyer, when his lawyer personates him; the client is said to do, when it is the lawyer only that does; and to overcome by doing, when it is the lawyer that overcomes; the reason is, because the lawyer does in the client's name. How much more then may it be said we do, when only Christ does; since he does what he does, not in our name only,

but in our nature too; 'for the law of the spirit of life in Christ (not in me) has set me free from the law of sin and death,' Rom. 8:1-3; he doing in his common flesh what could not be done in my particular person, that so I might have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in me, my flesh assumed by Christ; though impossible to be done, because of the weakness of my person.

The reason of all this is, because we are said to be in him in his doing, in him by our flesh, and also by the election of God. So, then, as all men sinned when Adam fell, so all the elect did righteousness when Christ wrought and fulfilled the law; for 'as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.'

Secondly, As we are said to do by Christ, so we are said to suffer by him, to suffer with him. 'I am crucified with Christ,' said Paul. And again; 'Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin,' 1 Pet. 4:1, 2. Mark how the apostle seems to change the person. First he says, it is Christ that suffered; and that is true; but then he insinuates that it is us that suffered, for the exhortation is to believers, 'to walk in newness of life'; and the argument is, because they have suffered in the flesh: 'For he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God,' Gal. 2:20.

We then suffered when Christ suffered; we then suffered in his flesh and also our 'old man was crucified with him,' Rom. 6:6; that is, in his crucifixion; for when he hanged on the cross, all the elect hanged there in their common flesh which he assumed, and because he suffered there as a public man.

Thirdly, As we are said to suffer with him, so we are said to die, to be dead with him; with him, that is, by the dying of his body: 'Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him,' Rom. 6:8.

Wherefore he saith in other places, 'Brethren, ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ'; for indeed we died then to it by him. To the law, that is, the law now has nothing to do with us; for that it has already executed its curse to the full upon us by its slaying of the body of Christ; for the body of Christ was our flesh, upon it also was laid our sin. The law, too, spent that curse that was due to us upon him when it condemned, killed, and cast him into the grave. Wherefore, it having thus spent its whole curse upon him as standing in our stead, we are exempted from its curse for ever; we are become dead to it by that body, Rom. 7:4; it has done with us as to justifying righteousness. Nor need we fear its damning threats any more; for by the death of this body we are freed from it, and are for ever now coupled to a living Christ.

Fourthly, As we are said thus to be dead, so we are said also to rise again by him 'Thy dead men' (saith he to the Father) 'shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.' And again; 'After two days he will revive us, and in the third day we shall live in his sight,' Isa. 26:19; Hos. 6:2.

Both these scriptures speak of the resurrection of Christ, of the resurrection of his body on the third day; but behold, as we were said before to suffer and be dead with him, so now we are said also to rise and live in God's sight by the resurrection of his body; for, as was said, the flesh was ours; he took part of our flesh when he came into the world; and in it he 'suffered, died, and rose again,' Heb. 2:14. We also were therefore counted by God in that God-man when he did this; yea, he suffered, died, and rose as a common head.

Hence also the New Testament is full of this, saying, 'If ye be dead with Christ.' 'If ye be risen with Christ.' And again; 'He hath quickened us together with him,' Col. 2:20; 3:1; and 2:13.

'We are quickened together with him.' 'Quickened,' and 'quickened together with him.' The

apostle hath words that cannot easily be shifted or evaded. Christ then was quickened when he was raised from the dead. Nor is it proper to say that he was ever quickened either before or since. This text also concludes that we, to wit, the whole body of God's elect, were also quickened then, and made to live with him together. True, we also are quickened personally by grace the day in the which we are born unto God by the gospel; yet before that we are quickened in our head; quickened when he was raised from the dead; quickened together with him.

Fifthly, Nor are we thus considered, to wit, as dying and rising, and so left. But the apostle pursues his argument, and tells us that we also reap by him, as being considered in him, the benefit which Christ received, both in order to his resurrection, and the blessed effect thereof. We received, by our thus being counted in him, that benefit which did precede his rising from the dead; and what was that but the forgiveness of sins? For this stands clear to reason, that if Christ had our sins charged upon him at his death, he then must be discharged of them in order to his resurrection. Now, though it is not proper to say they were forgiven to him, because they were purged from him by merit, yet they may be said to be forgiven us, because we receive this benefit by grace.

And this, I say, was done precedent to his resurrection from the dead: 'He hath quickened us together with him, having forgiven us all trespasses.' He could not be 'quickened' till we were 'discharged'; because it was not for himself, but for us, that he died. Hence we are said to be at that time, as to our own personal estate, dead in our sins, even when we are 'quickened together with him,' Col. 2:13.

Therefore both the 'quickening' and 'forgiveness' too, so far as we are in this text concerned, is to him, as we are considered in him or to him, with respect to us. Having forgiven you all trespasses. For necessity so required; because else how was it possible that the pains of death should be loosed in order to his rising, so long as one sin stood still charged to him, as that for the commission of which God had not received a plenary satisfaction? As therefore we suffered, died, and rose again by him; so, in order to his so rising, he, as presenting of us in his person and suffering, received for us remission of all our trespasses. A full discharge therefore was, in and by Christ, received of God of all our sins before he arose from the dead; as his resurrection truly declared; for 'he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,' Rom. 4:25.

This therefore is one of the privileges we receive by the rising again of our Lord; for that we were in his flesh considered, yea, and in his death and suffering too.

By this means also we have now escaped death. 'Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto (or, for) sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God,' Rom. 6:9, 10.

Now in all this, considering what has been said before, we that are of the elect are privileged, for that we also are raised up by the rising of the body of Christ from the dead. And thus the apostle bids us reckon 'Likewise reckon also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ,' Rom. 6:11.

Hence Christ says, 'he is the resurrection and the life,' for that all his are safe in him, suffering, dying, and rising. He is the life, our life; yea, so our life that by him the elect do live before God, even then when as to themselves they yet are dead in their sins. Wherefore, hence it is that in time they partake of quickening grace from this their head, to the making of them also live by faith, in order to their living hereafter with him in glory; for if Christ lives, they cannot die that were sharers with him in his resurrection. Hence they are said to 'live,' being 'quickened together with him.' Also, as sure as at his resurrection they lived 'by him,' so sure at his coming shall they be gathered 'to him'; nay, from that day to this all that, as aforesaid, were in him at his death and resurrection, are already, in the 'fulness of the dispensation of time,' daily 'gathering to him.' For this he hath purposed, wherefore none can disannul it 'In the fulness of the dispensation of time,

to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him,' Eph. 1:9, 10.

To secure this the more to our faith that believe, as we are said to be 'raised up together with him,' so we are said 'to be made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus'; Eph. 2:6. We died by him, we rose by him, and are together, even all the elect set down together in 'heavenly places in Christ Jesus'; for still even now he is on the right hand of God; he is to be considered as our public man, our head, and so one in whom is concluded all the elect of God. We then are by him already in heaven; in heaven, I say, by him; yea, set down there in our places of glory by him. Hence the apostle, speaking of us again, saith, that as we are predestinate, we are called, justified, and glorified; called, justified, glorified, all is done, already done, as thus considered in Christ, Rom. 8:30. For that in his public work there is nothing yet to do as to this. Is not he called? Is not he justified? Is not he glorified? And are we not in him, in him, even as so considered?

Nor doth this doctrine hinder or forestal the doctrine of regeneration or conversion; nay, it lays a foundation for it; for by this doctrine we gather assurance that Christ will have his own; for if already they live in their head, what is that but a pledge that they shall live in their persons with him? and, consequently, that to that end they shall, in the times allotted for that end, be called to a state of faith, which God has ordained shall precede and go before their personal enjoyment of glory.

Nor doth this hinder their partaking of the symbol of regeneration, and of their other privileges to which they are called in the day of grace; yea, it lays a foundation for all these things; for if I am dead with Christ, let me be like one dead with him, even to all things to which Christ died when he hanged on the tree; and then he died to sin, to the law, and to the rudiments of this world, Rom. 6:10; 7:4; Col. 2:20.

And if I be risen with Christ, let me live, like one born from the dead, in newness of life, and having my mind and affections on the things where Christ now sitteth on the right hand of God. And indeed he professes in vain that talketh of these things, and careth not to have them also answered in himself. This was the apostle's way, namely, 'To covet to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death,' Phil. 3:9-13.

And when we are thus, that thing is true both in him and us. Then as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly; for he that saith he is in him, and by being in him a partaker of these privileges by him, 'ought himself so to walk, even as he walked,' 1 Cor. 15:48; 1 John 2:6, 8.

But to pass this digression, and to come to my argument, namely, that men are justified from the curse of the law before God while sinners in themselves.

This is evident by what hath already been said; for if the justification of their persons is by, in, and through Christ; then it is not by, in, and through their own doings. Nor was Christ engaged in this work but of necessity, even because else there had not been salvation for the elect. 'Father' (saith he), 'if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,' Matt. 26:39. If what be possible? Why, that my elect may be saved, and I not spill my blood. Wherefore he saith again, Christ ought to suffer. Christ must needs have suffered; for without shedding of blood is no remission of sin, Luke 24:26; Acts 17:3; Heb. 9:22.

We will now come to the present state and condition of those that are justified; I mean with respect to their own qualifications, and so prove the truth of this our great position. And this I will do,

By giving of you plain texts that discover it, and that consequently prove our point.

And after that, by giving of you reasons drawn from the texts.
For the first of these.

First, 'Speak not in thine heart' (no, not in thine heart) 'after that the Lord thy God hath cast out thine enemies before thee, saying, For my righteousness do I possess the land... not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go in to possess the land... Understand, therefore, that the Lord thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness, for thou art a stiff-necked people,' Deut. 9:4-6.

In these words, very pat for our purpose, two things are worthy our consideration. The people here spoken to were the people of God; and so by God himself are they here twice acknowledged to be 'The Lord thy God, the Lord thy God.' So, then, the righteousness here intended, is not the righteousness that is in the world, but that which the people of God perform.

The righteousness here intended is not some, but all, and every whit of that the church performs to God: 'Say not in thine heart, after the Lord hath brought thee in, it was for my righteousness.' No, all thy righteousness, from Egypt to Canaan, will not purchase Canaan for thee.

That this is true is evident, because it is thrice rejected 'Not for thy righteousness, not for thy righteousness, not for thy righteousness, dost thou possess the land.' Now if the righteousness of the people of God of old could not merit for them Canaan, which was but a type of heaven, how can the righteousness of the world now obtain heaven itself? I say again,

If godly men, as these were, could not by their works purchase the type of heaven, then must the ungodly be justified, if ever they be justified from the curse and sentence of the law, while sinners in themselves. The argument is clear; for if good men by what they do cannot merit the less, bad men by what they do cannot merit more.

Secondly, 'Remember me, O my God, for this; and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done,' Neh. 13:14.

These words were spoken by holy Nehemiah, and that at the end of all the good that we read he did in the world. Also, the deeds here spoken of were deeds done for God, for his people, for his house, and for the offices thereof.

Yet godly Nehemiah durst not stand before God in these, nor yet suffer them to stand to his judgment by the law; but prays to God to be merciful both to him and them, and to spare him 'according to the multitude of his mercy,' verse 22.

God blots out no good but for the sake of sin; and forasmuch as this man prays God would not blot out his, it is evident that he was conscious to himself that in his good works were sin. Now, I say, if a good man's works are in danger of being overthrown because there is in them a tang [taint] of sin, how can bad men think to stand just before God in their works, which are in all parts, full of sin? Yea, if the works of a sanctified man are blameworthy, how shall the works of a bad man set him clear in the eyes of Divine justice?

Thirdly, 'But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we do all fade away as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away,' Isa. 64:6.

In these words we have a relation both of persons and things. Of persons. And they are a righteous people, a righteous people put all together 'We, we all are,' &c.

The condition of this people, even of all of them, take them at the best, are, and that by their own confession, 'as an unclean thing.'

Again the things here attending this people are their good things, put down under this large character, 'Righteousnesses, all our righteousnesses.' These expressions therefore comprehend all their religious duties, both before and after faith too. But what are all these righteousnesses? Why they are all as 'filthy rags' when set before the justice of the law; yea, it is also confessed, and that by these people, that their iniquities, notwithstanding all their righteousnesses, like the wind, if grace prevent not, would 'carry them away.' This being so, how is it possible for one that is in his sins to work himself into a spotless condition by works done before faith, by works done by natural abilities? or to perform a righteousness which is able to look God in the face, his law in the face, and to demand and obtain the forgiveness of sins, and the life that is eternal? It cannot be: 'men must therefore be justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves, or not at all.'

Fourthly, 'There is not a just man upon the earth, that doth good, and sinneth not,' Eccles. 7:20; 1 Kings 8:46.

Although the words before are large, yet these seem far larger; there is not a man, not a just man, not a just man upon the earth, that doth good, and sinneth not. Now, if no good man, if no good man upon earth doth good, and sinneth not, then no good man upon earth can set himself by his own actions justified in the sight of God, for he has sin mixed with his good. How then shall a bad man, any bad man, the best bad man upon earth, think to set himself by his best things just in the sight of God? And if the tree makes the fruit either good or evil, then a bad tree (and a bad man is a bad tree) can bring forth no good fruit (Matt. 7:16), how then shall such an one do that shall cleanse him from his sin, and set him as 'spotless before the face of God?'

Fifthly, 'Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness,' &c., Isa. 46:12, 13.

This call is general, and so proves, whatever men think of themselves that in the judgment of God there is none at all righteous men, as men are from being so.

This general offer of righteousness, of the righteousness of God, declares that it is in vain for men to think to be set just and righteous before God by any other means.

There is here also insinuated, that for him that thinks himself the worst, God has prepared a righteousness, and therefore would not have him despair of life that sees himself far from righteousness. From all these scriptures, therefore, it is manifest that 'men must be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Sixthly, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' Matt. 11:28.

Here we have a labouring people, a people labouring for life; but by all their labour, you see, they cannot ease themselves; their burden still remains upon them; they yet are heavy laden. The load here is, doubtless guilt of sin, such as David had when he said by reason thereof 'he was not able to look up'; Psal. 38:3-5.

Hence, therefore, you have an experiment set before you, of those that are trying what they can do for life; but behold, the more they stir, the more they sink under the weight of the burden that lies upon them.

And the conclusion, to wit, Christ's call to them to come to him for rest declares that, in his judgment, rest was not to be had elsewhere. And I think one may with as much safety adhere to Christ's judgment as to any man's alive; wherefore 'men must be justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Seventhly, 'There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doth good, no, not one,'

Rom. 3:10-12.

These words have respect to a righteousness which is justified by the law; and they conclude that none by his own performances is righteous with such a righteousness; and it is concluded from five reasons

Because they are not good; for a man must be good before he doth good, and perfectly good before he doth good and sinneth not.

Because they understand not. How then should they do good? for a man must know before he does, else how should he divert himself to do?

Because they want a heart, they seek not after God according to the way of his own appointment.

They are all gone out of the way; how then can they walk therein?

They are together become unprofitable; what worth or value then can there be in any of their doings?

These are the reasons by which he proveth that there is 'none righteous, no, not one.' And the reasons are weighty; for by them he proves the tree is not good; how then can it yield good fruit?

Now, as he concludes from these five reasons that not one indeed is righteous, so he concludes by five more that none can do good to make him so

For that internally they are as an open sepulchre, as full of dead men's bones; their minds and consciences are defiled; how then can sweet and good proceed from thence? Rom. 13; Matt. 23:27; Tit. 1:15; Isa. 44:12; Jer 17:9.

Their throat is filled with this stink; all their vocal duties therefore smell thereof.

Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; how then can there be found one word that should please God?

Their tongue, which should present their praise to God, has been used to work deceit; how then, until it is made a new one, should it speak in righteousness?

The poison of asps is under their lips, therefore whatever comes from them, must be polluted.

Thus, you see, he sets forth their internal part; which being a true report, as to be sure it is, it is impossible that any good should so much as be framed in such an inward part, or come clean out of such a throat by such a tongue through such lips as these, Rom. 3:11-14.

And yet this is not all: he also proves, and that by five reasons more, that it is not possible they should do good

'Their feet are swift to shed blood,' verse 15. This implies an inclination, an inward inclination to evil courses; a quickness of motion to do evil, but a backwardness to do good.

'Destruction and misery are in their ways,' verse 16. Take 'ways' for their 'doings,' and in the best of them destruction lurks, and misery yet follows them at the heels.

'The way of peace they have not known,' verse 17; that is far above out of their sight. Wherefore the labour of these foolish ones will weary every one of them, because 'they know not the way that goes to the city.'

'There is no fear of God before their eyes,' verse 18. How then can they do anything with that godly reverence of his holy Majesty that is and must be essential to every good work? for to do

things, but not in God's fear, to what will it amount? will it avail?

All this while they are under a law that calls for works that are perfectly good, that will accept of none but what are perfectly good, and that will certainly condemn them because they neither are nor can be perfectly good: 'For whatsoever things the law saith, it saith it to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God,' verse 19.

Thus you see that Paul here proves by fifteen reasons that none are, nor can be, righteous before God by works that they can do; therefore 'men must be justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Eighthly, 'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets,' &c., verse 21.

This text utterly excludes the law, what law? The law of works, the moral law (verse 27) and makes mention of another righteousness, even a righteousness of God; for the righteousness of the law is the righteousness of men, 'men's own righteousness,' Phil. 3:9.

Now, if the law, as to a justifying righteousness, is rejected, then the very matter upon and by which man should work is rejected; and if so, then he must be justified by the righteousness of God, or not at all; for he must be justified by a righteousness that is without the law; to wit, the righteousness of God. Now this righteousness of God, whatever it is, to be sure it is not a righteousness that flows from men; for that, as I said, is rejected, and the righteousness of God opposed unto it, being called a righteousness that is without the law, without our personal obedience to it.

The righteousness of God, or a righteousness of God's completing, a righteousness of God's bestowing, a righteousness that God also gives unto, and puts upon, all them that believe (verse 22), a righteousness that stands in the works of Christ, and that is imputed both by the grace and justice of God, Rom. 3:24-26.

Where, now, is room for man's righteousness, either in the whole, or as to any part thereof? I say, where, as to justification with God?

Ninthly, 'What shall we say, then, that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?'

Now the apostle is at the root of the matter; for Abraham is counted the father of the faithful; consequently the man whose way of attaining justification must needs be exemplary to all the children of Abraham.

Now the question is, How Abraham found? how he found that which some of his children sought and missed? Rom. 9:32 that is, how he found justifying righteousness; for it was that which Israel sought, and attained not unto, Rom. 11:7.

'Did he find it (saith Paul) by the flesh?' or, as he was in the flesh? or, by acts and works of the flesh? But what are they? Why, the next verse tells you 'they are the works of the law.'

If Abraham was justified by works, that is, as pertaining to the flesh; for the works of the law are none other but the best sort of the works of the flesh. And so Paul calls all they that he had before his conversion to Christ: 'If any other man (saith he) thinketh he hath whereof he may trust in the flesh, I more.' And then he counteth up several of his privileges, to which he at last adjoineth the righteousness of the moral law, saying, 'Touching the righteousness which is in the law, I was blameless,' Phil. 3:4-6.

And it is proper to call the righteousness of the law the work of the flesh (2 Cor. 3:8), because it is the work of a man, of a man in the flesh; for the Holy Ghost doth not attend the law, or the work thereof, as to this, in man, as man; that has confined itself to another ministration, whose glorious name it bears.

I say, it is proper to call the works of the law the works of the flesh (James 3:10), because they are done by that selfsame nature in and out of which comes all those things that are more grossly so called, Gal. 5:19, 20, to wit, from the corrupt fountain of fallen man's polluted nature.

This, saith he, was not the righteousness by which Abraham found justification with God 'For if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness,' see Rom. 4:2-11. This 'believing' is also set in flat opposition to 'works,' and to the 'law of works'; wherefore, upon pain of great contempt to God, it must not be reckoned as a work to justify withal, but rather as that which receiveth and applieth that righteousness.

From all this, therefore, it is manifest 'that men must be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.' But,

Tenthly, 'Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt,' Rom. 4:4.

These words do not only back what went before, as to the rejection of the law for righteousness as to justification with God; but supposing the law was of force to justify, life must not be admitted to come that way, because of the evil consequences that will unavoidably flow therefrom.

First, By this means, grace, and justification by grace, would be rejected; and that would be a foul business; it would not be reckoned of grace.

Secondly, By this, God would become the debtor, and so the underling; and so we in this the more honourable. It would not be reckoned of grace, but of debt: and what would follow from hence? Why, By this we should frustrate the design of Heaven, which is, to justify us freely by grace, through a redemption brought in by Christ, Rom. 3:24-26; Eph. 2:8-13.

By this we should make ourselves the saviours, and jostle Christ quite out of doors, Gal. 5:2-4.

We should have heaven at our own disposal, as a debt, not by promise, and so not be beholden to God for it, Gal. 3:18. It must, then, be of grace, not of works, for the preventing of these evils. Again; it must not be of works, because if it should, then God would be the debtor, and we the creditor. Now much blasphemy would flow from hence; as, First, God himself would not be his own to dispose of; for the inheritance being God, as well as his kingdom, for so it is written, 'Heirs of God,' Rom. 8:17, himself, I say, must needs be our purchase.

Secondly, If so, then we have right to dispose of him, of his kingdom and glory, and all; ('Be astonished, O heavens, at this!') for if he be ours by works, then he is ours of debt; if he be ours of debt, then he is ours by purchase; and then, again, if so, he is no longer his own, but ours, and at our disposal, &c.

Therefore, for these reasons, were there sufficiency in our personal works to justify us, it would be even inconsistent with the being of God to suffer it. So, then, 'men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Eleventhly, 'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,' Rom. 4:5.

These words shew how we must stand just in the sight of God from the curse of the law, both as it respecteth justification itself, as also the instrument or means that receiveth that righteousness which justifieth.

First, As for that righteousness that justifieth, it is not personal performances in us; for the person here justified stands, in that respect, as one that worketh not, as one that is ungodly.

Secondly, As it respecteth the instrument that receiveth it, that faith, as in the point of justifying righteousness, will not work, but believe, but receive the works and righteousness of another; for works and faith in this are set in opposition 'He doth not work, he doth believe,' Gal. 3:12. He worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth us, ungodly. As Paul also saith in another place, 'The law is not of faith.' And again; Works saith on this wise; faith, far different. The law saith, Do this, and live. But the doctrine of faith saith, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' &c., Rom. 10:5, 10.

Objection: But faith is counted for righteousness.

Answer: True; but yet consider, that by faith we do oft understand the doctrine of remission of sins, as well as the act of believing.

But again; faith when it hath received the Lord Jesus, it hath done that which pleaseth God; therefore, the very act of believing is the most noble in the world; believing sets the crown upon the head of grace; it sets its seal to the truth of the sufficiency of the righteousness of Christ (John 3:33), and giveth all the glory to God; and therefore it is a righteous act: but Christ himself he is the 'Righteousness that justifieth,' Rom. 4:20.

Besides, faith is a relative act, and hath its relation as such: its relation is the righteousness that justifieth, which is therefore called the righteousness of faith, or that with which faith hath to do, Rom. 10:6. Separate these two, and justification cannot be, because faith now wants his righteousness. And hence it is you have so often such sayings as these 'He that believeth in me, he that believeth on him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' John 6:35-40. Faith, then, as separate from Christ, doth nothing; nothing neither with God nor man; because it wants its relative object, but let it go to the Lord Jesus; let it behold him as dying, &c., and it fetches righteousness, and life, and peace out of the virtue of his blood, &c., Acts 10:29, 31, 33; or rather, sees it there as sufficient for me to stand just thereby in the sight of Eternal Justice: 'For him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith (belief) in his blood, with intent to justify him that believeth in Jesus,' Rom. 3:25, 26.

Twelfthly, 'Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works,' Rom. 4:6.

Did our adversaries understand this one text, they would not so boldly affirm, as they do, that the words, 'impute, imputed, imputeth, imputing,' &c., are not used in scripture but to express men really and personally to be that which is imputed unto them; for men are not really and personally faith, yet faith is imputed to men; nay, they are not really and personally sin, nor really and personally righteousness, yet these are imputed to men: so, then, both good things and bad may sometimes be imputed to men, yet themselves be really and personally neither.

But to come to the point: what righteousness hath that man that hath no works? Doubtless none of his own; yet God imputeth righteousness to him. Yea, what works of that man doth God impute to him that he yet justifies as ungodly?

Further, He that hath works as to justification from the curse before God, not one of them is regarded of God; so, then, it mattereth not whether thou hast righteousness of thine own or none.

'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works.' Man's blessedness, then, the blessedness of justification from the curse in the sight of God, lieth not in good works done by us, either before or after faith received, but in a righteousness which God imputeth without works; as we work not, as we are ungodly. 'Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sin is covered,' verse 7. To forgive and to cover are acts of mercy, not the cause of our merit. Besides, where sin is real, there can be no perfect righteousness; but the way of justification must be through perfect righteousness, therefore by another than our own, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin,' verse 8.

The first cause, then, of justification before God dependeth upon the will of God, who will justify because he will; therefore the meritorious cause must also be of his own providing, else his will cannot herein be absolute; for if justification depend upon our personal performances, then not upon the will of God. He may not have mercy upon whom he will, but on whom man's righteousness will give him leave, Rom. 9:15, 18. But his will, not ours, must rule here; therefore his righteousness, and his only. So, then, 'men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Having passed over these few scriptures, I shall come to particular instances of persons who have been justified; and shall briefly touch their qualifications in the act of God's justifying them.

First, By the Old Testament types.

Secondly, By the New.

First, By the Old.

'And unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them,' Gen. 3:21.

In the beginning of this chapter you find these two persons reasoning with the serpent, the effect of which discourse was, 'They take of the forbidden fruit, and so break the command of God,' verses 7-15. This done, they hide themselves, and cover their nakedness with aprons. But God finds out their sin, from the highest branch even to the roots thereof.

What followeth? Not one precept by which they should by works obtain the favour of God, but the promise of a Saviour; of which promise this 21st verse is a mystical interpretation: 'The Lord God made them coats of skins, and clothed them,' verse 21.

Hence observe,

First, That these coats were made, not before, but after they had made themselves aprons; a plain proof their aprons were not sufficient to hide their shame from the sight of God.

Secondly, These coats were made, not of Adam's inherent righteousness, for that was lost before by sin, but of the skins of the slain lambs, types of the death of Christ, and of the righteousness brought in thereby 'By whose stripes we are healed,' Isa. 53.

Thirdly, This is further manifest; for the coats, God made them; and for the persons, God clothed them therewith; to shew that as the righteousness by which we must stand just before

God from the curse is a righteousness of Christ's performing, not of theirs; so he, not they, must put it on them also, for of God we are in Christ, and of God his righteousness is made ours, 1 Cor. 1:30.

But, I say, if you would see their antecedent qualifications, you find them under two heads

First, Rebellion.

Second, Hypocrisy.

Rebellion, in breaking God's command; hypocrisy, in seeking how to hide their faults from God. Expound this by gospel language, and then it shews 'that men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Secondly, 'The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering,' Gen. 4:4.

By these words we find the person first accepted, 'The Lord had respect unto Abel.' And indeed, where the person is not first accepted, the offering will not be pleasing; the altar sanctifies the gift, and the temple sanctifieth the gold, Matt. 23:16-21; so the person, the condition of the person, is that which makes the offering either pleasing or despising. In the epistle to the Hebrews it is said, 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous,' Heb. 11:4. Righteous before he offered his gift, as his sacrifice testified; for God accepted of it.

By faith he offered. Wherefore faith was precedent, or before he offered. Now faith hath to do with God through Christ; not with him through our works of righteousness. Besides, Abel was righteous before he offered, before he did do good, otherwise God would not have testified of his gift. 'By faith he obtained witness that he was righteous,' for God approved of his gifts. Now faith, I say, as to our standing quit before the Father, respects the promise of forgiveness of sins through the undertaking of the Lord Jesus. Wherefore Abel's faith as to justifying righteousness before God looked not forward to what should be done by himself, but back to the promise of the seed of the woman, that was to destroy the power of hell, 'and to redeem them that were under the law,' Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4, 5. By this faith he shrouds himself under the promise of victory, and the merits of the Lord Jesus. Now being there, God finds him righteous; and being righteous, 'he offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than his brother'; for Cain's person was not first accepted through the righteousness of faith going before, although he seemed foremost as to personal acts of righteousness, Gen. 4. Abel therefore was righteous before he did good works, but that could not be but alone through that respect God had to him for the sake of the Messiah promised before, Gen. 3:15. But the Lord's so respecting Abel presupposeth that at that time he stood in himself by the law a sinner, otherwise he needed not to be respected for and upon the account of another. Yea, Abel also, forasmuch as he acted faith before he offered sacrifice, must thereby entirely respect the promise, which promise was not grounded upon a condition of works to be found in Abel, but in and for the sake of the seed of the woman, which is Christ, Gal. 4:4; which promise he believed, and so took it for granted that this Christ should break the serpent's head, that is, destroy by himself the works of the devil; to wit, sin, death, the curse, and hell. By this faith he stood before God righteous, because he had put on Christ; and being thus, he offered; by which act of faith God declared he was pleased with him, because he accepted of his sacrifice.

Thirdly, 'And the Lord said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger,' Gen. 25:23. These words, after Paul's exposition, are to be understood of justification in the sight of God, according to the purpose and decree of electing love, which had so determined long before that one of these children should be received to eternal grace; but mark, not by works of righteousness which they should do, but 'before they had done either good or evil'; otherwise 'the purpose of God'

according to election, not of works, but of him that calleth, 'could not stand,' but fall in pieces, Rom. 9:10-12. But none are received into eternal mercy but such as are just before the Lord by a righteousness that is complete; and Jacob having done no good, could by no means have that of his own, and therefore it must be by some other righteousness, 'and so himself be justified from the curse in the sight of God while a sinner in himself.'

Fourthly, The same may be said concerning Solomon, whom the Lord loved with special love as soon as born into the world (2 Sam. 12:24, 25), which he also confirmed with signal characters. 'He sent (saith the Holy Ghost) by the hand of Nathan the prophet, and he called his name Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him.' Was this love of God extended to him because of his personal virtues? No, verily; for he was yet an infant. He was justified then in the sight of God from the curse by another than his own righteousness.

Fifthly, 'And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live,' Ezek. 16:6. The state of this people you have in the former verses described, both as to their rise and practice in the world, verses 1-5.

(1.) As to their rise. Their original was the same with Canaan, the men of God's curse, Gen. 9:25. Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; the same with other carnal men, Rom. 3:9. 'Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite.'

(2.) Their condition, that is shewed us by this emblem

They had not been washed in water. 2. They had not been swaddled. 3. They had not been salted. 4. They brought filth with them into the world. 5. They lay polluted in their cradle. 6. They were without strength to help themselves. Thus they appear and come by generation.

Again, as to their practice

They polluted themselves in their own blood. 2. They so continued till God passed by 'And when I passed by thee, I saw thee polluted in thine own blood' in thy blood, in thy blood; it is doubled.

Thus we see they were polluted born, they continued in their blood till the day that the Lord looked upon them; polluted, I say, to the loathing of their persons, &c. Now this was the time of love 'And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live.'

Quest. But how could a holy God say, live, to such a sinful people?

Answer: Though they had nought but sin, yet he had love and righteousness. He had, 1) Love to pity them; 2) Righteousness to cover them: 'Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love,' Ezek. 16:8. What follows? 1) 'I spread my skirt over thee'; and, 2) 'Covered thy nakedness'; yea, 3) 'I sware unto thee'; and, 4) 'Entered into covenant with thee'; and, 5) 'Thou becamest mine.' My love pitied thee; my skirt covered thee. Thus God delivered them from the curse in his sight. 'Then I washed thee with water (after thou wast justified); yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and anointed thee with oil,' verse 9. Sanctification, then, is consequential, justification goes before the Holy Ghost by this scripture setteth forth to the life, free grace to the sons of men while they themselves are sinners. I say, while they are unwashed, unswaddled, unsalted, but bloody sinners; for by these words, 'not washed, not salted, not swaddled,' he setteth forth their un sanctified state; yea, they were not only un sanctified, but also cast out, without pity, to the loathing of their persons; yea, 'no eye pitied them, to do any of these things for them'; no eye but his whose glorious grace is unsearchable; no eye but his who could look and love; all others looked and loathed; but blessed be God that hath passed by us in that day that we wallowed in our own blood; and blessed be God for the skirt of his glorious righteousness wherewith he covered us when we lay before him naked in blood. It was when we were in our blood that he loved us; when we were in our blood he said, Live. Therefore, 'men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Sixthly, 'Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the angel,' Zech. 3:3.

The standing of Joshua here is as men used to stand that were arraigned before a judge. 'Joshua stood before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him,' verse 1. The same posture as Judas stood in when he was to be condemned 'Set thou (saith David) a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand,' Ps. 109:6-8. Thus therefore Joshua stood. Now Joshua was clothed (not with righteousness, but) with filthy rags! Sin upon him, and Satan by him, and this before the angel! What must he do now? Go away? No; there he must stand. Can he speak for himself? Not a word; guilt had made him dumb, Isa. 53:12. Had he no place clean? No; he was clothed with filthy garments.

But his lot was to stand before Jesus Christ, that maketh intercession for transgressors 'And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke thee, Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee,' Zech. 3:2. Thus Christ saveth from present condemnation those that be still in their sin and blood.

But is he now quit? No; he standeth yet in filthy garments; neither can he, by aught that is in him, or done by him, clear himself from him. How then? Why, the Lord clothes him with change of raiment: the iniquities were his own, the raiment was the Lord's 'This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.' We will not here discourse of Joshua's sin, what it was, or when committed; it is enough to our purpose that he was clothed with filthy garments, and that the Lord made a change with him by causing his iniquity to pass from him, and by clothing him with change of raiment. But what had Joshua antecedent to this glorious and heavenly clothing? The devil at his right hand to resist him, and himself in filthy garments 'Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake to those that stood before him saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment,' verses 3, 4.

But to pass the Old Testament types, and to come to the New.

First, 'And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might go with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things God hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee,' Mark 5:18, 19.

The present state of this man is sufficiently declared in these particulars

He was possessed with a devil; with devils, with many; with a whole legion, which some say is six thousand, or thereabouts.

These devils had so the mastery of him as to drive him from place to place into the wilderness among the mountains, and so to dwell in the tombs among the dead, Luke 8.

He was out of his wits; he would cut his flesh, break his chains, nay, 'no man could tame him,' Mark 5:7.

When he saw Jesus, the devil in him, as being lord and governor there, cried out against the Lord Jesus. In all this what qualification shews itself as precedent to justification? None but such as devils work, or as rank Bedlams have. Yet this poor man was dispossessed, taken into God's compassion, and was bid to shew it to the world 'Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee'; which last words, because they are added over and above his being dispossessed of the devils, I understand to be the fruit of electing love 'I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion,' which blesseth us with the mercy of a justifying righteousness; and all this, as by this is manifest, without the

least precedent qualification of ours.

Secondly, 'And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both,' Luke 7:42.

The occasion of these words was, for that the Pharisee murmured against the woman that washed Jesus' feet, because 'she was a sinner,' (verse 37); for so said the Pharisee, and so saith the Holy Ghost; but saith Christ, Simon, I will ask thee a question 'A certain man had two debtors. The one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both,' verse 38.

Hence I gather these conclusions

That men that are wedded to their own righteousness understand not the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. This is manifested by the poor Pharisee; he objected against the woman because she was a sinner.

Let Pharisees murmur still, yet Christ hath pity and mercy for sinners.

Yet Jesus doth not usually manifest mercy until the sinner hath nothing to pay 'And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly (or freely, or heartily) forgave them both.' If they had nothing to pay, then they were sinners; but he forgiveth no man but with respect to a righteousness; therefore that righteousness must be another's; for in the very act of mercy they are found sinners. They had nothing but debt, nothing but sin, nothing to pay: 'Then they were justified freely by grace, through that redemption that is in Jesus Christ.' So, then, 'men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Thirdly, 'And when he saw their faith, he said unto the man, Thy sins are forgiven thee,' Luke 5:20.

This man had not righteousness to stand just before God withal, for his sins as yet remained unforgiven; wherefore, seeing guilt remained until Christ remitted him, he was discharged while ungodly.

And observe it, the faith here mentioned is not to be reckoned so much the man's, as the faith of them that brought him; neither did it reach to the forgiveness of sins, but to the miracle of healing; yet this man in this condition had his sins forgiven him.

But again; set the case the faith was only his (as it was not), and that it reached to the doctrine of forgiveness, yet it did it without respect to righteousness in himself; for guilt lay still upon him, he had now his sins forgiven him.

But this act of grace was a surprisal; it was unlooked for: 'I am found of them that sought me not,' Isa. 65. They came for one thing, he gave them another; they came for a cure upon his body, but, to their amazement, he cured first his soul: 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'

Besides, to have his sins forgiven betokeneth an act of grace; but grace and works as to this are opposite, Rom. 11:6; therefore 'men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Fourthly, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son,' Luke 15:21.

What this man was, is sufficiently declared in verse 13, &c. As first, a riotous spender of all of time, talent, body, and soul.

He added to this his rebellion great contempt of his father's house, he joined himself to a stranger, and became an associate with swine, verses 15, 17.

At last, indeed, he came to himself. But then observe, 1) He sought not justification by personal

performances of his own; 2) Neither did he mitigate his wickedness; 3) Nor excuse himself before his father, but first resolveth to confess his sin; and coming to his Father, did confess it, and, that with aggravating circumstances: 'I have sinned against heaven; I have sinned against thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son,' verse 18. Now what he said was true or false; if true, then he had not righteousness; if false, he could not stand just in the sight of his father by virtue of his own performances. And, indeed, the sequel of the parable clears it. His father said to his servant, 'Bring forth the best robe,' the justifying righteousness, 'and put it upon him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet,' verse 22. This best robe, then, being in the father's house, was not in the prodigal's heart; neither stayed the father for further qualifications, but put it upon him as he was, surrounded with sin and oppressed with guilt. Therefore 'men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

Fifthly, 'For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost,'
Luke 19:10.

The occasion of these words was, for that the Pharisees murmured because 'Jesus was gone to be a guest to one that was a sinner,' yea, a sinner of the publicans, and these words are most fitly applied to the case in hand. For though Zaccheus climbed the tree, yet Jesus Christ found him first, and called him down by his name; adding withal, 'For today I must abide at thy house'; which being opened by verse 9, is as much as to say, I am come to be thy salvation. Now this being believed by Zaccheus, he made haste and came down, and 'received him joyfully.' And not only so, but to declare to all the simplicity of his faith, and that he unfeignedly accepted of this word of salvation, he said unto the Lord, and that before all present, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation (a supposition intimating an affirmative), I restore him fourfold.' This being thus, Christ doubleth his comfort, saying to him also, and that before the people, 'This day is salvation come to this house.' Then, by adding the next words, he expounds the whole of the matter, 'For I am come to seek and save that which was lost' to seek it till I find it, to save it when I find it. He finds them that sought him not, Rom. 10:20; and, as in the case of Zaccheus, behold me! to a people that asked not after him. So, then, seeing Jesus findeth this publican first, preaching salvation to him before he came down from the tree, it is evident he received this as he was a sinner; from which faith flowed his following words and works as a consequence.

Sixthly, 'Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, This day shalt thou be with me in paradise,'
Luke 23:43.

This was spoken to the thief upon the cross, who had lived in wickedness all his days; neither had he so much as truly repented, no, not till he came to die; nay, when he first was hanged he then fell to railing on Christ. For though Luke leaves it out, beginning but at his conversion; yet by Matthew's relating the whole tragedy, we find him at first as bad as the other, Matt. 27:44. This man, then, had no moral righteousness, for he had lived in the breach of the law of God. Indeed, by faith he believed Christ to be King, and that when dying with him. But what was this to a personal performing the commandments? or of restoring what he had oft taken away? Yea, he confesseth his death to be just for his sin; and so leaning upon the mediation of Christ he goeth out of the world. Now he that truly confesseth and acknowledgeth his sin, acknowledgeth also the curse to be due thereto from the righteous hand of God. So, then, where the curse of God is due, that man wanteth righteousness. Besides, he that makes to another for help, hath by that condemned his own (had he any) of utter insufficiency. But all these did this poor creature; wherefore he must stand 'just from the law in the sight of God while sinful in himself.'

Seventhly, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Acts 9:6. What wilt thou have me to do? Ignorance is here set forth to the full. He hitherto knew not Jesus, neither what he would have him to do; yet a mighty man for the law of works, and for zeal towards God according to that. Thus you see that he neither knew that Christ was Lord, nor what was his mind and will 'I did it ignorantly, in unbelief,' 1 Tim. 1:13-15. I did not know him; I did not believe he was to save us; I thought I must be saved by living righteously, by keeping the law of God. This thought kept me

ignorant of Jesus, and of justification from the curse by him. Poor Saul! how many fellows hast thou yet alive! every man zealous of the law of works, yet none of them know the law of grace; each of them seeking for life by doing the law, when life is to be had by nought but believing in Jesus Christ.

Eighthly, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,' Acts 16:31.

A little before, we find Paul and Silas in the stocks for preaching of Jesus Christ; in the stocks in the inward prison by the hands of a sturdy jailor; but at midnight, while Paul and his companion sang praises to God, the foundations of the prison shook, and every man's bands were loosed. Now the jailor being awakened by the noise of this shaking, and supposing he had lost his prisoners, drew his sword, with intent to kill himself; 'But Paul cried out, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' In all this relation here is not aught that can justify the jailor. For, His whole life was idolatry, cruelty, and enmity to God. Yea, Even now, while the earthquake shook the prison, he had murder in his heart, yea, and in his intentions too; murder, I say, and that of a high nature, even to have killed his own body and soul at once. Well,

When he began to shake under the fears of everlasting burnings, yet then his heart was wrapped up in ignorance as to the way of salvation by Jesus Christ: 'What must I do to be saved?' He knew not what, no, not he. His condition, then, was this: he neither had righteousness to save him, nor knew he how to get it. Now, what was Paul's answer? Why, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (look for righteousness in Christ), and then thou shalt be saved.' This, then, still holdeth true, 'men are justified from the curse in the sight of God whilst sinners in themselves.'

I should now come to the second conclusion, viz., that this can be done by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by, and remaining with, the person of Christ. But before I speak to that, I will a little further press this, by urging for it several reasons.

The first reason.

First, Men must be justified from the curse while sinners in themselves, because by nature all are under sin 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. He hath concluded all in unbelief; he hath concluded all under sin,' Rom. 3:23; 11:32; Gal. 3:22. Now having sinned, they are in body and soul defiled, and become an unclean thing. Wherefore, whatever they touch with an intent to work out righteousness thereby, they defile that also. And hence, as I have said, all the righteousness they seek to accomplish is but as a menstruous cloth and filthy rags; therefore they are sinners still,' Tit. 1:15; Lev. 15:11; Isa. 64:6.

Indeed, to some men's thinking, the Pharisee is holier than the Publican; but in God's sight, in the eyes of Divine justice, they stand alike condemned 'All have sinned'; there is the poison. Therefore, as to God without Christ all throats are an open sepulchre, Matt. 23:27; Rom. 3:13.

The world in general is divided into two sorts of sinners
The open profane.

The man that seeks life by the works of the law. The profane is judged by all; but the other by a few. Oh! but God judgeth him.

First, For a hypocrite; because that notwithstanding he hath sinned, he would be thought to be good and righteous. And hence it is that Christ calls such kind of holy ones, 'Pharisees hypocrites, Pharisees hypocrites,' because by their gay outside they deceived those that beheld

them. But, saith he, 'God sees your hearts'; you are but like 'painted sepulchers, within you are full of dead men's bones,' Prov. 30:12; Matt. 23:27-30; Luke 11:24; 16:15. Such is the root from whence flows all their righteousness. But doth the blind Pharisee think his state is such? No; his thoughts of himself are far otherwise 'God, I thank thee (saith he) I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this Publican,' Luke 18:11, 12. Ay, but still God judgeth him for a hypocrite.

Secondly, God judgeth him for one that spurneth against Christ, even by every such work he doth. And hence it is, when Paul was converted to Jesus Christ, that he calls the righteousness he had before, madness, blasphemy, injury; because what he did to save himself by works was in direct opposition to grace by Jesus Christ, Phil. 3:7, 8; Acts 23:3, 4; 26:4; 1 Tim. 1:14, 15.

Behold, then, the evil that is in a man's own righteousness!
It curseth and condemneth the righteousness of Christ.

It blindeth the man from seeing his misery.

It hardeneth his heart against his own salvation.

Thirdly, But again, God judgeth such for those that condemn him of foolishness 'The preaching of the cross,' that is, Christ crucified, 'is to them that perish foolishness,' 1 Cor. 1:18, 23. What! saith the merit-monger (mine ears have heard all this), will you look for life by the obedience of another man? Will you trust to the blood that was shed upon the cross, that run down to the ground, and perished in the dust? Thus deridingly they scoff at, stumble upon, and are taken in the gin that attends the gospel; not to salvation, but to their condemnation, Isa. 8:14; because they have condemned the Just, that they might justify their own filthy righteousness.

But, I say, if all have sinned, if all are defiled, if the best of a man's righteousness be but madness, blasphemy, injury; if for their righteousness they are judged hypocrites, condemned as opposers of the gospel, and as such have counted God foolish for sending his Son into the world; then must the best of 'men be justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves'; because they still stand guilty in the sight of God, their hearts are also still filthy infected 'Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God,' Jer. 2:22. It stands marked still before God. So, then, what esteem soever men have of the righteousness of the world, yet God accounts it horrible wickedness, and the greatest enemy that Jesus hath. Wherefore, this vine is the vine of Sodom; these clusters are the clusters of Gomorrah; these grapes are grapes of gall; these clusters are bitter, they are the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps, Matt. 3:7; 23. No marvel, then, if John in his ministry gives the first rebuke and jostle to such, still calling them serpents and vipers, and concluding it is almost impossible they should escape the damnation of hell; for of all sin, man's own righteousness in special bids defiance to Jesus Christ.

The second reason.

Secondly, A second reason why men must stand just in the sight of God from the curse while sinners in themselves is, because of the exactions of the law. For were it granted that men's good works arose from a holy root, and were perfect in their kind, yet the demand of the law, for that is still beyond them, would leave them sinners before the justice of God, 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 7:14-16; Heb. 13:8. And hence it is that holy men stand just in the sight of God from the curse, yet dare not offer their gifts by the law, but through Jesus Christ, knowing that not only their persons, but their spiritual service also, would else be rejected of the heavenly Majesty.

For the law is itself so perfectly holy and good as not to admit of the least failure, either in the matter or manner of obedience 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them. For they that shall keep the whole law, and yet offend

in one point, are guilty of all, and convicted of the law as transgressors,' Gal. 3:10; James 2:9, 10. 'Tribulation, therefore, and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile,' Rom. 2:9.

And observe, the law leaveth thee not to thy choice, when, or when not, to begin to keep it, but requireth thy obedience so soon as concerned, exactly, both as to the matter and manner, and that before thou hast sinned against it; for the first sin breaks the law, John 3:18. Now, if thou sinnest before thou beginnest to do, thou art found by the law a transgressor, and so standest by that convicted of sin; so, then, all thy after-acts of righteousness are but the righteousness of a sinner, of one whom the law hath condemned already. 'The law is spiritual, but thou art carnal, sold under sin,' Rom. 7:14.

Besides, the law being absolutely perfect, doth not only respect the matter and manner as to outward acts, but also the rise and root, the heart, from whence they flow; and an impediment there spoils all, were the executive part never so good 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength,' Mark 12:30. Mark the repetition, with all, with all, with all, with all; with all thy heart, with all thy soul, in all things, at all times, else thou hadst as good do nothing. But 'every imagination of the thought of the heart of man is only evil continually,' Gen. 6:5. The margin hath it, the 'whole imagination, the purposes, and desires'; so that a good root is here wanting. 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' Jer. 17:9. What thoughts, words, or actions can be clean, sufficiently to answer a perfect law, that flows from this original; it is impossible. 'Men must therefore be justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.'

But further yet to open the case. There are several things that make it impossible that a man should stand just in the sight of God but while sinful in himself.

First, Because the law under which he at present stands, holds him under the dominion of sin; for sin by the law hath dominion over all that are under the law, Rom. 6:14. Dominion, I say, both as to guilt and filth. Guilt hath dominion over him, because he is under the curse; and filth, because the law giveth him no power, neither can he by it deliver his soul. And for this cause it is that it is called beggarly, weak, unprofitable; imposing duty, but giving no strength, Gal. 3:2; 4:9; expecting the duty should be complete, yet bendeth not the heart to do the work; to do it, I say, as is required, Rom. 8:3. And hence it is again that it is called a void of words, Heb. 12:14; for as words that are barely such are void of spirit and quickening life, so are the impositions of the law of works. Thus far, therefore, the man remains a sinner. But,

Secondly, The law is so far from giving life or strength to do it, that it doth quite the contrary. For, It weakeneth, it discourageth, and dishearteneth the sinner, especially when it shews itself in its glory; for then it is the ministration of death, and killeth all the world. When Israel saw this, they fled from the face of God; they could not endure that which was commanded; yea, so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake,' Exod. 20:18, 19; Heb. 12:20, 21. Yea, almost forty years after, Moses stood amazed to find himself and Israel yet alive 'Did ever people,' said he, 'hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast done, and live?' Deut. 4:32, 33.

Alas! he who boasteth himself in the works of the law, he doth not hear the law; when that speaks, it shakes Mount Sinai, and writeth death upon all faces, and makes the church itself cry out, A mediator! else we die, Exod. 20:19; Deut. 5:25-27; 18:15, 19.

It doth not only thus discourage, but abundantly increaseth every sin.

(1.) Sin takes the advantage of being by the law; the motions of sin are by the law. Where no law is, there is no transgression, Rom. 4:15; 7:5.

(2.) Sin takes an occasion to live by the law: 'When the commandment came, sin revived; for without the law, sin is dead,' Rom. 7:8, 9.

(3.) Sin takes an occasion to multiply by the law: 'The law entered, that the offence might abound,' Rom. 5:20.

(4.) 'And the strength of sin is the law,' 1 Cor. 15:56.

(5.) 'Sin by the commandment is become' outrageous, 'exceeding sinful,' Rom. 7:7, 8. 'What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law, sin is dead.'

These things, then, are not infused or operated by the law from its own nature or doctrine, but are occasioned by the meeting of, and having to do with, a thing directly opposite. 'The law is spiritual, I am carnal'; therefore every imposition is rejected and rebelled against. Strike a steel against a flint, and the fire flies about you; strike the law against a carnal heart, and sin appears, sin multiplies, sin rageth, sin is strengthened. And hence ariseth all these doubts, murmurings, and sinful complainings that are found in the hearts of the people of God; they have too much to do with the law; the law of works is now in the conscience, imposing duty upon the carnal part. This is the reason of the noise that you hear, and of the sin that you see, and of the horror that you feel in your own souls when tempted. But to pass this digression.

The law, then, having to do with carnal men, by this they become worse sinners than before; for their heart now recoileth desperately, opposeth blasphemously; it giveth way to despair; and then, to conclude, there is no hope for hereafter; and so goeth on in a sordid, ungodly course of life, till his time is come to die and be damned, unless a miracle of grace prevent. From all this I conclude, that 'a man cannot stand just from the curse in the sight of God but while sinful in himself.' But,

Thirdly, As the law giveth neither strength nor life to keep it, so it neither giveth nor worketh repentance unto life if thou break it, Do this and live, break it and die; this is the voice of the law. All the repentance that such men have, it is but that of themselves, the sorrow of the world (2 Cor. 7:10) that endeth in death, as Cain's and Judas's did, even such a repentance as must be repented of either here or ill hell-fire.

Fourthly, As it giveth none, so it accepteth none of them that are under the law, Gal. 5:9. Sin and die, is for ever its language; there is no middle way in the law; they must bear their judgment, whosoever they be, that stand and fall to the law. Therefore Cain was a vagabond still, and Judas hangeth himself; their repentance could not save them, they fell headlong under the law, Gen. 4:9-11; Matt. 27:3. The law stays no man from the due reward of his deeds; it hath no ears to hear nor heart to pity its penitent ones.

Fifthly, By the law, God will shew no mercy; for, 'I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,' is the tenour of another covenant, Heb. 8:9, 10, &c. But by the law I regard them not, saith the Lord. For,

Sixthly, All the promises annexed to the law are by the first sin null and void. Though then a man should live a thousand years twice told, and all that while fulfil the law, yet having sinned first, he is not at all the better. Our legalists, then, begin to talk too soon of having life by the law: let them first begin without sin, and so throughout continue to death, and then if God will save them, not by Christ, but works, contrary to the covenant of grace, they may hope to go to heaven.

But, lastly, to come close to the point. Thou hast sinned; the law now calls for passive as well as active obedience; yea, great contentedness in all thou sufferest for thy transgressing against the law. So, then, wilt thou live by the law? Fulfil it, then, perfectly till death, and afterwards go to hell and be damned, and abide there till the law and curse for thy sin be satisfied for; and then, but not till then, thou shalt have life by the law.

Tell me now, you that desire to be under the law, can you fulfil all the commands of the law, and after answer all its demands? Can you grapple with the judgment of God? Can you wrestle with the Almighty? Are you stronger than he that made the heavens, and that holdeth angels in everlasting chains? 'Can thine heart endure, or can thy hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? I, saith the Lord, have spoken it; I will do it,' Ezek. 22:14. Oh, it cannot be! 'These must go away into everlasting punishment,' Matt. 25:46. So, then, 'men must stand just from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves,' or not at all.

Objection: But the apostle saith, 'That the doers of the law shall be justified,' Rom. 2:13, plainly intimating that, notwithstanding all you say, some by doing the law may stand just before God thereby; and if so, then Christ fulfilled it for us but as our example.

Answ. The consequences are not true; for by these words, 'The doers of the law shall be justified,' there is no more proof of a possibility of saving thyself by the law than there is by these: 'For by the works of the law shall no man living be justified in his sight,' Gal. 2:16. The intent, then, of the text objected is not to prove a possibility of man's salvation by the law, but to insinuate rather an impossibility, by asserting what perfections the law requireth. And were I to argue against the pretended sufficiency of man's own righteousness, I would choose to frame mine argument upon such a place as this 'The hearers of the law are not just before God'; therefore the breakers of the law are not just before God; not just, I say, by the law; but all have sinned and broken the law; therefore none by the law are just before God. For if all stand guilty of sin by the law, then that law that judgeth them sinners cannot justify them before God. And what if the apostle had said, 'Blessed are they that continue in all things,' instead of pronouncing a curse for the contrary, the conclusion had been the same; for where the blessing is pronounced, he is not the better that breaks the condition; and where the curse is pronounced, he is not the worse that keeps it. But neither doth the blessing nor curse in the law intend a supposition that men may be just by the law, but rather to shew the perfection of the law, and that though a blessing be annexed thereto, no man by it can obtain that blessing; for not the hearers of the law are justified before God, but the doers, when they do it, shall be justified. None but doers can by it be just before God; but none do the law, no, not one, Rom. 3:10, 11; therefore none by it can stand just before God.

And whereas it is said Christ kept the law as our example, that we by keeping it might get to heaven, as he, it is false, as before was shewn 'He is the end of the law,' or, hath perfectly finished it, 'for righteousness to every one that believeth,' Rom. 10:3, 4.

But a little to travel with this objection: no man can keep the moral law as Christ, unless he be first without sin, as Christ; unless he be God and man, as Christ.

And again; Christ cannot be our pattern in keeping the law for life, because of the disproportion that is between him and us; for if we do it as he when yet we are weaker than he, what is this but to out, vie, outdo, and go beyond Christ? Wherefore we, not he, have our lives exemplary: exemplary, I say, to him; for who doth the greatest work, they that take it in hand in full strength, as Christ; or he that takes it in hand in weakness, as we? Doubtless the last, if he fulfils it as Christ. So, then, by this doctrine, while we call ourselves his scholars, we make ourselves indeed the masters. But I challenge all the angels in heaven, let them but first sin as we have done, to fulfil the law, as Christ, if they can.

But again; if Christ be our pattern in keeping the law for life from the curse before God, then

Christ fulfilled the law for himself; if so, he was imperfect before he fulfilled it. And how far short this is of blasphemy let sober Christians judge; for the righteousness he fulfilled was to justify from sin; but if it was not to justify us from ours, you know what remaineth, Dan. 9:26; Isa. 53:8-10.

But when must we conclude we have kept the law? Not when we begin, because we have sinned first; nor when we are in the middle, for we may afterwards miscarry. But what if a man in this his progress hath one sinful thought? I query, is it possible to come up to the pattern for justification with God? If yea, then Christ had such; if no, then who can fulfil the law as he?

But should I grant that which is indeed impossible, namely, that thou art justified by the law; what then? Art thou now in the favour of God? No, thou art fallen by this thy perfection from the love and mercy of God: 'Whosoever of you are justified by the law are fallen from grace,' Gal. 5:4, 5. He speaks not this to them that are doing, but to such as think they have done it, and shews that the blessing that these have got thereby is to fall from the favour of God. Being fallen from grace, Christ profits them nothing, and so they still stand debtors to do the whole law.

So, then, they must not be saved by God's mercy, nor Christ's merits, but alone by the works of the law. But what should such men do in that kingdom that comes by gift, where grace and mercy reigns? Yea, what should they do among that company that are saved alone by grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ? Let them go to that kingdom that God hath prepared for them that are fallen from grace. 'Cast out the bond-woman, with her son; for he shall not be heir with the son of the promise,' Gal. 4:30.

But to pass this objection. Before I come to the next reason, I shall yet for the further clearing of this urge these scriptures more. The first is that in Gal. 3:10, 'As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.' Behold, how boldly Paul asserts it! And observe it, he saith not here, so many as sin against the law (though that be true), but, 'As many as are of the works of the law.' But what, then, are the works of the law? Not whoredom, murder, theft, and the like; but works that are holy and good, the works commanded in the ten commandments, as to love God, abhor idols, reverence the name of God, keeping the sabbath, honouring thy parents, abstaining from adultery, murder, theft, false-witness, and not to covet what is thy neighbour's, these are the works of the law. Now he, saith Paul, that is of these is under the curse of God. But what is it then to be of these? Why, to be found in the practice of them, and there resting; this is the man that is under the curse: not because the works of the law are wicked in themselves, but because the man that is in the practice of them comes short of answering the exactness of them, and therefore dies for his imperfections, Rom. 2:17.

The second scripture is that of the 11th verse of the same chapter, 'But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.' These words, 'the just shall live by faith,' are taken out of the Old Testament, and are thrice used by this apostle in the New.

To shew that nothing of the gospel can be apprehended but by faith: 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.' 'As it is written, The just shall live by faith,' Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38.

To shew that the way to have relief and succour under temptation is then to live by faith: 'Now the just shall live by faith.'

But in this of the Galatians it is urged to shew that how holy and just soever men be in themselves, yet as such they are dead, and condemned to death by the law before God. 'But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.'

The word 'just,' therefore, in this place in special, respecteth a man that is just, or that so

esteems himself by the law, and is here considered in a double capacity.

First, What he is before men.

Secondly, What he is before God.

As he stands before men, he is just by the law; as Paul before his conversion, Phil. 3:4.

As he stands in the sight of God; so, without the faith of Christ, he cannot be just, as is evident; for the just shall live, not by his justice or righteousness by the law.

This is the true intent of this place,

Because they carry with them a supposition that the just here intended may be excluded life, he falling within the rejection asserted within the first part of the verse. No man is just by the law in the sight of God; for 'the just shall live by faith': his justice cannot make him live, he must live by the faith of Christ. Again,

The words are a reason dissuasive, urged to put a stop to those that are seeking life by the law; as if the apostle had said, Ye Galatians! what are you doing? Would you be saved by keeping the law? Would you stand just before God thereby? Do you not hear the prophets, how they press faith in Jesus, and life by faith in him? Come, I will reason with you,

By way of supposition. Were it granted that you all loved the law, yet that for life will avail you nothing; for, 'the just shall live by faith.'

Were it granted that you kept the law, and that no man on earth could accuse you; were you therefore just before God? No; neither can you live by works before him; for 'the just shall live by faith.' Why not live before him? Because when we have done our best, and are applauded of all the world for just, yet then God sees sin in our hearts: 'He putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight,' Job 4:18. There is then a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, if he want the faith of Christ, Job 15:15; for that no man is 'justified by the law in the sight of God it is evident; for, the just shall live by faith'; and the law is not of faith.

The third scripture is this 'We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,' Gal. 2:15, 16.

These words are the result of the experienced Christians in the primitive times; yea, of those among them that had given up themselves before to the law, to get life and heaven thereby; the result, I say, of believing Jews, we who are Jews by nature. But how are they distinguished from the Gentiles? Why, they are such that rest in the law, and make their boast of God; that know his will, and approve the things that are excellent; that are guides to the blind, and a light to them that are in darkness; that are instructors of the foolish, teachers of babes, and which have the form of knowledge, and of the truth of the law,' Rom. 2:17-19.

How far these attained we find by that of the Pharisee I pray, I fast, I give tithes of all; and by the young man in the gospel 'All these have I kept from my youth up,' Luke 18:11, 12; and by that of Paul 'Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless,' Phil. 3. This was the Jew by nature, to do and trust in this. Now these attaining afterwards the sound knowledge of sin, the depravedness of nature, and the exactions of the law, fled from the command of the law to the Lord Jesus for life. We know it; we that are taught of God, and that have found it by sad experience, we, even we, have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.

Surely, if righteousness had come by the law, Paul and the Jews had found it, they being by many privileges far better than the sinners of the Gentiles; but these, when they received the word of the gospel, even these now fly to Christ from the law, that they might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.

To conclude this. If righteous men, through the knowledge of the gospel, are made to leave the law of God, as despairing of life thereby, surely righteousness is not to be found in the law; I mean that which can justify thee before God from the curse who livest and walkest in the law.

I shall therefore end this second reason with what I have said before 'Men must be justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinful in themselves.'

The third reason.

Thirdly, Another reason why not one under heaven can be justified by the law, or by his own personal performances to it, is, because since sin was in the world God hath rejected the law and the works thereof for life, Rom. 7:10.

It is true, before man had sinned, it was ordained to be unto life; but since, and because of sin, the God of love gave the word of grace. Take the law, then, as God hath established it, to wit, to condemn all flesh, Gal. 3:21; and then there is room for the promise and the law, the one to kill, the other to heal; and so the law is not against the promises, Rom. 4:14; but make the law a justifier, and faith is made void, and the promise is made of none effect; and the everlasting gospel, by so doing, thou endeavourest to root out of the world.

Methinks, since it hath pleased God to reject the law and the righteousness thereof for life, such dust and ashes as we are should strive to consent to his holy will, especially when in the room of this of works there is established a better covenant, and that upon better promises.

The Lord hath rejected the law, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof; for finding fault with them of the law, 'The days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,' &c., Heb. 8:7, 8. Give God leave to find fault with us, and to condemn our personal performances to death, as to our justification before him thereby; let him do it, I say; and the rather, because he doth by the gospel present us with a better. And certainly, if ever he be pleased with us, it will be when he findeth us in that righteousness that is of his own appointing.

To conclude. Notwithstanding all that hath or can be said, there are six things that have great power with the heart to bend it to seek life before God by the law; of all which I would caution that soul to beware that would have happiness in another world.

First, Take heed thou be not made to seek to the law for life, because of that name and majesty of God which thou findest upon the doctrine of the law, Exod. 20:1. God indeed spake all the words of the law, and delivered them in that dread and majesty to men that shook the hearts of all that heard it. Now this is of great authority with some, even to seek for life and bliss by the law: 'We know,' said some, 'that God spake to Moses,' John 9:28, 29. And Saul rejected Christ even of zeal towards God, Acts 22:3. What zeal? Zeal towards God according to the law, which afterwards he left and rejected, because he had found out a better way, Gal. 2:20. The life that he once lived, it was by the law, but afterwards, saith he, the life that I now live it is by faith, by the faith of Jesus Christ. So that, though the law was the appointment of God, and had also his name and majesty upon it, yet now he will not live by the law. Indeed, God is in the law, but yet only as just and holy, not as gracious and merciful; so he is only in Jesus Christ. 'The law,' the word of justice, 'was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,' John 1:17. Wherefore, whatever of God thou findest in the law, yet seeing grace and mercy is not there, let neither the name of God nor that majesty that thou findest of him in the law prevail with thee to seek life by

all the holy commands of the law.

Secondly, Take heed that the law, by taking hold on thy conscience, doth not make thee seek life by the law, Rom. 2:13-15. The heart of man is the seat of the law; this being so, the understanding and conscience must needs be in danger of being bound by the law. Man is a law unto himself, and sheweth that the works of the law are written in his heart. Now the law being thus nearly related to man, it easily takes hold of the understanding and conscience; by which hold, if it be not quickly broken off by the promise and grace of the gospel, it is captivated to the works of the law; for conscience is such a thing, that if it once be possessed with a doctrine, yea, though but with the doctrine of an idol (1 Cor. 8:6, 7), it will cleave so fast thereto that nothing but a hand from heaven can loosen it; and if it be not loosed, no gospel can be there embraced. Conscience is Little-ease, if men resist it, whether it be rightly or wrongly informed. How fast, then, will it hold when it knows it cleaves to the law of God! Upon this account the condition of the unbeliever is most miserable; for not having faith in the gospel of grace, through which is tendered the forgiveness of sins, they, like men drowning, hold fast that they have found; which being the law of God, they follow it; but because righteousness flies from them, they at last are found only accursed and condemned to hell by the law, Rom. 9:31, 32. Take heed, therefore, that thy conscience be not entangled by the law.

Thirdly, Take heed of fleshly wisdom. Reasoning suiteth much with the law 'I thought verily that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus,' and so to have sought for life by the law; my reason told me so. For thus will reason say: Here is a righteous law, the rule of life and death; besides, what can be better than to love God, and my neighbour as myself? Again; God hath thus commanded, and his commands are just and good; therefore, doubtless, life must come by the law. Further, to love God and keep the law are better than to sin and break it; and seeing men lost heaven by sin, how should they get it again but by working righteousness? Besides, God is righteous, and will therefore bless the righteous. Oh, the holiness of the law! It mightily swayeth with reason when a man addicteth himself to religion; the light of nature teacheth that sin is not the way to heaven; and seeing no word doth more condemn sin than the words of the ten commandments, it must needs be therefore the most perfect rule for holiness; wherefore, saith reason, the safest way to life and glory is to keep myself close to the law. But a little here to correct. Though the law indeed be holy, yet the mistake as to the matter in hand is as wide as the east from the west; for therefore the law can do thee no good, because it is holy and just; for what can he that hath sinned expect from a law that is holy and just? Nought but condemnation. Let them lean to it while they will, 'there is one that accuseth you,' saith Christ, 'even Moses in whom you trust,' John 5:45.

Fourthly, Man's ignorance of the gospel suiteth well with the doctrine of the law; they, through their being ignorant of God's righteousness, fall in love with that, Rom. 10:1-4. Yea, they do not only suit, but, when joined in act, the one strengtheneth the other that is, the law strengtheneth our blindness, and bindeth the veil more fast about the face of our souls. The law suiteth much our blindness of mind, 'For until this day remains the veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament' (2 Cor. 3:15, 16), especially in the reading of that which was written and engraven on stones, to wit, the ten commandments, that perfect rule for holiness which veil is done away in Christ. But 'even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is over their hearts'; they are blinded by the duties enjoined by the law from the sight and hopes of forgiveness of sins by grace 'Nevertheless when it (the heart) shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.' The law, then, doth veil the heart from Christ, and holds the man so down to doing and working for the kingdom of heaven, that he quite forgets the forgiveness of sins by mercy through Christ. Now this veiling or blinding by the law is occasioned, By reason of the contrariety of doctrine that is in the law to that which was in the gospel. The law requireth obedience to all its demands upon pain of everlasting burning; the gospel promiseth forgiveness of sins to him that worketh not, but believeth. Now the heart cannot receive both these doctrines; it must either let go doing or believing. If it believe, it is dead to doing; if it be set

to doing for life, it is dead to believing. Besides, he that shall think both to do and believe for justification before God from the curse, he seeks for life but as it were by the law, he seeks for life but as it were by Christ; and he being not direct in either, shall for certain be forsaken of both. Wherefore? 'Because he seeks it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law,' Rom. 9:32.

The law veils and blinds by that guilt and horror for sin that seizeth the soul by the law; for guilt, when charged close upon the conscience, is attended with such aggravations, and that with such power and evidence, that the conscience cannot hear, nor see, nor feel anything else but that. When David's guilt for murder and blood did roar by the law in his conscience, notwithstanding he knew much of the grace of the gospel, he could hear nothing else but terror, the sound of blood; the murder of Uriah was the only noise that he heard; wherefore he crieth to God that he would make him hear the gospel: 'Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice,' Psalm 51:8. And as he could not hear, so neither could he see; the law had struck him deaf and blind: 'I am (saith he) not able to look up'; not up to Christ for mercy. As if David had said, O Lord, the guilt of sin, which is by the law, makes such a noise and horror in my conscience, that I can neither hear nor see the word of peace, unless it is spoken with a voice from heaven! The serpents that bit the people in the days of old were types of guilt and sin, Num. 21:6. Now these were fiery serpents, and such as, I think, could fly, Isa. 14:29; wherefore, in my judgment, they stung the people about their faces, and so swelled up their eyes, which made it the more difficult for them to look up to the brazen serpent, which was the type of Christ, John 3:14. Just so doth sin by the law do now; it stings the soul, the very face of the soul, which is the cause that looking up to Jesus, or believing in him, is so difficult a task in time of terror of conscience.

This is not only so at present, but so long as guilt is on the conscience, so long remains the blindness; for guilt standing before the soul, the grace of God is intercepted, even as the sun is hid from the sight of mine eyes by the cloud that cometh between: 'My sin,' said David, 'is ever before me' (Psalm 51:3), and so kept other things out of his sight: sin, I say, when applied by the law. When the law came to Paul, he remained without sight (Acts 9.) until the good man came unto him with the word of forgiveness of sins.

Again; where the law comes with power, there it begetteth many doubts against the grace of God; for it is only a revealer of sin, and the ministration of death; that is, a doctrine that sheweth sin, and condemneth for the same; hence, therefore, as was hinted before, the law being the revealer of sin, where that is embraced, there sin must needs be discovered and condemned, and the soul for the sake of that; further, it is not only a revealer of sin, but that which makes it abound; so that the closer any man sticks to the law for life, the faster sin doth cleave to him. 'That law,' saith Paul, 'which was ordained to be unto life, I found to be unto death' (Rom. 7:10-14); for by the law I became a notorious sinner; I thought to have obtained life by obeying the law, 'but sin taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and thereby slew me.' A strange way of deceivableness, and it is hid from the most of men; but, as I have already told you, you see how it comes to pass.

Man by nature is carnal, and the law itself is spiritual: now betwixt these two ariseth great difference; the law is exceeding good, the heart exceeding bad; these two opposites therefore (the heart so abiding) can by no means agree.

Therefore, at every approach of the law to the heart with intent to impose duty, or to condemn for the neglect thereof; at every such approach the heart starteth back, especially when the law comes home indeed, and is heard in his own language. This being thus, the conscience perceiving this is a fault, begins to tremble at the sense of judgment; the law still continueth to command to duty, and to condemn for the neglect thereof. From this struggling of these two opposites ariseth, I say, those doubts and fears that drive the heart into unbelief, and that make it blind to the word of the gospel, that it can neither see nor understand anything but that it is a

sinner, and that the law must be fulfilled by it if ever it be saved.

But again; another thing that hath great influence upon the heart to make it lean to the law for life is, the false names that Satan and his instruments have put upon it; such as these, to call the law the gospel; conscience, the spirit of Christ; works, faith; and the like: with these, weak consciences have been mightily pestered; yea, thousands deluded and destroyed. This was the way whereby the enemy attempted to overthrow the church of Christ of old; as, namely, those in Galatia and at Corinth, &c., 2 Cor. 11:3, 4, 13, 14. I say, by the feigned notion that the law was the gospel, the Galatians were removed from the gospel of Christ; and Satan, by appropriating to himself and his ministers the names and titles of the ministers of the Lord Jesus, prevailed with many at Corinth to forsake Paul and his doctrine. Where the Lord Jesus hath been preached in truth, and something of his doctrine known, it is not there so easy to turn people aside from the sound of the promise of grace, unless it be by the noise and sound of a gospel. Therefore, I say, the false apostles came thus among the churches: 'another gospel, another gospel'; which, in truth, saith Paul, 'is not another; but some would pervert the gospel of Christ' (Gal. 1:6-8), and thrust that out of doors, by gilding the law with that glorious name. So again, for the ministers of Satan, they must be called the apostles of Christ and ministers of righteousness which thing, I say, is of great force, especially being accompanied with so holy and just a doctrine as the word of the law is; for what better to the eye of reason than to love God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, which doctrine, being the scope of the ten words given on Sinai, no man can contradict; for, in truth, they are holy and good. But here is the poison; to set this law in the room of a mediator, as those do that seek to stand just before God thereby; and then nothing is so dishonourable to Christ, nor of so soul-destroying a nature as the law; for that thus placed hath not only power when souls are deluded, but power to delude, by its real holiness, the understanding, conscience, and reason of a man; and by giving the soul a semblance of heaven, to cause it to throw away Christ, grace, and faith. Wherefore it behoveth all men to take heed of names, and of appearances of holiness and goodness.

Lastly, Satan will yet go further; he will make use of something that may be at a distance from a moral precept, and therewith bring souls under the law. Thus he did with some of old; he did not make the Galatians fall from Christ by virtue of one of the ten words, but by something that was aloof off; by circumcision, days and months, that were Levitical ceremonies; for he knows it is no matter, nor in what Testament he found it, if he can therewith hide Christ from the soul 'Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole law,' Gal. 5:2, 3. Why so, seeing circumcision is not one of the ten words? Why, because they did it in conscience to God, to stand just before him thereby. Now here we may behold much cunning of the devil; he begins with some at a distance from that law which curseth, and so by little and little bringeth them under it; even as by circumcision the Galatians were at length brought under the law that condemneth all men to the wrath and judgment of God. I have often wondered when I have read how God crieth out against the Jews for observing his own commandment (Isa. 1); but I perceive by Paul that by these things a man may reject and condemn the Lord Jesus; which those do that for life set up aught, whether moral or other institution, besides the faith of Jesus.

Let men therefore warily distinguish betwixt names and things, betwixt statute and commandment, lest they by doing the one transgress against the other, 2 Cor. 1:19, 20. Study, therefore, the nature and end of the law with the nature and end of the gospel; and if thou canst keep them distinct in thy understanding and conscience, neither names nor things, neither statutes nor commandments, can draw thee from the faith of the gospel. And that thou mayest yet be helped in this matter, I shall now come to speak to the second conclusion.

The second position.

That men can be justified from the curse before God while sinners in themselves by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by, and remaining with, the person of Christ.

For the better prosecuting of this position, I shall observe two things
That the righteousness by which we stand just before God from the curse was performed by the person of Christ.

That this righteousness is inherent only in him.
As to the first of these, I shall be but brief.

Now, that the righteousness that justifieth us was performed long ago by the person of Christ, besides what hath already been said, is further manifest thus

He is said to have purged our sins by himself 'When he had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of God,' Heb. 1:2, 3. I have shewed that in Christ, for the accomplishing of righteousness, there was both doing and suffering; doing, to fulfil all the commands of the law; suffering, to answer its penalty for sin. This second is that which in this to the Hebrews is in special intended by the apostle, where he saith, he hath 'purged our sins,' Heb. 9:14; that is, by his precious blood; for it is that alone can purge our sins, either out of the sight of God or out of the sight of the soul. Now this was done by himself, saith the apostle; that is, in or by his personal doings and sufferings. And hence it is that when God had rejected the offerings of the law, he said, 'Lo, I come. A body hast thou prepared me, to do thy will, O God,' Heb. 10:5-8. Now by this will of God, saith the Scripture, we are sanctified. By what will? Why, by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ; for that was God's will, that thereby we might be a habitation for him; as he saith again 'Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate,' Heb. 13:12.

As it is said, he hath purged our sins by himself, so it was by himself at once 'For by one offering hath he perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Now by this word 'at once,' or by 'one offering,' is cut off all those imaginary sufferings of Christ which foolish men conceive of; as, that he in all ages hath suffered, or suffereth for sin in us. No; he did this work but once: 'Not that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world,' in the time of Pilate, 'hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,' Heb. 9:25, 26. Mark how to the purpose the Holy Ghost expresseth it: he hath suffered but once; and that once, now; now once; now he is God and man in one person; now he hath taken the body that was prepared of God; now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

It further appears, in that by his resurrection from the dead, the mercies of God are made sure to the soul, God declaring by that, as was said before, how well pleased he is by the undertaking of his Son for the salvation of the world: 'And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give thee the sure mercies of David,' Acts 13:34. For Christ being clothed with man's flesh, and undertaking for man's sins, did then confirm all sure to us by his resurrection from the dead. So that by the rising of that man again, mercy and grace are made sure to him that hath believed on Jesus. Wherefore, from these things, together with what hath been discovered about his addressing himself to the work, I conclude 'That men can be justified from the curse before God while sinners in themselves by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by the person of Christ.' Now the conclusion is true, from all show of contradiction; for the Holy Ghost saith, he hath done it; hath done it by himself, and that by the will of God, at once, even then when he took the prepared body upon him 'By the will of God we are sanctified, through the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.'

This being so, the second position is also manifest, namely, that the righteousness by which we stand just from the curse before God is only inherent in Jesus Christ. For if he hath undertaken to bring in a justifying righteousness, and that by works and merits of his own, then that

righteousness must of necessity be inherent in him alone, and ours only by imputation; and hence it is called, in that fifth to the Rom., the gift, the 'gift of righteousness'; because neither wrought nor obtained by works of ours, but bestowed upon us, as a garment already prepared, by the mercy of God in Christ, Rom. 5:17; Isa. 11:10.

There are four things that confirm this for a truth

First, This righteousness is said to be the righteousness of one, not of many; I mean of one properly and personally, as his own particular personal righteousness. The gift of grace, which is the gift of righteousness, it is 'by one man, Jesus Christ. Much more they that receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,' Rom. 5:15-19. Mark, the righteousness of one, the obedience of one; the righteousness of one man, of one man, Jesus. Wherefore, the righteousness that justifieth a sinner, it is personally and inherently the righteousness of that person only who by works and acts of obedience did complete it, even the obedience of one, of one man, Jesus Christ; and so ours only by imputation. It is improper to say, Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit was personally and inherently an act of mine. It was personally his, and imputatively mine; personally his, because he did it; imputatively mine, because I was then in him. Indeed, the effects of his personal eating is found in my person, to wit, defilement and pravity; the effects also of the imputation of Christ's personal righteousness are truly found in those that are in him by electing love and unfeigned faith, even holy and heavenly dispositions: but a personal act is one thing, and the effects of that another. The act may be done by, and be only inherent in one; the imputation of the merit of the act, as also the effects of the same, may be in a manner universal, extending itself unto the most, or all. This the case of Adam and Christ doth manifest the sin of one is imputed to his posterity; the righteousness of the other is reckoned the righteousness of those that are his.

Secondly, The righteousness by which we stand just before God from the curse is called 'The righteousness of the Lord the righteousness of Goethe righteousness of Jesus Christ,' &c., Phil. 3:6-8; and that by way of opposition to the righteousness of God's own holy law 'That I might be found in him, not having on my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.' Now by this opposition, as by what was said before, the truth is made exceeding clear; for by these words, 'not having my own righteousness,' is not only excluded what qualifications we suppose to be in us, but the righteousness through which we stand just in the sight of God by them is limited and confined to a person absolutely distinct. Distinct, I say, as to his person and performances, who here is called God and Jesus Christ; as he saith also in the prophet Isaiah, 'In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,' Isa. 45:25; 54:17. In the Lord, not in the law; in the Lord, not in themselves. 'And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord': of me, not of themselves; of me, not of the law. And again; 'Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.' Now, as I have already said, all this is to be understood of the righteousness that was fulfilled by acts and works of obedience, which the person of the Son of God accomplished in the days of his flesh in the world; by that man, I say, 'The Lord our righteousness,' Jer. 23:6. Christ indeed is naturally and essentially righteousness; but as he is simply such, so he justifieth no man; for then he need not to bear our sins in his flesh, and become obedient in all points of the law for us; but the righteousness by which we stand just before God is a righteousness consisting of works and deeds, of the doings and sufferings of such a person who also is essentially righteousness. And hence, as before I have hinted, we are said to be justified by the obedience and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the doings and sufferings of the Son of God. And hence again it is that he first is called King of righteousness; that is, a King of righteousness as God-man, which of necessity supposeth his personal performances; and after that, 'King of peace,' Heb. 7:1-3; for what he is naturally and eternally in his Godhead he is not to us, but himself; but what he is actively and by works, he is not to himself, but to us; so, then, he is neither King of righteousness nor of peace to

us, as he is only the Eternal Son of the Father, without his being considered as our priest and undertaker 'He hath obtained,' by works of righteousness, 'eternal redemption for us,' Heb. 9:12. So, then, the righteousness by which we stand just before God is a righteousness inherent (only) in Christ, because a righteousness performed by him alone.

Now that righteousness by which we stand just before God must be a righteousness consisting of personal performances; the reason is, because persons had sinned, this the nature of justice requireth, that 'since by man came death, by man should come also the resurrection from the dead,' 1 Cor. 15:21. The angels, therefore, for this very reason, abide under the chains of everlasting darkness, because he 'took not hold on them,' Heb. 2:16, 17; that is, by fulfilling righteousness for them in their nature: that is a blessed word, to you 'To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,' Luke 2:11; to you, not to angels; to you is born a Saviour.

Thirdly, It is yet further evident that the righteousness by which we stand just before God from the curse is a righteousness inherent, not in us, but Christ; because it is a righteousness inherent, not in us, but Christ; because it is a righteousness besides, and without the law itself. Now take away the law, and you take away the rule of righteousness. Again; take away the rule, and the act as to us must cease: 'But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets,' Rom. 3:21. So, then, by such a righteousness we are justified as is not within the power of the law to command of us.

Quest. But what law is that which hath not power to command our obedience in the point of our justification with God?

Answ. The moral law, or that called the ten commandments. Therefore we are neither commanded to love God, or our neighbour, as the means or part of our justifying righteousness; nay, he that shall attempt to do these things to be delivered from the curse thereby, by the scripture is holden accused of God: 'As many as are of the works,' or duties, 'of the law, are under the curse,' &c., Gal. 3:10. Because we are justified not by that of the law, but by the righteousness of God without the law; that is, without its commanding of us, without our obedience to it: 'Freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood,' Rom. 3:24, 25. This is the righteousness of God without the law; that is, without any of our obedience to the law. Wherefore the righteousness by which we stand just in the sight of God cannot be inherent in us, but in Christ the King thereof.

Fourthly, This is further made apparent by the capacity that God will consider that soul in to whom he imputeth justifying righteousness; and that is, 'as one that worketh not,' as one that stands 'ungodly in the judgment of the law,' Rom. 4:4, 5. But this I have handled before, and therefore shall pass it here.

Fifthly, to conclude: If any works of ours could justify us before God, they would be works after faith received; but it is evident that these do not; therefore the righteousness that justifies us from the curse before God is a righteousness inherent only in Christ.

That works after faith do not justify us from the curse in the sight of God is evident Because no works of the saints can be justified by the moral law, considering it as the law of works for life, Gal. 3:10. For this must stand a truth for ever, Whatsoever justifieth us must be justified by the moral law, for that is it that pronounceth the curse; unless, then, that curse be taken away by the work, the work cannot justify us before God, Rom. 3:21. But the curse cannot be taken away but by a righteousness that is first approved of by that law that so curseth; for if that shall yet complain for want of a full satisfaction, the penalty remaineth. This is evident to reason, and confirmed by the authority of God's word, as hath been already proved; because the

law, once broken, pronounceth death, expecteth death, and executeth the same on him that will stand to the judgment of the law; but no work of a believer is capable of answering this demand of the law; therefore none of his works can justify him before God; for the law, that notwithstanding complaineth.

No works of faith can justify us from the curse before God, because of the want of perfection that is in the greatest faith in us. Now if faith be not perfect, the work cannot be perfect; I mean, with that perfection as to please Divine justice. Consider the person, one that hath to do with God immediately by himself. Now, that faith is not capable of this kind of perfection it is evident, because when men here know most, they know but in part, 1 Cor. 8:2; 13:12. Now he that knows but in part, can do but in part; and he that doth but in part, hath a part wanting in the judgment of the justice of God. So, then, when thou hast done all thou canst, thou hast done but part of thy duty, and so art short of justification from the curse by what thou hast done.

Besides, it looks too like a monster that the works of faith should justify us before God; because then faith is turned, as it were, with its neck behind it. Faith, in its own nature and natural course, respecteth the mercy of God through the Mediator Jesus Christ, and, as such, its virtue and excellency is to expect justification by grace through him; but by this doctrine faith is turned round about, and now makes a life out of what itself hath done: but methinks faith should be as noble as its fruits, that being the first, and they but the fruits of that.

Besides, seeing the work is only good because it floweth from faith, for faith purifieth the heart (Acts 15:9), therefore faith is it that justifies all its works. If, then, we be justified by either, it is by faith, and not by his works; unless we will say there is more virtue in the less than in the greater. Now what is faith but a believing, a trusting, or relying act of the soul? What, then, must it rely upon or trust in? Not in itself, that is without scripture; not in its works, they are inferior to itself; besides, this is the way to make even the works of faith the mediator between God and the soul, and so by them thrust Christ out of doors; therefore it must trust in Christ; and if so, then no man can be justified from the curse before God by the works that flow from faith.

To put all out of doubt; the saint, when he hath done what he can to bring forth good works by faith, yet he dares not shew these works before God but as they pass through the Mediator Christ, but as they are washed in the blood of the Lamb. And therefore Peter saith, those sacrifices of ours that are truly spiritual are only then accepted of God (1 Pet. 2:5) when offered up by Jesus Christ. And therefore it is said again, that the prayers of the saints, which are the fruits of faith, come up before the throne of God through the angel's hand (Rev. 8:3, 4), that is, through the hand of Christ, through his golden censer, perfumed with his incense, made acceptable by his intercession.

It is said in the book of the Revelation that it is granted to the bride, the Lamb's wife, that she should be 'arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; which white linen is the righteousness of saints.' This fine linen, in my judgment, is the works of godly men, their works that sprang from faith. But how came they clean? How came they white? Not simply because they were the works of faith. But mark, 'They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and therefore they stand before the throne of God,' Rev. 7:14, 15. Yea, therefore it is that their good works stand there too.

I conclude, then, 'our persons are justified while we are sinners in ourselves.' Our works, even the works of faith, are no otherwise accepted but as they come through Jesus Christ, even through his intercession and blood. So, then, Christ doth justify both our person and works, not by way of approbation, as we stand in ourselves or works before God, but by presenting of us to his Father by himself, washing what we are and have from guilt in his blood, and clothing us with his own performances. This is the cause of our acceptance with God, and that our works are not cast forth of his presence.

THE USE.

Is justifying righteousness to be found in the person of Christ only? Then this should admonish us to take heed of seeking it in ourselves, that is, of working righteousness, thereby to appease the justice of God, lest by so doing we affront and blaspheme the righteousness of Christ. He that shall go about to establish his own righteousness, he, as yet, doth defiance to that which is of God, of God's appointing, of God's providing; and that only wherewith the justice of the law must be well pleased. Wherefore take heed, I say, of doing such a thing, lest it provoke the eyes of the Lord's glory 'When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it,' Ezek. 33:13. Mark, though he be righteous, yea, though he have a promise of life, yet he shall die. But why? Because he sinned against the Lord by trusting to his own righteousness, therefore he must die for it.

There are some things that will preserve a man from splitting upon this rock. As, Get good acquaintance with the covenant of grace, and of the persons concerned in the conditions of that covenant. The conditions of that covenant are, that a righteousness shall be brought into the world that shall please the justice of God and answer (and so remove the curse of) the law. Now he that doth perform this condition is Christ; therefore the covenant is not immediately with man, but with him that will be the Mediator betwixt God and man; 'As for thee, by the blood of thy covenant,' Zech. 9:11, speaking of Christ. So, then, Christ, the ManChrist, is he who was to bring in these conditions, to wit, everlasting righteousness. And hence it is that God hath said, 'Christ shall be the covenant of the people' that is, he shall be our conditions to Godward, Dan. 9:23, 24. He therefore is all our righteousness as to the point of our justification before God; he is the covenant of the people, as well as the light of the Gentiles; for as no man can see but in the light of his Spirit, so no man can stand but in and by him, he is the covenant of the people, the conditions and qualifications of the people, Isa. 52:6. So that to Godward Christ is all in all, and no man anything at all. 'He hath made with me an everlasting covenant'; with me, as I stand in my head Christ, who, because he hath brought in everlasting righteousness, therefore hath removed the curse of the law; wherefore he adds, this covenant 'is ordered in all things, and sure,' 2 Sam. 23:5; because all points that concern me as to redemption from the curse are taken away by Christ, as before is discoursed. Look, then, upon Christ as the man, the mediator, undertaker, and accomplisher of that righteousness in himself, wherein thou must stand just before God; and that he is the covenant or conditions of the people to Godward, always having in himself the righteousness that the law is well pleased with, and always presenting himself before God as our only righteousness.

That this truth may be the more heartily inquired into by thee, consider thine own perfections; I say, study how polluted thou art, even from the heart throughout. No man hath a high esteem of the Lord Jesus that is a stranger to his own sore. Christ's church is an hospital of sick, wounded, and afflicted people; even as when he was in the world, the afflicted and distressed set the highest price upon Jesus Christ. Why? They were sick, and he was the Physician; but the whole had no need of him. And just thus it is now: Christ is offered to the world to be the righteousness and life of sinners, but no man will regard him save he that seeth his own pollution; he that seeth he cannot answer the demands of the law, he that sees himself from top to toe polluted, and that therefore his service cannot be clean as to justify him from the curse before God, he is the man that must needs die in despair and be damned, or must trust in Jesus Christ for life.

Further, This rule I would have all receive that come to Jesus Christ for life and salvation. Not to stick at the acknowledgment of sin, but to make that of it which the law makes of it: 'Acknowledge thine iniquity,' saith the Lord, Jer. 3:13. This is a hard pinch (I know what I say) for a man to fall down under the sense of sins by acknowledging them to be what the Lord saith they are; to acknowledge them, I Say, in their own defiling and polluting nature; to acknowledge them in their unreasonable and aggravating circumstances; to acknowledge them in their God-

offending and soul-destroying nature, especially when the conscience is burdened with the guilt of them. Yet this is duty 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive,' 1 John 1:9; yea, to this is annexed the promise, 'He that confesseth, and forsaketh them, shall find mercy.' This made David, as it were, lay claim to the mercy of God 'Wash me thoroughly (said he) from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin; for I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me.' Though, then, thou art to blush and be ashamed when thou rememberest thy sins and iniquities, yet do not hide them 'He that hideth his sins shall not prosper.' Do not lessen them; do not speak of them before God after a mincing way 'Acknowledge thine iniquities, that thou hast sinned against the Lord thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree; and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the Lord,' Jer. 3:13.

If we would come to Christ aright, we must only acknowledge our sins; we must only acknowledge them, and there stop; stop, I say, from attempting to do aught to present us good before God, but only to receive the mercy offered.

'Only acknowledge thine iniquities.' Men are subject to two extremes, either to confess sins notionally and by the halves, or else, together with the confession of them, to labour to do some holy work, thereby to ease their burdened conscience, and beget faith in the mercy of God, Hos. 5:14, 15. Now both these are dangerous, and very ungodly, dangerous, because the wound is healed falsely; and ungodly, because the command is transgressed: 'Only acknowledge thy sin,' and there stand (as David) 'till thy guilt is taken away.' Joshua stood before the angel, from top to toe in filthy garments, till the Lord put other clothes upon him, Zech. 3:3. In the matter of thy justification thou must know nothing, see nothing, hear nothing, but thine own sins and Christ's righteousness 'Only acknowledge thine iniquities.' Now the Saviour and the soul comes rightly together; the Saviour to do his work, which is to spread his skirt over the sinner; and the sinner to receive, by believing this blessed imputed righteousness. And hence the church, when she came to God, lieth down in her shame, and her confusion covereth her; and so lieth till pardon comes, Jer. 3:25.

THE SECOND USE.

I come now to the second use, Have faith in Christ. But what are we to understand by faith?

Answer: Faith importeth as much as to say, receive, embrace, accept of, or trust in, the benefit offered. All which are, by holy men of God, words used on purpose to shew that the mercy of God, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, are not to be had by doing or by the law; but by receiving, embracing, accepting, or trusting to the mercy of God through Christ 'We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they,' John 1:12; 2 Cor. 4:1; 11:4; Col. 2:6; Heb. 11:13; 1 Tim. 1:15; Ephes. 1:12, 13; Acts 15:11. Thus you see what the gospel is, and what faith doth do in the salvation of the soul.

Now, that faith might be helped in this work (for great are they that oppose it), therefore the Scriptures, the word of truth, hath presented us with the invitation in most plain and suitable sentences; as, 'That Christ came into the world to save sinners, Christ died for our sins, Christ gave himself for our sins, Christ bare our sins in his body on the tree; and, That God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' Further, as the invitations are plain and easy, so the threatenings to the opposers are sore and astonishing 'He that believeth not shall be damned, Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God gave them up to strong delusions, that they all might be damned,' Mark 16:16; 2 Thess. 2:10-12.

Objection: But faith is said to be an act of obedience.

Ans. 1. And well it may; for it is the most submitting act that a man can do; it throweth out all our righteousness; it makes the soul poor in itself; it liveth upon God and Christ, as the almsman

doth upon his lord; it consenteth to the gospel that it is true; it giveth God and Christ the glory of their mercy and merit; it loveth God for his mercy, and Jesus Christ for his service; whatever good it doth, it still crieth, Hereby am I not justified, but he that justifieth me is the Lord.

Well, but is there in truth such a thing as the obedience of faith? Then let Christians labour to understand it, and distinguish it aright, and to separate it from the law and all man's righteousness; and remember that it is a receiving of mercy, an embracing of forgiveness, an accepting of the righteousness of Christ, and a trusting to these for life. Remember again, that it putteth the soul upon coming to Christ as a sinner, and to receive forgiveness as a sinner, as such. We now treat of justification.

But a little to insert at large a few more of the excellences of it, and so draw towards a conclusion.

First, The more thou believest for remission of sins, the more of the light of the glorious gospel of Christ thou receivest into thy soul 'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith,' Rom. 1:16, 17; that is, according to the decree of faith. Little faith seeth but little, but great faith seeth much; and therefore he saith again, That by faith we have 'access into the grace of God,' Rom. 5:2. The reason is, Because faith, having laid hold upon Christ, hath found him 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' Col. 2:2, 3. In him therefore it finds and sees those heights and depths of gospel mysteries that are nowhere else to be found; nay, let a man be destitute of faith, and it is not possible he should once think of some of them.

By this means the Holy Spirit is plentifully received, Gal. 3:1-3. Now the Spirit of God is a spirit of wisdom and revelation; but yet so as in the knowledge of Christ, Eph. 1:17; otherwise the Spirit will shew to man not any mighty thing, its great delight being to open Christ and to reveal him unto faith. Faith indeed can see him, for that is the eye of the soul; and the Spirit alone can reveal him, that being the searcher of the deep things of God; by these therefore the mysteries of heaven are revealed and received. And hence it is that the mystery of the gospel is called the 'mystery of faith,' or the mystery with which faith only hath to do, 1 Tim. 3:9. Wouldst thou, then, know the greatest things of God? Accustom thyself to the obedience of faith; live upon thy justifying righteousness.

And never think that to live always on Christ for justification is a low and beggarly thing, and as it were a staying at the foundation; for let me tell you, depart from a sense of the meritorious means of your justification with God, and you will quickly grow light, and frothy, and vain. Besides, you will always be subject to errors and delusions; for this is not to hold the head from or through which nourishment is administered, Col. 2:19. Further, no man that buildeth forsakes the good foundation; that is the ground of his encouragement to work, for upon that is laid the stress of all; and without it nothing that is framed can be supported, but must inevitably fall to the ground. Again; why not live upon Christ alway? and especially as he standeth the mediator between God and the soul, defending thee with the merit of his blood, and covering thee with his infinite righteousness from the wrath of God and curse of the law. Can there be any greater comfort ministered to thee than to know thy person stands just before God? Just and justified from all things that would otherwise swallow thee up? Is peace with God and assurance of heaven of so little respect with thee that thou slightest the very foundation thereof, even faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ? and are notions and whimsies of such credit with thee that thou must leave the foundation to follow them? But again; what mystery is desirable to be known that is not to be found in Jesus Christ, as Priest, Prophet, or King of saints? In him are hid all the treasures of them, and he alone hath the key of David to open them, Col. 2:1, 2; Rev. 3:7. Paul was so taken with Jesus Christ, and the knowledge of this, that he was crucified for us, that he desired, nay, determined not to know any thing else among the Corinthians, that itched after other wisdom, 1 Cor. 2:2.

Objection: But I see not that in Christ now that I have seen in him in former days. Besides, I find the Spirit lead me forth to study other things.

Answer: To the first part of this objection I would answer several things

The cause why thou seest not that in Christ now which thou hast seen in him in former days is not in Christ, but in thy faith; he is the same, as fresh, and as good, and as full of blessedness, as when thou didst most rejoice in him, Heb. 1:11, 12.

And why not now, as well as formerly? God is never weary of being delighted with Jesus Christ; his blood is always precious with God; his merits being those in which justice hath everlasting rest, why shouldst thou wander or go about to change thy way? Prov. 8:30; Jer. 2:36.

Sin is the same as ever, and so is the curse of the law. The devil is as busy as ever; and beware of the law in thy members. Return, therefore, to thy rest, O soul! for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.

Guilt is to be taken off now, as it was years ago; and, whether thou seest it or no, thou sinnest in all thy works. How, then, canst thou stand clear from guilt in thy soul who neglectest to act faith in the blood of the Lamb? There thou must wash thy robes, and there thou must make them white, Rev. 7:14, 15.

I conclude, then, thou art a polluted, surfeited, corrupted, hardened creature, whosoever thou art, that thus objectest.

But I find, sayest thou, as if the Spirit led me forth to study other matters.

Answer: What other matters? What matters besides, above, or beyond the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, and of our acceptance with God through him? What spirit, or doctrine, or wisdom soever it be that centers not in, that cometh not from, and that terminates not within, the bounds of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is not worthy the study of the sons of God; neither is it food for the faith of Jesus Christ (John 6:51); for that is the flesh of Christ (and that is eternal life.) Whither will you go? Beware of the spirit of Antichrist; for 'many false spirits are gone out into the world.' I told you before, that the Spirit of God is 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ,' Ephes. 1:17; John 14:15; 16; and that without and besides the Lord Jesus it discovereth nothing; it is sent to testify of him; it is sent to bring his words to our remembrance; it is sent to 'take of his things and shew them unto us.' Wherefore, never call that the Spirit of Jesus which leads you away from the blood and righteousness of Christ; that is but the spirit of delusion and of the devil, whose teachings end in perdition and destruction. Tempt not Christ as they of old did. But how did they tempt him? Why, in loathing the manna, which was the type of his flesh and blood, which we are to eat of by believing. I say, tempt him not, lest you be destroyed by the serpents, by the gnawing guilt of sin; for, take away Christ, and sin remains, and there is no more sacrifice for sin: if so, thou wilt be destroyed by the destroyer, Num. 21:5-7; 1 Cor. 10:10. But again

Living by faith begets in the heart a sonlike boldness and confidence to Godward in all our gospel duties, under all our weaknesses, and under all our temptations. It is a blessed thing to be privileged with a holy boldness and confidence Godward, that he is on our side, that he taketh part with us, and that he will plead our cause 'with them that rise up against us,' 2 Cor. 2:14; 4:17, 18; Gal. 4:27; Phil. 3:2, 3; Rom. 5:11. But this boldness faith helpeth us to do, and also manageth in our heart. This is that which made Paul always triumph and rejoice in God and the Lord Jesus; he lived the life of faith; for faith sets a man in the favour of God by Christ, and makes a man see that what befalls him in this life, it shall, through the wisdom and mercy of God, not only prove for his forwarding to heaven, but to augment his glory when he comes there. This man now stands

on high, he lives, he is rid of slavish fears and carking cares, and in all his straits he hath a God to go to. Thus David, when all things looked awry upon him, 'encouraged himself in the Lord his God,' 1 Sam. 30:6. Daniel also believed in his God, and knew that all his trouble, losses, and crosses, would be abundantly made up in his God, Dan. 6:23. And David said, 'I had fainted unless I had believed.' Believing, therefore, is a great preservative against all such impediments, and makes us confident in our God, and with boldness to come into his presence, claiming privilege in what he is and hath, Ps. 27:13; Jon. 3:4, 5; Heb. 10:22, 23; Eph. 1:4-7. For by faith, I say, he seeth his acceptance through the Beloved, and himself interested in the mercy of God, and riches of Christ, and glory in the world to come. This man can look upon all the dangers in hell and earth without paleness of countenance; he shall meditate terror with comfort, 'because he beholds the King in his beauty,' Isa. 33:17, 18.

Again; living by faith makes a man exercise patience and quietness under all his afflictions; for faith shews him that his best part is safe, that his soul is in God's special care and protection, purged from sin in the blood of Christ. Faith also shews him that after a little while he shall be in the full enjoyment of that which now he believes is coming: 'We, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith,' Gal. 5:5. Wherefore, upon this ground it is that James exhorteth the saints to whom he wrote to patience, because they knew the harvest would in due time come, James 5:7-11. Faith lodgeth the soul with Christ: 'I know,' saith Paul, 'on whom I have believed' (and to whom I have committed my soul), 'and am persuaded (I believe it) that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day'; therefore it were no shame to him to wear a chain for his name and sake. Oh! it is a blessed thing to see, I say, by the faith of the Lord Jesus, that we are embarked in the same ship with him; this will help us greatly 'both to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,' 2 Tim. 1:12-16; Psalm 46:1-6; Lam. 3:26.

Further, I might add, that living by faith is the way to receive fresh strength from heaven, thereby to manage thine every day's work with life and vigour; yea, every look by faith upon Jesus Christ as thine doth this great work. It is said, when Paul saw the brethren that came to meet him, 'he thanked God, and took courage,' Acts 28:15. Oh! how much more, then, shall the Christian be blessed with fresh strength and courage even at the beholding of Christ; 'whom beholding as in a glass, we are changed,' even by beholding of him by faith in the word, 'into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,' 2 Cor. 3:18. But to be brief.

Make conscience of the duty of believing, and be as afraid of falling short here as in any other command of God, John 6:46. 'This is his commandment, that you believe,' 1 John 3:23. Believe, therefore, in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the will of God, that you believe. Believe, therefore, to the saving of the soul. Unbelief is a fine-spun thread, not so easily discerned as grosser sins; and therefore that is truly 'The sin that doth so easily beset us,' Heb. 12:1. The light of nature will shew those sins that are against the law of nature; but the law of faith is a command beyond what flesh or nature teacheth; therefore to live by faith is so much the harder work; yet it must be done, otherwise thine other duties profit thee nothing. For if a man give way to unbelief, though he be most frequent in all other duties besides, so often as he worshippeth God in these he yet saith, God is a liar in the other, even because he hath not believed: '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 us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,' 1 John 5:10, 11. So, then, when thou givest way to unbelief; when thou dost not venture the salvation of thy soul upon the justifying life that is in Christ, that is, in his blood, &c. at once, thou givest the lie to the whole testament of God; yea, thou tramplest upon the promise of grace, and countest this precious blood an unholy and unworthy thing, Heb. 10:29. Now how, thou doing thus, the Lord should accept of thy other duties, of prayer, alms, thanksgiving, self-denial, or any other, will be hard for thee to prove. In the meantime remember, that faith pleaseth God; and that without faith it is impossible to please him. Remember also, that for this cause it was that the offering of Cain was not accepted: 'By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain'; for by faith Abel first justified the promise of the Messiah, by whom a conquest should be obtained

over the devil, and all the combination of hell against us: then he honoured Christ by believing that he was able to save him; and in token that he believed these things indeed, he presented the Lord with the firstlings of his flock (Heb. 11:4), as a remembrance before God that he believed in his Christ. And therefore it is said, 'By faith he offered'; by which means the offering was accepted of God; for no man's offering can be accepted with God but his that stands righteous before him first. But unbelief holdeth men under their guilt, because they have not believed in Christ, and by that means put on his righteousness. Again; he that believeth not, hath made invalid (what in him lies) the promise of God and merits of Christ, of whom the Father hath spoken so worthily; therefore what duties or acts of obedience soever he performeth, God by no means can be pleased with him.

By this, therefore, you see the miserable state of the people that have not faith 'Whatever they do, they sin'; if they break the law, they sin; if they endeavour to keep it, they sin; they sin, I say, upon a double account, first, because they do it but imperfectly; and, secondly, because they yet stay upon that, resisting that which is perfect, even that which God hath appointed. It mattereth not, as to justification from the curse, therefore, men wanting faith, whether they be civil or profane, they are such as stand accursed of the law, because they have not believed, and because they have given the lie to the truth, and to the God of truth. Let all men, therefore, that would please God make conscience of believing; on pain, I say, of displeasing him; on pain of being with Cain rejected, and on pain of being damned in hell. 'He that believeth not shall be damned,' Mark 16:16. Faith is the very quintessence of all gospel obedience, it being that which must go before other duties, and that which also must accompany whatever I do in the worship of God, if it be accepted of him. Here you may see a reason why the force and power of hell is so bent against believing; Satan hateth all the parts of our Christian obedience, but the best and chiefest most. And hence the apostle saith to the Thessalonians, 'That he sent to know their faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted them, and so his labour had been in vain,' 1 Thess. 3:5. Indeed, where faith is wanting, or hath been destroyed, all the labour is in vain, nothing can profit any man, neither as to peace with God, nor the acceptance of any religious duty; and this, I say, Satan knows, which makes him so lend his force against us.

There are three things in the act of believing which makes this grace displeasing to the wicked one

Faith discovereth the truth of things to the soul; the truth of things as they are, whether they be things that are of this world, or of that which is to come; the things and pleasures above, and also those beneath. Faith discovereth to the soul the blessedness, and goodness, and durableness of the one; the vanity, foolishness, transitoriness of the other. Faith giveth credit to all things that are written in the law and in the prophets, Acts 24:14, both as to the being, nature, and attributes of God; the blessed undertaking of the Lord Jesus Christ; the glory of heaven and torments of hell; the sweetness of the promise and terror of the threatenings and curses of the word; by which means Satan is greatly frustrated in his assaults when he tempteth either to love this world or slight that which is to come, for he can do no great matter in these things to any but those who want the faith 'In vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird'; therefore he must first blind, and hold blind the minds of men, 'that the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine into them,' else he can do no harm to the soul. Now faith is the eye of the godly man, and that sees the truth of things, whatever Satan suggests, either about the glory of this world, the sweetness of sin, the uncertainty of another world, or the like, 1 John 5:4, 5; Prov. 1:17; 2 Cor. 4:4; Heb. 11:27.

Faith wraps the soul up in the bundle of life with God; it encloseth it in the righteousness of Jesus, and presents it so perfect in that, that whatever he can do, with all his cunning, cannot render the soul spotted or wrinkled before the justice of the law; yea, though the man, as to his own person and acts, be full of sin from top to toe, Jesus Christ covereth all; faith sees it, and holds the soul in its godly sense and comfort of it. The man, therefore, standing here, stands shrouded under that goodly robe that makes him glisten in the eye of justice. Yea, all the answer

that Satan can get from God against such a soul is, that he 'doth not see iniquity in Jacob, nor behold perverseness in Israel: for here Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the Lord of hosts, though, as to their own persons, their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel,' Numb. 23:21-23; Jer. 51:5; Rom. 6:14; Deut. 33:12. Thus, therefore, the soul believing, is hid from all the power of the enemy, and dwells safely under the dominion of grace.

Faith keeps the soul from giving credit to any of his insinuations; for whatever Satan saith, either about the acceptance of my person or performances, so long as I believe that both are accepted of God for Christ's sake, he suggesteth to the wind; wherefore, faith doth the same against the devil that unbelief doth against God. Doth unbelief count God a liar? Faith counts the devil a liar. Doth unbelief hold the soul from the mercy of God? Faith holds the soul from the malice of the devil. Doth unbelief quench thy graces? Faith kindleth them even unto a flame. Doth unbelief fill the soul full of sorrow? Faith fills it full of the joy of the Holy Ghost? In a word, doth unbelief bind down thy sins upon thee? Why, faith in Jesus Christ releaseth thee of them all.

As faith keeps the soul from giving credit to the insinuations of Satan, so, when he makes his assaults, it over-masters him, and makes him retreat; 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Whom resist steadfast in the faith,' James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9. Believe, as I have already said, that God loveth you, that the blood of Christ was shed for you, that your person is presented complete before him, through the righteousness of Christ, and Satan must give place; thy crediting of the gospel makes him fly before thee; but thou must do it steadfast in the faith; every waver giveth him advantage. And indeed this is the reason that the godly are so foiled with his assaults, they do not resist him steadfast in the faith; they often stagger through unbelief. Now, at every stagger he recovereth lost ground again, and giveth battle another time. Besides, by this and the other stagger he taketh heart to attempt by other means, and so doubleth the affliction with manifold temptations. This is, I say, for want of being steadfast 'Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked,' Ephes. 6:16. To quench them, though they come from him as kindled with the very fire of hell. None knows, save him that feels it, how burning hot the fiery darts of Satan are; and how, when darted, they kindle upon our flesh and unbelief; neither can any know the power and worth of faith to quench them but he that hath it, and hath power to act it.

5. Lastly, if justifying righteousness be alone to be found in the person of Jesus Christ, then this shews us the sad condition of two sorts of men
Of those that hang in doubt betwixt Christ and the law.

Of those that do professedly make denial of the sufficiency of this most blessed righteousness.

The first sort, though they may seek life, yet, thus continuing, are never like to find it. Wherefore? Because they seek it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. Indeed, they will not be merit-mongers; they will not wholly trust to the law; they will partly venture on Christ, and partly trust to the law. Well, but therefore they shall be damned, because they trust to Christ but in part, and in part, as it were, to the works of the law; for such sinners make Christ but a Saviour in part, why then should he be their Saviour in whole? No, because they halt between Christ and the law, therefore they shall fall between Christ and the law; yea, because they will trust to their works in part, they shall be but almost saved by Christ. Let not that man think that he shall obtain any thing from the Lord. What man? Why, he that doubteth or wavereth in his mind about the truth of the mercy of God in Christ. Therefore the exhortation is, 'But let him ask in faith; for he that wavereth (or, that halteth between the law and Christ for life) is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed,' Jam. 1:6, 7. In conclusion, he resteth nowhere 'a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' This man, therefore, must miscarry; he must not see the good land that flows with milk and honey; no, let him not have a thought of life in his heart; let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

This was the case of many in the primitive times, for whose sake this caution was written; for the devout and religious Jew and proselyte, when they fell away from the word of the gospel, they did not fall to those gross and abominable pollutions in which the open profane, like sows and swine, do wallow, but they fell from the grace of God to the law; or, at least, did rest betwixt them both, doubting of the sufficiency of either; and thus, being fearful, they distrust; wherefore, being found at length unbelieving, they are reputed of God abominable, as murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolators, and liars (Rev. 21:8); and so must have their portion in the lake (with them) that burns with fire and brimstone. The reason is, because where Christ is rejected sin remaineth, and so the wrath of God for sin. Neither will he be a Saviour in part; he must be all thy salvation, or none 'Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord,' Jam. 1:7.

Not any thing. There is no promise for him, no pardon for him, no heaven for him, no salvation for him, no escaping of his fire! What condition is this man in! Yet he is a religious man, for he prays; he is a seeking man, a desiring man, for he prays; but he halts between two, he leaneth to his righteousness, and committeth iniquity. He is afraid to venture all upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Let not that man think of receiving any thing from the Lord.

Yet the words suggest that he is apt to think he shall receive something, because God is merciful, because his promise is great; but this expectation is by this word cut off, and this sinner is cast away. Let not that man think, let him forbear to think, of having anything at the hand of God. The Israelites thought to go up to the land the day after they had despised it. Agag thought the bitterness of death was past even that day in which he was hewn to pieces. Rechab and Baanah his brother thought to have received reward of David that day they were hanged over the pool in Hebron. 'Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord,' Num. 14:40, 41; 1 Sam. 15:32, 33; 2 Sam. 4:12.

As for those that do professedly make denial of the sufficiency of this most blessed righteousness, the whole book is conviction to them, and shall assuredly, if it come to their hands, rise up in judgment against them. They have rejected the wisdom and mercy of God; they have rejected the means of their salvation; they have trampled upon the blood of the Son of God; wherefore judgment waiteth for them, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

To conclude. One word also to you that are neglecters of Jesus Christ: 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Here, then, we may see how we ought to judge of all such persons as neglect the Lord Jesus, under what guise, name, or notion soever they be. We ought, I say, to judge of such, that they are at present in a state of condemnation; of condemnation, 'because they have not believed in the only begotten Son of God,' John 3:18.

It is true, there is no man more at ease in his mind (with such ease as it is) than the man that hath not closed with the Lord Jesus, but is shut up in unbelief. Oh! but that is the man that stands convict before God, and that is bound over to the great assize; that is the man whose sins are still his own, and upon whom the wrath of God abideth, verse 36; for the ease and peace of such, though it keep them far from fear, is but like to that of the secure thief, that is ignorant that the constable standeth at the door; the first sight of an officer makes his peace to give up the ghost. Ah, how many thousands that can now glory that they never were troubled for sin against God; I say, how many be there that God will trouble worse than he troubled cursed Achan, because their peace (though false, and of the devil) was rather chosen by them than peace by Jesus Christ, than 'peace with God by the blood of his cross,' Col. 1:20.

Awake, careless sinners, awake! and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. Content not yourselves either with sin or righteousness, if you be destitute of Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:14); but cry, cry, oh cry to God for light to see your condition by; for light in the word of God, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed. Cry, therefore, for light to see this righteousness by; it is a righteousness of Christ's finishing, of God's accepting, and that which alone can save

the soul from the stroke of eternal justice, Rom. 1:17.

There are six things that on man's part are the cause he receiveth not the gospel of Christ, and so life by him.

They see not their state by nature, how polluted they are with original sin, Eph. 2:2.

They see not the justice of God against sin; they know not him that hath said, 'Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense,' Heb. 10:30.

They cannot see the beauty of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. 4:4.

Unbelief being mighty in them, they dare not venture their souls with Jesus Christ (Rev. 21:8); they dare not trust to his righteousness, and to that only. For,

Their carnal reason also sets itself against the word of faith, and cannot stoop to the grace of Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 2:14.

They love to have honour one of another (John 5:44); they love to be commended for their own vain-glorious righteousness; and the fools think that because they are commended of men, they shall be commended of God also: 'How can you believe, who seek honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only.' This last thing to wit, desire of vain-glory, is the bane of thousands; it is the legalist's bane, it is the civilian's bane, it is the formalist's bane, yea, which yet is stranger, it is the bane of the vicious and debauched also; for though there be a generation that, to one's thinking, have not regard to righteousness, yet watch them narrowly, and they have their times of doing something that looks like good, and though possibly it be but seldom, yet this wretch counteth that for the sake of that God accepteth him, and counteth his, glorious righteousness.

I might add a seventh cause, which is, want of serious meditation upon eternal judgment, and what shall follow. This consideration, did it take a deep place in the heart, would doubtless produce these workings of spirit after Jesus Christ for justification that now is wanting in the most of men. This made Felix, yea, it makes the devils, tremble; and would, I say, couldst thou deeply meditate, make thee start and turn thy wanton thoughts into heavy sighs after God's mercy in Jesus Christ, lest thou also come into their place of torment.

Before I conclude this use, I would lay down a few motives, if so be thou mayest be prevailed with to look after thine own everlasting state.

Consider, God hath put man, above all the creatures in this visible world, into a state of abiding for ever; they cannot be annihilated, they shall never again be turned into nothing, but must live with God or the devil for ever and ever. And though the scripture saith, 'Man hath not pre-eminence over a beast in his death,' yet the beast hath pre-eminence above many men, for he shall not rise again to come into judgment as man must, nor receive that dismal sentence for sin and transgression as man shall; this, therefore, is worthy to be considered with seriousness of all that have souls to be saved or damned 'They must one day come to judgment,' there to stand before that Judge of all the earth whose eyes are like a flame of fire, from the sight of which thou canst not hide one of thy words, or thoughts, or actions, because thou wantest the righteousness of God. The fire of his justice shall burn up all thy rags of righteousness wherewith by the law thou hast clothed thyself, and will leave thee nothing but a soul full of sin to bemoan, and eternal burnings to grapple with. Oh, the burnings that will then beset sinners on every side, and that will eat their flesh and torment their spirit with far more terror than if they were stricken with scorpions! And observe it, the torment will there be higher than other where there is the guilt of neglecting Jesus Christ, he being indeed the Saviour, and him that was sent on purpose to deliver men from the wrath to come.

Consider, once past grace, and ever past grace. When the door is shut against thee, it will open no more (Luke 13.), and then repentings, desires, wishings, and wouldings, come all too late. Good may be done to others, but to thee, none; and this shall be 'because, even because thou hast withstood the time of thy visitation,' and not received grace when offered: 'My God shall cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him,' Luke 19:41-43; Hos. 9:17. Cain was driven out from the presence of God, for aught I know, some hundreds of years before his death; Ishmael was cast away after seventeen years of age; Esau lived thirty or forty years after he had sold his birthright. Oh, many, very many are in this condition! for though God be gracious, yea, very gracious, yet he will not be slighted nor abused always; there are plenty of sinners in the world, if one will not, another will, Luke 8:37, 40. Christ was soon repulsed by and sent away from the country of the Gadarenes; but on the other side of the sea there were many ready with joy to receive him, Acts 13:46-48. So when the Jews contradicted and blasphemed, 'the Gentiles gladly received the word.' Look to it, sinner, here is life and death set before thee; life, if it be not too late to receive it; but if it be, it is not too late for death to swallow thee up. And tell me, will it not be dreadful to be carried from under the gospel to the damned, there to lie in endless torment, because thou wouldst not be delivered therefrom? Will it be comfort to thee to see the Saviour turn Judge? to see him that wept and died for the sin of the world now ease his mind on Christ-abhorring sinners by rendering to them the just judgment of God? For all their abominable filthiness, had they closed with Christ, they had been shrouded from the justice of the law, and should not have come into condemnation, 'but had been passed from death to life'; but they would not take shelter there; they would venture to meet the justice of God in its fury, wherefore now it shall swallow them up for ever and ever. And let me ask further, is not he a madman who, being loaded with combustible matter, will run headlong into a fire upon a bravado? or, that being guilty of felony or murder, will desperately run himself into the hand of the officer, as if the law, the judge, the sentence, execution, were but a jest, or a thing to be played withal? And yet thus mad are poor, wretched, miserable sinners, who flying from Christ as if he were a viper, they are overcome, and cast off for ever by the just judgment of the law. But ah! how poorly will these be able to plead the virtues of the law to which they have cleaved, when God shall answer them, 'Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised,' Ezek. 32:19. Go down to hell, and there be laid with those that refused the grace of God.

Sinners, take my advice, with which I shall conclude this use, Call often to remembrance that thou hast a precious soul within thee; that thou art in the way to thine end, at which thy precious soul will be in special concerned, it being then time to delay no longer, the time of reward being come. I say again, bring thy end home; put thyself in thy thoughts into the last day thou must live in this world, seriously arguing thus, How if this day were my last? How if I never see the sun rise more? How if the first voice that rings tomorrow morning in my heavy ears be, 'Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment?' Or, how if the next sight I see with mine eyes be the Lord in the clouds, with all his angels, raining floods of fire and brimstone upon the world? Am I in a case to be thus near mine end? to hear this trump of God? or to see this great appearance of this great God, and the Lord Jesus Christ? Will my profession, or the faith I think I have, carry me through all the trials of God's tribunal? Cannot his eyes, which are as a flame of fire, see in my words, thoughts, and actions enough to make me culpable of the wrath of God? Oh! how serious should sinners be in this work of remembering things to come, of laying to their heart the greatness and terror of that notable day of God Almighty, and in examining themselves, how it is like to go with their souls when they shall stand before the Judge indeed! To this end, God make this word effectual. Amen.



John Bunyan

John Bunyan (1628 – 1688) was a Puritan pastor and preacher, best known for his book 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

Faith, Justification, John Bunyan