

# ***Justification by Faith Alone***

by

**Jonathan Edwards**

Nov. 1734

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*Formatted, modernized, corrected, and annotated by  
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## Editor's Note

Jonathan Edwards' writings are not an easy read. And that's not entirely attributable to the archaic language or style of the early 18th century. Like John Owen a half century earlier, Edwards was needlessly wordy; his structure needlessly convoluted; and his ideas needlessly obtuse. Yes, I admit this is a matter of opinion, but it is my opinion. It's why I set this treatise aside in 2014. But it also compelled me to return to it, and finish modernizing it. It's too important to ignore. It's a powerful statement of a foundational doctrine of the Reformation. Hopefully, it's easier for you to read now; but I confess, it's still not an easy read. That's owing to the depth and scope of Edwards' examination of the doctrine, the subtle distinctions in some of his arguments, and his Puritan-like habit of repeating an argument several ways.

I've removed a lot of needless words, striving to distill rather than alter his ideas. So this is not a paraphrase; it's a clarification. I've updated the archaic words (thee, thou, thine, etc.), footnoted a few definitions and personal observations (marked by "– WHG"), broke up long sentences, completed others, employed parallelism to tie his ideas together, identified the personalities he mentions, simplified the syntax, used additional italics to help you spot comparisons, gave references for unreferenced pronouns, and provided a table of contents. The treatise now has five chapters, using Edwards' own divisions.

This is taken from the 1852 edition of *President Edwards' Works*, vol. IV. Feel free to compare the original, which is linked on the title page. Here is a commendation of this treatise, taken from a more recent edition of Edwards' works (*a reprint of the 1834 edition*):

Some say that one of the most vital elements of the gospel is the doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone (*sola fide*). Edwards himself claimed that the awakening revivals began in his own church after he preached these two sermons on that great biblical truth. In the preface to the published edition of his sermons, Edwards wrote, "The following discourse of justification... seemed to be remarkably blessed, not only to establish the judgments of many in this truth, but to have engaged their hearts in a more earnest pursuit of justification." He then wrote, "God's work wonderfully broke forth among us, and souls began to flock to Christ, as the Savior in whose righteousness alone they hoped to be justified." — *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, "Five Discourses" (Hendrikson Pub., Peabody, MA: 2000), p. 620.

I hope this modernized edition is useful, not only to confirm the doctrine for you, but perhaps to make it clearer. May that in turn help you to explain it more effectively to others, and even to appreciate it more fully for yourself. I think Edwards' treatment of *perseverance* is of particular interest and benefit. You'll find that in Part III. May God bless your studies!

**William Gross**

*Mar 24, 2022*

## Justification by Faith Alone

*“But to him who does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” – Rom 4:5*

The following things may be noted in this verse:

1. That justification regards man as ungodly. This is evident by these words, *who justifies the ungodly*. This cannot imply less than this: that in the act of justification, God has no regard toward anything in the person who is justified, such as godliness or any goodness in him, but immediately before this act, God beholds him only as an ungodly creature. So that, godliness in the person to be justified is not so antecedent to his justification as to be the ground of it. When it is said that God justifies the ungodly, it is absurd to suppose that our godliness, taken as some goodness in us, could be the ground of our justification. When it is said that Christ gave sight to the blind, it is absurd to suppose that their sight was prior to, and was the ground of that act of mercy in Christ. Or when someone, by his bounty, has made a poor man rich, it is absurd to suppose that it was the wealth of this poor man that was the ground of the rich man's bounty towards him, and the price by which it was procured.

2. It appears in this verse, that the phrase, *him who does not work*, does not mean someone who merely doesn't conform to the ceremonial law. This is because *he who does not work*, and *the ungodly*, are evidently synonymous expressions, or they signify the same thing. This appears by the manner of their connection. If this were not so, then to what purpose is the term, *the ungodly*, brought in? The context gives no other occasion for it, than to show that by the grace of the gospel, God in justification has no regard to any godliness of ours. The foregoing verse is, “Now to him who works, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” In *that* verse, it is evident that gospel grace consists in the reward being given *without works*. In *this* verse which immediately follows it, and in a sense is connected with it, gospel grace consists in a man's being justified as *ungodly*. By it is most plain that *him who does not work*, and the one who is *ungodly*, mean the same thing. And therefore, not only are works of the ceremonial law excluded in this business of justification, but works of morality and godliness.

3. It is evident in the words spoken here, that the *faith* by which we are justified, is not the same thing as a course of obedience or righteousness, since the expression by which this faith is denoted here, is *believing in Him who justifies the ungodly*. Those who oppose the Solifidians,<sup>1</sup> as they call them, greatly insist that we should take the words of Scripture concerning this doctrine, in their most natural and obvious meaning. Oh, how they cry aloud about our clouding this doctrine with obscure metaphors and unintelligible figures of speech! But when the Scripture speaks of our *believing in Him who justifies the ungodly*, or the *breakers of His law*, is this interpreting Scripture according to its most obvious meaning, that the meaning is performing a course of obedience to His law, and avoiding breaches of it? Believing in God as a *justifier* is certainly a different thing from submitting to God as a

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<sup>1</sup> A person who maintains that man is justified by faith alone.

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*lawgiver*, especially believing in Him as a justifier of *the ungodly*, or rebels *against the lawgiver*.<sup>1</sup>

4. It is evident that the subject of justification is looked at as destitute of any righteousness in himself, by the expression *it is counted*, or *imputed to him for righteousness*. The phrase, as the apostle uses it here and in the context, manifestly imports that God, of his sovereign grace, is pleased in his dealings with the sinner, to regard the one who has no righteousness, the same as if he had. However, this may be from the respect it bears to something that is indeed righteous. It is plain that this is the force of the expression in the preceding verses. In the next to last verse,<sup>2</sup> it is manifest that the apostle lays the stress of his argument for the free grace of God on the word *counted* or *imputed* — from the Old Testament text about Abraham.<sup>3</sup> This is the thing in which Paul supposed God showed his grace: in *counting* something for righteousness in his consequential dealings with Abraham, that was no righteousness in itself. In the next verse (Rom 4.3), which immediately precedes this text, “Now to him who works, the reward is not reckoned as grace, but as debt,” the word that is there translated *reckoned*, is the same word that is rendered *imputed* and *counted* in the other verses. It is as if the apostle said, “As for *him who works*, there is no need for any gracious *reckoning* or *counting* it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it *were* a righteousness. For if he has works, then he has what is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs.”

This is further evident by the words that follow. Rom 4.6, “Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works.” What can be meant here by *imputing righteousness without works*, if not imputing righteousness to the man who has none of his own? For verses 7 and 8 say: “Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” How are these words of David to the apostle’s purpose? Or how do they at all prove that righteousness is imputed without works — unless it is because the word *imputed* is used, and the subject of the imputation is mentioned as a *sinner* — and consequently, he is destitute of moral righteousness? For David says no such thing as that he is forgiven without the works of the ceremonial law. There is no hint of the ceremonial law, nor any reference to it in his words.

I will therefore venture to infer this *doctrine* from the words, for the subject of my present discourse:

### DOCTRINE:

*We are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own.*

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<sup>1</sup> That is, the plain meaning is *not* that we are justified by obedience to the law (as opponents of the doctrine of *sola fide* claimed), but we are justified despite our *disobedience* to the law, through faith in *Christ’s* righteousness alone. For the background, a new surge of Arminianism arose just prior to the Great Awakening. This led Edwards to refute it with these sermons. Also, in 1700, Christopher Ness had written his classic, “[Antidote to Arminianism](#).” – WHG

<sup>2</sup> **Rom 4:24** It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.

<sup>3</sup> Repeating Rom 4.3, which quotes Gen 15.6.

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I am sensible that many might be ready to call such an assertion *absurd*, as betraying a great deal of ignorance, and containing much inconsistency. But I desire everyone's patience until I am done.

In handling this doctrine, I would:

- I. Explain the *meaning* of it, and show how I would be understood by such an assertion.
- II. Proceed to the consideration of the evidence of the *truth* of it.
- III. Show how evangelical obedience <sup>1</sup> is concerned in this affair.
- IV. Answer several objections.
- V. Consider the importance of the doctrine.

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelical obedience, or gospel obedience, is our personal obedience, holiness, or godliness, as distinct from what is imputed to us from Christ. It is the expression or evidence of our faith, as James points out in his epistle (Jas 2.18).

A.W. Pink (1886-1952) offered this description of it, in his article of the same name:

“*Evangelical obedience* is obviously the opposite of *legal obedience* — and that [latter] is of two sorts:

“First, the flawless and constant conformity to His revealed will — which God required from Adam, and which He still demands from all who are under the Covenant of Works — for though man has lost his power to perform, God has not relinquished His right to insist upon what is His just due.

“Second, the obedience of unregenerate formalists, which is unacceptable to God — not only because it is full of defects — but because it issues from a natural principle — is not done in faith, and is rendered in a mercenary spirit, and therefore consists of *dead works* (Heb 6:1; 9:14).

“*Evangelical obedience* is also to be distinguished from *imputed obedience*. It is blessedly true that when they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God reckons to the account of all the subjects of the Covenant of Grace, the perfect obedience of their Surety, so that He pronounces them justified, or possessed of that righteousness which the Law requires. Yet that is not the only obedience which characterizes the redeemed. They now personally regulate their lives by God's commands and walk in the way of His precepts; and though their performances have many *blemishes* in them (as they are well aware) — yet God is pleased for Christ's sake to accept the same.

“It should need no long and laborious argument to demonstrate that God must require obedience — full and hearty obedience — from every rational agent, for only thus does He enforce His moral government over the same. The one who is indebted to God for his being and sustenance, is obviously under binding obligations to . . .

love Him with all his heart,  
serve Him with all might, and  
seek to glorify Him in all that he does.”

<https://www.monergism.com/evangelical-obedience> (accessed 3/29/2022)

## Justification by Faith Alone

## I. The Meaning of the Doctrine.

I would explain the meaning of the doctrine, or show in what sense I assert it. And I would endeavor to evince the truth of it, which may be done in answer to these two inquiries:

(1) What is meant by being *justified*?

(2) What is meant when it is said that this is by faith alone, without any manner of virtue or goodness “of our own?”

(1) *First*, I would show what justification is, or what I suppose is meant in Scripture by being justified. Here I would not at all enlarge upon it; and therefore, to answer in short:

A person is said to be *justified*, when he is approved by God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment; and having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles him to the reward of life. We take the word *justify* in such a sense, and we understand it as the judge’s accepting a person as having both a negative and positive righteousness belonging to him. Therefore, the judge looks at him not only as free from any obligation to punishment, but also as just and righteous; and so he is entitled to a *positive* reward. This is not only most agreeable to the etymology and natural import of the word — which signifies to make righteous, or to pass judgment on someone as being *righteous* — but it is also manifestly agreeable to the force of the word as used in Scripture.

Some suppose that nothing more is intended in Scripture by *justification*, than the bare remission of sins. If so, then it is very strange if we consider the nature of the case. For it is most evident, and none will deny, that it is with respect to the rule or the law of God that we are under, that we are said in Scripture to be either *justified* or *condemned*. Now what does it mean to justify a person as the subject of a law or rule, if not to judge him as standing right with respect to that rule? To justify a person in a particular case, is to approve of him as standing right, as subject to the law *in that case*. And to justify him *in general*, is to pass judgment on him, as standing right in a state corresponding to the law or rule in general. But certainly, in order for a person to be looked at as standing right with respect to the rule in general, or in a state corresponding to the law of God, more is needed than not having the *guilt* of sin. For whatever that law is, whether a new or an old one, doubtless something *positive* is needed to answer to the law. We are no more justified by the voice of the law, or by someone who judges according to the law, by a mere *pardon of sin*, than Adam was, our first surety. He was justified by the law at the moment of his existence, before he had yet fulfilled the obedience of the law, or had so much as a trial as to whether he would fulfill it or not. If Adam had finished his course of perfect obedience, he would have been justified; and certainly his justification would have implied something more than what is merely negative. He would have been *approved of*, as having fulfilled the righteousness of the law. Accordingly, he would have been adjudged to be due its reward.

## I. Meaning of the Doctrine

So Christ, our second surety (in whose justification all who have him as their surety, are *virtually* justified <sup>1</sup>), was not justified till he had done the work the Father had appointed him, and kept the Father's commandments through all trials. And then, *in his resurrection*, he was justified. When he had been *put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*, 1Pet 3.18, then he who *was manifest in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit*, 1Tim 3.16. But when God justified Him in raising him from the dead, He not only released him from his humiliation for sin, and acquitted him from any further suffering or abasement for it, but admitted him to that eternal and immortal life, and to the beginning of that exaltation that was the reward of what he had done. Indeed, the justification of a believer is none other than being admitted to communion in, or participation in the justification of this Head and Surety of all believers. For Christ suffered the punishment of sin, not as a private person, but as our surety. So when he was raised from the dead after this suffering, he was justified in this, not as a private person,<sup>2</sup> but as the surety and representative of all who would believe in him. So that he was raised again not only for his *own*, but also for *our justification*, according to the apostle. He says in Rom 4.25, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." This is why the apostle says in Rom 8.34, "Who is he that condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore, who is risen again."

But it is more directly taught in the Scriptures, that a believer's justification implies not only remission of sins, or acquittal from the wrath due to it, but also an admittance to a title to that glory which is the reward of righteousness. See particularly Rom 5.1-2, where the apostle mentions both of these as joint benefits implied in justification: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." So remission of sin, and inheritance among those who are sanctified, are mentioned *together*, as what are jointly obtained by faith in Christ. Act 26.18, "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified through faith in Me." Both of these are without doubt implied in *passing from death to life*, which Christ speaks of as the fruit of faith, and which he opposes to condemnation. Joh 5.24, "Truly I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes in Him who sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but *has passed from death to life.*"

**(2) Secondly**, I now proceed to show what is meant when it is said that this justification is by faith only, and not by any virtue or goodness of our own.

This inquiry may be subdivided into two parts:

1. How it is by *faith*.
2. How it is by faith *alone*, without any manner of goodness of ours.

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<sup>1</sup> *Virtually* justified: justified in essence or effect, but not yet in fact. WCF 11.4: "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect (Gal 3.8; 1Pet 1.2,19,20; Rom 8.30); and Christ did, in the fulness of time, die for their sins, and rise again for their justification (Gal 4.4; Rom 4.25): nevertheless, they are not justified until the Holy Spirit, in due time, actually applies Christ to them [upon their personal belief in Christ].(Col 1.21,22; Gal 2.16; Tit 3.4-7) – WHG

<sup>2</sup> Not only *privately* for himself, but also as a *public* person and the *FEDERAL* representative of His people. – WHG



## I. Meaning of the Doctrine

1. How is justification by *faith*? Here the great difficulty has been about the import and force of the particle *by*, or what is that influence which faith has in the affair of justification, that is expressed in Scripture by being *justified by faith*.

Here, if I may humbly express what seems evident to me, that faith is indeed the *condition* of justification so as nothing else is; yet this matter is not clearly and sufficiently explained by saying that faith is the condition of justification. That is because the word seems ambiguous, both in common use, and also as it is used in divinity. In one sense, Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation. In another sense, *faith* is the condition of our justification. And in still another sense, other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too. There seems to be a great deal of ambiguity in those expressions that are commonly used (which we are yet forced to use), *e.g.*, the condition of salvation; what is required in order to be saved or justified; the terms of the covenant, etc.

I believe they are understood in very different senses by different persons. And besides, as the word *condition* is often understood in the common use of language, faith is not the only thing in us that is the condition of justification. For the word *condition* — as it is very often (and perhaps most commonly) used — means anything that may have the place of a condition in a conditional proposition. As such, it is truly connected with the consequent, especially if the proposition holds true both in the affirmative and negative; *i.e.*, as the condition is either affirmed or denied. If it is that with which (being affirmed) a thing will be; and without which (being denied) it will *not* be, then in such a case, we call it a *condition* of that thing.

But in this sense, faith is not the only condition of salvation and justification. For there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, with which justification will be; and without them, it will *not* be. Thus, conditional propositions are put with justification and salvation, and they may be found in many places in Scripture. Such conditions are *love to God, love to our brothers, forgiving men their trespasses*, and many other good qualifications and acts. And there are many other things besides faith, which are directly proposed to us, and are to be pursued or performed by us in order for eternal life. If they are done, or obtained, we will have eternal life; and if they are not done, or not obtained, we will surely perish. If faith was the only condition of justification in this sense, I don't apprehend that saying *faith is the condition of justification*, would express the sense of that phrase in Scripture, of being *justified by faith*. There is a difference between being justified by a thing, and that thing universally, necessarily, and inseparably attending or going with justification; for so do a great many things that we are not said to be justified by. It is not the inseparable connection with justification that the Holy Ghost would signify (or that is naturally signified) by such a phrase, but some particular *influence* that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence that justification has on faith's influence.

Some who have been aware of this, have supposed that the influence or dependence might well be expressed by faith's being the *instrument* of our justification. This has been misunderstood, and injuriously represented, and ridiculed by those who have denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone. It is as if they supposed faith was used as an instrument in the hand of God, by which He performed and brought to pass that act of His — *namely*, approving and justifying the believer. To the contrary, it was not intended that faith was the instrument with which *God justifies*, but the instrument with which we *receive justification*

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— not the instrument with which the justifier acts in justifying, but with which the receiver of justification acts in accepting justification. Yet it must be admitted, this is an obscure way of speaking. There must certainly be some impropriety in calling it an *instrument* with which we receive or accept justification. For the very persons who thus explain the matter, speak of *faith* as being the reception or acceptance itself. If this is so, then how can it be the instrument of reception or acceptance? Certainly there is a difference between the *act* and the *instrument*. Besides, by their own descriptions of faith, Christ is the Mediator by whom we are justified, and His righteousness is that by which we are justified. He is more directly the object of this acceptance and justification, which is the benefit arising from it more indirectly. Therefore, if faith is an instrument, it is more properly the instrument by which we receive *Christ*, than the instrument by which we receive *justification*.

But I humbly conceive that we have been ready to look too far afield to find out what influence faith has on our justification, or what dependence this effect has on faith, signified by the expression *justified by faith*. We are overlooking that which is most obviously pointed out in the expression: *namely*, there is a Mediator who has purchased justification, and faith in this Mediator is what renders it a fitting and suitable thing in the sight of God, that the believer, rather than others, should have this purchased benefit assigned to him. This benefit is purchased. And God sees it is more appropriate and suitable that it be assigned to *some* rather than *others*, because He sees them as differently qualified. That qualification in which the fitness for this benefit consists, as the case stands, is that thing in us by which we are justified. If Christ had not come into the world and died, etc., to purchase justification, then no qualification whatsoever in us could render it an appropriate or fitting thing that we should be justified. But the case being as it now stands — that Christ has actually purchased justification by his own blood for infinitely unworthy creatures — there may be certain qualification found in some persons, which either from the relation it bears to the Mediator and his merits, or on some other account, is the thing that in the sight of God renders it a fitting and decent thing, that they should have an interest in this purchased benefit. And if any are destitute of this qualification, it renders it an unfit and unsuitable thing that they should have it. The wisdom of God in His constitutions doubtless much appears in the fitness and beauty of them, so that those things that are fit to be done, are established to be done; and that those things that are agreeable to one another, are connected in His constitution. So without a doubt, God justifies a believer according to His revealed constitution, because He sees something in this qualification that, as the case stands, renders it a fit thing that such persons should be justified — whether it is because faith is the *instrument*, or as it were, *the hand* by which the one who has purchased justification is apprehended and accepted; or because it is the acceptance itself; or whatever else. To be justified, is to be approved by God as a proper subject of pardon, with a right to eternal life. Therefore, when it is said that we are *justified by faith*, what else can be understood by it, but that faith is that by which we are rendered approvable, and fitly so; and indeed, as the case stands, that we are proper subjects of this benefit?

This is something different from faith being the condition of justification, even though it is inseparably connected with justification. So are many other things besides faith. And yet nothing in us but *faith* renders it fitting that we should have justification assigned to us. I will presently show how, in answer to the next inquiry.

## I. Meaning of the Doctrine

2. How is this said to be by faith *alone*, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own? To some, this may seem to be attended with two difficulties: *namely*, how can this be said to be by faith alone, without any virtue or goodness of ours, when faith itself is a virtue, and one part of our goodness? It is not only some manner of goodness of ours, but a very excellent qualification, and one chief part of the inherent holiness of a Christian. And if it is a part of our inherent goodness or excellence (whether this or any other part) that renders it a decent or congruous thing that we should have this benefit of Christ assigned to us, then how is this less than what those who talk about a merit of congruity mean by it? Moreover, if this part of our Christian holiness qualifies us in the sight of God for this benefit of Christ, and it renders it a fit or proper thing in His sight, that we should have it, then why not *other* parts of holiness and conformity to God? Why may not others that are also very excellent, and have as much of the image of Christ in them, and are no less lovely in God's eyes, qualify us as much, and have as much influence to render us fit in God's sight, for such a benefit as this?

I therefore answer, when it is said that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our own, what is meant is that it is not out of respect for the excellence or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it fit that this benefit of Christ should be ours. It is not in any way, on account of any excellence or value that there is in faith, that it appears in the sight of God a fit thing, that he who believes should have this benefit of Christ assigned to him. Rather, it is purely from the relation that faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had; or as it unites us to that Mediator in and by whom we are justified. Here, for greater clearness, I would particularly explain myself under several propositions.

(1.) It is certain that there is some union or relation to Him, in which the people of Christ stand, that is expressed in Scripture from time to time by being *in Christ*. And it is represented frequently by those metaphors of being *members of Christ*, or being *united to Him* as members to the Head; and *branches* to the stock;<sup>1</sup> and it is compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. I do not now pretend to determine what sort of union this is. Nor is it necessary to my present purpose, to enter into any sort of dispute about it. If any are disgusted at the word *union*, as obscure and unintelligible, the word *relation* equally serves my purpose. I do not now desire to determine any more about it than everyone, of all sorts, will readily allow: that there is a peculiar *relation* between true Christians and Christ, which does not exist between Him and others. It is signified by those metaphorical expressions in Scripture, of being *in Christ*, being *members of Christ*, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> "Our Savior compares his mystical body, that is, his church, to a vine, which his Father, whom he compares to a husbandman, has planted; *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman* (Joh 15.1). To represent to us the union that is between Christ and all true Christians, and the influence of grace and spiritual life which all who are united to him derive and receive from him, he sets it forth to us by the resemblance of a vine and branches. As there is a natural, vital union between the vine and the branches, so there is a spiritual union between Christ and true Christians; and this union is the cause of our fruitfulness in the works of obedience and a good life. There are some indeed who seem to be grafted into Christ by an outward profession of Christianity, who yet derive no influence from him so as to bring forth fruit, because they are not *vitally* united to him." — *Dr. Tillotson* (1630-1694), *3rd vol. of Sermons*, p. 307.

By this it appears that the vital union between Christ and true Christians, which is much more of a mystery than the relative union, and necessarily implies it, was not thought to be an unreasonable doctrine by one of the greatest divines *on the other side* of this question that we have in hand. — *Edwards*

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(2.) This *relation* or *union* to Christ, by which Christians are said to be *in Christ* (whatever it may be), is the ground of their right to His benefits. This needs no proof; the reason for it, at first blush, demonstrates it. It is also exceedingly evident by Scripture. 1Joh 5.12, “He who has the Son, has life; and he who does not have the Son, does not have life.” 1Cor 1.30, “Of him you are in Christ Jesus, who is made righteousness for us from God.” First we must be *in Him*, and then he will be made righteousness or justification for us. Eph 1.6, “Who has made us accepted in the Beloved.”

Our being *in Him* is the ground of our being accepted. So the Holy Ghost has thought it fit to compare this justification to those unions. The *union* of the members of the body with the head, is the ground of their partaking of the life of the head. It is the *union* of the branches to the stock, which is the ground of their partaking of the sap and life of the stock. It is the *relation* of the wife to the husband, that is the ground of her joint interest in his estate; they are looked upon, in several respects, as *one* in law. So there is a legal union between Christ and true Christians. All except Socinians<sup>1</sup> will allow that in some respects, one is accepted for the other by the Supreme Judge.<sup>2</sup>

(3.) And thus it is that *faith* is the qualification in any person, that renders it fit in the sight of God that he should be looked upon as having Christ’s satisfaction and righteousness belonging to him — because it is what, *on his part*, makes up this union between him and Christ. By what has just now been observed, it is a person’s being *in Christ*, according to the scripture phrase, that is the ground of having Christ’s satisfaction and merits belong to him, and a right to the benefits that are procured by it. The reason for it is plain: it is easy to see how our having Christ’s merits and benefits belonging to us, follows from our having (if I may so speak) *Christ himself* belonging to us, or our being united to Him. And if so, it must also be easy to see how, or in what manner, that which *on his part* makes up the *union* between his soul and Christ, should be the things on account of which God looks at it as fit that he should have Christ’s merits belonging to him. It is a very different thing for God to assign to a particular person a right to Christ’s merits and benefits, out of a regard for a qualification in him in this respect, or doing it for him in respect to the value or goodness of that qualification in him, or as a reward for its excellence.

There is nobody who would deny that there is a peculiar relation between Christ and his true disciples, by which they are in some sense said in Scripture to be *one*. So too, I suppose there is nobody who would deny that there may be something that the true Christian does on his part, by which he is active in coming into this relation or union — some uniting act, or that which is done towards this union or relation (or whatever any please to call it) on the Christian’s part. Now, I suppose that *faith* is this act.

I do not now pretend to define *justifying faith*, or to determine precisely how much is contained in it, but only to determine this much concerning it: justifying faith is that by which the soul — which was separate and alienated from Christ before — unites itself to Him, or ceases to be in that state of alienation any longer, and comes into that forementioned union or relation to Him. Or to use the scripture phrase, it is that by which the soul comes to Christ

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<sup>1</sup> *Socinians*: followers of Socinus (1539-1604), who reject the divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and original sin.

<sup>2</sup> That is, Christ is the surety, guarantor, representative, or federal head of all Christians (Heb 7.22). – WHG

## I. Meaning of the Doctrine

and *receives* him. This is made evident by the Scriptures using these very expressions to signify faith.

Joh 6.35-39, “He who *comes* to me shall never hunger; and he who *believes in* me, shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you also have seen me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives me, will *come to* me; and the one who *comes* to me, I will in no way cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.” Verse 40, “And this is the will of Him who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and *believes in* him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Joh 5.38-40, “Whom He has sent, you do not *believe*. Search the Scriptures, for ... they testify of me. And yet you will not *come to me*, that you might have life.”

Joh 5.43-44, “I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not *receive* me. If another comes in his own name, you will *receive* him. How can you *believe*, who receive honor from one another?”

Joh 1.12, “But as many as *received* Him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe in His name.”

If it is said that these are obscure figures of speech which, however well they might have been understood of old among those who commonly used such metaphors, they are understood now only with difficulty. I allow that the expressions *receiving* Christ and *coming* to Christ, are metaphorical expressions. Even if I allow that they are obscure metaphors, this much at least is certainly plain in them: that faith is that by which those who were separated before, and were at a distance from Christ (that is to say, who were not so related and united to Him as His people are), cease to be at such a distance any longer, and they come into that relation and nearness; unless these phrases are so unintelligible, that nothing at all can be understood by them.

God does not give to those who believe, a union with or an interest in the Savior, as a *reward* for faith; but only because faith is the soul’s *active* uniting with Christ. Or faith is itself the very act of union<sup>1</sup> on their part. God sees fit, that in order for a union to be established between two intelligent active beings or persons, such that they are looked upon as one, there should be a mutual act by both, so that each receives the other, as actively joining themselves to one another. In requiring this in order to have an union with Christ as one of his people, God treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act and choice. Hence, He sees it fit that only those who are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one *in law*. What is real in the union between Christ and his people, is the foundation of what is *legal*. That is, it is something that is really in them, and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of being counted *as one* by the judge. And if there is any *act* or qualification in believers that is of that uniting nature, that it is proper on that account for the judge to look upon them and accept them *as one*, then it is no wonder that on account of the same act or qualification, he should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one for the other, as if it were their *own* satisfaction and merits: it necessarily follows, or rather, it is implied.

And thus it is that faith justifies, or gives us an interest in Christ’s satisfaction and merits, and a right to the benefits procured by it: *namely*, as it makes Christ and the believer *one* in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Union*: the state of being joined or united as one.

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acceptance of the Supreme Judge. It is by faith that we have a title to eternal life, because it is by faith that we have the Son of God, by whom life is imparted. In 1Joh 5.12, the apostle John says, “He who has the Son, has life.” He evidently refers to those words of Christ, which he gives an account of in Joh 3.36: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son, shall not see life.” In the same places that the Scripture speaks of faith as the soul’s receiving or coming to Christ, it also speaks of this receiving, coming to, or joining with Christ, as the ground of an interest in His benefits: to as many as received him, “to them he gave power” to become the sons of God. You will not come to me “that you might have life.” Christ’s satisfaction and merits should belong to those who believe, because an interest in that satisfaction and merit is a fit *reward* for faith; or it is a suitable testimony of God’s regard for the amiableness and excellence of that grace. But there is a wide difference between looking upon that as suitable, and its being suitable that Christ’s satisfaction and merits should be theirs because Christ and they are so united that, in the eyes of the Judge, they may be looked upon and taken as one.

On account of the believer’s faith, it is fit and congruous in the sight of God, both that he who believes should be looked upon as being *in Christ*, and also as having *an interest in His merits*, in the way explained. Yet it appears that this is very wide from a *merit of congruity*, or indeed any *moral congruity* at all to either one. There is a twofold fitness to a state.<sup>1</sup> I don’t know how to give them distinguishing names, other than by calling the one a *moral fitness*, and the other a *natural fitness*.

A person has a MORAL FITNESS for a state, when his moral excellence commends him to it; or when his being put into such a good state is but a suitable testimony of regard for the moral excellence, value, or amiableness of any of his qualifications or acts.

A person has a NATURAL FITNESS for a state, when it appears appropriate and decent that he is in such a state or circumstances, only from the natural concord or agreeableness that exists between such qualifications and such circumstances. It isn’t because the qualifications are lovely or unlovely, but only because the qualifications and circumstances are like one another — they suit, agree, or unite to one another in their nature.

It is on this latter account alone that God looks on it as fit, by a *natural fitness*, that the one whose heart sincerely unites itself to Christ as his Savior, should be looked upon as united to that Savior, and thus having an interest in Him. It is not from any moral fitness that exists between the excellence of a qualification such as faith, and such a glorious blessedness as having an interest in Christ. God’s bestowing Christ and his benefits on a soul in consequence of faith, only out of regard to the natural concord that exists between such a qualification of a soul, and such a union with Christ, and an interest in him, makes the case widely different from what it would be if God bestowed this from a regard to any *moral suitableness*. For, in the former case, it is only from God’s love of order that He bestows these things on account of faith. In the latter case, God does it out of love for the grace of faith itself. God will neither look on Christ’s merits as ours, nor adjudge his benefits to us, till we are in Christ. Nor will He look upon us as being *in Him*, without an active union of our hearts and souls to Him. This is because He is a wise being, and delights in order and not in confusion, and that things

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably, a state of unity with Christ, or of acceptance with God. – WHG

## I. Meaning of the Doctrine

should be together or apart according to their nature. Making such a constitution, is a testimony of God's love of order. By contrast, if it were done out of a regard for any moral fitness, or any suitableness between faith and such blessedness, it would be a testimony of His love for the act or qualification itself. The one supposes that this divine constitution is a manifestation of God's regard for the beauty of the act of faith. The other only supposes it to be a manifestation of His regard for the beauty of the order in uniting those things that have a natural agreement and congruity, and the union of the one with the other. Indeed a *moral suitableness* or fitness for a state includes a *natural suitableness*. For if there is a moral suitableness for a person being in such a state, there is also a natural suitableness. But such a *natural suitableness*, as I described it, by no means necessarily includes a *moral suitableness*.

This is plainly what our divines intend when they say that faith does not justify as a *work*, or a righteousness. That is, it doesn't justify as part of our moral goodness or excellence; or it doesn't justify because man was to have been justified by the Covenant of Works.<sup>1</sup> That justification was to have a title to eternal life given to man by God, in testimony of His pleasedness with man's works, or His regard for the inherent excellence and beauty of man's obedience. This is certainly what the apostle Paul means when he so insists that we are *not* justified by works — that we are not justified by them as good works, nor by any goodness, value, or excellence in our works. For the proof of this, I will at present mention but one thing; and that is the apostle from time to time speaking of our not being justified by works, as the thing that excludes all boasting, Eph 2.9, Rom 3.27, and 4.2. Now, which way do works give occasion for boasting, except as good works? What do men boast about, if not something they suppose is good or excellent? And on what account do they boast of anything, if not for the supposed excellence that is in it?

From these things we may learn in what manner faith is the only condition of justification and salvation. For it is not the *only* condition, so as to truly have the place of a condition in a hypothetical proposition, one in which justification and salvation are the consequent. Yet it is the condition of justification in a manner peculiar to it, so that nothing else has a parallel influence with it, because *faith includes the whole act of union to Christ as a Savior*. In Scripture, the entire active *uniting* of the soul, or the whole of what is called *coming* to Christ, and *receiving* him, is called *faith*. Though other things may be no less excellent than faith, yet it is not the nature of any other graces or virtues to directly close with Christ as a Mediator, any further than they enter into the constitution of justifying faith, and belong to its nature.

Thus I have explained my meaning, in asserting it as a doctrine of the gospel, that we are justified by *faith only*, without any manner of goodness of our own.

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<sup>1</sup> The Covenant of Works was in effect in the Garden, prior to the fall. Afterwards it was a Covenant of Grace, pending Christ's fulfillment of the Covenant of Works, to which the Ceremonial Law pointed (Heb 7-10). – WHG

## I. Meaning of the Doctrine



## II. The Proof of the Doctrine.

I now proceed to the *proof* of it, which I will endeavor to produce in the two following arguments.

***First. Our only qualification for justification, is what unites us to Christ.***

Such is our case, and the state of things, that neither faith, nor any other qualification, or act, or course of acts, does or can render it suitable that a person should have an interest in the Savior, and so have a title to His benefits on account of any excellence in it, or in any other way than as something in him may unite him to the Savior. It is not suitable that God should give fallen man an interest in Christ and in His merits, as a testimony of His consideration of anything whatsoever that is a loveliness or goodness in man. And that is because it is not fitting, till a sinner is actually justified, that anything in him should be accepted by God as any excellence or amiableness of his person — or that God, by any act, should in any manner or degree, testify of any pleasedness with fallen man, or favor towards him, on account of anything inherent in him.

And that is for two reasons:

1. *The nature of things will not allow it.* This appears from the infinite guilt that the sinner is under till he is justified, which arises from the infinite evil or heinousness of sin. But because this is what some deny, I would therefore first establish this point, and show that sin is a thing that is indeed properly of infinite heinousness. And then I will show the consequence — that it cannot be suitable till the sinner is actually justified, nor that God should by any act, testify of His pleasedness with or acceptance of any excellence or amiableness of the sinner's person.

It is most demonstrably evident that the evil and demerit of sin is infinitely great,<sup>1</sup> because what the evil or iniquity of sin consists in, is the violating of an obligation, or doing what we should not do. Therefore, by however much greater the obligation that is violated, that much greater is the iniquity of the violation. And certainly our obligation to love or honor any Being, is great in proportion to the greatness or excellence of that Being, or His worthiness to be loved and honored. We are under greater obligations to love a lovelier Being, than to love one who is less lovely. If a Being is infinitely excellent and lovely, then our obligations to love Him are infinitely great. This matter is so plain, that it seems needless to say much about it.

Some have strangely argued against sin being infinitely evil, from being committed against an infinite object, saying that if this were so, it may as well be argued there is also an infinite value or worthiness in our holiness and love to God, because that also has an infinite object. Whereas the argument, from parity of reason, carries it the other way. The sin of the creature against God is ill-deserving in proportion to the distance between God and the creature — the greatness of the Object (God), and the inferiority of the subject (man), aggravates it. But it is the other way with regard to the worthiness of the creature's respect to God. It is worthless (or not worthy) in proportion to the inferiority of the subject — the greater the distance

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<sup>1</sup> A sin against an infinite God is an infinite sin, requiring an infinite atonement. Proposed by John Wycliffe (1328-1384) *Tracts and Treatises*, Trialogus; also, Francis Turretin (1623-1687), *Elenctic Theology*, chap. 1, the Necessity of the Atonement. – WHG

## II. Proof of the Doctrine

between the creature and God, the less the creature's respect is worthy of God's notice or regard. The unworthiness of sin or opposition to God, rises and is great in proportion to the dignity of the Object, and the inferiority of the subject. But conversely, the worth or value of respect, rises in proportion to the value of the subject. And that is for this plain reason: that the evil of disrespect is in proportion to the obligation that lies upon the subject, to the Object. This obligation is most evidently increased by the excellence and superiority of the Object. But conversely, the worthiness of respect due to a Being is in proportion to the obligation that lies on the one who is the Object (or rather, the reason He has) to regard the subject — and this is certainly in proportion to the subject's value or excellence. Sin or disrespect is evil or heinous in proportion to the degree of what it denies in the Object, and as it were, takes from it — *namely*, its excellence and worthiness of respect. Conversely, respect is valuable in proportion to the value of what is given to the Object in that respect, which undoubtedly (other things being equal) is great in proportion to the subject's value or worthiness of regard, because the subject, in giving his respect, can give no more than himself. So far as he gives his respect, he gives himself to the Object, and therefore his gift is of greater or lesser value in proportion to the value of himself.

Hence (by the way) the love, honor, and obedience of Christ towards God, has infinite value, from the excellence and dignity of the Person in whom these qualifications were inherent. The reason why we needed a Person of infinite dignity to obey for us who had disobeyed, was because of our comparative infinite inferiority by which our disobedience was infinitely aggravated. We needed the worthiness of One whose obedience might correspond to the unworthiness of our disobedience. And therefore we needed One who was as great and worthy, as we were unworthy.

Another objection (that perhaps may be thought hardly worth mentioning), is that to suppose *any* sin to be infinitely heinous, is to make *all* sins equally heinous; for how can any sin be more than infinitely heinous? But all that can be argued from this, is that no sin can be greater with respect to that aggravation, than the worthiness of the object against whom it is committed. One sin cannot be more aggravated than another in *that* respect, because the aggravation of every sin is infinite. But that doesn't keep some sins from being more heinous than others, in other respects. If we suppose a cylinder is infinitely long, then it cannot be greater with respect to its length. Yet it may be doubled and trebled, and made a thousandfold more, by the increase of *other* dimensions. Of sins that are all infinitely heinous, some may be more heinous than others, having diverse punishments as well, that are all infinitely dreadful calamities; or all of them may infinitely exceed all finite calamities. So that there is no finite calamity, however great, that is not infinitely less dreadful, or more eligible than any of them. Yet some of them may be a thousand times more dreadful than others. A punishment may be infinitely dreadful because of its infinite duration; and therefore it cannot be greater with respect to that aggravation of it (*namely*, its length of continuance); yet it may be vastly more terrible on other accounts.

Having thus, I imagine, made it clear that all sin is infinitely heinous, and consequently that the sinner, before he is justified, is under infinite guilt in God's sight, it now remains that I show the consequence. It follows from this, that it is not suitable that God should give the sinner an interest in Christ's merits, and so a title to His benefits, from regard to any

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qualification, or act, or course of acts in the sinner, on account of any excellence or goodness whatsoever in these things, but only from regard to his uniting to Christ. This fully implies that it is not suitable that God, by any act, should in any manner or degree, testify of any acceptance of, or pleasedness with anything — as having any virtue, or excellence, or any part of goodness, or valuableness in his person — until the sinner is actually and already interested in Christ's merits.

From these premises, it follows that before the sinner is already interested in Christ, and justified, it is impossible that God should have any acceptance of, or pleasedness with the person of the sinner, as being in any degree lovely in His sight, or indeed, being less the object of His displeasure and wrath. For by this supposition, the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in the sight of God; for his guilt is not removed except by pardon. But to suppose that the sinner is already pardoned, is to suppose that he is already justified, which is contrary to the supposition. But if the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in God's sight, it is the same as still being beheld by God as infinitely the object of His displeasure and wrath, or infinitely hateful in His eyes. If this is so, then where is there any room for anything in him to be accepted as something of value in God's sight, or for any act of favor of any kind towards him, or any gift whatsoever to him, in testimony of God's respect to and acceptance of something of himself that is lovely and pleasing? If we supposed that a sinner could have faith or some other grace in his heart, and yet remain separate from Christ, and this should continue to be so — that he is not looked upon as being *in Christ*, or having any relation to Him — then it would not be suitable that true grace should be accepted by God as any loveliness or goodness of his person in the sight of God. If it were to be accepted as the loveliness of the person, that would be to accept the person as in some degree lovely to God. But this cannot be consistent with his still remaining under infinite guilt, or his infinite unworthiness in God's sight, which that goodness has no worthiness to balance.

While God beholds the man as separate from Christ, He must behold him as he is in himself. And so his goodness cannot be beheld by God, except as taken together with his guilt and hatefulness, and put in the scales with it. So his goodness is nothing, because something finite is on the balance against something infinite, whose proportion to it is nothing. In such a case, if the man is looked at as he is in himself, the excess weight in one scale above the other, must be looked at as the quality of the man. These contraries being beheld together, one takes from another, as one number is subtracted from another, and the man must be looked upon in God's sight, according to the remainder. For by this supposition, all acts of grace or favor in not imputing the guilt as it is, are excluded, because it supposes a degree of pardon. And that pardon supposes justification, which is contrary to what is supposed — namely, that the sinner is *not* already justified. Therefore, things must be taken strictly as they are. And so the man is still as infinitely unworthy and hateful in God's sight, as he was before without diminution, because his goodness bears no proportion to his unworthiness; and therefore, when taken together, it is nothing.

From this may be more clearly seen the force of that expression in the text, of believing in Him who *justifies the ungodly* (Rom 4.5). For though there is indeed something in man that is really and spiritually good *prior* to justification, yet there is nothing that is accepted as any godliness or excellence of the person, till *after* justification. Goodness or loveliness of the

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person in the acceptance of God, in any degree, is not to be considered as prior, but posterior in the order and method of God's proceeding in this affair. Though respect to the natural suitableness between such a qualification and such a state goes before justification, the acceptance even of faith, as being any goodness or loveliness of the believer, follows justification. Goodness, on the forementioned account, is justly looked at as nothing, until the man is justified. Therefore, the man is regarded in justification, as altogether hateful in himself. Thus the nature of things will not permit a man to have an interest given to him in the merits or benefits of a Savior, on account of anything in himself being a righteousness, or virtue, or excellence.

2. A divine constitution that is antecedent to that which establishes justification by a Savior (and indeed, to any need for a Savior), stands in the way of it; namely, of that original constitution or law which man was put under, by which constitution or law the sinner is condemned because he is a violator of that law. He stands condemned till he has an actual interest in the Savior, through whom he is set at liberty from that condemnation. But to suppose that God gives a man an interest in Christ in reward for his righteousness or virtue, is inconsistent with his still remaining under condemnation till he has an interest in Christ. This is because it supposes that the sinner's virtue is accepted, and he is accepted for it, before he has an interest in Christ, inasmuch as an interest in Christ is given as a reward for his virtue. But the virtue must first be accepted before it is rewarded; and the man must first be accepted for his virtue, before he is rewarded for it with so great and glorious a reward. For the very notion of a reward, is some good bestowed in testimony of respect to, and acceptance of virtue in the person rewarded. It is inconsistent with the honor of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth, to accept anything from a condemned malefactor, who is condemned by the justice of His own holy law, till that condemnation is removed. And then, such acceptance is inconsistent with and contradictory to such remaining condemnation. For the law condemns the one who violates it, to be totally rejected and cast off by God. But how can a man continue under this condemnation — *i.e.*, how can he continue to be utterly rejected and cast off by God — and yet his righteousness or virtue be accepted, and he himself be accepted on account of it, so as to have so glorious a reward as an interest in Christ bestowed as a testimony of that acceptance?

I know the answer <sup>1</sup>will be that we are not now subject to that constitution which mankind was put under at first, but God, in mercy to mankind, has abolished that rigorous constitution, and put us under a *new* law. He has introduced a milder constitution, and the constitution or law itself not remaining, there is no need to suppose that its condemnation remains to stand in the way of the acceptance of our virtue. Indeed, there is no other way to avoid this difficulty. The condemnation of the law must stand in force against a man, till he is actually interested in the Savior who has satisfied and answered the law, so as to effectually prevent any acceptance of his virtue either before, or in order to, obtain such an interest, unless the law or constitution itself is abolished. But the scheme of those modern divines by whom this is maintained, seems to contain a great deal of absurdity and self-contradiction. They hold that the old law given to Adam, which requires perfect obedience, is entirely repealed, and that

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## II. Proof of the Doctrine

instead of it, we are put under a *new law* which requires no more than imperfect sincere obedience. This is in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent circumstances since the fall, by which we are unable to perform that perfect obedience that was required by the first law. They strenuously maintain that it would be unjust of God to require anything of us that is beyond our present power and ability to perform. And yet they hold that Christ died to satisfy for the imperfections of our obedience, that so our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of perfect obedience. Now, how can these things hold together? I would ask what law these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law, then they are not sins; and if they are not sins, then what need is there of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? But if they are sins, and so they are the breach of *some* law, then what law is it? They cannot be a breach of their *new* law, for that requires no other than imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections. They cannot be a breach of the *old* law, for they say that is entirely abolished, and we were never under it; and we cannot break a law that we were never under. They say it would not be just of God to exact from us perfect obedience, because it would not be just of God to require more of us than we can perform in our present state, and to punish us for failing in it.

Therefore, by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. And therefore, what need is there of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? What need is there of Christ's suffering to satisfy for that which is no fault, and in its own nature deserves no suffering? What need is there of Christ's dying to purchase, so that our imperfect obedience would be accepted, when according to their scheme it would be unjust in itself that any other than imperfect obedience should be required? What need is there of Christ's dying to make way for God's accepting such an obedience, as it would in itself be unjust of Him not to accept it? Is there any need of Christ's dying to persuade God *not* to do unjustly? If it is said that Christ died to satisfy that law for us, so that we might not be under that law, but might be delivered from it, and so that there might be room for us to be under a milder law, then I would still inquire, What need is there of Christ's dying, that we might not be under a law that (according to their scheme) it would in itself be unjust for us to be under it, because in our present state we are not able to keep it? What need is there of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that it would be unjust that we be under it, whether Christ died or not?

Thus far I have argued principally from reason, and the nature of things.

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### ***Second. God's revelation is exceedingly full of this doctrine.***

The second argument is that the Holy Scripture is exceedingly full in this doctrine. It is the revelation that God has given to us of His mind and will, by which alone we can ever come to know how those who have offended God can be accepted by him, and justified in his sight. Particularly, the apostle Paul is abundant in teaching that "we are justified by faith alone, without the works of the law." (Rom 3.28; Gal 2.16) There is no one doctrine that he insists so much upon, and that he handles with so much distinctness, by explaining, giving reasons, and answering objections.

Here it is not denied by any, that the apostle asserts that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law — because the words are express. But it is said that we take his words wrong,

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and what we understand by them, is what never entered into his heart. For when he excludes the works of the law, they say, we understand him to mean the *whole* law of God, or the rule which He has given to mankind to walk by; whereas, all he intends is the *ceremonial* law.

Some who oppose this doctrine that we uphold, say that indeed the apostle sometimes means that that persons are *admitted* into a justified state by faith, *i.e.*, by a hearty embracing of the gospel in its first act only, without any preceding holy life. But, they say, it is by a persevering obedience that they are *continued* in a justified state, and *finally* justified. But this is the same as saying that upon first embracing the gospel, a man is only *conditionally* justified and pardoned. To pardon sin is to free the sinner from its punishment, or from that eternal misery that is due for it. Therefore, if a person is pardoned, or freed from this misery on his first embracing the gospel, and yet he is not finally freed, but his actual freedom still depends on some condition yet to be performed, then it is inconceivable how he can be pardoned other than conditionally. That is, he is not actually pardoned and freed from punishment, but he only has God's promise that he will be pardoned upon future conditions. God promises him now, that if he perseveres in obedience, he will be finally pardoned or actually freed from hell. This is to make nothing at all of the apostle's great doctrine of justification by faith alone. Such a conditional pardon is no pardon or justification at all — no more than all mankind have, whether they embrace the gospel or not. For they all have a promise of final justification on conditions of future sincere obedience, as much as the one who embraces the gospel. But not to dispute about this, we will suppose that there may be something or other at the sinner's first embracing the gospel, that may properly be called *justification* or *pardon*, and yet that final justification, or real freedom from the punishment of sin, is still suspended on conditions that are unfulfilled up to now. Yet those who hold that sinners are thus justified upon embracing the gospel, suppose that they are justified by this, in no other way than as it is a leading act of obedience; or at least as virtue and moral goodness in them. Therefore, it would be excluded by the apostle as much as any other virtue or obedience, if it is allowed that he means the *moral law*, when he excludes *works of the law*. Therefore, if that point is yielded — that the apostle means the moral law, and not just the ceremonial law — their whole scheme falls to the ground.

And because the outcome of the whole argument from those texts in Paul's epistles depends on the determination of this point, I would particularly discuss it.

Some of our opponents in this doctrine of justification, when they deny that what the apostle means by "the law" is the *moral law* or the *whole rule of life* which God has given to mankind, seemingly choose to express themselves thus: that the apostle only intends *the Mosaic dispensation*. But this comes to the same thing as if they said that the apostle only means to exclude the works of the *ceremonial* law. For when they say that it is intended only that we are not justified by the works of the Mosaic dispensation, if they mean anything by it, it must be that we are not justified by attending to and observing what is *Mosaic* in that dispensation, or what was peculiar to it, and what differed from the *Christian* dispensation. This is the same as what is ceremonial and positive, and not moral, in that administration. So this is what I have to disprove: that when the apostle speaks of "works of the law" in this affair, he means only works of the *ceremonial* law, or those observances that were peculiar to the Mosaic administration.

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Here it must be noted that nobody controverts whether the works of the ceremonial law are not included, or whether the apostle particularly argues against justification by circumcision and other ceremonial observances. But all that we have in question is whether, when he denies justification by *works of the law*, he is to be understood as speaking of the ceremonial law only — or whether the moral law is also implied and intended. Therefore, those arguments which are brought to prove that the apostle meant the *ceremonial* law, are not to the purpose unless they prove that the apostle meant *only* those laws.

What is much insisted on is that it was the Judaizing Christians being so fond of circumcision and other ceremonies of the law, and depending on them so much, which was the occasion of the apostle's writing as he does against justification by the works of the law. But supposing it were so, that their trusting in works of the *ceremonial* law was the sole occasion for the apostle's writing (which there is still no reason to concede this, as it may appear later). If their trusting in a particular work as a work of righteousness was all that gave occasion for the apostle to write, then how does it follow that therefore the apostle did not on that occasion, write against trusting in *all works* of righteousness whatsoever? Where is the absurdity of supposing that the apostle might take occasion, from observing some who trusted in a certain work, to write to them against trusting in *any* works of righteousness, and that it was a very proper occasion for that too? Indeed, it would have been unavoidable for the apostle to argue against trusting in a particular work as having the general quality of a work of righteousness, and not necessarily argue against trusting in works of righteousness in general. Suppose it had been some other particular work that was the occasion for the apostle's writing — for instance, works of charity — and the apostle took that occasion to write to them not to trust in their works. Could the apostle be understood to mean no other works besides works of charity? Would it have been absurd to understand him as writing against trusting in any work at all, because it was their trusting in a particular work, that gave occasion for his writing?

Another thing alleged as an evidence that the apostle means the *ceremonial* law when he says we cannot be justified by the works of the law, is that he uses this argument to prove it: that the law he speaks of was given so long after the covenant with Abraham: Gal 3.17, "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But, they say, it was only the *Mosaic administration*, and not the *Covenant of Works*, that was given so long after. But the apostle's argument seems to be manifestly mistaken by them. The apostle does not speak of a law that began to have its being four hundred and thirty years after. If he did, there would be some force in their objection. But he respects a certain solemn transaction that was well-known among the Jews, indicated by the phrase *the giving of the law*, which was at Mount Sinai. We have an account of it in Exodus chapters 19 and 20. It consists especially in God's giving the Ten Commandments, which is the *moral* law, with a terrible voice — the law which He afterwards gave on tablets of stone. The Jews in the apostle's time misinterpreted this transaction. They looked at it as God's establishing that law as a rule of justification. Against this conceit of theirs, the apostle brings this invincible argument: that God would never go about to disannul his covenant with Abraham, which was plainly a Covenant of Grace, by a transaction with his posterity, that was so long after it and plainly built upon it. He would not overthrow a Covenant of Grace that He had long before established with Abraham — for him and for his seed (which is often mentioned as the ground of God's making them His people)

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— by now establishing a Covenant of Works with them at Mount Sinai, as the Jews and Judaizing Christians supposed.

### ***Eleven Instances from Scripture***

The apostle does not mean works of the ceremonial law only, when he excludes works of the law in justification — but also works of the moral law, and all works of obedience, virtue, and righteousness whatsoever. This may appear by the following things:

1. The apostle not only says that we are not justified by the works of the *law*, but that we are not justified by *works*, using a general term, as in our text: *to him who does not work, but believes in him who justifies*, etc.; and in the 6th verse, “God imputes righteousness without works;” and Rom 11.6, “And if by grace, then is it no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, then it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.” So too, Eph 2.8-9, “For by grace you are saved, through faith, not of works.” There is no reason in the world to understand the apostle to mean by this, any works other than in general as correlates of a reward, or good works, or works of virtue and righteousness. When the apostle says we are justified or saved *not by works*, without annexing any term such as *the law*, or any other addition to limit the expression, what warrant does anyone have to confine it to works of a particular law or institution, excluding others? Are not observances of other divine laws, *works*, as well as of that law? It seems to be allowed by the divines in the Arminian scheme, in their interpretation of several of those texts where the apostle only mentions works, without any addition, that he means our own good works in general. But then, they say, he only means to exclude any proper *merit* in those works. But it is unreasonable to say the apostle means one thing when he says, *we are not justified by works*, and another when he says, *we are not justified by the works of the law*; when we find the expressions mixed and used in the same discourse; and when the apostle is evidently on the same argument. It is to dodge and fly from Scripture, rather than to open and yield ourselves to its teachings.

2. In the third chapter of Romans, our having been guilty of breaches of the moral law, is an argument that the apostle uses for why we cannot be justified by the works of the Old Testament — that *all* are under sin: “There is none righteous, no not one; their throat is as an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; and their feet are swift to shed blood.” (Rom 3.12-13) And so he goes on, mentioning only those things that are breaches of the *moral* law. When he is done, his conclusion is in the 19th and 20th verses, “Now we know that whatever things the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified in his sight.” This is most evidently his argument, because all had sinned (as it was said in the 9th verse), and had been guilty of those breaches of the moral law that he mentioned (and repeated in verse 23), “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Therefore none at all can be justified by the deeds of the law. Now, if the apostle only meant that we are not justified by the deeds of the *ceremonial* law, what kind of arguing would this be: “Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood;” therefore, they cannot be justified by the deeds of the *Mosaic administration*. They are guilty of the breaches of the *moral* law; and therefore they cannot be justified by the deeds of the *ceremonial* law? Doubtless, the apostle’s argument is that the very same law they have broken, can never justify



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them as observers of it, because every law necessarily condemns its violators. And therefore our breaches of the moral law argue no more than this: that we cannot be justified by that law which we have broken.

And it may be noted that the apostle's argument here is the same one I have already used; namely, that as we are in ourselves, and outside of Christ, we are under the condemnation of that original law or constitution that God established with mankind. And therefore, it is in no way fitting that anything we do, any virtue or obedience of ours, should be accepted, or that we be accepted on account of it.

**3.** The apostle, in all the preceding part of this epistle, wherever he has the phrase, *the law*, evidently intends the moral law principally. Such as the 12th verse of the foregoing chapter: "For as many as have sinned without law, will also perish without law." It is evident that the apostle means the written *moral* law, as in Rom 2.14: "For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law;" that is, the moral law that the Gentiles have by nature. Also the next verse, "Who show the work of the law written in their hearts." This is the moral and not the ceremonial law, that is written in the hearts of those who are destitute of divine revelation. Also in the 18th verse, "You approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law." It is the moral law that shows us the nature of things, and teaches us what is excellent. The 20th verse: "You have a form of knowledge and truth in the law." It is the moral law, as is evident by what follows in verses 22, 23, "You who say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege? You who make your boast of the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?" Adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege, surely are the breaking of the *moral*, and not the *ceremonial* law. So too in the 27th verse, "And will not the uncircumcised, which is physical, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, by the letter and circumcision, transgress the law?" — *i.e.* if the Gentiles, whom you despise because they are uncircumcised, live moral and holy lives in obedience to the moral law, they will condemn you though you are circumcised. So there isn't one place in all the preceding part of the epistle, where the apostle speaks of the law, that he doesn't most apparently and principally intend the moral law. And yet when the apostle, continuing the same discourse, comes to tell us that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, they would have him mean only the ceremonial law. Yes, even though this entire discourse about the moral law, showing how Jews as well as Gentiles have violated it, is evidently preparatory and introductory to that doctrine in Rom 3.20: "No flesh," that is, none of mankind, neither Jews nor Gentiles, "can be justified by the works of the law."

**4.** It is evident that when the apostle says we cannot be justified by the works of the law, he means the moral as well as ceremonial law, by giving this reason for it — that *by the law is the knowledge of sin*, as in Rom 3.20: "By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Now that law by which we come to the knowledge of sin, is chiefly and primarily the moral law. If this argument of the apostle is good, "that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law, because it is by the law that we come to the knowledge of sin," then it proves that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law, nor by the precepts of Christianity, for *by them is the knowledge of sin*. If the reason is good, then where the reason holds, the truth holds. It is a miserable shift, and violence is done to the words, to say that the meaning is that *by the law of circumcision is the knowledge of sin*.

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This is because circumcision, signifying the taking away of sin,<sup>1</sup> puts men in mind of sin. The plain meaning of the apostle is that because the law most strictly forbids sin, it tends to convict us of sin, and bring our own consciences to condemn us, instead of justifying us. The use of it is to declare to us our own guilt and unworthiness, which is the reverse of justifying and approving of us as virtuous or worthy. This is the apostle's meaning, if we allow him to be his own expositor. For in this very epistle, he explains to us how we have the knowledge of sin by the law, and that it is by the law's *forbidding* sin. Rom 7.7, "I would not have known sin, except by the law. For I would not have known lust unless the law had said, *You shall not covet.*" There the apostle determines two things: *first*, that the way by which "the law is the knowledge of sin," is by the law's forbidding sin; and *secondly*, which is even more directly to the purpose, he determines that it is the *moral* law by which we come to the knowledge of sin. "For," says he, "I would not have known lust, unless the law had said, *You shall not covet.*" Now, it is the moral and not the ceremonial law that says, "You shall not covet." Therefore, when the apostle argues that *by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified*, because *by the law is the knowledge of sin*, his argument proves (unless he was mistaken as to the force of his argument) that we cannot be justified by the deeds of the moral law.

**5.** It is evident that the apostle does not mean only the ceremonial law, because he gives this reason why we have righteousness, and a title to the privilege of God's children — not by the law, but by faith; *for the law brings about wrath*. Rom 4.13-16:

"For the promise that he would be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect. Because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace."

Now the way in which the law brings about wrath, by the apostle's own account, in the reason that he himself annexes, is by forbidding sin, and aggravating the guilt of the transgression. "For," says he, "where there is no law, there is no transgression:" And so we read in Rom 7.13, "That sin, by the commandment, might become exceedingly sinful." Therefore, if this reason of the apostle is good, it is much stronger against justification by the moral law than by the ceremonial law. For it is by transgressions of the moral law chiefly that wrath comes; for they are most strictly forbidden, and most terribly threatened.

**6.** It is evident that when the apostle says we are not justified by the works of the law, he excludes all our own virtue, goodness, or excellence, for the reason he gives: namely, *that boasting might be excluded*. Rom 3.26-28, "To declare at this time His righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *without the deeds of the law.*" Eph 2.8-9, "For by grace you are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, *lest anyone should boast.*" Now, what are men prone to boast of, if not what they esteem as their own goodness or excellence? If we are not justified by works only of the *ceremonial* law, then how does that

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<sup>1</sup> Circumcision was the sign of the covenant, identifying the people of God as a holy people, distinct from all others in the world (Deu 7.6; 30.6). Thus it symbolized a cutting away or separation from sin and all that was unholy in the world, as well as being consecrated to God (Lev 10.10). – WHG

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exclude boasting, so long as we are justified by our own excellence, or virtue and goodness of our own, or works of righteousness which we have done?

**Obj.** But it is said that *boasting* is excluded, as *circumcision* was excluded, which was what the Jews especially used to glory in and value themselves upon, above other nations.<sup>1</sup>

**Ans.** To this, I answer that the Jews not only used to boast of circumcision, but they were notorious for boasting of their moral righteousness. The Jews of those days were generally admirers and followers of the Pharisees, who were full of boasts about their moral righteousness; as we may see by the example of the Pharisee mentioned in the 18th chapter of Luke. Christ mentions it as describing the general temper of that sect: “Lord,” he says, “I thank you, that I am not like other men — an extortioner, unjust, or an adulterer.” The works that he boasts of were chiefly *moral* works; he depended on the *works of the law* for justification. And therefore Christ tells us that the publican, who renounced all his own righteousness, “went down to his house justified rather than the other.” And elsewhere, we read of the Pharisees praying on the street corners, and sounding a trumpet before them when they gave alms. But those works which they so vainly boasted of were *moral* works. And not only so, but what the apostle in this very epistle condemns the Jews for, is their boasting of the moral law. Rom 2.22-23, “You who say a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you commit sacrilege? You who boast about the law, through breaking the law, do you dishonor God?” The law mentioned here, that they boasted of, was that of which adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege were the breaches — which is the *moral* law. So this is the boasting which the apostle condemns them for. And therefore, if they were justified by the works of *this* law, how does he come to say that their boasting is excluded? And besides, when they boasted of the rites of the ceremonial law, it was under a notion of its being a part of their own goodness or excellence, or what made them holier and more lovely in the sight of God, than other people. If they were not justified by this part of their own supposed goodness or holiness, yet they were justified by another, how did that exclude boasting? How was their boasting excluded, unless *all* goodness or excellence of their own was excluded?

7. The reason given by the apostle in the 3d chapter of Galatians, why we can be justified only by faith and not by the works of the law, is namely that, “those who are under the law, are under the curse.” This makes it evident that he does not mean only the ceremonial law. In that chapter the apostle had particularly insisted that Abraham was justified by faith, and that it is by faith *alone*, and not by the works of the law, that we can be justified, and become the children of Abraham, and be made partakers of the blessing of Abraham. He gives this reason for it in the 10th verse: “For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse; for it

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards has argued that *all* works are excluded from our justification, works of the moral as well as ceremonial laws. The Arminians argue that only the works of the ceremonial law are excluded, and therefore we are still bound by the moral law as part of our justification. Edwards says we are bound to the moral law by grace, through faith alone, just as we are justified by grace, through faith alone. We are godly because of who we are in Christ, not to merit justification. To support that from Scripture, Edwards lists Rom 3.26-28, concerning boasting, and expands on it using Eph. 2.8-9. His assertion is that men are prone to boast of their moral virtue in general, and not just of rituals. What he offers here, is a possible objection to his assertion: the Jews predominantly, if not exclusively, boasted in circumcision, and belittled those who were uncircumcised. Circumcision is of the ceremonial law only, not the moral law. Therefore (it might be objected), these verses do not support his argument. Edwards will now answer such an objection. – WHG

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is written, Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” (Gal 3.10) It is manifest that these words, cited from Deuteronomy, are spoken not only with regard to the ceremonial law, but the whole law of God to mankind, and chiefly the moral law. It is clear that all mankind are therefore under the curse *as they are in themselves* — not only while the ceremonial law lasted, but also now, since that law has ceased. Therefore, all who are justified, are redeemed from that curse by Christ’s bearing it for them, as in verse 13, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, *Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.*”

Now therefore, either its being said so — *that everyone is cursed who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them* — is a good reason why we cannot be justified by the works of that law of which it is said so, or else it is not. If it is, then it is a good reason why we cannot be justified by the works of the moral law, and of the whole rule which God has given to mankind to walk by. For the words are spoken of the moral as well as the ceremonial law, and they reach every command or precept which God has given to mankind. Chiefly it is the moral precepts which are most strictly enjoined, and the violations of which — in both the Old and New Testaments, and in the books of Moses themselves — are threatened with the most dreadful curse.

**8.** The apostle in like manner argues against our being justified by our own righteousness, as he does against being justified by the works of the law. He evidently uses the expressions of *our own righteousness*, and *works of the law*, promiscuously, as signifying the same thing. It is particularly evident by Rom 10.3, “For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” Here it is plain that the same thing is asserted as in Rom 9.31-32, “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.” It is unreasonable on several accounts, to suppose that the apostle, by *their own righteousness*, intends only their ceremonial righteousness. For when the apostle warns us against trusting in our own righteousness for justification, doubtless it is fair to interpret the expression in agreement with other scriptures, where we are warned not to think that it is for the sake of our own righteousness that we obtain God’s favor and blessing — particularly Deu 9.4-6:

“Do not think in your heart, after the Lord your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land;’ but it is for the wickedness of these nations that the Lord drives them out from before you. <sup>5</sup> It is not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart, that you go to possess their land. But it is for the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. <sup>6</sup> Therefore, understand that the Lord your God does not give you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stiff-necked people.”

None will pretend that here the expression *your righteousness*, signifies only a ceremonial righteousness, but rather all virtue or goodness of their own — yes, and the inward goodness of the heart, as well as the outward goodness of life. This appears by the beginning of the 5th verse, “Not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart;” and also by the antithesis in the 6th verse, “not for your righteousness; for you are a stiff-necked people.”

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Their stiff-neckedness was their moral wickedness, obstinacy, and perverseness of heart. By *righteousness*, therefore, on the contrary, is meant their moral virtue, and rectitude of heart and life. This is what I would argue from this: that the expression, *our own righteousness*, when used in Scripture with relation to the favor of God — and when we are warned against looking at it as that by which His favor or its fruits are obtained — does not signify only a ceremonial righteousness, but all manner of goodness of our own.

The Jews in the New Testament also, are condemned for trusting in their own righteousness in this sense. Luk 18.9, “And he spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.” This intends chiefly a moral righteousness, as it appears by the parable itself, in which we have an account of the prayer of the Pharisee, in which the things that he mentions as what he trusts in, are chiefly moral qualifications and performances — *namely*, that he was not an extortioner, unjust, nor an adulterer, etc.

But we need not go to the writings of other penmen of the Scripture. If we allow the apostle Paul to be his own interpreter, when he speaks of our own righteousness as that by which we are not justified or saved, he does not mean only a ceremonial righteousness; nor does he intend only a way of religion and serving God, of our own choosing, without divine warrant or prescription. But by *our own righteousness* he means the same as a *righteousness of our own doing*, whether it is a service or righteousness of God’s prescribing, or our own unwarranted performing. Let it be obedience to the ceremonial law, or gospel obedience, or whatever else: if it is a *righteousness of our own doing*, it is excluded by the apostle in this affair, as made evident by Tit 3.5, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done.”

But I would more particularly insist on this text; and therefore this may be the 9th argument.

**9.** When the apostle denies justification by works, and by works of the law, and by our own righteousness, he does not mean works of the ceremonial law only. Tit 3.3-7:

<sup>3</sup> For we ourselves were also sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. <sup>4</sup> But after the kindness and love of God our Savior toward men appeared, <sup>5</sup> not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, <sup>6</sup> whom he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; <sup>7</sup> that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Works of righteousness that we have done are excluded here, as what we are neither saved nor justified by. The apostle expressly says that we are not saved by them; and it is evident that when he says this, he refers to the act of justification. And he means that we are not *saved* by them, in not being *justified* by them, as in verse 7, which is part of the same sentence: “that being *justified by His grace*, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

It is manifest in several ways in this text, that by “works of righteousness which we have done,” the apostle does not mean only works of the ceremonial law. It appears by the 3d verse, “For we ourselves were also sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” These are breaches of the moral law that the apostle observes they lived in before they were justified. And it is most plain that it is *this* which gives occasion to the apostle to observe, as he does in the 5th verse,

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that is was *not by works of righteousness which they had done*, that they were saved or justified.

And we need not go to the context. It is most apparent from the words themselves, that the apostle does not mean works of the ceremonial law only. If he had only said, *it is not by our own works of righteousness*, what could we understand by *works of righteousness*, if not righteous works, or *good works*, which is the same thing? To say it is by our own righteous works that we are justified, though not by one particular kind of righteous works, would certainly be a contradiction to such an assertion. But the words are rendered even stronger, plainer, and more determined in their sense, by those additional words, *which we have done*. This shows that the apostle intends to exclude all our own righteous or virtuous works, universally. Say it was asserted concerning any commodity, treasure, or precious jewel, that it could not be procured by money; and not only so, but the assertion was made stronger by asserting with additional words, that it could not be procured by money *that men possess*. How unreasonable would it be, in the end, to conclude that all that was meant by this, was that it could not be procured with *brass* money?

What renders the interpretation of this text still more unreasonable, that *works* intends works of the *ceremonial* law, is that these works were indeed no works of righteousness at all, but were only falsely supposed to be so by the Jews. Our opponents to this doctrine also suppose that the reason we are not justified by them, is because they are not works of righteousness — or because the ceremonial law now being abrogated, there is no obedience in them. But how absurd is it to say that when the apostle says we are not justified by works of righteousness that we have done, he meant only works of the ceremonial law, because those are not works of righteousness? Let me illustrate this by the forementioned comparison. If it were asserted that something could not be procured by money which men possess, how ridiculous would it be to say that the meaning is only that it could not be procured by *counterfeit* money, because that it is not money? What Scripture will stand before men if they take liberty to manage Scripture this way? Or what one text is there in the Bible that may not at this rate be explained away, and perverted to any sense men please?

Furthermore, if we allowed that the apostle intends only to oppose justification by works of the ceremonial law in this text, it is still evident by the expression he uses, that he means to oppose it under that notion, or in that quality, of their being works of righteousness *of our own doing*. But if the apostle argues against our being justified by works of the ceremonial law, under the notion that they are of that nature and kind (*i.e.*, works of our own doing), then it will follow that the apostle's argument is strong against not only *those* kinds of works, but *all* works of that nature and kind — all works that are *of our own doing*.

If there were no other text in the Bible about justification except this one (Tit 3.3-7), it would clearly and invincibly prove that we are not justified by any of our own goodness, virtue, or righteousness, or for the excellence or righteousness of anything that we have done in religion, because it is so fully and strongly asserted here. But this text abundantly confirms *other* texts of the apostle, where he denies justification by works of the law. There can be no rational doubt that when the apostle shows that God does not save us by “works of righteousness which we have done,” verse 5, and that we are “justified by grace,” verse 7, he thereby opposes salvation by *works*, to salvation by *grace*. And he means the *same* works as in other places,

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where in like manner he opposes works to grace, as in Rom 11.6, “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works: otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, then is it no longer grace: otherwise work is no longer work.” And it is the same works as in Rom 4.4, “Now to him who works, the reward is not reckoned as grace, but as debt.” And the same works that are spoken of in Rom 3.20, 24, which the apostle there calls “works of the law ... being justified freely by his grace.” And in Rom 4.16, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” In the context there, the righteousness of *faith* is opposed to the righteousness of the *law*. For here in Titus, God’s saving us according to his mercy, and justifying us by grace, is opposed to saving us *by works of righteousness which we have done*. In the same manner as in those other places, justifying us by His grace is opposed to justifying us by works of the law.

**10.** The apostle could not mean works of the ceremonial law *only*, when he says we are not justified by the works of the law, because it is asserted by the saints under the Old Testament as well as the New. If men are justified by their sincere obedience, it would then follow that formerly, before the ceremonial law was abrogated, men were justified by the works of the ceremonial law, as well as the moral law. For if we are justified by our sincere obedience, it doesn’t alter the case whether the commands are moral or positive, provided they are God’s commands, and our obedience is obedience to God. And so the case under the Old Testament must be just the same with the works of the moral law, as with the ceremonial law, according to the measure of the virtue of obedience there was in either one. It is true, their obedience to the ceremonial law would have nothing to do in the affair of *justification*, unless it was sincere; neither would the works of the moral law. If *obedience* was the thing, then obedience to the ceremonial law while that stood in force, and obedience to the moral law, had exactly the same sort of concern, according to the proportion of obedience that consists in each. And now, under the New Testament, if obedience is what we are justified by, then that obedience must doubtless comprehend obedience to all God’s commands now in force — to the positive precepts of attendance to baptism and the Lord’s supper, as well as moral precepts. If obedience is the thing, then it is not because it is obedience to such commands, but because it is *obedience*. So that by this supposition, the saints under the Old Testament were justified, at least *in part*, by their obedience to the ceremonial law.

But it is evident that the saints under the Old Testament were *not* justified in any measure by the works of the ceremonial law. This may be proved by proceeding on the footing of our adversaries’ own interpretation of the apostle’s phrase, “the works of the law,” and supposing them to mean only the works of the ceremonial law. For instance, it is evident that David was not justified in any way by the works of the ceremonial law. Rom 4.6-8: “Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, *Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*” From the preceding verse and the context, it is plain that the apostle is speaking of justification here. And the thing spoken of — forgiving iniquities and covering sins — is what our adversaries themselves suppose to be justification, and even the *whole* of justification. David says of himself (by the apostle’s interpretation) that he had this justification *without* works. For it is manifest that in the words cited here from the beginning of the 32nd Psalm, David was regarding himself; he speaks of his own sins being forgiven and not imputed to him. This appears by the words that immediately follow,

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“When I kept silence, my bones grew old through my roaring all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me. My moisture was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” (Psa 32.3-5)

When Paul says, “David describes the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness without works,” whichever way we understand the apostle respecting *works* — whether all manner of works, or only works of the ceremonial law — it is at least evident that David was not justified by works of the ceremonial law. Therefore, here is the argument by our opponents: if our own obedience is that by which men are justified, then under the Old Testament, men were justified partly by obedience to the ceremonial law. But *we* say, the saints under the Old Testament were *not* justified partly by the works of the ceremonial law. Therefore men’s own obedience is not that by which they are justified.

**11.** Another argument may be taken from Rom 10.5-6, showing that the apostle doesn’t mean only the works of the ceremonial law when he speaks of the two opposite ways of justification — one by the works of the law, and the other by faith:

“For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the *law*, that the man who does these things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of *faith*, speaks in this way,” etc.

Here, two things are at first evident:

**First.** That the apostle here speaks of the same two opposite ways of justification — one by the righteousness which is of the law, the other by faith — that he treated in the former part of the epistle. Therefore it must be the same law that is spoken of here. The same law is meant here, as in Rom 9.31-32, where he says the Jews had “not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.” This is plain, because the apostle is still speaking of the same thing. The words are a continuation of the same discourse, as may be seen at first glance by anyone who looks at the context.

**Second.** It is manifest that when Moses says, “He who does these things shall live by them,” he is not speaking only, or chiefly, of the works of the ceremonial law as he describes the righteousness which is *of the law*, or the way of justification *by the law*. For none will pretend that God ever made such a covenant with man — that the one who kept the ceremonial law should live by it; or that there was ever a time that it was chiefly by the works of the ceremonial law that men lived and were justified. Indeed, it is manifest by the forementioned instance of David, mentioned in the 4th chapter of Romans, that there was never a time in which men were justified in any measure by the works of the ceremonial law, as just shown. Therefore Moses, in those words which the apostle says are a description of the righteousness which is *of the law*, cannot mean only the *ceremonial* law.

Therefore, it follows that when the apostle speaks of justification by the *works of the law*, as opposed to justification *by faith*, he does not mean only the ceremonial law, but also the works of the *moral* law. These are the things spoken of by Moses when he says, “He who does these things shall live by them.” And these are the things which the apostle, in this very place, is arguing that we cannot be justified by. This is evident by Rom 9.31-32: “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law,” etc. And in Rom



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10.3, “For being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”

Furthermore, how can the apostle’s description that he gives here from Moses, of this defunct way of justification by the works of the law, be consistent with the Arminian scheme of a way of justification by virtue of *sincere obedience*, that somehow still remains as the true and only way of justification under the gospel? It is most apparent that the design of the apostle is to give a description of both the *legal* (rejected) and *evangelical* (valid) ways of justification, in which they differ or are distinguished from one another. But according to their scheme, how is “he who does these things shall live by them” — as a way of justification by the works of the law — distinguished from that way in which Christians are justified under the gospel? For according to them, it may still be said of the precepts of the gospel, and in the same manner, that “he who does these things shall live by them.”

The difference lies only in the things to be done, but not at all in this: that *doing them* is not the condition of *living by them*; just in the one case, as in the other. The words, “He who does them, shall live by them,” would serve just as well for a description of the one, as for the other. By the apostle’s statement, the righteousness of the *law* is described in this way: *he who does these things, shall live by them*. But his statement about the righteousness of *faith* (Rom 4.13) plainly intimates that it is otherwise, and in an opposite manner. Besides, if these words cited from Moses were actually said by him about the moral as well as the ceremonial law (as it is most evident they were), it renders it still more absurd to suppose they are mentioned by the apostle as the very mark of distinction between justification by a ceremonial obedience, and justification by a sincere moral obedience, as the Arminians must suppose.

Thus I have spoken to a second argument, to prove that we are not justified by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own. To suppose otherwise, I say, is contrary to the doctrine directly urged and abundantly insisted on by the apostle Paul in his epistles.

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### ***Third: Justification by obedience derogates from gospel grace.***

I now proceed to a third argument, namely, that to suppose we are justified by our own sincere obedience, or any of our own virtue or goodness, derogates <sup>1</sup> from gospel grace.

That scheme of justification that manifestly takes from, or diminishes the grace of God, is undoubtedly to be rejected. For it is the declared design of God in the gospel, to exalt the freedom and riches of His grace in that method of justification of sinners, and that way of admitting them to His favor and the blessed fruits of it, which the gospel declares. The Scripture teaches that the way of justification appointed in the gospel covenant is appointed for *this* end: that free grace might be expressed and glorified. Rom 4.16, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” The exercising and magnifying of free grace in the gospel scheme for the justification and salvation of sinners, is evidently its chief design. This freedom and riches of grace in the gospel, is spoken of everywhere in Scripture as its chief glory.

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<sup>1</sup> *Derogate*: to take away from, or minimize.

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Therefore, that doctrine which derogates from the free grace of God in justifying sinners, as it is most opposite to God's design, so it must be exceedingly offensive to Him.

Those who maintain that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, pretend that their scheme does not diminish the grace of the gospel. For they say that the grace of God is wonderfully manifested in appointing a way and method of salvation by *sincere obedience* — in assisting us to perform such an obedience, and in accepting our imperfect obedience instead of perfect obedience.

Let us therefore examine that matter, whether their scheme of a man's being justified by his own virtue and sincere obedience, derogates from the grace of God or not; or whether free grace isn't more exalted in supposing (as we do) that we are justified without *any* manner of goodness of our own.

In order to do this, I will lay down the self-evident proposition that whatever is the means by which the abundant benevolence of the giver is expressed, and the gratitude of the receiver is obliged, *that* is what magnifies free grace. I suppose none would ever controvert or dispute this. And it is no less evident that (1) it shows a more abundant benevolence in the giver when he shows kindness without goodness or excellence in the object, to move him to it; and (2) that it also enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver.

1. It shows a more abundant goodness in the giver, when he shows kindness without any excellence in our persons or actions that move the giver to love and beneficence. For it certainly shows a more abundant and overflowing goodness, or a disposition to communicate good, by how much less loveliness or excellence there is to entice such beneficence. The less there is in the receiver to draw the giver's goodwill and kindness, the more it argues for the principle of goodwill and kindness in the giver. One who has little of a principle of love and benevolence, may be drawn to do good, and to show kindness, when there is a great deal to draw him, or when there is much excellence and loveliness in the object to move goodwill. One whose goodness and benevolence is more abundant, will show kindness where there is less to draw it out. He doesn't need to have it drawn from without so much, for he has enough of the principle within to move him by itself. Where the principle is most abundant, it is most sufficient for itself, and it stands in least need of something from without to excite it. For certainly a more abundant goodness more easily flows forth with less to impel or draw it, than where there is less of it. Or (which is the same thing) the more anyone is disposed by himself, the less he needs from outside of himself to put him upon it, or to stir him up to it. Therefore his kindness and goodness appears more exceedingly great when it is bestowed without any excellence or loveliness at all in the receiver, or when the receiver is respected in the gift, as being wholly without excellence. And this is even more so, when the benevolence of the giver not only finds nothing in the receiver to *draw* it, but a great deal of hatefulness to *repel* it. The abundance of goodness is then manifested not only in flowing forth without anything extrinsic to put it forward, but in overcoming great repulsion in the object. Then kindness and love appear most triumphant, and wonderfully great, when the receiver is not only wholly without all excellence or beauty to attract it, but altogether, even *infinitely* vile and hateful.

2. It is also apparent that it enhances the obligation to gratitude in the receiver. This is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, that the less worthy or excellent the object of benevolence or the receiver of kindness is, the more he is obliged to gratitude, and the greater

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the gratitude is due. Therefore, the one who receives kindness without any goodness or excellence in himself, but with a total and universal hatefulness, is most of all obliged. And just as it is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, so it is agreeable to the Word of God. How often does God in the Scripture insist on this argument with men, to *move* them to love Him and to acknowledge His kindness? How much does He insist on this as an obligation to gratitude: that they are so sinful, and undeserving, and ill-deserving?

Therefore it certainly follows that the doctrine which teaches that God, when he justifies a man, and shows him such great kindness as to give him a right to eternal life, does not do it for any obedience or any manner of goodness of his own, but that justification regards a man as ungodly, and wholly without any manner of virtue, beauty, or excellence. I say, this doctrine certainly more exalts the free grace of God in justification, and man's obligation to gratitude for such a favor, than the contrary doctrine — namely, that God, in showing this kindness to man, regards him as sincerely obedient and virtuous, and as having something in him that is truly excellent and lovely, and acceptable in His sight; and that this goodness or excellence of man is the very fundamental condition of the bestowment of that kindness on him, or of distinguishing him from others by that benefit.

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### ***Fourth. Justification by obedience derogates from the Mediator's honor.***

But I hasten to a fourth argument for the truth of the doctrine, that to suppose a man is justified by his own virtue or obedience, derogates from the honor of the Mediator, and it ascribes to man's virtue, what belongs only to the righteousness of Christ.

It puts man in Christ's stead, and makes him his own savior; whereas Christ alone is his Savior. And so it is a doctrine contrary to the nature and design of the gospel, which is to abase man, and to ascribe all the glory of our salvation to Christ the Redeemer. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which is a gospel doctrine.

Here I would,

1. *explain* what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness;
2. *prove* the thing intended by it to be true; and
3. *show* that this doctrine is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by our own virtue or sincere obedience.

**1.** I would EXPLAIN what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

Sometimes the expression is taken by our divines in a larger sense, for the imputation of all that Christ did and suffered for our redemption, by which we are freed from guilt, and stand righteous in the sight of God. And so it implies the imputation of both his satisfaction and his obedience. But here I intend it in a stricter sense, for the imputation of that righteousness or moral goodness that consists in the obedience of Christ. What *imputing* that righteousness to us means, is none other than this: that the righteousness of Christ is accepted for us, and is admitted in place of that perfect inherent righteousness which ought to be in ourselves. Christ's perfect obedience is reckoned to our account, so that we have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves. And so we suppose that a title to eternal life is given to us as the reward for this imputed righteousness. The Scripture uses the word *impute* in this

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sense: *namely*, for reckoning anything belonging to any person, to *another* person's account. For instance, in Phm 1.18, "If he has wronged you, or owes you anything, put that on my account." In the original it is *τουτο εμοι ελλογει (touto emoi ellogei)*, *impute that to me*. It is a word with the same root as what is translated *impute* in Rom 4.6: "To whom God imputes righteousness without works." And it is the same word used in Rom 5.13, that is translated *impute*: "sin is not imputed when there is no law."

Those who oppose this doctrine, think it is an absurdity to suppose that God imputes Christ's obedience to us. It is to suppose that God is mistaken, and thinks *we* performed that obedience which *Christ* performed. But why can't his righteousness be reckoned to our account, and be accepted for us, without any such absurdity? Why is there any more absurdity in it than in a merchant's transferring debt or credit from one man's account to another, when one man pays a price for another, so that it is accepted as if that other had paid it? Why is there any more absurdity in supposing that Christ's *obedience* is imputed to us, than that his *satisfaction* is imputed? If Christ has suffered the penalty of the law in our stead, then it will follow that his suffering that penalty is imputed to us — that is, it is accepted for us, and in our stead, and is reckoned to our account, as though *we* had suffered it. But why may his obeying the law of God not be as rationally reckoned to our account, as his suffering the penalty of the law? Why may not a price that brings someone into debt, be as rationally transferred from one person's account to another, as a price to *pay* a debt?

I have thus explained what we mean by the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

**2.** I now proceed to PROVE that the righteousness of Christ is thus imputed.

(1.) There is the very same need for Christ to obey the law in our stead in order for us to gain the reward, as there is for his suffering the penalty of the law in our stead in order for us to escape the penalty. And there is the same *reason* why the one should be accepted on our account, as the other. There is the same *need* for the one as for the other: so that the law of God might be answered; one was as requisite to answer the law, as the other. It is certain that this was the reason why Christ needed to suffer the penalty for us: that the law might be answered; for the Scripture plainly teaches this. This is given as the reason why Christ was made a curse for us: that the law threatened a curse upon us, Gal 3.10, 13. But the same law that fixes the curse of God as the consequence of *not continuing in all things written in the law, to do them* (verse 10), has as much fixed doing those things as an antecedent to *living in them* (verse 12). There is as much connection established in the one case as in the other. There is therefore exactly the same need from the law — of perfect obedience being fulfilled in order for us to obtain the reward — as there is of death being suffered in order for us to escape the punishment. Or there is the same necessity by the law, of perfect obedience preceding life, as there is of disobedience being succeeded by death. Without doubt, the law is as much of an established rule in the one case as in the other.

By suffering the penalty, and so making atonement for us, Christ only removes the guilt of our sins. And so he sets us in the same state that Adam was in, at the first moment of his creation. It is no more fitting that we should obtain eternal life only on that account, than it would be fitting that Adam have in the first moments of his existence, the reward of eternal life — of a confirmed and unalterable state of happiness — without any obedience at all. Adam was not to have the reward merely on account of his being *innocent*. If so, he would have had

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it fixed upon him at once, as soon as he was created, for he was as innocent then as he could be. But he was to have the reward on account of his *active obedience* — not merely on account of his not having done evil, but on account of his doing good.

So too, we don't have eternal life merely on account of being void of guilt (as Adam was at his first existence), which we have by the atonement of Christ. But we have it on account of Christ's active obedience and doing good. Christ is our second federal head; and he is called the second Adam (1Cor 15.22) because he acted that part for us, which the *first* Adam should have done. When he had undertaken for us to stand in our stead, he was looked upon and treated as though he were guilty of our guilt. And by his satisfying or bearing the penalty, he freed himself from this guilt, as it were. But by this, the second Adam only brought himself into the state in which the first Adam was at the first moment of his existence — *namely*, a state of mere freedom from guilt; and hereby indeed, he was free from any obligation to suffer punishment. But this being supposed, there was need of something further, of his positive obedience, in order to obtain, as did our second Adam, the reward of eternal life.

God saw fit to place man first in a state of trial, and not to give him a title to eternal life as soon as he had made him, because it was His will that man should first give honor to God's authority, by fully submitting to it in will and act, and perfectly obeying His law. God insisted upon it, that His holy majesty and law should have their due acknowledgment and honor from man, such as befit the relation man stood in to that Being who created him, before God would bestow the reward of confirmed and everlasting happiness upon man. Therefore, God gave him a law so that he might have the opportunity to obtain this happiness, by giving due honor to God's authority, in obeying it. In assuming man to himself (1Tim 3.16), Christ sought a title to this eternal happiness for him, after man had broken the law. It therefore suited Christ that he himself should become subject to God's authority, and be in the form of a servant (Phi 2.7); that by his obedience he might do that honor to God's authority for him, which God at first required of man as the condition of his having a title to that reward. Christ came into the world to render the honor of God's authority and law, that is consistent with the salvation and eternal life of sinners. He came to save them, and yet also with *this*: to assert and vindicate the honor of the Lawgiver, and His holy law.

Now, if the sinner, after the penalty of his sin was satisfied, had eternal life bestowed upon him without *active* (positive) righteousness, the honor of God's law would not be sufficiently vindicated. Suppose this were possible: that the sinner could himself pay his debt by suffering, and afterwards be in the same state he was in before his probation — that is to say, *negatively* righteous, or merely without guilt. If at the last, he had eternal life bestowed on him, without performing that condition of obedience, then God would recede from His law. He would give the promised reward, and yet His law would never have the respect and honor shown to it, in the way of being obeyed. But now Christ, by subjecting himself to the law, and obeying it, has done great honor to the law, and to the authority of God who gave it. That so glorious a person should become subject to the law, and fulfill it, has done much more to honor it than if mere man had obeyed it. It was a thing infinitely honorable to God, that a person of infinite dignity was not ashamed to call Him his God, and to adore and obey Him as such. This was more to God's honor than if any mere creature, of any possible degree of excellence and dignity, had done so.

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It is absolutely necessary that in order for a sinner to be justified, the righteousness of some other person should be reckoned to his account. For it is declared that the person justified is looked upon as ungodly (in himself); but God neither will nor can justify a person without a righteousness. For justification, as the word is used in Scripture, is manifestly a *forensic* term; it is a judicial thing, or the act of a judge. So that if a person were to be justified without a righteousness, the judgment would not be according to the truth. The sentence of justification would be a false sentence, unless a righteousness is performed that is properly looked upon by the judge, as the person's own. To say that God does not justify the sinner without *sincere*, though *imperfect* obedience, does not help the case. For an imperfect righteousness before a judge is no righteousness at all. To accept something that falls short of the rule, instead of something else that answers the rule, is no judicial act, nor the act of a judge, but a pure act of sovereignty. An imperfect righteousness is no righteousness before a judge; for as someone observes, "righteousness is a relative thing, and it always has relation to a law. The formal nature of righteousness, properly understood, lies in a conformity of actions to that which is the rule and measure of them."

Therefore, righteousness in the sight of a judge is only that which answers the law.<sup>1</sup> The law is the judge's rule. If he pardons and hides what is really the case, and doesn't pass sentence

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<sup>1</sup> Perfect obedience is the condition of justification — what is called *righteousness* in the New Testament; and this righteousness or perfect obedience, is by God's fixed and unalterable rule. This is from the plain evidence of truth, as confessed by a certain great man that nobody will think is a likely person to be blinded by prejudice in favor of the doctrine that we are maintaining, and one who did not receive this doctrine: namely, Mr. Locke, in his *Resemblances of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures*, Vol. II of his *Works*, p. 474:

"To one who thus unbiased reads the Scripture, what Adam fell from is visible; it was the state of perfect obedience which is called *justice* in the New Testament, though the word which in the original signifies justice, he translated *righteousness*."

Ibid. pp. 476-477:

"For righteousness, or an exact obedience to the law, seems by the Scripture to have a claim of right to eternal life. Rom 4.4, *To him who works*, i.e., who does the works of the law, *is the reward reckoned, not reckoned of grace, but of debt*. On the other side, it seems the unalterable purpose of the divine justice, that no unrighteous person, on one who is guilty of any breach of the law, should be in paradise. But that the wages of sin should be to every man, as it was to Adam, and exclusion of him out of that happy state of immortality, and bring death upon him. And this is so conformable to the eternal and established law of right and wrong, that it is spoken of too as it could not be otherwise. Here then we have the standing and fixed measures of life and death — immortality and bliss belonging to the righteous. Those who have lived in an exact conformity to the law of God, are out of the reach of death; but an exclusion from paradise and loss of immortality, is the portion of sinners, of all those who have in any way broken that law, and failed of complete obedience to it, by the guilt of any one transgression. And thus mankind, by the law, are put upon the issues (results) of life or death, as they are righteous or unrighteous, just or unjust — i.e., exact performers or transgressors of the law."

Again, on p. 477:

"The law of works then, in short, is that law which requires perfect obedience, without any remission or abatement; so that by that law, a man cannot be just, or justified, without an exact performance of every tittle. Such a perfect obedience in the New Testament is termed  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\upsilon\nu\epsilon$  (*dikaïosune*), which we translate *righteousness*."

In this last passage, it is also to be noted that by *the law of works*, Mr. Locke does not mean the ceremonial law, but the covenant of works, as he more fully expresses himself in a subsequent paragraph. Where this law of works was to be found, the New Testament tells us; *namely*, in the law delivered by Moses. Joh 1.17, *The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*. Joh 7.19, *Didn't Moses give you the law, says our Savior, and yet none of you kept the law?* And this is the law which he speaks of, verse 28, *Do this and you shall live*. This is what Paul so often styles *the law*, without any further distinction. Rom 2.13, *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law are justified*. It is needless to quote any more places; his epistles are full of it, especially Romans. — Edwards

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according to what things are in themselves, he either doesn't act the part of a judge, or else he judges falsely. The very notion of judging is to determine what is, and what is *not* in anyone's case. The judge's work is twofold: it is to determine first what is *fact*, and then whether what is fact, is according to rule, or according to the law. If a judge has no rule or law established beforehand by which to proceed in judging, he has no foundation on which to judge. He has no opportunity to be a judge, nor is it possible to do the part of a judge. It is impossible to judge without a law or rule by which to judge. For the very notion of judging is to determine whether the object of judgment is according to rule. Therefore God has declared that when He acts as a judge, he will not justify the wicked, and cannot clear the guilty — and by parity of reason, He cannot justify without righteousness.

The scheme of the old law being abrogated, and a new law being introduced, will not help at all in this difficulty. For an imperfect righteousness cannot answer the law of God that we are under, whether that is an old or a new one; for every law requires perfect obedience to itself. Every rule whatsoever requires perfect conformity to itself; it is a contradiction to suppose otherwise. For to say that there is a law that does not require perfect obedience to itself, is to say that there is a law that does not require all that it requires. That law that now forbids sin, is certainly the law that we are now under (whether an old or new one), or else it is not sin. That which is not forbidden, and breaches no law, is no sin. But if we are now forbidden to commit sin, then it is forbidden by a law that we are now under. For surely we are neither under the forbidding nor the commanding of a law that we are not under. Therefore, if all sin is now forbidden, then we are now under a law that requires perfect obedience. And therefore nothing can be accepted as righteousness in the sight of our Judge, except *perfect* righteousness. So that, our Judge cannot justify us unless He sees perfect righteousness in some way belonging to us — either performed by ourselves, or else by another, and justly and duly reckoned to our account.

In the sentence of *justification*, God pronounces a man *perfectly* righteous, or else the man would need a further justification after he is justified. It is not sufficient for his justification, that a man's sins be removed by Christ's atonement. For justifying a man, as already shown, is not merely pronouncing him innocent or without guilt, but standing right with regard to the rule that he is under, and righteous unto life. But according to the established rule of nature, reason, and divine appointment, this is a positive (active) and perfect righteousness.

As there is the same *need* for Christ's obedience and his atonement to be reckoned to our account, so there is the same *reason* why it should be. If Adam had persevered and finished his course of obedience, we would have received the benefit of his obedience, as much as we now have the mischief of his disobedience. So in like manner, there is a reason why we should receive the benefit of the second Adam's obedience, as well as the benefit of his atonement for our disobedience. Believers are represented in Scripture as being so *in Christ*, that they are legally *one* person, or accepted as one, by the Supreme Judge. Christ has assumed our nature, and in that nature that belongs to him, he has so assumed all believers into such a union with himself, that he has become their Head, and has taken them to be his members. Therefore, what Christ has done in our nature — by which he honored the law and authority of God by his acts, as well as the reparation to the honor of the law by his sufferings — is reckoned to the believer's account. So too, the believer should be made happy, because it was so well and

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worthily done by his Head, as well as freed from being miserable, because He has suffered for our ill and unworthy doing.

Once Christ had undertaken with God to stand for us, and put himself under our law, he was obliged to suffer by that law, and by that same law, he was obliged to obey. By the same law, after he had taken man's guilt upon himself, being our surety, he could not be acquitted till he had suffered; nor could he be rewarded till he had obeyed. But he was not acquitted as a private person, but as our public Head; and believers are thus acquitted in His acquittal. Nor was he accepted to obtain a reward for his obedience, as a private person, but as our Head; and in *His* acceptance, *we* are accepted to obtain a reward. The Scripture teaches us that when Christ was raised from the dead, he was justified. This justification, as I have already shown, implies both his acquittal from our guilt, and his acceptance to the exaltation and glory that was the reward for his obedience. But believers, as soon as they believe, are admitted to partake with Christ in his justification. Hence we are told that he was "raised again for our justification," Rom 4.25. This is true not only of that part of his justification that consists in his acquittal, but also his acceptance for his reward. The Scripture teaches us that he is exalted and has gone to heaven to take possession of glory in our name, as our *forerunner*, Heb 6.20. We are, as it were, both *raised up together with Christ*, and also *made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places, in Him*, Eph 2.6.

**Obj.** It may be objected here that there is a reason why what Christ *suffered* should be accepted on our account, but not the *obedience* which he performed: that he was obliged to obedience for himself, but he was not obliged to suffer except on our account.

**Ans.** I answer that Christ was not obliged on his own account to undertake to obey. Christ in his original circumstances, was not in subjection to the Father, being altogether equal with him. He was under no obligation to put himself in man's stead, and under man's law, or to put himself into any state of subjection to God whatsoever. There was a transaction between the Father and the Son,<sup>1</sup> that was antecedent to Christ's becoming man, and being made under the law, in which he undertook to put himself under the law, and both to obey and to suffer. In this transaction, these things were already virtually done in the sight of God, as is evident by this: that God acted on the ground of that transaction, justifying and saving sinners,<sup>2</sup> as if the things undertaken had been actually performed long before they were performed indeed. Therefore, without a doubt, in order to estimate the value and validity of what Christ did and suffered, we must look back to that transaction in which these things were first undertaken and virtually done in the sight of God, and see under what capacity and circumstances Christ acted in them. We will find that Christ was under no manner of obligation either to obey the law, or to suffer its penalty. But *after this*, he was equally under obligation to both, for from then on He stood as our surety or representative. And therefore this consequent obligation may be as much of an objection against the validity of his suffering the penalty, as against his obedience. But if we look to that original transaction between the Father and the Son, in which both these were undertaken and accepted as virtually done in the sight of the Father, we will

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<sup>1</sup> This is called the Redemptive Covenant. – WHG

<sup>2</sup> The elect were chosen in Christ and united to Him before the foundation of the world, for redemption on the cross in the fulness of time. (Eph 1.4, 10, 11)– WHG



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find that Christ acted with regard to both, as one perfectly in his own right, and under no manner of previous obligation to hinder the validity of either.

(2.) To suppose that all Christ does is to atone for us by suffering, is to make him our Savior only in part. It is to rob him of half his glory as a Savior. For if it were so, then all he does is to deliver us from hell; he doesn't purchase heaven for us. The adverse scheme supposes that he purchases heaven for us, in that he satisfies for the imperfections of our obedience, and he purchases so that our sincere imperfect obedience might be accepted as the condition of eternal life. Thus he purchases an opportunity for us to obtain heaven by our own obedience. But to purchase heaven for us only in this sense, is to purchase it in no sense at all. For all of it comes to no more than a satisfaction for our sins, or removing the penalty by suffering in our stead. For all the purchasing which they speak of, so that our imperfect obedience might be accepted, is only His satisfying for the sinful *imperfection* of our obedience, or (which is the same thing) making atonement for the sin that attends our obedience. But that is not purchasing heaven, merely to set us at liberty again so that we may go and get heaven by what we do ourselves. If all that Christ does is to pay a debt for us, there is no positive purchase of any good. We are taught in Scripture that heaven is purchased for us. It is called the *purchased possession*, Eph 1.14. The gospel proposes the eternal inheritance, not as a thing *to be* acquired as the first covenant did, but as *already* acquired and purchased. But whoever pays a man's debt for him, and thus delivers him from slavery, cannot be said to purchase an estate for him, merely because he sets him at liberty, so that afterward he has an opportunity to get an estate by his own labor. According to this scheme, the saints in heaven have no reason to thank Christ for purchasing heaven for them, or for redeeming them to God and making them kings and priests, as we have an account that they do, in Rev 5.9-10.

(3.) Justification by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, is a doctrine that the Scripture teaches in very full terms. Rom 5.18-19, "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came to all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many will be made righteous." Here in one verse we are told that we have justification by Christ's righteousness. And so that there might be no room to understand the righteousness spoken of as merely Christ's *atonement* by suffering the penalty, in the next verse it is put in other terms. There it is asserted that it is by Christ's *obedience* that we are made righteous. It is scarcely possible that anything could be more full and determined. The terms taken singly, fix their own meaning; and taken together, they fix the meaning of each other. The words show that we are justified by that righteousness of Christ which consists in his obedience, and that we are made righteous, or justified by his obedience — that is, by his righteousness or moral goodness before God.

**Obj.** Here it may possibly be objected that this text means only that we are justified by Christ's *passive* obedience.<sup>1</sup>

**Ans.** To this I answer that whether we call it active or passive, it doesn't alter the case as to the present argument, as long as it is evident by the words that it is not merely under the

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<sup>1</sup> Christ's *active* obedience is his perfect obedience of the whole law; his *passive* obedience is *actively* undertaking to be our sin-bearer, and consequently, his willingness to *passively* receive the penalty for it on our behalf (Isa 53.5-7). But Edwards will now challenge this "modern" distinction as absent from Scripture. – WHG

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notion of an atonement for disobedience, or a satisfaction for unrighteousness, but under the notion of a positive obedience, and a righteousness or moral goodness, that justifies us, or makes us righteous. This is because both the words *righteousness* and *obedience* are used, and they are used as the opposites to sin and disobedience, and an offense:

“Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men 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, many will be made righteous.”

Now, what can be meant by *righteousness* when it is spoken of as the opposite to sin or moral evil, if not moral goodness? What is the righteousness that is the opposite of an offense, if not the behavior that is well pleasing? And what can be meant by obedience when spoken of as the opposite of disobedience, or going contrary to a command, if not positive obeying and actual complying with the command? So that there is no room for any invented distinction of *active* and *passive* to hurt the argument from this Scripture. For it is as evident by it as anything can be, that believers are justified by the righteousness and obedience of Christ, under the notion of his moral goodness, and his positive obeying, and actual complying with the commands of God, and that behavior which was well-pleasing in His sight because of its conformity to His commands. This is all that anyone ever needs to be granted in this dispute.

By this it appears that if Christ’s dying is included here in the words *righteousness* and *obedience*, it is not merely as a propitiation, or bearing a penalty for a broken law in our stead. But it is voluntarily submitting and yielding himself to those sufferings, as an act of obedience to the Father’s commands. So it was a part of his positive righteousness, or moral goodness.

Indeed all obedience, considered under the notion of righteousness, is something active. It is something done in voluntary compliance with a command, whether what we do in obedience is something easy, or it is hard and difficult. Yet as it is obedience, or righteousness, or moral goodness, it must be considered as something voluntary and active. If anyone is commanded to go through difficulties and sufferings, and he does it voluntarily in compliance with this command, he properly *obeys* in doing so. And as he does it voluntarily, in compliance with a command, his obedience is as active as any whatsoever. It is the same sort of obedience — a thing of the very same nature — as when a man, in compliance with a command, does a piece of hard service, or goes through hard labor. There is no room to distinguish between such obedience and other obedience that is easier, by using such opposite terms as *active* and *passive*, as if it were something of a quite different nature. The only distinction that can be pretended, is between obeying an easy command and a difficult one. But is the obedience itself *not* of the same nature, just because some of the commands to be obeyed are more difficult than others? From this, is there any foundation to make two species of obedience, one active and the other passive? There is no appearance of any such distinction ever entering into the hearts of any of the penmen of Scripture.

It is true that of late, when a man refuses to obey the precept of a human law, but patiently yields himself to suffer the penalty of the law, it is called *passive* obedience. But I suppose this is only a modern use of the word *obedience*. Surely it is a sense of the word that the Scripture is a perfect stranger to. It is improperly called *obedience*, unless there is a precept in the law, that he must patiently yield himself to suffer, and in doing so, it will be an active,

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voluntary conformity to the law. In some sense, a person's suffering the penalty of the law may be said to be a conformity to the law. But no other conformity to the law is properly called *obedience* to it, except an active voluntary conformity to its precepts. The word *obey* is often found in Scripture with respect to the law of God to man, but never in any other sense.

It is true that Christ's *willingly* undergoing those sufferings which he endured, is a great part of that obedience or righteousness by which we are justified. The sufferings of Christ are respected in Scripture under a twofold consideration: either merely as his being substituted for us (put in our stead) in suffering the penalty of the law — and so his sufferings are considered a satisfaction and propitiation for sin — or else, in obedience to a law or a command of the Father, he voluntarily submitted himself to those sufferings, and actively yielded himself to bear them. So they are both considered his *righteousness*, and part of his *active* obedience. Christ underwent death in obedience to the command of the Father:

Psa 40.6-8, "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire; my ears you have opened. Burnt-offering and sin-offering you have not required. Then said I, Behold, I come. In the volume of the book it is written of me, *I delight to do your will, O my God; and your law is within my heart.*"

Joh 10.17-18, "I lay down my life, that I might take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received from my Father."

Joh 18.11, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?"

And this is part, and indeed the *principal* part, of that active obedience by which we are justified.

It cannot be a just objection against this, that the command of the Father to Christ, that he should lay down his life, was not part of the law that *we* had broken. And therefore his obeying this command could not be part of that obedience which he performed for us, because we needed him to obey no other law for us, than that which we had broken or failed to obey.

Although it is the same Legislative Authority whose honor is repaired by Christ's obedience, and which we have injured by our disobedience, there is no need that the law which Christ obeys should be precisely the same law as that which Adam was to have obeyed — in the sense that there should be no positive precepts missing, nor any added. The precept about the forbidden fruit was missing, and the ceremonial law was added. *The thing required was perfect obedience.* Thus it doesn't matter whether the positive precepts that Christ was to obey were much more than equivalent to what was missing, because they were infinitely more difficult — particularly the command that He had received to lay down his life. This was His principal act of obedience and above all others, is concerned in our justification. That act of disobedience by which we fell, was disobedience to a positive precept that Christ was never under — *namely*, abstaining from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Likewise, that act of obedience by which we are principally redeemed, is obedience to a positive precept that Adam was never under — *namely*, the precept of laying down his life. It was suitable that a positive precept should test both Adam's *and* Christ's obedience. Such precepts are the greatest and most proper trial of obedience, because the authority and will of the Legislator is the sole ground of the obligation, and nothing in the nature of the things themselves. Therefore they are the greatest test of any person's respect for that authority and will.

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The law that Christ was subject to and obeyed, was in some sense the same that was given to Adam. There are innumerable particular duties that are only conditionally required by the law; and in such circumstances, they are comprehended in some great and general rule of that law. For instance, there are innumerable acts of respect and obedience to men, which are required by the law of nature (which was a law given to Adam). They are not absolutely required, but only upon many prerequisite conditions — *e.g.*, that men stand in such a relation to us that they can give such commands, and the like. So too, many acts of respect and obedience to God are included in the moral law in like manner — either conditionally, or with certain things being supposed, such as Abraham’s setting out to sacrifice his son; the Jews’ circumcising their children when eight days old; and Adam’s not eating the forbidden fruit. They are virtually comprehended in the great *general rule* of the moral law, that we should obey God and be subject to Him in whatever He pleases to command us. Certainly the moral law requires us to obey *God’s* positive commands, as much as it requires us to obey the positive commands of our *parents*. And thus all that Adam was commanded, and all that Christ was commanded — even his observing the rites and ceremonies of Jewish worship, and laying down his life — was virtually included in this same great law.<sup>1</sup>

It is no objection against the last-mentioned thing — Christ’s laying down his life being in the moral law given to Adam — because that law itself allowed no *occasion* for any such thing. The moral law virtually includes all right acts, on all possible occasions, even occasions that the law itself does not allow for. Thus we are obliged by the moral law to mortify our lusts and repent of our sins, even if that law allows for no lust to mortify, nor sin to repent of.

There is indeed but one great law of God, and that is the same law that says, “if you sin, you shall die;” and “cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things contained in this law, to do them.” All duties of positive institution are virtually comprehended in this law. And therefore, if the Jews broke the ceremonial law, it exposed them to the penalty of the law, or the covenant of works, which threatened “you shall surely die.” The law is the eternal and unalterable rule of righteousness between God and man. Therefore it is the rule of judgment by which all that a man does will either be justified or condemned; and no sin exposes us to damnation, except by the law. So now, whoever refuses to obey the precepts that require attending to the sacraments of the New Testament, is exposed to damnation by virtue of the law or covenant of works. It may moreover be argued that all sins whatsoever are breaches of the law or covenant of works, because all sins — even breaches of the positive precepts, as well as others — are atoned for by the death of Christ. But what Christ died for, was to satisfy the law, or to bear the curse of the law, as in Gal 3.10-13 and Rom 8.3-4.

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<sup>1</sup> Thus, Mr. Locke writes in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, *ibid.*, p. 478, “Indeed, whatever God requires anywhere to be done, without making any allowance for faith, that is part of the law of works. So that forbidding Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge, was part of the law of works. Only, we must take notice here, that some of God’s positive commands being for peculiar ends, and particular circumstances of times, places, and persons, have a limited and only temporary obligation, by virtue of God’s positive injunction. Such was that of Moses’ law which concerned the outward worship or political constitution of the Jews, and is called the ceremonial and Judaical law.” Again, p. 479, “Thus then, as to the law in short, the civil and ritual part of the law delivered by Moses, does not oblige Christians, though to the Jews it was a part of the law of works: it being a part of the law of nature, that men ought to obey every positive law of God, whenever He pleases to make any such addition to the law of His nature.” — *Edwards*

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So Christ's laying down his life might be part of that obedience by which we are justified, even though it was a positive precept not given to Adam. It was doubtless Christ's main act of obedience, because it was obedience to a command that was attended with the greatest difficulty, and so it was obedience to a command that was the greatest trial of his obedience. His respect shown to God in it, and his honor given to God's authority, was proportionally great. It is spoken of in Scripture as Christ's principal act of obedience:

Phi 2.7-9, "But made himself of no reputation, and took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name."

It therefore follows from what has already been said, that it is mainly by this act of obedience that believers in Christ also have the reward of glory, or come to partake with Christ in his glory. (1Pet 4.13) We are saved by the death of Christ, because yielding himself to die was as much an *act of obedience*, as it was a *propitiation* for our sins. For it was not the only act of obedience that merited it. He performed meritorious acts of obedience throughout the course of his life. Nor was it the only propitiatory act of suffering. All his sufferings throughout the course of his life were propitiatory; and every act of obedience was meritorious as well. But this was his principal act of suffering, and it was as much his principal act of obedience.

Hence we may see how the death of Christ not only made atonement, but also merited eternal life. And hence we may see how we are not only redeemed *from sin* by the blood of Christ, but also redeemed *to God*. Therefore the Scripture seems everywhere to attribute the whole of salvation to the blood of Christ. This precious blood is as much the main price by which heaven is purchased, as it is the main price by which we are redeemed from hell. The positive righteousness of Christ, or that price by which he merited our salvation, was of equal value to that by which he satisfied our debt — for indeed, it was the same price. He spilled his blood to satisfy, and by reason of the infinite dignity of his person, his sufferings were looked upon as of infinite value, and equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a finite creature. He spilled his blood out of respect for the honor of God's majesty, and in submission to His authority, who commanded him to do so. His obedience in this was of infinite value, both because of the dignity of the person who performed it, and because he put himself to infinite expense to perform it, by which the infinite degree of his regard for God's authority appeared.

One might wonder what Arminians mean by *Christ's merits*. They talk of Christ's merits as much as anybody, and yet they deny the imputation of Christ's positive righteousness. What could anyone merit or deserve anything by, besides righteousness or goodness? If anything that Christ did or suffered merited or deserved anything, it was by virtue of its goodness, righteousness, or holiness. If Christ's sufferings and death merited heaven, it must be because there was an excellent righteousness and transcendent moral goodness in that act of laying down his life. And if he merited heaven for us by that excellent righteousness, then surely that righteousness is reckoned to our account, so that we have the benefit of it, or (which is the same thing) it is *imputed* to us.

Thus, I hope, I have made it evident that the righteousness of Christ is indeed imputed to us. I now proceed to the third and last thing under this argument.

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3. To SHOW that this doctrine of the imputation of Christ's righteousness is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of our being justified by *our own* virtue or sincere obedience.

If acceptance into God's favor and a title to life are given to believers as the reward for Christ's obedience, then it is not given as the reward for our own obedience. In whatever respect Christ is our Savior, that doubtless excludes our being our own saviors in that same respect. If we can be our own saviors in the same respect that Christ is, it would follow from this, that the salvation of Christ is needless in that respect, according to the apostle's reasoning in Gal 5.4: "Christ is rendered of no effect for you, whoever of you are justified by the law." <sup>1</sup> Doubtless, it is Christ's prerogative to be our Savior in that sense in which he is our Savior. Therefore, if it is by *his* obedience that we are justified, then it is not by *our own* obedience.

Here perhaps it may be said that a title to salvation is not *directly* given as the reward for our obedience. For that salvation is not by anything of ours, but only by Christ's satisfaction and righteousness. Yet an *interest* in that satisfaction and righteousness is indeed given as a reward for our obedience.

But this does not at all help the case. For this is to ascribe as much to our obedience as if we ascribed salvation to it directly, without the intervention of Christ's righteousness. For it would be as great a thing for God to give us Christ and his satisfaction and righteousness *in reward for our obedience*, as it would be to give us heaven directly. It would be as great a reward, and as great a testimony of His regard for our obedience. If God gives as great a thing as salvation for our obedience, why couldn't He as well give us salvation itself directly? Then there would have been no need for Christ's righteousness. Indeed, if God gives us *Christ* or an *interest* in him, as a reward for our obedience, he really gives us *salvation* in reward for our obedience; for the former implies the latter. It implies it, as the greater implies the lesser. So that indeed, it exalts our virtue and obedience more, to suppose that God gives us Christ in reward for that virtue and obedience, than if He gave us salvation without Christ.

The thing that the Scripture guards and militates against is our imagining that it is our own goodness, virtue, or excellence that instates us in God's acceptance and favor. But to suppose that God gives us an interest in Christ as a reward for our virtue, is as great an argument that it instates us in God's favor, as if He bestowed a title to eternal life as its direct reward. If God gives us an interest in Christ as a reward for our obedience, it would then follow that we are instated in God's acceptance and favor by our own obedience, prior to having an interest in Christ. For rewarding anyone's excellence always supposes favor and acceptance on account of that excellence. It is the very notion of a reward, that it is a good thing bestowed as a testimony of the respect and favor given for the virtue or excellence rewarded.

So that, according to this other scheme, it is not by virtue of our interest in Christ and his merits that we first come into favor with God. For we are in God's favor *before* we have any interest in those merits — in that we have an interest in those merits given as a fruit of God's favor for our own virtue. If our interest in Christ is the *fruit* of God's favor, then it cannot be the *ground* of it. If God did not accept us, and had no favor for us for our own excellence, then

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<sup>1</sup> This is the King James version. The NKJ renders it, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be* justified by law; you have fallen from grace." – WHG

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He would never bestow so great a reward upon us, as a right in Christ's satisfaction and righteousness. So that such a scheme destroys itself. For it supposes that Christ's satisfaction and righteousness are necessary to recommend us to God's favor. And yet it supposes that we have God's favor and acceptance *before* we have Christ's satisfaction and righteousness, and that we have these given to us as a *fruit* of God's favor.

Indeed, neither salvation itself, nor Christ the Savior, is given as a reward of anything in man. They are not given as a reward for faith, nor for anything else of ours. We are not united to Christ as a reward for our faith; rather, we have union with him by faith, only as faith is the very act of uniting or closing on our part. It's like when a man offers himself to a woman in marriage. He doesn't give himself to her as a reward for her receiving him in marriage. Nor is her receiving him considered a worthy deed for which he rewards her by giving himself to her. But by her receiving him, the union is made, by which she has him for her husband. On her part, it is the union itself. By these things it appears how contrary to the gospel of Christ the Arminian scheme is, who say that faith justifies as a principle of obedience, or as a leading act of obedience, or (as others say) the sum and comprehension of all evangelical obedience. For by this, the obedience or virtue of *faith*, gives it its justifying influence. And that is the same as saying that we are justified by our own obedience, virtue, or goodness.

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### III. How Evangelical Obedience is concerned in Justification.

Having thus considered the evidence of the truth of the doctrine, I now proceed to the third thing proposed, namely, “To show in what sense the acts of a Christian life, or of evangelical obedience, may be looked upon as concerned in this affair.”

From what has been said already, it is manifest that these acts cannot have any concern in this affair as *good works*, nor by virtue of any *moral goodness* in them; nor as works of the law; nor as that moral excellence or any part of it which is the fulfillment of that great, universal, and everlasting law or covenant of works which the great Lawgiver has established as the highest and unalterable rule of judgment, which Christ alone answers or does anything towards it.

It has been shown out of the Scripture, that we are justified only by faith, or by the soul’s receiving and uniting to the Savior who has wrought our righteousness. It therefore remains that the acts of a Christian life cannot be concerned in this affair in any other way than as they imply, and are the expressions of faith, and may be looked upon as so many acts of receiving Christ the Savior.

But determining how these acts of Christian obedience are concerned in justification in this respect, will depend on resolving another point: *namely*, whether any *act of faith*, besides the first, has any concern in our justification — or how far *perseverance in faith*, or continued and renewed acts of faith, have an influence in this affair.

It seems manifest that justification is by the first act of faith — in some respects, in a peculiar manner — because a sinner is actually and finally justified as soon as he has performed one act of faith. And faith in its first act, virtually at least, depends on God for perseverance, and entitles us to it among other benefits. Yet the perseverance of faith is not excluded in this affair. It is not only certainly connected with justification, but it is not to be excluded from that on which the justification of a sinner depends, or by which he is justified.

I’ve shown that the way in which justification depends on faith, is that faith is the qualification on which the congruity of an interest in the righteousness of Christ depends, or in which such a fitness consists. But the consideration of the perseverance of faith cannot be excluded from this congruity or fitness. For it is congruous that the one who believes in Christ should have an interest in Christ’s righteousness, and so have an interest in the eternal benefits purchased by it — because faith is that by which the soul has union or oneness with Christ. There is a natural congruity in it, that those who are one with Christ should have a joint interest with Him in his eternal benefits. Yet this congruity depends on its being an *abiding* union. Just as it is necessary that the branch abide in the vine in order to receive the lasting benefits of the root, so it is necessary that the soul should abide in Christ in order to receive those lasting benefits of God’s final acceptance and favor.

Joh 15.6-7, “If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out, as a branch... If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.”

Joh 15.9-10, “Continue in my love. If you keep (or abide in) my commandments, you will abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in His love.”

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There is the same reason why it is necessary for the union with Christ to remain, as for why it should begin — why it should continue to be, as for why it should once be. If it should begin without remaining, the beginning would be in vain. In order for the soul to now be in a justified state, and free from condemnation, it is necessary that it should now be in Christ, and not only that it should once have been in him. Rom 8.1, “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” The soul is saved in Christ (now being in Him) when that salvation is *bestowed*,<sup>1</sup> and not merely remembering that once it was in Him. Phi 3.9, “That I may be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.” 1Joh 2.28, “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when he appears, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” In order for people to be blessed after death, it is necessary not only that they should once have been in him, but that they should die in him. Rev 14.13, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.” There is the same reason why faith, the uniting qualification, should remain in order for the union to remain, as for why it once was, in order for the union to once be.

So that, although the sinner is actually and finally justified upon the first act of faith, the perseverance of faith, even then, comes into consideration as one thing on which the fitness for acceptance to life depends. In the act of justification, a judgment which is passed <sup>2</sup> upon a sinner’s first believing, God considers perseverance as being virtually contained in that first act of faith. It is looked upon, and taken by Him who justifies, as if it were a property of that faith. God considers the believer’s continuance in faith, and the believer is justified by that, as though it already were, because by divine establishment, it *shall* follow. By divine constitution, it is connected with that first act of faith as much as if it were a property of it; and being considered as such, justification is not suspended. But were it not for this, it would be necessary for justification to be suspended till the sinner had actually persevered in faith.

That this is so — that God in the act of final justification which He passes at the sinner’s conversion, considers perseverance in faith and future acts of faith, as being virtually implied in the first act — is further manifest by this: *namely*, that in a sinner’s justification, at his conversion, there is virtually contained a forgiveness as to eternal and deserved punishment. This is not only forgiveness of all past sins, but also of all future infirmities and acts of sin that he will be guilty of, because that first justification is decisive and final. And yet *pardon*, in the order of nature, properly *follows* the crime, and also follows those acts of repentance and faith that respect the crime that is pardoned. This is manifest both from reason and Scripture. David, in the beginning of Psalm 32 speaks of the forgiveness of sins which were doubtless committed long after he was first godly, as being consequent upon those sins, and upon his repentance and faith with respect to them. And yet this forgiveness is spoken of by the apostle in the 4th chapter of Romans, as an instance of justification by faith. Probably the sin that David speaks of in Psalm 32 is the same one he committed in the matter of Uriah. And so the pardon is the same as that release from death or eternal punishment which the prophet Nathan speaks of in 2Sam 12.13: “The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” Not

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<sup>1</sup> *Bestowed*: granted a qualification, title, right, and actual possession.

<sup>2</sup> Justification is an act of God in which He declares a sinner to be perfectly righteous in Christ and for Christ’s sake, though the sinner himself lacks inherent righteousness. This act is “passed” like a decree or legislative act. — WHG

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only does the manifestation of this pardon follow the sin in order of time, but the pardon itself, in order of nature, follows David's repentance and faith with respect to this sin. For it is spoken of in Psalm 32 as depending on it.<sup>1</sup>

But since a sinner, in his first justification, is forever justified and freed from all obligation to eternal punishment, it necessarily follows from this, that future faith and repentance are beheld in that justification, as virtually contained in that first act of faith and repentance. Because repentance of those future sins, and faith in a Redeemer with respect to them — or at least, the continuance of that habit and principle in the heart that has such an actual repentance and faith in its nature and tendency — is now made sure by God's promise.

If remission of sins committed *after* conversion, in the order of nature, follows that faith and repentance which come *after* those sins, then it follows that *future sins* are respected in the first justification, in no other way than as *future faith and repentance* are respected in it. And future repentance and faith are looked upon by Him who justifies, as virtually implied in the *first repentance and faith* — in the same manner as justification from future sins is virtually implied in the *first justification*. This is the thing that was to be proved.

And besides, if no other act of faith could be concerned in justification except the first act, it would then follow that Christians should never seek justification by any other act of faith. For if justification is not to be obtained by later acts of faith, then surely it is not a duty to seek it by such acts. And so it could never be a duty for persons, after they are converted, to seek God by faith, or to believingly look to Him for the remission of sin or deliverance from the guilt of it, because deliverance from the guilt of sin is part of what belongs to justification. And if it is not proper for converts by faith to look to God through Christ for it, then it would follow that it is not proper for them to pray for it. For Christian prayer to God for a blessing, is but an expression of faith in God for that blessing — *prayer is only the voice of faith*. But if these things were so, it would follow that the petition in the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our debts*, is not proper to be pleaded by the disciples of Christ, nor to be used in Christian assemblies. And Christ improperly directed his disciples to use that petition, when all of them except Judas were converted *before*. The debt that Christ directs his disciples to pray for the forgiveness of, can mean nothing else but the punishment that sin deserves, or the debt that we owe to divine justice — the ten thousand talents we owe our Lord. To pray that God would forgive our debts, is undoubtedly the same thing as to pray that He would release us from the obligation to due punishment. But releasing from the obligation to the punishment due to sin, and forgiving the debt that we owe to divine justice, is what pertains to *justification*.

To then suppose that no later acts of faith are concerned in the business of justification, and that it is not proper for anyone to ever seek justification by such acts, would be to forever cut off those Christians who are doubtful concerning their first act of faith, from the joy and peace of believing. As the business of a justifying faith is to obtain pardon and peace with God by

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<sup>1</sup> We say that Christ's atonement is infinite, and therefore *sufficient* to cover all the sins of all mankind for all time; but it is *efficient* only for the elect; it is *applied* only to them. This application is made upon the believer's confession of sin, and repentance from it. That doesn't mean every sin must be minutely confessed in every moment; it means that believers must acknowledge that any forgiveness of sin is necessarily by God's grace alone, for Christ's sake alone. Thus each confession is made with gratitude to God, that *all* sins are cleansed by faith in Christ's atoning blood. — WHG

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looking to God, and trusting in Him for these blessings, so the joy and peace of that faith is in the apprehension of pardon and peace obtained by such a trust. A Christian who is doubtful of his first act of faith, cannot have this from that act, because by the supposition, he is doubtful whether it is an act of faith; and so he is doubtful whether he obtained pardon and peace by that act. The proper remedy in such a case, is by faith to look to God in Christ for these blessings. But he is cut off from this remedy because he is uncertain whether he has any warrant to do so. For he doesn't know if he has believed already, and if not, then he has no warrant to look to God by faith for these blessings now, because by the supposition, no new act of faith is a proper means of obtaining these blessings. So he can never properly obtain the joy of faith, for there are acts of true faith that are still very weak; and the first act may be as weak as the others. It is like the first motion of the infant in the womb — it may be so weak an act, that by examining it, the Christian may never be able to determine whether it was a true act of faith or not. It is evident from fact, and abundant experience, that many Christians are forever at a loss to determine which was their first act of faith. And those saints who have had a good degree of satisfaction concerning their faith, may be subject to great declensions and falls, in which case they are liable to great fears of eternal punishment. The proper way of deliverance, is to forsake their sin by repentance, and now by faith to come to Christ for deliverance from the deserved eternal punishment. But this would not be possible if deliverance from that punishment was not to be obtained in this way.

But what is a still more plain and direct evidence of what I am now arguing for, is that the act of faith which Abraham exercised in the great promise of the covenant of grace that God made to him, was not Abraham's first act of faith. It was exerted long after he had by faith forsaken his own country, and had been treated as an eminent friend of God (Heb 11.8). Thus it is expressly said in Gal 3.6, "It was accounted to him for righteousness." This is the grand instance and proof that the apostle so much insists on throughout Romans 4 and Galatians 3, to confirm his doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Moreover, in Philippians 3, the apostle Paul tells us how earnestly he sought justification by faith, or to win Christ and obtain that righteousness which was by faith in Him, in what Paul did *after* his conversion. Phi 3.8, 9, "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." In the two next verses he expresses the same thing in other words, and tells us how he went through sufferings, and became conformable to Christ's death, so that he might be a partaker with Christ in the benefit of his resurrection. The apostle elsewhere teaches that this benefit is especially justification. *Christ's* resurrection was *his* justification. In this, he who was put to death in the flesh, was justified by the Spirit; and he who was delivered for our offenses, rose again for our justification. The apostle tells us in the verses that follow in that third chapter of Philippians, that he thus sought to attain the righteousness which is through faith in Christ, and so to partake of the benefit of His resurrection, not as though he had already attained, but he continued to pursue it.

On the whole, it appears that the perseverance of faith is necessary even to the congruity of justification. And that is no less so because a sinner is justified and perseverance is promised upon the first act of faith. But in that justification, God respects not only the past act of faith,

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but His own promise of future acts, and the fitness of a qualification that is, as yet, beheld only in His own promise. It seems manifest by many Scriptures, that perseverance in faith is thus necessary to salvation, not merely as a *sine qua non*, or as a universal concomitant of it, but because of such an influence and dependence. I would mention a few:

Heb 3.6, “Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

Heb 3.14, “For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.”

Heb 6.12, “Be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Rom 11.20, “Well, because of unbelief they were broken off; but you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.”

As congruity to a final justification depends on perseverance in faith, as well as the first act of faith, so the manifestation of justification in the conscience oftentimes arises a great deal more from later acts, than from the first act. The entire peculiar difference by which the first act of faith is concerned in this affair, seems to be, as it were, only an incidental difference. It arises from the circumstance of time, or being first in order of time, and not from any peculiar respect that God has to it, nor any influence which it has of a peculiar nature, in the affair of our salvation.

Thus it is that a truly Christian walk, and the acts of an evangelical, child-like, believing obedience, are concerned in the affair of our justification, and seem to be spoken of sometimes in Scripture as an expression of a *persevering faith* in the Son of God, the only Savior. Faith unites to Christ, and so it gives a congruity to justification, not merely remaining as a dormant principle in the heart, but being and appearing in its active expressions. The obedience of a Christian, so far as it is truly evangelical and performed with the Spirit of the Son sent forth into the heart, has its entire relation to Christ the Mediator. It is but an expression of the soul's believing union to Christ. All evangelical works are works of that faith which works by love. And every such act of obedience in which it is an inward act of the soul, is only a new effective act of our reception of Christ, and of our adherence to the glorious Savior. Hence that statement of the apostle in Gal 2.20, “I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, is by faith in the Son of God.” And hence we're directed in whatever we do, whether in word or deed, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Col 3.17.

God in justification respects not only the first act of faith, but also future persevering acts, in the sense of *living* by faith. This seems manifest by Rom 1.17, “For in this the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” And also by Heb 10.38-39, “Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe, to the saving of the soul.”

So that, as it was said of *faith* before, so may it be said of a childlike believing *obedience*: it has no concern in justification by any virtue or excellence in itself, but only as there is a reception of Christ in it. This is no more contrary to the apostle's frequent assertion of our being justified without the works of the law, than it is to say that we are justified by faith. For faith is as much a work, or an act of Christian obedience, as expressions of faith in our spiritual

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life and walk. Therefore, just as we say that faith does not justify as a work, so we say of all these effective expressions of faith in the life we live.

This is the reverse of the scheme of our modern divines, who hold that faith justifies only as an act or expression of obedience. Whereas in truth, obedience has no concern in justification, other than as an expression of faith.

## IV. Answering Several Objections

I now proceed to the fourth thing proposed, *namely*, to answer several objections.

**Objection 1.** We frequently find promises of eternal life and salvation, and sometimes of justification itself, made for our own virtue and obedience. In Rom 2.7, eternal life is promised for obedience: “To those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life.” The same is found in innumerable other places. Justification itself is promised for that virtue of a forgiving spirit or temper in us. Mat 6.14-15, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” All admit that justification in great part consists in the forgiveness of sins.

**Ans.** To this I answer,

**1.** These things being promised for our virtue and obedience, argues no more than that there is a connection between them, and evangelical obedience. I already observed that this is not the thing in dispute. All that can be proved by obedience and salvation being connected in the promise, is that obedience and salvation are in fact connected, which nobody denies. Whether it is admitted or denied, it is not to the purpose, as was shown. There is no need that an admission to a title to salvation should be given on account of our obedience, in order for the promises to be true. If we find such a promise, that *he who obeys shall be saved*, or *he who is holy shall be justified*, all that is needed in order for such promises to be true, is that it be really so — that he who obeys *shall* be saved, and that holiness and justification indeed go together. The proposition may be true, that he who obeys shall be saved, because obedience and salvation are in fact connected; and yet acceptance to a title to salvation is not granted on account of any of our own virtue or obedience. What is a promise, if not a declaration of a future truth, for the comfort and encouragement of the person to whom it is declared? Promises are *conditional* propositions, and as already observed, it isn’t in dispute whether other things besides faith may be the condition in such propositions in which pardon and salvation are the consequents.

**2.** Promises may rationally be made upon signs and evidences of faith, and yet the thing promised is not granted on account of the *sign*, but the thing *signified*. Thus, for instance, human government may rationally make promises of certain privileges to those who can show evidences of their being freemen <sup>1</sup> of such a city, or members of such a corporation, or descended from such a family. Yet it is not for the sake of that evidence or sign considered in itself, that they are admitted to such a privilege, but only and purely for the sake of that which the sign evidences. Though God doesn’t need signs to know whether we have true faith or not, our own consciences do; so that it is much for our comfort that promises are made upon signs of faith. Finding in ourselves a forgiving temper and disposition may be a most proper and natural evidence to our consciences, that our hearts (sensing our own utter unworthiness) have truly closed and fallen in with the way of free and infinitely gracious forgiveness of our

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<sup>1</sup> Originally, “free” — that is, citizens in good standing of such a city.

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sins by Jesus Christ. From this we may be enabled with greater comfort to apply to ourselves the promises of forgiveness by Christ.

**3.** It has just now been shown how acts of evangelical obedience are indeed concerned in our justification itself, and are not excluded from that condition that justification depends upon, without the least prejudice to that doctrine that has been maintained of *justification by faith*, without any goodness of our own. Therefore, it can be no objection against this doctrine, that sometimes in Scripture we have promises of pardon and acceptance made for such acts of obedience.

**4.** Promises of particular benefits implied in justification and salvation, may be fitly made for such expressions and evidences of faith, especially as they have a peculiar natural likeness and suitableness to them. Thus forgiveness is promised to a forgiving spirit in us (Mat 6.14); and obtaining mercy is fitly promised to mercifulness in us (Mat 25.40), and the like. And that is on several accounts, as they are the most natural evidences of our heart's closing with those benefits by faith. For they especially show the sweet accord and consent there is between the heart and these benefits, and because of the natural likeness there is between the virtue and the benefit — the one has the greater tendency to bring the other to mind. The practice of the virtue tends to renew the sense more, and to refresh the hope of the blessing promised. It also convinces the conscience of the justice of being denied the benefit if the duty is neglected.

The sense and manifestation of divine forgiveness in our own consciences, and the many exercises of God's forgiving mercy (as it respects God's fatherly displeasure) that are granted after justification, and throughout the course of a Christian's life — these may indeed be given as the proper rewards for a forgiving spirit. And yet this may not at all prejudice the doctrine we have maintained. This will appear more fully when we come to answer another objection to be mentioned hereafter.

**Objection 2.** Our own obedience and inherent holiness are necessary to prepare men for heaven. And therefore it is doubtless what recommends persons to God's acceptance, as the heirs of heaven.

**Ans.** To this I answer,

**1.** Our own obedience being necessary in order to prepare for an actual bestowment of glory, is no argument that it is the thing on account of which we are accepted to have a right to it. God may, and does do many things to prepare the saints for glory, after He has accepted them as the heirs of glory. A parent may do much to prepare a child for an inheritance in its education, after the child is an heir. Yes, there are many things necessary to fit a child for the actual possession of the inheritance; yet they are not necessary in order to have a right to the inheritance.

**2.** If everything that is necessary to prepare men for glory must be the proper condition of justification, then *perfect holiness* is the condition of justification. Men must be made perfectly holy, before they are admitted to the enjoyment of the blessedness of heaven; for there must in no way enter in there, any spiritual defilement. Therefore, when a saint dies, he leaves all his sin and corruption when he leaves the body.



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**Objection 3.** Our obedience is not only indissolubly connected with salvation, and preparatory to it, but the Scripture expressly speaks of bestowing eternal blessings as rewards for the good deeds of the saints. Mat 10.42, “Whoever gives a drink to one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, he shall in no way lose his reward.” Also, 1Cor 3.8, “Every man will receive his own reward, according to his own labor;” and many other places. This seems to militate against the doctrine that is maintained, in two ways:

1. Bestowing a reward carries in it a regard for the one rewarded, as morally fit for the reward. The very notion of a reward, is a benefit bestowed in testimony of the acceptance of and regard for the goodness or amiableness of some qualification or work in the person rewarded. And besides, the Scripture seems to explain itself in this matter: Rev 3.4, “You have a few names, even in Sardis, who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” This is given as the reason why they should have such a reward : “because they were worthy.” Though we suppose it implies no proper merit, yet it at least implies a moral fitness, or that the excellence of their virtue in God’s sight recommends them for such a reward. This seems directly repugnant to what has been supposed — *namely*, that we are accepted and approved by God, as the heirs of salvation, not out of regard for the excellence of our own virtue or goodness, or any moral fitness in this for such a reward, but only on account of the dignity and moral fitness of Christ’s righteousness.

2. Our being eternally rewarded for our own holiness and good works, necessarily supposes that our future happiness will be greater or smaller, in some proportion to our own holiness and obedience. It supposes there are different degrees of glory according to different degrees of virtue and good works. This is a doctrine very expressly and frequently taught to us in Scripture. But this seems quite inconsistent with the saints all having their future blessedness as a reward of Christ’s righteousness. For if Christ’s righteousness is imputed to all, and this is what entitles each one to glory, then it is the *same* righteousness that entitles one to glory, which entitles another. But if all have glory as their reward for the same righteousness, then why don’t they all have the same glory? Doesn’t the same righteousness merit as much glory when it is imputed to one, as when it is imputed to another?

**Ans. 1.** In answer to the *first* part of this objection, I would observe that it doesn’t argue that we are justified by our good deeds, and we will have eternal blessings in reward for them. For it is in consequence of our *justification*, that our good deeds become rewardable with spiritual and eternal rewards. The acceptableness, and so the rewardability of our virtue, is not antecedent to justification, but follows it, and is built entirely upon it. This is the reverse of what those in the adverse scheme of justification suppose — *namely*, that justification is built on the acceptableness and rewardability of our virtue. They suppose that a saving interest in Christ is given as a reward for our virtue, or (which is the same thing) as a testimony of God’s acceptance of our excellence in our virtue. But the contrary is true: that God’s consideration of our virtue as our amiableness in his sight, and His acceptance of it as rewardable, is built entirely on our interest in Christ having already been established. So that the relation to Christ, by which believers (in scripture language) are said to be *in Christ*, is the very foundation of our virtues and good deeds being accepted by God, and so of their being rewarded. A reward is a testimony of acceptance. For we, and all that we do, are *accepted only*

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*in the Beloved*, Eph 1.6. Our sacrifices are acceptable, only through our interest in Him, and through His worthiness and preciousness being made ours, as it were.

1Pet 2.4-5, “Coming to Him as to a living stone, disallowed indeed by men, but chosen by God, and precious. You also, as living stones, are built up as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

Here, being actually built on this Stone, precious to God, is mentioned as the entire ground of the acceptability of our good works to God, and of their becoming also precious in His eyes. So it is in Heb 13.21, “May the God of peace ... make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.” And hence we are directed, in whatever we offer to God, to offer it in Christ’s name, expecting to have it accepted in no other way than from the value that God has ascribed to that name. Col 3.17, “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.” To act in Christ’s name, is to act under Him as our head, and to have him stand for us, and represent us to God.

The reason for this may be seen from what has been already said, showing that it is not proper that anything in us should be accepted by God as any excellence of ours, until we are actually *in Christ*, and *justified through him*. The loveliness of the virtue of fallen creatures is nothing in the sight of God, till he beholds them in Christ, and clothed with His righteousness. Why?

- (1) Because till then, we stand condemned before God by his own holy law, to his utter rejection and abhorrence.
- (2) Because we are infinitely guilty before him, and the loveliness of our virtue bears no proportion to our guilt, and must therefore pass for nothing before a strict judge.
- (3) Because our good deeds and virtuous acts themselves are *corrupt* in a sense, and the hatefulness of their corruption, if we are beheld as we are in ourselves or separate from Christ, infinitely outweighs the loveliness of any good that is in them.

So that, if no other sin was considered except that which attends the act of virtue itself, the loveliness vanishes into nothing in comparison to it. And therefore, the virtue must pass for nothing, outside of Christ. Not only are our best duties defiled, in being attended with the exercises of sin and corruption which precede, follow, and are intermingled with them — but even the holy acts themselves, and the gracious exercises of the godly, are *defective*. Though the act is good, simply considered, if we take the acts in their measure and dimensions, and the manner in which they are exerted, they are sinfully defective. There is a defect in them that may well be called their *corruption*. And that defect is properly *sin*. It is an expression of a vile sinfulness of heart, and it tends to provoke the just anger of God. This is not because the exercises of love and other grace is not equal to God’s loveliness — for it is impossible for the love of creatures (men or angels) to be so. It is because the act is so very disproportionate to the occasion given for love or other grace, considering God’s loveliness, the manifestation made of it, the exercises of His kindness, the capacity of human nature, our advantages and the like, taken together.

A *negative* expression of corruption may be as truly sin, and as just a cause of provocation, as a *positive* expression. Say a worthy and excellent person, from mere generosity and goodness,

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laid himself out exceedingly, and with great expense and suffering saved another's life, or redeemed him from some extreme calamity. If that other person never thanked him for it, nor expressed the least gratitude any way, this would be a *negative* expression of his ingratitude and baseness. But that omission is equivalent to an *act* of ingratitude, or a *positive* exercise of a base unworthy spirit, and is truly an expression of it. It brings as much blame as if he had greatly injured another person by some positive act. And it would still be so (only to a lesser degree) if the gratitude was but very small, bearing no proportion to the benefit and obligation. It's as if for so great and extraordinary a kindness, he expressed no more gratitude than would have been suitable towards a person who had only given him a cup of water when he was thirsty, or shown him the way on a journey when he was lost, or some other such small kindness. If he came to his benefactor to express his gratitude, and did so in this manner, he might truly be said to act unworthily and odiously; he would show a most ungrateful spirit. His acting in such a manner might justly be abhorred by all. Yet the gratitude is good, what little there is of it, simply considered and so far as it goes. So it is with respect to our exercise of love, gratitude, and other graces towards God: they are defectively corrupt and sinful. Taken as they are, in their manner and measure, they might justly be odious and provoking to God, and would be necessarily so, if we were beheld outside of Christ. For this defect being sin, it is *infinitely* hateful. So the hatefulness of the very act infinitely outweighs the loveliness of it, because all sin has infinite hatefulness and heinousness. But our holiness has only little value and loveliness, as demonstrated elsewhere.

Hence, though it is true that the saints are rewarded for their good works, it is for Christ's sake alone, and not for the excellence of their works considered in themselves, or beheld separately from Christ. For they have no excellence in God's sight, nor acceptableness to Him, as it has now been shown. It is acknowledged that God, in rewarding the holiness and good works of believers, in some respect gives them happiness as a testimony of His regard for the loveliness of their holiness and good works in His sight. For that is the very notion of a reward. But it is in a very different sense from what it would have been if man had not fallen. It would have been to bestow eternal life on man as a testimony of God's regard for the loveliness of what man did, considered in itself, and in man separately by himself, and *not* beheld as a member of Christ. In this sense also, the scheme of justification that we oppose, necessarily supposes that the excellence of our virtue is respected and rewarded. For it supposes that a saving interest in Christ is itself given as a reward for it.

Two things come to pass, relating to the saints' reward for their inherent righteousness, by virtue of their relation to Christ:

1. The guilt of their persons is entirely done away with, and the pollution and hatefulness that attends and lies in their good works, is hidden.
2. Their relation to Christ adds a positive value and dignity to their good works in God's sight.

That little holiness, and those faint and feeble acts of love and other graces, receive an exceeding value in the sight of God, by virtue of His beholding them as *in Christ*, and as it were, members of One who is so infinitely worthy in His eyes. And that is because God looks upon their persons as being of greater dignity on this account. Isa. 43.4, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored." God, for Christ's sake, and because they are members of his own righteous and dear Son, sets an exceeding value upon their persons.

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Hence it follows that He also sets a great value on their good acts and offerings. The same love and obedience in a person of greater dignity and value in God's sight, is more valuable in His eyes than in one of less dignity. Love and respect (as observed before) are valuable in proportion to the dignity of the person whose love it is; because so far as anyone gives his love to another, he gives himself in giving his heart. And this is a more excellent offering in proportion to the greater worthiness of the person whose self is offered. Believers have become immensely more honorable in God's esteem by virtue of their relation to Christ, than man would have been considered by himself, even if he had been free from sin — just as a lowly person becomes more honorable when married to a king. Hence God will probably reward the little and weak love, and the poor and exceedingly imperfect obedience of believers in Christ, more gloriously than He would have rewarded Adam's perfect obedience. According to the tenor of the first covenant, the person was to be accepted and rewarded only for the *work's* sake. But by the Covenant of Grace, the work is accepted and rewarded, only for the *person's* sake. And the person is beheld antecedently as a member of Christ, and clothed with His righteousness.

So that, although the saints' inherent holiness is rewarded, this very reward is indeed no less founded on the worthiness and righteousness of Christ. None of the value that their works have in God's sight, nor any of the acceptance they have with Him, is outside of Christ and outside of His righteousness. Rather, His worthiness as Mediator is the prime and only foundation on which all is built, and the universal source from which all arises. God indeed does great things out of regard for the saints' loveliness; but it is only as a secondary and derivative loveliness. When I speak of a derivative loveliness, I don't mean only that the qualifications themselves which are accepted as lovely, are derived from Christ, and from his power and purchase — but that the *acceptance* of them as loveliness, and all the *value* that is set upon them, and all their connection with the reward, is founded in and derived from Christ's righteousness and worthiness.

If we suppose that not only higher degrees of glory in heaven, but heaven itself, is in some respect given in reward for the holiness and good works of the saints in this secondary and derivative sense, it will not prejudice the doctrine we have maintained. It is not impossible that God may bestow heavens' glory wholly out of regard for Christ's righteousness, and yet it is in reward for man's inherent holiness in different respects, and in different ways. It may be Christ's righteousness alone that God regards, for its own sake — the independent acceptableness and dignity of it being sufficient of itself to recommend all who believe in Christ to a title to this glory. So it may be by this alone that persons enter into a title to heaven, or have their prime right to it. Yet God may also have regard for the saints' own holiness for Christ's sake, and as deriving its value from Christ's merit, which He may testify in bestowing heaven upon them. Because the saints are beheld as members of Christ, their obedience is looked upon by God as something of Christ's. It is the obedience of the members of Christ, just as the sufferings of the members of Christ are looked upon in some respect, as the sufferings of Christ. Hence the apostle, speaking of his sufferings, says in Col 1.24, "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ." To the same purpose is Mat 25.35ff: *I was hungry, naked, sick, and in prison*, etc. And so is Rev 11.8 "And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called *Sodom* and *Egypt*, where also our Lord was crucified."

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By the merit and righteousness of Christ, such favor of God towards the believer may be obtained, that God may hereby be (as it were) already disposed to make them perfectly and eternally happy. Yet this does not hinder God in his wisdom, from choosing to bestow this perfect and eternal happiness in this way: *namely*, in some respect as a reward for their holiness and obedience. It is not impossible that the blessedness may be bestowed as a reward for what is done after an interest is already obtained in that favor which (to speak of God in the manner of men) disposes God to bestow the blessedness. Our heavenly Father may already have that favor for a child, by which He may be thoroughly ready to give the child an inheritance, *because* he is His child. And he is His child by the purchase of Christ's righteousness. Yet the Father may choose to bestow the inheritance on the child in a way of reward for his dutifulness, and for behaving in a manner suitable of His child. So great a reward may not be judged more than a fit reward for his dutifulness. But the fact that so great a reward is judged fit, does not arise from the excellence of the obedience itself, absolutely considered. It arises from standing in so near and honorable a relation to God, as that of a child; and this is obtained only by the righteousness of Christ. Thus the reward, and its greatness, arises properly from the righteousness of Christ, even though it is indeed in some way the reward for their obedience. A father might justly esteem the inheritance no more than a fit reward for the obedience of his *child*, and yet esteem it more than a fit reward for the obedience of a *servant*. The favor from which a believer's heavenly Father bestows the eternal inheritance, and his title as an heir, is founded in that relation in which he stands to Him as a child, purchased by Christ's righteousness — though in wisdom, God chooses to bestow it in such a way as to testify in it, of His acceptance of the amiableness of his obedience in Christ.

Believers having a title to heaven by faith that is *antecedent* to their obedience, or absolutely promised to them *beforehand*, does not prevent the actual bestowment of heaven from *also* being a testimony of God's regard for their obedience, even though performed afterwards. Thus it was with Abraham, the father and pattern of all believers. God bestowed on him that blessing of multiplying his seed as the stars of heaven, and causing all the families of the earth to be blessed in his seed, in reward for his obedience in offering up his son Isaac.

Gen 22.16-18, "I have sworn by Myself, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son — that in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

And yet the very same blessings had from time to time been promised to Abraham in the most positive terms. And the promise had been confirmed and sealed to him with great solemnity, such as Gen 12.2-3; 13.16; 15.1, 4-7, etc.; Genesis 17 throughout; and Gen 18.10, 18.

From what has been said, we may easily solve the difficulty arising from this text in Rev 3.4: "They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy;" which is parallel with Luk 20.35, "But those who will be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead." I allow (as in the objection) that this worthiness doubtless denotes a *moral fitness* for the reward, or that God looks at these glorious benefits as a fit testimony of His regard for the value which their persons and performances have in His sight.

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1. God looks at these glorious benefits as a fit testimony of His regard for the value which their persons have in His sight. But He sets this value on their persons purely for Christ's sake. They are such jewels, and have such preciousness in His eyes, only because they are beheld in Christ, and because of the worthiness of the Head that they are the members of, and the stock that they are grafted into. The value that God sets upon them on this account is so great that God thinks it fitting, from His regard for it, to admit them to such exceeding glory. The saints, on account of their relation to Christ, are such precious jewels in God's sight, that they are thought worthy of a place in His own crown (Mal. 3.17; Zec. 9.16). So far as the saints are said to be valuable in God's sight, on whatever account, they may properly be said to be worthy or fit for that honor which corresponds to the value or price which God sets upon them. A child or wife of a prince is worthy to be treated with great honor. Therefore, if a lowly person were adopted as a child of a prince, or were pledged in marriage to a prince, it would be proper to say that she was worthy of a certain honor and respect. There would be no violence done to the words in saying that she ought to have such respect paid to her, for she is worthy, even though it is only on account of her relation to the prince.

2. From the value which God sets on their persons for the sake of Christ's worthiness, He also sets a high value on their virtue and performances. Their meek and quiet spirit is of great price in His sight. Their fruits are pleasant fruits; their offerings are a sweet aroma to Him because of the value He sets on their persons, as already observed and explained. This preciousness, or the high valuableness of believers, is a moral fitness for a reward. Yet this valuableness is all in the righteousness of Christ — *that* is the foundation of it. The thing respected is not excellence in them separately by themselves; nor is it in their virtue by itself. Rather, the value in God's account arises from other considerations, which is the natural import of Luk 20.35: "Those who will be counted worthy to obtain that world," and Luk 21.36, "That you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." 2The 1.5: "That you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer."

There is a vast difference between this scheme, and what is supposed in the scheme of those who oppose the doctrine of justification by faith alone. This lays the foundation of our first acceptance with God, and all actual salvation that is consequent upon it, *wholly in Christ and his righteousness*. In their scheme, to the contrary, a regard for man's own excellence or virtue is supposed to be first, and to have the place of the first foundation in actual salvation, though not in that ineffectual redemption which they suppose is common to all.<sup>1</sup> They lay the foundation of all discriminating salvation in man's own virtue and moral excellence. This is the very bottom stone in this affair. For they suppose that it is from God's regard for our virtue, that even a special interest in Christ is given. The foundation being thus contrary, the whole scheme becomes exceedingly different and contrary. The one is an evangelical scheme; the other is a legal one. The evangelical scheme is utterly consistent with being justified by Christ's righteousness; the other is not at all consistent with it.

From what has been said, we may understand not only how the forgiveness of sin granted in justification is indissolubly connected with a forgiving spirit in us, but how there may be many

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards refers to the *universal* atonement of Arminianism, rather than *particular* (limited) atonement. – WHG

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exercises of forgiving mercy granted in reward for our forgiving those who trespass against us. For none will deny that there are many acts of divine forgiveness towards the saints, that do not presuppose an unjustified state immediately preceding that forgiveness. None will deny that saints who never fell from a justified state, still commit many sins which God forgives afterwards, by laying aside his Fatherly displeasure. This forgiveness may be in reward for our forgiveness, without any prejudice to the doctrine that has been maintained, as well as other mercies and blessings that are consequent upon justification.

**Ans. 2.** The *second* part of the objection relates to the different degrees of glory, and the seeming inconsistency that the degrees of glory in different saints should be greater or lesser according to their inherent holiness and good works. Yet everyone's glory, under our scheme, is purchased with the price of the very same imputed righteousness.

I answer that Christ, by his righteousness, purchased complete and perfect happiness for everyone, each according to his capacity. But this does not keep the saints, who are of various capacities, from having various degrees of happiness; and yet all their happiness is the fruit of Christ's purchase. Indeed, it cannot be properly said that Christ purchased any particular *degree* of happiness, so that the value of Christ's righteousness in the sight of God, is sufficient to raise a believer only so high in happiness, and no higher — that if the believer were made any happier, it would somehow exceed the value of Christ's righteousness. But Christ purchased eternal life *in general*, or perfect happiness *for all*, according to their several capacities. The saints are like so many vessels of different sizes, cast into a sea of happiness, where every vessel is full. This is what Christ purchased for all. But in the end, it is left to God's sovereign pleasure to determine the largeness of the vessel. Christ's righteousness doesn't meddle with this matter. Eph 4.4-7, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism," etc. — "But to every one of us, grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ." God may dispense in this matter according to whatever rule He pleases, not the less for what Christ has done. He may dispense either without condition, or upon whatever condition He is pleased to set. It is evident that Christ's righteousness does not meddle with this matter, for what Christ did was to fulfill the covenant of works; and the covenant of works didn't meddle with this at all. If Adam had persevered in perfect obedience, he and his posterity would have had perfect and full happiness. Everyone's happiness would have corresponded to his capacity, so that he would have been completely blessed. But God would have been at liberty to make some people of one capacity, and some of another, as He pleased.

The angels have obtained eternal life, or a state of confirmed glory, by a covenant of works, whose condition was perfect obedience. Yet some are higher in glory than others, according to the several capacities that God has given them, according to His sovereign pleasure. So that it is still left with God — notwithstanding the perfect obedience of the second Adam — to fix the degree of each one's capacity by whatever rule He pleases. He has been pleased to fix the degree of capacity, and so of glory, by the proportion of the saints' grace and fruitfulness here. He gives higher degrees of glory, in reward for higher degrees of holiness and good works, because it pleases Him. And yet all the happiness of each saint is indeed the fruit of the purchase of Christ's obedience. If it had been but one man that Christ died for, and it pleased God to make him with a very large capacity, Christ's perfect obedience would have purchased

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what would fill his capacity; and then all his happiness might properly be said to be the fruit of Christ's perfect obedience. Though, if he had been of a lesser capacity, he would not have had so much happiness by the same obedience; yet he would have had as much as Christ merited for him. Christ's righteousness doesn't meddle with the degree of happiness, in any other way than as He merits that it will be full and perfect, according to the believer's capacity. So it may be said to be concerned in the degree of happiness, as *perfect* is a degree with respect to *imperfect*; but it doesn't meddle with the degrees of perfect happiness.

This matter may be better understood if we consider that Christ and the whole church of saints are, as it were, one body of which He is the Head and they are the members; only they are each of a different place and capacity. Now the *whole* body, both head and members, have communion in Christ's righteousness. They are all partakers of its benefit. Christ who is himself the Head is rewarded for it, and every member is partaker of that benefit and reward. But it by no means follows that every part should equally partake of the benefit. Rather, every part partakes in proportion to its place and capacity. The Head partakes of far more than the other parts, and the more noble members partake of more than the inferior. As it is in a natural body which enjoys perfect health, the head, the heart, and the lungs, have a greater share of this health. They have it more seated in them, than the hands and feet do, because they are parts of greater capacity — even though the hands and feet are as much in perfect health as those nobler parts of the body. So it is in the mystical body of Christ: all the members are partakers of the benefit of the Head, but it is according to the different capacity and place that they have in the body. God determines that place and capacity as he pleases. He makes whom he pleases the foot, and whom he pleases the hand, and whom he pleases the lungs, etc. — 1Cor 12.18, "God has set the members, every one of them, in the body as He pleased." God efficaciously determines the place and capacity of every member, by the different degrees of grace and assistance in the employment of it in this world. Those whom He intends for the highest place in the body, He gives the most of his Spirit — the greatest share of the divine nature, the Spirit and nature of Christ Jesus the Head — and that assistance by which they perform the most excellent works and most abound in them.

**Objection 4.** What has been supposed is that rewards are given for our good works, only in consequence of an interest in Christ, or in testimony of God's regard for the excellence or value of them in His sight, because they are built on an interest already obtained in Christ's righteousness. It may be objected against this, that the Scripture speaks of an interest in Christ itself, as being given out of regard for our moral fitness. Mat 10.37-39, "He who loves father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me. He who loves son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of me. He who does not take up his cross, and follow Me, is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life, will lose it," etc. Worthiness, here at least, signifies a moral fitness, or an excellence that recommends it. This passage seems to intimate that it is from a regard for moral fitness, that men are admitted even to a union with Christ, and an interest in Him. Therefore, this worthiness cannot be the consequent of being in Christ, and the imputation of His worthiness — nor from any value in us or in our actions in God's sight, as beheld in Christ.

**Ans.** To this I answer that when they are *accepted*, they are not accepted as *worthy*. Yet when they are *rejected*, they are rejected as *unworthy*. Whoever does not love Christ above all other things, but treats him with such indignity as to set Him *below* earthly things, will be treated



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as unworthy of Christ. Being unworthy of Christ, especially in that particular, will be marked against him and imputed to him. Even if he is a professing Christian, and lives in the enjoyment of the gospel, and has been visibly ingrafted into Christ, and admitted as one of his disciples (as Judas was), he will be thrust out in wrath, as a punishment for his vile treatment of Christ. The forementioned words do not imply that if a man loves Christ above father and mother, etc. that he would be *worthy* for that reason. The most they imply is that such a visible Christian <sup>1</sup> will be treated and thrust out as unworthy. The one who believes is not received for the *worthiness* or moral fitness of his faith; but the visible Christian is cast out by God for the *unworthiness* and moral unfitness of unbelief. Being accepted as one of Christ's is not the reward for *believing*; but being thrust out from being one of Christ's disciples, after a visible admission of that, is a proper punishment for *unbelief*.

Joh 3.18-19, "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

Salvation is promised for *faith* as a free gift; but damnation is threatened for *unbelief* as a debt, or a punishment due to unbelief. Those who believed while in the wilderness, did not enter into Canaan, because of the worthiness of their faith. But God swore in his wrath, that those who did not believe would not enter in, because of the unworthiness of their unbelief.<sup>2</sup> Admitting a soul to union with Christ is an act of free and sovereign grace. But at death and at the day of judgment, excluding those professors of Christianity who have had the offers of a Savior, and enjoyed great privileges as God's people, is a *judicial* proceeding, and a just punishment of their unworthy treatment of Christ. The design of this saying of Christ (above), is to make them sensible of the unworthiness of their treatment of Christ in professing Him to be their Lord and Savior, and yet setting Him below father and mother, etc. It is *not* to show the worthiness of loving him above father and mother.

If a beggar were offered any great and precious gift, but as soon as it was offered, trampled it under his feet, it might be taken from him as unworthy to have it. Or if a malefactor had his pardon offered to him so that he might be freed from execution, and he only scoffed at it, his pardon might be refused him, as unworthy of it. And yet, if he *had* received it, he would not have had it for his worthiness, nor being recommended for it by his virtue. For his being a malefactor supposes him to be unworthy. Offering it to him to have it merely upon accepting, supposes that the king looks for no worthiness — nothing in him for which the king should bestow pardon as a reward. This may teach us how to understand Act 13.46, "It was necessary that the Word of God be spoken to you first; but seeing that you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles."

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<sup>1</sup> That is, someone who may externally exhibit the moral conduct of a Christian, and professes Christ with his lips, but whose heart is far from Him. (Mat 15.8; Rom 2.28-29) – WHG

<sup>2</sup> **Heb 4.2-3** For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, "They shall not enter My rest," although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

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**Objection 5.** It is objected against the doctrine of justification by faith alone, that repentance is evidently spoken of in Scripture as that which in a special way, is the condition of remission of sins. And remission of sins is admitted by all to be that in which justification consists, at least in great part.

**Ans.** This objection must certainly arise from a misunderstanding of what the Scripture says about repentance, in supposing that faith and repentance are two distinct things that, in like manner, are the conditions of justification. For it is most plain from the Scripture that there is but *one* condition of justification, or what in us we are justified by, and that is *faith*. Faith and repentance are *not* two distinct conditions of justification; nor are they two distinct things that together make one condition of justification. But faith comprehends the whole of that by which we are justified, or by which we come to have an interest in Christ. There is nothing else that has a parallel concern with it in the affair of our salvation. The divines on the other side are sensible of this; and therefore they suppose that the faith which the apostle Paul speaks of, and by which he says we are justified *alone*, comprehends repentance in it.

Therefore, in answer to the objection, I would say that when repentance is spoken of in Scripture as the condition of pardon (Luk 3.3), it does not intend any particular grace, or act, properly distinct from faith, which would have a parallel influence with it in the affair of our pardon or justification. Repentance intends nothing distinct from active conversion (or conversion actively considered), as it respects the thing *from which* they turn. Active conversion is a motion or exercise of the mind, that respects two terms: namely, *sin* and *God*. And repentance means this conversion, or active change of mind, so far as it concerns the phrase *from which* (or *about sin*). This is what the word *repentance* properly signifies: *a change of mind*, or (which is the same thing) the turning or conversion of the mind. Repentance is this turning, as it respects whatever is turned from. Act 26.20, “Therefore, O king Agrippa, I showed those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should *repent*, and *turn to God*.” Both of these are the same *turning*, except with respect to these two opposite terms, *from sin* and *to God*. In the former is expressed the exercise of the mind *about sin* in this turning. And in the other, it is the exercise of mind *towards God*.

If we look over the Scriptures that speak of evangelical repentance, we will quickly see that repentance is to be understood in this sense. For instance, Mat 9.13, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Luk 13.3, “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” Luk 15.7, “There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents,” *i.e.* over one sinner who is converted. Act 11.18, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life.” This is said by the Christians about the circumcision at Jerusalem, upon Peter’s giving an account of the conversion of Cornelius and his family. They embraced the gospel, though Peter said nothing expressly about their sorrow for sin. Again, Act 17.30, “But now God commands all men everywhere to repent.” Luk 16.30, “No, father Abraham, but if one went to them from the dead, they would repent.” 2Pet 3.9, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” It is plain that in these and other places, *repentance* means *conversion*.

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Now, it is true that conversion is the condition of pardon and justification. But if it is so, then it is absurd to say that conversion is one condition of justification, and faith is another, as though they were two distributively distinct and parallel conditions. Conversion is the condition of justification, because it is that great change by which we are brought from sin to Christ, and by which we become believers in him. It is agreeable to Mat 21.32, “And when you had seen it, you did not afterward repent and believe Him.” When we are directed to repent so that our sins may be blotted out, it is the same as saying, *let your minds and hearts be changed so that your sins may be blotted out*. But if it is said, *let your hearts be changed, so that you may be justified*, and *believe, so that you may be justified* — does it therefore follow, that the heart being changed is one condition of justification, and believing is another? Yet our minds must be changed, so that we may believe, and so be justified.

Besides, evangelical repentance being active conversion, it is not to be treated as a particular grace, properly and entirely distinct from faith, as it seems to have been by some. What is conversion, if not the sinful, alienated soul’s closing with Christ, or the sinner’s being brought to believe in Christ? That exercise of the soul in conversion, respecting sin, cannot be excluded from the nature of faith in Christ. There is something in faith, or in closing with Christ, that respects sin — and that thing is evangelical repentance. That repentance which in Scripture is called *repentance for the remission of sins* (Luk 3.3), is that very principle or operation of the mind itself that is called *faith*, so far as it is concerned with sin. Justifying faith in a Mediator is concerned about two things. First, it is concerned about the sin or evil that is to be rejected and be delivered from; and secondly, about the positive good that is to be accepted and obtained by the Mediator. Concerning the first, it is evangelical repentance, or repentance for remission of sins. Surely those people must be very ignorant, or at least very inconsiderate of the whole tenor of the gospel, who think that the repentance by which remission of sins is obtained, can be completed as to all that is essential to it, without any respect to Christ, or the application of the mind to that Mediator who alone has made atonement for sin. Surely so great a part of salvation as remission of sins, is not to be obtained without looking or coming to the great and only Savior. It is true, in its more general abstracted nature, repentance is only a sorrow for sin and forsaking it, which is a duty of natural religion. But *evangelical* repentance, or *repentance for the remission of sins*, has more to it than this essential. The dependence of the soul on the Mediator, for its deliverance from sin, is of the essence of it.

Justifying repentance has the nature of faith. This seems evident by Act 19.4, “Then Paul said, John truly baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe in Him who would come after him, that is, in Christ Jesus.” The latter words, “saying to the people, that they should believe in Him,” etc. are evidently exegetical of the former, and they explain how he preached repentance for the remission of sins. When it is said that he preached repentance for the remission of sin, saying that they should believe in Christ, it cannot be denied that saying they should believe in Christ, was intended to direct them what to do so that they might obtain remission of sins. 2Tim 2.25, “In meekness instructing those who are in opposition; perhaps God will grant them repentance to acknowledge the truth.” That acknowledging of the truth which there is in believing, is spoken of here as what is attained in repentance. On the other hand, it is evident that faith includes repentance in its nature, by the apostle’s speaking of sin as *destroyed* in faith (Gal 2.17-18). In the preceding verses the apostle mentions an objection against the doctrine of justification by faith alone;

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*namely*, that it tends to encourage men in sin, and so it makes Christ the minister of sin. He rejects this objection and refutes it with this, “If I build again the things that I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.” If sin is destroyed by faith, it must be by the repentance from sin included in it. For we know that it is our repentance from sin, or the μετανοια (*metanoia*), or turning of the mind from sin, that is the destroying of our sin.

In *justifying faith*, that which directly respects sin, or the evil we are to be delivered from by the Mediator, is as follows: a sense of our own sinfulness, the hatefulfulness of it, and a hearty acknowledgment that it deserves the threatened punishment, while looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it and from the punishment of it.

Concerning what is described here, three things may be noted about justifying faith:

1. It is the very same thing as that evangelical repentance for which remission of sins is promised in Scripture.
  2. It is of the essence of justifying faith, and it is the same as that faith, so far as it concerns the evil that we are to be delivered from by the Mediator.
  3. This faith is indeed the proper and peculiar condition of the remission of sins.
1. All of it is essential to evangelical repentance, and is indeed the very thing meant by that repentance, to which remission of sins is promised in the gospel. As to the former part of the description — *namely*, a sense of our own sinfulness, and the hatefulfulness of it, and a hearty acknowledgment of its desert of wrath — none will deny these belong to repentance. But this doesn't comprehend the whole essence of evangelical repentance. What also properly and essentially belongs to its nature, is looking to the free mercy of God in a Redeemer, for deliverance from it, and the punishment of it. That repentance to which remission is promised, not only has this hope with it, but it is contained in it as part of its proper nature and essence. Respect is ever had to this in the nature of repentance, whenever remission is promised for it. And it is especially from respect to this in the nature of repentance, that it has that promise made for it. If this latter part is missing, it fails in the nature of that evangelical repentance to which the remission of sins is promised. If repentance remains in mere sorrow for sin, and it doesn't reach to looking to the free mercy of God in Christ for pardon, then it is not that which is the condition of pardon, nor will pardon be obtained by it. Evangelical repentance is humiliation for sin before God. But the sinner never comes and humbles himself before God in any other repentance than that which includes hoping in His mercy for remission. If sorrow is not accompanied with that, there is no coming to God in it, but only flying further from Him.

There is some worship of God in justifying repentance, but not in any other repentance except that which has a sense of and faith in the divine mercy to forgive sin. Psa 130.4, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” In Pro 28.13, the promise of mercy to a true penitent, is expressed in these terms: “Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins, will have mercy.” In that confessing, there is faith in God's mercy. The psalmist in Psalm 32, speaking of the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord does not impute sin, says that he acknowledged his sin to God; he didn't hide his iniquity. He said he would confess his transgression to the Lord, and then God forgave the iniquity of his sin. The manner of expression plainly holds forth that *then* he began

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to encourage himself in the mercy of God; but his bones grew old while he kept silence. And therefore in Rom 4.6, Paul brings this instance to confirm the doctrine of justification by faith alone, which he had been insisting on. When sin is rightly confessed to God, there is always faith in that act of mercy. That confession of sin which is joined with despair, as in Judas, is not the confession to which the promise is made. In Act 2.38, the direction given to those who were pricked in their heart with a sense of the guilt of sin, was for them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins. Being baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins, implied faith in Christ for the remission of sins. Repentance for the remission of sins was typified of old by the priest's confessing the sins of the people over the scapegoat, and laying his hands on him, Lev 16.21. It denoted that the only repentance and confession of sin which obtains remission, is that which is made over Christ, the great sacrifice, with dependence on Him. Many other things might be produced from the Scripture, that in like manner confirm this point, but these may be sufficient.

**2.** All of the forementioned description is of the essence of justifying faith, and is not different from it so far as it concerns sin, or the evil to be delivered from by the Mediator. For it is doubtless of the essence of justifying faith, to embrace Christ as a Savior from sin and its punishment. All that is contained in that act, is contained in the nature of faith itself. But in the act of embracing Christ as a Savior from our sin and its punishment, is implied a sense of our sinfulness, and a hatred for our sins, or rejecting them with abhorrence, and a sense of our deserving punishment. Embracing Christ as a Savior from sin, implies the contrary act; *namely*, rejecting sin. If we fly to the light to be delivered from darkness, the same act is contrary to darkness; it is *namely*, a rejection of it. In the same act, and in proportion to the earnestness with which we embrace Christ as a Savior from sin, is the abhorrence with which we reject sin. Suppose there is in the nature of faith, as it concerns sin, no more than the hearty embracing of Christ as a Savior from the *punishment* of sin. This act will yet imply in it the whole of the above-mentioned description. It implies a sense of our own sinfulness. Certainly in the hearty embracing of a Savior from the punishment of our sinfulness, there is the exercise of a sense that we are sinful. We cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Savior from the punishment of that which we are not sensible we are guilty of.

There is also in the same act, a sense of our deserving the threatened punishment. We cannot heartily embrace Christ as a Savior from a punishment that we aren't sensible we deserved. For if we are not sensible that we deserved the punishment, we won't be sensible that we have any need of a Savior from it. Or at least we won't be convinced of anything but that God who offers the Savior, unjustly makes Him necessary; and we cannot heartily embrace such an offer. Furthermore, there is implied in a hearty embracing of Christ as our Savior from punishment, not only a conviction of the conscience, that we deserved the punishment (such as the devils and damned have), but there is also a hearty acknowledgment of it, along with the submission of the soul, and the accord of the heart, to accept that God might be just and worthy in the punishment. If the heart rises against the act or judgment of God in holding us obliged to the punishment, then when He offers us his Son as a Savior from the punishment, we cannot with the consent of the heart receive Him in that character. But if we submit to the righteousness of so dreadful a punishment for sin, this carries in it a hatred of sin.

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The Scripture from time to time holds forth that such a sense of our sinfulness, and our utter unworthiness, and our deservedness of punishment, belongs to the nature of saving faith; particularly these:

Mat 15.26-28: “But he answered and said, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs.’ And she said, That’s true, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.’ Then Jesus answered, and said to her, ‘O woman, great is your faith.’”

Luk 7.6-9. “The centurion sent friends to him, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof. Therefore I did not think myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed: for I also am a man set under authority... “When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned around, and said to the people that followed him, ‘I say to you, I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel.’”

Luk 7.37-38. “And behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meal in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster-box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.” Verse 50, “He said to the woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

These things do not necessarily suppose that repentance and faith are words of exactly the same signification. For what is called *repentance*, is only that much in justifying faith which respects the evil to be delivered from by the Savior. And besides, both repentance and faith, taken only in their general nature, are entirely distinct. *Repentance* is a sorrow for sin, and forsaking it; *faith* is trusting in God’s sufficiency and truth. But faith and repentance as evangelical duties (or justifying faith), and repentance for remission of sins, contain more in them. They imply a respect to a Mediator, and they involve each other’s nature.<sup>1</sup> It is true that they still bear the names of *faith* and *repentance* from those general moral virtues — from that *repentance* which is a duty of natural religion, and that *faith* which was a duty required under the first covenant. These are contained in this evangelical act, and they severally appear when this act is considered with respect to the different terms and objects it is concerned with.

It may be objected here that the Scripture sometimes mentions faith and repentance together, as if they were entirely distinct things, as in Mark 1.15, “*Repent, and believe* the gospel.” But there is no need to understand these as two distinct conditions of salvation; rather, the words explain one another. It is to teach us in what manner we must repent, *namely*, as believing the gospel; and in what manner we must believe the gospel, *namely*, as repenting. These words no more prove that faith and repentance are entirely distinct, than those mentioned before: Mat 21.32, “And you, when you had seen it, did not afterwards repent, that you might believe him.” Or 2Tim 2.25, “If perhaps God will grant them repentance so that they may acknowledge the truth.” The apostle, in Act 19.4, seems to refer to these words of John the Baptist: “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying to the people, that they should believe,” where the latter words, as already observed, explain how he preached repentance.

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<sup>1</sup> Agreeable to this, is what Mr. John Locke (1632-1704) says in his second *Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity*, etc. (1695), Vol. II of his *Works*, pp. 630-631: “Believing him, therefore, to be the Messiah, is very often, with great reason, put both for faith and repentance too, which are sometimes set down singly, where one is put for both, as implying the other. — *Edwards*

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Another Scripture where faith and repentance are mentioned together, is Act 20.21: “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance towards God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.” It may be objected that in this place, faith and repentance are not only spoken of as distinct things, but having distinct objects.

To this I answer, it is true that faith and repentance, in their general nature, are distinct things. And repentance for the remission of sins, or that aspect of justifying faith which respects the evil to be delivered from, so far as it regards that term, is what especially denominates it *repentance*. It has respect to God as the object, because He is the Being who is offended by sin, and is to be reconciled with. But this justifying act from which it is termed *faith*, more especially respects Christ. Let us interpret it however we will, the objection that faith is thus distinguished from repentance, is as much an objection against the scheme of those who oppose justification by faith alone, as it is against *this* scheme. For they hold that the justifying faith that the apostle Paul speaks of, includes repentance, as already observed.

**3.** This repentance that has been described, is indeed the special condition of the remission of sin. This seems very evident by the Scriptures, particularly these:

Mar 1.4: “John baptized in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

Luk 3.3, “And he came into all the region around Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

Luk 24.47, “And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations.”

Act 2.38, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.”

Act 3.19. “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.”

Act 5.31, “God has exalted Him to His right hand, to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.”

The same is evident by Lev 26.40-42; Job 33.27-28; Psa 32.5; Pro 28.13; Jer 3.13; 1Joh 1.9, and other places.

The reason may be plain from what has been said. We need not wonder that in faith, what especially respects sin, should be especially the condition of the remission of sins. Or that this motion or exercise of the soul, as it rejects and flies from evil and embraces Christ as Savior from it, should especially be the condition of being free from that evil. In like manner, it is no wonder that the same principle or motion that seeks good, and clings to Christ as the procurer of that good, should be the condition of obtaining that good. Faith, with respect to good, is *accepting*; and with respect to evil, it is *rejecting*. Indeed, rejecting evil is itself an act of acceptance. It is accepting freedom or separation from that evil; and this freedom or separation is the benefit bestowed in remission. No wonder that what in faith immediately respects this benefit, and is our acceptance of it, should be the special condition of our having it. It is the same with respect to all the benefits that Christ has purchased. Trusting in God through Christ for such a particular benefit that we need, is the special condition of obtaining that benefit. When we need protection from enemies, the exercise of faith with respect to such

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a benefit, or trusting in Christ for protection from enemies, is especially the way to obtain that particular benefit, rather than trusting in Christ for something else. And so it is with any other benefit that might be mentioned. So prayer, which is the expression of faith for a particular mercy that is needed, is especially the way to obtain that mercy. <sup>1</sup>

Thus, no argument can be drawn from this against the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Indeed, there is in the nature of repentance, what peculiarly tends to establish the contrary of justification by works. For nothing so much renounces our own worthiness and excellence, as repentance. The very nature of it is to acknowledge our utter sinfulness and unworthiness, and renounce our own goodness and all confidence in self. And so we trust in the propitiation of the Mediator, and ascribe all the glory of forgiveness to Him.

**Objection 6.** The last objection I will mention is that paragraph in the 2nd chapter of James, where persons are expressly said to be justified by works. Jas 2.21, “Wasn’t Abraham our father justified by works?” Verse 24. “You see then, how a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.” Verse 25. “Wasn’t Rahab the harlot justified by works?”

In response to this objection, I would answer four things.

1. Take notice of the great unfairness of the divines who oppose us, in the employment they make of this passage against us. All will admit that in this proposition of Jas 2.24, “a man is justified by works, and not by faith only,” that one of the terms — either the word *faith*, or else the word *justify* — is not to be understood in precisely the same sense as those same terms when used by Paul, because they suppose (as well as we) that it was not the intent of the apostle James to contradict Paul in that doctrine of justification by faith alone, in which he instructed the churches. But if we understand both the terms, as used by each apostle, in precisely the same sense, then what one asserts is a precise, direct, and full contradiction of the other: the one affirms and the other denies the very same thing.

So the entire controversy from this text comes to this: which of these two terms will be understood differently from Paul? *They* say it is the word *faith* — for they suppose that when the apostle **Paul** uses that word, and makes *faith* that by which alone we are justified, then what is understood by it is compliance with the practice of Christianity in general, so that it includes all saving Christian virtue and obedience. But as the apostle **James** uses the word *faith* in this place, they suppose it is to be understood only as an assent of the understanding to the truth of gospel doctrines, as distinguished from good works — and that assent may exist separate from those works, and from all saving grace.

We, on the other hand, suppose that the word *justify* in James, is to be understood in a different sense from the apostle Paul. So they are forced to go as far in their scheme, in altering the sense of the terms from Paul’s use of them, as we do. Yet at the same time that they freely vary the sense of *faith*, when *we* understand *justify* in a different sense from Paul, they cry out against us, “What need is there to frame this distinction, if not to serve your opinion?”

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<sup>1</sup> If repentance justifies, or it is that by which we obtain pardon of sin in any other way than this, it must be either as a virtue or righteousness, or something pleasing in us; or else it must be that our sorrow, and condemning what is past, is accepted as some atonement for it; both of which are equally contrary to the gospel doctrine of justification by Christ.  
– Edwards



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At this rate, a man may maintain anything, however contrary to Scripture, and elude the clearest text in the Bible! They won't show us why we don't have as good a warrant to understand the word *justify* differently from Paul, as they have to understand the word *faith* differently. If the sense of one of the words must be varied on either scheme in order to make the apostle James's doctrine consistent with the apostle Paul's, and if varying the sense of one term or the other is all that stands in the way of their agreeing with either scheme, and if varying the sense of *faith* is in itself as fair as varying the sense of *justify*, then the text lies as fair for one scheme as the other. Therefore it can no more fairly be an objection to our scheme than to theirs. If so, then what becomes of this great objection from the passage in James?

**2.** If there is no more difficulty in varying the sense of one of these terms as the other, from anything in the text itself, so as to make the words suit either scheme, then certainly the one to be chosen is the one most agreeable to the current of Scripture, and to other places where the same matter is more particularly and fully treated. Therefore, we should understand the word *justify* in this passage of James, in a sense that in some respects differs from that in which Paul uses it. For by what has been already said, it may appear that there is no one doctrine in the whole Bible that is more fully asserted, explained, and urged, than the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any of our own righteousness.

**3.** There is a very fair interpretation of this passage of James, in no way inconsistent with this doctrine of justification which I have shown that other scriptures abundantly teach, which the words themselves will allow for, as well as that which the objectors put upon them; and it much better agrees with the context. And that interpretation is that works are spoken of here as evidences of justifying. A man may be said to be justified by that which clears him, or vindicates him, or makes the goodness of his cause manifest. When a person has a cause tried in a civil court, and he is justified or cleared, he may be said, in different senses, to be justified or cleared by the goodness of his *cause*, and by the goodness of the *evidences* of it. He may be said to be cleared by what *evidences* his cause to be good, but not in the same sense as he is cleared by what makes his cause itself to be good. That which renders his cause good, is the proper ground of his justification; it is by that of which he is himself a proper subject. But evidences justify only as they manifest that his cause is in fact good — whether or not they are of such a nature as to have any influence to render it so. It is by *works* that our cause appears to be good. But it is by *faith* that our cause not only appears to be good, but it becomes good, because by faith we are united to Christ. The word *justify* should sometimes be understood to signify the appearance, as well as the fact. It is agreeable to the use of the word in common speech, as when we say that someone stood up to justify another; *i.e.*, he endeavored to show or to manifest that the other's cause is good.

It is certain that the word is sometimes used in this sense in Scripture, when speaking of our being justified before God. For example, where it is said that we will be justified by our words. Mat 12.37, "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." It cannot mean that men are accepted before God on account of their words. For God has told us nothing more plainly than that it is the heart He looks at; and when He acts as judge towards men to justify or condemn them, he tests the heart.

Jer 11.20. "But, O Lord of hosts, who judges righteously, who tests the mind and the heart, let me see Your vengeance on them; for to you I have revealed my cause."

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Psa 7.8-9, “The Lord shall judge the people; judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me. O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end. But establish the just; for the righteous God tests the hearts and minds.”

Psa 7.11, “God judges the righteous.” (KJV)

Many other places are to the same purpose. Therefore men can be justified by their words, in no other way than as evidences or manifestations of what is in the heart. Thus Christ speaks of the words in this very place, as evident by the context. Mat 12.34-35. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart,” etc. The words or sounds themselves, are not parts of godliness, nor evidences of godliness, but signs of what is inward.

God himself makes use of evidences when he acts towards men as judge, in order to make a declarative judgment; thus He judges men by their works. Therefore, at the day of judgment God will judge men according to their works. For though God stands in no need of evidence to inform Him what is right, consider that He will then sit in judgment, not as earthly judges sit — to find out what is right in a cause — but to declare and manifest what is right. And therefore, the apostle calls that day, “the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,” Rom 2.5.

To be justified, is to be approved of and accepted; but a man may be said to be approved and accepted in two respects: the one is to be approved *really*, and the other to be approved and accepted *declaratively*. Justification is twofold: it is either the acceptance and approval of the judge itself, or else it is the manifestation of that approval by a sentence or judgment declared by the judge, either to our own consciences, or to the world. If justification is understood in the former sense, for the approval itself, it is only that by which we become fit to be approved. But if it is understood in the latter sense, for the manifestation of this approval, then it is by whatever is a proper evidence of that fitness. In the former, faith alone is concerned, because it is by that alone that we become fit to be accepted and approved. In the latter, whatever is an evidence of our fitness, is concerned alike. Therefore, if we take justification in this latter sense of *evidence*, then faith and all other graces and good works have a common and equal concern in it. For any other grace or holy act is equal with faith as evidence of a qualification for acceptance or approval,

In common speech, *justify* has always indifferently signified *approval*, or else *testifying* of that approval. Sometimes it is one, and sometimes the other, because they are both the same — except that one is outwardly, what the other is inwardly. So our nation, and maybe all of them, are prone to give the same name to two things, when one is only declarative of the other. Thus sometimes *judging* intends only judging in our thoughts; and at other times, it is testifying and declaring what our judgment is. So words such as justify, condemn, accept, reject, prize, slight, approve, or renounce, are sometimes put for mental acts; and at other times, they are put for an outward treatment. So too, in the sense in which the apostle James seems to use the word *justify* for *manifestative justification*, a man is justified not only by *faith*, but also by *works*; as a tree is manifested to be good, not only by directly examining the tree, but also by its fruit. Pro 20.11, “Even a child is known by his deeds, whether his work is pure, and whether it is right.”

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The drift of the apostle does not require that he be understood in any other sense. For all that he aims at, as appears by a view of the context, is to prove that good works are necessary. The error of the people he opposed was this: that good works were not necessary to salvation; that if they simply believed there was but one God, and that Christ was the Son of God and the like, and they were baptized, then they were safe, no matter how they lived. This doctrine greatly tended to licentiousness. Evincing the contrary of this is evidently the apostle's scope.

A due consideration of the context will naturally lead us to understand that the apostle speaks of works justifying us, as an *evidence*, and in a *declarative* judgment. For it is plain that the apostle is here insisting on works in the quality of a necessary manifestation and evidence of faith, or as what makes the truth of faith apparent: as in Jas 2.18, "Show me your faith *without* your works, and I will show you my faith *by* my works." And in verse 26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." It is much more rational and natural to understand him as speaking of works as the proper signs and evidences of the reality, life, and goodness of faith. It's not that the very works or actions done are properly the life of faith, like the spirit in the body. Rather, it is the active, working nature of faith that is itself the life and spirit of faith, and the actions or works done are the signs of it. The sign of a thing is often, in scripture language, said to *be* that thing; as it is in that comparison by which the apostle illustrates it. It is not the actions of a body that are themselves properly the life or spirit of the body. Rather, the active nature is the life of the body, of which those actions or motions are the signs. What makes men pronounce anything to be alive, is that they observe it has an active and operative nature. And they can observe this in no other way than by the actions or motions which are the signs of that nature.

It is plainly the apostle's aim to prove that if faith has no works, it is a sign that it is not a good sort of faith. This would not have been to his purpose, if it was his design to show that it is *not* by faith alone (though of a right sort) that we have acceptance with God, but that we are accepted on account of our obedience as well as faith. It is evident by the apostle's reasoning, that the necessity of works is not from their having a parallel concern with faith, in our salvation. But he speaks of works only as *related* to faith, and *expressive* of it. In the end, this leaves faith as the sole fundamental condition, without anything else having a parallel concern with it in this affair. And other things are conditions, only as several expressions and evidences of that faith.

That the apostle speaks of works justifying only as a sign, or evidence, and in God's declarative judgment, is further confirmed by Jas 2.21: "Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?" Here the apostle plainly seems to refer to that declarative judgment of God concerning Abraham's sincerity, manifested to him for the peace and assurance of his own conscience after offering up his son Isaac on the altar: Gen 22.12, "Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Here it is plain, and expressed in the very words of justification or approval, that this work of Abraham in offering up his son on the altar, justified him as an *evidence*. When the apostle James says that we are justified by works, he may and should be understood in a sense agreeable to the instance that he brings for the proof of it. And justification in that instance, appears by the works of justification that are referred to; it is by works as an *evidence*. Where

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this instance of Abraham's obedience is mentioned elsewhere in the New Testament, it is mentioned as the fruit and evidence of his faith.

Heb 11.17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises, offered up his only-begotten son."

The apostle mentions another instance. Jas 2.25, "Likewise, wasn't Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers, and sent them out another way?" The apostle refers to a declarative judgment in that particular testimony which was given of God's approval of her as a believer, in directing Joshua to save her when the rest of Jericho was destroyed. Jos 6.25, "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwells in Israel even to this day, because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho." This was accepted as an evidence and expression of her faith. Heb 11.31, "By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace." The apostle in asking, "Wasn't Rahab the harlot justified by works?" by the manner of his speaking, refers to something in her history. But we have no account in her history of any justification of her, other than this one.

4. If notwithstanding, any choose to take justification in James's precisely as we do in Paul's epistles — for God's acceptance or approval itself, and not for any expression of that approval — then what has already been said concerning the manner in which acts of evangelical obedience are concerned in the affair of our justification, affords a very easy, clear, and full answer. For if we take *works* as acts or expressions of *faith*, they are not excluded. So a man is not justified by faith alone, but also by works — *i.e.* he is not justified only by faith as a principle in the heart, or in its first and more immanent acts, but also by the effective acts of faith *in life*. These are the expressions of the life of faith, just as the operations and actions of the body are expressions of the life of that body, agreeable to Jas 2.26.

What has been said in answer to these objections may also, I hope, abundantly serve for an answer to another objection often made against this doctrine; *namely*, that it encourages licentiousness in life. For, from what has been said, we may see that the Scripture doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any manner of goodness or excellence of ours, in no way diminishes either the necessity or the benefit of a sincere, evangelical, universal *obedience*. Man's salvation is not only indissolubly connected with obedience, and damnation connected with the lack of it in those who have opportunity for it, but salvation depends on it in many respects. It is the way to salvation, and the necessary preparation for it. Eternal blessings are bestowed in reward for it. And our justification in our own consciences and at the day of judgment depends on it, as the proper evidence of our acceptable state. Even in accepting us as entitled to life in our justification, God regards this obedience as something on which the fitness of such an act of justification depends. So that our *salvation* as truly depends on it, as if we were justified for its moral excellence. And besides all this, the degree of our happiness to all eternity is suspended on, and determined by, the degree of it. So that this gospel-scheme of justification is as far from encouraging licentiousness, and it contains as much to encourage and excite us to strict and universal obedience, and the utmost possible eminence of holiness, as any scheme that can be devised — and indeed, unspeakably more.

## V. The Importance of this Doctrine

I come now to the fifth and last thing proposed, which is to consider the “importance of this doctrine.”

I know there are many who make as though this controversy is of no great importance; that it is chiefly a matter of narrow speculation, depending on certain subtle distinctions which many who make use of them don’t understand themselves; that the difference is not so consequential as to warrant being zealous about it; and that more hurt than good is done by raising disputes about it.

Indeed I am far from thinking that it is of absolute necessity that persons understand and be agreed on all the distinctions needed to particularly explain and defend this doctrine against all cavils<sup>1</sup> and objections. Yet all Christians should strive for an increase of knowledge, and none should content themselves without some clear and distinct understanding in this point. And in general, we should believe according to the clear and abundant revelations of God’s word, so that none of our own excellence, virtue, or righteousness is the *ground* of our being received from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance in God’s sight — but it is only Jesus Christ, and *his* righteousness and worthiness, received by faith. I think this is of great importance, at least in applying it to ourselves. And that is for the following reasons.

**First**, the *Scripture* treats this doctrine as a doctrine of very great importance. There is a certain doctrine of *justification by faith*, in opposition to *justification by the works of the law*. None will deny that the Apostle Paul insists on this as of the greatest importance, because nothing in the Bible is more apparent. Under the infallible conduct of the Spirit of God, the apostle thought it worth his most strenuous and zealous disputing about and defending. In the latter part of the ninth chapter of Romans, and in the beginning of the tenth, he speaks of the contrary doctrine as fatal and ruinous to the souls of men. He speaks of it as subversive of the gospel of Christ, and calls it *another gospel*. And in Gal 1.8-9, compared with the following part of the epistle, Paul says concerning this doctrine, that if anyone, “even an angel from heaven, preaches it, let him be accursed”. Certainly we must allow the apostles to be good judges of the importance and tendency of doctrines, or at least the Holy Ghost in them. Doubtless we are safe and in no danger of harshness and censoriousness if we only follow him and keep close to his express teachings, in what we believe and say about the hurtful and pernicious tendency of any error. Why are we to blame for saying what the Bible has taught us to say, or believing what the Holy Ghost has taught us, to the end that we might believe it?

**Second**, the adverse scheme lays another foundation for man’s salvation than what God has laid. I am not speaking of that ineffectual redemption that they suppose is universal, and what all mankind are equally the subjects of. But I say it lays another foundation entirely, of man’s actual, discriminating salvation, or of that salvation in which true Christians differ from wicked men. We suppose the foundation of this is Christ’s worthiness and righteousness. But contrariwise, the other scheme supposes it to be man’s own virtue, even that this is the ground of gaining a saving interest in Christ. It takes Christ out of the place of the foundation stone, and puts men’s own virtue in his place; so that Christ himself, in the affair of distinguishing

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<sup>1</sup> *Cavil*: to raise a trivial objection; to be overly critical; nitpick.

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actual salvation, is laid on this foundation. The foundation being so different, I leave it to each one to judge whether the difference between the two schemes consists only in a fine point of small consequence. The two foundations being contrary, it makes the whole scheme exceedingly dissimilar and opposite: the one is a *gospel* scheme, the other is a *legal* one.

**Third**, it is in this doctrine that the most essential difference lies between the Covenant of Grace and the first covenant. The *adverse* scheme of justification supposes that we are justified by our *works*, in the very same sense in which man was to have been justified by his works under the first covenant. By that covenant, our first parents were not to have eternal life given to them for any proper merit in their obedience, because their perfect obedience was a debt they owed God. Nor was it to be bestowed for any proportionality between the dignity of their obedience, and the value of the reward. Rather, it was to be bestowed only from a regard to a moral fitness by virtue of their obedience, to obtain the reward of God's favor. A title to eternal life was to be given to them as a testimony of God's pleasedness with their works, or His regard for the inherent beauty of their virtue. And so it is the very same way that those in the adverse scheme suppose that we are received into God's special favor *now*, and to those saving benefits that are testimonies of it. I am sensible that the divines of that side entirely disclaim the popish doctrine of *merit*, and they freely speak of our utter unworthiness and the great imperfection of all our services. But in the end, it is our *virtue*, imperfect as it is, that they say recommends men to God, by which "good men" come to have a saving interest in Christ, and God's favor, rather than others. These things are bestowed in testimony of God's regard for their goodness. So that whether they allow the term *merit* or not, they hold that we are accepted by our own merit, in the same sense as under the first covenant, though not in the same degree.

But the great and most distinguishing difference between *that* covenant and the covenant of *grace*, is that by the covenant of grace we are not justified by our own works, but only by faith in Jesus Christ. It is chiefly on this account that the new covenant deserves the name of a Covenant of Grace. This is evident in the following places:

Rom 4.16: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace."

Rom 3.20, 24, "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight... Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

Rom 11.6, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace: but if it is of works; then it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."

Gal 5.4, "Whichever of you are justified by the law, you have fallen from grace."

Therefore, in the same epistle to the Galatians, the apostle speaks of the doctrine of justification by works, as *another gospel*, adding, "which is not another," Gal 1.6-7 — meaning it is no gospel at all: it is *law*. It is no covenant of *grace*, but of *works*. It is not an *evangelical*, but a *legal* doctrine. Certainly that doctrine in which the greatest and most essential difference between the covenant of grace and the first covenant consists, must be a doctrine of great importance. That doctrine of the gospel which above all others is worthy of the name *gospel*, is doubtless a very important doctrine of the gospel.

**Fourth**, this is the main thing for which fallen men stood in need of divine revelation, to teach us how we who have sinned may come to be again accepted by God, or which is the same

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thing, how the sinner may be justified. Something beyond the light of nature is necessary to salvation chiefly on this account. Mere natural reason afforded no means by which we could come to the knowledge of this, for it depends on the sovereign pleasure of the Being whom we had offended by sin. This seems to be the great drift of that revelation which God has given, and of all those mysteries it reveals, all those great doctrines that are peculiarly doctrines of revelation, and above the light of nature. It seems to have been very much on this account that it was requisite that the doctrine of the Trinity itself should be revealed to us — that by a discovery of the concern of the several Divine Persons in the great affair of our salvation, we might better understand and see how all our dependence in this affair is on God; that our sufficiency is all in Him and not in ourselves; and that He is all in all in this business, in accord with 1Cor 1.29-31:

“That no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who from God is made for us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption — that as it is written, *He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.*”

What is the gospel, if not the glad tidings of a new way of acceptance with God unto life, a way in which sinners may come to be free from the guilt of sin and obtain a title to eternal life? And when this way is revealed, if it is rejected, and another of man’s devising is put in its place, then without a doubt it must be an error of great importance, and the apostle might well say that it was another gospel.

**Fifth**, the contrary scheme of justification derogates much from the honor of God and the Mediator. I have already shown how it diminishes the glory of the Mediator in ascribing to man’s virtue and goodness, that which belongs to His worthiness and righteousness alone. By the apostle’s sense of the matter, it renders Christ needless. Gal 5.4, “Christ has become of no effect to you, whoever of you are justified by the law.” If that scheme of justification is followed to its consequences, it utterly overthrows the glory of all the great things that have been contrived, and done, and suffered in the work of redemption. Gal 2.21, “If righteousness comes by the law, Christ died in vain.” It has also been shown already how it diminishes the glory of divine grace (which is the attribute that God has especially set himself to glorify in the work of redemption), and so it greatly diminishes the obligation to gratitude in the sinner who is saved. Indeed, in the sense of the apostle, it makes void the distinguishing grace of the gospel. Gal 5.4, “Whoever of you are justified by the law, have fallen from grace.” It diminishes the glory of the grace of God and the Redeemer, and it proportionally magnifies man. It makes the goodness and excellence of fallen man to be something, which I have shown are nothing.

I have also shown already that to justify the sinner for his virtue, is contrary to the truth of God in the threatening of His holy law. And whether it is contrary to God’s truth or not, it is a scheme of things very unworthy of God. It supposes that when God is about to lift up a poor, forlorn malefactor, condemned to eternal misery for sinning against his Majesty, and to make him unspeakably and eternally happy by bestowing his Son and Himself upon him, He puts all this up for sale, as it were, for the price of His virtue and excellence. I know that those we oppose acknowledge that the price is very disproportionate to the benefit bestowed, and they say that God’s grace is wonderfully manifested in accepting so little virtue, and bestowing so glorious a reward for such imperfect righteousness. We are such infinitely sinful and abominable creatures in God’s sight. And by our infinite guilt, we have brought ourselves into

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such wretched and deplorable circumstances. All our righteousness is nothing, and ten thousand times worse than nothing if God looks at them as they are in themselves. Isn't it therefore immensely more worthy of the infinite majesty and glory of God, to deliver and make happy such wretched vagabonds and captives, without any money or price of theirs, and without any manner of expectation of any excellence or virtue in them, that in any way would recommend them? Won't it betray a foolish, exalting opinion of ourselves, and a low one of God, to think of offering anything of ours to recommend us to His favor? Or to be brought from wallowing like filthy swine in the mire of our sins, and from the enmity and misery of devils in the lowest hell, to the state of being God's dear children? Or to be in the everlasting arms of His love in heavenly glory? Or to imagine that such is the constitution of God, that we should bring our filthy rags, and offer them to Him as the *price* of all this?

**Sixth**, the opposite scheme most directly tends to lead men to trust in their own righteousness for justification, which is fatal to the soul. This is what men, of themselves, are exceedingly prone to do, even though they are ever so much taught the contrary. This comes through the biased and high thoughts they have of themselves, and their exceeding dullness to apprehend any such mystery as our being accepted for the righteousness of another. But this other scheme directly teaches men to trust in their own righteousness for justification, by teaching them that this is indeed what they must be justified by, being the way of justification that God himself has appointed. So that if a man had no natural disposition to trust in his own righteousness, but he embraced this scheme and acted consistent with it, it would lead him to it. But trusting in our own righteousness is fatal to the soul; this is what the Scripture plainly teaches us. It tells us that it will cause Christ to profit us nothing, and be of no effect to us, Gal 5.2-4. For though the apostle speaks there in particular about circumcision, it is not merely being circumcised, but *trusting* in circumcision as a righteousness, that the apostle refers to. He could not mean that merely being circumcised would render Christ of no profit or effect to a person. For in Act 16.3 we read that for certain reasons, he himself circumcised Timothy. The same is evident by the context and by the rest of the epistle.

The apostle speaks of trusting in their own righteousness as fatal to the Jews. Rom 9.31-32, "But Israel, which pursued the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling stone." Together with Rom 10.3, "For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." This is spoken of as fatal to the Pharisees, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, which Christ spoke to them in order to reprove them for trusting in themselves as righteous. The design of the parable is to show them that even the publicans will be justified, rather than them. This appears by the reflection that Christ makes on it in Luk 18.14: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other" — that is, this man and not the other. Its fatal tendency might also be proved from its inconsistency with the nature of justifying faith, and with the nature of that humiliation that the Scripture often speaks of as absolutely necessary to salvation. But these Scriptures are so express, that it is needless to bring any further arguments.

How far may a wonderful and mysterious agency of God's Spirit so influence some men's hearts, that their practice in this regard may be contrary to their own principles? They won't



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trust in their own righteousness, even though they profess that men are indeed justified by it. They believe the doctrine of justification by men's own righteousness in general; and yet they don't believe it when it is applied to themselves in particular.

How far may that error which they may have been led into by education, or by the cunning sophistry of others, be contrary to the prevailing disposition of their own hearts, and indeed contrary to their own practice?

Some may *seem* to maintain a doctrine that is contrary to this gospel doctrine of justification, who really don't. They only express themselves differently from others. Or they seem to oppose it through their misunderstanding of our expressions; or we misunderstand theirs, when indeed our real sentiments are mainly the same. Or they may seem to differ more than they actually do, by using terms that are without a precisely fixed and determinate meaning. Or their sentiments may seem to be wide from this doctrine for lack of a distinct understanding of it. But their hearts, meanwhile, entirely agree with it, And if it was clearly explained to their understandings, they would immediately close with it, and embrace it.<sup>1</sup>

How far these things may be so, I will not determine. But I am fully persuaded that great allowances are to be made on these and similar accounts, in innumerable instances — though it is manifest from what has been said, that the teaching and propagating of contrary doctrines and schemes, have a pernicious and fatal tendency.

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<sup>1</sup> Edwards wrote this in 1734, hoping in part to stem the rising tide of Arminianism. But in 1739, John Wesley would publish a popular sermon titled, "Free Grace." It presented a hybrid form of Arminianism, which is actually 3-point Calvinism (T\_L\_P instead of TULIP). Whitefield wrote a letter to his friend Wesley in 1740, hoping to convince him of his doctrinal error; but failed to change Wesley's mind. They parted ways. In 1784, staunch Calvinist Charles Simeon met with Wesley, and they had an intriguing exchange on saving faith. They managed to find common ground. That may be all that Edwards is pleading for here. But Wesley's more "democratic" and less intellectual gospel found fertile ground in America. For more about that, read David Wells' book, No Place for Truth (1993) – WHG