



THE DOCTRINE  
OF JUSTIFICATION  
BY FAITH

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JOHN OWEN



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# *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith*

THROUGH THE IMPUTATION OF THE  
RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST;

EXPLAINED, CONFIRMED, AND VINDICATED

by John Owen

from  
THE WORKS OF JOHN OWEN

EDITED BY  
WILLIAM H. GOOLD

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## Editor's Preface

The language of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is a bit baffling to the modern ear, but the principles and the subject matter are just as important today as they were in Owen's time. To make the arguments more accessible to us today, the syntax, grammar, and vocabulary of Owen's treatise have been updated. The following is best described as a *condensation* of Owen's work in paraphrased modern language. Much of the redundant verbiage has been removed. However, his ideas and the flow of his reasoning have been fully preserved. Therefore, this is not really a synopsis. A number of esoteric arguments and defenses relating to the Catholic Church have been excised along with incidental passages in Greek and Latin. However, where the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin (Vulgate) in the text is central to the argument, it has been kept. Where helpful, Strong's numbers have been included in brackets. The reader may find the Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon a useful tool in such places. The depth of Owen's scholarship and his knowledge of the ancient languages are impressively displayed. They hint at how much we've lost by ignoring such linguistic disciplines today, and how crucial this paper remains to our doctrinal understanding.

A note on two words that are repeatedly used in this paper: "ordinance" and "efficiency." An ordinance (or ordination) is simply something that has been ordained or ordered by a superior authority. So an ordinance of God is what he declares will be. Efficiency not only means taking the shortest path to an end; technically it identifies something that acts directly to produce an effect. It directly *causes* it. If you drop a fork, the reason it hits the ground is not because you let go of it, but because gravity attracted it. Gravity is the efficiency. Faith is the efficiency of justification, and being so is an ordinance of God. Another term, "gospel" or "evangelical" obedience, refers to works done *after* justification, and in response to it. These works are contrasted with meritorious works done *prior* to justification, in an attempt to earn it.

Some theological terms common to previous centuries but foreign to the modern ear have been left alone intentionally. About halfway through you will find the term "exinanition" describing Christ's

humanity. Although “humiliation” might be substituted, it does not have a comparable meaning, and it has its own connotations dealing with the cross. Christ is fully God and fully man. Historically, this has been called the hypostatic union. The word “kenosis” [NT:2758] is found in the NT Greek (Phil. 2:7) to describe putting off some aspects of his divine nature – “kenosis” means to empty. It hints linguistically that there is a loss of something, but that is not true. There was an emptying of his rightful claim to divine glory or reputation. Yet he was no less God, no less divine, by setting this aside. He did not have two separate and distinct natures co-existing or competing in one body. He was completely both without any loss or addition to his person. That is the basis for using the phrase “hypostatic union.” That being said, the idea of *exinanition* is a willful humbling, a condescension – the divine choosing to limit himself.

Many of the supporting quotes from the Founding Fathers have been left out as duplicative. Owen used them to show the Catholic Church that justification should be familiar to them. Keep in mind that this was written in an age when Protestant theology was under attack from within as well as without. Some arguments rebut those attacks, like those rebutting Socinus who was anti-Trinitarian. Those have been left in because we are beginning to hear the attacks again. Some structural changes were made in the text to promote parallelism for clarity. And because the modern audience is generally less familiar with Scripture, additional references have been included where Owen assumed the reader would recognize them. Unfortunately, the abandonment of creeds, catechisms, and confessions has handicapped the church’s common understanding of fundamental doctrine. Hopefully you will find this treatise powerfully refreshing and informative, just as it was for readers some 325 years ago.

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## TO THE READER

I will not delay you too long with the nature and importance of the doctrine of Justification. Although many of us have various apprehensions about it, all of us agree that knowing its truth is crucial to us. In fact, any sinner who knows he is offensive to God as a result of his sin must desire to know something about it. Justification is the only way he can be delivered from his evil state. Many people have some general convictions about sin and its consequences. Yet they deny the conclusions that necessarily flow from such convictions. They willfully delude themselves with vain hopes and imaginings. Never once do they seriously ask how to obtain peace with God and acceptance before him. They choose to enjoy the present pleasures of sin instead of valuing peace with God. It is a waste of time to recommend the doctrine of justification to people who neither want nor try to be justified.

But when people are made aware of their apostasy from God, the evil of their nature and life, the dreadful consequences associated with it, the wrath of God, and the eternal punishment that come from it, they become desperate to know how to be delivered from this condition. They do not need any arguments to satisfy them about the doctrine's importance. Their own concern is sufficient. My only intent here is to inquire diligently into what will assure them of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. I would rather provide steady direction to one inquiring soul, than refute the objections of twenty wrangling critics. The important thing at the beginning, therefore, lies in the interpretation of scripture testimonies, how they apply to the experience of believers, and the state of those who seek salvation by Jesus Christ.

I would like to point out a few things that may help free you from biases against the doctrine, and futile attempts to oppose it.

1. I aim to declare and vindicate the truth as a way to instruct and edify those who sincerely love the truth. I am striving to free their minds from the entanglements which some try to cast on all gospel mysteries. I hope to direct the consciences of those who inquire after abiding peace with God, and to settle the minds of believers.



2. I write only what I believe to be true, and what is useful to promote gospel obedience. I seek to influence sinners to apply to God, by Jesus Christ, to be delivered from the curse of their apostate condition, and to gain peace with him through universal gospel obedience. To treat it appropriately, one must weigh everything he has come to know and experience. He should be as serious in treating this as he is when he approaches God, or when he is surprised by danger. He should be as serious as he is in his deepest afflictions, in his preparations for death, or in his humble contemplation of the infinite distance between himself and God.

3. I know that many claim the doctrine undermines, even abolishes, the necessity of personal holiness, good works, and gospel obedience in general. That is how it was received when the apostle Paul first revealed it, as he frequently declares in Scripture. That was the charge made by the Papists at the first Reformation, and which they continue to make today. But Paul showed, as I will, that justification is the primary motive for the obedience that should accompany acceptance by God through Jesus Christ. However, I acknowledge that the objective grace of the gospel is liable to abuse. That occurs when the subjective grace of the gospel is missing from the hearts of men. The seasonings of the carnal mind alienate the way the doctrine might influence them toward the life of God. Yet, what happened during the Reformation still happens today. Men are made fruitful in real holiness when two things arise. First, when they are freed from their bondage to superstitious fears and rituals that conflict with true gospel obedience. And second, when they are directed into the ways of peace with God through Jesus Christ. Then they abound in all the blessed effects of the life of God, unlike their adversaries.

The whole of the gospel is the truth that leads to godliness. It declares and exhibits the grace of God which teaches us “to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world” (Tit. 2:12). We have fallen on times when there are fierce battles over concepts, opinions, and practices in religion. There is a horrible decay in true gospel purity and a decline in holiness among men in general. Keeping a due regard for Scripture as the only standard of truth, there is a secondary test of doctrines that ought to be made: by looking at the ways, lives, walk, and conversations of those who receive and profess

these doctrines. I acknowledge that the doctrine of justification is liable to be abused, even turned into licentiousness by men of corrupt minds. Because of prevailing vicious habits in such men, they tend to do the same thing with justification as they do with the whole doctrine of grace through Jesus Christ. Without some beam of spiritual light, the way toward universal obedience to God, toward righteousness and true holiness, simply cannot be discerned. This doctrine cannot give an experience of its power to men who are missing a principle of spiritual life. Yet, if it cannot preserve its place in the church by its sufficiency to promote godliness in all those who really believe and receive it, then I am content to dismiss it.

4. As I mentioned, the principal design of this discourse is to state the doctrine of justification from the Scripture, and to confirm it by the testimonies found there. I will not consider the doctrine opposed unless my exposition of Scripture testimonies, and their application to the present argument, can be disproved by just rules of interpretation, and unless another sense of them can be shown.

**J.O.**

From my study, May the 30th, 1677.

## THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

# GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

### NECESSARY PREVIOUS TO THE EXPLANATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

#### 1. The General Nature of Justification

**First.** We must examine the general nature of justification.

1. The first question is, “How can we properly relieve the conscience of a sinner who is tormented by the guilt of his sin?” Justification is the way for this person to obtain acceptance before God. It will give him the right and the title to a heavenly inheritance. The only thing he can plead for relief is what his anxious conscience tells him. The sinner is, in himself, [ajsezh>v](#), “asethes” [NT:765] or “ungodly” (Rom. 4:5), and as a result he is [uJpo>dikov tw~| Qew~|](#) “hupodikos tooi Theooi” or “guilty before God” (chap. 3:19). That is, he is liable to God. He is [tw~| dikaiw>mati tou~ Qeou](#) subject to the righteous, sentential judgment of God, “He who commits sin” is “worthy of death” (chap. 1:32). He finds himself [kata>ran](#) under “the curse” (Gal. 3:10). “The wrath of God remains on him” (John 3:18, 36). In this condition, he is [ajnapolo>ghtov](#) “anapologetos” [NT:379], without a plea in his defense. He is without excuse, and unable to rely on anything in and from himself (Rom. 1:20). His “mouth is stopped,” (Rom. 3:19). He is declared in the Scripture to be [sugkekleisme>nov aJmarti>an](#) “a prisoner of sin” and all its consequences (Gal. 3:22). In this condition, the sinner tends to commit the same two sins as Adam and Eve. First, they foolishly thought they could hide themselves from God; and then more foolishly, they accused him of being the cause of their sin. Those are the natural thoughts of men when convinced of their sin. The person who seeks justification will become increasingly alarmed about his sinful state until he cries out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

2. The second question concerning men in this condition is, “On what basis does God pardon all their sins, receive them into his favor, declare them righteous, acquit them from all guilt, remove the curse, turn away his wrath from them, and give them the right to

eternal life?” This is the sole concern of sinners in this condition. The only thing they want to know is how to answer God’s justice in the commands and curse of the law, and what they may depend on to obtain His acceptance for life and salvation.

The apostle fully answers this question. He declares the nature of justification and all its causes in the third and fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, as I will demonstrate later. I will also demonstrate that the apostle James, in the second chapter of his epistle, does *not* address this question. James speaks of justification in another sense, and for another purpose. We can safely and usefully apply this doctrine only to its declared objectives, and only in the same way that it is applied in the Scripture. For it is the direction, satisfaction, and peace of men’s consciences, and not people’s curiosity or subtle arguments, which it is our duty to address. And therefore I will avoid, as much as possible, all those philosophical terms and distinctions that have muddied this evangelical doctrine.

3. The basis on which a sinner is acquitted of sin and accepted by God necessarily flows from a third inquiry. “Is our release from sin’s debt warranted by anything in us, such as our faith and repentance, the renovation of our natures, inherent habits of grace, or actual works of righteousness that we have done or may do in the future? Or is it because we have been credited with the obedience, righteousness, satisfaction, and merit of the Son of God, our mediator and surety of the covenant?” The basis must be one or the other. It is either something that is our own, or it is something that is not our own. Whatever influences the grace of God has contributed to its presence; it is either shaped in and by us, or it is not. It is either inherently our own, or it is not. If it is not, then it must be imputed to us for the pardon of our sins to make us righteous in the sight of God. These two competing causes are mutually exclusive (Rom. 11:6). Our whole inquiry is to determine which of the two a convinced sinner must rely on and trust for his safety when he appears before God.

4. A distinct consideration is the way sinners gain this relief for themselves, assuming it is the righteousness of Christ. How can they have a share in something that is not inherently their own, receiving as good a benefit and advantage from it as if it were their own? This is clearly determined in Scripture, and it is acknowledged in the

experience of all true believers. We will not give much attention to the arguments of those who were never thoroughly convinced of their sin, and have not “fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them” (Heb. 6:18).

5. I will make constant reference to these things during the whole inquiry into the nature of evangelical justification. If I do not, we will quickly wander into complicated questions that do not concern the consciences of guilty sinners, and do not address the substance or truth of this doctrine. We will inquire only about the relief of those who are personally guilty before God and liable to His judgment. This relief is nothing in or of themselves, nor can it be. It is a provision outside them, made in infinite wisdom and grace by the mediation of Christ, by his obedience, and by his death. It is secured in the Scripture against all contradiction; and it is the fundamental principle of the gospel (Matt. 11:28).

6. I must confess that many things are prerequisite to declaring the truth and the order of the dispensation of God’s grace. They include such things as the nature of justifying faith, the place and use of it in justification, the causes of the new covenant, the true concept of mediation, and the surety of Christ. We will inquire into all of them. But we will not go beyond what speaks directly to the guidance of the minds and satisfaction of the souls of men who seek a stable and abiding foundation of acceptance with God. If we do, we will lose the benefit and comfort of this most important evangelical truth in needless and unprofitable arguments.

7. The doctrine of justification directs our Christian practice. In no other evangelical truth is the whole of our obedience more concerned. That is because the foundation, reasons, and motives of all our duty towards God are contained in this doctrine. It ought to be taught just to improve our obedience. What we ought to learn by it is how we may get and maintain peace with God, living for him in a way that brings acceptance in what we do. It ought to be taught to satisfy the minds and consciences of men about these things. To take it out of the understanding of ordinary Christians by involving speculative theories and philosophical distinctions does a disservice to the faith of the church. In fact, mixing evangelical revelations with philosophical concepts has always been the poison of religion. Pretence of accuracy and artificial skill in teaching is what lends

credence to such a perverted way of handling sacred things. The spiritual power of divine truths is restrained when inferior philosophical meanings are imposed on them. Endless divisions and contentions arise and perpetuate themselves.

8. As a result, papists such as Bellarmine and Vasquez have charged that there are some twenty apparently differing opinions among Protestants about justification, when in fact they are all one and the same. We will speak more about that elsewhere. When enmeshed in philosophical contention, we often forget the business we are about, especially in this matter of justification. The business we are about is how a guilty sinner may come to obtain favor and acceptance with God.

9. Therefore, we only trouble the faith of Christians, and the peace of the true church of God, when we dispute about expressions, terms, and theories. The substance of the doctrine may be declared and believed without the knowledge, understanding, or use of any of them. Attending diligently to the revelation made in the Scripture, and examining our own experience through it, is all that is required of us to rightly understand the truth of it. Every true believer who is taught of God knows how to put his whole trust in Christ alone for mercy, righteousness, and glory. He does not concern himself at all about the thorns and briars by which some pretend to help him, calling them definitions, distinctions, accurate thinking, or any number of exotic terms.

10. The Holy Ghost makes use of many metaphorical expressions to express the most eminent acts in our justification, especially about believing or acting on that faith by which we are justified. And yet, to use those same metaphors for the purpose of examining the basis of justification is considered rude, undisciplined, and even ridiculous; but on what grounds is it abusing them? Can we deny that there is more spiritual sense and experience conveyed by them than in the most accurate philosophical expressions? The propriety of such expressions should be confined to natural science. Spiritual truths are to be taught, “not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1Cor. 2:13). God is wiser than man is. The Holy Ghost knows better than the wisest of us the most expedient ways to illuminate our minds with knowledge of the evangelical truths that

we have a duty to attain. Knowledge or skill in things not required by duty should not be preferred.

## **2. A Consideration of God**

**Second.** A due consideration of God, the Judge of all, is necessary to correctly state and understand the doctrine of justification. The Scripture states emphatically that it is “God who justifies,” Rom. 8:33. He takes it on himself, as his prerogative, to do whatever belongs to justification. “I am the one who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins,” Isa. 43:25. It is hard, in my understanding, to suggest any other reason for the pardon of our sins than what God says the reason is. He says he does it for his own sake; that is, “for the Lord’s sake,” Dan. 9:17, in whom “all the seed of Israel are justified,” Isa. 45:25. It is in his sight and before his tribunal that men are justified or condemned. “Do not bring your servant into judgment; for in your sight no living man is justified,” Psa. 143:2. The whole work of justification is represented as a juridical proceeding before God’s tribunal. “Therefore,” says the apostle, “no one will be justified in his sight by the deeds of the law,” Rom. 3:20. It does not matter whether a man can be justified in the sight of men and angels by his obedience to the law. None can be justified that way in God’s sight.

Anyone coming to a trial with a personal stake in its outcome, needs to consider the judge he will appear before, the one who determines his cause. If we dispute justification without regard to the one who can acquit us, we will not correctly determine what our plea should be. A sense of the greatness, majesty, holiness, and sovereign authority of God, should always be present with us when we inquire how we may be justified before him. It is hard to understand how some men think when they fiercely battle to offer their own works for their justification. But the Scripture does show us how men think of God and of themselves when they gain an effectual conception of God and his greatness. There is an ensuing sense of the guilt of sin. It is the same sense that filled our first parents with fear and shame, and led them to that foolish attempt to hide themselves from God. The wisdom of their posterity is no better when they fail to discover the promise. Only the promise which offers relief can make sinners wise.

At present, most people are confident that they will come off well enough in the trial they will undergo. They are completely indifferent about what is taught and learned about justification. For the most part, they prefer any statement of it that agrees with their own reasoning – even if that reasoning is influenced by self-conceit and twisted desire. Their basic assumption is that what they cannot do themselves, what they need to be saved, will be made up by Christ in one way or another. The use or the abuse of this kind of reasoning is the greatest fountain of sin in the world, next to our depraved nature. Whatever may be pretended to the contrary, people who are not convinced of their own sin, nor humbled by it, in all their logical thinking about spiritual things, will end up applying corrupted principles. See Matt. 18:3, 4. But when God manifests his glory to sinners, all their false assurances and clever thinking result in dreadful horror and distress. An account of their state of mind is given to us in Isa. 33:14, “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burning?”

This is not the thinking of some isolated group of sinners. These are the thoughts of all guilty people at some time or other. Those who try to suppress these thoughts through sensuality, false security, or superstition, will inevitably encounter them when their terror increases and they find no remedy. Our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). Men one day will find out how useless it is to set their briars and thorns against him in battle array. We can see what outlandish arguments convinced sinners depend on once they encounter the real majesty and holiness of God. “Shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Mic. 6:6, 7).

This is the proper effect of the conviction of sin, strengthened and sharpened by considering the terror of the Lord who will judge us for it. In the Papacy, this desperation combined with an ignorance of the righteousness of God, has produced innumerable superstitious inventions to appease the consciences of those disturbed by such convictions. They quickly see that nothing in their performance of



the obedience that God requires of them will justify them before this high and holy God. Therefore they seek shelter in things that God has not commanded, attempting to cheat their consciences and find relief in diversions.

Not only the basest sinners respond in fear and submission when they are convicted of their sin and become convinced of the greatness of God. But the best of men, when they have intense visions of the greatness, holiness, and glory of God, have been thrown into the deepest self-abasement, and most serious renunciation of all trust or confidence in themselves. So it was with the prophet Isaiah, when he had his vision of the glory of the Holy One. He cried out, "Woe is me! I am undone because I am a man of unclean lips," chap. 6:5. Nor was he relieved until there was evidence of the free pardon of sin in verse 7.

Job's friends charged him with being a hypocrite, and a sinner guiltier than other men. Holy Job defends himself against their whole charge with assured confidence and perseverance, justifying his sincerity, his faith, and his trust in God. And he does this completely satisfied with his own integrity, not only insisting on his vindication, but frequently appealing to God himself to affirm the truth of his plea. As the apostle James so long after counsels all believers, Job shows his faith by his works, and pleads his justification by them. His plea for justification by works was the most noble ever seen in the world.

After a while Job is called into the immediate presence of God to plead his cause. The issue as stated between him and his friends, as to whether he was a hypocrite, or whether his faith and trust in God was sincere, no longer mattered. As the issue was stated between God and him, it seems he made some undue assumptions on his own behalf. The question was now reduced to this: on what grounds could he be justified in the sight of God? To prepare his mind for a right judgment in this case, God manifests his glory to him, and instructs him in the greatness of his majesty and power. And this he does with multiple examples, because under our temptations we are very slow to acquire a right conception of God. Here the holy man quickly acknowledged that the state of the case was completely altered. All his former pleas of faith, hope, and trust in God, of sincerity in obedience, which he insisted on before with so much earnestness, are

now laid aside. He sees well enough that he cannot make such a plea at this tribunal in any way that would allow God to justify him. In the deepest self-abasement and abhorrence, he turns to sovereign grace and mercy. For “then Job answered the LORD and said, ‘Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer you? I will put my hand over my mouth. I have spoken once, but I will not answer twice; I will proceed no further’,” Job 40:3-5. And again, “You said, ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will demand of you, and you will answer me.’ I have heard of you with my ears, but now my eyes see you. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes,” chap. 42:4-6.

If any man puts himself in Job’s place in the immediate presence of God, and attempts to answer the charge that God has against him, what will his best plea for justification be? I do not believe any man living has more encouraging grounds than Job had to plead his own faith and obedience in his defense. I suppose he did not have as much skill to manage a plea for that purpose as the Jesuits have. Yet, whatever subtle arguments and solutions we think we may have, I fear it will not be safe for us to venture further than Job did.

There was of old a direction for the visitation of the sick, composed they say by Anselm, and published by Casparus Ulenbergius. It expresses a better sense of these things than some seem to be convinced of: “Do you believe that you cannot be saved but by the death of Christ?” The sick man answers, “Yes.” Then say to the sick man, “Go then, and while your soul lives in you, put all your confidence in this death alone. Place your trust in no other thing. Commit yourself completely to this death. Cover yourself completely with this alone. Throw yourself completely on this death. Wrap yourself completely in this death. And if God would judge you, say, “Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and your judgment. I will not contend or enter into judgment with you any other way.” And if he says to you that you are a sinner, say, “I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sins.” If he says to you that you deserve damnation, say, “Lord, I put the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between you and all my sins, and I offer his merits for my own, which I should have but do not.” If he says that he is angry with you, say, “Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and your anger.”

Those who gave these directions seem to have understood what it is to appear before the tribunal of God, and how unsafe it will be for us to insist on anything in ourselves there. Here are the words of the same Anselm in his Meditations: “My conscience has deserved damnation, and my repentance is not sufficient for satisfaction; but most certain it is that your mercy abounds above all offense.”

Jerome, long before Anselm, spoke to the same purpose: “When the day of judgment or of death shall come, all hands will be dissolved” (that is, faint or fall down); “to which it is said in another place, ‘Be strengthened, you hands that hang down.’ But all hands shall be melted down” (that is, all men’s strength and confidence will fail them), “because no works shall be found which can answer the righteousness of God; for no flesh shall be justified in his sight. For that reason the prophet says in the psalm, ‘If you, LORD, should mark iniquity, who would stand?’” (Psa. 130:3).

And Ambrose, to the same purpose wrote, “Let no man arrogate anything to himself. Let no man glory in his own merits or good deeds. Let no man boast of his power. Let us all hope to find mercy by our Lord Jesus, for we shall all stand before his judgment seat. Of him I will beg pardon. Of him I will desire indulgence. What other hope is there for sinners?”

Therefore, men must have a continual regard for the greatness, holiness, and majesty of God. However, they may lose sight of it in the heat of dispute. They may forget a reverential consideration of what will become of them, and what they should plea when they stand before God’s tribunal. If they lose their way, they may come to a public understanding of justification that they would not dare accept in their personal reflections. For “how shall man be just with God?” The schoolmen themselves, in their meditations and devotional writings, spoke something quite different about justification before God than they did in their philosophical wrangling about it. I would rather learn what some men really think about their own justification from their prayers than I would from their writings. I never heard a good man in his prayers use any expressions about justification, pardon of sin, and righteousness before God, based on anything in himself.

Instead, the prayer of Daniel has been the basis of their supplications: “O Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but to us confusion of faces. We do not present our supplications before you for our righteousness, but for your great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; for your own sake, O my God,” Dan. 9:7, 18, 19. Or that of the psalmist, “Enter not into judgment with your servant, O Lord, for in your sight shall no man living be justified,” Psa. 143:2. Or, “If you, LORD, should mark iniquities, who can stand? But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared,” Psa. 130:3, 4.

In our supplications to God, we ought to represent what we believe in. I question whether some men actually plead before him all the arguments and distinctions they make use of to prove the value of our works and obedience in justification. And I doubt that many will make use of the prayer which Pelagius taught the widow: “You know, O Lord, how holy, how innocent, how pure from all deceit and rapine, are the hands which I stretch forth to you; how just, how unspotted with evil, how free from lying, are those lips from which I pour forth prayers to you, that you would have mercy on me.” And yet, although he taught her to plead her own purity, innocence, and righteousness before God, these things are not the *basis* on which she might be absolutely justified. They are only the *condition* of her obtaining mercy. I have not found any public liturgies that teach men to plead for acceptance with God based on anything other than mercy and grace through the righteousness and blood of Christ alone. The only exception is the mass-book where there is frequent reference to the merits and intercession of saints.

Therefore I think it is best for those who want to properly teach or learn the doctrine of justification, to place their consciences in the presence of God, see themselves before his tribunal, and then consider his greatness, power, majesty, righteousness, and holiness. The terror of his glory and his sovereign authority, the teaching of Scripture, and a sense of their own condition will direct them to their relief and refuge. They will know what plea to make for themselves. Private thoughts of God and ourselves, secluded meditations, our spirit in humble supplications, deathbed preparations for an immediate appearance before God, faith and love exercised on Christ, all speak something different in their hearts than many contend for in their public oratory.

### **3. The Extent of our Apostasy from God**

**Third.** We need a clear understanding of the extent of our apostasy from God. We need to acknowledge the depravity of our nature, the power and guilt of sin, and the holiness and severity of the law. Therefore, Paul devotes the first three chapters of Romans to these things, to thoroughly convince sinners of the truth of them. The rules, methods, and purposes that he has given us there are those which I choose to follow here. In general, he says “that the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith;” and that “the just shall live by faith,” chap. 1:17. But he does not declare the causes, nature, and way of our justification until he has proven that all men are prisoners of sin. He begins with how deplorable their condition is. By ignoring these things, by denying or minimizing them, we lay a foundation for misbelief about the grace of God.

Pelagianism, at its core, is determined to minimize our condition. Not apprehending the dread of our original apostasy from God, and the consequence of the total depravity of our nature, they disown any need for either Christ to satisfy our debt, or divine grace to restore us. So they renounce the main purpose of the mission both of the Son of God and of the Holy Spirit by denying the deity of the one and the personality of the other. In their view, the fall we had was not very great, and the disease we contracted is easily curable. Because there is little or no evil in our nature, it is no big deal to be freed or justified from it by our own endeavors. They suppose the efficacious grace of God is not needed at all for our sanctification and obedience.

These and similar conceits keep sinners from a proper understanding of the state and guilt of their sin. Their consciences are unaffected by the terror of the Lord and the curse of the law that flow from it. Justification becomes a concept to be dealt with pleasantly or cleverly as men see fit. And for that reason the differences we see at present arise about the doctrine. These are substantial differences, not just different ways by informed men express their thoughts and understandings about it.

Some completely deny imputed sin. They do not believe that Adam’s apostasy and transgression, the source of our nature, became the sin of the world. Thereby they evade both the grounds and the arguments that the apostle makes in Romans 5 to prove the necessity

of our justification, and how we are made righteous by the obedience of another. Socinus de Servitor. par. 4 cap. 6, confesses that the passage gives great support to the doctrine of justification by imputing the righteousness of Christ. Therefore using various devices he opposes the imputation of the sin of Adam to his natural seed. He perceived well enough that once he admitted it, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to his spiritual seed would unavoidably follow.

Some deny or minimize the depravity and corruption of our nature, which ensued after our apostasy from God and the loss of his image. They acknowledge that some disease of the soul arises from our deranged desires. That's what makes us so apt to conform to the vicious habits and customs that the world practices. But because the guilt of that is not much, the danger of it is not so great either. And as for any spiritual filth or stain on our nature that results from such practices, it is washed away by baptism. They reject the idea that we suffered any deformity of soul in the loss of the image of God, or that the beauty and harmony of all our faculties has been impaired. They think it is a fable. They dismiss the enmity with God that ensued, and the darkness that clouds, even blinds our understanding. They refuse to accept that spiritual death overcame our soul and we are totally alienated from the life of God. They cannot see the inability to do good, the tendency to do evil, the deceitfulness of sin, and the power that our corrupted lusts have over us, which the Scriptures and our own experience attribute to our fallen nature. All of this is fantasy to them. No wonder such people look at imputed righteousness as the shadow of a dream. What else would you think if you believe those things that evidence its necessity are just fond imaginings? There is little hope to get such men to value the imputed righteousness of Christ, when they are so unacquainted with their own inherent unrighteousness. Until men know themselves better, they will care very little to know Christ.

We are obliged to defend the doctrine of justification against arguments like these, silencing its critics. And we will contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. But we cannot expect to satisfy these critics while they suffer from these misperceptions. As our Savior said when he declared the necessity of regeneration, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, then how will you

believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” (John 3:12) If men will not believe something without a personal experience of it, then how can they believe heavenly mysteries that require a personal experience, when they refuse to acknowledge they have it?

For that reason, some are so unconcerned with imputed righteousness that they boast of a perfection in themselves. The Pelagians of old gloried in a sinless perfection in the sight of God, even when they were convicted of sinful miscarriages in the sight of men, as Jerome accused, lib. 2 Dialog.; so too Austin, lib. 2 contra Julian., cap. 8. While men have no sense in their own hearts and consciences of their sinfulness and depravity, they will confidently reject and condemn what is offered about justification through the imputed obedience and righteousness of Christ. They are oblivious to the secret continual activity of sin with its deceit and violence, obstructing all that is good, and promoting all that is evil. It defiles all that is done by them through the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, even though there may be no outward perpetration of sin or actual omission of duty. As a result, they do not engage in a constant vigil against sin. They do not consider sin the greatest burden and sorrow in this life. They do not cry out for deliverance from it. And they despise those who do confess to God their guilt of these things.

That’s because no man wants to solicit the righteousness of another when he believes he has a righteousness of his own to serve his needs. Therefore, it is their ignorance of their sinful state alone that deludes men into believing they can be justified before God by their own personal righteousness. If they were acquainted with it, they would quickly see that the best of their duties are imperfect. The frequency of sinful lust in their minds, the deranged desires, the unworthiness of all that they are and do, and the greatness and holiness of God, would soon abate their confidence in placing any trust in their own righteousness for their justification.

These and similar presumptuous ideas keep our consciences from gaining an appropriate sense of our sin, and from seriously considering how to obtain acceptance before God. Nothing can prevail with those who think so little of the state of their sin that they refuse to fly for refuge to the only hope for deliverance and salvation that is set before them: not the holiness or terror of the Lord, not the severity and demands of the law, and not the promise of the gospel.

They never question what to tender for righteousness in answer to the righteousness of God. They never question the uncertainty of their own minds when tested, their lack of peace, nor the constant secret torment of their conscience, assuming it has not been seared or hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Therefore, if we would properly teach or learn the doctrine of justification, we need a clear understanding of the greatness of our apostasy from God, an appropriate sense of the guilt of sin, and a deep experience of its power, all with respect to the holiness and law of God. We are not addressing those who, through the fever of pride, have lost the understanding of their own miserable condition. The healthy do not need the physician, but the sick (Mt. 9:12). Those who are pricked in their heart because of their sin and cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" (Acts 2:37) will understand what we have to say. Against the others we must defend the truth as God shall enable. It may be proved that the more men minimize sin in their minds, the less regard they have for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And it is no less true that, as unbelief creates a disfavor in men for the person and righteousness of Christ, they inevitably assuage their own consciences by minimizing their sin. So imperceptibly are men's minds diverted from Christ, and seduced to place their confidence in themselves. In their confusion they think of Christ as some kind of relief, but how or why he may be so is beyond them. They live in that pretended height of human wisdom that says to trust in themselves. And they are instructed to do so by the best of the philosophers: "The only good, as far as the basis of happiness is concerned, is to be true to yourself" (Seneca epistle 31).

#### **4. The Opposition Between Grace and Works**

**Fourth.** We need to consider the opposition between grace and works in the Scripture. The opposition is not about the essence, nature, or consistency of them as they relate to the method and order of our salvation. It is only with respect to our justification that we find a conflict. I will not present any particular testimonies of Scripture here as to the special use of these words, or what the mind of the Holy Ghost declares in them. That comes later. I only want to take a look at how the Scripture guides our understanding, and whether our own experience complies with it.



The principal support for this doctrine, as admitted by all, is in the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and Galatians. We could add the Hebrews, but it is best declared in Romans. He lays down the general thesis that in the gospel the “righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith,” Rom. 1:17. Then, as always, anyone who had any knowledge of God and themselves was inquiring after righteousness. They correctly looked at a favorable relationship between themselves and God as the only means of acquiring it. Generally, they thought that this righteousness must be their own, inherent in them and performed by them, as we see in Rom. 10:3. “Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and trying to stand on their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”

This is the natural language of conscience and of the law, and it is suited to every philosophical concept concerning the nature of righteousness. Wherever Scripture speaks about another kind of righteousness in the Law and the Prophets, as indicated by a “righteousness of God without the law,” in Rom. 3:21, there is a veil on its meaning. Righteousness is what all men must seek who desire acceptance with God. If we seek it in the law, in our natural conscience, or by philosophical reason, the only kind of righteousness we will find is in our own inherent habits and acts. But in opposition to this righteousness of our own, the apostle declares that the gospel reveals another righteousness. It is the righteousness of another, the righteousness of God, and that comes from faith to faith. Not only is the righteousness that this passage reveals foreign to those other principles, but the way it is communicated to us is foreign. “From faith to faith” - *the faith of God in the revelation, and our faith in the acceptance of it* - is a glorious revelation. Righteousness, of all things, we would expect to be from works to works - from the work of grace in us to the works of obedience done by us - as the Papists affirm. “No,” says the apostle, “it is ‘from faith to faith.’”

This is the general thesis the apostle proposes. He seems to exclude from justification everything but the righteousness of God and the faith of believers. He says all persons who seek a righteousness of their own apart from God are failures, and all means by which they hoped to attain it are insufficient.

As to specific groups of people,

1. He concludes that, based on their religious practices, beliefs, and behavior, the Gentiles neither were nor could be justified before God. They were all deservedly under the sentence of death. And whatever men may argue concerning the justification and salvation of those without the revelation of the righteousness of God by the gospel, "from faith to faith," his whole discourse expressly contradicts it in chapter 1 from verse 19 to the end.

2. He also considers the Jews excluded from any possibility of attaining justification before God. In chapter 2 he argues that, although they enjoyed the written law and the privileges that accompanied it, especially the circumcision which was the outward seal of God's covenant, their compliance did not constitute privileged righteousness before God. Against Greek and Jew he uses one argument: that both of them sinned openly against what they took to be the rule of their righteousness. Namely, the Gentiles sinned against the light of nature, and the Jews against the law. For that reason it inevitably follows that none of them could attain to the righteousness of their own rule.

3. In chapter 3 he proves the same thing against all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, by considering the complete depravity that exists in all of them, and the horrible effects that necessarily ensue from that depravity. This being true, they were all prisoners of sin and came short of righteousness. From people, he proceeds to things, or the means of righteousness.

4. Because the law was given directly by God as the whole and only rule of our obedience to him, and the works of the law are therefore all that is required of us, these may be pleaded with some pretence as the means by which we may be justified. Therefore, Paul considers the nature, use, and purpose of the law, showing that it is completely insufficient as a means of our justification before God, chap. 3:19, 20.

5. Some might object that the law and its works might be insufficient for unbelievers in their natural state, because they lack the aids of grace that are administered in the promise. But with respect to believers who are regenerate, whose faith and works are accepted by God, it may be otherwise. To counter this objection, he gives an example of two of the most eminent believers in the Old Testament:

Abraham and David. In chapter 4 he declares that all works whatever were excluded from their justification.

On these principles, and by this order of argument, he peremptorily concludes that every one of the sons of men is guilty before God. There is nothing in themselves, nothing that can be done by them, and nothing that can be done in them. They are liable to the point of death; they are imprisoned under sin; they have their mouths stopped and are deprived of all pleas in their own defense. They have no righteousness with which to appear before God, and all the ways and means by which they expected to obtain it were insufficient.

Now he proceeds with his inquiry as to how we may be delivered from this condition, and come to be justified in the sight of God. In resolving that inquiry he makes no mention of anything in us except faith, by which we receive the atonement. What justifies us, he says, is “the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ Jesus.” We are justified “freely by grace through the redemption that is in him,” chap. 3:22-24. Not content with this answer that Christ is our propitiation, he immediately proceeds to exclude everything in and of ourselves that might pretend to give us an interest in our justification. Such things are inconsistent with the righteousness of God as revealed in the gospel, and witnessed to by the law and the prophets. Some propose that before the law was given, men were justified by obedience to the light of nature and revelations made to them in their private pondering. After the law, they were justified by obedience to God according to the directions of the law! The heathen might obtain the same benefit by complying with the dictates of reason. How contrary their scheme of divinity is to the design laid out by the apostle and his management of it.

The apostle’s declaration of the mind of the Holy Ghost is echoed by the constant tenor of the Scripture speaking to the same purpose. The grace of God, the promise of mercy, the free pardon of sin, the blood of Christ, his obedience, and the righteousness of God in him, rested in and received by faith, are asserted everywhere as the causes and means of our justification. This is in opposition to anything in us, expressed in a way that demands the best of our obedience, and the utmost of our personal righteousness. Wherever mention is made of the duties, obedience, and personal righteousness of the best of

men, with respect to their justification, they renounce them. They cling to sovereign grace and mercy alone.

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**Some places in Scripture may be reviewed for this purpose:**

The foundation for all this is laid in the first promise, where the suffering of the woman's seed destroys the work of the devil. It is proposed as the only relief for sinners, and the only means of the recovery of the favor of God. "It shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel," Gen. 3:15. "Abraham believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness," Gen. 15:6. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat; and the goat shall bear on him all their iniquities to a land not inhabited," Lev. 16:21, 22. "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of your righteousness, yours only," Psa. 71:16. "If you, LORD, should keep track of iniquities, who would stand? But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared," Psa. 130:3, 4.

"Enter not into judgment with your servant: for in your sight shall no man living be justified," Psa. 143:2. "Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: how much less in those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust?" Job 4:18, 19. "Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me," Isa. 27:4, 5. "Surely, shall one say, In the LORD have I righteousness and strength: in the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," chap. 45:24, 25. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities," chap. 53:6, 11.

"This is his name by which he shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness," Jer. 23:6. "But you are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags," Isa. 64:6. "He shall finish the transgression, and make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness," Dan. 9:24. "As

many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name,” John 1:12. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life,” chap. 3:14, 15. “Be it known to you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses,” Acts 13:38, 39. “That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me,” chap. 26:18.

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” Rom. 3:24-28. “For if Abraham were justified by works, he has something in which to glory; but not before God. For what says the Scriptures: Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, ‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin,’” chap. 4:2-8.

“But not as the offense, so also is the free gift. For if through the offense of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses to justification. For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offense 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 shall many be made righteous," Rom. 5:15-19. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," chap. 8:1-4. "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," chap. 10:4. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work," chap. 11:6.

"But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made wisdom to us, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. 1:30. "For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. 5:21. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," Gal. 2:16. "But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that does them shall live in them. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," chap. 3:11-13. "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them," Eph. 2:8-10. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but what is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. 3:8, 9.

"Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was

given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” 2 Tim. 1:9. “That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life,” Tit. 3:7. “Once in the end of the world has he appeared, to put away sin,” Heb. 9:26, 28. “Having by himself purged our sins,” chap. 1:3. “For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified,” chap. 10:14. “The blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son cleanses us from all sin,” 1 John 1:7. Therefore, “To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen,” Rev. 1:5, 6.

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These are some of the places that come to mind that present to us the grounds, causes, and reasons for our acceptance with God. The special import of many of them, and the evidence of truth that is in them, will be considered later. Here we take only a general view of them. Our entire acceptance with God seems to be assigned to grace, mercy, and the obedience and blood of Christ. This is in opposition to our own worth and righteousness, or to our own works and obedience. I can only suppose that a convinced sinner, if not prejudiced, will judge correctly which of these he should depend on to be justified.

Some might respond that these things are not to be understood as absolutes without limitations. They might say a number of distinctions are necessary to understand the mind of the Holy Ghost, and the meaning of Scripture when imputing grace to us or when excluding our works and personal righteousness from justification. Let me give you a sampling of these alleged distinctions the experts say we need:

1. The law is either the moral or the ceremonial law. The latter is excluded from any place in our justification, but not the former.
2. Works required by the law are either done before faith, without the aid of grace; or after believing, by the help of the Holy Ghost. The former is excluded from our justification, but not the latter.
3. Works of obedience done after grace is received, may be considered as merely sincere, or as absolutely perfect,

depending on what was originally required in the covenant of works. Those of the latter sort are excluded from any place in our justification, but not those of the former.

4. There is a twofold justification before God in this life; we must diligently consider whether anything is spoken of the two in the Scripture.
5. Justification may be considered either as to its beginning or as to its continuation, and so it has various causes in these separate respects.
6. Works may be considered either as meritorious from their own *intrinsic* worth, or meritorious only with respect to the *covenant* and promise of God. Those of the first sort are excluded at least from the first justification; the latter may have a place in both the first and the second justification.
7. There are many moral causes: preparatory, dispositive, meritorious, conditionally efficient, or only “*sine quibus non*” (one of many essentials). We must diligently inquire what reasons would cause our works to be excluded from our justification, and what reasons would make them essential to it.

Any one of these distinctions would need many more to explain it, and that's what the experts love to distract us with. When warily managed by the art of debate, such a specious slant may be put on these things that very few are able to discern the basis, substance, or truth of them. But someone who is really convinced of sin, and what it means to enter into judgment with the holy God, inquires for himself how he may come to be accepted by him. I have to ask myself: “How should I come before the Lord and bow myself before the high God? How can I escape the wrath to come? What can I plead in judgment before God to be absolved, acquitted, and justified? Where can I find a righteousness that will endure a trial in his presence?” If I harnessed myself with a thousand distinctions like these, I fear they would turn out to be thorns and briars, which God would pass through and consume along with me.

Therefore, the inquiry is whether the sinner's wisest and safest course would be to put his whole trust and confidence in sovereign grace and the mediation of Christ, or to place some confidence in his



own graces, duties, works, and obedience? What if we were to put this great difference to an umpire, someone impartial, perhaps one of our best opponents. He gives us his judgement in these words: "By reason of the uncertainty of our own righteousness, and the danger of vain glory, it is the safest course to put our whole trust in the mercy, kindness, and grace of God alone." To support his determination of this important question, he uses two testimonies from Scripture. The first is Dan. 9:18, "We do not present our supplications before you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy;" and the other is that of our Savior, Luke 17:10, "When you have done all those things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'"

And after our umpire has corroborated his reasoning with a number of other testimonies of the fathers, he closes with this dilemma: "Either a man has true merits, or he does not. If he does not, he is seriously deceived when he trusts in anything but God's mercy. He seduces himself, trusting in false merits. If he has any merits at all, he does not lose anything by disregarding them and trusting in God alone. So whether a man has any good works or not, when it comes to his justification before God, it is best and safest for him to disregard his works." And if this is so, he could have spared himself the pains of writing his sophistical books about justification. Their only purpose was to seduce the minds of men into accepting the very position the writer himself refuses to assume before God.

Thuanus gives us an account of the great emperor Charles V as he reasoned with himself on his deathbed. "He felt that in himself he was altogether unworthy to obtain the kingdom of heaven by his own works or merits. But his Lord, who obtained heaven on a double right or title, first by inheritance from the Father, and second by the merit of his own sacrifice, was content with the one himself, and freely granted to Charles the other. This free grant was what he laid claim to. And being confident of that, he felt he would not be disappointed. For the oil of mercy is poured only into the vessel of faith or trust; and that is the trust of a man who despairs in himself and rests in his Lord. Otherwise, trusting in his own works or merits is not faith, but treachery. Sins are blotted out by the mercy of God. And therefore we ought to believe that our sins can be pardoned by

him alone, because we have sinned against him alone, in whom there is no sin, and by whom alone sins are forgiven.”

This is the faith of men when they die, and those who are tormented by temptations while they live. Some are hardened in sin, and endeavor to leave this world without thoughts of another world to come. Some are ignorant, neither knowing nor considering what it is to appear in the presence of God, and to be judged by him. Some are seduced to place their confidence in merits, pardons, indulgences, and future suffrages for the dead. But there are those acquainted with God and grounded spiritually, who consider their past and approaching eternity. They know they must enter by the judgment-seat of God, however they may have thought, talked, and argued about their own works and obedience. Those who were looking at Christ and his righteousness only to make up for some small defects in themselves, will at last renounce what they have been doing. They will turn to Christ alone for righteousness or salvation. This is the substance of what is pleaded for: that men renounce all confidence in themselves, and anything that might support it; that they cling to the grace of God by Christ alone for righteousness and salvation. This is what God intends in the gospel, “That no flesh should glory in his presence. But from Him you are in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: As it is written, ‘He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.’” 1 Cor. 1:29-31.

## **5. The Exchange of Sin and Righteousness**

**Fifth.** Scripture represents to us that sin and righteousness are commuted between Christ and believers. That is, their sins are imputed to him, and his righteousness to them. The exercise of faith plays no small part in the improvement and application of this process to our own souls. This is what was taught to the church of God in the offering of the scapegoat: “And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities,” Lev. 16:21, 22. If the goat sent away with this burden lived, then it was a type of the life of Christ in his resurrection. If it perished in the wilderness by being thrown off a

rocky precipice, then what was done represented what was done to the person of Jesus Christ in his death. Aaron did not merely confess the sins of the people *over* the goat. He put their sins on the goat's head by fixing his hands on it, indicating that the goat bore the sins. Aaron did not actually transfer sin from one subject into another, but he did transfer the *guilt* of it from one to another. For that reason the Jews say, "that all Israel was made as innocent on the Day of Atonement as they were on the day of creation," verse 30.

However, the people came short of perfection through this sacrifice, as the apostle explains in Hebrews 10. It uses the language of every expiatory sacrifice, "Let the guilt be on him." For that reason the sacrifice itself was called "chattat" [OT:2403] and "asham" [OT:817], or "sin" and "guilt," Lev. 4:29; 7:2; 10:17. When there was an uncertain murder, and no one could be found to punish, a heifer was slain by the elders of the city next to the place where the murder was committed. This removed the guilt, and avoided it being placed on the land or imputed to the whole people, Deut. 21:1-9. But this was only a moral representation of the punishment that was due because of the guilt. Those who slew the heifer did not put their hands on him to transfer their own guilt to him. Instead, they washed their hands over him, to declare their personal innocence. By these means, as in all other expiatory sacrifices, God instructed the church about transferring the guilt of sin to Him who would bear all their iniquities, thereby discharging their sin and justifying them.

So "God laid on him the iniquities of us all," that "by his stripes we might be healed," Isa. 53:5, 6. Our iniquity was laid on Christ, and he bore it, verse 11; and through his bearing it, we are freed from it. His stripes are our healing. Our sin was his, imputed to him. His merit is ours, imputed to us. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might become the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. 5:21. This is that commutation I mentioned: he was made sin for us; we are made the righteousness of God in him. God does not impute sin to us, but instead imputes righteousness to us (v. 19). He does so for this reason alone: that "he was made sin for us." The reason for making anything an expiatory sacrifice was to impute sin to it by divine institution. The same thing is expressed by the apostle in Rom. 8:3, 4. "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. And because of sin, he condemned sin in that flesh so that the

righteousness of the law could be satisfied in us.” The sin was made his; he answered for it; and the righteousness that God requires by the law is made ours. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, not by our doing it, but by his doing it. This alone is the blessed change in which a convinced sinner can find rest and peace. So he “has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, so that the blessing of Abraham might come to us,” Gal. 3:13, 14. The curse of the law contained the entire penalty for sin. This curse belonged to us, but it was transferred to him. He was made a curse. Hanging him on a tree was the sign and token of it. For that reason he is said to “bear our sins in his own body on the tree,” 1 Pet. 2:24. “One who is hanged is the curse of God,” Deut. 21:23. By contrast, the blessing of faithful Abraham contains all righteousness and acceptance with God. For Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. So you do not think the ideas are mine alone, let me quote some others.

In the excellent words of Justin Martyr: “He gave his Son a ransom for us, the holy for transgressors; the innocent for the guilty; the just for the unjust; the incorruptible for the corrupt; the immortal for mortals. What else could hide or cover our sins but his righteousness? For whose sake could we wicked and ungodly people be justified, or considered righteous, but for the sake of the Son of God alone? O sweet change! O unsearchable work! O blessed benefit! It exceeds all our expectations that the sin of many should be hidden in one just one, and the righteousness of one should justify many...”<sup>1</sup>

Gregory Nyssen speaks to the same issue: “He has transferred to himself the filth of my sins, and communicated to me his purity, and made me share his beauty.”<sup>2</sup>

Augustine also wrote: “He was sin, that we might be righteousness; not our own, but the righteousness of God; not in ourselves, but in him; in the same way that he was sin, not his own, but ours, not in himself, but in us. He comments on Psa. 22:1: [ytig;a}v yreb\]Di](#) “Why does he say, ‘Of my sins?’ Because he prays for our sins; he made our sins his own, so that he might make his righteousness ours. O sweet commutation and change!”

Chrysostom commented on Paul’s words this way: “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him.’ What word, what speech is

this? What mind can comprehend or express it? For he says, ‘He that was righteous was made sin, that he might make sinners righteous. Far better, he does not speak about an appearance or consideration of being sinful, but he expresses the quality itself. He does not say he made him a sinner, but he made him sin. He says that we are not made merely righteous, but we become the righteousness of God. And this occurs when we are justified *not* by works, but by grace, through which all sin is blotted out.’<sup>3</sup>

There are some in the Roman Catholic Church itself that have testified to this truth. Taulerus, in his meditations (Vitae Christ. cap. 7) writes: “Christ took upon himself all the sins of the world, and willingly grieved for them, as if he himself had committed them.” And again, speaking as if Christ: “Because the great sin of Adam cannot go away, I beg you, heavenly Father, punish it in me. For I take all his sins upon myself. If this tempest of anger has arisen for me, cast me into the sea of my most bitter passion.”

We are made righteous in Christ with the righteousness of God and not our own. By what right is this done? By the right of friendship. Everything is shared in common among friends, as the ancient proverb says. Being in grafted into Christ, fastened and united to him, he makes his things ours. He communicates his riches to us. He interposes his righteousness between the judgment of God and our unrighteousness. Under that shield, he hides us from the divine wrath that we deserve. He defends and protects us there. Indeed, he transfers it to us and makes it ours. Being covered and adorned with it, we may boldly and securely appear before the divine tribunal, not only *appearing* righteous, but being righteous *in fact*. Paul affirms that as one man’s fault made us all sinners, so the righteousness of Christ can effectively justify us all: ‘And as by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man,’ says he, ‘many are made righteous.’ (Rom. 5:19).

Christ’s righteousness is his obedience by which he fulfilled the will of his Father in all things. On the other hand, our unrighteousness is our disobedience of the commands of God. But because our righteousness is placed in the obedience of Christ, and we are incorporated into him, it is accounted to us as if it were ours. And so we are considered righteous by God. Jacob was not the firstborn, but

he wanted the blessing that belonged to his brother. So he hid under his brother's habit, clothed himself with his brother's garment, took on the very aroma of his brother, and then presented himself to his father to receive the blessing. In the same way, it is necessary for us to lie hidden under the precious purity of the First-born, our eldest brother, to be fragrant with his sweet aroma, and to have our sin covered with his perfection. Then we may present ourselves to our most Holy Father to obtain from him the blessing of righteousness. God clothes us with Christ's innocence and righteousness as we are grafted into him. God therefore justifies us by his free grace or goodness when he embraces us in Christ Jesus. Because only what is true and perfect can endure in the sight of God, only those things ought to be presented and pleaded for us before the divine tribunal. When we rest in Christ, we are covered with his purity and we obtain the daily pardon of sin. Our sins and their filth are not imputed to us. Instead they are covered as if they were buried. They do not come into the judgment of God. Until the old man is destroyed and slain in us, divine goodness receives us into peace with the second Adam.

This blessed transformation from sin to righteousness is presented to us in the Scripture as a principal object of our faith. Our peace with God is founded on it. And although this is an act of God, yet by faith we are to exemplify the transformation in our own souls. We are to really perform what is required on our part to have it applied to us, and through which we receive "the atonement," Rom. 5:11. Christ calls to him all those who "labor and are heavy laden," Matt. 11:28. The weight that is on the consciences of men is the burden of sin. So the psalmist complains that his "sins were a burden too heavy for him," Psa. 38:4. The guilt of Cain's sin was more than he could bear, Gen. 4:13. This is the burden that Christ bore when it was laid on him by divine estimation. So it is said in Isa. 53:11, [IBos\]yi aWh μt;nOwO\[\]w](#), "He shall bear their iniquities" as a burden. And he did this when God placed on him "the iniquity of us all," verse 6. Applying this to ourselves, we should be aware of the weight and burden of our sins. It is heavier than we can bear. Therefore the Lord Christ calls us with our sin to himself to ease our load. He does this in the preaching of the gospel, where he is "portrayed crucified before our eyes," Gal. 3:1. Faith sees Christ crucified, for faith is "looking to him" Isa. 45:22; 65:1. As those who were stung by fiery

serpents looked to the bronze serpent for relief, Christ answers our look, John 3:14, 15. Faith is coming to him with our burdens in response to his call and invitation. A believer considers that God has laid all our iniquities on him. It is the very thing on which our faith acts, and that faith is in his blood. On this one fact the soul agrees. It embraces the righteousness and the grace of God, along with the infinite condescension and love of Christ himself. It consents to it as the infinite wisdom and grace of God; and there it rests. A believer no longer seeks to establish his own righteousness, but instead he submits to the righteousness of God. In doing so, by faith, he leaves that burden that he was called to bring with him on Christ; and he complies with the wisdom and righteousness of God who laid that burden on his own son. And with that, the believer receives the everlasting righteousness that the Lord Christ brought in when he made an end of sin and reconciled sinners to God.

We should not be persuaded by people who are unacquainted with these things in their reality and power, and who reject the work of faith as a flight of fancy or imagination. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to the best of the natural wisdom of men. None can understand without the Spirit of God. Those who know what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, and who are looking for a real solid foundation for acceptance with him, think differently of these things. They find that believing is something quite different than others suppose. It is not a work of fancy or imagination to deny and abhor themselves, or to subscribe to the righteousness of God. They have no problem accepting the fact that death is the due reward for their sins. They renounce all hopes and expectations of relief from any righteousness of their own. They mix the promise of God concerning Christ's righteousness with their own faith so as to receive the atonement. And in response, they give themselves up to a universal obedience to God. For those who do see this as a work of fancy, whether through their own pride, self-conceit, or ignorance, the gospel is only a fable. We are not concerned with them.

## **6. The Effect of Grace on Obedience**

**Sixth.** We must have a clear understanding of the introduction of grace into our relationship with God, and how it affects our obedience. There was no such thing as grace in our original

relationship when we were created under obedience to the law. We had an immediate personal relationship to God as our creator, preserver, and rewarder. There was no mystery of grace in the covenant of works. At our creation, we were enabled to obey and receive the reward for obedience. "Do this and live," (Lk. 10:28) was the sole rule of our relation to God. There was nothing in that original religion that the gospel celebrates today under the name of the grace, kindness, and love of God. There was no need to interpose a mediator with respect to our righteousness before God; and yet that is now the substance of the gospel and all its truth. The introduction of these things is what makes our religion a "great mystery," 1 Tim. 3:16. At first, all religion was suited to reason. But now that it has become a mystery, men for the most part are very unwilling to receive it. But it must be so.

The introduction of grace by Christ into our relationship with God, has no natural meaning in our minds, nor can it be discovered by the best exercise of reason, 1 Cor. 2:14. Before our understanding was darkened and our reason debased by the fall, nothing of the kind was revealed or proposed to us. In fact, supposing such a thing would have conflicted with the whole state of our original relationship with God, because it would have supposed the existence of sin. It is not likely that our reason, which is now corrupted, would be willing to embrace something that it knew nothing of before it became corrupted. And that was when it was in its best condition to make such a determination. Because our reason was given to us as our only guide in our original innocent state, it is naturally unready to receive what is now beyond its understanding, and which it now hates because of its corrupted condition.

For that reason, most wise and rational men of the world looked on the first open proposal of this mystery as mere folly, as the apostle declares in 1 Cor. 1. The faith to accept it cannot be received without an act of the Holy Ghost to renew the mind. There are those who think that nothing more is needed to enable the mind of man to receive the mysteries of the gospel than the outward declaration of the doctrine. That not only denies the depravity of our nature by the fall, but it wholly renounces the grace by which we are recovered. Therefore, acting under its own capabilities and deteriorated from its original state, reason rejects the mystery, Rom. 8:7. Trying to reduce



the doctrine of the gospel and the hidden mystery of the grace of God in Christ to principles and ideas that the minds of men can accept by reason, debases and corrupts them. It only makes way for their rejection.

For that reason, it is very difficult to prepare the minds of men for the reality and spiritual height of this mystery. Men naturally do not understand it or like it. And therefore, trying to make it palatable to natural reason seems quite acceptable to most people. However, such arguments tend to be made without any exercise of faith or prayer, and without any supernatural illumination. These simplified arguments are easily understood and address man's common sense, but the mysteries of the gospel cannot be accepted without the effectual working of the Spirit of God, Eph. 1:17-19. In the absence of the Spirit's work, the doctrine is generally seen as difficult, perplexing, and unintelligible. Even the minds of those who cannot contradict it are not at all delighted with it. And this is the approach taken by those who undermine the doctrine of the gospel in whole or part. They modify it for consumption by a corrupted reason. And being confident that they can do so, they not only oppose the things themselves, but they despise the declaration of the gospel truth as fanatic gibberish. I am completely satisfied that the understanding of these men is no just measure or standard of spiritual truth. We are not "ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes."

Opposition to the mystery of justification, and to the distinct operations of the persons of the holy Trinity in its outworking, takes two forms:

1. Reduce it all to reason and logic. This is the Socinian approach. For that reason,

- (1.) The doctrine of the Trinity itself is denied, impugned, and derided by them. They plead that it is incomprehensible by man's reason. Of course it is incomprehensible to natural reason! That doctrine makes a declaration about things that are infinite and eternal, and cannot be conformed to things that are finite and temporal. They *must* deny the distinct operations of any persons in the Godhead in the dispensation of the mystery of grace. For if there are no such distinct persons, there can be no such distinct

operations. If we deny the Trinity, then no article of faith can be correctly understood, nor can any duty of obedience to God be acceptably performed. If we deny the Trinity, then we must agree that the doctrine of justification cannot stand.

(2.) They reject the incarnation of the Son of God as the most absurd conception that ever befell the minds of men. It serves no purpose to argue about justification with men who are so persuaded. If the incarnation of the Son of God is false, then we freely acknowledge that all the things we believe about justification are no better than old wives' tales. If Jesus Christ was no more than a man, I can well understand that, however exalted, dignified, and glorified he may have been, he cannot exercise a spiritual rule over the hearts, consciences, and thoughts of all the men in the world. He cannot at all times intimately know of and be equally present to them all. Nor could the righteousness and obedience of one be esteemed the righteousness of all who believe, if he was not the incarnate Son of God.

While their minds are filled with such prejudices, and until they accept the foundational truths of the gospel, it is impossible to convince them of the truth and necessity of justification. If the Lord Christ is who they believe him to be, I will grant there can be no other way of justification than what they declare; although I cannot believe that any sinner will ever be justified that way. These are the issues that ensue from an obstinate refusal to allow the introduction of the mystery of God and his grace into the way of our salvation and our relation to him.

The fundamental rule for these men in determining doctrine, is to accept what the Scripture says as true only if it is not repugnant to our reasoning, and it is not beyond what we can comprehend. Otherwise we must conclude that the Scripture does not say what it says, even though it seems to expressly say so. "Just because the Scripture affirms both these" (that is the efficacy of God's grace and the freedom of our wills), "we cannot conclude from that reason that they are not repugnant. Because these things are repugnant to one another, we must determine that one of them is not spoken in the Scripture." No, let the Scripture say what it will. This is the best way they can take to advance their own reason above the Scripture, yet it smacks of intolerable presumption.

Socinus himself says in plain terms about the satisfaction of Christ, “For my part, if this (doctrine) was written in the Holy Scripture not once, but often, I would still not believe it as you do. Where it cannot be so, I would, as I do in other places, make use of some less troublesome interpretation. I would draw the meaning out of the words that would make it consistent with itself.” And how would he do this? He would give the words a figurative sense rather than take their plain meaning. And indeed, he perverts all the divine testimonies concerning our redemption, reconciliation, and justification by the blood of Christ by applying such crude interpretations to them. Read the Socinian interpretation of the beginning of John as an example of this serpentine wit.

2. The second form of opposition to this mystery springs from a misunderstanding of the harmony that exists between all its parts. Understanding the wisdom of God in a mystery is neither an art nor a science, but comes from spiritual wisdom. And this spiritual wisdom understands things not so much in their ideas as in their power, reality, and efficacy to achieve their proper ends. And therefore, although there may be very few that clearly grasp the doctrinal truth of it, even the least of all true believers are directed and enabled by the Holy Spirit in their own practice and duty to understand its harmony. We are promised that “they shall all be taught of God.” Those things that appear to others to be contradictory and inconsistent one with another are reconciled in their minds, and indeed they complement one another in the course of their obedience.

Such a harmony is the whole mystery of God. It is the most curious product of divine wisdom. Just because it is not discernible by human reason, does not mean it is not true. No one can hope to fully understand it. Only in the contemplation of faith may we arrive at such an understanding that enables us to give glory to God, and to employ all its parts in practice. And so it is expressed by the apostle as something that has an unfathomable depth of wisdom in it, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding Rom. 11:33-36. See also Eph. 3:8-10.

There is a harmony, a relationship of one thing to another, in all the works of creation. Yet we see that it is not perfectly nor absolutely

understood by the wisest and most diligent of men. How far they are from an agreement about the order and motions of the heavenly bodies, of the sympathies and qualities of various things here below, or the cause and effect between one thing and another! The new discoveries made concerning any of them only evidence how far men are from a correct understanding of them. Yet there is such a universal harmony in all the parts of nature and its operations, that nothing in its proper place and operation is destructively contradictory either to the whole or to any part of it. Everything contributes to the preservation and use of the universe. But although this harmony is not absolutely comprehensible by anyone, yet all living creatures that follow the conduct or instinct of nature make use of it and live upon it. And without that harmony, neither their existence nor their activities would continue.

But in the mystery of God and his grace, the harmony and relationship of one thing to another, is incomparably more excellent and glorious than anything that is seen in nature. God made all things at first in wisdom, and yet the re-creation of all things by Jesus Christ is ascribed specifically to the riches, stores, and treasures of that infinite wisdom. Some seem to think that there is no great wisdom in it. Others think that no great wisdom is required to understand it. Few think it is worthwhile to spend half the time to understand it that they would spend to understand mathematics or science. Therefore there are three things that are evident:

1. We are not only to consider and know the several parts of the doctrine of spiritual truths, but their relation to one another, their consistency with one another in practice, and their mutual advancement of one another to their common end.
2. To understand this harmony appropriately, it is necessary that we be taught of God. Without that, we can never be wise in the knowledge of the mystery of his grace. And this is where we need to be most diligent in our investigation of the truths of the gospel.
3. All those who are taught of God to know his will, have personally experienced the consistency of all parts of the mystery of God's grace and truth in Christ, and their spiritual harmony. The introduction of the grace of Christ into our relation to God does not confuse us with

any conflict between the principles of natural reason in our first relation to God, and those of grace by which we are now renewed.

Thus, the Socinians cannot see any consistency between the grace of God and the satisfaction of Christ. But they imagine that if one of them is admitted, then the other must be excluded. Therefore they principally oppose the satisfaction to vindicate the grace. And where the two are expressly connected in the same passage, they violate common sense and reason rather than admit the harmony they cannot understand. For example, “we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,” Rom. 3:24, 25. Although it is plainly affirmed that we are redeemed by his blood, and that Christ is a propitiation because his blood was a ransom price, yet they contend that it is only metaphorical. It is a mere deliverance by power, like that of the Israelites by Moses. But these things are clearly stated in the gospel. They are not only consistent, but the one cannot subsist without the other. Nor is there mention of any special love or grace given by God to sinners without Christ’s sacrifice being the means of communicating its effects to them. See John 3:16; Rom. 3:23-25; 8:30-33; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Eph. 1:7; etc.

In the same way, the Socinians fail to see any consistency between Christ’s sacrifice and the necessity of holiness or obedience in believers. For that reason they continually assert that the mediation of Christ overthrows all obligations to a holy life. These and similar misconceptions arise from their unwillingness to admit that the mystery of grace has been brought into our relation to God. If we were to stand before God under the original covenant of works, which is all that natural reason likes and understands, we acknowledge that these things would be inconsistent. But the mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in Christ cannot stand without them both.

Likewise, they assert that God’s efficacious grace and a believer’s thoughtful obedience are contradictory and inconsistent. Although both are positively and frequently declared in the Scripture, these men reject the consistency in Scripture because it offends their reason. Therefore, they declare that the Scripture does not assert one of them. They cannot in their wisdom concede the possibility that the

mystery of God's grace has affected our relation and obedience to God. Because the Socinians lean most heavily on this objection, we will consider it fully and separately. For that reason we grant,

1. That justification is unsuited, foolish, and even childish to people whose minds are unenlightened and unsanctified. We consider this to be the primary cause of all the objections that are made to the doctrine.
2. That the necessary relationship between justification and personal obedience will not be clearly understood or accepted apart from faith. True faith has a spiritual light that is able to receive it, and to move us to obedience.

Those who have no spiritual light, and who oppose the doctrine of justification, make the following specious arguments:

- a. If the passive righteousness of Christ's death and suffering is imputed to us, then there is no need for the active righteousness in his obedient life to be imputed to us. They are contradictory.
- b. If all sin has been pardoned, then there is no need to impute his righteousness to us. And on the other side, if the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, then there is no need to pardon sin.
- c. If we believe our sins are pardoned, then are our sins pardoned before we believe? If not, then we are bound to believe in something that is not so.
- d. If the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, then are we considered to have done what we did not do, and suffered what we did not suffer? If so, then imputing it to us is nonsense.
- e. If Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, then are we as righteous as Christ himself?
- f. If our sins were imputed to Christ, then was Christ a sinner?
- g. If good works are excluded from our justification, then they must be useless to our salvation.
- h. It is ridiculous to think that where there is no sin, we are missing the required righteousness.
- i. Righteousness that is imputed is only imaginary righteousness.

All these and similar objections can be plainly and clearly solved, and we will address all of them shortly. At present I will only say that the confusion they create in people's minds vanishes before the light of express Scripture testimonies, and the experience of believers.

## **7. Common Objections to the Imputation of Righteousness**

**Seventh.** There are some common objections to the imputation of the righteousness of Christ that do not fall under a particular consideration. So we will briefly examine them here:

1. It is usually argued that imputing the righteousness of Christ to us is not expressly mentioned in the Scripture. Those who make this argument do not object to saying that we benefit from the righteousness of Christ. But if we say that the righteousness of Christ actually becomes our righteousness before God, then they say we are guilty of error. They say the error arises when we think that we have done what Christ has done, and Christ has done what we have done. But that is not what we are saying at all. If we do anything ourselves, then it cannot be imputed to us as done by another. On the other hand, we cannot say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us unless we receive the righteousness itself and its benefits.

The Socinians make extensive use of this objection. The church uses a number of expressions that are not literally contained in the Scripture. The Socinians hope to use this fact to their advantage in opposing the things themselves. We use terms such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the satisfaction and merit of Christ, as well as this imputation of his righteousness. They have not prevailed against the other terms. As for their objection to this we assert,

(1.) That it is the truth of the doctrine we plead for and not just the term. If it is not plainly taught and confirmed in the Scripture, we will relinquish it. But if we can prove that the doctrine is plainly declared in the Scripture, then this expression of it is a divine fact. To deny this is to undermine the interpretation of the Scripture and overthrow the ministry of the church.

(2.) The same thing is expressed in the Scripture in equivalent phrases. It affirms that "by the obedience of one" (that is Christ), "many are made righteous," Rom. 5:19. And we are made righteous by imputing righteousness to us: "Blessed is the man to whom God

imputes righteousness without works,” chap. 4:6. If righteousness is imputed to us, then the obedience of Christ by which we are made righteous must also be imputed to us.

2. Socinus also objects that there is nothing said of it in the “Evangelists,” nor in the “report of the sermons of Christ to the people, nor in his private discourses with his disciples.” He is entirely against the expiation of sin by Christ’s death, *De Servator.*, par. 4, cap. 9. It is dangerous to compare the writings of the evangelists with the other writings of the New Testament. He makes insinuations about Paul. Socinus writes that he is “apt to admire our Savior’s sermons, who was the author of our religion, above the writings of the apostles, though inspired men.” By doing so he challenges both the canon and its historicity.

This boldness is not only unwarranted, but abhorrent. What place of Scripture, what ecclesiastical tradition, what single precedent of any one sober Christian writer, what theological reason, would justify someone making the comparison mentioned, and the determination reached? Such juvenile boldness, such want of a proper understanding of the divine inspiration of the New Testament should be examined. To remove this pretence out of our way, it may be observed that,

(1.) What the Lord Christ taught his disciples in his personal ministry on the earth, was suited to the needs of the Church prior to his death and resurrection. He withheld nothing from those that was necessary to their faith, obedience, and consolation in that state. He instructed them out of the Scripture, occasionally correcting their understanding of it; and he made many new revelations to them. However, he did not reveal any sacred mysteries to them that could not be understood before his death and resurrection.

(2.) What the Lord Christ revealed to the apostles afterward by his Spirit was no less the truth than what he spoke to them with his own mouth. Any contrary understanding is destructive to the Christian religion. The epistles of the apostles are no less Christ’s sermons than what he delivered on the mount.

(3.) Neither the content nor the way they were revealed makes one group of writings more advantageous than the others. The things



written in the epistles proceed from the same wisdom, the same grace, and the same love, as the things spoken by Jesus in the flesh. They have the same divine veracity, authority, and efficacy. The revelation made by his Spirit is no less divine and personal than what he spoke to his disciples on the earth. To distinguish between them for any of these reasons, is intolerable folly.

(4.) The writings of the evangelists do not contain all the instructions that the Lord Christ gave to his disciples personally on the earth. They saw him for forty days after his resurrection, and he spoke to them about “things pertaining to the kingdom of God,” Acts 1:3. Nothing about these things is recorded in their writings except a few speeches. He had not previously given them a clear understanding of the things concerning his death and resurrection in the Old Testament. That is plainly declared in Luke 24:25-27.

(5.) The extent of divine revelations given by his Spirit to his apostles after his ascension were beyond those that he personally taught them. He told them plainly not long before his death, that he had many things to say to them which “they could not bear” at that time, John 16:12. He told them of the coming Spirit who would reveal these truths to them. “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but only what he hears. He will show you things to come. He will glorify me, because he will receive it from me and show it to you,” verses 13, 14. He told them as he did before, he had to go away so that the Holy Spirit would come to them, whom he would send from the Father, verse 7. Here he delegates the full and clear manifestation of the mysteries of the gospel to the Spirit. The insinuations of Socinus and his followers are therefore false, dangerous, and scandalous.

(6.) The writings of the evangelists fulfill their proper purpose, which was to record the genealogy, conception, birth, acts, miracles, and teachings of our Savior. Thereby they proved him to be the true and only-promised Messiah: “Jesus did many other signs that are not written in this book. But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” John 20:30, 31. Everything that is necessary to instill and establish our faith is recorded. All the things declared in the Old Testament concerning him, all that was taught in types and sacrifices, became the objects of our faith. This doctrine is revealed in them. It is, therefore, no

wonder that some things were declared more fully in other New Testament writings than they were in the writings of the evangelists.

(7.) There are as many pregnant testimonies to the truth of this doctrine in just one of the evangelists as there are in any other book of the New Testament, namely in the book of John. See chap. 1:12, 17; 3:14-18, 36; 5:24.

3. Whatever differences exist among Protestant writers about this doctrine, they generally agree that it is the righteousness of Christ, and not our own, by which we receive the pardon of sin and the blessings of God. By the way, we have the concurrence of the Founding Fathers in this. Especially in their controversy with the Pelagians, they plead vehemently that we are made righteous by the grace of God, and not by the endeavors of our own free will, or by works performed in our own strength. Changing our hearts and natures creates in us a principle of spiritual life and holiness.

We wholly concur with them. And we do so in opposition to the doctrine of the Roman church that claims we are made inherently and personally righteous by grace. When we speak of justification before God, we mean that righteousness by which our sins are pardoned, and by which we are accepted as righteous before him.

The real differences among people who agree in the substance of the doctrine, may be reduced to these points:

(1.) There are honest disagreements about the role faith plays in our justification, and the object of our faith in this process. Faith is an act of our minds, exercised as a duty to God. It secures both our justification and our salvation. We must bear with one another in our different conceptions and expressions of faith. For my part, I would rather be unable to define faith but be able to exercise it toward righteousness, than to be able to clearly define it but fail to personally exercise it as my duty.

(2.) In the Reformed churches, the righteousness of Christ is said to be imputed to us. For some, this refers only to his suffering death and the satisfaction that he made for our sin. For others, it also includes the obedience of his life. My own judgment of the righteousness of Christ is that it is inseparable from his obedience.

(3.) There have also been some differences about whether the imputation of the righteousness of Christ can be the formal cause of our justification before God. Roman Catholics believe Christ's righteousness becomes our own inherent, personal righteousness. *Our* righteousness therefore is the formal cause of our justification; it is not just imputed to us. In opposition to them, some Protestants contend that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, but we are merely *considered* righteous before God; it is not our own inherent, imperfect, personal righteousness. They all concede that there is a habitual, infused habit of grace, which does lead to our personal, inherent righteousness. But they all deny that God pardons our sins, and justifies us with respect to Christ's righteousness alone. They deny that this is, or can be, the inherent formal cause of our justification.

Notwithstanding these differences, they all agree that God justifies no sinner without a true and perfect righteousness. This righteousness is truly the righteousness of the person justified. It becomes ours by God's free grace and donation. It is received by faith alone. And this righteousness is the perfect obedience or righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

## **8. The Influence of the Reformation on Justification**

**Eighth.** To close these observations, it is worth considering what weight the first Reformation laid on this doctrine of justification, and the concurrence of their thoughts about its importance. The doctrine of justification is the start, the foundation, and the core of reformation. But much has changed in the world of doctrine, so that it is no longer clearly understood or acknowledged. The first reformers found their consciences so immersed in darkness, so pressed and harassed with fears and terrors, and so lacking in steady guidance as to how to obtain peace with God, that they inquired after the truth in this matter. All men in those days were either kept in bondage to fear by their convictions of sin, or they were sent for relief to indulgences, priestly pardons, penances, pilgrimages, personal works, and doing more than was expected of others. They were kept under the chains of darkness and purgatory until the last day.

There have obviously been great changes made in these things, even in the papal church. Before the Reformation, such things consumed

almost the whole of religion. To ensure their painstaking observation of them, people's minds were stuffed with traditions and stories of visions, apparitions, frightful spirits, and other imaginations that are apt to amaze poor mortals. These terrors of the night were the principal objects of their creed, and the source of their religious conversation. So much of that still blinds the eyes of men from discerning the necessity, as well as the truth, of the evangelical doctrine of justification.

Not much has changed since Christianity first entered the world. There was such light and truth from the gospel that affected men's minds; yet it was opposed and persecuted in its general design. Because of its truth, the very vulgar sort of men began to get a better understanding of God and his nature, and the original rule of the universe, than they had in the midnight of their paganism. The learned sort of men, by virtue of that same light of truth, reformed and improved their old philosophy, discarding many of the falsehoods and excesses that encumbered it. But they still maintained their old causes and principles. Indeed, their opposition to the gospel was far more plausible than before. For after they discarded the gross misconceptions about the divine nature and rule, and blended the light of truth with their own philosophies, they made a vigorous attempt to reinforce them against the gospel.

As I said, not much differed in the Reformation. The first reformers labored diligently to declare and vindicate the evangelical doctrine of justification, and God was with them. They directed convinced sinners to the only way available to gain solid peace with God. Thereby they rooted out the superstitions in men's minds and delivered them from their bondage to fear and distress. They communicated to them the knowledge of the righteousness of God, which is revealed from faith to faith. And it is worth our consideration, whether we should easily part with that doctrine of truth that gave them peace for their own souls. That truth was the reason that they were so instrumental in giving liberty and peace with God to so many others. And that truth produced in them the visible effects of a holy life, and the fruitfulness that accompanies works of righteousness, to the praise of God by Jesus Christ.

Some recent writers try to minimize the differences between the Catholics and Protestants concerning justification. The Protestants

emphasize the Catholic ascriptions to grace and the merit of Christ on the one side, and the Catholics emphasize the necessity of good works for those who are justified on the other. But I must say that I have not seen the desired effect of such an undertaking. For, when each party comes to interpret their own concessions to the other, the distance between them continues to be as wide as ever. Until Protestants fully comply with the decrees and canons of the Catholic Council of Trent, that anathematized the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, the Catholics will only advertise the differences between us.

But do what we can for the sake of peace, it cannot be denied that the doctrine of justification, as it works in the church of Rome, is the foundation of many lapses both in judgment and practice. I acknowledge that they do not continue as much in slavish bondage to their former aberrations, but streams still issue from this corrupt fountain, dangerously infecting the souls of men. Expiatory sacrifices for the dead and dying, confessionals with authoritative absolution, penances, pilgrimages, sacramentals, indulgences, commutations, external works without internal repentance, the merit and intercession of departed saints or angels, purgatory, and the whole of monastic devotion still depend on them. They are all invented to pacify the consciences of men, or to divert them from responding to the law of God. They are poor sources of a righteousness of their own for those who do not know how to submit to the righteousness of God. If the doctrine of free justification by the blood of Christ were once again undermined, then men would again resort to these things, as absurd and foolish as they now seem. If men are diverted from putting their trust in the righteousness of Christ and the grace of God alone, choosing to depend on themselves instead, then their sense of sin will drive them from their present hold to seek shelter in anything that offers them relief. It is futile to dispute with anyone about justification if they are not convinced of their sinful state and its guilt. Such men neither understand what they say nor what they dogmatize.

Therefore, we have the same reasons that the first reformers had to keep this doctrine of the gospel pure and complete; but we may not expect similar success in our endeavors. The minds of most men have a different attitude than when the reformers dealt with this

issue. They were under the power of ignorance and superstition, but multitudes of them at least had a sense of the guilt of sin. With us, for the most part, things are different. Speculative insight accompanied by a senselessness of sin, leads men to have contempt for this doctrine, indeed for the whole mystery of the gospel. In former days, we experienced the fruits of the faith that we now plead for in this nation. It cannot be denied that those who were the most tenacious in their support of the doctrine of justification were the most exemplary in a holy life. If this doctrine is further undermined or forgotten among us, we will quickly fall into one of the extremes urged on either side.

Although the practices of the Roman church are presently despised, if Protestant's trust in the righteousness of Christ and the grace of God waivers, they will return to them. I have no doubt that some who are ignorant of the righteousness of God, have in good conscience sought out that pretended rest which the church of Rome offers them. Being troubled about their sins, they think it is better to ease their consciences with the means that the Roman church affords them than to stay where they are. This may serve them for a while, but once they are convicted of their sin, they must look beyond themselves for peace and satisfaction, or live with the consequences for eternity. Other means to assuage their conscience, apart from what the Roman Catholic Church offers, are neither better nor worse. All of them arise from the absence of a proper sense of the nature and guilt of sin, and of the holiness and righteousness of God. When this senselessness grows prevalent in the minds of men, they quickly grow careless, negligent, and comfortable in sinning. It results for the most part in atheism, or a great indifference to all religion and all the duties that accompany it.

## 1. The Means of Justifying Faith

The means of justification on our part is faith. This is so frequently and expressly affirmed in the Scripture that it cannot be denied. At present we only inquire into the true meaning of it: its nature and its use in our justification.

Justifying faith is distinct in character from other types of faith. The Scripture mentions a twofold faith by which men believe the gospel. There is a faith by which we are justified and secure our salvation. It purifies the heart and works by love. And there is a faith or believing that does not justify or save. It is said of Simon the magician, that he “believed,” Acts 8:13, when he was “bitter and bound in sin” (v. 23). Therefore he did not believe with that faith which “purifies the heart,” Acts 15:9. We also read that many “believed on the name of Jesus when they saw the miracles that he did, but Jesus did not commit himself to them, because he knew what was in man,” John 2:23, 24. They did not believe on his name with the same kind of faith as those who “receive power to become the sons of God,” John 1:12. And some, when they “hear the word receive it with joy, believing for a while,” but “have no root,” Luke 8:13. And faith, without a root in the heart, will not justify anyone. For “with the heart men believe and are saved,” Rom. 10:10. So is it with those who cry, “Lord, Lord” in the last days, “we have prophesied in your name,” and yet they were always “evil-doers,” Matt. 7:22, 23.

This *justifying faith* has differences or degrees in its basis and its effects. All faith is an assent based on testimony; and divine faith is an assent based on divine testimony. Depending on how this testimony is received, there are differences or degrees of this faith. Some believe based on its credibility to their reason. Their assent is merely a natural act of their understanding, which is the lowest degree of this kind of faith. Some have their minds enabled by spiritual illumination, discovering the evidence of divine truth by which it is believed. Their assent and response is firmer than the other.

With respect to its effects, for some it has little or no influence on the will or emotions, nor does it result in any visible change in a person’s life. That’s how it is with those who profess that they believe the

gospel, and yet they live in all kinds of sin. This is what James calls “a *dead faith*.” He compares it to a dead carcass, without life or motion. With others it has an effect on their emotions and produces many effects in their lives. However, it is usually a *temporary faith*, because it disappears under trial, and it will not bring eternal rest. People with such faith have no root and quickly fall away, Matt. 13:21.

This faith is real and true to its kind; it is not merely a pseudo-faith. But it is not the same as justifying faith. Justifying faith is not a higher degree of this faith. It is another kind of faith altogether.

1. We can have this faith with all its effects and still not be justified.
2. It may produce great effects on the minds, emotions and lives of men, although none that are unique to justifying faith. Yet those in whom it is found ought to be charitably viewed as true believers.
3. It may be a bare faith. We are justified by faith alone, but we are not justified by bare faith. Bare faith simply exists. It does not speak to its influence on our justification. We absolutely deny that we can be justified by bare faith that has no principle of spiritual life that results in a duty to universal obedience.

I observe these things only to obviate the reproach that some associate with the doctrine of justification by faith alone that it denies the necessity of universal obedience, or good works. Detractors assert that we believe that faith alone is the means, instrument, or condition of our justification. They would be right, for that is what Christ taught all the apostles. If they think we believe that justifying faith is bare, or separable from a principle of life and the fruit of holy obedience, then they are mistaken. For we accept no faith as justifying faith unless it radically contains universal obedience as its effect, the fruit in the root, a spiritually vital principle of obedience and good works.

1. As for the special nature of *justifying faith*, four things evidence it: what God causes, what we are required to have, what its proper object is, and what its specific acts and effects are. Faith originates in the divine will, and it is communicated to us in a unique and special way. The topic is far too complex and extensive to handle here without distracting us. I have written of it elsewhere. Therefore, our first inquiry concerns what is necessary to be found in us prior to



believing in a way that justifies us. I say there is supposed to be a conviction of sin. I will first consider what is essential to this work of conviction, and then consider its effects compared to the temporary faith I mentioned earlier.

(1.) Conviction is the means by which a man gains a practical understanding of the nature of sin, its guilt, and the punishment due for it. He is made aware of how both original and actual sin affect him, and his utter inability to deliver himself from it. The Word is the external means and instrument of his justification. A convinced sinner is only *capable* of being justified. Not every convinced sinner must necessarily be justified; but without conviction, he cannot be justified. This is true because,

[1.] Without conviction of sin, the true nature of faith can never be understood. For, as we showed before, justification is God's way of delivering the convinced sinner. This is someone whose mouth is stopped, and who is guilty before God, liable to the law, and imprisoned under sin. Therefore, a sense of this condition, and all that belongs to it, is required to believe. It is that alone which puts the soul in flight to the mercy of God in Christ, to be saved from the wrath to come. Heb. 6:18, "Fled for refuge."<sup>4</sup>

[2.] The relation between the law and the gospel uncontrollably proves the necessity of this prior conviction. What any man has to deal with first, with respect to his eternal condition, is the law. It presents to the soul its terms of righteousness and life, and its curse in case of failure. Without this, the gospel cannot be understood, nor its grace properly valued. The gospel is the revelation of God's way to relieve the souls of men from the sentence and curse of the law, Rom. 1:17. Therefore, we cannot act out the faith that the gospel requires without first being convicted of our sin by the law. The law gives the knowledge of sin, a sense of its guilt, and the state of the sinner as a result of it. We absolutely deny that any faith which does not respond to the law can be justifying faith, Gal. 3:22-24; Rom. 10:4.

[3.] Our Savior directly teaches this in the gospel. He calls to himself only those who are weary and heavy-laden. He affirms that the "healthy have no need of the physician, but the sick;" and he says that he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to

repentance.” He did not intend to call all sinners, as all men are, but only those who were convinced of sin, burdened with it, and sought deliverance from it. He makes a difference between those who are burdened and those who are not, offering the gospel to some and not to others. Those to whom the apostle Peter presented the gospel were “pricked to the heart” at the conviction of their sin and cried, “What shall we do?” Acts 2:37-39. The same response came from the jailer to whom the apostle Paul offered salvation by Christ, Acts 16:30, 31.

[4.] God’s dealing with Adam is the best example of how these things proceed. After the fall, he was in the very same condition as we are by nature. He was completely lost by sin, and he was convinced both of the nature of his sin and its effects. The action of the law on his mind caused the “opening of his eyes.” This was the communication by his conscience to his mind of a sense of the nature, guilt, effects, and consequences of sin. The law could then teach him what it could not teach him before. This filled him first with shame, which he tried to cover with fig leaves, and then with fear, which he tried to cover by hiding among the trees of the garden. These were no more successful in gaining freedom and safety from sin than any other man-made contrivance. God immediately examines Adam, sharpens his conviction by adding his own testimony, and places him under the curse of the law in a juridical denunciation of it. In this lost, forlorn, and hopeless condition, God offers the promise of redemption by Christ to him. And this was the object of that faith by which he was to be justified.

These things are generally agreed to. Yet if properly considered, they reveal the vanity and mistakes of many definitions of faith that are imposed on us. Any definition or description of faith that does not expressly address our conviction of sin is a deceit. It ignores the experience of true believers. Faith is not merely an assent to divine revelation. There cannot be valid assent without including this work of the law. Justifying faith is the response of the soul to the gospel. It is a plea to God to gain deliverance from this condition and from the curse of the law that afflicts the conscience. I am not giving this as a definition of faith. I am only expressing what has a necessary influence on it to help discern its nature.

(2.) Now let's consider the *effects* of this conviction with respect to our justification, real or pretended. Because this conviction results from the law, it must be considered in conjunction with that temporary faith in the gospel I described before. These two, legal conviction and temporary faith, are the fountain of all works or duties that are related to justification. And yet, we must deny that either of them are the cause of our justification. It is accepted that many acts and duties, both internal and external, flow from real convictions. Those that are internal have three basic sources:

[1.] Remorse and sorrow that he has sinned. It is impossible for someone to be really convinced of sin in the way described without having a dislike of sin, and a dislike of himself for sinning. Shame and sorrow for it will follow. It is sufficient evidence that he is not really convinced of sin if he is not so affected, whatever he professes or confesses with his lips, Jer. 36:24.

[2.] Fear of punishment due to sin. Conviction is not just discovering the existence and nature of sin, but the curse of it that threatens judgment and condemnation, Gen. 4:13, 14. Therefore, where there is no fear of punishment, there is no real conviction of sin; nor will the law have its proper effect on him since fear must precede the administration of the gospel. Because by faith we "fly from the wrath to come," if there is no apprehension of the wrath, there is no reason to believe.

[3.] A desire to be saved from the state he is in. This is naturally the first thing that conviction establishes in the minds of men. It does so with various degrees of concern, fear, anxiety, and restlessness.

2. These internal attitudes produce a number of external actions under two primary categories:

[1.] Abstaining from known sin by sheer will power. Those who begin to discover that sin is an evil thing, and who are bitter that they have sinned against God, are compelled to try to abstain from it. This is the natural outcome of the internal attitudes mentioned; but it particularly relates to the last of them, which is a desire to be delivered from the sinner's condition. They suppose this is the best way to do that, or at least they assume it must be part of the

deliverance process. And so they vow to change, with renewed sorrow every time they are surprised by their continuing sin.

[2.] The other thing we see is that they resort to religious worship, prayer, bible reading, and participating in the ordinances of the church. They know that no deliverance can be obtained without them. The extent to which they reform their life and conversation consists partly in these things, and partly such reform follows them. These things are always present where their convictions are real and abiding.

Yet it must be said that these things are not necessary preparations, dispositions, nor conditions of our justification. They have no merit in themselves as far as justification goes.

[1.] They are not conditions of justification. If one thing is conditioned on another, that other thing must surely follow the fulfilling of that condition. Otherwise it is not conditional. But these things may be all found where justification does not ensue. Therefore, there is no promise of God that makes them a condition of our justification. This is true even though they may result from our faith, which is indeed required of us. So the meat we eat may be a condition of our justification, but it is not the source of it. Justification and faith are inseparable, but not justification and these outward acts.

[2.] Justification based on the convictions of our faith may exist even where the outward acts do not. Adam was justified without them; so were the converts in Acts 2:37; so was the jailer in Acts 16:30, 31; and so it is with most who believe. Therefore, these acts are not conditions.

[3.] They are not formal dispositions to justification. That is, they do not lead us any closer to justification or make it any more probable that it will occur. Nor are they proof of justification. That is because justification does not consist in introducing a new *form* or *quality* in the soul.

[4.] They are not moral preparations for justification. When they precede faith, the only purpose these activities can serve is to “seek righteousness by the works of the law,” (Rom. 9:32, Gal. 2:16). That is no preparation for justification. *Faith* is what discovers the righteousness of God. Repentance accompanies faith, and so it is

included in the nature of it; it is required for justification. But legal repentance by outward acts alone, behavior that precedes gospel faith and is exercised without it, is not a condition of, disposition of, or preparation for our justification.

Again, the sequence of these things may be briefly observed in how God dealt with Adam. There are three stages:

[1.] The eyes of the sinner are opened. The sinner can then see the filth and guilt of his sin as the sentence and curse of the law are applied to his conscience, Rom. 8:9, 10. This produces the attitudes mentioned before, and sets the sinner about doing all the duties that spring from such attitudes. The initial conviction ordinarily leads them to conclude that their state is evil and dangerous, and it is their duty to change it. But all these activities, as far as protection or deliverance goes, are no better than fig-leaves or hiding behind a tree.

[2.] God gives life and power to this work of the law in a special way by his providence or by the dispensation of his word. He levies his charges against Adam after his attempt to hide himself. "Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you should *not* eat?" (Gen. 3:11). Thereby the "mouth of the sinner is stopped." Adam becomes completely aware of his guilt before God. And he is convinced that there is no relief or deliverance to be found in any sorrow or duty that he may resort to.

[3.] In this condition of despair and need, it is sovereign grace alone that calls the sinner to believing, or to have faith in the promise of justification of life (Gen. 3:15). And this is done without any consideration of these previously mentioned activities.

This is God's order in bestowing justification. Yet what *precedes* his call to faith does not *cause* it.

3. The next thing we want to examine is the proper *object* of justifying faith. There are two opinions. The first is that of the Roman church. They assert that the object of justifying faith is all of the divine revelation written in the Scripture or delivered by tradition, represented to us by the authority of the church. They maintain that the whole Scripture, and all its parts, are equally the objects of our faith so far as justification is concerned. For that reason, as to the nature of justification, they believe it consists only

in an assent of the mind. Suppose the whole of Scripture with all its laws, precepts, promises, threats, stories, prophecies, and the like is the object of our faith. As such, these would not contain things that are either good or evil to us, because they are equally the objects of our faith. The only act the mind is permitted to make is to assent to them as a whole. So confident are these proponents that faith is no more than an assent to divine revelation, that Bellarmine claims justifying faith is better defined by ignorance than by knowledge. He thus opposes Calvin who placed *knowledge* in the description of justifying faith. I will observe some things related to this assertion that may help us discover the truth of it.

(1.) All faith is firmly assenting to the truth of things not evident to us by sense or reason. That truth is declared to us through testimony. It is “the evidence of things not seen.” Divine faith is an assent to the truth proposed to us by divine testimony. And as such, it is distinguished from opinion and moral certainty on the one hand, and science or demonstration on the other.

(2.) Therefore, in justifying faith there is an assent to all divine revelation given by the testimony of God, the revealer. We cannot be justified by any other act of our mind, not because it is not justifying, but because it is not faith. This assent is necessary to justifying faith.

(3.) On these concessions two things must be said: First, justifying faith is not merely an assent of the mind, no matter how firm and steadfast; nor is it defined only by the obedience it may produce. Second, its role in justification has a specific object in the Scripture; it is not a general and equal assent to all divine revelation. Let me critique some *opposing* views by way of comparison:

1. Some say this assent is an act of understanding only, an act of the mind responding to the evidentiary truth presented to it. But believing is an act of the *heart*. In the Scriptures, the heart comprises all the faculties of our being as a single principle of moral and spiritual duties: “With the heart man believes and is justified,” Rom. 10:10. It is frequently described as an act of the will, though it is not that alone. But without an act of the will, no one can believe as he should. See John 5:40; 1:12; 6:35. We come to Christ in an act of the will; and “let whoever *will*, come” (John 7:37; Rev. 22:17). To

be willing is the same as believing, Psa. 110:3; and unbelief is the same as disobedience, Heb. 3:18, 19.

2. Some say that all divine truth is equally the object of this assent. Such assent does not regard any one truth as more important than another. If that were true, then Judas being a traitor must have as great an influence on our justification as the fact that Christ died for our sins. This is so contrary to the Scripture, the analogy of faith, and the experience of all believers as to need no refutation.

3. Some say this assent to all divine revelation may be true and sincere even where there has been no conviction of sin. We have already shown that conviction is necessary to justifying faith. To suppose otherwise would overthrow the order and use of the law and the gospel, and subvert their mutual relation to one another in the design of God's salvation for sinners.

4. Some say assent is not the way for a convinced sinner to seek relief. On the contrary, only such people are capable subjects of justification, and only such people can properly seek after it. It is true that a mere assent to divine revelation is not specifically suited to give them relief. The law gives them knowledge of sin, and their assent puts them in a condition to obtain relief. But *faith* is a specific action of the soul to bring deliverance.

5. Others claim that assent is no more than what the devils themselves may have, and do have, as the apostle James affirms (2:19). I say, if they believe in one God then that proves devils also believe in whatever God reveals as true. And yet devils practice all kinds of wickedness and disobedience. And so they make God out to be a liar, 1 John 5:10. If this is so, then no wonder men deny we can be justified by faith, when they know no other faith than this.

6. Some say assent does not match the descriptions that are given of justifying faith in the Scripture. Particularly, it is by faith that we are said to "receive" Christ, John 1:12; Col. 2:6; to "receive" the promise, the word, the grace of God, and the atonement, James 1:21; John 3:33; Acts 2:41; 11:1; Rom. 5:11; Heb. 11:17; by faith we "cling to God," Deut. 4:4; Acts 11:23. Let me respond that in the Old Testament faith is generally expressed by trust and hope. Those are not contained in a mere assent to the truth. They require more than just understanding.

7. Some say assent does not reflect the experience of true believers. This goes to the crux of our inquiries. Our whole purpose is to discover what true believers do to obtain justification. It is not what opinion men may have, or how they express their ideas, or how defensible their positions are. It is only what we ourselves do as true believers when we appeal to God for forgiveness of our sins. Although our inability to agree about it is a reflection on our fallen nature, that should only give us a mutual tenderness and forbearance towards each other. I therefore deny that general assent to the truth alone is what a true believer does who is seeking God's pardon for sin and justification.

8. Some say any faith is justifying faith if justification actually accompanies it. Well if it was not, it would be a contradiction in terms! But justification is not found in everyone in whom this general assent is found; nor do those who plead for general assent declare that it is the sole basis for justification. Therefore it is obvious that somewhat more is required for justifying faith than assent to all divine revelations, although we do give such assent through justifying faith.

On the other side, it is supposed by some that the object of justifying faith is so subtle, and its nature is so hidden in the mind, that it cannot entirely satisfy what the Scripture ascribes to it. So some have said that the pardon of our sins is the object of justifying faith. Therefore, faith would be the full persuasion of the forgiveness of our sins through the mediation of Christ. Or they say it is what Christ did and suffered for each of us as our personal mediator. Therefore, faith would be the particular application of mercy to our own souls and consciences. Or they say that believing our own particular sins are forgiven is the first and most proper act of justifying faith. Therefore, whoever is not firmly persuaded of the forgiveness of his own sins has no saving faith and would not be a true believer. We certainly do not accept that, nor should anyone else. I have no doubt that these by-products of faith will increase in true believers who improve their faith and grow in its proper exercise.

Many great divines during the first Reformation made the mercy of God in Christ, and thereby the forgiveness of our own sins, the proper object of justifying faith. The Lutherans still do. The essence of this faith is a fiducial trust in the grace of God by Christ, which is



declared in the promises. Such faith makes a certain and unwavering application of these promises to ourselves. I say with some confidence, that those who do not endeavor to attain such faith, have either misunderstood the nature of believing, or they are neglecting both the grace of God and their own peace.

What motivated them to place the essence of faith in its highest act of trusting in grace, was the state of the consciences of the men with whom they had to deal. Their battle with the Roman church was about the way that convinced and troubled sinners might find rest for their consciences and peace with God. At that time they were instructed that the only way these things could be obtained was by works of personal righteousness, and strict observance of Church-ordained sacrifices, sacraments, absolutions, penances, pilgrimages, and other such superstitions. They saw that these fruitless pursuits kept the consciences of men in perpetual turmoil, confusion, fear and bondage. In fact, they were excluded from the very rest, assurance, and peace with God through the blood of Christ, that the gospel proclaims and offers. However, when the leaders of the Roman church observed the same thing, they made it part of their doctrine that belief in the gospel pardon of our own sins, and assurance of the love of God in Christ, were false and pernicious. That was the principal controversy between the reformed divines and the church of Rome. The issue is whether the gospel declares there is a state of rest and assured peace with God that can be attained in the convinced sinner's life?

Taking into account all the imaginable proof of it, from the very nature, use, and purpose of the gospel, from the grace, love, and design of God in Christ, and from the efficacy of his mediation in his oblation and intercession, the divines came to this conclusion: faith itself is a fiduciary trust in the special grace and mercy of God, that comes through the blood of Christ, as proposed in the promises of the gospel. That is, the reformed divines direct men to seek peace with God, the pardon of sin, and a right to the heavenly inheritance, by placing their sole trust and confidence in the mercy of God by Christ alone. But I have never read any of them who affirmed that every true and sincere believer always had a full assurance of the special love of God in Christ, or of the pardon of his own sins.

Instead, they argue that the Scripture requires this as a duty, and believers ought to aim at attaining it.

Therefore, I say that , in his work of mediation for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is the adequate and proper object of justifying faith. This was ordained by God and proposed by the promise of the gospel. The reason why I state the object of justifying faith this way is because it completely answers all that is ascribed to it in the Scripture, and all that its nature requires.

(1.) The Lord Jesus Christ himself is the proper object of justifying faith. That is required in all those Scripture testimonies where faith is declared to be believing in him, believing on his name, receiving him, or looking to him. And these testimonies have the promise of justification and eternal life annexed to them. See John 1:12; 3:16, 36; 6:29, 47; 7:38; 14:12; Acts 10:43; 13:38, 39; 16:31; 26:18; etc.

(2.) Christ is not proposed as the absolute object of justifying faith. It includes what God the Father ordained to that end. Thus the Father is also the immediate object of justifying faith. So justification is frequently ascribed to faith that is specifically directed toward the Father, as in John 5:24: "He that believes on him that sent me, has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death to life." And again, in 1 Pet. 1:21, "Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God." And in Rom. 3:23, 24 we find the grace, love, and favor of God which comprises the principal cause of our justification, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through redemption in Christ Jesus." Add to that John 6:29, and the object of our faith is complete: "This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent;" God the Father as sending, and Jesus the Son as sent. Jesus Christ is the object of our faith in the work of his mediation, as ordained by God, for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners.

(3.) Christ is proposed as the object of our faith in the promises of the gospel. The general nature of faith consists in assent, which is the foundation of all its other acts. The promises contain, propose, and exhibit Christ as the ordinance of God. They also convey the benefits of his mediation to those who believe. Thus, in justifying faith, there

is a special assent to these promises of the gospel. However, some mistakenly place the whole nature, essence, and work of justifying faith in our assent to these promises. While we certainly assent to them when we act on our faith, this is only an act of the mind. Neither the whole nature nor the whole work of faith can consist of that alone. Therefore, so far as the promises point to the complete object of faith, they materially contain, propose, and exhibit Christ to believers. And in that sense they are frequently affirmed in the Scripture to be the object of our justifying faith. Acts 2:39; 26:6; Rom. 4:16, 20; 15:8; Gal. 3:16, 18; Heb. 4:1; 6:13; 8:6; 10:36.

(4.) The recovery and salvation of lost sinners is the result of the Lord Christ's work of mediation, and the ordinance of God. Therefore it is proposed in the promises of the gospel, and it belongs to the object of justifying faith. For that reason, the forgiveness of sin and eternal life are proposed in the Scripture as things that are to be believed to be justified. Salvation is the object of our faith, Matt. 9:2; Acts 2:38, 39; 5:31; 26:18; Rom. 3:25; 4:7, 8; Col. 2:13; Tit. 1:2; etc. Because the justified person is to live by faith, and believe for himself, and apply the things believed to his own benefit, some have affirmed that the pardon of our sins, our own salvation, is the proper object of justifying faith. Indeed, salvation does belong to the object of our faith, when we can attain it God's way, 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:6, 7.

Therefore, by asserting that the Lord Jesus Christ is the object of our faith leading to justification, in the work of his mediation, I necessarily include:

- the grace of God, which is the cause of it
- the pardon of sin, which is the effect of it, and
- the promises of the gospel, which are the means of communicating Christ and the benefits of his mediation to us.

All these things are so united, so intermixed in their mutual relations and respects, so concatenated in the purpose of God and the declaration of his will in the gospel, that believing any one of them virtually includes belief of the rest. If any one of them is disbelieved, it frustrates and voids all the rest, and so it frustrates and voids faith itself.

Due consideration of these things solves all the difficulties that arise about the nature of faith and its object, either from the Scripture or from the experience of those who believe. There are many things in the Scripture that we are said to believe with and by justifying faith. But two things are evident. First, no one of them can be the complete and adequate object of our faith. Second, none of them absolutely suffices as the ordinance of God for our justification and salvation except as they relate to the Lord Christ.

And this affirms the experience of all true believers. These things are so united and inseparable in the constitution of God, that all of them are virtually included in every one of them.

- (1.)** Some fix their faith and trust principally on the grace, love, and mercy of God. This is especially true under the Old Testament, before the clear revelation of Christ and his mediation. So did the psalmist, Psa. 130:3, 4; 33:18, 19; and the publican, Luke 18:13. These are proposed as the causes of our justification in numerous places in the Scripture. See Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:4-8; Tit. 3:5-7. This is not absolute, but only with respect to the “redemption that is in the blood of Christ.” Nowhere in Scripture is it proposed any other way. Compare Dan. 9:17 with Rom. 3:24, 25; Eph. 1:6-8. For Christ’s mediation is the cause, the way, and the means of communicating God’s grace, love, and mercy to us.
- (2.)** Some fix their faith and trust principally on the Lord Christ, his mediation, and its benefits. The apostle Paul frequently proposes this to us in his own example. See Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:8-10. This is not absolute, but only with respect to the grace and love of God. It is for this reason that they are given and communicated to us, Rom. 8:32; John 3:16; Eph. 1:6-8. Nowhere in Scripture are they proposed to us any other way as the object of our justifying faith.
- (3.)** Some fix their faith and trust on the promises. This is exemplified by Abraham, Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:20. And so the promises are proposed in the Scripture as the object of our faith, Acts 2:39; Rom. 4:16; Heb. 4:1, 2; 6:12, 13. But they are not merely divine revelations. The promises inherently contain and propose to us the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation, from the grace, love, and mercy of God. Hence, the

apostle argues in his Epistle to the Galatians that if justification is obtained by any means other than the promise, both the grace of God and the death of Christ are unnecessary and ineffectual. The reason is that the promise is the way and the means of communicating these to us.

- (4.) Some fix their faith on the things that they want, namely, the pardon of sin and eternal life. And these are also proposed to us in the Scripture as the object of our justifying faith, Psa. 130:4; Acts 26:18; Tit. 1:2. But this is to be done in its proper order, especially when applying them to our own souls. For we are nowhere required to believe them, or to have our own interest in them, except as the effects of the grace and love of God, through Christ and his mediation, as proposed in the promises of the gospel. Therefore, believing them is included in our prior belief of these other things. Belief in the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, without exercising faith in what causes them, is presumption.

Thus, I have given the entire object of justifying faith in compliance with the testimonies of the Scripture, and the experience of those who believe.

Putting the promises, the pardon of sins, and eternal life in their proper place, I further confirm that the work of the Lord Christ's mediation is the ordinance of God for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners. And in that respect, the Lord Christ is the proper and adequate object of justifying faith. The true nature of evangelical faith consists in the response of the heart to the love, grace, and wisdom of God; with the mediation of Christ, in his obedience; with his sacrifice, in the satisfaction and atonement for sin that he made by his blood. These things are opposed by some as being inconsistent. The second part of the Socinian impiety is the belief that the grace of God and the satisfaction of Christ are opposite and inconsistent. They think that if we allow the one, we must deny the other. But these things are proposed in the Scripture in such a way that, without granting both of them, neither can be believed. So, faith that considers the mediation of Christ subordinate to the grace of God, finds rest in both, and in nothing else. It fixes itself on the Lord Christ, and the redemption that is in his blood, as being the ordinance of God and the effect of God's wisdom, grace, and love.

This assertion is not only abundantly declared in the Scripture, but it contains a principal part of the design and substance of the gospel. Therefore, I will only refer to some of the places where it is taught, or the testimonies that speak to it.

The whole of it is expressed in the passage where the apostle most eminently proposes the doctrine of justification, Rom. 3:24, 25, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." We may add to this Eph. 1:6, 7, "He has made us accepted in the Beloved; in whom we have redemption through his blood, according to the riches of his grace." How we are justified is the special object of our justifying faith. How we are justified is by the Lord Christ in the work of his mediation: for we are justified by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, through his blood, to the forgiveness of sin. Christ's propitiation is the cause of our justification and the object of our faith; that is, we attain justification by faith in his blood. Christ is the ordinance of God for that end – appointed, given, proposed, set forth from and by the grace, wisdom, and love of God. God set him to be a propitiation. He makes us accepted in the Beloved. We have redemption in his blood, according to the riches of his grace, by which he makes us accepted in the Beloved. And in this he "abounds towards us in all wisdom," Eph. 1:8. This is what the gospel proposes to us as the special object of our faith to the justification of life.

In the same way, we may separately confirm the several parts of this assertion:

(1.) The Lord Jesus Christ, as proposed in the promise of the gospel, is the special object of justifying faith. There are three sorts of testimonies that confirm this:

[1.] That sort in which it is positively asserted, as in Acts 10:43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whoever believes in him shall receive remission of sins." Believing in Christ as the means and the cause for the remission of sins, is what all the prophets give witness to. Acts 16:31, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." It is the answer of the apostle to the jailer's inquiry, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They respond that it is his duty to believe, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the object of his belief. Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, by which we must be saved." What is proposed to us as the only means of our justification and salvation, in opposition to all other ways, is the object of our justifying faith. That object is Christ alone, excluding all other things. This is testified to by Moses and the prophets. The design of the whole Scripture is to direct the faith of the church to the Lord Christ alone, for life and salvation, Luke 24:25-27.

[2.] There are multiple passages in which justifying faith is affirmed to be our believing in him, or believing on his name. John 1:12, "He gave power to them to become the sons of God, who believed on his name." Chap. 3:16, "That whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Verse 36, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Chap. 6:29, "This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent." Verse 47, "He that believes on me has everlasting life." Chap. 7:38, "He that believes on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." So too chap. 9:35-37; 11:25; Acts 26:18, "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." 1 Pet. 2:6, 7. In all these places and many others, we are not only directed to place our faith in him, but the effect of justification is ascribed to doing so. It is expressly stated in Acts 13:38, 39; which is what we plan to prove.

[3.] There are passages that describe acts of faith in such a way as to make Christ the direct and proper object of our faith. Such passages make reference to "receiving" him. John 1:12, "To as many as received him." Col. 2:6, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord." What we receive by faith is the proper object of our faith. It is represented by those who, being stung by fiery serpents, looked to the brazen serpent when it was lifted up, John 3:14, 15; 12:32. Faith is that act of the soul by which convinced sinners, otherwise ready to perish, look to Christ as he was made a propitiation for their sins. Those who do so "shall not perish, but have everlasting life." He is, therefore, the object of our faith.

(2.) Christ is the object of our faith *because* he is the ordinance of God to this end. This consideration is not to be separated from our

faith in him. This also is confirmed by several testimonies:

[1.] All those passages in which the love and grace of God are proposed as the only cause for giving Jesus Christ as the means of our recovery and salvation. For that reason they become the supreme and efficient cause of our justification. John 3:16, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." So too Rom. 5:8 and 1 John 4:9, 10. "Being justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:6-8. The Lord Christ continually directs our faith to this, referring everything back to the One that sent him, and whose will he came to do, Heb. 10:5.

[2.] All those passages in which God is said to specify Christ as the cause of our justification. Rom. 3:25, "Whom God has proposed to be a propitiation." 1 Cor. 1:30, "Who of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and rectification, and redemption." 2 Cor. 5:21, "He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Acts 13:38, 39, etc. Therefore, acting on justifying faith in Christ, we can only consider him as the ordinance of God to that end. He brings nothing to us, does nothing for us, except what God has appointed, designed, and made him to do. Diligently consider that by our faith in the blood, sacrifice, and satisfaction of Christ, we take nothing from the free grace, favor, and love of God.

[3.] All those passages which propose that the wisdom of God is evidenced by this way of justification and salvation. Eph. 1:7, 8, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; in which he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and understanding." See chap. 3:10, 11; 1 Cor. 1:24.

The whole assertion is comprised in this statement of the apostle: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them," 2 Cor. 5:19. All that was done to reconcile us to God, to pardon our sins, and to bring acceptance with Christ unto life, was done by the presence of God in his grace, wisdom, and power, and in Christ designing and effecting it.



Therefore, the Lord Christ, who is proposed in the promise of the gospel as the object of our justifying faith, is considered the ordinance of God to that end. Hence, the love, grace, and wisdom of God in sending and giving Christ are comprised in that object. Not only did God act in Christ towards us, but all his acts towards the person of Christ, which were done to the same end, belong to that object. So, as to his death, “God set him forth to be a propitiation,” Rom. 3:25. “He spared him not, but delivered him up for us all,” Rom. 8:32; and in doing so he “laid all our sins upon him,” Isa. 53:6. He was “raised for our justification,” Rom. 4:25. Our faith is in God, who “raised him from the dead,” Rom. 10:9. and in Christ’s exaltation, Acts 5:31. These things complete “the record that God has given of his Son,” 1 John 5:10-12.

The whole process is confirmed by the exercise of faith in prayer. This is how we appeal to God to participate in the benefits of the mediation of Christ. It is called our “access through him to the Father,” Eph. 2:18; our coming through him “to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,” Heb. 4:15, 16; and through him as both “a high priest and sacrifice,” Heb. 10:19-22. Thus we “bow our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” Eph. 3:14. This affirms the experience of all who know what it is to pray. In prayer, we come in the name of Christ, and through his mediation, to God the Father. Through the Father’s grace, love, and mercy, Christ makes us partakers of what he has designed and promised to communicate to poor sinners. And this represents the complete object of our faith.

Due consideration of these things will reconcile and harmonize whatever is spoken in the Scripture concerning the object of justifying faith. Because this is distinctly affirmed by various things, none of them can be the entire and adequate object of faith. But consider them all in their relation to Christ, and each of them finds its proper place:

- in the grace of God, which is the cause;
- the pardon of sin, which is the effect; and
- the promises of the gospel, which are the means of communicating the Lord Christ and the benefits of his mediation to us.

You may be pleased to notice that I not only neglect, but despise the recent attempt of some to place everything concerning the person and mediation of Christ under the doctrine of the gospel exclusively. There is no reasoned proof for such a restriction.

## 2. The Nature of Justifying Faith

We will now inquire into the nature of justifying faith. We will examine the exercise of that faith by which we are justified according to God's ordination and promise. Keep in mind those things that we have already ascribed to saving faith. It must be sincere faith in general. And recall the aspects relating to its special nature, work, and duty in our justification. According to the declarations of Scripture prescribing our duty to believe, one cannot truly believe with justifying faith unless there has been a conviction of sin. All descriptions and definitions of faith that assert justifying faith can exist without conviction are only vain speculations. Some people do give such definitions of faith. It is hard to conceive that they ever asked themselves what they did when they believed on Jesus Christ for life and salvation.

Exercising faith in a way that justifies us consists in the heart's *approval* of the way that sinners are justified and saved by Jesus Christ, as proposed in the gospel, proceeding from the grace, wisdom, and love of God; and it consists in the heart's *acquiescence* in this as it concerns its own condition. No further explanation of the nature of faith is required than what we have already proved concerning its object. What may seem lacking will be fully supplied in the ensuing confirmation of it.

The Lord Christ, and his mediation, as the ordinance of God for the recovery, life, and salvation of sinners, is the object of justifying faith. These are all considered an effect of the wisdom, grace, authority, and love of God. They all act in and towards the Lord Christ himself, in his acceptance and discharge of his office. He constantly attributes all that he did and suffered to this office, with all the benefits accruing to the church thereby. For that reason, sometimes the grace, love, or special mercy of God are proposed as the object of our justifying faith; or sometimes it is the way that God acts in or towards the Lord Christ himself – in sending him, giving him up to death, and raising him from the dead. But they are the objects of our faith only with respect to his obedience and the atonement that he made for sin. They are never considered to be the object of our faith apart from the promises of the gospel. Hence, a sincere assent to the

divine truthfulness of those promises is included in this approval of the heart.

Four things confirm this description of faith. These things mutually illustrate one another:

1. The contrary declaration of the nature of faith, or our unbelief of the gospel promises.
2. The declaration of God's design and purpose for the gospel.
3. The nature of faith's compliance with that design, that is, faith's response to it.
4. The order, method, and way of believing, as declared in the Scripture

1. The gospel is the revelation or declaration of how God, in his infinite wisdom, love, and grace, has prepared a way to justify and save sinners by Jesus Christ. When properly received, precepts of obedience and promises of rewards accompany the way provided. "It is the righteousness of God." It is what he requires, accepts, and approves for salvation, "revealed from faith to faith," Rom. 1:17. This is the record of God, "That he has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," 1 John 5:11; John 3:14-17. "Tell the people all the words of this life," Acts 5:20; "All the counsel of God," Acts 20:27. Therefore, when dispensing or preaching the gospel, this way of salvation is proposed to sinners as the great effect of divine wisdom and grace. Unbelief is the rejection, neglect, refusal to admit, or disapproval of the terms and the ends for which this way of salvation is proposed. The unbelief of the Pharisees, upon the preparatory preaching of John the Baptist, is called the "rejecting of the counsel of God against themselves;" that is, to their own ruin, Luke 7:30. "They would have none of my counsel," is an expression of the same attitude, Prov. 1:30; so is "neglecting this great salvation," Heb. 2:3. It is refusing to admit what the excellence of the gospel requires. Disallowing Christ, the stone the "builders disapproved of," 1 Pet. 2:7, Acts 4:11, as a stone not fit for the place and purpose for which it was designed, is unbelief. To disapprove of Christ, and the way of salvation he affords, as though it did not reflect divine wisdom, is unbelief. Likewise, it is unbelief if we refuse him or do not receive him.

This may become more evident if we consider the first preaching of the gospel where it resulted in unbelief, and where it continues to do so.

Most of those who rejected the gospel by their unbelief did it under the apprehension that the way of salvation that it proposed was not a reflection of divine goodness and power in which they might safely confide and trust. The apostle describes this resistance at length in 1 Cor. 1:23, 24, "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God, and the wisdom of God." What they preached in the gospel was that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," chap. 15:3. They proposed that Christ was the ordinance of God. He was the great effect of God's wisdom and power for the salvation of sinners. But for those who continued in their unbelief, they rejected Christ as such, considering this way of salvation as both weakness and folly. And therefore Paul describes the faith of those who are called, by their approval of the wisdom and power of God contained in the gospel. Failure to comprehend the glory of God in this way of salvation – rejecting it – is an unbelief that ruins the souls of men. "If our gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are lost. The god of this age has blinded the minds of those who disbelieve." 2Cor. 4:3, 4.

So it is with all who continue to disbelieve the proposed object of faith in the preaching of the gospel. They may give an intellectual assent to the truth of it, or at least not reject it. In fact, they may assent to it with that temporary faith we described before, and perform many of the duties of religion. Yet they show that they are not sincere believers. They do not believe with their heart to the point of true righteousness. They show their unbelief by many things that are irreconcilable and inconsistent with justifying faith. The inquiry, therefore, is what is the formal nature of this unbelief that allows these people to perish? As was said, it is not the lack of an assent to the truths of the *doctrine* of the gospel. In many places in Scripture these people are said to believe, as has been proved. This assent may be so firm and so entrenched in their minds, that they may give their bodies to be burned to testify to it. Men may do so to confirm many false persuasions. Nor is it failing to apply the fiduciary promises of the gospel to themselves, or accepting the

pardon of their own sins. In the initial preaching of the gospel, applying the promises or accepting the pardon is not something that they must first believe. This is because there may be belief that results in righteousness and yet does not involve applying the promises to themselves: "Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah! To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?" says the LORD. Isa. 1:10. This may evidence untrue faith, but it is not formal unbelief. Nor is it failing to obey the precepts of the gospel, in the duties of holiness and righteousness. For these duties, as formally given in the gospel, apply only to those who truly believe and are justified by that belief.

Therefore, what is required for evangelical faith, and what constitutes its nature as the foundation of all future obedience, is the heart's approval of the way of life and salvation that comes by Jesus Christ, proposed as the effect of the infinite wisdom, love, grace, and goodness of God. It satisfies the whole plan, and all the wants of guilty and convinced sinners. This approval is what such people do not have. And the lack of such approval is the formal nature of unbelief. For without this, no man is or can be influenced by the gospel to relinquish sin. Nor can they be encouraged to obey, whatever else they may do for other reasons and motives that are foreign to the grace of the gospel. And wherever this cordial and sincere approval of the way of salvation by Jesus Christ prevails, as proposed in the gospel, it will infallibly produce both repentance and obedience.

If the mind and heart of a convinced sinner is able to spiritually discern the wisdom, love, and grace of God in this way of salvation, and if he is under the power of that persuasion, then he has the foundation that is given by the gospel for repentance and obedience. I will defer the process of receiving Christ that is mentioned in Scripture, and by which the exercise of faith is expressed, until the latter part of the description of our acquiescence in God's proposed way of salvation.

Again, there were and are some who do not absolutely reject this way of salvation, or the idea of it. Instead, they comparatively reject it as to their practice; and so they perish in their unbelief. They judge that the way of their own righteousness is better, more trustworthy, and

more according to the mind of God and to his glory. Generally, that's what the Jews did, whose frame of mind the apostle represents in Rom. 10:3, 4. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about their own righteousness, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Many of them generally assented to the doctrine of the gospel as true. However, they did not like it in their hearts as the best way of justification and salvation. And so they sought justification and salvation by the works of the law.

Therefore, the formal nature of unbelief consists in the lack of spiritual discernment, and the lack of approval of the way of salvation that comes by Jesus Christ, as an effect of the infinite wisdom, goodness, and love of God. Where such discernment and approval are present, a convinced sinner can only embrace it and adhere to it. Where it is missing, what is pretended as believing is only a shadow of faith. For that reason, it is impossible for unbelievers to acquiesce in this way of salvation, or to express any trust and confidence by committing themselves to it. Such persons are missing the only foundation on which this consent and trust can be built.

2. God's design for the gospel, with respect to the work and office of faith, further confirms the description given. God's design in the first place is not the justification and salvation of sinners. His ultimate purpose in all his counsels is his own glory. He does all things for himself. One who is infinite cannot do otherwise. But in a special way, he expresses his glory through this way of salvation by Jesus Christ.

Particularly, he designed this way of salvation for the glory,

- of his righteousness; "To declare his righteousness," Rom. 3:20;
- of his love; "God so loved the world," John 3:16; "In this we see the love of God, that he laid down his life for us," 1 John 3:16;
- of his grace; "Accepted, to the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. 1:5, 6;
- of his wisdom; "Christ crucified is the wisdom of God," 1 Cor. 1:24; "that the manifold wisdom of God might be

- known by the church,” Eph. 3:10;
- of his power; “it is the power of God to salvation,” Rom. 1:16;
  - of his faithfulness, “Therefore out of faith, and that by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed,” Rom. 4:16.

For God designed in this not only the reparation of all that glory which was obscured by the appearance of sin, but also a further degree of exaltation, and a more eminent manifestation of it. He planned to reveal some special aspects of it that were previously concealed, “to make evident to everyone the economy of the mystery which from perpetuity has been hidden in God,” Eph 3:9.

And all this is called “The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. 4:6. Faith is the beholding of that face.

3. The principal purpose of the gospel of justification and salvation by Christ is ascribing glory to God. This is what he has designed for us to exalt. For our part, we are required to participate in the benefits of it. We are required to acknowledge all these glorious properties of the divine nature as manifested in the provision and proposition of this way of life, of this way of righteousness and salvation. We are required to approve of the provision itself as an effect of these properties, and as something that is safe to trust in. And this is faith or believing: “Being strong in faith, he gave glory to God,” Rom. 4:20. This is in the nature of the weakest degree of sincere faith. No other grace, work, or duty is suited to the task, or primarily directed toward it, except as a consequence of gratitude. I cannot wholly agree with someone who asserts that the faith described in the epistles of Paul is too general, and not limited to the way of salvation by Christ. To the contrary, they contain much of the nature of faith.

For that reason, we may learn both the nature of faith, and the fact that faith alone is required for our justification. This is because faith is the only way we can give to God that glory which he designs to manifest and exalt in and by Jesus Christ. Only faith is suited to do this, and this is what it means to believe. Faith, in the sense that we are inquiring about, is the heart’s approval of, and consent to, the way of life and salvation of sinners that comes by Jesus Christ, and by which the glory of the righteousness, wisdom, grace, love, and



mercy of God is exalted. Faith ascribes praise to him, and yields justification, life, and salvation. Its purpose is to give “glory to God,” Rom. 4:20; to “behold his glory as in a glass,” or the gospel in which it is shown to us, 2 Cor. 3:18; to have in our hearts “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. 4:6. The contrary makes God a liar, and thereby denies him the glory of all those holy properties that he intended to manifest by this provision. “Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the record that God has given about his Son,” 1 John 5:10. If I am not mistaken, this is the experience of true believers, and what they will testify to when they are not in heated arguments.

4. To rightly understand the nature or exercise of justifying faith, we must consider the order of justification: first, the things which necessarily precede it, and then what to believe with respect to them. As necessary precedents we require,

(1.) The state of a convinced sinner, who is the only subject capable of being justified. This has already been addressed, and the necessity that conviction must precede both justification and evangelical righteousness has been demonstrated. If we lose sight of this, we lose our best guide to discover the nature of faith. No man should think that he understands the gospel if he knows nothing of the law. God’s constitution, and the nature of things, have given the law precedence with respect to sinners; “for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” And gospel faith is acting according to the mind of God, to gain deliverance from the condition that the law casts us under. All those descriptions of faith that do not at least include an essential reference to this condition, or the work of the law on the consciences of sinners, are vain speculations. There is nothing in this whole doctrine that I will more firmly adhere to than the necessity of the convictions mentioned prior to true believing. Without them not one line of it can be understood correctly, and men would only beat the air in their contentions about it. See Rom. 3:21-24.

(2.) We assume in this a sincere assent to all divine revelations, in which the promises of grace and mercy by Christ are a special part. Paul assumed this in Agrippa when he would have won him over to faith in Christ Jesus: “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I

know that you believe,” Acts 26:27. And this assent accepts the promises of the gospel as divine revelations of infallible truth. It is a true and sincere assent as we described it before under the notion of temporary faith. But if it proceeds no further, and it includes no act of the will or heart, then it is not that kind of faith by which we are justified. However, it is nonetheless required, and it is included in justifying faith.

(3.) The presentation of the gospel, according to the mind of God, is also assumed. That is, not only is the gospel itself required, but its preaching through the ministry of the church is ordinarily required to believe. The apostle proves the necessity of this proclamation in Rom. 10:11-17: “Accordingly, how can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one they have not heard? And how can they hear without a preacher?”

In this the Lord Christ and his mediation with God is revealed, declared, proposed, and offered to such sinners: “For in this is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,” Rom. 1:17. The glory of God is represented “as in a glass,” 2 Cor. 3:18; and “life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel,” 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:3. Therefore,

(4.) The persons who are required to believe, and whose immediate duty is to believe, are those whose consciences make the inquiries mentioned in the Scripture: “What shall we do? What shall we do to be saved? How shall we fly from the wrath to come? With what shall we appear before God? How shall we answer the charges?” The persons required to believe are those who sense the guilt of their sin, and seek righteousness in the sight of God, Acts 2:37, 38; 16:30, 31; Micah 6:6, 7; Isa. 35:4; Heb. 6:18.

The direction we are given in response to these questions is, “Believe, and you will be saved.” The inquiry before us is “What act or work of faith will obtain for me a real interest in the promises of the gospel and the things declared in them, so that I am justified before God?” And the conclusion is this:

1. It is evident from what has been said that justifying faith does not consist in, and is not fully expressed by, any one single habit or distinct act of the mind or will. Such descriptions of it are given in the Scripture, and such things are proposed as the object of that

faith. The experience of all sincere believers is that no single act either of the mind or will can answer these questions. Nor can an exact way to respond to these questions be prescribed. Only what is essential to justifying faith is apparent.

2. What seems to have precedence when we realize our sin and trouble, is assent to the relief that the psalmist first seeks under Psa. 130:3, 4, "If you, O LORD, should take note of iniquities, who shall stand?" The sentence of the law, and the judgment of conscience, are against being accepted by God. Therefore, standing in judgment, the sinner despairs of being acquitted before God. In this state, what he first fixes on for relief is the hope that "there is forgiveness with God." This hope, as declared in the gospel, is that God in his love and grace will pardon and justify guilty sinners through the blood and mediation of Christ. That is what is proposed in Rom. 3:23, 24. The assent of the mind to this promise of the gospel is the root of faith, and the foundation of everything we do in believing. There is no evangelical faith without it. But, considered abstractly as a mere act of the mind, the essence and nature of justifying faith does not consist in this hope alone, even though it cannot exist without it. But,

3. In sincere believing, this is accompanied by an approval of the proposed *way* of deliverance and salvation, as an *effect* of divine grace, wisdom, and love. The heart rests in this trust, and applies itself to it according to the mind of God. *This* is the faith by which we are justified, and which I will further prove by showing what is included in it and what is inseparable from it. It includes,

(1.) A sincere renunciation of all other ways and means to attain righteousness, life, and salvation. This is essential to faith, Acts 4:12; Hos. 14:2, 3; Jer. 3:23; Psa. 71:16, "I will make mention of your righteousness, *yours only*." When a person recognizes his sinfulness and his need for relief (and only such people are called to believe immediately, Matt. 9:13; 11:28; 1 Tim. 1:15), many things will come to mind as sources of relief, particularly his own righteousness, Rom. 10:3. Sincere belief means renouncing all of them, Isa. 50:10, 11.

(2.) The consent of the will, by which the individual cordially and sincerely expects pardon of sin and righteousness before God through the way of salvation that is proposed in the gospel. This is

what is called “coming to Christ,” and “receiving him.” It is how authentic justifying faith is so often expressed in the Scripture. It is also called, “believing in him,” or “believing on his name.” The whole of this expression of faith is found in John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by me.”

(3.) Acquiescence in God’s sovereign grace and mercy shown towards sinners by authoring, preparing, and causing the way of salvation: “By him you believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God,” 1 Pet. 1:21. By acquiescing, the sinner gives glory to God for all the holy properties of his nature that he intended to reveal in and by Jesus Christ. See Isa. 42:1; 49:3. And this acquiescence is the immediate source of the waiting, patience, longsuffering, and hope, which are the proper acts and effects of justifying faith. See Heb. 6:12, 15, 18, 19.

(4.) It includes and ensues from trust in God, and in the grace and mercy of God in and through the Lord Christ, who becomes a propitiation through faith in his blood. The person called to believe is first convinced of sin and exposed to wrath. Second, he has nothing else to trust in for help and relief. Third, he actually renounces all other things that offer themselves as relief. Therefore, without some act of trust on his part, he must fall into despair. That would be utterly inconsistent with faith, or with the choice and approval of the way of salvation that was described.

(5.) The most frequent declaration of the nature of faith in the Scripture, especially in the Old Testament, is by this trust. That is because acting in trust is what composes the soul, and brings it all the rest it can attain. All our rest in this world comes from trust in God. And the special object of this trust, so far as it belongs to the nature of justifying faith, is “God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.” For this is where his goodness, mercy, grace, name, faithfulness, and power are expressed. They cannot be the objects of our trust, except on account of the covenant that is confirmed and ratified in and by the blood of Christ alone.

Whether this trust or confidence is considered the essence of faith, or the first fruit of it, we need not positively determine. I place it,

therefore, as what belongs to justifying faith, and is inseparable from it. If all we have said about faith could be comprised under the idea of a firm assent and persuasion, such assent cannot be conceived apart from this trust.

Many divines believed special mercy is the unique object of this trust. This special mercy includes in it the pardon of our own sins. Their adversaries fiercely opposed the idea on the grounds that such a state of trust is not attainable in this life. If it were, it would not be of any use to us. It would only serve as a means of false security and negligence in our duty. They betray how ignorant they are of these things in their own minds. Mercy may be said to be special in two ways: *First*, as distinct from common mercy; *second*, with respect to the believer.

In the *first* sense, special mercy is the object of justifying faith because nothing more is meant by it than the grace of God providing Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood, Rom. 3:23, 24. Faith in this special mercy is what the apostle calls “receiving the atonement,” Rom. 5:11. It is our approval of it and adherence to it, as the great effect of divine wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, love, and grace. Therefore it will never fail for those who put their trust in it.

In the *second* sense, special mercy is seen as the pardon of our own sins in particular, or the special mercy of God on our souls. I deny that this is the object of justifying faith, or that a man is bound to believe this before he can be justified. I do not know of any testimony or safe experience to confirm it.

Anyone who denies that we can attain such trust in this life, or denies that it is our duty to believe our own sins are pardoned, seems unacquainted with the design of God in the gospel. See Rom. 5:1-5; Heb. 10:2, 10, 19-22; Psa. 46:1, 2; 138:7, 8; etc. Yet I will not deny that peace with God, which is inseparable from justification, does not require them. These things are fruits or effects of faith, things that may be exercised and improved, rather than being the essence or instrument of our justification.

Concerning this faith and trust, it is earnestly pleaded by many that obedience is included in it, but opinions vary as to how. Socinus and those who follow him make obedience the essential form of faith, which is denied by Episcopius. The Papists distinguish between faith

in-formed and faith formed by charity. Both are built on the supposition that there may be true evangelical faith without charity or obedience, and so that faith would be a useless faith. Socinians do not make obedience the absolute essence of faith, but only in so far as it justifies. And so they plead that “faith without works is dead.” But to suppose that faith which is dead is the kind of faith that is required in the gospel is pure imagination. Others plead for obedience, charity, and the love of God to be included in the nature of faith. They do not directly plead that this obedience is the form of faith, but only belongs to the perfection of it. Neither do they say that a continued course of works and obedience is required for our justification, but only a sincere and active intent to obey.

*First*, it is impossible for those who believe in justification by faith alone to accept that justifying faith can exist without a sincere purpose of heart to obey God in all things. We believe that faith is “not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.” It is a grace worked in the hearts of men by the exceeding greatness of his power. And to suppose that such a grace could be dead, inactive, unfruitful, or not operative to the glory of God, and the transforming of the souls of those who receive it, is a negative reflection on the wisdom, goodness, and love of God himself.

*Secondly*, this grace is a principle of spiritual life in their heart, which is not really distinguished from any other grace by which we live to God. Faith should be habitually in the heart. To have or exercise the kind of evangelical faith we are inquiring after, where there is not a habit of all the other graces, is utterly impossible. Neither is it possible to exercise this justifying faith unless the mind is prepared, disposed, and determined to be universally obedient. And therefore,

*Thirdly*, any faith, trust, or confidence that is absolutely separable from all other graces cannot be imagined. Some have said, “men may believe, and place their firm trust in Christ for life and salvation, and yet not be justified.” This is a position so destructive to the gospel, and so scandalous, and such an express denial of the record that God has given concerning his Son Jesus Christ, that I wonder if any person of sobriety and learning could be fooled into believing it.

Therefore we say that justifying faith is found only in those who are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and by him united to Christ, whose nature is renewed, and in whom there is a principle of all grace, and a purpose of obedience. Only, we say it is not any other grace such as charity, nor any obedience, that gives life and form to this faith. Rather, it is this faith that gives life and efficacy to all other graces, and that gives form to all evangelical obedience. Nothing here supports our adversaries who would give all those graces the same influence on our justification as faith has. The Romanists reproach us because they think that when we say we are justified by faith alone, we mean by faith which is alone. To answer that reproach, what we mean by faith includes all the other graces and obedience as well. However, no other grace is capable of the role that is assigned to faith in our justification. That role is to receive Christ, and the promises of life by him, and to give glory to God on their account. When they can give us any testimony from Scripture that assigns our justification to any other grace, or to all the graces together, or to all the fruits of them, as it has assigned it to faith, then they will be attended to.

They most vehemently urge that repentance is as necessary to our justification as faith. And this they say is easily proved from numerous testimonies of Scripture that call all men to repentance who want to be saved; two eminent places insisted on are Acts 2:38, 39; 3:19. But what they have to prove is not that it is as necessary as faith to be justified, but that it is used the same as faith in their justification. Baptism in Acts 2:38, 39 is joined with faith no less than repentance, and in other places it is expressly put into the same condition. For that reason, most of the ancients concluded that it was no less necessary to salvation than faith or repentance itself. Yet none of them assigned it the same role as faith in justification.

It is pleaded by some that whatever is a necessary condition of the new covenant, is also a necessary condition of justification. Otherwise, they reason, a man might be justified and not be saved for lack of that necessary condition. By a necessary condition of the new covenant, they mean that a man cannot be saved without it. But this is true of repentance as well as faith; and so repentance would equally be a necessary condition of our justification. I say that final perseverance is also a necessary condition of the new covenant and

therefore, by this rule, it is also necessary to justification. The ambiguity of the word “condition” confuses the present inquiry. These people say that some conditions are absolute, such as faith and repentance. Some conditions are only assumed, such as obedience, good works, and perseverance to the end. I suggest that if perseverance to the end is a necessary condition of a man’s justification, then he cannot be justified while he remains in this world. A condition suspends from existence what it is a condition of until it is accomplished. It serves no purpose to argue any longer about whether a man is or can be conditionally justified in this life. It is obvious how contrary this is to Scripture and experience.

They might argue that final perseverance, an express condition of salvation in the new covenant, is not the condition of our first justification, but only the condition of the continuation of our justification. If they do, then they yield their position that whatever is a necessary condition of the new covenant is a necessary condition of justification. What they call the first justification is the only thing we are addressing. Later I will declare that the continuation of our justification depends solely on the same causes as our justification itself. But it is not yet proved, nor will it be, that whatever is required of those who are to be justified, becomes a condition on which their justification depends. The only condition we allow to be a condition of justification is what *causes* it. And this we ascribe to *faith alone*. Because we do so, it is pleaded that we ascribe more in our justification to ourselves than our opposition does. They say that it is a condition, or “*causa sine qua non*,” of our justification. After they have given the specious name of a condition, and a “*causa sine qua non*,” to faith, they immediately place all other graces and works of obedience into the same state with it, to play the same role in justification. After this seeming gold has been cast into the fire of argument for a while, out comes the calf of a personal, inherent righteousness, by which men are justified before God. As for the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us, it has gone to heaven and they do not know what has become of it.

Definitions of justifying faith are so numerous, varied, and inconsistent, that they reveal little about the truth. All they do is offer occasions for new controversies and divisions. I know no man that has labored in this argument about the nature of faith more than Dr.



Jackson. He gives us a definition of justifying faith that I know few will subscribe to. Yet, in the main scope of it, it is both pious and sound. He tells us, "We may define the faith by which the just live as a firm and constant adherence to the mercies and the loving-kindness of the Lord, and to the spiritual food in his sacred word. Such food is much better than this life itself, grounded on a relish of their sweetness, worked in the heart of a man by the Spirit of Christ." Lively scriptural expressions of faith such as receiving Christ, leaning on him, rolling our burden on him, tasting how gracious the Lord is, and the like have recently been reproached, even blasphemed by many. They convey a better understanding of the nature, work, and object of justifying faith to the minds of men spiritually enlightened, than the most accurate definitions that many pretend to.

### 3. The Role of Faith in Justification

The description of justifying faith that was given before sufficiently reveals its use in justification. But because this use has been expressed with some variety, and several ways appear inconsistent, they must be considered in this passage. I will briefly speak to these various conceptions about the use of faith in our justification to give an understanding of what is meant by them, rather than to argue about their truth and propriety.

Protestant divines, until recently, have unanimously affirmed that faith is the instrumental cause of our justification. So it is expressed in many of the public confessions of their churches. This notion of theirs concerning the nature and use of faith was opposed from the first by those of the Roman church. Afterward, the Socinians opposed it as either false or improper. Of late this expression is disliked by some among ourselves: Episcopius, Curcellaeus, and others of that way. Those who are moderate decline this expression as improper rather than untrue. Our safest course in these cases is to consider what is meant. Because the only question is what meant by the expression, it is not enough that the word “instrument” is not found for this purpose in the Scripture. On the same ground we may reject a trinity of persons in the divine essence, but not one line of the Scripture can be rightly understood without it.

Those, like ourselves, who assert that faith is the instrumental cause of our justification, have two ends in mind. First, they intend to declare the meaning of those expressions in the Scripture that say we are justified “pistei” [NT:4102 by faith], absolutely: which must denote instrumentality either by form or mode of action. The Greek “Logidzometha oun pistei kikaioushai anthroopon” in Rom. 3:28 is translated “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith.” So, *Dia*< pi>*stewv* “Dia pisteos,” verse 22; *jEk* pi>*stewv* “Ek pisteos,” Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:8; *Dia*< th~v pi>*stewv* “Dia tes pisteos,” Eph. 2:8; *jEk* pi>*stewv* kai< dia< th~v pi>*stewv* “Ek pisteos, kai dia tes pisteos,” Rom. 3:30; that is, “Fide, ex fide, per fidem” which we can express only *by* faith or *through* faith. We are nowhere said to be justified “propter fidem” or *dia*< pi>*stin* “dia pistin,” *for* our faith. The inquiry is “What is the most proper, light-shedding, and convenient

way of declaring the meaning of these expressions?” Most Protestants judge it to be by an instrumental cause. For these expressions are used to speak of faith in our justification before God, and of no other grace of duty whatever. Therefore, they indicate the proper role of faith in our justification. And “dia” is nowhere used in the whole New Testament with a genitive case, unless to denote an instrumentality.

In the divine workings of the holy Trinity, the operation of the second person, who is a principal efficient in them, is sometimes expressed by this term. It may denote the order of operation in the holy Trinity, revealing the order of subsistence. Although it is also applied to God absolutely or the Father: Rom. 11:36, *Di j aujtou~?* “Di autou” (“By him are all things”). Again, *ejx e]rgwn no>mou* and *ejx ajkoh~v pi>stewv* “ex ergoon vomou” and “ex akoes pisteos” are directly opposed to each other, Gal. 3:2. But when it is said that a man is not justified *ejx e]rgwn no>mou* “ex ergoon nomou,” “by the works of the law,” it is acknowledged by all that the meaning of the expression is to exclude every kind of such works from any efficiency in our justification. It follows, therefore, that where we are said to be justified *ejk pi>stewv* “ek pisteos” – “by faith” – an instrumental efficiency is meant. The most common and proper meaning of the scriptural expressions, *pi>stei ejk pi>stewv* “pistei, ek pisteos,” and *Dia< pi>stewv* “dia pisteos,” is an instrumental cause, and any other kind of meaning is certainly excluded.

It might be said that if faith were the instrumental cause of justification, then either it is the instrument of God, or it is the instrument of believers themselves. It is plain that it is not the instrument of God because it is a duty that he prescribes to us. It is an act of our own and it is we that believe, not God. Nor can any act of ours be the instrument of his work. And if it were our own instrument, then we would justify ourselves. That would be derogatory to the grace of God and the blood of Christ.

The Scripture is explicit that “God justifies us by faith.” “It is one God which shall justify the circumcision *ejk pi>stewv* “ek pisteos,” (by faith,) “and the uncircumcision *dia< th~v pi>stewv* “dia tes pisteos,” (through or by faith), Rom. 3:30. “The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith,” Gal. 3:8. Because he

“purifies the hearts of men by faith,” Acts 15:9, faith may be said to be the instrument of God in our justification. It is both the means and the way ordained by him on our part by which we are justified. And he also bestows it on us and works it in us so that we may be justified. For “by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God,” Eph. 2:8. If anyone now says that on these accounts faith is the instrument of God for our justification, he will come to the right conception of the work of God in this. This is what the gospel says of faith in Rom. 1:16; and the ministers of it, 2 Cor. 5:18; 1 Tim. 4:6; and the sacraments too, Rom. 4:11; Tit. 3:5.

What is primarily meant is that faith is the instrument of those who believe. Nothing has been said that indicates they justify themselves. Because it is a pure sovereign act of God, it does not produce the effect of justification by a physical operation, nor does it merit justification morally in any way. It does not introduce an inherent formal cause of justification, there being no such thing in “rerum natura.” There is no reason to ascribe the effect of justification to anything but its principal efficient cause, which is God alone, and from whom it proceeds as a means of free and sovereign grace. [Dikaious>menoi dwrea<n th~| aujtou~ ca>riti](#) “Dikaiousmenoi doorean tei autou chariti,” Rom. 3:24; [Dia< th~v pi>stewv ejn tw~| aujtou~ ai\[mati](#) “Dia tes pisteos en tooi autou haimati,” verse 25. Therefore, it is the ordinance of God that prescribes our duty to exercise faith as an instrument for the purpose of our being justified freely by his grace. Unless someone can prove there is a more natural exposition of these expressions, “pistei, ek pisteos” and “dia tes pisteos,” they can contribute nothing to the understanding of this truth. All we want to do is endeavor to come to a right understanding of Scripture propositions and expressions. Otherwise, we wander outside the argument and lose ourselves in a maze of uncertain conjectures.

The second purpose of arguing that faith is instrumental in justification is expressed in the Scripture by apprehending and receiving Christ’s righteousness, and thereby gaining remission of sins. The words expressing this use of faith in our justification are [lamba>nw](#), [paralamba>nw](#), and [katalamba>nw](#) “lambanoo [NT:2983], para-lambanoo” and “kata-lambanoo.” Their consistent use in Scripture is to take, receive, accept, or lay hold of what is offered, tendered, given or granted to us, thereby making it our own;

[ejpilamza>nomai](#) “epilamthanomai” [NT:1949] is also used in the same sense in Heb. 2:16. So by faith we are said to “receive Christ,” John 1:12; Col. 2:6; the “abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness,” Rom. 5:17; the “word of promise,” Acts 2:41; the “word of God,” Acts 8:14; 1Thess. 1:6; 2:13; the “atonement made by the blood of Christ,” Rom. 5:11; the “forgiveness of sins,” Acts 10:43; 26:18; the “promise of the Spirit,” Gal. 3:14; and the “promises,” Heb. 9:15.

Therefore, there is nothing that agrees with our justification that we do not receive by faith. And by comparison, unbelief is expressed by “not receiving,” John 1:11; 3:11; 12:48; 14:17. Therefore, the object of faith in our justification, that thing by which we are justified, is tendered, granted, and given to us by God. The use of faith is to lay hold of it, to receive it, so that it may be our own. When we receive physical things that are given to us, we use our hand. Our hand, therefore, is the instrument of that reception. It is that thing by which we realize or lay hold of anything to appropriate it for ourselves. And it is the unique purpose that nature has assigned to our hand among all the members of the body. It has other uses, and other members on occasion may be as useful to the body as the hand. But the hand alone is the instrument of receiving what is being given to us, and to make it our own.

Because the righteousness by which we are justified is the gift of God which is tendered to us in the promise of the gospel, and the use of faith is to receive or lay hold of this righteousness, I do not know how it can be better expressed than as an instrument. All those who place the formal cause of our justification in ourselves, or our inherent righteousness, and so deny all imputation of the righteousness of Christ to our justification, are not capable of admitting that faith is an instrument in this work. For they do not acknowledge that we receive righteousness that is not our own as a gift. And so they cannot accept the idea of an instrument by which it can be received. They consider the righteousness itself as putative, imaginary, a chimera, a fiction. Therefore it can have no real causes. As was said at the start of this discourse, the truth and propriety of declaring the use of faith in our justification as an instrumental cause of it, depends on the substance of the doctrine itself. If we are justified by imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, which faith alone

receives, it will not be denied that faith is rightly enough the instrumental cause of our justification. But if we are justified by an inherent, evangelical righteousness of our own, faith may be the condition of imputing it to us, or a way to introduce it to us, or a way for us to merit it, but it cannot be an instrument.

Some plead that faith can only be the condition of our justification. As I said before, I will not argue about words, terms, or expressions, so long as what they mean is agreed upon. And there is an obvious sense in which faith may be called the condition of our justification. For no more may be meant by this than that faith is the duty that God requires on our part so that we may be justified. The whole Scripture bears witness to this. Yet this does not conflict with the idea that faith is the instrument by which we receive Christ and his righteousness. But to assert that faith is the condition of our justification, so as to give it another use in justification apart from being the instrumental cause of it, would alter the substance of the doctrine itself.

We must introduce words into religion that are used nowhere in the Scripture if we want to bring light and communicate a proper understanding of the things it contains. However, we should not take along with them their arbitrary, preconceived meanings, forged either among lawyers or in the peripatetic school. The use of these words by the most distinguished authors of the language, and their common use among ourselves, must determine their sense and meaning. We know the confusion that is produced by introducing words into ecclesiastical doctrines that have no agreed upon definition. So the word “merit” was introduced by some of the ancients to designate acquisition, “quovis modo,” by any means whatever. But there being no cogent reason to confine the word to that precise definition, it has become as corrupted as the rest of Christian religion. We must, therefore, make use of the best means we have to understand the meaning of this word and what is intended by it before we admit its use in this case.

“Conditio,” is variously used by the best Latin writers to translate [kata>stasiv](#), [tu>ch](#), [ajxi>a](#), [ajjti>a](#), [sunqh>kh](#), “katastasis, tuche, axia, aitia, tuntheche” in the Greek. The corresponding Latin words for these could also be “status, fortuna, dignitas, causa, pactum initum.” Which of these alternative meanings should be applied here is not

easy to determine. In common use, “conditio” may denote the state and quality of men, that is, *kata>stasis* and *ajxi>a* “katastatis” and “axia.” Sometimes it is a valuable consideration for something that is to be done, that is, *ajti>a* or *sunqh>kh* “aitia” or “suntheke.” But here it is applied to things in great variety. Sometimes it expresses the principal procuring or purchasing cause. It can be the condition on which a man lends another a hundred pounds, perhaps that he repay it with interest. It can be the price for which a man conveys his land to another. So a condition is a valuable consideration for something.

Sometimes “condition” means a circumstance that triggers the suspension of the principal cause. For example a man might bequeath a hundred pounds to another on the condition that he come to a particular place to obtain it. This is not a valuable consideration, yet the will of the testator can be suspended because of it. The possibilities are endless. Therefore we cannot determine the sense of this word “condition” without a particular declaration of what it means wherever it is used. Although this is not a sufficient reason to exclude using it to declare how we are justified by faith, it does exclude imposing a precise definition of it apart from its context. Without this, its application remains ambiguous.

For instance, it is commonly said that faith and new obedience are the condition of the new covenant. But because of the ambiguous definition and various uses of the term “condition,” we cannot understand with certainty what is meant by that. It is indeed conditional if the only intent is that, under the new covenant, God indispensably requires us to have a good conscience towards Him, and to glorify Him because Christ rose from the dead, and we are to fully enjoy all the benefits of salvation through faith and obedience. But if the intent is that our faith and obedience are required *prior* to participating in any grace, mercy, or privilege of salvation, then it is most false. They would become the consideration and procuring causes of our salvation, which is the reward for our faith and obedience. It would not only be contrary to the express testimonies of Scripture, but destructive of the nature of the covenant itself.

We could say that when faith is a condition of our justification, it is a “*causa sine qua non*,” which is easy enough to understand as an indispensable condition. But we do not get a plain understanding of what is meant when it is just one among several things creating the

plural “causa sine quibus non.” These, in a larger sense, are all such efficient or meritorious causes that are inferior to principal causes, and could do nothing without them. But in conjunction with the principal causes, they have a real effective influence, physical or moral, on producing the effect. And if we take a condition to be a “causa sine qua non” in this sense, we are still at a loss as to what its role may be with respect to our justification. If it is understood more strictly as something that is necessarily present, but has no causality of any kind, I cannot understand how it can be an ordinance of God. For everything that he has appointed to any end, moral or spiritual, is either symbolically instrumental, or actively instrumental to that end.

Other things may be generally and remotely necessary to achieve an end, which are also not ordinances of God, and do not cause it. The air we breathe is necessary to preach the word, and consequently it is a “causa sine qua non” of preaching. But it is not an ordinance of God with respect to preaching. Everything that God appoints to a special spiritual end either agrees with the internal efficiency of the principal cause, or it operates externally on the principal cause by removing obstacles and hindrances that oppose its efficiency. And this excludes all causes “sine quibus non” from any place among divine ordinances. God appoints nothing for an end that does nothing. His sacraments exhibit that grace which they do not contain in themselves. The preaching of the word has a real efficiency to all its ends. So have all the graces and duties that God works in us and requires of us. By all those graces and duties “we are made suitable for the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). And our whole obedience has a rewardable correlation to eternal life. That being said, if we allow faith to be the *condition* of our justification, intending that God requires it of us to be justified, and we cannot agree on what that means, it only leads to conflict.

To close these discourses concerning faith and its use in our justification, some things must yet be added concerning its “special object.” Although what has been said already about its nature and object are sufficient in general, there has been a debate about it under some special terms that must be considered. This is whether our justifying faith is in respect to Christ as a king and prophet in addition to priest. Was the satisfaction he made for us in those roles



in the same manner, and for the same purposes as he made in his role as priest? I will be brief in this inquiry, because it is a recent controversy, and it may be more of a curiosity than useful for edification. No reformed churches have taken a stance, and so anyone is free to express their apprehensions concerning it. To this purpose I say,

1. Justifying faith in receiving Christ principally respects his person, for all those ends for which he is the ordinance of God. It does not respect his person absolutely, because its formal object is the truth of God in the proposition, and not the thing that is proposed in itself. Therefore, it respects and receives Christ as proposed in the promise, and the promise itself is the formal object of its assent.

2. We cannot receive Christ in the promise, and exclude the consideration of any of his offices, for he must always be considered as vested with all his offices. So to receive Christ as a priest, but not as a king or prophet, is not faith, but unbelief – not the receiving, but the rejecting of him.

3. In receiving Christ for justification, our express design is to be justified thereby, and no more. Now, to be justified is to be freed from the guilt of sin and to have all our sins pardoned. It is to have a righteousness with which to appear before God so as to be accepted by him, and to gain a right to the heavenly inheritance. Every believer also has other designs such as the renovation of his nature, the sanctification of his person, and the ability to live for God in all holy obedience. But these are all things that he aims at by receiving Christ. Therefore,

4. Justifying faith respects Christ in his priestly office alone, because he was the surety of the covenant, and because of what he did in discharging that office. The consideration of his other offices is not excluded, but it is not formally the object of justifying faith.

5. When we say that the priestly office of Christ, or the blood of Christ, or the satisfaction of Christ, is the only thing that faith respects in justification, we do not exclude anything else that depends on that assertion, or agrees with it to make our faith effectual.

Such things include:

*First*, the “free grace” and favor of God in giving Christ for us and to us, and by which we are frequently said to be justified, Rom. 3:24; Eph. 2:8; Tit. 3:7. His wisdom, love, righteousness, and power are also part of that grace.

*Second*, it includes whatever in Christ himself was a necessary prerequisite to his discharge of that office, or a consequence of it, or accompanied it. Such was his incarnation, the whole course of his obedience, his resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and intercession. The consideration of all these things is inseparable from the discharge of his priestly office. And therefore justification is either expressly or virtually assigned to them too, Gen. 3:15; 1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14-16; Rom. 4:25; Acts 5:31; Heb. 7:27; Rom. 8:34. Yet, wherever our justification is assigned to them, they are not considered apart from their relation to his sacrifice and satisfaction.

*Third*, it also includes all the means of applying the sacrifice and righteousness of the Lord Christ to us. The principal efficient cause of that is the Holy Ghost. For that reason we are said to be “justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,” 1 Cor. 6:11. And the instrumental cause of that on the part of God is the “promise of the gospel,” Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:22, 23. It would be wrong to assume that by this assertion we restrict the object of justifying faith. Indeed, we assign the whole mediatory office of Christ to our justification. We do not exclude the whole of his kingly and prophetic offices, only those aspects that bring more of ourselves rather than Christ into our justification. The assertion may be proved,

(1.) From the experience of all who are justified or seek justification according to the gospel. For under this notion of seeking justification or righteousness, they were all considered, and considered themselves, as *uJpo>dikoi tw~| Qew~|* “hupodikoi tooi Theooi” [NT:5267 2316] – “guilty before God.” They were subject to, obnoxious by, and liable to his wrath in the curse of the law; as we declared at the start of this discourse, Rom. 3:19. They were all in the same state that Adam was in after the fall, and to whom God proposed the relief of the incarnation and suffering of Christ, Gen. 3:15. To seek justification is to seek a discharge from this woeful state and condition. Such persons have, and ought to have, other designs and desires in their search. The state they are in before their

justification leaves them depraved in their nature; the power of sin is prevalent in them. Their whole soul is defiled. They desire not only to be justified, but to be sanctified as well. Because justification is their relief for the guilt of sin and the lack of righteousness before God, I say they look to Christ as “a propitiation through faith in his blood.” In their desire for *sanctification*, they look to the special exercise of his kingly and prophetic offices. But to be freed from the guilt and condemnation of sin, and made acceptable to God so as not to come into judgment, they look to Christ crucified. Their faith fixes upon and acquiesces in that alone: Christ lifted up as the “brazen serpent” in the wilderness, the blood of Christ, the propitiation that he was, the atonement that he made, his bearing their sins, his being made sin and a curse for them, his obedience, his putting an end to sin, and the everlasting righteousness that he brought in. If it was otherwise in the experience of any believer, I am not acquainted with it. I do not say that conviction of sin is the only prior condition of actual justification. But this is what makes a sinner “*subjectum capax justificationis*,” capable of being justified. No man can be considered justifiable unless he is actually under the power of the conviction of his sin, and he understands all the consequences of it.

Take any sinner in this condition as it is described by the apostle in Rom. 3, “guilty before God,” with his “mouth stopped” as to any pleas, defenses, or excuses. Suppose he is seeking relief and deliverance from this estate, that is, he seeks to be justified according to the gospel. He does not and cannot wisely take any other course of action than what he is directed to take by the apostle in verses 20-25, “Therefore by the deeds of the law no one can be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus Christ to all and upon all those who believe; for there is no difference: all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” For that reason I argue,

Whatever a guilty and condemned sinner fixes his faith on to obtain deliverance and justification, is the special object of justifying faith. But this comes by the grace of God alone, through the redemption that is in Christ who is proposed by God as a propitiation through faith in his blood. Either this is so, or the apostle incorrectly guides the souls and consciences of men who are in the condition that he describes. It is the blood of Christ alone that he directs their faith to. Faith fixes upon grace, redemption, and propitiation, all uniquely through the blood of Christ. If I am not mistaken, this will be confirmed by the experience of anyone who has observed how their faith has acted in their justification before God.

(2.) The Scripture plainly declares that justifying faith looks to the actions of Christ in his priestly office alone. In the church of old, justification was represented in the expiatory sacrifice when all their sins and iniquities were pardoned, and they were made acceptable to God. What their faith acted on was limited to the imposition of all their sins on the head of the sacrifice by the high priest, Lev. 16. "By his knowledge" (that is, by faith in him) "shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities," Isa. 53:11. What faith looks to in Christ for justification is his "bearing their iniquities" alone. Guilty, convinced sinners look to him by faith as he was lifted up on the cross, John 3:14, 15, just as those who were stung with "fiery serpents" looked to the "brazen serpent." Paul expressed the nature and acting of faith in our justification in Rom. 3:24, 25. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." As he is a propitiation, as he shed his blood for us, as we have redemption thereby, Christ is the unique object of our faith with respect to our justification. See Rom. 5:9, 10; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Eph. 2:13-16; Rom. 8:3, 4. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2 Cor. 5:21. What we look for in justification is to participate in the righteousness of God. We want to be made the righteousness of God, not in ourselves, but in Christ Jesus. And what alone is proposed as the means and cause of our faith, is his being made sin for us, or a sacrifice for sin, where all the guilt of our sins was laid on him. This therefore, is faith's unique object. Wherever the Scripture directs us to seek forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ, to receive the

atonement, to be justified through faith in Christ crucified, it limits and determines the object of our faith in justification.

It may be pleaded, despite these testimonies, that none of them affirms we are justified by faith in the blood of Christ alone. None of them excludes considering the exercise of the other offices of Christ as the object of justifying faith in the same manner and to the same ends as his priestly office.

This exception derives from a common objection to the doctrine of justification by faith alone that the exclusive term “alone” is not found in the Scripture. In reply, there is sufficient evidence that although the specific word is not found, there are expressions equivalent to it, as we will see. It is so in this particular instance of Christ’s crucifixion. First, where our justification is expressly ascribed to our faith in the blood of Christ as the propitiation for our sins (believing in him as crucified for us), and it is nowhere ascribed to receiving him as King, Lord, or Prophet, it is plain that the former virtually excludes the latter. Secondly, I do not say that considering the kingly and prophetic offices of Christ is excluded from our justification in the same way that works are excluded from faith and grace. Works are to be positively rejected from them as an act of our minds. But as to these offices of Christ, we are only saying that they are not included as an object of faith for justification. To believe his blood justifies us, while thinking we can exclude compliance with his other offices, is an impious thought.

(3.) Considering these offices will not give the relief that the consciences of convinced sinners seek in justification. We should not lose sight of the state of the person who is to be justified, and what he seeks by it. He seeks pardon of sin and righteousness before God alone. Something that is completely unsuited to give this relief to him is not, and cannot be, the object of his faith on which justification depends. This relief is to be had in Christ alone. But under what consideration? The whole intent of the sinner is to discover how he may be accepted with God, how he may be at peace with him, and have all God’s wrath turned away by a propitiation or atonement. Only someone acting towards God on the sinner’s behalf to turn away God’s anger and gain acceptance with him can do this. It is by the blood of Christ that we are “made close,” who were “far off,” Eph. 2:13. By the blood of Christ we, who were enemies, are

reconciled, verse 16. By the blood of Christ we have redemption, Rom. 3:24, 25; Eph. 1:7; etc. This provision, therefore, is the object of faith.

All of the activities of the kingly and prophetic offices of Christ are from God; that is, they are exercised in the name and authority of God and directed towards us. None of them is directed towards God on our behalf to gain acceptance with God. They are all good, blessed, holy, and tend eminently to glorify God in our salvation. In fact, they are no less necessary to our salvation, to the praise of God's grace, than the atonement for sin and satisfaction that he made; for they revealed the way of life to us, communicated grace, sanctified us, and bestowed the reward on us. It is in the exercise of his kingly power that the Lord Christ both pardons and justifies sinners. He did not as a king constitute the law of justification, for it was given and established in the first promise; but he came to execute it, John 3:16. By virtue of his atonement and righteousness, imputed to them, he both pardons and justifies sinners. Yet it is the acts of his priestly office alone that act toward God on our behalf. Whatever he did for the church on earth with God, in obedience, suffering, and offering himself up, and whatever he does in heaven, in intercession and appearance in the presence of God for us, it all entirely belongs to his priestly office. In these things alone the convinced sinner finds relief when he seeks deliverance from the state of sin, and acceptance with God. Therefore, these alone must comprise the unique object of his faith that will give him rest and peace. Of itself, this last consideration is sufficient to determine this difference between the offices.

In general it may be argued that justifying faith is the same as saving faith. And it may be said that we are justified not by this or that part of faith, but by faith in general. As to faith in this sense, not only is it directed to Christ in all his offices, but obedience itself is also included in it, as evident in many places in the Scripture. Therefore, there is no reason why we should limit the object of our faith to the person of Christ discharging his priestly office with its effects and fruits. In answer to this argument,

1. Saving faith and justifying faith are one and the same. Yet saving faith has a unique role in justification. Therefore,

2. Although saving faith always includes obedience, obedience is not the form or essence of this faith. It is only a necessary effect of the actual cause of this faith. It is the fruit in the fruit-bearing juice. Its presence and exercise is often mentioned where there is no express mention of Christ, his blood, or his righteousness. It is applied to all the acts, duties, and purposes of the gospel. All this proves is that it has a unique object in our justification. If it could be proved that where justification is ascribed to faith, there is any other object assigned to faith, such as what it depends on for the pardon of sin and acceptance with God, this objection would have some force; but this cannot be done.
3. This is not to say that we are justified by just a part of faith, or by just the essence of faith. We are justified by the entire grace of faith, acting in the unique manner that others have observed. The true meaning of it is not whether anything of Christ is to be excluded as an object of justifying faith, but what in and of ourselves is to be admitted as the efficient cause in that work, under the name of receiving Christ as our Lord and King. Justifying faith is receiving Christ. Therefore, whatever belongs to the person of Christ, or his offices, or the discharge of any of his offices, is freely admitted to belong to the object of justifying faith. This is so as long as it procures or causes our justification meritoriously, materially, or formally. I will not argue, "What of Christ is or is not the object of justifying faith?" The only question is this, "Is our own obedience, whether distinct from faith or included in it, the condition of our justification before God in the same way that faith is its condition?"

## 4. Justification – the idea and meaning of the word in Scripture

To gain a correct understanding of the nature of justification, the proper sense and meaning of the words “justification” and “justify” must be investigated. Until their meaning is agreed upon, it is impossible to avoid quibbling. Some people have taken these words in one sense, and some in another. As a result, they have appeared to deliver contrary doctrines concerning our justification before God, despite fully agreeing upon the import of these words. Thus, many have already declared and affirmed their own understanding of the true meaning of these words. But stating it correctly here is more important to determine the main objections to and significance of the doctrine itself than most understand. Therefore, something at least remains to be said to vindicate the import and the only meaning of these words *in the Scripture*. And so I will give an account of my observations concerning that with what diligence I can.

The Latin derivation and composition of the word “justificatio,” would seem to denote an internal change from inherent unrighteousness to inherent righteousness by a physical motion and transmutation, as the scholastics would put it. So sanctification, mortification, vivification, and the like all denote a real internal work on the subject spoken of. In the whole of the Roman Catholic School, justification is taken for justifaction, or making a man inherently righteous by the infusion of a habit of grace, where previously the man was inherently unrighteous and habitually unjust. While this is taken to be the proper meaning of the word, we cannot speak to the same point in our disputes with them about the cause and nature of the justification that the Scripture teaches.

This apparent sense of the word possibly deceived some of the ancients, Austin [Augustine] in particular, who declared the doctrine of justification to be free, gratuitous sanctification, without respect to any works of our own. Neither he nor any of them thought of a justification before God that would consist of the pardon of our sins and our acceptance as righteous by virtue of any inherent habit of grace infused into us or acted out by us. Therefore the subject matter must be determined by the scriptural use and meaning of these



words before we can speak intelligibly concerning it. If justifying men in the Scripture means making them subjectively and inherently righteous, we must acknowledge a mistake in what we teach concerning the nature and causes of justification. If it means no such thing, all their arguments about justification by infusing grace and inherent righteousness fall to the ground. Therefore, all Protestants (including the Socinians) affirm that the use and meaning of these words is forensic, denoting an act of jurisdiction. Only the Socinians and some others would have it mean the pardon of sin only, which the word does not mean at all. The sense of the word is to absolve, to acquit, to declare righteous after a trial, which in this case, the pardon of sin would necessarily follow.

“Justificatio” and “justifico” are never used in the Latin tongue to make someone inherently righteous by any means who was not righteous before. But because these words were coined to mean such things, we can only determine their meaning by considering the nature of the things that they were invented to declare and signify. And because in this language these words are derived from “jus” and “justum,” they must refer to an act of jurisdiction rather than a physical operation or infusion. “Justificari” is “justus censer, pro justo haberi;” – to be esteemed, accounted, or adjudged righteous. So in adoption a man was made “justus filius” to the person who adopted him. In adoption there is no internal inherent change made in the person adopted. Instead, by virtue of being adopted, he is esteemed and adjudged to be a true son, and he has all the rights of a legitimate son. So by justification, a man is only esteemed, declared, and pronounced righteous, as if he were completely so. And in the present case the substance of justification and gratuitous adoption are the same, John 1:12; only the effects or privileges that ensue from each are different.

But the true and genuine meaning of these words is to be determined from the original languages of the Scripture. In the Hebrew it is [qdx](#); “tsadak” [OT:6663]. This in the LXX is rendered [Di>kaion ajpofai>nw](#) “Dikaion apofainoo,” Job 27:5; [Di>kaiov ajnafai>nomai](#) “Dikaios anafainomai,” chap. 13:18; [Di>kaion kri>nw](#) “Dikaion krinoo,” Prov. 17:15; it means to show or declare one righteous; to appear righteous; to judge anyone righteous. And the meaning may be taken from any one of them, as in Job 13:18, [fp;v\]mi yTiK\]r\[; an;AhNehi qD;x\]a](#),

ynia}AyKi yTi[]dy; “Hinneh-na ‘arakti mishpat yada’ti ki-’ani ‘etsdak” – “Behold, now I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified.” The preparation of his case that he will be judged on, is his preparation for a sentence, either of absolution or condemnation. His confidence was that he should be justified, that is, absolved, acquitted, or pronounced righteous. And the meaning is no less obvious in the other places. Commonly, they render it by [dikaio](#)>w? “dikaio- oo” [NT:1344], of which I will speak afterwards.

Properly, it denotes an action towards another (as justification and to justify do) in the Hebrew Hiphil tense only [NT:6663]; and a reciprocal action of a man on himself, in the Hebrew Hithpael tense, [qD;fx\]ji](#) “hitstadak.” Here alone is the true meaning of these words determined. In no place, nor on any occasion, is it used in that conjugation to denote an action towards another in any sense but to absolve, acquit, esteem, declare, pronounce righteous, or to impute righteousness; this is the forensic sense of the word we plead for. That is its consistent meaning. It never once signifies to make inherently righteous, much less to pardon or forgive. Some are so vain to pretend that justification consists only in the pardon of sin, which the word does not signify in any place in Scripture. Whatever an infusion of inherent grace may be, or however it may be called, it is not justification, and it cannot be; the word nowhere signifies any such thing. Therefore, those in the church of Rome do not so much oppose justification by faith through imputing the righteousness of Christ, as they deny that there is any such thing as justification. What they call the first justification, which consists in the infusion of a principle of inherent grace, is nothing like justification. And their second justification, which consists in the merit of works, where absolution or pardon of sin has no place, is inconsistent with evangelical justification, as we will show afterwards.

This word, therefore, is always used in a forensic sense to mean the act of God towards men, or of men towards God, or of men among themselves. It does not denote a physical operation, transfusion, or transmutation. 2 Sam. 15:4, “If any man has a suit or cause, let him come to me,” [wyTiq\]Dx\]hiw\]](#) “wehitsdaktiw,” “and I will do him justice;” – “I will justify him, judge in his cause, and pronounce for him.” Deut. 25:1, “If there is a controversy among men, and they

come for judgment so that the judges may judge them,” [qyDixjAta, WqyDix\]hiw](#) “wehitsdiku et-hatsdik,” “they shall justify the righteous.” They will pronounce sentence on his side: conversely, [\[v;r;h;Ata, W\[yvir\]hiw](#) “wehirshi’u et-harasha” “and they shall condemn the wicked;” they will make him wicked, as the word signifies. That is, they will judge, declare, and pronounce him wicked; thereby he becomes so judicially in the eye of the law, just as the other is made righteous by declaration and acquitment. He does not say, “This shall pardon the righteous;” which would overthrow both the antithesis and the purpose of the passage. [\[yvir\]hi](#) “Hirshia” [NT:7561] has as little to do with infusing wickedness into a man, as [qyDix\]ji](#) “hitsdik” [NT:6663] does with infusing a principle of grace or righteousness into him. The same antithesis occurs in Prov. 17:15, [qyDix \[yvir\]mW \[v;r; qyDix\]m](#), “matsdik rasha umarshia tsadik” – “He that justifies the wicked, and condemns the righteous...” It is not that he changes him inherently from unrighteous to righteousness; without any basis he acquits him and declares him to be righteous, and that “is an abomination to the LORD.” Although this is spoken of the judgment of men, the judgment of God also follows this truth: for although he justifies the ungodly – those who are ungodly in themselves – he does it on the basis and in consideration of a perfect righteousness that is made theirs by imputation. It is an act of his grace, that they may be appropriate subjects of this righteous favor. He really and inherently changes them from unrighteousness to holiness, by the renovation of their natures.

And these things are unique acts of God. There is nothing comparable among men. The imputation of the righteousness of Christ to a person who is in himself ungodly, leading to his justification so that he may be acquitted, absolved, and declared righteous, is built on such foundations. It proceeds on principles of righteousness, wisdom, and sovereignty that have no equivalent place among the acts of men, nor can they. Moreover, when God justifies the ungodly on account of the righteousness imputed to him, at the same instant, by the power of his grace, he makes him inherently and subjectively righteous or holy. That is something men cannot do for each other. When men justify the wicked in their wicked ways, they are constantly made worse and more obdurate in

evil. But when God justifies the ungodly, their change from personal unrighteousness and unholiness, to righteousness and holiness, necessarily and infallibly accompanies that justification.

The word is used for the same purpose in Isa. 5:23, “Which justify the wicked for reward;” and in chap. 50:8, 9, [yqiyDix\]m bwOrq](#); “karov matsdiki” – “He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me? Let us stand together: who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who shall condemn me?” Here we have a full declaration of the proper sense of the word, which is to acquit and pronounce righteous at a trial. We likewise find a full declaration of the word “condemn” in 1 Kings 8:31, 32. “If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before your altar in this house; then hear you in heaven, and judge your servants,” – [\[v;r; \[yvir\]hl\]](#) “leharchi’a rasha” “to condemn the wicked,” [qyDix qyDix\]jl\]W](#) “ulhatsdik tsadik,” “and to justify the righteous.” The same words are repeated in 2Chr. 6:22, 23. Psa. 82:3, [WqyDx\]h vr;w; yni\[;](#) “ani warash hatsdiku” – “Do justice to the afflicted and poor.” That is, justify them in their cause against wrong and oppression. Exod. 23:7, [\[v;r; qyDix\]aAalo](#) “lo- ‘atsdik rasha” – “I will not justify the wicked;” meaning to absolve, acquit, or pronounce him righteous. Job 27:5, [μk,t\]a, qyDix\]aAμa yL\] hl;ylij;](#) “chalilah li imatsdik etchem” – “Be it far from me to justify you,” or pronounce sentence on your behalf as if you were righteous. Isa. 53:11, “By his knowledge my righteous servant,” [qyDix\]y](#) “yatsdik,” “shall justify many.” The reason is added, “For he shall bear their iniquities;” by which they are absolved and justified.

Once it is used in Hithpael, where a reciprocal action is denoted, justifying himself. Gen. 44:16, “And Judah said, What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak?” [qD;fx\]NiAhmW](#) “Umah-nitstadak,” “and how shall we justify ourselves? God has found out our iniquity.” They could plead nothing to absolve their guilt.

Once the participle is used to denote the outward instrumental cause of the justification of others. It is the only place there is any doubt of its sense. Daniel 12:3, [μyBirh; yqeyDix\]mW](#) “Umatsdikei harabim” – “And those who justify many,” in the same sense that preachers of

the gospel are said “to save themselves and others,” 1 Tim. 4:16. Men are no less instrumental causes of others’ justification than of their sanctification.

Therefore, although [qdx](#); “tsadak” in Kal signifies “justum esse,” and sometimes “juste agere,” which may relate to inherent righteousness, where any action towards another is denoted, this word signifies nothing but to esteem, declare, pronounce, and adjudge anyone absolved, acquitted, cleared, or justified. There is no other kind of justification once mentioned in the Old Testament. [Dikaio>w](#) “Dikaio-oo” [NT:1344] is the word used for the same purpose in the New Testament, and for that purpose alone. This word is never used by any good author to signify making a man righteous by producing internal righteousness in him. It means either to absolve or acquit by pronouncing righteous, or on the contrary, it means to condemn.

As we have done with “hitsdik” in the Old Testament, we could inquire whether this word is used in the New Testament in a forensic sense to denote an act of jurisdiction, or in a physical sense to express an internal change or mutation. Such an infusion of a habit of righteousness might lead to a pardon. But this we may lay aside. No one has ever pretended that “dikaio-oo” signifies a pardon of sin. On the contrary, it is the only word applied to express our justification in the New Testament. Even if was taken to mean a pardon, it could not be called justification as argued by those of the Roman church. It is something of quite another nature than what that word signifies. Matt. 11:19, [jEdikaiw>qh hJ Zofi>a](#), “Edikaioothe he Sofia,” “Wisdom is justified of her children;” not made just, but approved and declared. Chap. 12:37, [jEk tw~n lo>gwn sou dikaiwqh>sh|](#)? “Ek toon logoon sou dikaioothesei” – “By your words you shall be justified;” not made just by them, but judged according to them, as made evident in the antithesis, [kai< ejk tw~n lo>gwn sou katadikasqh>sh|](#) “kai ek toon logoon sou katadikasthesei” – “and by your words you shall be condemned.” Luke 7:29, [jEdikai>Wsan to<n Qeo>n?](#) “Edikaioosan ton Theon” – “They justified God.” Surely this was not by making him righteous in himself, but by owning, avowing, and declaring his righteousness. Chap. 10:29, [JO de< ze>lwn dikaiou~n eJauto>n?](#) “Ho de theloon dikaioun heauton” – “He, willing to justify himself;” to declare and maintain his own righteousness. To

the same purpose, chap. 16:15, [Ymei~v ejste oiJ dikaiou~ntev eJautou<v ejnw>pion tw~n ajnqrw>pwn](#) “Hemeis este hoi dikaiountes heautous enoopian toon enthroopoon” – “You justify yourselves before men.” They did not make themselves internally righteous, but approved of their own condition, as our Savior declares in Lk. 18:14. The publican went down [dedikaiwme>nov](#) “dedikaioomenos” [NT:1344] (justified) to his house. That is, he was acquitted, absolved, and pardoned after the confession of his sin, and supplication for remission.

In Acts 13:38, 39 and Rom. 2:13, [OiJ poihtai< tou~ nu>mou dikaiwqh>sontai?](#) “Hoi poietai tou nomou dikaiouthesontai” – “The doers of the law shall be justified.” This passage declares directly the nature of our justification before God, and it puts the meaning of the word out of question. Justification ensues as the whole effect of inherent righteousness according to the law; and therefore it is irrefutably not the act of making of us righteous. It is spoken of God, Rom. 3:4, [Opwv ajn dikaiwqh~|v ejn toi~v lo>Goiv sou?](#) “Hopos an dikaioutheis en tois logois sou” – “That you might be justified in your sayings.” To ascribe any other sense to the word is blasphemy. The same word is used in like manner in 1Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 3:20, 26, 28, 30; 4:2, 5; 5:1, 9; 6:7; 8:30; Gal. 2:16, 17; 3:11, 24; 5:4; Tit. 3:7; and James 2:21, 24, 25. In none of these instances does it have any other meaning, nor does it denote making any man righteous by infusing a habit or principle of righteousness, or any other internal mutation.

It is not in *many* places, but in *all* places of Scripture, that the words we have listed signify the declaration or juridical pronouncement of someone as righteous. Where they are used, they are only used in a forensic sense, especially where mention is made of justification before God. Because, in my judgment, this one consideration sufficiently defeats all the pretences of the Roman church about the nature of justification, I will consider any exceptions against the observations made and remove it out of our way.

Lud de Blanc, in his reconciliatory endeavors on this article of justification, (“Thes. de Usu et Acceptancee Vocis, Justificandi,”) grants to the Papists that the word [dikaio>w](#) “dikaio-oo” [NT:1344] does, in several places of the New Testament, signify to renew, to sanctify, or to infuse a habit of holiness or righteousness, just as they

argue. He undoubtedly grounds that concession on the most pertinent passages. I do not expect anyone else will treat this concession more fairly than he will. I will therefore examine all the instances that he cites for this purpose and let you determine the difference. The only restriction I ask is that, if the meaning of the word in any of the places he mentions seems doubtful (as it does not to me), then that uncertainty should not override the meaning in so many other places where it is clear and unquestionable.

The first place he mentions is that of the apostle Paul himself, Rom. 8:30, “moreover, whom he predestined, he also called; and whom he called, he also justified; and whom he justified, he also glorified.” He argues that the reason “justified” in this place is an internal work of inherent holiness is this: “It is not likely,” he says, “that the holy apostle, in this enumeration of gracious privileges, would omit the mention of our sanctification. It is the means by which we are freed from the service of sin, and adorned with true internal holiness and righteousness. It is utterly omitted if it is not included under the name and title of being justified. It would be absurd for some to put it under the heading of glorification.”

In answer to this argument:

1. The grace of sanctification, by which our nature is spiritually washed, purified, and endowed with a principle of life, holiness, and obedience to God, is a privilege that is unquestionably great and excellent, and without which none can be saved. Our redemption by the blood of Christ is the same. Both of these this apostle declares, commends, and insists upon in numerous other places. But I dare not judge whether he ought to have mentioned either of them in this place, seeing he has not done so.

2. If our sanctification were included in any of the privileges here, predestination would be more probable than being justified. Indeed, it seems to be expressly included in vocation (calling). Because it is effectual vocation that is meant, by which a holy principle of spiritual life or faith itself is communicated to us, our sanctification is the effect, and predestination is the immediate cause. For that reason, we are said to “be called to be saints,” Rom. 1:7. This is the same as being “sanctified in Christ Jesus,” 1 Cor. 1:2. In many other places, sanctification is included in vocation.

3. Because sanctification prepares us for glory, it is essentially of the same nature as glory itself. It infuses a principle of spiritual life which, when acted out, leads to an increase in our duties of holiness, righteousness, and obedience. For that reason, its advances in us are said to be from “glory to glory,” 2Cor. 3:18. Glory itself is called the “grace of life,” 1Pet. 3:7. It is much more properly expressed by being gloried than by being justified, which is a privilege quite of another nature. However, it is evident that there is no reason why we should depart from the general use and meaning of the word, and no circumstance in the text compels us to do so.

The next place that he yields to this meaning is 1Cor. 6:11, “Such were some of you: but you are washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” He tries to assert that justification is intended here to mean the infusion of an inherent principle of grace, making us inherently righteous, for three reasons:

1. “Because justification is here ascribed to the Holy Ghost: ‘You are justified by the Spirit of our God’ But renewing us is the proper work of the Holy Spirit.”
2. “It is evident,” he says, “that by justification the apostle means some change occurred in the Corinthians, by which they ceased to be what they were before. They were fornicators and drunkards, who could not inherit the kingdom of God; but now they were changed, which proves a real inherent work of grace is meant.”
3. “If justification here signifies nothing more than being absolved from the punishment of sin, then the reasoning of the apostle will be weak. For after he has said the greater, to heighten it, he adds the lesser. For it is more to be washed than merely to be freed from the punishment of sin.”

***In answer to his reasoning,***

1. None of these reasons proves that sanctification and justification are the same. The apostle makes an express distinction between them and, as this author observes, proceeds from one to the other ascending from the lesser to the greater. The infusion of a habit or



principle of grace or righteousness, by which we are inherently righteous, is our sanctification and nothing else. Indeed, sanctification is distinguished from washing in this passage, so it peculiarly denotes positive habits of grace and holiness. He could not have declared the nature of it any differently than by expressing it as being justified.

2. Justification is the work of the Spirit of God. He is the principal efficient cause of the application of the grace of God and blood of Christ that justifies us. He is also the means of that faith by which we are justified. Although he justifies us, it does not follow that our justification consists in the renovation of our natures.

3. So far as it was physical in its inherent effects, the apostle expressly ascribes the change in these Corinthians to their washing and sanctification. There is no need to suppose that this change is expressed by their being justified. The real change asserted in the renovation of our natures is entirely the work and nature of our sanctification. By reason of the vicious habits and practices mentioned, these people were in a state of condemnation, and had no right to the kingdom of heaven. By their justification they were changed and transferred out of that state into another, one in which they had peace with God, and a right to life eternal.

4. The third reason is based on a mistake, namely, that being justified is only being “freed from the punishment due to sin.” Justification is the result of both the non-imputation of sin and the imputation of righteousness. This inseparably includes the privilege of adoption, and a right to the heavenly inheritance. It does not appear that the apostle, by enumerating these privileges, meant a process from the lesser to the greater. Nor is it safe for us to compare and determine which is greater. Yet, we may say that in this life we can be made partakers of no greater mercy or privilege than our justification. You may see for that reason how impossible it is to find any place where the words “justification” and “to justify” signify a real internal work and physical operation. Even this learned man, a person of more than ordinary perspicacity, candor, and judgment, trying to prove it, insisted on instances that give so little support.

He adds Tit. 3:5-7 as another example: “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; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” The sole argument he makes to prove that justification means an infusion of internal grace is that the apostle first mentions “the washing of regeneration,” and afterwards mentions that we are “justified by his grace.” He assumes from this that we must be regenerated and renewed before we may be justified; and if so, then our justification contains and comprises our sanctification.

The plain truth is, the apostle does not say one word about the necessity of our sanctification, regeneration, or renovation by the Holy Ghost, prior to our justification. Indeed he assigns regeneration, renovation, and justification, which are all the means of our salvation, equally to grace and mercy, and he does so in opposition to any works of our own. Nor does Paul intimate any order of precedence or connection between the things that he mentions other than justification and adoption. Justification has the priority in order of nature: “That, being justified by his grace, we should be heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” All the things he mentions are inseparable. No man is regenerated or renewed by the Holy Ghost unless he is justified; no man is justified, unless he is renewed by the Holy Ghost. And they are all equally of the sovereign grace in God, as opposed to any works of righteousness that we have done. God’s grace is as much a part of sanctification as it is of justification. But the apostle says nothing in this place about the necessity of being sanctified so that we may be justified before God, who justifies the ungodly. Even if he did so, it would not prove that “to be justified,” means “to be sanctified,” or to have inherent holiness and righteousness worked in us. But these passages would not have been used to prove it, where these things are so expressly distinguished, unless there are none with more force or evidence.

The last place Lud de Blanc grants this meaning of the word [dikaio](#)>w “dikaio-oo,” is Rev. 22:11, [JO di](#)>kaov [dikaiwqh](#)>tw [e\]ti](#)? “Ho dikaios dikaioothetoo eti,” in Latin, “Qui justus est, justificetur adhuc;” which is the passage cited by all the Romanists. “Let him who is righteous be justified more.” And he says there are only a few among the Protestants who do not acknowledge that the word cannot be

used here in a forensic sense. To be justified here, is to go on and increase in piety and righteousness.

There are several answers to this argument:

1. A large objection lies in the text that is used to support these words. For many ancient copies do not read, *JO di>kaiov dikaiwqh>tw e]ti*, “Ho dikaios dikaioothetoo eti,” which the Vulgar renders “Justificetur adhuc.” Instead it reads, *Dikaiosu>nhn poihsa>Tw e]ti?* “Dikaiosunen poiesatoo eti” – “Let him that is righteous work righteousness still,” as does the printed copy which now lies before me. That it how it reads in the copy of the Complutensian edition, which Stephens commends above all others, and in one more ancient copy that he used. It is the same in the Syrian and Arabic published by Hutterus, and in our own Polyglot. So Cyprian reads the words, “De bono patientiae; justus autem adhuc justior faciat, similiter et qui sanctus sanctiora.” And I do not doubt that it is the true reading of the passage, *dikaiwqh>tw* “dikaioothetoo” being supplied by some to comply with *aJgiasqh>tw* “hagiasthetoo” that ensues. And this phrase of *dikaiosu>nhn poiei~n* “dikaiosunen poiein” [NT:1343 4160] is unique to this apostle, being used by no one else in the New Testament. He uses it expressly in 1Jn. 2:29, and chap. 3:7, where these words, *JO poiw~n dikaiosu>nhn, di>kaio>v e]sti* “Ho poioon dikaiosunen, dikaios esti,” plainly contain what is expressed here, “he that does righteousness is righteous.”
2. If the suggested word “dikaioothetoo” is kept, it must be rendered by the Vulgar, “Let him be justified more.” It regards an act of God, which neither begins nor continues as a prescribed duty for us; nor is it capable of increasing in degrees.
3. Men are said to be *di>kioi* “dikaioi” generally from inherent righteousness. If the apostle had meant to say justification in this place, he would not have said *oJ di>kaiov* “ho dikaios,” but *oJ dikaiwqei>v* “ho dikaiotheis.” All of which prefers the Complutensian, Syrian, and Arabic readings, to the Vulgar. If the Vulgar reading is retained, then it can only mean that he who is righteous should proceed in working righteousness to secure his justified estate for himself, and to display it before God and the world.

Now, because the words [dikaio>w](#) “dikaio-oo” and [dikaious~mai](#) “dikaiousmai” are used thirty-six times in the New Testament, these are all the places where any objection must be asserted against their forensic meaning; and how ineffectual these exceptions are is evident to any impartial judge.

Some other considerations are appropriate here, such as the contrast between justification and condemnation. We find it in Isa. 50:8, 9; Prov. 17:15; Rom. 5:16, 18; 8:33, 34 and in a number of other places. Condemnation is not infusing a habit of wickedness into someone that is condemned, nor making someone inherently wicked who was righteous before. It is passing a sentence on a man with respect to his wickedness. In the same way, justification is not changing a person from inherent unrighteousness to righteousness by infusing a principle of grace, but by declaring him to be righteous.

Moreover, what is meant in the Scripture is suggested by equivalent terms, which absolutely exclude any infusion of a habit of righteousness. For example, the apostle expresses it by the “imputation of righteousness without works,” Rom. 4:6, 11. In the same place, he calls it the “blessedness” which we have by the “pardon of sin” and the “covering of iniquity.” It is called “reconciliation with God,” Rom. 5:9, 10. To be “justified by the blood of Christ” is the same as “reconciled by his death.” “Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath by him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” See 2 Cor. 5:20, 21. Reconciliation is not infusing a habit of grace, but effecting peace and love by the removal of all enmity and causes of offense.

To “save,” and “salvation,” are used for the same purpose. “He shall save his people from their sins,” Matt. 1:21, is the same as “By him all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses,” Acts 13:39. Gal. 2:16, “We have believed, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law,” is the same as Acts 15:11, “But we believe that, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Eph. 2:8, 9, “By grace are you saved through faith; ...and not of works.” To be saved is to be justified. So it is expressed by pardon, or

the “remission of sins,” which is the effect of being saved, Rom. 4:5, 6; by “receiving the atonement,” chap. 5:11; not “coming into judgment” or “condemnation,” John 5:24; “blotting out sins and iniquities,” Isa. 43:26; Psa. 51:9; Isa. 44:22; Jer. 18:23; in Acts 3:19; “casting them into the bottom of the sea,” Micah 7:19; and many other expressions of like importance. The apostle declares it by its effects, [Di>kaioi katastathontai oiJ polloi>](#) “Dikaioi katastathesontai hoi polloi” – “Many shall be made righteous,” Rom. 5:19. [Di>kaiov κατασταθήσονται](#) “Dikaios kathistatai,” means that someone on juridical trial in open court is absolved and declared righteous.

And so it may be observed that all things concerning justification are proposed in the Scripture under a juridical scheme, or a forensic trial and sentence:

- (1.) A judgment is expected, which the psalmist prays is not based on the terms of the law, Psa. 143:2.
- (2.) The judge is God himself, Isa. 50:7, 8; Rom. 8:33.
- (3.) The tribunal on which God sits in judgment is the “throne of grace,” Heb. 4:16. “Therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious to you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy on you; for the LORD is a God of judgment,” Isa. 30:18.
- (4.) There is a guilty person. This is the sinner, who is [ujpo>dikov tw~| Qew~|](#) “hupodikos tooi Theooi” [NT:5267], Rom. 3:19, so guilty of sin as to be liable to the judgment of God; “tooi dikaioomati tou Theou” [NT:1345], Rom. 1:32; and whose mouth is shut by conviction.
- (5.) Accusers are ready to levy charges against the guilty person; these accusers are the law, John 5:45; and conscience, Rom. 2:15; and Satan also, Zech. 3:1; Rev. 12:10.
- (6.) The charge is admitted and drawn up in writing in legal form, and it is laid before the tribunal of the Judge, at bar, to which the offender is delivered, Col. 2:14.
- (7.) A plea is prepared in the gospel for the guilty person; and this plea is for grace, through the blood of Christ; the ransom is paid, and the atonement is made into eternal righteousness through the surety of the covenant, Rom. 3:23-25; Dan. 9:24; Eph. 1:7.
- (8.) This alone is what the sinner depends on, renouncing all

other apologies or defenses whatsoever, Psa. 130:2, 3; 143:2; Job 9:2, 3; 42:5-7; Luke 18:13; Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:11, 16-19; 8:1-3, 32, 33; Isa. 53:5, 6; Heb. 9:13-15; 10:1-13; 1 Pet. 2:24; 1 John 1:7. There is no other plea for a sinner before God. He who knows both God and himself will not provide or depend on any other. Nor will he, I suppose, trust any other defense, even if all the angels in heaven would plead for him.

**(9.)** To make this plea effectual, we have an advocate with the Father, and he pleads his own propitiation for us, 1 John 2:1, 2.

**(10.)** The sentence rendered is absolution, on the account of the ransom, blood, or sacrifice and righteousness of Christ; with it comes acceptance into favor as persons approved of God, Job 33:24; Psa. 32:1, 2; Rom. 3:23-25; 8:1, 33, 34; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13, 14.

What value there may be in declaring this process of justification for a sinner has been mentioned before. If many seriously considered that all these things concur, and are required to justify everyone who will be saved, maybe they would not think so little of sin, and how to be delivered from the guilt of it. From this consideration the apostle learned the "terror of the Lord" that made him so earnest with men to seek reconciliation, 2 Cor. 5:10, 11. I would not have labored so long on the meaning of the words in the Scripture, except that a right understanding precludes the Romanist idea that the infusion of a habit of charity is the formal cause of our justification. It may also cause some to consider what role their own personal, inherent righteousness plays in their justification.

## 5. The Distinction of a First and Second Justification Examined

Before we inquire into the nature and causes of justification, there are some things to consider to avoid any ambiguity and misunderstanding about the subject. The evangelical position is that there is only one justification, and it is completed at once. We will not argue about any other. Those who can find another may say about it what they will. Let us, therefore, consider what is offered of this nature.

Those of the Roman church ground their whole doctrine of justification on a distinction of a double justification, which they call the first and the second. The first justification, they say, is the infusion or the communication to us of an inherent principle or habit of grace or charity. Hereby, they say, original sin is extinguished, and all habits of sin are expelled. This justification they say is by faith. The obedience and satisfaction of Christ is the only meritorious cause of it. Only, they dispute many things about preparations for it, and dispositions to it. Under the terms of the Council of Trent was included the doctrine of the schoolmen about “*meritum de congruo*,” as both Hosius and Andradius confess in the defense of that council. And as they are explained, they come much to one mind. However, the council warily avoided the name of merit with respect to this first justification. And the use of faith in this (which to them is no more than a general assent to divine revelation) bears the main part in these preparations. So to be “justified by faith,” according to them, is to have the mind prepared by this kind of believing to receive “*gratiam gratum facientem*,” a habit of grace, expelling sin, and making us acceptable to God. Upon believing this, and accompanied by other required duties of contrition and repentance, it is proper and consistent with divine wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, to give us that grace by which we are justified. And this, according to them, is the justification that the apostle Paul addresses in his epistles, and from which he excludes all the works of the law to procure it.

The second justification is an effect or consequence of the first. Its proper formal cause is good works, which proceed from this principle

of grace and love. For that reason they are the righteousness with which believers are righteous before God, and the reason they merit eternal life. They call it the righteousness of works; and they assume the apostle James taught it. They constantly affirm this to make us “justos ex injustis” “just from unjust” in which they are followed by others. This is the way that most of them take to salve the seeming inconsistency between the apostles Paul and James. Paul, they say, treats the first justification only, and for that reason he excludes all works, for it is by faith. But James treats the second justification, which is by good works. And that is the express determination of those at Trent, sess. 6 cap. 10. This distinction was coined for no other purpose than to bring confusion into the whole doctrine of the gospel. Justification through the free grace of God, by faith in the blood of Christ, is evacuated by it. Sanctification is turned into justification, and making its fruits meritorious corrupts it. The whole nature of evangelical justification is utterly defeated by this distinction.

Nevertheless, others have embraced this distinction, though not absolutely in their sense. So do the Socinians. The idea must be accepted in some sense by anyone who believes that our inherent righteousness either causes or influences our justification before God. They allow a justification that precedes works, and is truly gracious and evangelical. But as a consequence of such works, there is a second justification differing at least in degree, if not in nature and kind. They mostly say that what they mean by it is only the continuation of our first justification, increasing in degrees. If they may be allowed to turn sanctification into justification, and to turn any progress or increase either in the root or fruit of it into a new justification, then they may make twenty justifications as well as they can make two. After all, the “inward man is renewed day by day,” 2 Cor. 4:16; and believers go “from strength to strength,” and they are “changed from glory to glory,” 2 Cor. 3:18, by the addition of one grace to another in their exercise, 2Pet. 1:5-8, and “increasing with the increase of God,” Col. 2:19; in all things they “grow up into him who is the head,” Eph. 4:15. And if their justification consists in such increase, they are justified anew every day. Therefore I will do two things. First, show that this distinction is both unscriptural and



irrational. And second, declare what continues from our justification, and what it depends on.

1. Justification by faith in the blood of Christ may be considered either as to its nature and essence, or as to its manifestation and declaration. Its manifestation is twofold: first, the initial manifestation is in this life. Second, the solemn and complete manifestation is on the Day of Judgment. The manifestation of it in this life is in respect to either the consciences of those who are justified or the consciences of others; that is, the consciences of the church or those of the world. And each of these is called justification, although our real justification before God will always be one and the same. A man may be really justified before God, and yet not have the evidence or assurance of it in his own mind. Therefore that evidence or assurance is not part of the nature or essence of that faith by which we are justified, nor does it necessarily accompany our justification. When a man finally realizes his own justification, it is not a second justification. It is only the application of justification to his conscience by the Holy Ghost. When our justification is manifested to others, it is still not a second justification. That is because it depends entirely on the visible effects of that faith by which we are justified, as the apostle James instructs us. It remains one single justification before God, evidenced and declared to his glory, for the benefit of others, and the increase of our own reward.

*There is also a twofold justification before God mentioned in the Scripture –*

*First*, there is a justification “by the works of the law,” Rom. 2:13; 10:5; Matt. 19:16- 19. This requires an absolute conformity to the whole law of God, in our natures, in all the faculties of our souls, in all the principles of our moral operations, with perfect actual obedience to all its commands, in all instances of duty, both in form and content. He is cursed who does not continue to do all things that are written in the law; and he that breaks any one commandment is guilty of the breach of the whole law. For that reason, the apostle concludes that no one can be justified by the law, because all will have sinned (Rom. 3:23).

*Second*, there is a justification by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ. These two ways of justification are contrary to each other.

They proceed on terms that are directly contradictory. They cannot be made consistent with or subservient to one another. But, as we will show later, confounding them by mixing them together is the aim of this distinction between a first and second justification.

(1.) As the Papists explain this idea, it is exceedingly derogatory to the merit of Christ. It leaves no effect on us other than the infusion of a habit of charity. When that is done, all that remains with respect to our salvation is worked out by ourselves. Christ has only merited the first grace for us, that we thereby may merit eternal life. Because the effect of the merit of Christ is confined to the first justification, it has no immediate influence on any grace, privilege, mercy, or glory that follows from it. They are all effects of that second justification which is purely by works. This is openly contrary to the whole tenor of the Scripture. Although there is an order of God's appointment in which we are made partakers of evangelical privileges in grace and glory, one before another, yet all of them are the immediate effects of the death and obedience of Christ. It is he who has "obtained for us eternal redemption," Heb. 9:12; and is "the author of eternal salvation to all who do obey him," chap. 5:9; "having by one offering forever perfected those who are sanctified." Those who allow a secondary, if not second, justification obtained by our own inherent, personal righteousness, are also guilty of minimizing the merit and glory of Christ, though not to the same degree. Because they place our acquittal from all charges of sin after the first justification, it is evident that the satisfaction and merit of Christ is limited to the first justification. Righteousness is accepted in the judgment of God as if it were complete and perfect.

(2.) By this distinction, more is ascribed to us by virtue of inherent grace than to the blood of Christ, as far as meriting and procuring spiritual and eternal good goes. For Christ's blood only procures the first grace and justification for us. It is the meritorious cause of that alone. As others express it, we are made partakers of its effects in the pardon of sins past. But by virtue of this grace, we do ourselves obtain, procure, or merit, another, a second, a complete justification, the continuance of the favor of God and all the fruits of it, with life eternal and glory. So our works at least perfect and complete the merit of Christ, without which it is imperfect. Those who assign the continuation of our justification to our own personal righteousness,

including all the effects of divine favor and grace, follow in their steps. If only the proponents of these ideas could somehow find leisure to think about how they will be freed from the sentence of the law, and the curse due to sin, and how to obtain a pleadable righteousness at the judgment-seat of God before which they will stand. All their arguments for the mighty efficacy of their own personal righteousness will sink in their minds like water at the return of the tide. It will leave nothing but mud and defilement behind them.

(3.) This distinction of two justifications, as used and improved by those of the Roman church, leaves us no justification at all. There is something left of sanctification. but nothing at all of justification. Their first justification is in fact sanctification, and nothing else. It is the infusion of a habit or principle of grace that expels all habits of sin. We have never contended that our justification in this sense consists in the imputation of the inherent righteousness of Christ. And this justification, if it can be called that, is capable of increasing degrees, both of itself and of its fruits. To call something that makes us personally and inherently righteous by the name of justification, and then to argue that this is the same justification through faith in the blood of Christ that is declared in the Scripture, excludes true evangelical justification from any place in religion. The second distinction is much like justification by the law, but nothing like that declared in the gospel. This distinction, instead of coining us two justifications, has left us none at all. For,

(4.) There is no support for this distinction in the Scripture. As was said before, there is indeed mention of a double justification, the one by the law and the other according to the gospel. But there is nothing in the Scripture to intimate that either of these should be sub-distinguished into a first and second of the same kind. This second justification in no way applies to what the apostle James has to say on that subject. He speaks not one word of an increase of it, or an addition to it, or a first and second application. Instead, he speaks expressly of one who boasts of faith without works having a dead faith. Our adversaries say that one who has the first justification has a true, living faith, formed and enlivened by charity. And they use the same passage concerning the justification of Abraham that Paul does, though for a different purpose. No believer learns of it in his

own experience, nor would it ever have entered the minds of sober men by reading the Scripture. It is the bane of spiritual truth, for its proponents in declaring it, coin arbitrary distinctions without Scriptural support. They force them on us as belonging to the doctrine. This distinction serves no purpose other than to distract men from what they ought to attend to, and engage them in endless arguments. If the authors of this distinction would simply go over the places in the Scripture where mention is made of our justification before God, and apply them to the respective parts of their distinction, they would quickly find themselves at an unbelievable loss.

(5.) There is something in the Scripture ascribed to our first justification that leaves no room for their second feigned justification. The sole foundation of this distinction is a denial of those things that belong to our justification by the blood of Christ, which the Scripture expressly assigns to it. Let us examine some instances of what belongs to the first, and we will quickly see how little is left for the pretended second justification. For by the first justification,

[1.] We receive the complete “pardon and forgiveness of our sins,” Rom. 4:6, 7; Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Acts 26:18.

[2.] We are “made righteous,” Rom. 5:19; 10:4; and,

[3.] Are freed from condemnation, judgment, and death, John 3:16, 19; 5:25; Rom. 8:1;

[4.] Are reconciled to God, Rom. 5:9, 10; 2 Cor. 5:21; and,

[5.] Have peace with him, and access to the favor in which we stand by grace, with the advantages and consolations that depend on it in a sense of his love, Rom. 5:1-5. And,

[6.] We have adoption, and all its privileges, John 1:12; and, in particular,

[7.] A right and title to the whole inheritance of glory, Acts 26:18; Rom. 8:17. And,

[8.] Based on this, eternal life follows, Rom. 8:30; 6:23.

If there is anything left for their second justification to do, let them take it as their own. These things are all that we assert belong to the

one justification. Therefore it is evident that either the first justification overthrows the second, rendering it unnecessary, or the second destroys the first by taking away what essentially belongs to it. We must therefore part with one or the other, for they are not consistent. What supports the fiction and artifice of this distinction, is a dislike of the doctrine of the grace of God and, for that reason, justification by faith in the blood of Christ. Some endeavor by this distinction to send it out of the way on a pretended sleeveless errand, while they dress up their own righteousness in its robes, and exalt it into the room and dignity of it.

2. However, there is more seeming reality and difficulty in what is argued about the continuation of our justification. For those who are freely justified continue in that state until they are glorified. By justification, they are really changed into a new spiritual state and condition. They are given a new relation to God and Christ, to the law and the gospel. The question is, on what does their continuation in this state depend, or what is required of them to be justified to the end? And this, some say, is not faith alone, but also the works of sincere obedience. None can deny that these works are required of all who are justified while they are on this side of glory. But the issue is whether, as soon as we are justified before God, faith is immediately dismissed from its place and office, and its duties are given over to works. So, does the continuation of our justification depend on our own personal obedience, and not on the renewed application of faith to Christ and his righteousness? I want you to observe that everyone absolutely agrees on the necessity of personal obedience in justified persons. The seeming difference we are concerned with here is not the substance of the doctrine of justification, but the way we express our ideas about the order of the disposition of God's grace, and our own duty. I will offer my thoughts in the ensuing observations:

(1.) Justification is a work that is completed at once in all its causes and effects, though not as to the full possession of all that it gives right and title to. For,

[1.] All our sins, past, present, and those to come, were at once imputed to and laid on Jesus Christ. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement for our peace was on him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his

own way: and the LORD has seen fit to lay on him the iniquities of us all,” Isa. 53:5, 6. “Who himself bears our sins in his own body on the tree,” 1Pet. 2:24. These assertions are without exception or limitation, and are equivalent to universals. All our sins were on him; he bears them all at once, and therefore, once died for all.

[2.] Therefore, he at once “finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness,” Dan. 9:24. At once he expiated all our sins, for “by himself he purged our sins,” and then “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” Heb. 1:3. And “we are sanctified,” or dedicated to God, “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; for by one offering he has perfected” (i.e. consummated or completed, as to their spiritual state) “those who are sanctified,” Heb. 10:10, 14. He will never do more than he has actually done already, for the expiation of all our sins from first to last; “for there remains no more sacrifice for sin,” Heb. 10:26. I am not saying that at this point our justification is complete, but only that the meritorious procuring cause of it was completed at once, and it is never to be renewed or repeated. All we are inquiring about is its renewed application to our souls and consciences, and whether that is done by faith alone, or by our own works of righteousness.

[3.] By believing with justifying faith, by believing on Christ or his name, we receive him. Thereby justified, we become the “sons of God,” John 1:12. That is, we become “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,” Rom. 8:17. We have a right to, and an interest in, all the benefits of his mediation, which means we are at once completely justified. For “in him we are complete,” Col. 2:10; for by the faith that is in him we “receive the forgiveness of sins,” and a lot or “inheritance among all those who are sanctified,” Acts 26:18. Being immediately “justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law,” Acts 13:39, God “blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ,” Eph. 1:3. All these things are absolutely inseparable from our first believing in him, and therefore our justification is at once complete. In particular,

[4.] On believing, all our sins are forgiven. “He has made you alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses,” Col. 2:13-

15. For “in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,” Eph. 1:7. That one passage obviates all the petulant exceptions some have against the consistency of the free grace of God in the pardon of sins, and the satisfaction of Christ in procuring it.

[5.] There is nothing left with which to charge those who are justified, for “he that believes has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but has passed from death to life,” John 5:24. And “who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies; it is Christ that died,” Rom. 8:33, 34. And “there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” verse 1; for, “being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” chap. 5:1. And,

[6.] Therefore, we have all that blessedness we are capable of in this life, Rom. chap. 4:5, 6. From all of this, it appears that our justification is at once complete. And,

[7.] It must be so, or no one can be justified in this world. For no time can be assigned, nor measure of obedience be defined, by which anyone comes to be justified before God who is not justified on his first believing. Nowhere does the Scripture assign any such time or measure. To say that no man is completely justified in the sight of God in this life overthrows all that is taught in the Scriptures concerning justification. And with that we lose all peace with God and all comfort for believers. A man acquitted at his legal trial is at once discharged from all that the law has against him.

(2.) On being completely justified, believers are obliged to universal obedience to God. The law is not abolished but established by faith. It is neither abrogated nor dispensed with by any interpretation that would remove its obligation in anything that it requires, whether in degree or manner. Nor could it be any other way. The law is the rule of obedience that the nature of God and man makes necessary between them. To assert that obedience is not required is Antinomianism of the worst sort, and that would be most derogatory to the law of God. There is no middle ground. Either the law is utterly abolished and there is no sin, or it must be allowed to require the same obedience that it did when it was first instituted. It

is not in the power of any man living to keep his conscience from judging and condemning something of which he is convinced that he comes short of the perfection of the law. Therefore,

(3.) Justified persons are still subject to the commanding power of the law in both its positive precepts and its negative prohibitions. All of their transgressions are as properly sins as they would be if these believers were still under the curse of the law. They are not under the curse of the law, nor can they be, because being under the curse and being justified are contradictory. But being *subject* to the commands of the law and being justified are not contradictory. It is being subject to the law, and not being under the curse of the law, that constitutes the nature of sin in their transgression. Therefore, although complete justification at once dissolves the obligations on the sinner to be punished by the curse of the law, it does not annihilate the commanding authority of the law over those who are justified. What is sin in others is sin in them. See Rom. 8:1, 33, 34.

Hence, in the first justification, all future sins are remitted as to any actual obligation under the curse of the law. The only exception is sins that would cause believers to forfeit their justified estate and transfer them from the covenant of grace into the covenant of works. We believe that God, in his faithfulness, will preserve them from such sins. Although sin cannot be pardoned before it is actually committed, the curse of the law can be virtually taken away from such sins in justified persons prior to their actual commission. In this sense, God at once “forgives all their iniquities, and heals all their diseases, redeems their life from destruction, and crowns them with loving-kindness and tender mercies,” Psa. 103:3, 4. Future sins are not pardoned in a way that they are not sins when they are committed. That cannot be unless the commanding power of the law is abrogated. But the obligation to be punished under the curse of the law is taken away.

Still there remains the transgression of the law in justified persons, which stands in need of daily actual pardon. For there is “no man that lives and does not sin;” and “if we say that we have no sin, we only deceive ourselves,” 1Jn. 1:8. None is more sensitive to the guilt of sin, none more troubled by it, none more earnest in begging for its pardon, than a justified person. This is the effect of the sacrifice of Christ applied to believers, as the apostle declares in Heb. 10:1-4, 10,



14. His sacrifice takes away conscience that condemns sin in the sinner with respect to the curse of the law. But it does not take away conscience that condemns sin in the sinner. In considering God and themselves, the law and the gospel, sin requires repentance on the part of the sinner, and actual pardon on the part of God.

Therefore, one essential part of justification consists in the pardon of our sins. But sins cannot be pardoned before they are actually committed. Our present inquiry is what the continuation of our justification depends on, despite the commission of sin after we are justified. How are such sins actually pardoned? How do we continue in a state of acceptance with God and keep our right to life and glory uninterrupted? Justification is complete at once in the imputation of a perfect righteousness. It grants a right and title to the heavenly inheritance, the actual pardon of all past sins, and the virtual pardon of future sin. But how, by what means, on what terms and conditions, is this state continued in justified persons in which their righteousness is everlasting, their title to life and glory is indefeasible, and all their sins are actually pardoned?

In answer to this inquiry I say,

(1.) "It is God that justifies;" and, therefore, the continuation of our justification is also his act. And for his part, this depends on

- the immutability of his counsel;
- the unchangeableness of the everlasting covenant that is "ordered in all things and sure;"
- the faithfulness of his promises;
- the efficacy of his grace;
- his complacency in the propitiation of Christ with the power of his intercession; and
- the irrevocable grant of the Holy Ghost to those who believe.

(2.) Some say that, on our part, the continuation of this state of our justification depends on the condition of good works. That is, works have the same consideration and use as faith itself here. Some seem to ascribe continuation distinctly to works, with the proviso that they be done in faith. For my part, I cannot understand why the continuation of our justification would depend on anything different than our justification itself. As faith alone is required for

the one, so faith alone is required for the other. Where it differs is in its operations and the effects of the discharge of its duty and office. To make this assertion clearer, two things are to be observed:

[1.] The continuation of our justification is the continuation of the imputation of righteousness and the pardon of sins. I still assume the imputation of righteousness occurs at our justification, although we have not yet examined which righteousness is imputed. But the fact that God imputes righteousness to us in our justification is so expressly affirmed by the apostle that it must not be called into question. Now the first act of God in imputing righteousness cannot be repeated, and the actual pardon of sin after justification is an effect and consequence of that imputation of righteousness. If any man sins, there is a propitiation for it: "Deliver him, I have found a ransom." Therefore, there is nothing required for this actual pardon but the application of that righteousness which caused it; and this is done by faith only.

[2.] The continuation of our justification is in God's hands and oversight, no less than our absolute justification is. We are not speaking of the sense and evidence of it to ourselves, nor of evidencing and manifesting its effects to others, but continuing it in the sight of God. Whatever its means, condition, or cause, it is our plea before God, and ought to be pleaded for that purpose. So, then, the inquiry is,

What happens when a justified person is guilty of sin, and his conscience is pressed by this as the only thing which can endanger his justified estate, his favor with God, and his title to glory? On what should he depend for the continuance of his justified state? It is evident for three reasons that what he pleads is not his own obedience, his personal righteousness, or fulfilling the condition of the new covenant.

The first reason is the experience of believers. Their consciences are continually exercised by their own sin. What do they depend on? What is it that they plead with God to continue the pardon of their sins, and their acceptance before him? Is it anything but sovereign grace and mercy through the blood of Christ? Are not all the arguments which they plead for this purpose taken from the name of God, his mercy, grace, faithfulness, tender compassion, covenant,

and promises – all manifested and exercised through the Lord Christ and his mediation alone? Do they not place their only trust and confidence in this, because in every way they are unworthy in themselves? Does any other thought enter into their hearts? Do they plead their own righteousness, obedience, and duties to this purpose? Do they leave behind the prayer of the publican, and take up the prayer of the Pharisee? Is it not by faith alone that they apply for the mercy or grace of God through the mediation of Christ? It is true that faith works itself by godly sorrow, repentance, humiliation, self judging and abhorrence, fervency in prayer and supplications, with pledges of renewed obedience, and with a humble willingness to wait for an answer of peace from God. But it is faith alone that makes applications for grace in the blood of Christ for the continuation of our justified estate. It expresses itself in those other ways and with the effects mentioned, but a believer does not expect mercy from any of them.

The second reason is that the Scripture expressly declares that this is the only way to continue our justification. 1 John 3:1, 2, “I write these things to you so that you do not sin. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins.” It is required of those who are justified that they do not sin. It is their duty not to sin. Yet if they fail in their duty, they do not immediately lose the privilege of their justification. Therefore, if any man sins (and there is no man that lives and does not sin), what way is prescribed for him so that his sin may be pardoned and his acceptance with God, his justification, be continued? The course to take, as directed by the apostle, is none other than the application by faith to the Lord Christ, as our advocate with the Father, on the account of the propitiation that he has made for our sins. Considering both his priestly offering and intercession, he is the object of our faith in our absolute justification and in its continuation. So the entire progress of our justified estate, in all its degrees, is ascribed to faith alone.

What God requires of those who are justified is not part of our inquiry as to justification. However, there is no grace or duty, required either by the law or by the gospel, that does not oblige believers to render them, both as to substance and manner of performance. Where these duties are omitted, we acknowledge that

the guilt of sin is contracted; and it is accompanied by such torment that some will not own up to or allow them to be confessed to God himself. For that reason in particular, the faith and grace of believers is constantly and deeply exercised in godly sorrow, repentance, humiliation for sin, and confession of it before God, once the guilt of it is apprehended. These duties are so necessary to the continuation at our justification that a justified estate cannot coexist with the sins and vices that oppose them. Thus the apostle affirms that “if we live after the flesh, we shall die,” Rom. 8:13. Someone cannot live who does not avoid things that might destroy his natural life, like fire. But these graces and duties are not the things that life depends on. Nor do our best duties affect the continuation of our justification, other than preserving us from things that are contrary to and destructive of it.

The sole question is what the continuation of our justification depends on, ignoring what duties are required of us in the way of our obedience. If someone were to say informally that the continuation of our justification depends on our own obedience and good works, or that they are the condition for its continuation, then I readily agree. God does indispensably require good works and obedience in everyone who is justified; a justified estate is inconsistent with their neglect. I will never argue with anyone about the way they choose to express their ideas. But if it is asked, “What do we immediately incur in the way of *duty* to continue in our justified estate,” then I say it is faith alone. For “The just shall live by faith,” Rom. 1:17. As the apostle applies this divine testimony to prove that our first or absolute justification is by faith alone, so he applies it to the continuation of our justification, Heb. 10:38, 39, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition; but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” Drawing back to perdition includes the loss of a justified estate, in reality or in profession. In opposition to this, the apostle places “believing to the saving of the soul;” that is, to continuing in justification to the end. And this is where the “just live by faith.” The loss of this life can only be by unbelief: so the “life which we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us,” Gal. 2:20. The life that we now lead in the flesh is the continuation of our

justification. It is a life of righteousness and acceptance with God, in opposition to a life by the works of the law, as the next words declare in verse 21. “I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then is Christ dead in vain.” And this life is by faith in Christ, as “he loved us, and gave himself for us;” that is, as he was a propitiation for our sins. This, then, is the only way, means, and cause, on our part, to preserve this life or continue our justification. And in this we are “kept by the power of God through faith to salvation.”

Again, if the continuation of our justification depends on our own works of obedience, then the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us only with respect to our initial justification, or our “first” justification as some put it. And this, indeed, is the doctrine of the Roman school. They teach that the righteousness of Christ is only imputed to us to the point that God gives us justifying grace, and thereby the remission of sin. For that reason, they consider it the meritorious cause of our justification. But as soon as we receive that grace, we continue to be justified by the works we perform under that grace. Although some of them go so far as to assert that this grace and its works need no further reference to the righteousness of Christ, many of them affirm that the works are only meritorious in consideration of it. Others affirm that the continuation of our justification depends on our own works, but they set aside that ambiguous term “merit.” They say it is on the account of the righteousness of Christ that our own works, or imperfect obedience, is accepted by God to continue our justification.

But the apostle gives us another account of it in Rom. 5:1-3. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation works patience.”

He distinguishes three things:

1. Our access into the grace of God.
2. Our standing in that grace.
3. Our glorying in that state against all opposition.

By the first he expresses our absolute justification. By the second, our continuation in the state to which we are admitted thereby. And by the third, the assurance of that continuation, despite all the opposition we meet. He ascribes each of these equally to faith, without any other cause or condition.

The third reason we do not plead our own obedience is because of the example of believers who were justified, as recorded in the Scripture, and who all bear witness to the same truth. The continuation of the justification of Abraham before God is declared to have been by faith only, Rom. 4:3. The example of his justification given by the apostle from Gen. 15:6, was long after he was justified absolutely. And if both our first justification and the continuation of it did not absolutely depend on the same cause, then the one example could not be proof of the other, as they are here. David, a justified believer, not only depended on the free remission of sins in opposition to his own works (Rom. 4:6, 7), but he ascribes the continuation of his own justification and acceptance before God to grace, mercy, and forgiveness alone. These things can only be received by faith, Psa. 130:3-5; 143:2. "If you, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word do I hope." All other works and duties of obedience accompany *faith* in the continuation of our justified estate. They are the necessary effects and fruits of it, but they are not the causes, means, or conditions on which that effect depends.

It is patient waiting by faith that brings in the full accomplishment of the promises, Heb. 6:12, 15. "Be not slothful, but followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises... And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." Therefore, it is one justification, and one kind only, with which we are concerned in this dispute. It is the justification of an ungodly person by faith. The Scripture mentions no other, nor will we consider any other. For if there is a second justification, it must be the same kind as the first. If it is the same kind, and the same person must be justified quite often, then he should probably be baptized quite often too. If it is not the same kind, then the same person is justified before God with two sorts of justification, about which the Scripture is utterly silent. And

so the continuation of our justification depends solely on the same causes as our justification itself.

## 6. The Nature of Evangelical Personal Righteousness -

The things that we have discussed concerning the first and second justification, and concerning the continuation of justification, have no other purpose than to separate the principal subject from what does not belong to it necessarily. Until we separate unrelated items from the principal one, we cannot correctly understand the true question about the nature and causes of our justification before God. We intend to show that there is only one justification by which God freely, by his grace, and at once justifies a convinced sinner through faith in the blood of Christ. Whatever else anyone may be pleased to call justification, we are not concerned with that, nor should any believer be. To the same purpose, we must also briefly consider what is usually disputed about our own personal righteousness as it affects justification, specifically, what is called sentential justification at the Day of Judgment. I will only address this topic as necessary to isolate the principal subject from it. What influence our own personal righteousness has on our justification before God will be examined in particular afterwards.

Some believe that there is an evangelical justification based on personal righteousness. They distinguish this from justification by faith through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, if they allow such imputation at all. The righteousness of Christ is our legal righteousness, by which we are pardoned of sin and acquitted from the sentence of the law. This is on the account of his satisfaction and his merit. But they go on to say that, because there is a personal, inherent righteousness required by the gospel, there is a corresponding justification required. By pleading our faith, we are justified from the charge of unbelief; by pleading our sincerity, we are justified from the charge of hypocrisy; and so on. By pleading all the other graces and duties we are justified from the charge of the contrary sins. How this differs from the second justification by works is best declared by those who hold this view themselves.

Some add that this inherent, personal righteousness is a condition on our part to obtain our legal righteousness, which is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or the pardon of sin. And those who deny



the satisfaction and merit of Christ make it the sole condition of our absolute justification before God. This is the view of all the Socinians, for they assert that our obedience to Christ is neither the meritorious nor the efficient cause of our justification. They say it is the only *condition* of it, without which God has decreed that we cannot partake of its benefits. In all their discourses about it, they assert that our personal righteousness and holiness, or our obedience to the commands of Christ, is the condition on which we obtain justification or the remission of sins. They conceive that this obedience is the form and essence of faith. Indeed, considering what their opinion is concerning the person of Christ, with their denial of his satisfaction and merit, it is the only conception they could have. All their notions about grace, conversion to God, justification, and the like are necessarily based on their hypothesis about the person of Christ.

At present I will only inquire into that peculiar evangelical justification which is supposed to be the result of our own righteousness. And here we may observe that,

1. God requires the sincere obedience of all believers to be performed through the aids of grace supplied to them by Jesus Christ. Indeed, he requires obedience of all persons whatever. But everyone agrees that their performance prior to believing does not cause our justification. At least no one says that such works, which are done in preparation for believing, amount to meritorious works, or faithful obedience, which would imply a contradiction. But everyone grants that works are necessary for all believers. On what grounds, and to what ends, we will inquire afterwards. Their necessity is declared in Eph. 2:10.

2. It is also granted that by being obedient, believers are designated righteous in the Scripture, and are personally and internally righteous, Luke 1:6; John 3:7. This designation is not applied to a habitually inherent grace, but to duties of obedience which are the *effect* of that grace. "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord and blameless;" the latter description of obedience gives the former reason for being esteemed as righteous before God. And, "He that does righteousness is righteous;" the designation comes from doing. Bellarmine, endeavoring to prove that it is habitual and not actual righteousness,

which he considers the formal cause of our justification, could not produce one testimony of Scripture where anyone is designated righteous from habitual righteousness, (De Justificat., lib. 2 cap. 15). He is forced to attempt to prove it with the absurd argument that “we are justified by the sacraments, which do not create in us actual but only habitual righteousness.” This is enough to show the insufficiency of pretending that our own righteousness contributes anything to this designation of being righteous.

3. This inherent righteousness, which is habitual and actual, is the same as our sanctification. There is no difference between them other than their names. Our sanctification is the inherent renovation of our natures exerting itself in newness of life. It displays works of righteousness out of obedience to God in Christ. But in the Scripture, sanctification and justification are always distinguished, despite any causality that one may have on the other. Those who confound them, like the Papists, are not disputing the nature of justification so much as endeavoring to prove that indeed there is no such thing as justification. They extinguish the pardon of sin, which serves most to enforce justification, by substituting this infusion of inherent grace, which does not belong to justification.

4. We may be said to be justified by this inherent, personal righteousness in several ways:

(1.) In our own consciences. Our conscience testifies to us of our participation of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and our acceptance with him. This has no small influence on our peace. So the apostle says, “Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world,” 2 Cor. 1:12. Still, he disclaims any confidence in this testimony of his personal righteousness as influencing his justification before God. He says, “Although I know nothing against myself, yet am I not hereby justified,” 1 Cor. 4:4.

(2.) By our personal righteousness we may be said to be justified before men. That is, we are acquitted of any evils charged against us, and we are approved as righteous and unblamable. The way things are in the world, professors of the gospel are always spoken of as evil doers. The measure that is given to them to acquit

themselves is holy and fruitful walking. They are to abound in good works, so that in the end they may be acquitted and justified by all who are not absolutely blinded and hardened in wickedness; 1 Pet. 2:12; 3:16. It is the same way with regard to the church as a whole. This is so that we will not be judged dead and barren professors, but as people who share the same precious faith: "Show me your faith by your works," James 2. Therefore,

(3.) This righteousness is our plea for justification against all the charges of Satan, who is the great accuser of all believers. Whether he makes his charge privately in our consciences, as he charged Job, or by his instruments in all kinds of reproaches and slander, this righteousness is pleadable to our justification.

Assuming our personal righteousness is allowed its proper place and use, believers are not justified by it in the sight of God. Nor does imputing the righteousness of Christ depend on it for our absolute justification. For,

1. No one has this personal righteousness unless he has been previously justified in the sight of God. Personal righteousness is entirely the obedience of faith. It proceeds from true and saving faith in God by Jesus Christ. As it was said before, there is general consent that works before faith have no bearing on our justification. And we proved that they are not the conditions of it, dispositions to it, or preparations for it. Every true believer is immediately justified upon his believing. There is no moment of time when a true believer is not justified, if he has the faith that is required in the gospel. For he is thereby united to Christ, and this is the foundation of our justification by him. So the whole Scripture testifies that the one who believes is justified. There is an infallible connection between true faith and justification. Therefore this personal righteousness cannot be the condition of our justification before God, because it is a consequence of it. Any exceptions based on a supposed second justification, or based on different causes for the beginning and the continuation of our justification, have been already disproved

2. Justification before God means freedom and absolution from a charge before God. The instrument of this charge must either be the law or the gospel. But neither the law nor the gospel charge true believers with unbelief, hypocrisy, or the like for "who shall lay

anything to the charge of God's elect," who are once justified before him? Such a charge may be laid against them by Satan, or sometimes it is mistakenly made by the church, or by the world (as it was in the case of Job). But against all these charges, we may plead righteousness. What is charged immediately before God, is charged by God himself, either by the law or by the gospel; and the judgement of God is according to truth. If this charge is by the law, then we must be justified by the law. The plea of our own sincere obedience will not justify us by the law. Only what is complete and perfect will satisfy its demands. Where this charge is by the gospel, nothing can justify us unless it is possible for the gospel to be the instrument of a false charge. If we are justified *by* the gospel *from* the charge of the law, then it would render the death of Christ of no effect [bare grace without payment]. And it is impossible to be justified without a charge of some kind.

3. Such a dependent or conditional justification as that suggested is altogether needless and senseless. This may be easily proved from what the Scripture asserts about our justification being in the sight of God by faith in the blood of Christ. Let that be considered, and it will quickly appear that there is neither place nor use for this new justification based on our personal righteousness, whether that righteousness is prior to and subordinate to such a justification, or a consequence and completion of it.

4. This proposed justification is unlike any that is mentioned in the Scripture. That is, it is neither by the law, nor is it the type provided for in the gospel. Justification by the law is this: a man that does the works of the law shall live by them. This is not what its proponents intend. And when compared to evangelical justification, it is in every way contrary to it. In evangelical justification, the charge against the person to be justified is true. He has sinned and comes short of the glory of God. In this proposed justification, the charge is false. The charge is that a believer is an unbeliever; a sincere person but a hypocrite; he is one who is fruitful in good works, but altogether lacking what is needed. We are acquitted in true, evangelical justification by absolution or pardon of sin. The plea of the person to be justified is "guilty," because all the world is guilty before God. Under this proposal, we are supposed to be acquitted by a vindication of our own righteousness. The plea of the person on trial

is to be “not guilty,” at which point the proofs and evidence of innocence and righteousness must follow. But this is a plea which the law will not admit, and which the gospel disclaims.

5. If we are justified before God based on our own personal righteousness, and we are pronounced righteous by him on their account, then God enters a judgement based on something in ourselves, and he acquits us for them. Justification is a juridical act, yielding a Judgment of God that is according to truth. But the psalmist does not believe that God would justify us based on our personal righteousness, Psa. 130:2, 3; 143:2; nor did the publican, Luke 18.

6. This personal righteousness of ours cannot be a subordinate righteousness, and subservient to our justification by faith in the blood of Christ. That is because God justifies the ungodly, and imputes righteousness to someone who has no works to merit it. Besides, it is expressly excluded from any consideration in our justification, Eph. 2:7, 8.

7. This personal, inherent righteousness that we are justified by in this type of justification, is our own righteousness. Personal righteousness, and our own righteousness, are equivalent expressions. But our own righteousness is not the material cause of any justification before God. First, it is unfit to be so, Isa. 64:6; and second, it is directly opposed to and inconsistent with that righteousness by which we are truly justified, Phil. 3:9; Rom. 10:3, 4.

It might be said by some, to distinguish the two, that our own righteousness is the righteousness of the law, while this personal righteousness is “evangelical.” But,

(1.) It will be hard to prove that our personal righteousness is anything other than our own righteousness; and our own righteousness is expressly rejected from effecting our justification in the places quoted.

(2.) Evangelical righteousness is legal in respect to its formal motivation and our obligation to it. There is no duty belonging to it. But in general, we are obligated to it by virtue of the first commandment to “take the LORD for our God.” Acknowledging God’s essential verity and sovereign authority, we are obliged to believe all that he reveals and to obey all that he commands.

(3.) Good works that do not impact our justification are those which we are “created in Christ Jesus to do,” Eph. 2:8~10. They are the “works of righteousness which we have done,” Tit. 3:5, and which the Gentiles never sought by the works of the law, Rom. 9:30.

It will be said that these things are self-evident. God requires an evangelical righteousness in all believers. However, they say, this is not the righteousness of Christ. He may be said to be our legal righteousness, but he is not our evangelical righteousness. To the extent that we are righteous with any kind of righteousness, we are justified by it. We must be tried according to this evangelical righteousness. If we have such righteousness, we will be acquitted. But if we do not have it, we will be condemned. Therefore, they say, there is a justification according to this evangelical righteousness.

I answer by pointing out that,

1. According to some who maintain this opinion, it seems that the Lord Christ is not so much our evangelical righteousness as he is our legal. For, in their judgement, he is not our legal righteousness by imputing his righteousness to us, but by communicating to us the fruits of what he did and suffered for us. And so he is our evangelical righteousness as well, because our sanctification is an effect or fruit of what he did and suffered for us, Eph. 5:26, 27; Tit. 2:14.
2. No one could have this kind of evangelical righteousness except those who are justified before they actually have it. For, as they define it, it is what is required of all who believe in order to be justified. We do not need to inquire how a man can be justified after he is justified.
3. God has not appointed this personal righteousness to justify us before him in this life. However, he did appoint it to evidence our justification to others in his sight. He accepts it and approves of it based on the free justification of the person who does it. He “favored Abel and his offering,” Gen. 4:4. But we are not acquitted by it from any real charge in the sight of God, nor do we receive remission of sins because of it. And those who think the whole of justification is found in the remission of sins, and who make this personal righteousness the condition of it, as the Socinians do, do

not leave any place for the righteousness of Christ in our justification.

4. If we are in any sense justified by our own righteousness in the sight of God, then we have a reason to boast before him. We may not have an absolute reason, or with respect to merit, but we have one compared to others who cannot make the same plea for their justification. But all boasting is excluded in the Scripture. It will not relieve anything to say that this personal righteousness is the free grace and gift of God to some and not others. For we must plead it as our duty, and not as God's grace.

5. Suppose a person is freely justified by the grace of God, through faith in the blood of Christ, without respect to any works, obedience, or righteousness of his own. In such a case we freely grant,

(1.) That God indispensably requires his personal obedience, which may be called his evangelical righteousness.

(2.) That God approves of and accepts this performed righteousness in Christ.

(3.) That by our works of obedience we evidence, prove, and manifest the faith that justifies us in the sight of God and men.

(4.) That this righteousness is pleadable as an acquitment against any charge from Satan, the world, or our own consciences.

(5.) That with it we will be declared righteous at the last day, and without it no one will be.

If anyone concludes for these reasons that we have an evangelical justification, or that God's acceptance of our righteousness can be called by that name, then I will not argue with him. Whenever it is asked how a man who professes faith in Christ will be tried, judged, and upon that faith be justified, we grant that it is and must be by his own personal and sincere obedience. This is *not* asking how a sinner, guilty of death and liable under the curse, will be pardoned, acquitted, and justified. This is only accomplished by imputing the righteousness of Christ to him.

These things are said, not to argue with anyone or oppose their opinions, but only to remove from the principal question at hand those things that do not belong to it. A few words will also free our

inquiry from something called sentential justification at the day of judgement. For whatever its nature, the person on whom that sentence is pronounced is,

- (1.) Actually and completely justified before God in this world;
- (2.) Made partaker of all the benefits of that justification, even to a blessed resurrection in glory: “It is raised in glory,” 1 Cor. 15:43.
- (3.) Will long before have enjoyed a blessed rest with God, absolutely discharged and acquitted from all his labors and all his sins; there remains nothing but his actual admission into eternal glory.

Therefore, this sentence or judgement is clearly declaratory, to the glory of God and the everlasting refreshment of those who have believed. Without making it into a new justification, the purpose of that solemn judgement is to sufficiently manifest the wisdom and righteousness of God in appointing the way of salvation by Christ, as well as giving the law. It results in,

- the public conviction of those who transgressed the law and despised the gospel;
- the vindication of the righteousness, power, and wisdom of God in ruling the world by his providence, the means and outcome of which, for the most part, are in the deep and not known;
- the glory and honor of Jesus Christ, triumphing over all his enemies who are made his footstool; and
- the glorious exaltation of grace in all believers, with many similar things that ultimately manifest divine glory in the creation and guidance of all things.

And hence, there is little force in the argument that some think has such great weight in supporting personal righteousness. They say, “Everyone shall be judged by God at the last day, in the same way and manner, and on the same grounds, that he is justified by God in this life. Everyone shall be judged at the last day only by works and not by faith alone. Therefore everyone is justified before God in this life by works and not by faith alone.”

1. It is nowhere said that we will be judged at the last day “ex operibus” (out of works). It is only said that God will render to men



“secundum opera” (according to works). God does not justify anyone in this life “secundum opera.” Instead, we are justified freely by his grace, and not according to the works of righteousness that we have done. It says everywhere in the Scripture that we are justified in this life “ex fide” or “per fidem,” out of faith or by faith, but nowhere is it said to be “propter fidem” or “secundum fidem,” for our faith or according to our faith. We are not to depart from the words of the Scripture where such a difference is constantly observed.

2. It is somewhat strange that a man should be judged at the last day in the same way that he is justified in this life with respect to faith and works. The Scripture constantly ascribes our justification before God to faith without works, and yet it is said here that the judgment at the last day is to be according to works without any mention of faith.

3. This statement asserts that justification and eternal judgment proceed from identical grounds, reasons, and causes. If so, then men who have not done what they will be condemned for doing at the last day, should have been justified in this life. But according to Rom. 2:12-16, many will be condemned only for sins against the light of nature, because they never had the written law or gospel made known to them. Therefore, if such persons abstain from sins against the light of nature, that would be enough to obtain justification without any knowledge of Christ or the gospel.

4. This proposition that God pardons men of their sins, adopts them as his children, and gives them a right to the heavenly inheritance, all according to their *works*, is not only foreign to the gospel, but contradicts and destroys it. It is contrary to all the express testimonies of the Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New where these things are spoken of. But it is true that God judges all men and renders to them according to their works at the last judgment, and this is affirmed in the Scripture.

5. In our justification in this life by faith, Christ is considered as our propitiation and advocate, as the one who has made atonement for sin and brought in everlasting righteousness. But at the last day, and in the last judgment, he is considered only as the judge.

6. The purpose God has in our justification is the glory of his grace, Eph. 1:6. But the purpose God has in the last judgment is the glory of

his remunerative righteousness [receiving the crown], 2 Tim. 4:8.

7. The representation that is made of the final judgment in Matthew 7 and 25, is only of the visible church. The plea and profession of faith there is the same for all. Upon that plea of faith, it is put to the test whether it is sincere and true faith, or dead and barren faith. And this trial is made solely by the fruits and effects of that faith. Otherwise, the plea of faith by which we are justified cannot be made at all, and it does not come into judgment at the last day. See John 5:24, with Mark 16:16.

## 7. The Nature of the Imputation of Righteousness

The first express record of the justification of any sinner is that of Abraham. There is evidence that others were justified before him from the beginning, but this prerogative was reserved for the father of the faithful. That was done so that his justification, and its express manner, would be the first entered on the sacred record. Thus it is recorded in Gen. 15:6, “He believed in the LORD, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” [h;b,vlj\]Yw](#) “Wayachsheveha” [NT:2803] – it was “accounted” to him, or “imputed” to him, for righteousness. In Greek, [Elogi>sqh](#) “Elogisthe” [NT:3049] – it was “counted, reckoned, imputed.” And “it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe,” Rom. 4:23, 24. Therefore, the first express declaration of the nature of justification in the Scripture affirms it is by imputation. It is recorded in that particular place and circumstance for a purpose. It is the precedent and example of all those who will be justified. As he was justified, so are we, and not otherwise.

Under the New Testament there came a need for a fuller and clearer declaration of the doctrine of imputation. For it is among the first and most principal parts of that heavenly mystery of truth which was brought to light by the gospel. And, besides, there was from the first a strong and dangerous opposition to it. It was because of this matter of justification, the doctrine of it, and what necessarily belongs to it, that the Jewish church broke off from God, refused Christ and the gospel, and was perishing in their sins as expressly declared in Rom. 9:31; 10:3, 4. In the same way, there was a dislike of it, and opposition to it, that became a source of apostasy in any professing church, as it did afterwards in the churches of Galatia. But in this state of apostasy, the doctrine of justification was fully declared, stated, and vindicated by the apostle Paul in a unique way. He does it especially by affirming and proving that the righteousness by which we are justified comes to us by imputation. Or it could be said that our justification consists in not imputing sin, and imputing righteousness.

The first recorded instance of justification presents the doctrine of imputed righteousness, recorded for our benefit, and repeated by the apostle in the Book of Romans. And yet, it has so fallen from favor in our days that nothing in religion is more maligned, reproached, or despised than the imputation of righteousness. “A putative righteousness, the shadow of a dream, a fancy, a mummery, an imagination,” say some among us. A detestable opinion, says Socinus. Opposition to it arises every day from a great variety of theories, because those who reject it cannot agree what to replace it with.

However, everyone acknowledges the weight and importance of this doctrine, whether they believe it is true or false. It is not a needless dispute about ideas, terms, and speculations that Christian practice is little concerned with. It has an immediate influence on our whole present duty, with our eternal welfare or ruin in the balance. Those who reject this imputation of righteousness, assert that the doctrine overthrows the necessity of gospel obedience, of personal righteousness and good works, which leads to antinomianism and libertinism. Hence, it must necessarily destroy salvation in those who believe it and conform their practice to it. On the other hand, those who believe it and think it impossible for anyone to be justified before God any other way, accordingly judge that without imputation none can be saved. They do not think that all those who cannot understand, or who deny, the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ are excluded from salvation. But they do judge that they are lost if that righteousness is not really imputed. They cannot do otherwise while they make it the foundation of their own acceptance with God and eternal salvation.

These things greatly differ. It is one thing to believe or not believe the doctrine as it is explained one way or another. And you can like it or not like it. I have no doubts that many receive more grace from God than they understand or accept, and it may have a greater efficacy in them than they grasp. They may be truly saved by a grace whose doctrine they deny, or justified by the imputation of a righteousness that they reject. For their faith is included in the general assent they give to the truth of the gospel. Their adherence to Christ may be such that their mistake will not defraud them of their inheritance. For my part, despite all the disputes that I see and read about justification, I

believe that their authors really do trust the mediation of Christ for the pardon of their sins and acceptance with God, and not their own works or obedience. I make an exception for the Socinians who deny the whole merit and satisfaction of Christ. We must address later the danger of the doctrine of imputation undermining the need for holiness and works of righteousness.

There are, indeed, many differences among learned, sober, and orthodox persons in how they explain the doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. And yet all of them agree on the substance of it. As far as possible, I will avoid concerning myself at present with these differences. What purpose does it serve to argue about these minor things while the substance of the doctrine itself is openly opposed and rejected? Why debate the order and decoration of the rooms in a house while the house is on fire? When the fire is well quenched, we can consider the best way to arrange its parts.

There are two main groups who oppose the doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. These are the Papists and the Socinians. But they proceed on different principles, and for different purposes. The design of the one is to exalt their own merits. The other aims to destroy the merit of Christ. There are other interlopers who boldly borrow from both as they see fit. We will have to deal with all of them as we go. In general, the importance of the cause to be pleaded, the greatness of the opposition that is made to the truth, and the deep concern believers have to be correctly instructed in it, call for a renewed declaration and vindication of the doctrine.

The first thing we will consider is the meaning of these words “impute” and “imputation.” [bcj](#); “Chashav” [NT:2803], the word first used for this purpose, signifies to think, to esteem, to judge, or to refer a thing or matter to anyone; to impute, or to be imputed, for good or evil. See Lev. 7:18; 17:4, and Psa. 106:31. [hq;d;x\]li wOl b2,j;Tew](#) “Watechashev lo litsdakah” translated “And it was counted, reckoned, imputed to him for righteousness;” to judge or esteem this or that good or evil as belonging to him. The LXX express it by [logizw](#) “logidzoo” and [logi>zomai](#) “logidzomai” [NT:3049], as do the writers of the New Testament. In the Latin, these are rendered by “reputare,

imputare, acceptum ferre, tribuere, assignare, ascribere.” But there is a different significance among these words. In particular, to be imputed righteous, and to have righteousness imputed, differ as to their cause and effect. For anyone to be reputed righteous there must be a real foundation for that reputation, or it would be a mistake. A man may be reputed to be wise who is a fool, or reputed to be rich who is a beggar. Therefore to have a foundation for someone to be reputed righteous, he must either have a righteousness of his own, or another righteousness that was previously imputed to him. Thus, imputing righteousness to someone that has none of his own, is not to repute him to be righteous if he is indeed unrighteous. Instead, it is to convey righteousness to him, so that he may be correctly and justly esteemed, judged, or reputed to be righteous.

“Imputare” is the Latin word that imparts the meaning used by divines. In their sense, if it is evil that is imputed to another, then it means to charge him with it, to burden him with it. Pliny says, “We impute our own faults to the earth, or charge it with them.” If it is good, then it means to ascribe it to him as his own, whether it was originally so or not: “Magno authori imputate.” It should not be confused with “reputare” as Vasquez has done. Unlike reputare, “imputare” includes an act that precedes the point that we esteem a thing to belong to someone. Because something may be imputed to us that is really our own prior to that imputation, the word must have a double sense, as it has in the instances of several Latin authors now mentioned.

1. To impute something to us that was really ours prior to that imputation includes two things:

(1.) Acknowledging or judging that the thing imputed truly exists. Before wisdom or learning can be imputed to someone, it must first be determined whether the person is wise or learned.

(2.) Dealing with them according to what is imputed, whether good or evil. So, when at trial a man is acquitted because he is found righteous, he is first judged and esteemed righteous, and then he is dealt with as a righteous person. His righteousness is imputed to him. See this exemplified in Gen. 30:33.

2. To impute something to us that not our own prior to that imputation also includes two things:

(1.) A grant or donation of the thing to us, to make it ours on some just basis; for a thing must be made ours before we can be dealt with justly according to what is required on the account of what is made ours.

(2.) The will to deal with us according to what is made ours. In justification, the most holy and righteous God does not justify people without a prior, true, and complete righteousness, that has been actually and completely made their own. That is the only way he will absolve them from sin, pronounce them righteous, and grant them the right and title to eternal life.

But these things will be made clearer by some examples; and it is necessary that they should be.

(1.) There is an imputation to us of something that is really our own, inherent in us, and performed by us prior to that imputation, and this is so whether it is good or evil. The rule and nature of this is given in Ezek. 18:20, “The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” We have Instances of both sorts. First, there is the imputation of sin when the person who is guilty of the sin is judged and reckoned to be a sinner, and must be dealt with accordingly. This imputation was deprecated by Shimei, 2 Sam. 19:19. He said to the king, “Let not my lord *impute* iniquity to me,” – [öwO\[; ynidoa yliAbv;j}yAla](#) “al-yachashav-li [NT:2803] ‘adoni ‘awon,” the same word used in Gen. 15:6 when Abraham believed the Lord and it was credited or imputed to him as righteousness; “neither do you remember what your servant did perversely: for your servant does know that I have sinned.” He was guilty, and acknowledged his guilt; but he deprecates the imputation of the sentence that his sin deserved. In the same way, Stephen deprecated the imputation of sin to those who stoned him, and of which they were really guilty, Acts 7:60, “Lay not this sin to their charge.” The idea is not to impute it to them. On the other side, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, who died in the same cause and suffered the same kind of death as Stephen, prayed that the sin of those who slew him might indeed have consequences, 2 Chron. 24:22. Therefore, to impute sin is to charge it against

someone, and then deal with him according to what that sin deserves.

To impute something that is good to someone, is to judge and acknowledge it to be theirs, and then to deal with them according to its worth under the law of God. The “righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him.” So Jacob provided that his “righteousness should answer for him,” Gen. 30:33. And we have an instance of it in God’s dealing with men, Psa. 106:30, 31, “Then Phinehas stood up and executed judgment; and that was counted to him for righteousness.” Even though it seems that he did not have sufficient warrant for what he did, God knew his heart and approved his act as righteous, and then gave him a reward testifying to that approval.

It must be observed that whatever is our own prior to God’s act of imputation can never be imputed to us for anything more or less than what it actually is in itself. Imputation has two concurrent parts. First, there is a judgment that the thing imputed is ours; it is in us, or it belongs to us. Second, there is a will to deal with us according to what is imputed. Therefore, when imputing anything to us that is ours, God does not consider it to be something other than what it actually is. He does not consider something to be perfect righteousness if it is imperfect. To do so would either be a mistake about the thing judged, or a perverse judgment. Therefore, if as some say, our own faith and obedience are imputed to us for righteousness, and they are imperfect, then they must be imputed to us as an imperfect righteousness and not a perfect righteousness. That is because the judgment of God is according to the truth in this imputation. And imputing an imperfect righteousness to us will do us little good in this matter. It must be observed that this imputation is a mere act of justice without any mixture of grace, as the apostle declares in Rom. 11:6 “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” So it consists of these two parts: judging what is truly found in us, and the will to deal with us according to what has been found. Both are acts of justice.

(2.) Imputing something to us that is not our own prior to that imputation varies as to its grounds and causes. It must be observed that in this kind of imputation, those to whom something is imputed are not considered to have done the thing that is imputed to them.



That would not be imputing, but erring in judgment. It utterly overthrows the whole nature of gracious imputation. Instead, it means to make something ours that was not ours before by imputing it to us, and thereby obtaining all the same ends and purposes it would have served if it had been our own without the imputation.

Therefore, it is an obvious mistake that some make when they object to the doctrine of imputation on these grounds. They say, "If our sins were imputed to Christ, then he must be esteemed to have done what we have wrongfully done, and so he would be the greatest sinner that ever was." On the other side they say "If his righteousness is imputed to us, then we are esteemed to have done what he did, and so we have no need of the pardon of sin." But this is contrary to the nature of imputation, which is not based on any such interpretation. On the contrary, we ourselves have done nothing of what is imputed to us (righteousness), nor did Christ do anything of what was imputed to him (sinfulness).

To make the nature of this imputation more distinct, I will consider several reasons why it is necessary. Imputing something to us that is not previously our own may either be done,

1. "Ex justitia" (out of justice)
2. "Ex voluntaria sponsorship" (out of voluntary sponsorship or assumption)
3. "Ex injuria," (without wrongdoing or guilt)
4. "Ex gratia" (out of grace),

I will give examples for all. I do not make these distinctions as if one or more might not be found in the same imputation; indeed I will show that they do. But I will compare each to what causes all of them.

1. Things that are not our own originally, personally, or inherently may still be imputed to us "ex justitia," by the rule of righteousness. This may be based on both a federal and a natural relation between the parties from and to whom it is imputed.

- (1.) Things done by one may be imputed to others, "propter relationem foederalem," because of a covenant relation between them. Thus the sin of Adam is imputed to all his posterity. The basis for doing so is that we all stood in a covenant relationship with him. He was our head and our representative. The corruption and

depravity of *nature* that we derive from Adam is imputed to us with the first kind of imputation. It is something that was ours prior to that imputation – it is our nature. But his *actual* sin is also imputed to us as something that became ours by imputation, because it was not ours prior to it. For that reason, Bellarmine himself says, “The sin of Adam is so imputed to all his posterity that it is as if they had all committed the same sin.” And in this he gives us the true nature of imputation, which he fiercely rejects in his books on justification. For imputing that sin to us includes both charging it to us, and then dealing with us as if we had committed it. That is the doctrine of the apostle in Rom. 5.

(2) There is an imputation of sin to others, “*ex justitia propter relationem naturalem*,” on the account of a natural relation between those to whom it is imputed and those who actually contracted the guilt of it. But this is only with respect to some outward, temporary effects of it. God speaks about the children of the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, “Your children shall wander in the wilderness forty years, and bear your whoredoms,” Numb. 14:33; It is as if to say, “Your sin shall be imputed to your children because of their relation to you, and your interest in them, and because of that they will suffer for your sin by being afflicted in the wilderness.” This was a just thing to do because of the relationship between them. So, where there is a due foundation for it, imputation is an act of justice.

2. Imputation may justly ensue “*ex voluntaria sponsorships*,” when one freely and willingly undertakes to answer for another. We have an illustration in that passage of the apostle to Philemon on behalf of Onesimus, verse 18, “If he has wronged you, or owes you something” (*tou~to ejmoi ejllo>gei* “*touto emoi ellogei*”), “impute it to me, put it on my account.” He supposes that Philemon might have a double action against Onesimus.

(1.) “*Injuriarum*,” of wrongs: *Eij de> ti hJdi>khse> se?* “*Ei de ti edikese se*” If he has dealt unjustly with you, or by you, if he has so wronged you as to render himself subject to punishment.”

(2.) “*Damni*,” or of loss: *{H ojfei>lei?* “*E ofeilei*” “If he owes you something, and is a debtor to you;” which made him liable for payment or restitution. In this state, the apostle interposes himself

as a voluntary sponsor, to undertake for Onesimus: “I Paul have written it with my own hand,” jEgw< ajpoti>sw? “Egoo apotisoo.” “I, Paul, will answer for the whole.” And he did this by transferring both debts of Onesimus to himself; for the crime was not a capital offense and might be taken away by clearing him of the charge. Imputing these debts to him was made just by voluntarily undertaking them. “Consider me,” he says, “the person who has done these things and I will make satisfaction, so that nothing will be charged to Onesimus.”

Judah voluntarily undertook liability to Jacob for the safety of Benjamin, and obliged himself to perpetual guilt in case of failure, Gen. 43:9, “I will be the surety for him; of my hand shall you require him: if I do not bring him to you and set him before you,” [μymiY;hAlK; òl\] ytiaf;j;w\]](#) “wechatta’ti lecha kol-hayamim,” “I will be a sinner before you always,” be guilty, or as we say, bear the blame. So he expresses himself again to Joseph in chap. 44:32. It seems that this is the nature and the office of a surety. What he undertakes is justly required of him, as if he had been originally and personally liable for it. And this voluntary sponsorship was one ground for the imputation of our sin to Christ. He took upon himself the liability for the whole church that had sinned, to answer for what they had done against God and the law. For that reason, the imputation was “fundamentaliter ex compacto, ex voluntaria sponsorshipe;” it had its foundation in his voluntary undertaking. But supposing it was actually “ex justitia,” that is, righteous or just that he should answer for it and make good for what he had undertaken, the glory of God’s righteousness and holiness is greatly involved here.

3. There is an imputation “ex injuria,” when someone is charged with something of which he is not guilty. So Bathsheba says to David, “It shall come to pass that when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be [μyaiF;j](#) ‘chatta’im” (sinners), 1 Kings 1:21. It is saying, “We shall be dealt with as offenders and as guilty persons. We will have sin imputed to us on one pretence or another, and that will be to our destruction. We will be esteemed sinners, and be dealt with accordingly.” We see in this phrase of the Scripture that the type of sinner follows the imputation of sin. That sheds light on what the apostle means in 2Cor. 5:21: “He was made sin for us.” This kind of imputation has no place in the

judgment of God. Far be it from him that the righteous should be considered wicked.

4. There is an imputation “*ex mera gratia*,” of mere grace and favor. This is when what precedes imputation was in no way ours. It was not inherent in us or performed by us. We had no right or title to it. And then it is granted to us and made our own, so that we are judged and dealt with accordingly. It applies to both branches of imputation, negative in the non-imputation of sin, and positive in the imputation of righteousness. This is what the apostle so vehemently pleads for, and so frequently asserts in Rom. 4. He both affirms the thing itself, and declares that it is only by grace, without respect to anything within ourselves, that we are considered righteous. If this kind of imputation cannot be fully exemplified in any other instance than this one, it is because the foundation of it, in the mediation of Christ, is singular, and there is nothing to parallel it in any other case.

From what has been said concerning the nature and grounds of imputation, several things are made evident that greatly contribute to a right understanding of the matter under debate.

1. The difference is plain between imputing any works of our own to us, and imputing the righteousness of faith without works. For imputing works to us, whatever they may be – even faith as a work of obedience – is imputing something that was ours before such imputation. But imputing the righteousness of God, which is by faith, is imputing something that was not previously ours. It is made ours only by virtue of that imputation. These two imputations are completely different. The one is judging something that is actually in us before that judgment is passed. The other is conveying something to us that was not ours before. No one can grasp the apostle’s discourse on this if he does not acknowledge that the righteousness he speaks of is made ours by imputation, and was not ours prior to that imputation.

2. The imputation of works, whatever they may be, even faith itself as a work, is “*ex justitia*,” and not “*ex gratia*.” It is our right and not of grace. Even though bestowing faith on us and working obedience in us may be of grace, imputing them to us as our own is an act of justice. For imputation, as shown, is judging that something is truly in us as our own, and then treating us accordingly. But the

imputation of righteousness mentioned by the apostle is “ex mera gratia,” of mere grace, as he fully declares, “doorean tei chariti outou.” And, moreover, he declares that these two sorts of imputation are incompatible, Rom. 9:6. “If by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.” For instance, if faith itself as a work of ours is imputed to us, and it is ours prior to that imputation, then it is only an acknowledgment that it is in us and that it is ours. It ascribes to us what we already have. If this is an imputation “ex justitia” of works, then mere grace can have no place here. By the apostle’s rule, it would be exclusive of grace. On the other hand, if the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, then it must be “ex mera gratia,” of mere grace. That is because what is imputed to us was not ours prior to that imputation, and so it is conveyed to us thereby. And here there is no place for works. In the one, the foundation of the imputation is in ourselves. In the other, it is in someone else. And the two are irreconcilable.

3. Both kinds of imputation agree in one thing. Whatever is imputed to us, is imputed for what it is, and not for what it is not. If perfect righteousness is imputed to us, it is esteemed and judged to be just that. And, as those who have a perfect righteousness, we are dealt with accordingly. If what is imputed as righteousness to us is imperfect, or imperfectly imputed, then it must be judged so. And we must be dealt with as those who have an imperfect righteousness, and not otherwise. Therefore, if our inherent and imperfect righteousness is imputed to us, we cannot be accepted as perfectly righteous without an error in judgment. For that reason,

4. The true nature of imputation is obvious, both negatively and positively.

(1.) Negatively. First, it is not judging or esteeming someone to be righteous who is not truly righteous. That would be “ex injuria,” or a false charge, for it would consider what is evil to be good. And therefore the Papists and others are ignorant or malicious when they cry out that we affirm God esteems those who are wicked, sinful, and polluted to be righteous. This affects those who maintain that we are justified before God by our own inherent righteousness. For then a man would be judged righteous who indeed is not so, because someone who is not perfectly righteous cannot be righteous

in the sight of God so as to be justified. Secondly, we cannot pronounce or declare anyone to be righteous without a just and sufficient foundation for the judgement. God declares no one righteous unless he is righteous. The whole question is how he comes to be righteous. Thirdly, it is not the transfusion of the righteousness of another into those who are to be justified that makes them perfectly and inherently righteous. For it is impossible to transfuse the righteousness of one into another in a way that makes it subjectively and inherently his own. On the other hand, it is a great mistake to say that the righteousness of one cannot in any way be made the righteousness of another. That would deny all imputation. Therefore,

(2.) Positively. This imputation is an act of God “*ex mera gratia*,” of his mere love and grace. On the consideration of the mediation of Christ, God makes an effectual grant and donation of a true, real, and perfect righteousness. It is that righteousness of Christ himself that is granted to all who believe. God accounts it as theirs, by his own gracious act, and he both absolves them from sin and grants them the right and title to eternal life because of it.

For that reason,

5. In this imputation, what is first imputed to us is the thing itself, not its effects. But the effects are made ours by virtue of that imputation. To say that only the effects of the righteousness of Christ are imputed to us is to say that we have the benefit of them, and nothing more. The imputation itself is denied. This is what the Socinians say. And it is not pleasing to see some among ourselves confidently use the ideas and words of these men in their disputes against the Protestant doctrine in this case, which is the doctrine of the Church of England.

The effects of the righteousness of Christ are made ours by reason of its imputation to us, and that makes sound sense. His righteousness is so reckoned to us by God that he really communicates all its effects to us. But to say that the righteousness of Christ is not also imputed to us, defeats all imputation. For the effects cannot be said to be properly imputed to us if his righteousness itself is not. The Socinians, who expressly oppose the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and limit it to its effects or benefits, wisely deny that the

righteousness of Christ serves as a satisfaction and merit at all. From the description of imputation and the examples given of it earlier, it appears that there can be no imputation of anything unless the thing itself is imputed. Nor can we participate in the effects of anything that is not imputed itself. Therefore, in our particular case, no imputation of the righteousness of Christ is allowed, unless we grant that the righteousness itself is imputed; nor can we participate in its effects unless his righteousness itself is imputed to us.

All we aim to show is that either the righteousness of Christ itself is imputed to us, or there is no imputation in our justification. As was said, the effects of the righteousness of Christ cannot be said to be properly imputed to us if his righteousness is not imputed. For instance, pardon of sin is a great effect of the righteousness of Christ. Our sins are pardoned on the account of his righteousness. God, for Christ's sake, forgives us all our sins. But the pardon of sin cannot be said to be imputed to us, nor is it. Adoption, justification, peace with God, all grace and glory, are *effects* of the righteousness of Christ. But it is evident from their nature that these things are not *imputed* to us, nor can they be. Instead, we partake in them on the account of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us, and not otherwise.

## 8. Imputation of the sins of the Church to Christ

Those who believe that in justification there is an imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers, also unanimously profess that the sins of all believers were imputed to Christ. They do so based on many passages of Scripture directly witnessing to it. In the first place, we will inquire into the foundation of this dispensation of God, the equity of it, and the grounds on which it is resolved.

The principal foundation of this imputation is that Christ and the church, in this design, are one mystical person. This is a state that they actually coalesce into through the uniting efficacy of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the head and believers are the members of that one person, as the apostle declares in 1Cor. 12:12, 13. For that reason, what he did is imputed to them as if done by them. What they deserved on the account of their sin was charged to him. We hear the voice of the body from the mouth of the head. The church suffered in him when he suffered for the church; as he suffers in the church when the church suffers for him. For as we have heard the voice of the church in Christ suffering, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? look upon me;’ so we have heard the voice of Christ in the church suffering, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’” We may look beyond this to the understanding of the ancient church.

In outline, there is no doubt that Christ was the focus in the [ajnahmealaj>wsiv](#) “anakefalaiosis” [NT:346], “gathering together into one” mentioned in Eph. 1:10. It may be that this was what Origen meant enigmatically by saying, “The soul of the first Adam was the soul of Christ, and so it is charged to him.” And Cyprian, Epist. 62, in talking about the administration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, “Nos omnes portabat Christus; qui et peccata nostra portabet;” “He carried us,” or suffered in our person, “when he carried our sins.” For that reason, Athanasius affirms that it was our voice in Christ on the cross, [Oujk aujto<v oJ Ku>riov? ajlla< hJmei~v ejn ejkei>nw| pa>scontev h+men?](#) “Ouk autos ho Kurios, alle hemeis en ekeinooi paschontes hemen;” “We suffered in him.”



Eusebius says much on this point. *Evangelii. lib. 10 cap. 1.* He expounds the words of the psalmist, “Heal my soul, for I have sinned against you,” *Psa. 41:4*, by applying them to our Savior in his sufferings. He says, *ἵνα ἑμεῖς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἐπιλάβωμεν* *εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἁμαρτίας*? “Epeidan tas hemeteras koinopoiei eis heauton hamartias,” “Because he took of our sins to himself;” That is, he conveyed our sins to himself, making them his own. And so he adds, *{ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἁμαρτίας ἐποιήσαμεν}*? “Hoti tas hemeteras hamartias exoikeiomenos,” “Making our sins his own.” Thus, he asks “How, then, did he make our sins his own, and how did he bear our iniquities? Is it not for that reason, that we are said to be his body? As the apostle says, ‘You are the body of Christ, and members, for your part, of one another.’ When one member suffers, all the members suffer. So when the many members sin and suffer, according to the laws of sympathy (in the same body) he took the sorrows or labors of the suffering members on himself, and made all their infirmities his own. By the Word of God he takes the form of a servant, and is joined to the common habitation of us all in the same nature. According to the laws of humanity (in the same body), he bore our sorrow and labor for us. And the Lamb of God not only did these things for us, but he underwent torments and was punished for us. He was in no way exposed to this for himself, but because of the multitude of our sins. Thereby he became the cause of the pardon of our sins. He underwent death, stripes, and reproaches, translating the thing which we had deserved to himself. He was made a curse for us, taking to himself the curse that was due to us. What was he if not a substitute for us, and a price of redemption for our souls? In our person, therefore, while freely uniting himself to us, and us to himself, and making our sins or passions his own, he cries ‘I have said, Lord, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against you.’”

The union between Christ and us is demonstrated in these things:

- that our sins were transferred to him and made his;
- that because of them he underwent the punishment that was due to us, and

- that the basis for this, in which its equity is resolved, is fully declared in this discourse.

Many church fathers often say that “he bore us,” that “he took us with him on the cross,” and that “we were all crucified in him.” As Prosper said, “He is not saved by the cross of Christ who is not crucified in Christ,” *Resp. ad cap., Gal. cap. 9*. This, then, is the foundation of the imputation of the sins of the church to Christ: namely, that he and the church are one person. We must inquire into the grounds for saying so.

Numerous comments ensue and various questions are asked on this topic. What is a person? In how many senses may that word be used? What is the true idea of it? What is a natural person? What is a legal, civil, or political person? In the explication of these questions, some have fallen into error. If we enter into this discussion, there will be enough debate and disagreements. But I must say that these things do not belong to our present inquiry. The union of Christ and the church is only obscured by them. Christ and believers are not a natural person, nor are they a legal or political person, nor are they any such person as the laws, customs, or usages of men know or permit. They are one mystical person. Although there may be a crude resemblance found in natural or political unions, the union between Christ and us is of such a nature, and arises from such reasons and causes, that it is unlike any personal union among men. And therefore it is compared to unions of various kinds and natures to illustrate it to us who have limited understanding, and are unable to comprehend the depth of heavenly mysteries.

It is represented by the union of man and wife. The relation is not derived from mutual affections, which would only make it a moral union, but from the extraction of the first woman from the flesh and bone of the first man. This was instituted by God to establish the foundation of the individual society of life. The apostle declares this at length in *Eph. 5:25-32*. He concludes from the union thus represented that, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones,” verse 30. We have such a relation to him as Eve had to Adam when she was made of his flesh and bone. She was one flesh with him.

It is also compared to the union of the head and members of the same natural body, 1 Cor. 12:12. It is compared to a political union between a ruling or political head and its political members. But it is never exclusively represented by the union of a natural head and its members in the same passage, Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19. It is also compared to a number of things in nature, such as a vine and its branches, John 15:1, 2. It is declared by the relation between Adam and his posterity, by God's institution, and by the law of creation, Rom. 5:12, etc. The Holy Ghost represents the union between Christ and believers by such a variety of images, that it is clear that the union is not any one kind; they agree only in the general concept of a union. This will be made more evident by considering its causes, and the grounds on which it is resolved. Because it would take too much time and effort to handle these in depth, I will only briefly refer to the main causes and grounds for this union:

1. The first cause of this union lies in the eternal compact between the Father and Son concerning the recovery and salvation of fallen mankind. This is where the assumption of our nature was designed. The relation between Christ and the church, proceeding from that, is such an effect of infinite wisdom in the counsel of the Father and Son, and made effectual by the Holy Spirit, that it must be distinguished from all other unions or relations whatsoever.

2. The nature which the Lord Christ was to assume predestined him to grace and glory. He was [proegnwsme>nov](#) "proegnoosmenos" – foreordained, predestined – "before the foundation of the world," 1 Pet. 1:20. That is, he was foreordained with all the grace and glory that was required for and resulted from his office. All the grace and glory of the human nature of Christ was an effect of free divine preordination. God chose from all eternity to have it include all that it received in time. No other cause exists for the glorious exaltation of that portion of our nature.

3. This grace and glory that he was preordained to have was twofold:

- (1.) What was unique to himself and,

- (2.) What was to be conveyed by and through him to the church.

Of the first sort was the [ca>riv eJnw>sewv](#) "charis henooseoos," or the grace of personal union. This is the single effect of divine wisdom

that his nature was filled with: “Full of grace and truth,” Jn. 1:14. There is no shadow or resemblance of it in any other works of God, either of creation, providence, or grace. To this belongs all of his personal glory, power, authority, and majesty as mediator, and his exaltation at the right hand of God that expresses them all. These things were unique to him, and all of them were effects of his eternal predestination. But as to the second sort, he was not absolutely predestined, but only as to the grace and glory that was conveyed to the church.

[1.] He was predestined as the pattern and exemplary cause of our predestination; for we are “predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, that he might be the first born among many brothers,” Rom. 8:29. For that reason he will even “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body,” Phil. 3:21, so that when he appears we may be like him in every way, 1 John 3:2.

[2.] He was predestined as the means and cause of conveying all grace and glory to us. For we were “chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and predestined to adoption as children by him,” Eph. 1:3-5. He was designed to be the only cause of procuring all spiritual blessings in heavenly things for those who are chosen in him.

[3.] He was thus foreordained as the head of the church. It is the design of God to gather all things under his headship, Eph. 1:10.

[4.] All the elect of God were committed to him, in God’s eternal purpose and design, and in the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son. They were to be delivered from sin, the law, and death, and to be brought into the enjoyment of God: “Yours they were, and you gave them to me,” John 17:6. That was the reason for which he loved them and gave himself for them, prior to any good or love they had in themselves, Eph. 5:25, 26; Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5, 6.

[5.] In the fullness of time, he prosecuted this design of God and accomplished the everlasting covenant. He took our nature upon himself. The special relationship that followed between him and the elect children is declared by the apostle at length in Heb. 2:10-17.

[6.] On these foundations he undertook to be the surety of the new covenant, Heb. 7:22, “Jesus was made a surety of a better testament.” Of all the fundamental considerations of the imputation of our sins to Christ, I particularly want to articulate this one. I hope to remove some mistakes about the nature of his surety, and its relation to the new covenant.

The word for surety in Heb. 7:22 is “enguos” [NT:1450]. It is found nowhere else in the Scripture. Some would say for that reason it does not have much force and should not be relied on. That is both unreasonable and absurd. First, this one place is a divine revelation, and therefore it has the same authority as twenty passages to the same purpose. One divine verse makes our faith no less necessary, nor does one less verse than a hundred keep us from being deceived. Second, the meaning of the word is known from its use, and what it means to people. So there is no question as to its sense and importance, even though it is only used once. In any circumstance this removes the difficulty and danger. Third, the intent is so fully declared by the apostle here, and so often repeated in other places of the Scripture, that the single use of the word here can only add light.

Something may be said about the meaning of the word [e\]ggguov](#) “enguos” to illuminate what is intended by it. [Gu>alon](#) “Gualon” is “vola manus” or the “palm of the hand.” Thus [e\]ggguov](#) “enguos,” or [eijv to< gu>alon](#) “eis to gualon” is literally to “deliver into the hand.” [jEgguhth>v](#) “Enguetes” has the same meaning. For that reason, being a surety is indicated by striking the hand, Prov. 6:1. “My son, if you are the surety for your friend, if you have struck your hand with a stranger...” So the Greek here corresponds to the Hebrew [br\[;](#) “arav,” which the LXX renders [ejggua>w](#) “enguaoo,” Prov. 6:1; 17:18; 20:16, and [dieggua>w](#) “dienguaoo” in Neh. 5:3. “Arav” originally means to mingle, or make a mixture of things or persons. For that reason, there is a blending between the surety and the one he ensures so that they coalesce into one person. What the one did who became [br\[;](#) “arav,” a surety, was to answer for the one he ensured, whatever befell him. That is how it is described in Gen. 43:9. In the words of Judas to his father Jacob concerning Benjamin, [WNb;r\]\[,a, ykinOa;](#) “anochi ‘e’erbennu,” “I will be surety for him; from my hand will you search for him.” In ensuring his safety and preservation, he engages himself to answer for anything that should happen to him. He adds,

“If I do not bring him to you, and set him before you, let me be guilty forever.” Based on this pledge, he entreats Joseph to make him a servant and a bondman in Benjamin’s place so that Benjamin might be free to return to his father, Gen. 44:32, 33.

This is what is required to be a surety: to answer for whatever the ensured is liable for, to the extent of the suretyship, whether the matter is criminal or civil. A surety undertakes for another, and is justly and legally answerable for what is due to them or from them. The word is not used in any other way. See Job 17:3; Prov. 6:1; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 27:13. So Paul became a surety to Philemon for Onesimus, verse 18.

Latin equivalents for [jEggu>h](#) “engue” are “sponsio, expromissio, fidejussio.” It is giving security for anything or person to another person under an agreement. This was done in some cases by offering pledges or giving an earnest, as in Isa. 36:8, [an; br,\[;t\]hi](#) “hit’arev na,” It means to “give surety, pledges, hostages,” until the conditions are performed. Hence, we find the word [öwObr;\[e](#) “eravon,” or [ajrjrJazw>n](#), “arrathoon” [NT:728], which is a pledge or earnest, used in Eph. 1:14. “Which is the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” Therefore [e\]gguov](#) “enguos” is a “sponsor, fidejussor, praes.” It is someone who voluntarily takes on himself the cause or condition of another. He answers for or pays what the other is liable for, or completes what is promised. In doing so, he becomes justly and legally liable for the performance.

Our present inquiry into the nature of this surety of Christ is reduced to this one question: was the Lord Christ only made God’s surety to us to confirm that he would accomplish the promises of the covenant, or was he principally made our surety to God to perform what is required so that the promise may be accomplished? The Socinians vehemently assert the first, and they are followed by Grotius and Hammond in their annotations on this passage in Hebrews. On the other hand, most Roman and Protestant expositors on this passage affirm that the Lord Christ, as the surety of the covenant, was properly a surety to God for us, and not a surety to us for God. Because has great importance concerning the faith and consolation of the church, I will expand a little upon it.

First, we will consider the argument used by others to prove that Christ was only a surety for God to us. This is taken neither from the nature of the surety, nor from the nature of the covenant. The sole argument is that God is the initiator of the covenant, and therefore we do not give Christ as a surety of the covenant to God, but instead God gives him to us for that purpose. Thus Christ is a surety for God and not for us. But there is no force in this argument, because it is not the nature of a surety to define his office and work as a surety. His voluntary acceptance of the office and work is all that is required, no matter how he is induced to undertake it. And this is what the Lord Christ did on behalf of the church. It was said, "Sacrifice, and burnt-offering, and whole burnt-offerings for sin, God would not have," Amos 5:22. That is, he would not accept them as sufficient to make the atonement that he required to establish the covenant and make it effectual for us. Then he said, "Lo, I come to do your will, O God," Heb. 10:5, 7. He willingly and voluntarily, out of his own abundant goodness and love, took it upon himself to make atonement for us, and thus he became our surety. Accordingly, this undertaking is ascribed to the love which he exercised in doing this, Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16; Rev. 1:5. Moreover, in being our surety, he took upon himself our nature as the seed of Abraham. Although we could not appoint him to be our surety, he took from us what was necessary to be just that. That is the same as if we had appointed him to his work and made it the true reason for his being our surety. Therefore, notwithstanding any prior transactions between the Father and Son in this matter, it was his voluntary engagement to be our surety, and taking on our nature for that purpose, that was the formal reason for his being instated in that office.

It is contrary to all common experience to say that no one can be a surety for others unless they appoint him to be such. In the world, becoming a surety is a voluntary undertaking that in no way is procured by those who are ensured. In such undertakings, the surety is considered to be the same as the one ensured. When Judah, on his own account, became a surety for Benjamin, satisfying his father was the same as procuring the safety of his brother. And so the Lord Christ, in undertaking to be a surety for us, was looking to the glory of God in ensuring our safety.

Secondly, we will argue that it is evident that Christ neither was nor could be a surety for God to us, but had to be a surety for us to God.

1. The word for surety, *Egguov* “enguos” or *ejgguhth>v* “enguetes,” is someone that undertakes liability for another who is defective, whether actually or in reputation. Whatever that undertaking is, whether to keep a promise, or to deposit real security in the hands of an arbitrator, or for any other personal engagement, it assumes the disability of the ensured person. The surety is called the “sponsor” or “fidejussor” (fiduciary) in all good authors and in common use. If anyone has absolute credit in himself, or an unquestionable reputation, then there is no need for a surety unless they have died. The words a surety speaks on behalf of another whose ability or reputation is dubious are, “Ad me recipio, faciet, aut faciam” (on my house is a guarantee face to face). And when *ejgguov* “anguos” is used as an adjective, it signifies “satisfactionibus obnoxius,” liable to pay for others who are not solvent.

2. Therefore, properly, God can have no surety, because there can be no imaginable defect on his part. There may be a question as to whether God was the source of a promise. Assuring us of that promise is not the work of a surety but the work of a witness who may give evidence. Supposing that we are dealing with a word or promise of God, it still cannot be imagined that there would be any defect on his part. So again, there is no need for a surety to perform it. God does make use of witnesses to confirm his word by testifying that he has made such promises. The Lord Christ was his witness. Isa. 43:10, “You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen;” but they were not his sureties. Christ affirms that “he came into the world to bear witness to the truth,” John 18:37, that is, the truth of the promises of God. He was the minister of the circumcision for the truth of the promises of God to the fathers, Rom. 15:8. But he was not a surety for God, nor could he be. The difference is clear enough between a witness and a surety. A surety must have more ability, or more credit and reputation, than the one he ensures, or there is no need to be a surety. He must at least add to their credit, and make it better than it would be without him. No one can be in this position for God, not even the Lord Christ himself who was the servant of the Father in all he did. And the



apostle never uses this word in the improper sense of an assurer to particularly describe Christ. In such a sense, all the prophets and apostles were sureties for God, and many of them confirmed the truth of his word and promises by laying down their lives. But a surety undertakes to do something for others that they cannot do for themselves, or at least that they are reputed to be unable to do.

3. The apostle previously declared at length how impossible it was for God to have any other surety for the covenant than himself. "Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself," Heb. 6:13, 14. Therefore, if God were to have any surety besides himself, it must be someone greater than himself. This being completely impossible, he swears by himself alone. He may use many ways to declare and testify of his truth to us so that we may know and believe it to be his word. And so the Lord Christ in his ministry was the principal witness of the truth of God. But he cannot have any other surety than himself. And therefore,

4. When God would have us come to the full assurance of faith concerning his promises, and be strongly consoled by them, he points to the immutability of his counsel as declared by his promise and oath, Heb. 6:18, 19. So God is not capable of having any surety, and we do not need any on his part to fully confirm our faith.

5. On all accounts, we stand in need of a surety for us. Without interposing such a surety, any covenant between God and us would not be firm and stable, everlasting, ordered in all things, and sure. In the first covenant, made with Adam, there was no surety. God and men made the covenant directly. Although we were then capable of performing all the terms of the covenant, it was broken. If this was caused by the failure of God's promise, then, on making a new covenant, God would need a surety to undertake it for him so that the covenant might be stable and everlasting. This is false and blasphemous to imagine. It was man alone who failed and broke that covenant. Therefore it was necessary to have a surety for us when making the new covenant, to make it stable and everlasting. If that first covenant was not firm and stable because there was no surety to undertake the responsibilities for us, even though we were capable of meeting its terms, how much more we need one now that our natures have become depraved and sinful! Therefore, we alone were in need of a surety, and without a surety the covenant could not be firm and

inviolable on our part. The surety of this covenant, therefore, is for us to God.

6. It is the priesthood of Christ that the apostle addresses in Hebrews 6:18-20, and that alone. Therefore, Christ is a surety in the discharge of that priestly office, and he is a surety to God on our behalf. Schlichtingius observes this, and is aware of what will ensue against his pretensions that Christ is a surety for God unless he endeavors to obviate the role of priest.

*Answer 1.* It may seem strange to anyone who imagines that Christ is a surety for God, that the apostle would describe his priestly office as belonging to that role of surety. But if we consider what the proper work and duty of a surety is, and who the Lord Jesus was a surety for, then it becomes evident that nothing more pertinent could be mentioned by him.

*Answer 2.* By making Christ a surety for God, Schlichtingius contradicts the nature of a surety. He acknowledges that a surety acts only when there is a defect or inability on the part of the ensured. He is to pay what they owe, and to do what is they must do, but cannot perform. If this is not the notion of a surety in this passage, the apostle uses no other word in the whole Scripture to teach something other than what a surety means to us. The sole reason why he uses it is to help us understand its significance, what he intends by it, and what he ascribes to the Lord Jesus by it.

*Answer 3.* Schlichtingius has no way to solve the apostle's mention of Christ being a surety in the description of his priestly office, but by overturning the nature of that office. To confirm this absurd notion that Christ as a priest was a surety for God, he would have us believe that the priesthood of Christ consists in his making the promises of God effectual to us, or effectually conveying the good things promised to us. I have demonstrated elsewhere the falsehood of this notion, which is really destructive of the priesthood of Christ. Therefore, seeing that the Lord Christ is a surety of the covenant as a priest, and all the priestly actions of Christ have God as their immediate object, and they are performed on our behalf, he was obviously a surety for us to God.

The Lord Christ was a surety for us by his voluntary undertaking. Out of his rich grace and love, he performed all that is required on

our part so that we may enjoy the benefits of the covenant in the manner determined by divine wisdom. This may be reduced to two areas: First, he answered for our transgressions against the first covenant; Secondly, he purchased and procured the grace of the new covenant. "He was made a curse for us, ... that the blessing of Abraham might come on us," Gal. 3:13-15.

(1.) As the surety of the covenant, Christ undertook to answer for all the sins of those who are made partakers of its benefits. That is, he underwent the punishment due for their sins. He made atonement for them by offering himself a propitiatory sacrifice to expiate their sins. By the price of his blood, he redeemed them from their state of misery, bondage, and curse under the law, Isa. 53:4-6, 10; Matt. 20:28; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Cor. 6:20; Rom. 3:25, 26; Heb. 10:5-8; Rom. 8:2, 3; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; Gal. 3:13. This was absolutely necessary so that the grace and glory prepared in the covenant might be conveyed to us. Sinners are apostasized from God. They despise his authority and rebel against him. Thereby they fall under the sentence and curse of the law. Without undertaking and performing this atonement for us, the righteousness and faithfulness of God would not permit us as sinners to be received into his favor again, and made partakers of grace and glory.

(2.) Those who were taken into this covenant received grace, enabling them to comply with its terms, fulfill its conditions, and offer up the obedience that God required in it. By the ordination of God, Christ was to merit and procure for them the Holy Spirit, and all the necessary supplies of grace. He was to make them new creatures, and enable them to offer up obedience to God from a new principle of spiritual life, and to continue that faithfully to the end. And so, he was the surety of this better testament.

But some have other ideas about these things. They say that "By his obedient death, Christ offered himself a sacrifice of sweet smelling savor to God, and procured for us the new covenant." One of them says, "All that we have by the death of Christ is what we owe the covenant of grace. For what he did and suffered is what God required and freely appointed him to do and suffer. The justice of God did not require any such thing with respect to the sins of those for whom he died, and in whose stead he suffered. It was only what was appointed to him by a free constitution of divine wisdom and sovereignty.

Because of it, God was pleased to cancel the terms of the old covenant, and enter into a new covenant with mankind. Its terms were more suited to our reason, possible to our abilities, and in every way advantageous to us. For these terms are faith and sincere obedience. It is an assent to the truth of divine revelation and conditioned on obedience to the will of God contained in the terms. As an encouragement, we are given the promises of eternal life or a future reward. Our justification, adoption, and future glory, depend on the performance of these conditions. They are that righteousness before God upon which he pardons our sins, and accepts us as if we were perfectly righteous.”

Therefore, by procuring the new covenant for us they mean the abrogation of the old covenant or law. They ascribe this to the death of Christ. The law will no longer obligate us either to sinless obedience or punishment, nor will it require a perfect righteousness to obtain our justification before God. It means the constitution of a new law of obedience that accommodates our present state and condition. And all the promises of the gospel depend on observing it.

Others say that the death of Christ was only done to satisfy God and not the law. God was well pleased and satisfied with what Christ did without any respect to his own justice or the curse of the law. And they add that, based on this, the whole righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, making us partakers of the benefits derived from it. Moreover, the way the benefits are conveyed to us is by the new covenant, which the Lord Christ procured by his death. The conditions of this covenant, which are faith and obedience, are established in the covenant itself. On meeting them, God will bestow all the benefits and effects on us. Therefore, what the Lord Christ has done for us is accepted as our real righteousness, and God, conditioned on our responding in faith and obedience, releases and pardons all our sins of omission and commission. Once pardoned, there is no need for any positive perfect righteousness to obtain our justification or salvation. Our own personal righteousness is accepted with God along with Christ’s, by virtue of the new covenant which Christ has procured. This is the doctrine stated by Curcellaeus and those who follow him.

There are a number of things in these opinions that deserve examination. What we want to inquire into, concerning the Lord

Christ as surety of the covenant, is whether the new covenant is all that he procured for us by his death. If not, then we are not obligated to it for anything at all.

(1.) The terms of procuring the new covenant are ambiguous. It has not yet been declared how the Lord Christ procured it, whether by his satisfaction and obedience, or by some other way. Unless this is stated, we are uncertain what relation the new covenant has to the death of Christ. To say that we owe the new covenant to his death only renders it more ambiguous. We do not know whether what was procured is the constitution of the covenant, or the conveyance of its benefits. It is no less general that God was so well pleased with what Christ did, that he entered into a new covenant with mankind. They may say this and still deny the whole satisfaction and merit of Christ. If they mean that the Lord Christ, by his obedience and suffering, meritoriously procured the making of the new covenant, and that was all that he procured by his death, then what they say may be understood, but it defeats the whole nature of the mediation of Christ.

(2.) This assertion is liable to give great offense, because it involves such a fundamental article of our religion. The eternal welfare of the church is so nearly conceded by it, and yet there is no mention of it in the Scripture. It seems strange that this would be the sole effect of the death of Christ, because a number of other things in the Scripture are frequently said to be its effects and fruits. Our redemption, pardon of sins, the renovation of our natures, our sanctification, justification, peace with God, eternal life, are all jointly and severally assigned to Christ's death in numerous places. But it is nowhere said in the Scripture that by his death Christ merited, procured, and obtained the new covenant alone, or that God entered into a new covenant of works with mankind. In fact, as we will see, the contrary is frequently asserted.

(3.) To reveal the truth, we must consider several concepts and causes of the new covenant, and the true relation that the death of Christ has to it. The new covenant is variously depicted.

[1.] It is described in its terms and benefits as something that God designed and prepared according to his own counsel. Although it is like an eternal decree, it is not the same as the decree of

election, as some want to believe. Properly, election is directed at those for whom grace and glory are prepared; but this decree only involves how that grace and glory are conveyed. Some learned men conclude that this new covenant is the covenant of grace, or at least it contains the substance of that covenant. It is God's purpose to give grace and glory through Jesus Christ to the elect, in the way and by the means that he prepared. But it is clear that there is more to the nature of a covenant than its procurement. This purpose of God is not called the covenant in the Scripture. It is only proposed as the source of that covenant, Eph. 1:3-12.

More complete requirements of the covenant of grace include the declaration of God's will, the means and powers to accomplish it, prescribing the way that we gain an interest in it, and how we are made partakers of its benefits. But the first thing to consider in discovering how the new covenant is procured, is the fact that God first prepared its terms and benefits in his own mind. Nowhere in the Scripture is this preparation said to be the effect of the death or mediation of Christ. Saying it is the result of his death defeats the whole freedom of eternal grace and love. Nothing that is absolutely eternal, like this decree of God, can result from or be procured by anything that is external and temporal.

[2.] The new covenant may be considered with respect to the federal transactions between the Father and the Son concerning how to accomplish his will. What these consisted of, I have written elsewhere (Exercitat., vol. 2). I do not call this the covenant of grace absolutely, nor is it called that in the Scripture. But some will not distinguish between the covenant of the mediator and the covenant of grace, because the promises of the covenant are said to be made to Christ exclusively, Gal. 3:16. He is the [prw~ton dektiko](#) "prooton dektikon," or first subject of all its grace. In the covenant of the mediator, Christ stands alone, and he undertakes for himself alone, not as the representative of the church. But he is indeed the representative of the church in the covenant of grace. This is what was intended as the ways, means, and ends of its accomplishment. This is what was designed to make it effectual, to the eternal glory of the wisdom, grace, righteousness, and power of God. Therefore, the covenant of grace was procured by the same

means as what procured this covenant of the mediator, which is from Father through the Son undertaking the work of mediation. Because this is nowhere ascribed to the death of Christ in the Scripture, asserting so would be contrary to all spiritual reason and understanding. Who can conceive that, by his death, Christ would procure an agreement between God and him to die?

[3.] The new covenant is said by some to be declared by special revelation, which is another way to say that God made or established it. However, a covenant in Scripture is primarily, if not exclusively, executed by or applied to people, 2 Sam. 23:5; Jer. 32:40. This declaration of the grace of God, and the provision in the covenant to have a mediator to make it effectual to God's glory, is usually called the covenant of grace. And this covenant is twofold:

**1st.** There is a unique and absolute promise, first declared to Adam and afterwards to Abraham. The promise concerns how God would deal with sinners after the fall, and the resulting forfeiture of their first covenant state. The grace and will of God were the only cause of this promise, Heb. 8:8. The death of Christ could not be the means to procure it, because he himself and all that he was to do for us was the substance of that promise. And this promise is formally the new covenant. It declares the purpose of God in conveying grace and glory to sinners, by the mediation of Christ, according to the terms prepared in his sovereign wisdom and pleasure; though something must still be added to complete its application to us. Now, the substance of this first promise, comprising virtually the whole covenant of grace, directly respected the giving of Christ to recover mankind from sin and misery by his death, Gen. 3:15. Therefore, if he and all the benefits of his mediation, along with his death and all its effects, are contained in the promise of the covenant, then his death was not the procuring cause of that covenant.

**2nd.** The covenant prescribes the way and means by which we enter into a covenant with God, and gain an interest in its benefits. Every promise of God tacitly requires faith and obedience in us, but it is expressed in other places as the

condition that is required on our part. This is not the covenant, but the terms under which we are made partakers of it. These terms are not an effect of the death of Christ, nor are they procured by it. They are the result of the sovereign grace and wisdom of God. The things that are bestowed on us, conveyed to us, and worked in us by grace, are effects of the death of Christ. But making them the terms and conditions of the covenant is an act of sovereign wisdom and grace. "God so loved the world, as to send his only begotten Son to die," not that faith and repentance might be the means of salvation, but that all his elect might believe, and that all who believe "might not perish, but have everlasting life." It is granted that these terms reflect the federal transaction between the Father and the Son. They were designed to the praise of the glory of God's grace. And so, although their provisions were not the cause of his death, yet without them, it would not have happened. Therefore, the sole cause of God's making the new covenant was the same as what made him give Christ to be our mediator. It was the purpose, counsel, goodness, grace, and love of God, as it is expressed everywhere in the Scripture.

[4.] The covenant may be considered the actual application of the grace, benefits, and privileges of the covenant to us, making us real partakers of them. It is not a general revelation, or a declaration of the terms and nature of the covenant, but a conveyance of its grace, accompanied by a prescription of obedience. That is God's way of making his covenant with anyone, as all instances of it are declared in the Scripture.

It may be asked what relation the covenant of grace has to the death of Christ, or what influence it has on it. Assuming we are talking about his being a surety for it, it has a threefold relation to the death of Christ:

**1st.** The grace and glory of the covenant were prepared in the counsel of God. Its terms were fixed in the covenant of the mediator. It was declared in the promise. Thereby, the covenant was confirmed, ratified, and made irrevocable. Our apostle insists on this at length in Heb. 9:15-20. He compares Christ's blood, in his death and sacrifice, to the sacrifices and blood by which the old covenant was confirmed, purified, dedicated, and



established (verses 18, 19). These sacrifices did not procure that covenant, nor win God's subscription. They only ratified and confirmed it. This was done in the new covenant by the blood of Christ.

**2dly.** Christ performed all that the righteousness and wisdom of God required. This was done so that the effects, fruits, benefits, and grace that were intended in the new covenant, might be effectually conveyed to sinners. Although he did not procure the covenant for us by his death, yet by his mediation, life, and death, he was the only cause and the only means by which the whole grace of the covenant could be made effectual for us.

**3dly.** All the benefits of the covenant were procured by him. That is, all the grace, mercy, privileges, and glory, that God prepared in the counsel of his will, the fixed way that they would be conveyed to us in the covenant of the mediator, and that were proposed in its promises, are purchased, merited, and procured by Christ's death. They are effectually conveyed or applied to all the covenanters by virtue of his death and his other acts of mediation. This is a much more comprehensive procurement of the new covenant than just obtaining its terms and conditions. For if Christ only procured God's promise that whoever believed would be saved, it is possible that no one would be saved. In fact, if he did no more than that, then considering our state and condition, it would be impossible for anyone to be saved.

To sum up, the question we ask is, which of these considerations of the new covenant was procured by the death of Christ? If it is said that it actually conveyed all the grace and glory prepared in the covenant and proposed to us in its promises, then it is most true. In this sense, by his death he procured the new covenant. The whole Scripture, from the first promise to its end, bears witness to this. For it is in Christ alone that "God blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things" (Eph. 1:3). All the good things that are mentioned or promised in the covenant, both jointly and severally, were procured for us by the obedience and death of Christ.

But this is not what is meant by those who deny that grace, conversion, the remission of sins, sanctification, justification, adoption, and the like, were procured by the death of Christ. On the

contrary, they declare that it only procured the terms and conditions of the covenant, and they leave it to mankind to obtain their recovery. But there is nothing in this.

(1.) The first and principal promise of the covenant is the whole work of Christ's mediation for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners. His appearance in the flesh, and his work of mediation for our deliverance, was the subject of that first promise. It contained virtually the whole covenant. He restored it to Abraham when it was solemnly confirmed by the oath of God, Gal. 3:16, 17. "Now the promises were made to Abraham and his seed. He did not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many; but as of one, 'And to your seed,' which is Christ. And I say this, that the covenant that God confirmed before in Christ, cannot be annulled by the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, that it should make the promise of no effect." By his death Christ did not procure the promise of his death, nor his appearance in the flesh, nor his coming into the world that he might die.

(2.) Making this covenant and sending Christ to die is ascribed everywhere in the Scripture to the love, grace, and wisdom of God alone. Nowhere is it ascribed to the death of Christ; yet the actual conveyance of all grace and glory is. Consider all the places where the giving of the promise, the sending of Christ, or the making of the covenant are mentioned, and in none of them is the cause anything other than the grace, love, and wisdom of God alone. All of these are made effectual to us by the mediation of Christ.

(3.) Assigning the sole end of the death of Christ to the procurement of the new covenant does indeed evacuate all the virtue of the death of Christ and the covenant itself. First, the covenant they mean is nothing but a proposal of new terms and conditions for life and salvation for all men. Because the acceptance and accomplishment of these conditions is dependent on our will without effectual grace, it is possible that no sinner might be saved by them, and the whole design of God might be frustrated, notwithstanding all Christ did by his death. Secondly, nothing can be more dishonorable to Christ and the gospel than suggesting that the advantage of these conditions lies in the fact that God will now accept an obedience inferior to what is required in the law. Under this scheme, the grace of Christ does not make

all things conform to the holiness and will of God declared in the law. Instead, it accommodates all things to our present condition. What else does that do but make Christ the minister of sin by annulling the holiness that the law requires, and substituting what is incomparably less worthy? Nor is it consistent with divine wisdom, goodness, and immutability, to give mankind a law of obedience, and place them all under the severest penalty for transgressing it, when God could have given them a law of obedience that they need only partially obey. If he could do that now, he could have done so before. Neither does this fond imagination comply with the testimonies of Scripture that say the Lord Christ came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. Christ is the end of the law. By faith the law is not annulled, but established. Lastly, the Lord Christ was the mediator and surety of the new covenant. In him and by him it was ratified, confirmed, and established. Therefore, it was not its terms that he procured. For all the acts of his office belong to that mediation. It is incomprehensible how any act of mediation to establish the covenant and render it effectual could be said to procure it.

7. All the precedent causes of the union between Christ and believers center on the conveyance of his Spirit to them. For that reason Christ and believers become one mystical person. These causes form a complete foundation for imputing believers' sins to him and his righteousness to them. The same Spirit that dwells in him is given to them, to abide in, animate, and guide the whole mystical body and all its members.

On these considerations, the sins of all the elect were imputed to him. This has been the faith and language of the church in all ages, derived from and founded on express testimonies of Scripture, with all the promises and resignations of his appearing in the flesh from the beginning. It cannot now, with any modesty, be expressly denied. Therefore the Socinians themselves grant that our sins may be said to be imputed to Christ. He underwent the punishment for them. All the things which befell him that were evil and afflictive in this life, and the death he underwent, were caused by our sins. If we had not sinned, there would have been no need or occasion for his suffering. Notwithstanding this concession, the Socinians expressly deny that

he satisfied the punishment that was due to our sins. They also deny all imputation of our sins to him.

Others say that our sins were imputed to him “quoad reatum culpae” – to the extent of his guilty fault. This is insisted on by Feuardentius and others, Dialog 5 p. 467. What he would prove by it is that the Lord Christ did not present himself before the throne of God with the burden of our sins on him to answer for them to the justice of God. The main argument is that if our sins are imputed to Christ, then he must be polluted with them; and hence he is designated a sinner in every way. This would be true if our sins could be conveyed to Christ by transfusion so that they became his inherently and personally. But they are his only by imputation. This is legal uncleanness, where there is no inherent defilement. The priest who offered the red heifer to make atonement, and the one that burned it, were said to be unclean in estimation only, Num. 19:7, 8. But in response to this challenge, proponents say that Christ died and suffered on the special command of God. They deny that his death and suffering were due in any way to our sins, or that they were required by justice. This utterly defeats the satisfaction of Christ. Therefore, the purpose of this distinction is, to deny the imputation of the *guilt* of our sins to Christ. In what other sense they can be said to be imputed to him, I cannot understand. But we are not tied to arbitrary distinctions, or the meaning that some are pleased to impose on these terms. I will, therefore, inquire into the meaning of the words “guilt” and “guilty.” Then we may be able to judge what it is meant by this distinction.

The Hebrews have no other word to signify guilt or guilty but  $\mu\nu;a;$  “asham.” They use it for sin, the guilt of sin, the punishment for sin, and the sacrifice for it. When they speak of the guilt of blood, they do not use any word to signify guilt. They only say  $wOl \mu D;$  “dam lo” – “It is blood to him.” So David prays, “Deliver me”  $\mu ymi D;mi$  “midamim,” “from blood;” which we render “blood-guiltiness,” Psa. 51:14. This was because, in God’s design, someone who was guilty of blood was to die by the hand of the magistrate, or the hand of God himself. But  $\mu\nu;a;$  (ascham) is nowhere used for guilt. Instead, it signifies the relation of the sin to its punishment. That is its only meaning in the Old Testament.

In the New Testament someone who is guilty is said to be [uJpo>dikov](#) “hupodikos” [NT:5267], Rom. 3:19. That is, he is liable to judgment or vengeance for sin, [hJ di>kh zh~|n oujk ei\]asen](#) “he dike dzein ouk eiasen,” “whom vengeance will not suffer to go unpunished,” Acts 28:4. He is also said to be “enochos” [NT:1777], 1 Cor. 11:27, a word with the same meaning. It is referred to once by [ojfei>lw](#) “ofeiloos” [NT:3784], in Matt. 23:18. That means to owe, or to be indebted to justice. Therefore, being guilty means being liable to justice, vengeance, or punishment for sin.

“Reus,” which is “guilty” in the Latin, has major significance. Someone who is “crimini obnoxiosus” (criminally liable), or “poenae propter crimen,” or “voti debitor,” or “promissi,” or “officii ex sponsorship,” is called “reus.” Every sponsor or surety is “reus” in the law. Someone who engages himself for another is “reus” in the matter of his engagement. Every captain should take care of the station that is committed to him knowing that if anything amiss happened it would be imputed to him. He would be guilty of the fault of another by imputation, and suffer for it. So in the Latin tongue, someone is “reus,” who is liable for punishment or payment for himself or for any other person.

“Reatus” is a word of late origin in the Latin tongue. It was formed from “reus.” So Quintilian informs us in his discourse on the use of obsolete and new words, lib. 8, cap. 3. “Reatus” did not originally have the meaning now applied to it. I mention this only to show that we have no reason to be obliged by men’s arbitrary use of words. Some lawyers first used it “pro crimine” to describe a fault that exposed someone to punishment. But the original meaning, confirmed by long use, was to express the outward state and condition of someone who was “reus” after he was first charged in a cause criminal, and before he was acquitted or condemned. Romans who were made “rei” by any public accusation, put on a poor squalid habit, a sorrowful countenance, and then let their hair and beards go unkempt. Custom inclined the people who were to judge their cause toward compassion. Milo was banished in part because he would not submit to this custom. They called this state of sorrow and trouble “reatus.” Later it came to denote the state of those who were committed to custody prior to trial. In our present argument, it refers to the state of someone after his conviction of sin and before his

justification. It is their “reatus,” the condition where the proudest of men cannot avoid expressing their inward sorrow and anxiety by some outward evidence of them.

Guilt, in the Scripture, is the relation of sin to the law’s sanction. It is the reason why the sinner becomes liable to punishment. To be guilty is to be “hupodikos tooi Theoooi” – liable to punishment for sin from God, who is the supreme lawgiver and judge of all. And so guilt, or “reatus,” is well defined to be an obligation to be punished because of guilt, whether personally admitted to, or imputed to the just from the unjust. Bathsheba says to David, that she and her son Solomon should be μυαιF;j “chatta’im” [OT:2400] – sinners; that is, they should be esteemed guilty, or liable to punishment for some evil charged against them, 1 Kings 1:21. And the distinction of “dignitas poenae” [worthy of punishment], and “obligatio ad poenam” [obligated to be punished] is the same thing in different words. Both express the relation of sin to the sanction of the law. Even if we said these things were different, they are inseparable, because there can be no “obligatio ad poenam” where there is not “dignitas poenae.” There is less weight in distinguishing “reatus culpae” [culpable guilt] and “reatus poenae” [punishable guilt]; for this “reatus culpae” is nothing but “dignitas poenae propter culpam” [worthy of punishment because of guilt].

Sin has other considerations such as its formal nature. It is a transgression of the law. It brings the stain of filth on the soul. But the *guilt* of sin is simply its relation to punishment under the sanction of the law. And so, indeed, “reatus culpae” is the same as “reatus poenae.” The guilt of sin is its lack of, and need for, punishment. Where there is no culpable guilt there can be no punishment. For punishment is “vindicta noxae,” the revenge due to sin. So there can be no punishment, nor the guilt of it, unless sin is considered along with its guilt. Thinking there could be punishment without the *guilt* of sin, is what the Socinians propose with respect to the suffering of Christ. And yet they reject his satisfaction of the requirement for punishment.

If the alleged distinction between “culpae” [blame] and “poenae” [punishment] is understood to result from “reatus” [guilt] in the formal nature of sin and punishment, “reatus” must be given the same meaning in both. Otherwise there would be equivocation in

what it refers to. But “reatus poenae,” is a liability to be punished according to the sentence of the law. It is the reason that a sinner becomes liable to punishment for *sin* from God. If the meaning of “reatus” is the same in both, and yet the distinction is accepted, then “reatus culpae” must be a liability to *sin*, which would be an aberration.

Therefore, there is no imputation of sin where there is no imputation of its guilt. Any guilt of punishment that is not related to the merits of sin, is a plain fiction. There is no such thing in nature. There is no guilt of sin except in its relation to punishment. What we affirm here is that our sins were transferred to Christ in such a way that he became  $\mu\upsilon\epsilon\alpha;$ ,  $\text{uJpo>dikov tw~| Qew~|}$ , “reus”, – responsible to God for them, and liable to punishment under the justice of God. He was perfectly innocent in himself; but he took our *guilt* on himself, and our liability to be punished for sin. And so he may be said to be the greatest debtor in the world, who never borrowed or owed one earthly thing on his own account. He became surety for the greatest debt of others. Paul, who owed Philemon nothing, became a debtor to Philemon when he undertook for Onesimus in this way.

Two things are concurrent in this imputation of sin to Christ. *First*, there is the act of God imputing it; and *second*, there is the voluntary act of Christ in undertaking it, or admitting to the charge.

(1.) The act of God, in imputing the guilt of our sins to Christ, is expressed by his “laying all our iniquities upon him,” (Isa. 53:6), “making him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” (2Cor. 5:21), and the like.

[1.] As the supreme governor, lawgiver, and judge of all, who takes care that his holy law is observed, and that offenders are punished, God admitted the sponsorship and suretyship of Christ to answer for the sins of men, Heb. 10:5-7.

[2.] To this end, he put Christ under the power of the law, to demand of him and inflict on him the penalty which was due to the sins of those for whom he undertook responsibility, Gal. 3:13; 4:4, 6.

[3.] The guilt of our sins was transferred to him to declare the righteousness of God in making Christ a propitiation for our sins,

and in having him bear our iniquities. It was an act of God's righteous judgment in accepting and esteeming him to be the guilty person, just as it is with every case of public surety.

(2.) The Lord Christ's voluntary acceptance of the state and condition of a surety was required to become undertaker for the church. He was subject to appear before the throne of God's justice for them, and to answer whatever was laid to their charge; and this he did absolutely. There was a concurrence of his own will and all those divine acts by which he and the church were constituted one mystical person. Of his own love and grace, he stood in our stead before God as our surety when he was investigated for sin. He took the punishment that sin deserved on himself. For that reason, it became just and righteous that Christ suffered, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

If this is not so, I want to know what has become of the guilt of the sins of believers? If it was not transferred to Christ, then it still remains on them, or it is nothing. It might be said that guilt is taken away by the free pardon of sin. But if that was true, there was no need to punish the sin at all. Indeed, that is what the Socinians plead. *If punishment is not for guilt, then it is not punishment.*

It is fiercely objected by some that if the guilt of our sins was imputed to Christ, then he was thereby constituted a sinner, because it is the guilt of sin that makes someone a sinner. This is urged by Bellarmine, lib. 2, De Justificat., to disprove the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us. He says, "If we are made righteous and the children of God through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, then he was made a sinner by the imputation of the guilt of our sins, our unrighteousness, to him." Here is my answer to this objection.

[1.] Nothing is more absolutely true, nothing is more sacredly or assuredly believed by us, than that nothing which Christ did or suffered, nothing that he undertook or underwent, made him subjectively, inherently, and personally a sinner. He was not guilty of any sin of his own. When someone bears the guilt or blame of another man's faults, it does not make him a sinner, unless he unwisely undertakes that responsibility. But if Christ admitted anything of sin in himself, it would be absolutely inconsistent with



his hypostatical union with the Father. It would render him unfit for all other duties of his office, Heb. 7:25, 26. It has always seemed scandalous to me that Socinus, Crellius, and Grotius say that, in some sense, Christ offered his own sins; and they would prove it from that very place where it is positively denied, Heb. 7:27. No thought or word of the kind should ever be entertained.

[2.] No one ever dreamed of a transfusion or propagation of sin from us to Christ, such as there was from Adam to us. For Adam was common to us. We are not common to Christ, even if he is common to us. The imputation of our sins to him is a singular act of divine dispensation, from which no evil consequence can ensue.

[3.] To imagine that imputing our sins to Christ would make them cease to be our own and become his absolutely, would defeat what we affirm about Christ's satisfaction. Christ could not suffer for our sins if they ceased to be ours prior to his suffering for them. But the guilt of them was indeed transferred to him so that, through his suffering for it, our guilt might be pardoned.

In sin, there is a transgression of the Law. And there is a liability to be punished under the sanction of the law. The transgression is what gives sin its formal nature. Where there is no subjective transgression, no person can formally become a sinner. Anyone may be called a sinner, but without this subjective and personal transgression, they cannot formally be a sinner, whatever may be imputed to them. And where there is a personal transgression, no imputation of the punishment for that sin can free the person from formally being a sinner. Bathsheba told David that she and her son Solomon should be "chatta'im" (sinners) by having crimes laid to their charge. Judah told Jacob that he would always be a sinner before him should any evil befall Benjamin; that is, it should be imputed to him that he was a sinner. Yet neither of them could thereby formally become a sinner. On the other hand, when Shimei did not want David to impute sin to him, and he escaped punishment, that non-imputation of the punishment did not free him from formally being a sinner.

Sin, as a transgression of the law, cannot be communicated from one person to another, unless the habit of sin is propagated as well. Neither will the personal, inherent sin of one person ever become the

personal sin of another. Adam, because of his personal sin, has communicated a vicious, depraved, and corrupted nature to all of his posterity. Additionally, the *guilt* of his actual sin is imputed to them as if it had been committed by every one of them. Yet his particular personal sin never did, nor ever could, become the personal sin of any one of them. Therefore, our sins neither are, nor can be, so imputed to Christ, that they become subjectively his. A physical transfusion of sin is, in this case, naturally and spiritually impossible. But the guilt of sin is external to it, and only refers to the sanction of the law. This is separable from sin. If it were not so, a sinner could neither be pardoned nor saved. Guilt may therefore be made someone else's by imputation. Yet that does not render that other person formally a sinner. Our guilt is what was imputed to Christ, and our guilt is what made him liable to the curse of the law. For it is impossible for the law to pronounce anyone accursed but the guilty, nor would it do so, Deut. 27:26.

*Secondly*, There is a great difference between the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us and the imputation of our sins to Christ. He cannot in the same manner be said to be made a sinner by the one as we are made righteous by the other. For our sin was imputed to Christ only as he was our surety for a time to take it away, destroy it, and abolish it. It was never imputed to him in any way that made any alteration in his personal state and condition. But his righteousness is imputed to us to abide with us. It is always ours. It makes a total change in our state and condition as to our relation to God. Our sin was imputed to him only for a season, not forever. It was imputed to him because he was a surety, for the special purpose of destroying it. It was assumed by him on this condition: that his righteousness would be made ours forever. Everything in the imputation of his righteousness to us is absolute. We are not under a temporary capacity. It abides with us forever. It changes our state and relation to God. It is an effect of superabounding grace.

It might be said that if the guilt of our sins is imputed to Christ, then God must hate Christ because he hates the guilty. I look upon such arguments as cavils. But seeing it is mentioned, it may be addressed.

*First*, it is certain that the Lord Christ's taking on himself the guilt of our sins was a high act of obedience to God, Heb. 10:5, 6; and for which the "Father loved him," John 10:17, 18. There was, therefore,

no reason why God should hate Christ for taking our debt on himself, and the payment for it, in an act of the highest obedience to his Father's will.

*Secondly*, God in this matter is considered as a rector, ruler, and judge. It is not required of the severest judge to hate the guilty person, even if he is guilty personally, and not by imputation. As such, he only has to consider the guilt, and pronounce the sentence of punishment.

*Thirdly*, suppose someone, out of heroic generosity, became an "antipsuchos" for another, willing to answer for him with his life or liberty, as Judas undertook to be for Benjamin. Would the most cruel tyrant under heaven, who will take his life, hate him for it? Would he not rather admire his worth and virtue? Christ suffered as such a one, and not otherwise. *Fourthly*, all the force of this exception depends on the ambiguity of the word "hate." For hate may mean aversion or detesting, or it may only mean a will to punish, as it mostly does in God. In the first sense of aversion, there was no reason why God should hate Christ for this imputation of guilt to him. Sin inherently renders the soul polluted, abominable. It becomes the only object of divine aversion.

But Christ was perfectly innocent, holy, harmless, and undefiled in himself. He did not sin, nor was there guile found in his mouth (1Pet. 2:22). He took upon himself the guilt of another's sins to comply with and accomplish the design of God to manifest his glory and infinite wisdom, grace, goodness, mercy, and righteousness. It resulted in the certain expiation and destruction of sin. Nothing could render him more glorious and lovely in the sight of God or man. But no one can deny that God's hatred is evident, in the sense of a will to punish, where sin is imputed. To deny this is to openly disavow the satisfaction of Christ.

I will close this discourse with a summary of a few of these arguments:

1. Unless the *guilt* of sin was imputed to Christ, sin was not imputed to him at all. The Scripture is plain, that "God laid on him the iniquity of us all," and "made him to be sin for us." This could not happen except by imputation.

2. There can be no punishment without the guilt of sin being personally contracted or imputed. It is guilt alone that gives what is otherwise materially evil and afflictive, the formal nature of punishment. If one of these is denied, the other must be also. And if one is admitted, they both must be. If guilt was not imputed to Christ, then he could not undergo the punishment for sin. If the guilt of sin was imputed to him, then he underwent the punishment for it. And if he underwent the punishment for it, then the guilt of it was imputed to him. These things are inseparably related.

3. Christ was made a curse for us, under the curse of the law, as it is expressly declared in Gal. 3:13, 14. But the curse of the law is based on the guilt of sin only. Where there is no guilt, there can be no curse; and where guilt is found, the curse inseparably attends it, Deut. 27:26.

4. The express testimonies of the Scripture on this subject cannot be evaded without openly twisting their words and meaning. So God is said to “make all our iniquities to meet upon him,” and he bears them on himself as his burden. That is what the word means in Isa. 53:6, “God has laid on him” [WnL;Ku öwO\[\]](#) [tae](#) “et ‘awon kulanu,” “the iniquity,” (that is, the guilt) “of us all;” verse 11, [lBos\]yi aWh ut;nOwO\[\]w](#) “we’awonotam hu yisbol,” “and their sin or guilt shall he bear.” That is what is meant by “‘awon” when joined with any other word that denotes sin, as it is in those places. Psa. 32:5, “You forgave” [ytiaF;j öwO\[\]](#) “‘awon chatta’ti,” “the iniquity of my sin,” that is, the guilt of it, which alone is what pardon takes away; that “his soul was made an offering for the guilt of sin;” that “he was made sin,” that “sin was condemned in his flesh,” etc.

5. This was represented in all the sacrifices of old, especially on the Day of Atonement, with the ordinance of the scapegoat, as declared before.

6. Without accepting this, we cannot understand how the Lord Christ could be our [Anti>yucov](#) “Antipsuchos,” that is, the one who suffered [ajnti< hJmw~n](#) in our stead.

## 9. The Formal Cause of Justification

There are three primary controversies about the Doctrine of Justification. These involve the nature of it, the formal cause of it, and what is required to be done on our part.

1. The nature of it – Does justification mean there is an internal change in the justified person by imputing a habit of inherent righteousness? Or is it simply a forensic act in judging, esteeming, declaring, and pronouncing such a person to be righteous? We only have to deal with the church of Rome on this issue. All others, both Protestants and Socinians, are agreed on the forensic sense of the word. Those who avoid the Romanists in these controversies will give an appearance more of fear than of contempt. When all is done, if free justification through the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness, is unable to preserve its place in the minds of men, then the Popish doctrine of justification must and will return upon the world, with all its consequences. While we continue to have any knowledge of the law or the gospel, our consciences will be really affected with a sense of sin's guilt and danger. For that reason, our mind will become troubled and uneasy, and we will be forced to seek some relief and satisfaction. What would men not attempt when they are reduced to this condition, Mic. 6:6, 7?

Therefore, if the only true relief for a sinner's conscience is hidden from their eyes, they will pursue anything that confidently offers them present ease and relief from their distress and burden. They have no understanding of, nor trust in, the only thing they may use to defeat the sentence of the law, and interpose between God's justice and their souls. It is the only shelter they have from the storms of wrath that stay on those who do not believe. For that reason, many persons who have been living all their days in ignorance of the righteousness of God, are often encouraged on their sickbeds, and in their dying hours, to have confidence in the ways of rest and peace which the Romanists impose. They wait for such advantageous seasons to enhance the reputation, they suppose, of their own zeal. In truth, it is to the scandal of Christian religion. Any time they find that men's consciences are disquieted, and either ignorant of or disbelieving the heavenly relief that is provided in the gospel, they are ready with their applications and medicines. They have on them

the pretended experience of many ages, and an innumerable company of devout souls. Such is their doctrine of justification, with the addition of those other ingredients of confession, absolution, penances or commutations, aids from saints and angels, especially the blessed Virgin, all warmed by the fire of purgatory, and confidently administered to persons sick of ignorance, darkness, and sin. Let no one be pleased in the contempt of these things. If the truth concerning evangelical justification is disbelieved among us at some point, or obliterated by any contrivance of the minds of men, these sinners must and will resort to them. As for the new proposals of justification that some would offer, they are not suited or able to give relief to the really troubled conscience that seriously inquires how to have rest and peace with God. I will have the boldness to say that, if we lose the ancient doctrine of justification that comes through faith in the blood of Christ, and the imputation of his righteousness to us, public religion will quickly return to Popery or Atheism.

2. The second principal controversy concerns the formal cause of justification as expressed by those in the Roman church. Some Protestant divines have consented to debate their differences with the Roman view. Some of ours say the righteousness of Christ is imputed, and some say that this imputation is the formal cause of our justification. Others say that there is no formal cause of justification, but the righteousness of Christ fulfills the purpose of a formal cause. I will not concern myself with these things, though I judge that the latter is the most proper and significant.

The substance of the inquiry is, “With what righteousness is a believing sinner justified and made acceptable to God, pardoned of his sins, received into grace and favor, and given title to the heavenly inheritance?” I will not state this inquiry another way, knowing that it contains the substance of what convinced sinners look for in the gospel.

It is agreed by all except the Socinians that the procuring cause of our pardon and acceptance with God, is the satisfaction and merit of Christ. But concerning the righteousness itself, there seems to be a difference among those who deny that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. The Roman church, under the name of first justification, plainly says that upon the infusion of a habit of grace in

us, which results in the expulsion of sin and the renovation of our natures, we are actually justified before God by our own works of righteousness. Here they argue about how meritorious and satisfactory those works are toward the reward of eternal life.

Others, such as the Socinians, openly disclaim all merit in our works. Some, out of reverence for the antiquity of the word, I suppose, have faintly attempted an accommodation with the Scripture. But in the substance of what they assert, they are all agreed. What the Papists call “justitia operum,” the righteousness of works, the Socinians call a personal, inherent, evangelical righteousness, as mentioned before. The Papists say that this righteousness of works is not absolutely perfect, nor is it able in itself to justify us in the sight of God. It owes all its worth and dignity to the merit of Christ. Therefore, they affirm that this evangelical righteousness is the condition on which we enjoy the benefits of the righteousness of Christ. But for those who acknowledge no other righteousness by which we are justified before God than Christ’s, the meaning is the same. Whether we say that on the condition of this righteousness we are made partakers of the benefits of the righteousness of Christ, or that it is the righteousness of Christ itself which makes this righteousness of ours accepted with God, it is Christ’s righteousness. These things must be inquired into more specifically later.

3. The third area of controversy in this matter is what is required on our part to gain an interest in the righteousness of Christ? Some say it is faith alone. Others say it is faith and works equally. What we will consider at present is the second. The substance of the whole controversy concerning our justification before God depends on the answer. This is what I affirm: *the righteousness of Christ, in his obedience and suffering for us, is imputed to believers as they are united to him by his Spirit. It is his righteousness by which they are justified before God. It is on this account that their sins are pardoned, and they are granted a right to the heavenly inheritance.*

I have chosen to express the thesis this way because the learned Davenant laid it down as the common doctrine of the Reformed churches whose defense he undertook. This is the shield of truth in the whole cause of justification. While it is preserved, we do not need to trouble ourselves with the differences among learned men about the most proper way to declare some of its lesser concerns. This is

the only refuge for distressed consciences, where they may find rest and peace.

To confirm this assertion, I will do three things. Reflect on what is necessary to explain it. Answer the most important objections against it. And prove the truth of it by arguments and testimonies from the holy Scripture.

As to what is necessary to explain this assertion, it has been sufficiently addressed in our foregoing discourses. The summary of only a few things will be reviewed at this point.

1. The foundation of the imputation of our sins to Christ and his righteousness to us is *union*. There are many grounds and causes for this union, as has been declared. But what we are immediately concerned with, as the foundation of this imputation, is that operation by which the Lord Christ and believers actually coalesce into one mystical person. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit, who inhabits Christ as the head of the church in all fullness, and inhabits all believers according to their measure. It is the Holy Spirit by whom they become members of his mystical body. It is the faith of the catholic church that there is such a union between Christ and believers, and it has been so in all ages. In our day, those who deny or question it, either do not know what they are saying, or their minds are influenced by the doctrine of those who deny the divine persons of the Son and the Spirit. Assuming that this union is true, reason will grant that the imputation is reasonable. At least there is such a unique basis for the imputation, that its equivalent will not be found in anything natural or political among men.

2. The nature of imputation has been fully addressed before. I refer you back to that place for an understanding of what it means.

3. What is imputed is the righteousness of Christ. Briefly, I understand that to mean his whole obedience to God, in all that he did and suffered for the church. This is imputed to believers and becomes their only righteousness before God to obtain their justification for life.

Beyond these things, if any expressions used to explain this truth have given rise to any differences, although they may be true and defensible, I will not concern myself with them. The substance of the truth as laid down is what I have undertaken to defend. Where that is



consented to, I will not argue about the way it is declared, nor the terms and expressions that are used. For instance, some have said that “what Christ did and suffered is so imputed to us, that we are esteemed in the sight of God to have done or suffered ourselves in him.” Although it may be sound, and is used by some of the ancients, the substance of the truth is better expressed another way. Yet there is no need to argue over the phrasing. We do not say that God esteems that we did and suffered in ourselves what Christ did and suffered. We only say that he did it and suffered it in our stead. God grants and donates it to believers upon their believing, and justifies them before him. Many other expressions are similar.

These things being said, I will now consider some general objections to the imputation we plead for. I will consider only some of the principal ones, which may resolve the others. It would be endless to go over all the ones that could be invented. Some general considerations include the following:

1. The doctrine of justification is an eminent part of the mystery of the gospel. It is no wonder, therefore, that some would try to interpret it using common reason. There is more required to a gain true spiritual understanding of such mysteries. In fact, unless we intend to renounce the gospel, it must be asserted that our reason is corrupted, and the natural mind is destitute of supernatural revelation. As such, the natural mind dislikes every such truth, and rises up in hatred against it. The Scripture directly affirms this in Rom. 8:7 and 1 Cor. 2:14.

2. For that reason, the minds and imaginations of men are wonderfully fertile in coining objections to evangelical truths and raising cavils against them. Because they know no better, they have an endless number of sophisticated objections which they themselves judge insoluble. Once we set carnal reason at liberty under the false idea of seeking truth, it acts freely and boldly against spiritual mysteries. It is subtle in its arguing, and pregnant in its inventiveness. The sophisms of the Socinians against the doctrine of the Trinity are endless! They triumph in them as unanswerable! Under their shelter they ignore the force of the most evident and numerous testimonies of the Scripture. They treat the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ in the same way, just as the Pelagians did with the doctrine of his grace. Therefore, anyone who is shocked by subtle

or plausible objections to the gospel mysteries that are plainly revealed in the Scripture, will likely be unsure when professing them.

3. Most objections to imputation arise from a lack of understanding of the work of God's grace, and of our compliance that is done out of duty. They assert that these two things are inconsistent with each other. In their proper place and order, they are not only consistent, but they are mutually subservient to one another. And that is the experience of true believers. Instances have been given before, and others will follow shortly.

4. The objections that are made are all based on supposed consequences which will ensue if the doctrine is admitted. This is only done to perpetuate endless controversies. In my observation, I find that such objections are made to give apparent force to the absurd consequences that are imagined. The objection is stated in a way that puts any challenger at a disadvantage. I wonder that good men are not either wearied by or ashamed of such tactics.

1. It is objected "That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ defeats all remission of sins on the part of God." This is pleaded by Socinus, De Servatore, lib. 4 cap. 2-4; and others. This seems to be a confident charge by those who steadfastly believe that without this imputation there could be no remission of sin. But they say, "That someone who has an absolutely perfect righteousness imputed to him as his own, needs no pardon, and has no sin to be forgiven, nor can he ever need forgiveness." But because this objection will come up again in the vindication of one of our ensuing arguments, I will only speak briefly to it here:

(1.) Grotius answers this objection by saying, "Because we have said that Christ has procured... two things for us, freedom from punishment and a reward, the ancient church attributes the one distinctly to his satisfaction, and the other to his merit. Satisfaction consists in the translation of sins from us to him. Merit [consists] in the imputation of his most perfect obedience, performed for us, to us." In his judgment, the remission of sins and the imputation of righteousness were as consistent as the satisfaction and merit of Christ, as indeed they are.

(2.) If we had not been sinners, there was no need to impute the righteousness of Christ to make us righteous before God. Being

sinner, the first purpose for which his righteousness is imputed is the pardon of sin. Without that pardon, we could not be made righteous by imputing the most perfect righteousness. Therefore these are consistent. They are not only consistent, but neither of them singly is sufficient for our justification.

2. It is pleaded by the same author and others, "That the imputation of the righteousness of Christ overthrows all necessity to repent of sin in order to [obtain] the remission or pardon of [that sin]. In fact, it renders it completely unnecessary. For what need has someone of repentance for sin who, by imputing the righteousness of Christ, is esteemed completely just and righteous in the sight of God? If Christ satisfied all sins of the elect, if as our surety he paid all our debts, and if his righteousness is made ours before we repent, then all repentance is needless."

**Ans.**

(1.) It must be remembered that we require evangelical faith before we can be justified by imputing the righteousness of Christ to us. *That is also the condition of its continuation.* Therefore, whatever is necessary to our justification is similarly required of us in order to believe. Among these is a sorrow for sin and a repentance from it. For whoever is duly convinced of sin cannot help being troubled that he has involved himself in it. He is sensible of its evil and guilt. He knows that it is both contrary to the holy law, and necessary consequences will flow from it. He has come under the wrath and curse of God. And that posture of mind will be accompanied by shame, fear, sorrow, and other painful passions. He is utterly resolved to abstain from it in the future, with sincere endeavors to that purpose. If there is time and space for it, his life will be reformed. And true repentance consists in this sense of sin, sorrow for it, fear concerning it, abstinence from it, and reformation of life. This is usually called legal repentance, because its motives are principally taken from the law. But that temporary faith of the gospel which we have described before is also required. And because it usually produces great effects in the confession of sin, humiliation for it, and a change of life (as in Ahab and the Ninevites), it also ordinarily precedes true saving faith and justification.

Therefore, the necessity of repentance is not in any way weakened by the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Indeed, it is strengthened and made effectual by it. For without repentance, an interest in the gospel is not attained. And this is what, in the Old Testament, is so often proposed as the means and condition of turning away the judgments and punishments for sin because it is true and sincere. The Socinians do not require any other special repentance for justification. Because they deny true evangelical repentance in all its causes, what may and does precede faith is all that they require. This objection, therefore, is a baseless and vain pretence.

(2.) The nature of justifying faith includes the entire principle of evangelical repentance. It is utterly impossible for a man to be a true believer and not at the same time be truly penitent. That is why they are so frequently joined in the Scripture as one simultaneous duty. The call of the gospel to repent is a call to faith acting by repentance. The sole reason for that call to repentance, which brings the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), is the promise that is the object of our faith (verse 39). "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

And those ideas and emotions that a man has about sin become evangelical. With sorrow for it, and repentance from it, based on a conviction of his sin under the law, and being made alive and evangelical by the introduction of faith as his new principle by which to live, he is given a whole new motivation. So it is impossible for faith to exist without repentance. The first and only proper act of faith toward justification is responding to the grace of God in Christ, and the way of salvation that is proposed in the promise of the gospel. Yet this precedes faith acting in self-discipline, godly sorrow, and universal conversion from sin to God. It could not be otherwise, because it virtually and radically contains all of them in itself.

However, evangelical repentance is not the *condition* of our justification. It does not have any direct influence on it. Nor are we said anywhere to be justified by repentance. Nor is anything said

about it being the proper and sole object of our justification. Nor does it directly and immediately give glory to God because of the way and workings of his wisdom and grace in Christ Jesus. It is only a consequence of that. Nor is it how we receive Christ, which alone is expressly required for our justification. Yet it is the root, principle, and motivation for its exercise in everyone who has been justified. And it is specifically required with respect to the forgiveness of sins. It is impossible to have any true sense or comfort of being justified without it. But it is no part of that righteousness that is considered when our sins are pardoned; nor is it what gains us an interest in that pardon.

These things are plain in the divine method of our justification, and the order of our duty that is prescribed in the gospel. They are also the experience of believers. Therefore, considering

- the necessity of legal repentance to believing,
- the sanctification of the affections exercised in repentance by faith, and by which they are made evangelical,
- the nature of faith, which includes total conversion to God,
- and especially that repentance which has for its principal motive the love of God and of Jesus Christ, with the grace that is communicated for that reason,
- all of which are assumed in the doctrine of justification,

the necessity of true repentance is immovably fixed on its proper foundation.

(3.) As to what was said concerning Christ's suffering for the elect, I do not know whether any have considered it in their objections or not. He suffered in their stead, which all sorts of writers, ancient and modern, have expressed. In his suffering, he bore the person of the church. The meaning of that was declared before. Christ and believers are one mystical person, one spiritually animated body, head and members. I assume this will not be denied. To do so would overthrow the church and its faith. For that reason, what he did and suffered is imputed to them. And it is granted that, as the surety of the covenant, he paid all our debts and answered for all our faults. His righteousness is really communicated to us. "Why then," say some, "there is no need for repentance. Everything has been done for us already." But why would that be so? Why must we

assent to one part of the gospel to the exclusion of another? Was it not free for God to appoint the way, method, and order he would communicate these things to us? Assuming the design of his wisdom and grace, these two things were necessary:

[1.] That this righteousness of Christ should be communicated to us, and be made ours, in such a way that he himself might be glorified by it. After all, he has disposed all things in this whole economy to “the praise of the glory of his grace,” Eph. 1:6. This was to be done by faith on our part. It is so and could not be otherwise: for that faith by which we are justified is our giving to God the glory of his wisdom, grace, and love. Whatever does so is faith, and nothing else.

[2.] That it was necessary for our nature to be renewed and changed. Our nature was so corrupted and depraved that it was not capable of participating in the righteousness of Christ, or any benefit of it, to the glory of God and our own good. And unless it were so, the design of God in the mediation of Christ, to entirely recover us to himself, could not be attained. Therefore, as faith was necessary to give glory to God, so it was necessary that this faith should be accompanied with, and contain in itself, the seeds of all those other graces of which the divine nature consists, and of which we are made partners. Therefore, righteousness itself, its communication to us, and the way, manner, and means of it, all depend on God’s sovereign order and disposal. Christ did satisfy the justice of God for all the sins of the church as a mediator and a surety. And Christ did pay all our debts. Yet, our particular interest in what Christ did and suffered depends on the way, means, and order designed by God to that end. This, and this alone, gives the true necessity of all the duties which are required of us, with their order and their ends.

3. It is objected that the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which we defend, overthrows the necessity of faith itself. They suppose that the righteousness of Christ is ours before we believe. Their reasoning goes like this: “Christ satisfied all our sins as if we had satisfied them ourselves. And one who is esteemed to have satisfied all his sins is acquitted from them and accounted just, whether he believes it or not. Nor is there any ground or reason why he should be required to believe. If, therefore, the righteousness of

Christ is really ours, because in the judgment of God we are esteemed to have righteousness through him, then it is ours before we believe. If it is otherwise, then it is plain that this righteousness itself can never be made ours by believing. Only its fruits and effects may be dependent on our believing, by which we may be made partakers of them. If Christ made any such satisfaction for us as is pretended, then it is really ours without any further imputation. For, being performed for us and in our stead, it would be the highest injustice not to consider us pardoned and acquitted without any additional imputation on God's part, or faith on our part."

I have transcribed these things out of Socinus, De Servatore, lib. 4 cap. 2-5; His serpentine wit was fertile in the invention of cavils against all the mysteries of the gospel. Nor was he obliged by any one of them, so as to fear contradicting himself in what he opposed concerning them. In denying the deity of Christ, his satisfaction, sacrifice, merit, righteousness, and overthrowing the whole nature of his mediation, nothing stood in his way which he had a mind to oppose. But I wonder how others can make use of his inventions of this kind. If people rightly considered the tendency of these arguments, they would find they absolutely destroy what they seem to support. So it is in this present objection against the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. If it has any force in it, which indeed it has not, it is to prove that the satisfaction of Christ was impossible. And that is what Socinus intended it to prove. But this objection will be easily removed.

The whole fallacy of this objection lies in assuming that the satisfaction of Christ must have its whole effect without believing on our part. This is contrary to the whole declaration of the will of God in the gospel. I will principally address those who make use of this objection and yet do not deny the satisfaction of Christ.

(1.) When the Lord Christ died for us, and offered himself as a propitiatory sacrifice, "God laid all our sins on him," Isa. 53:6; and he then "bare them all in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. 2:24. Then he suffered in our stead, and made full satisfaction for all our sins. For he "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. 9:26; and "by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified," chap. 10:14. He whose sins were not actually and absolutely satisfied in that one offering of Christ, will

never have them expiated to eternity; for there is “no more sacrifice for sin” (10:26). The repetition of a sacrifice for sin, which would mean crucifying Christ anew, overthrows the foundation of Christian religion.

(2.) Notwithstanding this full, plenary satisfaction made once for the sins of the world that will be saved, all men continue to be born equal by nature “children of wrath.” And while they do not believe, “the wrath of God abides on them,” John 3:36. That is, they are liable to the curse of the law. Therefore, without making that satisfaction, no one for whom it was made can be said to have suffered in Christ, have an interest in his satisfaction, or be made a partaker of it except by an act of God that imputes it to him. For this is but one part of the purpose of God’s grace as to our justification by the blood of Christ: that by his death Christ should make satisfaction for our sins. Nor is it to be separated from what also belongs to it in the same purpose of God: its imputation to us. Therefore, granting the satisfaction of Christ, does not negate a consequential act of its imputation to us. Nor, therefore, does it negate the necessity of our faith in believing and receiving it. This is no less the appointment of God than Christ making that satisfaction. Therefore,

(3.) What the Lord Christ paid for us is as truly paid as if we had paid it ourselves. So he speaks in Psa. 69:4-5, [yTil}zOg;Aaol rv,a} byvia; za](#); “asher lo-gazolatti ‘az ‘ashiv” (“That which I did not take away I then restored”). He made no spoil of the glory of God. What was done of that nature by us, he returned to him. And what he underwent and suffered, he underwent and suffered in our stead. But yet the act of God in laying our sins on Christ conveyed no actual right and title to us as to what he did and suffered. They are not immediately esteemed ours because God has appointed something else prior to it as the means of procuring it, to his own glory. These things, both as to their being and order, depend on the free ordination of God. But yet,

(4.) It cannot be said that this satisfaction was made for us based on a condition that would absolutely suspend the event, or render it uncertain whether it would ever be ours. Such a institution may be righteous in pecuniary solutions. A man may lay down a great sum of money for the discharge of a duty by another, based on a



condition that may never be fulfilled. On the absolute failure of the condition, his money may and ought to be restored to him. He has received no injury or damage. But in penal suffering for crimes and sins, the event cannot depend on an uncertain condition which may not come to pass or be fulfilled. For if the condition fails, no recompense can be made to the one who has suffered. Therefore, the application of the satisfaction of Christ to those for whom it was made, is sure and steadfast in the purpose of God.

(5.) God has appointed an immediate foundation for the imputation of the satisfaction and righteousness of Christ to us. And this is our actual coalescence into one mystical person with him by *faith*. This is what the necessity of faith originally depends upon. And if we add to the necessity of faith that special glory of God that he intends to exalt in our justification by Christ, and all the ends of our obedience to God, and the renovation of our natures into his image, its station is sufficiently secured against all objections. Our actual interest in the satisfaction of Christ depends on our actual insertion into his mystical body by faith, according to the appointment of God.

4. It is objected that, "If the righteousness of Christ is made ours, we may be said to be saviors of the world, as he was, or to save others, as he did; for he was savior and did so by his righteousness, and not otherwise." This objection is of the same nature as those foregoing. For,

(1.) The righteousness of Christ is not transfused into us, so as to be made inherently and subjectively ours, as it was in him. Whatever we may do with respect to others by virtue of any power or quality inherent in ourselves, cannot be said to be done by virtue of what is imputed to us only for our own benefit. If any righteousness of ours should benefit another, it is absolutely necessary that it should be done by ourselves.

(2.) If the righteousness of Christ could be transfused into us, and be made inherently ours, we still could not be said to be the saviors of others thereby. That is because our nature in our individual persons is not capable of receiving and retaining a righteousness useful and effective for that purpose. This capacity

existed in Christ only by virtue of the hypostatical union. The righteousness of Christ himself, as performed in his human nature, would not have been sufficient for the justification and salvation of the church, had it not been the righteousness of his person who is both God and man. For “God redeemed his church with his own blood.”

(3.) The purpose and use of this imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us, has its measure from the will of God. Its purpose is to be the righteousness of those to whom it is imputed, and nothing else.

(4.) We do not say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to every believer. It was made absolutely for the church as a whole. But his satisfaction for every one of them in particular is imputed to them according to the will of God. This is done, not with respect to its general purposes, but according to everyone’s particular interest. Every believer has his own abode of this bread of life, and all are justified by the same righteousness.

(5.) The apostle declares, as we will prove afterwards, that as Adam’s actual sin is imputed to us to our condemnation, so the obedience of Christ is imputed to us to our justification of life (Rom. 5:16). But Adam’s sin is not imputed to any person so as to be the cause of sin and condemnation for all other persons in the world. Only the one to whom it is imputed is guilty before God. And so it is on the other side. As we are made guilty by Adam’s actual sin, which is not inherent in us but only imputed to us, so we are made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which is not inherent in us, but only imputed to us.

5. It is said, “That if we insist on personal imputation to every believer of what Christ did, or if any believer is personally righteous in the very individual acts of Christ’s righteousness, then many absurdities will follow.” The conceivability of some unrealized absurdity does not constitute a valid objection to imputation. All imputation is to a person, and it is the act of a person, whatever it may be; but neither of these observations can be called a personal imputation. And if there can be an imputation that is not to a person, namely to *all believers*, then the nature of it has not yet been declared that I know of.

I do not know that anyone has said, “that every believer should be personally righteous in the very individual acts of Christ’s righteousness.” It seems not only to assume that Christ did every individual act which in any instance is required of us, but also that those acts are made our own inherently, both of which are false and impossible. What indeed is pleaded for in this imputation is only this: that what the Lord Christ did and suffered as the mediator and surety of the covenant, in answer to the law for believers, and in their stead, is imputed to every one of them to the justification of life. And this is sufficient to that end, without any such suppositions,

(1.) From the dignity of the person who yielded this obedience, which rendered it both satisfactory and meritorious, and imputable to many.

(2.) From the nature of the obedience itself, which was a perfect compliance with, fulfilling of, and satisfaction of the whole law in all its demands. Assuming it was an act of God’s sovereign authority, by which a representative of the whole church was introduced to answer the law, it is the basis of his righteousness being made theirs, and being in every way sufficient to their justification.

(3.) From the nature of God, that what was done and suffered by Christ as our surety, should be *reckoned* to us as if done by ourselves. So the sin of Adam, because he represented his whole posterity, is *imputed* to us all, as if we had committed that actual sin. This Bellarmine himself frequently acknowledges: that the actual sin of Adam is imputed to us as if we all had committed that actual sin, that is, as if we had broken the whole law of God. And this is how the apostle illustrates the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers. Therefore, it is not said that in God’s judgement we have done those very acts ourselves, and endured the penalty of the law that the Lord Christ endured. For that would overthrow all imputation. But what Christ did and suffered, God imputes to believers to the justification of life as if it had been done by themselves. And his righteousness is made theirs by imputation, even as the sin of Adam is made the sin of all his posterity by imputation.

From this, none of the pretended absurdities follow. Christ did not in his own person perform every individual act that we in our circumstances are obliged to perform in a way of duty; nor was there any need for him to do so. This imputation, as I have shown, stands on other foundations. Nor does it follow, that every saved person's righteousness before God is the same identically and numerically with Christ's in his public capacity as mediator. This objection destroys itself by affirming that it was *his* righteousness, the righteousness of God-man. And so it has a special nature as it relates to his person. It was formally inherent in him, while it is only materially imputed to us. It was actively his, while it is passively ours. It was done in the person of God-man for the whole church, but it is imputed to each single believer for his own concern.

Adam's sin, as imputed to us, is not just the sin of our representative, even though that is what he was. It is the particular sin of every one of us. But it does not follow from such an imputation that we are considered to have done something that happened long before we were in a capacity to do anything. However, what was done in our stead, before we were in any such capacity, may be imputed to us; such is the sin of Adam. An incidental objection is that Christ did not suffer the "idem" (the exact same thing) that we were obliged to suffer. Because he did what the law required, and suffered what the law threatened to the disobedient, which is the whole of what we are obliged to suffer, it will not be as easy to prove or answer the same kind of arguments that confirmed the contrary. Christ did hold the place of a surety, and was the surety of the new covenant. Scripture so expressly affirms this that it cannot be denied. And there may be sureties in criminal cases as well as civil and pecuniary, as was proved before. What else occurs about the singularity of Christ's obedience, as he was mediator, proves only that his righteousness, as formally and inherently his, was unique to himself. And the adjuncts of it, which arise from their relation to his person, as also inherently his, are not communicable to those to whom it is imputed.

6. It is moreover urged by some, "That on the supposed imputation of the righteousness of Christ, it follows that every believer is justified by the works of the law. For the obedience of Christ was a

legal righteousness. And if that is imputed to us, then we are justified by the law, which is contrary to express testimonies of Scripture in many places.” In answer:

(1.) I know of nothing more frequent in the writings of some learned men than that the righteousness of Christ is our legal righteousness. And yet, I presume they are able to free themselves of this objection.

(2.) If this assertion follows in the true sense of being justified by the law, or the works of the law, which are denied in the Scripture, then pity the weakness of those who can see no other way by which we may be freed from an obligation to be justified by the law, than by this imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

(3.) The Scripture, which affirms that “by the deeds of the law no man can be justified,” also affirms that by “faith we do not make void the law, but establish it;” that “the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us;” that Christ “came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it;” and that Christ is the “end of the law for righteousness to those who believe.” We will prove later that the law must be fulfilled, or we cannot be justified.

(4.) Imputation does not mean that we are justified by the law, or its works, in the only sense of that proposition in the Scripture. To coin a new meaning for the word is not safe. The meaning of it in the Scripture is that only “the doers of the law shall be justified,” Rom. 2:13. “He that does the things of the law shall live by them,” chap. 10:5. That means doing it in his own person, by the way of personal duty, which alone is what the law requires. But if we have not fulfilled the law by our own inherent, personal obedience, and instead are justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us, then we are justified by *Christ*, and not by the law.

It may be said that this will not remove the objection. For if Christ’s obedience is imputed to us in a way that we are accounted by God to have done what Christ did, then it is all the same. We are as much justified by the law as if we had personally performed an unsinning obedience to it. I confess, I cannot understand this. This inference, in my judgment, does not follow from the nature of imputation, and I cannot acknowledge it. If you grant an imputation of the righteousness of another to us, whatever its

nature, then all justification by the law and its works, in the sense of the Scripture, is gone forever. The admission of imputation takes all power from the law to justify. That is because it can justify none except by a righteousness that is originally and inherently his own: “The man that does them shall live in them” (Rom. 10:5). If the righteousness that is imputed to us is the foundation of our justification, and it is made ours by that imputation, state it how you will, that justification is by *grace*, and not by the *law*. What Christ did for us, in our stead, is imputed and communicated to us as we coalesce into one mystical person with him by faith. And that is the basis on which we are justified. This absolutely overthrows all justification by the law or its works. The law is established, fulfilled, and accomplished so that we may be justified.

Nor can anyone, based on the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, be said to merit their own salvation. Satisfaction and merit are adjuncts of the righteousness of Christ, as formally inherent in his own person. As such, it cannot be transfused into another. Therefore, as it is imputed to individual believers, it does not have those properties accompanying it that belong only to its existence in the person of the Son of God. But this was addressed before, as was much of what was necessary to repeat here.

I have taken notice of these objections here because the answers given to them tend to further explain the truth that I will now confirm by arguments and testimonies of Scripture.

## **10. Arguments for Justification by imputing the righteousness of Christ**

The first argument is taken from the nature and use of our own personal righteousness. Convinced sinners are justified when they believe. At this point their sins are pardoned, they are accepted with God, and a right is given to them to the heavenly inheritance. They are immediately taken into this state upon their faith, that is, upon believing in Jesus Christ. And it is a state of actual peace with God. Take these things for granted at present. They are the foundation of all that I will plead in the present argument. I take notice of them because some seem to deny any actual justification of sinners on their believing in this life. They make justification only a conditional sentence that is declared in the gospel, but not executed until the Day of Judgment. They believe that while men are in this world, the whole condition of justification is not fulfilled. And so they cannot partake of it, or be actually and absolutely justified. From this it follows that there would be no real state of assured rest and peace with God by Jesus Christ for anyone in this life. I will not dispute this at present, because it seems to me to overthrow the whole gospel, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the comfort of believers. I hope we are not yet called to contend with it.

Our inquiry is, “how do convinced sinners, on believing, obtain the remission of sins, acceptance with God, and a right to eternal life?” If this can only be done by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them, then that alone is how they are justified in the sight of God. This assertion proceeds on a supposition that a righteousness is required to justify any person. This is because when God, in justifying someone, declares him to be acquitted from all crimes laid to his charge, and to stand as righteous in his sight, it must be on the consideration of a righteousness that he is acquitted. For the judgment of God is according to truth. We sufficiently evidenced this before in the juridical procedure that the Scripture uses to represent to us the justification of a believing sinner. If there is no other righteousness by which we may be justified than that of Christ’s righteousness imputed to us, then that must be the basis on which we are justified, or we are not justified at all. If there is any other

righteousness, then it must be our own, inherent in us, and done by us. For these two kinds of righteousness, imputed and inherent, Christ's and our own, divide the whole nature of righteousness in our inquiry. I will prove in the first place that there is no such inherent righteousness, no such righteousness of our own, by which we may be justified before God. I will prove it first from express testimonies of Scripture, and then from the consideration of righteousness itself.

First, we will produce some of the many testimonies which may be pleaded to this purpose, Psa. 130:3, 4, "If you, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with you, that you may be feared." The question is how a man, any man, may be justified before God. How may he stand in the presence of God and be accepted with him? How will he stand in judgment, as it is explained in Psa. 1:5, "The wicked shall *not* stand in the judgment." They will not be acquitted on their trial. What first offers itself in answer to this is his own obedience. This is what the law requires of him in the first place, and this is what his own conscience calls upon him to account for. But the psalmist plainly declares that no man can manage a plea for his justification with any success. The reason is because, notwithstanding the best obedience of the best of men, there are iniquities found in them against the Lord their God. If men come to their trial before God, whether they will be justified or condemned, these iniquities must also be heard and taken into account. But then no man can "stand," no man can be "justified," as it is elsewhere expressed. Therefore, as to our justification before God, the wisest and safest course is to utterly to forego this plea and not to insist on our own obedience, or our sins will also appear and be heard. No man can give a reason why they should not be heard; and if they are, then the best of men will not stand in their trial, as the psalmist declares.

Two things are required in this trial, to ensure that a sinner may stand:

1. That his iniquities are not observed, for if they are, he is lost forever.
2. That a righteousness is produced and pleaded that will endure the trial; for justification is based upon a justifying righteousness.



For the first of these, the psalmist tells us that it must be through pardon or forgiveness. “But there is forgiveness with you,” in which lies our only relief against the condemnatory sentence of the law with respect to our iniquities. That is, pardon is granted through the blood of Christ, for in him “we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,” Eph. 1:7. The other cannot be our own obedience, because of our iniquities. Therefore the psalmist directs us to Psa. 71:16, “I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of your righteousness, of yours only.” The righteousness of God, and not his own, as opposed to his own, is the only plea that he would insist upon in this case.

If no man can stand a trial before God based on his own obedience, and he cannot be justified before God because of his own personal iniquities, and if our only plea is the righteousness of God and not our own, then is there no personal, inherent righteousness in any believer by which he may be justified. And that is exactly what is to be proved.

The same thing is asserted again more plainly and directly in Psa. 143:2, “Enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight no man living shall be justified.” This testimony is weightier, because as it is derived from the law, Exod. 34:7, so it is transferred into the gospel. It is twice urged by the apostle for the same purpose in Rom. 3:20 and Gal. 2:16.

The person who insists on this plea with God professes to be God’s servant: “Enter not into judgment with your *servant*,” that is, one who loved God, feared him, and yielded all sincere obedience. He was not a hypocrite or an unbeliever. He was not an unregenerate person. He had performed only works that were legal and required by the law. Such works were done in the strength of the law only. And such works all will acknowledge are excluded from our justification. This was David. He was converted and a true believer. He had the Spirit of God, and the aids of special grace in his obedience. And he also had this testimony to his sincerity: he was “a man after God’s own heart.” He had this witness in his own conscience of his integrity, uprightness, and personal righteousness. He frequently avows them, appeals to God concerning the truth of them, and pleads them as a ground of judgment between him and his adversaries. Therefore, in David we have a case of a sincere and

eminent believer, who most excelled in inherent, personal righteousness.

This person, under these circumstances, whose sincerity and eminence of obedience is testified to both by God and his own conscience, considers how he may “stand before God,” and “be justified in his sight.” Why does he not plead his own merits? If not “ex condigno” (out of worth), yet at least “ex congruo” (out of conformity), did he not deserve to be acquitted and justified? But he left this plea for that generation of men that were to come after him, who would justify themselves and despise others. But suppose he had no such confidence in the merit of his works as some now have? Why does he not freely enter into judgment with God and put it to the trial whether he should be justified, or plead that he had fulfilled the condition of the new covenant? Assuming the procurement of that covenant and its terms by Christ, which I suppose is allowed to extend to the Old Testament, this was all that was required of him. Is it possible that he was one of those who see no need for personal holiness and righteousness. After all, he makes no mention of it here where it would stand him in the greatest stead? At least he might plead his faith as his own duty and work, to be imputed to him for righteousness. But whatever the reason is, he waives them all, and absolutely deprecates a trial based upon them. “Come not,” he says, “O LORD, into judgment with your servant.” Just as it is promised that he who believes should “not come into judgment,” John 5:24.

And if this holy person renounces the consideration of all his personal, inherent righteousness, of every kind, and he will not insist upon it under any pretence, in any place, for any use in his justification before God, then we may safely conclude that there is no such righteousness in anyone by which they may be justified. If men would just leave those shades and covers under which they hide themselves in their arguments, we would better understand their minds than we do now. If only they would forego those pretences and distinctions by which they delude themselves and others, and tell us plainly what plea would they dare to make to be justified in the presence of God? Is it not sad, that David was so ignorant of the worth of his inherent righteousness, and so timid with respect to his trial before God? Surely God would find from these works that David was and must be “worthy of eternal blessedness?”

The reason the psalmist gives as to why he will not put his own obedience to the trial, to be acquitted or justified based upon it, is this general axiom: “For in your sight,” or before you, “no man living shall be justified.” Is this spoken absolutely with respect to some cause of justification? If it is spoken absolutely, then this endeavor ceases forever. There is indeed no such thing as justification before God. But this is contrary to the whole Scripture, and destructive of the gospel. Therefore it is spoken only with respect to our own obedience and works. He does not pray absolutely that he “would not enter into judgement with him,” for this would forego God’s government of the world. He simply would not do so on the account of his own duties and obedience. If these duties and obedience did answer in any way what is required of us as a righteousness that leads to justification, then there was no reason why he should deprecate a trial based on them. The Holy Ghost positively affirms that “no man living shall be justified in the sight of God” by his own works or obedience. It is, I confess, marvelous to me that some would interpret the apostle James as if he affirmed the express contrary: that we are justified in the sight of God by our own works. Indeed, he says no such thing. This, therefore, is an eternal rule of truth: by his own obedience, no man living can be justified in the sight of God.

Some will say, “That if God enters into judgment with anyone on their own obedience to the law, then, indeed, none can be justified before him. But God, judging according to the gospel and the terms of the new covenant, may justify men based on their own duties, works, and obedience.” [Christ plus works]. My answer to this is as follows:

(1.) The negative assertion is general and unlimited that “no man living shall,” on his own works or obedience, “be justified in the sight of God.” To limit it to this or that way of judging is not to distinguish but to contradict the Holy Ghost.

(2.) The judgment intended is only with respect to justification, as is plain in the words. There is no judgment on our works or obedience with respect to righteousness and justification, except by the proper rule and measure of them, which is the law. If they will not endure the trial by the law, then they will not endure the trial as to their righteousness and justification in the sight of God.

(3.) It would be like saying the prayer and plea of the psalmist are to this purpose: “O LORD, enter not into judgment with your servant by or according to the law, but enter into judgment with me on my own works and obedience according to the rule of the gospel.” He gives this reason: “because in your sight no man living shall be justified.” This is so remote from his intention that it does not need to be said.

(4.) The judgment of God as to our justification according to the gospel does not proceed on our works of obedience, but upon the righteousness of Christ, and our interest in that righteousness by faith. This is too evident to be even modestly denied.

Therefore, we argue that if the most holy of the servants of God, after sincere, fruitful obedience, testified to by God himself, and witnessed to in their own consciences, renounce all such thoughts of a righteousness by which they may be justified before God, then there is no such righteousness in anyone. Instead, it is the righteousness of Christ alone, imputed to us, by which we are justified.

I suspect that many learned men resort to the psalmist’s method in their own practice, despite all their pleas for personal righteousness and works in our justification before God. They cry, as the prophet Daniel does, “We do not present our supplications before you for our own righteousness, but for your great mercies,” chap. 9:18. Job, as we observed before, presented a long and earnest defense of his own faith, integrity, and personal righteousness, in which he justified himself against the charge of Satan and men. And yet, being called to plead his cause in the sight of God, and declare on what grounds he expected to be justified before him, he renounces all his former pleas, and resorts to the same plea as the psalmist, chap. 40:4; 43:6.

It is true that in particular cases a man may plead his own integrity and obedience before God. Hezekiah did when he prayed for the sparing of his life, Isa. 38:3, “Remember now, O LORD, I beg you, how I have walked before you in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done what is good in your sight.” This may be done with respect to temporal deliverance, or some other particular end in which the glory of God is concerned. So it was in sparing the life of Hezekiah at that time. For because he had with great zeal and industry reformed religion, and restored the true worship of God, “cutting him off in the midst of his days” would have caused the idolatrous multitude to

reflect on him as someone dying under a token of divine displeasure. But no one ever made this plea before God for the absolute justification of themselves. Nehemiah, in that great contest which he had about the worship of God and the service of his house, pleads with God to remember it in his justification against his adversaries. But he resolves his own personal acceptance with God into pardoning mercy: "And spare me according to the multitude of your mercies," chap. 13:22.

We have another testimony in the prophet Isaiah, speaking in the name of the church, chap. 64:6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." It is true that the prophet makes a deep confession of the sins of the people in this place. Yet he joins himself with them, and asserts the special interest of those of whom he speaks by adoption. He says that God was their Father, and they his people, chap. 63:16, 44:8, 9. And the righteous acts of all who are the children of God are of the same kind, however they may differ in degrees. Some of them may be more righteous than others. But all of it is described as something that we cannot expect justification from in the sight of God.

I will wholly omit many other testimonies. They include all those in which the saints of God, or the church, in a humble acknowledgment and confession of their own sins, resort to the mercy and grace of God alone as dispensed through the mediation and blood of Christ. And I omit all those in which God promises to pardon and blot out our iniquities for his own sake, or for his name's sake. He promises to bless the people, not for any good that was in them, nor for their righteousness, nor for their works. He excludes their consideration from any influence on his grace towards them. These are passages in which God expresses his delight in them alone, and his approbation of those who hope in his mercy, trust in his name, turning to him as their only refuge, pronouncing them accursed who trust in anything else, or glory in themselves. They contain singular promises to those who turn to God as fatherless, hopeless, and lost in themselves.

All of these multiple testimonies sufficiently prove that the best of God's saints do not have a righteousness of their own on which they can, in any sense, be justified before God. They all renounce any such righteousness of their own, all that is in them, all that they have done or can do, and resort to grace and mercy alone. As we proved before,

in justifying anyone, God exercises grace towards them with respect to a righteousness by which he declares them to be righteous and accepted before him. And this is done with respect to a righteousness which is not inherent in them, but imputed to them.

In this lies the substance of all that we inquire into in this matter of justification. All other disputes about qualifications, conditions, causes, any kind of interest in our own works and obedience for our justification before God, are merely the speculations of men at ease. The conscience of a convinced sinner, who presents himself in the presence of God, finds everything reduced to this one point: whether he will trust in his own personal inherent righteousness, or in a full renunciation of it, turning to the grace of God and the righteousness of Christ alone. He is not concerned with other things. Let men characterize his righteousness to him however they please. Let them call it meritorious, evangelical, not legal, only an accomplishment of the condition of the new covenant, or a cause without which he cannot be justified. He will not have any confidence in it as to his justification before God, nor will he be deceived in the issue.

The second part of the present argument is taken from the nature of the thing itself. Here we consider this personal, inherent righteousness of our own. What is it? What does it consist of? And what use does it have in our justification?

We grant that there is an inherent righteousness in all believers, as has been declared before: "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth," Eph. 5:9. "Being made free from sin, we become the servants of righteousness," Rom. 6:18. It is our duty to "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness," 1 Tim. 6:11. Although righteousness is mostly a special grace or duty, distinct from other graces and duties, we acknowledge that it may be taken for the whole of our obedience to God. The word is used that way in the Scripture where our own righteousness is opposed to the righteousness of God. It is either habitual or actual. There is a habitual righteousness inherent in believers as they have "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," Eph. 4:24. Believers are the "workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus to do good works," chap. 2:10. There is an actual righteousness consisting in those good works for which we are created, or the fruits of righteousness, which

are to the praise of God by Jesus Christ. Concerning this righteousness, it may first be observed that men are said in the Scripture to be just or righteous by it. But no one is said to be *justified* by it before God. Secondly, it is not ascribed to or found in anyone but those who are actually justified *prior* to such righteousness.

Bellarmino says that, "Inherent righteousness cannot be said to be ours unless by our inherent righteousness we are made righteous. That is, it is the *condition* of our justification required in the new covenant. If this is denied, then all inherent righteousness is denied."

But how is this proved? What if we say that every believer is inherently righteous, but this inherent righteousness was not the condition of his justification. Rather it was the *consequence* of it, and it is nowhere required in the new covenant as the condition of our justification? How will the contrary be shown? The Scripture plainly affirms that there is such an inherent righteousness in all who believe. And yet as plainly it affirms that we are justified before God by faith without works. Therefore, saying that it is the condition of our justification, and that it precedes our justification, is expressly contrary to what the apostle says. "To him that does not work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness," Rom. 4:5. Nor is it the condition of the covenant itself, as something on which the whole grace of the covenant depends. Because such righteousness is habitual, as principally defined, it is a grace of the covenant itself. And so it cannot be a condition of it, Jer. 31:33; 32:39; Ezek. 36:25-27. If no more is meant than to say that its actual exercise is indispensably required of all who are taken into the covenant, then we are agreed. But for that reason it does not follow that it is the condition of our justification.

Bellarmino adds that, "All righteousness respects a law and a rule by which it is to be tried. He is righteous who does the things which that law requires, by whose rule he is to be judged."

First, this is not the way by which the Scripture expresses our justification before God, and that alone is under consideration. We do not bring to it a personal righteousness of our own, answering the law by which we are to be judged. An assertion to this purpose is foreign to the gospel, and destructive of the grace of God by Jesus

Christ. Secondly, it is granted that all righteousness respects a law as its rule. And so does this question of which we speak, namely, the moral law. Being the sole, eternal, unchangeable rule of righteousness, if it does not in its substance answer the question of righteousness, then it is not righteousness. But it does. In so far as it is habitual, it consists in the renovation of the image of God, in which that law is written in our hearts. The substance of all its actual duties is what is required by that law. But as to the manner of its communication to us, and of its performance by us, which is faith in God by Jesus Christ, and love for him as the author and fountain of all the grace and mercy procured and administered by him, it is speaking of the gospel. What follows from that? Why, that a person is just who does those things which that law requires by which he is to be judged. For “not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified,” Rom. 2:13. So Moses describes the righteousness of the law, that “the man which does those things shall live in them,” Rom. 10:5. The righteousness we speak of is nothing but the law in our hearts. Hence, we walk in the ways and keep the commandments of God. But although it is required by the law, it does not answer the law in any way that can justify a man.

But then it will be said that if it does not answer that law and rule by which we are to be judged, then it is not righteousness. For all righteousness must answer the law by which it is required. I agree. That is most true. It is not a perfect righteousness. It does not answer the rule and law so that we can be justified by it, or safely judged on it. But to the extent that it does answer the law, it is a righteousness, albeit an imperfect righteousness. Yet it calls those righteous who have it, both absolutely and comparatively. It is said, therefore, that it is “the law of grace or the gospel which is the reason we are called righteous with this righteousness.” But it will not be proved that we are called righteous by the gospel from any righteousness that is not required by the moral law. Nor does the law of grace or the gospel anywhere require or prescribe this righteousness of us as a basis for being justified before God. It requires faith in Christ Jesus. It requires that all who are to be justified receive him, as he is proposed in the promises of the gospel. It requires “repentance from dead works” in all who believe. It also requires the fruits of faith, conversion to God, and repentance in the works of righteousness



which are to the praise of God by Jesus Christ. It requires perseverance in that to the end. And all of this may be called our evangelical righteousness, being our obedience to God according to the gospel. Yet the graces and duties in which it consists no more perfectly answer the commands of the gospel than do those of the moral law. It is impious to think that the gospel minimizes the holiness of the law, and makes something not sin which the law says is sin, or approves of less in the love of God than the law does.

It is not yet proved that the gospel requires all of these things entirely and equally as the prior condition of our justification before God, nor will it ever. For that reason, Bellarmine concludes that “this is our righteousness, according to the evangelical law which requires it. By this we are made righteous. That is, we are not guilty of the non-performance of the condition required in that law.” I wholly deny that our faith, obedience, and righteousness, considered as ours, as done by us, perfectly answer the commands of the gospel that requires them of us as to matter, manner, and degree. And this is true even though they are all accepted with God through Jesus Christ according to the grace declared in the gospel. Therefore it is utterly impossible that they can be the cause or condition of our justification before God. Yet in the explanation of these things, it is added by Bellarmine that “our maimed and imperfect righteousness is accepted to salvation, as if it were in every way absolute and perfect. Christ has merited by his most perfect righteousness that it should be so.”

But it is justification alone, and not salvation, that we are talking about. It is obvious in Scripture that the works of obedience or righteousness are regarded differently with respect to salvation than they are to justification. If this weak and imperfect righteousness of ours is esteemed and accepted as in every way perfect before God, then either it is because God judges it to be perfect, and so declares us to be justified in his sight; or he judges it incomplete and imperfect, and yet declares us to be perfectly righteous in his sight. Neither of these can be granted. It will therefore be said, it is neither of them. But it is said that “by his complete and most perfect righteousness and obedience, Christ has made this lame and imperfect righteousness of ours accepted as in every way perfect.” If this is so, some will think it best not to use this weak and imperfect

righteousness for their justification. They will turn immediately to the most perfect righteousness of Christ, which I am sure the Scripture encourages them to do. And they will be ready to think that their own righteousness which cannot justify itself, but must be obliged to grace and pardon through the merits of Christ, will never be able to justify them.

But what ensues from this explanation of accepting our imperfect righteousness on the merit of Christ to obtain justification? So far as I can discern, it is only that Christ has merited and procured for us either that God judges something to be perfect which is imperfect, and declares us perfectly righteous when we are not so; or he judges the righteousness still to be imperfect, but declares us to be perfectly righteous with this imperfect righteousness. This is what happens when men accept that a perfect righteousness is required for our justification before God, and yet they deny the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us. It allows no other righteousness to this end but what is so weak and imperfect that no man can justify it in his own conscience, or with a frenzy of pride, he imagines himself perfectly righteous thereby.

This personal, inherent righteousness which, according to the Scripture, we allow in believers, is not that righteousness by which we are justified before God. For it is not perfect, nor does it perfectly answer any rule of obedience that is given to us. And so it cannot be our righteousness before God to our justification. Therefore, we must be justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, or we must be justified without respect to any righteousness, or we must not be justified at all. A threefold imperfection accompanies our personal, inherent righteousness:

1. As to the principle of righteousness that is habitually resident in us.

- (1.) There is a contrary principle of sin abiding with us while we are in this world. Contrary qualities may exist in the same person while neither of them is in the highest degree. So it is in Gal. 5:17, "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would."

(2.) None of the faculties of our souls are perfectly renewed while we are in this world. "The inward man is renewed day by day," 2 Cor. 4:16. We are always purging ourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. 7:1. In the Scripture and in the experience of believers, this includes the remainders of indwelling sin in the darkness of our minds. Hence, at best we know but in part. Through ignorance we are ready to wander out of the way in the deceitfulness of our heart and the disorder of our desires, Heb. 5:2.

For this reason alone, I do not understand how anyone can think of pleading his own righteousness in the sight of God, or suppose that he can be justified by it. Such notions arise from a lack of due consideration, or a complete ignorance, of God and ourselves. Neither can I understand how a thousand distinctions can safely entertain such an idea in our justification before God. Anyone who can search by a spiritual light into his own heart and soul, will find that "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a better plea than any he can furnish from his own worth. "What is man, that he should be clean? And he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" Job 15:14-16; 4:18, 19. Both Gregory and Bernard declare that a man cannot be justified in any sense by that righteousness which, upon trial, will appear to be more of an unrighteousness.

2. Our personal, inherent righteousness is imperfect with respect to every act and duty of it, whether internal or external. There is iniquity cleaving to our holy things, and all our "righteousnesses are as filthy rags," Isa. 64:6. It has often been well observed that if a man, the best of men, were left to choose the best of his works that he ever performed, and based on that enter into judgment with God, it would be his wisest course to renounce it, and resort to grace and mercy alone.

3. Our personal, inherent righteousness is imperfect by reason of the incursion of actual sins. For that reason our Savior has taught us continually to pray for the "forgiveness of our sins." And "if we say that we have no sins, we deceive ourselves," (1Jn. 1:8), for "in many things we offend all" (Jm. 3:2). What confidence can be placed in this righteousness which is acknowledged to be weak, maimed, and imperfect by those who plead for it in this cause?

Two things are pleaded by some in behalf of this righteousness and its influence on our justification:

1. That it is absolutely complete and perfect. For that reason some say that they are perfect and sinless in this life. They are no longer concerned with the mortification of sin, or growth in grace. Indeed, this is the only rational pretence for ascribing our justification before God to this righteousness. For if it were true, what would stop someone from being justified before God for any reason other than being a sinner? But this is so contrary to the Scripture and the experience of all who know the terror of the Lord, and what it is to walk humbly before him, that I will not bother to refute it.
2. "That although this righteousness is not an exact fulfilling of the moral law, yet it accomplishes the condition of the new covenant. It entirely answers the law of grace and all that is required of us in that law."

My answer:

(1.) This wholly takes away sin and its pardon, no less than does the conceit of sinless perfection which we just rejected. For if our obedience answers the only rule of law by which it is to be tried, measured, and judged, then there is no sin in us, nor any need of pardon. No more is required of any man to keep him absolutely free from sin than that he fully answer and exactly comply with the rule and law of his obedience by which he must be judged. On this assumption, therefore, there is neither sin nor any need to pardon it, [because we have fully complied with all the requirements of the law of *grace*]. To say that there is still both sin and need for pardon with respect to the *moral* law of God, is to confess *that* law to be the rule of our obedience, which this inherent righteousness does not in any way answer. And therefore none can be justified by it in the sight of God.

(2.) Although this inherent righteousness is accepted in justified persons through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, consider the principle of it. Consider all the acts and duties it consists of as required and prescribed in the gospel to us. They do not fulfill the commands of the gospel, any more than they do the commands of the law, either jointly or severally. Therefore, they cannot constitute a righteousness that exactly conforms to the rules of the gospel, or

the law of the gospel. It is impious to imagine that the gospel makes any reduction in the matter, manner, or degrees of perfection from what was required by the law. Does the gospel require a lower degree of love for God, or a less perfect love than the law did? God forbid. The same may be said concerning the inward frame of our natures and all our other duties. Therefore, although this righteousness is accepted in justified persons (as God accepted Abel and his offering), yet as it relates to the commands of the gospel, this righteousness and all its duties are just as imperfect as if tried by the law of creation only.

(3.) I do not know what some men intend. On the one hand, they affirm that our Lord Jesus Christ has enlarged and heightened the spiritual sense of the moral law, and added to it new precepts of more exact obedience than it originally required. On the other, they would have him remove the obligation of the law so that a man could be judged by God to have fulfilled the whole obedience which it requires, even though he never fulfilled one precept of it according to its original sense and obligation. That is how it must be if this imperfect righteousness is on any account esteemed to fulfill the rule of our obedience in a way that justifies us in the sight of God.

(4.) This opinion puts an irreconcilable difference between the law and the gospel. According to this opinion, through the gospel God declares a man to be perfectly righteous, justified, and blessed upon consideration of a righteousness that is imperfect. And yet in the law God pronounces every one accursed who does not continue in all the things required by the law. But it is said that this righteousness is not to be considered other than as the condition of the new covenant. This righteousness obtains our justification which is the remission of our sins on the sole account of the satisfaction of Christ.

Answer:

(1.) Saying that justification consists only in the pardon of sin is so contrary to the meaning of the word in the Scripture, men's common understanding of it, the testimony of men's consciences who find themselves obligated to their duty, and other express testimonies of the Scripture, that I wonder how it can be pretended. But it will be addressed elsewhere.

(2.) If this righteousness fulfills the condition of the new covenant on which we are justified, then it must in itself exactly answer some rule or law of righteousness, and so be perfect. But it does not. And therefore it cannot take the place of a perfect righteousness in our justification.

(3.) It is not proved that this righteousness is the condition of our justification before God, nor of that interest in the righteousness of Christ by which we are justified, nor will it ever be proved.

I will briefly add two or three considerations to exclude this personal righteousness from its pretended interest in our justification, and close this argument:

1. A righteousness that neither answers the law of God nor the purpose of God in our justification by the gospel, is not a righteousness on which we are justified. And such is this inherent righteousness of believers, even of the best of them.

(1.) Our inherent righteousness does not answer the law of God, as proved from its imperfection. Nor will any sober person pretend that it exactly and perfectly fulfills the law of our creation. And this law cannot be ignored while there continues to be a relation of Creator and Rewarder on the one hand, and creatures capable of obedience and rewards on the other. Therefore, what does not answer creation's law will not justify us. God will not abrogate the law so that its transgressors may be justified. The apostle asks whether the doctrine of justification by faith without works "makes void the law? God forbid: indeed, we establish it," Rom. 3:31.

(2.) Justifying us with respect to our inherent righteousness does not answer God's purpose in our justification by the gospel. His purpose is to take away all glorying in ourselves, all occasion of glorying, and everything that might countenance it, so that everything might be to the praise of his own grace by Christ, Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:29-31. How faith alone gives glory to God has been declared in the description of its nature. But it is evident that no man can possibly have any greater occasion for boasting in himself with respect to his justification, than that he is justified by meeting the condition of his justification, which consists in his own personal righteousness.

2. No man was ever justified in his own conscience by his personal righteousness. Much less can he be justified by it in the sight of God. "For God is greater than our hearts and knows all things." There has never been a man so righteous, or so holy, in the whole world that his own conscience would not charge him with coming short of the perfect obedience required of him. There is no man that lives and does not sin. Let any man try himself whether he can be justified in his own conscience by his own righteousness, and he will be convicted at his own judgment-seat. Anyone who does not conclude from this that there must be another righteousness by which he must be justified, will be at a loss for peace with God. But it will be said that "men may be justified in their consciences that they have performed the condition of the new covenant, which is all that is pleaded with respect to this righteousness." I do not doubt that men may be comfortably persuaded of their own sincerity in obedience, and satisfied in the acceptance of such obedience with God. It is when they depend on it as an effect of faith by which they are justified, and not as the condition of their justification, that discomfort arises. Let it be stated that way in their minds: that God requires a personal righteousness in order to justify them. And their determination must be, "This is my righteousness which I present to God that I may be justified." If I am not mistaken, they will find difficulty in arriving at that determination.

3. None of the holy men of old ever pleaded their own personal righteousness, either as to the merit of their works, or as to their complete performance of what was required of them as the condition of the covenant, to obtain their justification before God. This has been addressed before.

## **11. The Nature of Obedience that God requires of us**

Our second argument is taken from the nature of that obedience or righteousness which God requires of us in order to be accepted and approved by him. This would be a large subject if fully handled. I will reduce our present concern to some special topics or observations.

1. Because God is a most perfect and therefore a most free agent, all of his actions towards mankind, all of his dealings with them, all of his constitutions and laws concerning them, are resolved into his own sovereign will and pleasure. No other reason can be given for the origination of the whole system of interactions and laws. The Scripture testifies to this in Psa. 115:3; 135:6; Prov. 16:4; Eph. 1:9, 11; Rev. 4:11. Because the being, existence, and natural circumstances of all creatures are an effect of the free counsel and pleasure of God, all that belongs to them must ultimately be resolved in that too.

2. Assuming some free acts of the will of God, and the existence of a theme that creates an order and relationship between the things that are outwardly of God, some things may become necessary that would not be absolutely necessary otherwise. The order of all things, and their mutual respect to one another, depend on God's free constitution as much as their absolute being. But assuming that constitution exists, things in that order have a necessary relationship to one another, and all of them are related to God. Therefore,

3. It was a free, sovereign act of God's will to create, effect, or produce a creature such as man. That is, a creature whose nature is intelligent, rational, and capable of moral obedience with rewards and punishments. But supposing that a man is so freely made, he could not be governed any other way than by a moral instrument of law or rule influencing his rational faculties to obedience, and guiding him in that obedience. With such a constitution, he could not be contained under the rule of God by a mere physical influence, as are all irrational or brute creatures. That would deny or destroy the essential faculty and powers by which he was created. Therefore, it was necessary for a law or rule of obedience to be prescribed for him, and that it should become the instrument of God's government towards him.



4. This necessary law immediately and unavoidably ensued upon the constitution of our nature in relation to God. Suppose the nature, being, and properties of God with the works of creation on the one hand; and then suppose the being, existence, and nature of man with his necessary relation to God on the other. The law we speak of is nothing but the rule of that relation, which cannot exist without it. For that reason, this law is eternal and indispensable. It admits no other variation than does the relation between God and man. It is a necessary outworking of their distinct natures and properties.

5. The substance of this law was that man should yield obedience to God in all things known to be God's will and pleasure, either by the light of his own mind, or by special revelation made to him. He would do so with respect to God's infinite wisdom, righteousness, and almighty power to protect, reward, and punish, procuring all the present and future advantages this law was capable of. Man would adhere to God absolutely, universally, unchangeably, uninterruptedly, in trust, love, and fear. And he would do so recognizing God as the chief good and the first author of his being. It is evident that no more is required to constitute and establish this law but that God be God, and man be man, with the necessary relation that must ensue between them. Therefore,

6. This law eternally and unchangeably obliges all men to obey God, according to the obedience which the law requires and the manner in which it requires it. For both the substance of what it requires, and the manner of its performance, as to measure and degree, are equally necessary and unalterable based on the suppositions above. For God cannot deny himself, nor can the nature of man change, and those are what constituted this law. Although God might superadd to the original obligations of this law any arbitrary commands he pleased which did not necessarily arise from the relation between him and us, they would be resolved into a principle of this law that God, in all things, was absolutely to be trusted and obeyed.

7. "Known to God are all his works from the foundation of the world." In the constitution of this order of things, God made it possible and foresaw that man would rebel against the receptive power of the law. He would disturb that order of things in which he was placed under his moral rule. This resulted in that effect of infinite divine righteousness which established the punishment man

would suffer by his transgression of this law. This was not an effect of arbitrary will and pleasure any more than the law itself was arbitrary. Upon the creation of man, the law mentioned was necessary from all the divine properties of the nature of God. And supposing that man would transgress the law, God being man's ruler and governor, the constitution of the punishment due to man's sin was a necessary effect of divine righteousness. This would not have been true had the law itself been arbitrary. But the law being necessary, so was the penalty for its transgression. Therefore, the constitution of this penalty is liable to no more change, alteration, or abrogation than the law itself, without an alteration in the relation between God and man.

8. This is that law which our Lord Jesus Christ came "not to destroy, but to fulfill," (Matt. 5:17) that he might be "the end of it for righteousness to those who believe" (Rom. 10:4). He did not abrogate this law, nor could he do so without destroying the relation between God and man arising necessarily from their distinct beings and properties. But because this relation cannot be destroyed, the Lord Christ came for a contrary purpose, namely, to repair and restore this relation where it was weakened. Therefore,

9. This law of sinless, perfect obedience, with its sentence of the punishment of death on all transgressors, does and must abide in force forever in this world. To be so, no more is required than that God be God, and man be man. Yet this further will be proved:

(1.) There is nothing in the Scripture intimating any alteration or abrogation of this law. Any transgression of what is prescribed or proscribed in the law, merits and deserves that punishment which is threatened by it: "The wages of sin is death." It is therefore in universal force towards all mankind. There is no relief in this case but to "Behold the Lamb of God."

In exception, it may be pleaded that when it was first given to Adam, it was the rule and instrument of a covenant between God and man, a covenant of works and perfect obedience. But upon the entrance of sin, it ceased to have the nature of a covenant. And it ceased because it was impossible for any man to fulfill the perfect righteousness of it, and so he could not be justified or obtain the benefit of the covenant. Therefore, it is not only ineffectual for us as

a covenant, by reason of our weakness and disability to perform it, but it has ceased to be a covenant by its own nature. However,

[1.] Our discourse is not about the federal adjunct of the law, but only about its moral nature. It is enough that, as a law, it continues in full force to oblige all mankind to perfect obedience under its original penalty. For that reason it will unavoidably follow that unless its commands are complied with and fulfilled, the penalty will fall on all who transgress it. The law requires no obedience other than what it required in its original constitution, that is, sinless and perfect obedience. And it requires no duty, nor prohibits any sin, except under the penalty of death for disobedience.

[2.] It is true that if a sinner should afterwards yield all that perfect obedience to God that the law requires, he could not thereby obtain the benefit of the promise of the covenant. But the sole reason for that is because he is previously a sinner, and so he is liable to the curse of the law. No man can be liable to its curse and have a right to its promise at the same time. But to assume that the same person is by any means free from the curse due to sin, and then to assume that performing that perfect, sinless obedience which the law requires will still not procure the right to the promise of life, is to deny the truth of God. It reflects the highest dishonor on his justice. Jesus Christ himself was justified by this law. It is immutably true that he who does the things of the law will live in that law (Rom. 10:5).

[3.] It is granted that man did not continue in the observation of this law, as it was the rule of the covenant between God and him. It was not the covenant, but the rule of it that was superadded as a law. The covenant comprised things that were not a result of the necessary relation of God and man. Therefore man, by his sin, demerited its benefits to himself. He may be said to break this covenant, to annul it. It is also true, that God never did formally and absolutely renew this law as a covenant [of works] a second time. Nor was there any need to do so, unless it were declarative only. It was renewed this way at Sinai. Because the whole of it is an emanation of eternal right and truth, it abides, and it must abide, in full force forever. Therefore, it is only thus far broken as a covenant. All mankind having sinned against its commands,

guilty and impotent to obey it, they defeated themselves of any interest in its promise. The possibility of attaining any such interest being absent, they cannot have any benefit of it. But as to its power to oblige all mankind to obedience, and the unchangeable truth of its promises and threats, it abides the same as it did from the beginning.

(2.) Take away this law and there is no standard of righteousness left to mankind, no certain boundaries of good and evil. Those pillars on which God has fixed the earth are left to move and float up and down like the isle of Delos in the sea. Some say that the rule of good and evil for men is not this law in its original constitution, but the light of nature and the dictates of reason. If they mean that light which was originally created within our natures, and those dictates of right and wrong which reason originally suggested and improved, then they only say that this law is still the unalterable rule of obedience for all mankind. But if they mean the remaining light of nature that continues in every individual in this depraved state, and that has affixed to most of us under additional deprivations such as traditions, customs, prejudices, and lusts of all sorts, then there is nothing more irrational. It still leaves no certain boundaries of good and evil. On this basis, what is good to one will be evil to another. All the idolaters that ever existed in the world might be excused on this pretence.

(3.) Conscience bears witness to this. There is no good or evil required or forbidden by this law that, upon discovering it, any man in the world can persuade or bribe his conscience not to comply with it in judgment. It will accuse and excuse, condemn and free him, according to the sentence of this law, no matter what he does to the contrary.

In brief, it is acknowledged that God, by virtue of his supreme dominion over all, may in some instances change the nature and order of things so that the precepts of the divine law will not operate in their ordinary efficacy. So was it in the case of his command to Abraham to slay his son, and to the Israelites to rob the Egyptians. But assuming the continuance of that order of things which this law preserves, such is the intrinsic nature of the good and evil commanded and forbidden in it, that it is not the subject of divine dispensation. Even the schoolmen generally grant this fact.

10. From what we have said, two things unavoidably ensue:

(1.) All mankind have fallen under the penalty of eternal death for the transgression of this law. Eternal death is inconsistent with acceptance before God or the enjoyment of blessedness. And so, it is utterly impossible for any one of the posterity of Adam to be justified in the sight of God, accepted or blessed by him, unless this penalty is answered and suffered by them, or for them. In this, the [dikai>wma tou~ Qeou~](#) “dikaiooma tou Theou” [the Judgement of God] is not to be abolished, but established.

(2.) To that same end of gaining acceptance, the righteousness of this eternal law must be fulfilled in us in such a way that, in the judgment of God, we may be esteemed to have fulfilled it, and be dealt with accordingly. Assuming a failure in that, the sanction of the law is not arbitrary or optional. It is necessary from the righteousness of God as the supreme governor of all.

11. About the first of these, our controversy is only with the Socinians who deny the satisfaction of Christ and any necessity for it. I have treated this extensively elsewhere. As to the second, we must inquire how we are supposed to comply with the rule, and answer the righteousness of this unalterable law, whose authority we cannot be exempted from. What we say is that the obedience and righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. His obedience, as the surety of the new covenant, is granted to us and made ours by the gracious constitution, sovereign appointment, and donation of God. It is that by which we are judged and esteemed to have answered the righteousness of the law. “By the obedience of one many are made righteous,” Rom. 5:19. “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,” Rom. 8:4. And for that reason we argue the following.

If there is no other way by which the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us than by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, then that is the sole righteousness by which we are justified in the sight of God. There is no other way. Without it, we cannot be justified and must inevitably fall under the penalty threatened for the transgression of the law.

12. Assuming this law continues in full force, with its original obligation to obedience and its sanctions for transgression, and we are in no way able to perform the obedience required, there can be

only one of three ways a sinner can be justified before God. Each of them depends on a sovereign act of God with reference to this law. The first is to abrogate the law so that it no longer obliges us either to obedience or punishment. We have proved this is impossible. The second is by transferring its obligation to a surety or a common undertaker. This is what we argue is the substance of the mystery of the gospel, considering the person and grace of this undertaker or surety. And by doing this, all things tend to exalt the glory of God in all the holy properties of his nature, by fulfilling and establishing the law itself, Matt. 5:17; Rom. 3:31; 8:4; 10:3, 4. The third way is by an act of God towards the law, and another act towards us, that change the nature of the righteousness that the law requires. We will examine this as the only reserve against our present argument.

13. It is said by some that we answer the righteous requirements of the law by our own personal obedience. But because no sober person can imagine that anyone in our lapsed condition ever yielded that perfect, sinless obedience to God which is required in the law of creation, two things must be presumed to enable our obedience to be accepted by God as if sinless and perfect. Either the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us for what it is, or our own righteousness is imputed to us for what it is not. Of these two things, the one respects the law, the other our obedience.

14. What respects the law does not abrogate it. Although abrogating the law would seem the most expedient way to reconcile this difficulty, not many suggest it. If the law of creation is utterly abrogated by the gospel, both as to its obligations and its punishment, then no law continues in force except to require sincere obedience of us. As to our duties, and the manner of their performance, there would be no absolute rule or measure. It is true that the law was broken by man with respect to its principal end, which is our subjection to God and dependence on him according to its rule. But it is foolish to think that breaking a righteous law, rightly given, would abrogate or annul the law itself. A law that is good and just may cease to have any power of obligation when the relation on which it is founded ceases. So the apostle tells us that “when the husband of a woman is dead, she is free from the law of her husband,” Rom. 7:2.

But the relation between God and us, which was constituted in our first creation, can never cease. A law cannot be abrogated without a new law being given, made by the same or equal power that made the first one, either expressly revoking it, or enjoining the things that are inconsistent with it and contradictory to its observation. In the latter way, the law of Mosaical institutions was abrogated and annulled. No positive law was made to take it away. But the introduction of a new way of worship by the gospel, inconsistent with the old way and contrary to it, deprived it of all its obligatory power and efficacy. By neither of these ways has God taken away the obligation of the original law of obedience, either as to its duties or its reward. He has not given any direct law for its abrogation, nor has he given any new law of moral obedience. Indeed, in the gospel, the law is declared to be established and fulfilled (Matt. 5:17).

It is true, as was observed before, that this law was made the instrument of a covenant between God and man (Gal. 3:17), so there is another reason for it. God has actually introduced a new covenant inconsistent with the law and contrary to it. But this does not instantly, and “*ipso facto*,” free all men from the law just because of this new covenant. For the law to be an obligation, no more is required than it be just and righteous, that it be given or made by one who has just authority, and be sufficiently declared to those who are obliged by it. For that reason, making and promulgating a new law does “*ipso facto*” abrogate any former law that is contrary to it, and frees all men from obedience to the former law who were obliged by it. But in a covenant this is not so. For a covenant does not operate by mere sovereign authority. It only becomes a covenant with the consent of those with whom it is made. Therefore, no benefit accrues to anyone, nor is anyone freed from the old covenant by the constitution of a new one, unless he has actually complied with it, chosen it, and is interested in it thereby. In Adam, we did consent to and accept the first covenant. And we must abide in that, notwithstanding our sin. That is, we remain under its obligation as to our duty and punishment, until by faith we are made partakers of the new covenant. Therefore, it cannot be said that we are unconcerned with fulfilling the righteousness of this law because it is abrogated.

15. Nor can it be said that the law has received a new interpretation so that it no longer obliges, or that it may be complied with on far

easier terms. The law was given to us when we were sinless, with a purpose to continue and preserve us in that condition. It is absurd to say that it did not oblige us to sinless obedience, nor is any such thing once intimated in the gospel. The discourses of our Savior on the law absolutely destroy any such imagination. Because the scribes and Pharisees had attempted, by their false glosses and interpretations, to accommodate the law to the inclinations and lusts of men, Christ, on the contrary, rejected all such pretended epieikias [accommodations] and interpretations. He restored the law to its pristine crown, as the Jews' tradition expected the Messiah to do.

16. Nor can we pretend that the law has been relaxed, if there is any such thing in rule. If there is, it consists either in the suspension of its whole obligation, at least for a season, or the substitution of another person to answer its demands who was not in the original obligation.

*[Alternative view of the requirements of obedience under the new covenant:]*

17. Some say there is an act of God towards the law in this case that derogates its obliging power as to obedience. It did originally oblige us to perfect, sinless obedience in all our duties, both as to their substance and the manner of their performance. And it still obliges us to obedience, but not as to the completeness and perfection of it. If it did so, either it is fulfilled in the righteousness of Christ for us, or no man living can ever be justified in the sight of God. Therefore, by an act derogating its original power, it still obliges us to obedience, but not what is absolutely sinless and perfect. Although it is performed in a lower degree than at first required, sincere and universal as to all its parts, it is all that the law now requires of us. It has been adapted to the service of the new covenant, and made the rule of obedience according to the law of Christ. Here is the receptive part of the law, so far as we are concerned, answered and complied with. Whether these things are so or not, we will see immediately in a few words.

18. For that reason, it follows that the act of God with respect to our obedience is not an act of judgment according to any rule or law of his own. It is an esteeming, accounting, or accepting of it as perfect,



or in the room of what is perfect, though really and in truth it is not perfect.

19. Both the act of God in derogating the obliging power of the law, and the esteeming of our obedience as if perfect, depend on the obedience, suffering, and merits of Christ. For it is on their account that our weak and imperfect obedience is accepted as if it were perfect, and the power of the law to require absolutely perfect obedience is taken away. Because these are the effects of the righteousness of Christ, that righteousness may on that account be said to be imputed to us.

*[In rebuttal to this alternative view:]*

20. Notwithstanding the great endeavors that have been used to give a color of truth to these things, both of them are only fictions that have no ground in the Scripture. Nor do they comply with the experience of believers. To touch a little on the latter, all true believers have these two things fixed in their mind and conscience,

(1.) Anything in principles, habits, qualities, or actions, in which a believer comes short of a perfect compliance with the holy law of God, has in it the nature of sin. That in itself deserves the curse originally annexed to the breach of that law. Believers do not, therefore, understand that its obligation is taken off, weakened, or derogated from anything.

(2.) The only relief for a believer, with respect to what the law requires or threatens, is the mediation of Jesus Christ alone, who of God is made righteousness to him (1Cor. 1:30). Therefore, they do not rest on the acceptance of their own obedience, such as it is, to answer the law, but trust to Christ alone for their acceptance with God.

21. Both of these assertions are *doctrinally* untrue. As to the former derogation,

(1.) It is unwritten. There is no intimation in the Scripture of any such dispensation of God with reference to the original law of obedience. Much is spoken of our deliverance from the curse of the law by Christ, but nothing at all is spoken of the abatement of its receptive power.

(2.) It is contrary to the Scripture. For it is plainly affirmed that the law is not to be abolished, but to be fulfilled; it is not to be made void, but to be established; and its righteousness must be fulfilled *in us* (Rom. 8:4).

(3.) It is a supposition that is both unreasonable and impossible. For,

[1.] The law was a representation to us of the holiness of God and his righteousness in the government of his creatures. There can be no alteration made in it because with God himself there is no variableness or shadow of changing.

[2.] It would leave no standard of righteousness, but only a Lesbian rule. It would turn and apply itself to the light and abilities of men, leaving at least as many various measures of righteousness as there are believers in the world.

[3.] It includes a variation in the center of all religion, which is the natural and moral relation of men to God. There must be such a variation if all that was once necessary to that relation does not still continue.

[4.] It dishonors the mediation of Christ because it makes the principal end of it to be God's acceptance of a righteousness inexpressibly beneath what he required in the law of our creation. This in a sense makes Christ the minister of sin, or at least indicates that he has procured an indulgence to sin. This mediation would not be done by way of satisfaction and pardon, which takes away the guilt of it from the church. Instead it would be done by taking from sin its nature and demerit, so that it does not continue to deserve the punishment that was first threatened.

[5.] It reflects on the goodness of God himself. If he has reduced his law so far that it can be satisfied by an observation so weak, so imperfect, and accompanied with so many failures and sins, then what reason can be offered for giving it in the first place? Consistent with God's goodness, why would he give a law of perfect obedience at first, by which one sin placed all mankind under its penalty to their ruin?

22. All this and more follows the second supposition of an imaginary estimation of something as perfect which is imperfect, as sinless

which is attended with innumerable sins. But the judgment of God is according to truth. He will not reckon something to us as a perfect righteousness in his sight if it is so imperfect as to be like tattered rags, especially having promised to us robes of righteousness and garments of salvation.

What necessarily follows from these observations is this: there is no other way by which the original, immutable law of God may be established and fulfilled with respect to us, but by the imputation of the perfect obedience and righteousness of Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe.

## 12. The Imputation of the Obedience of Christ

From the foregoing general argument another issue arises with respect to the imputation of the active obedience or righteousness of Christ to us. "If it was necessary for the Lord Christ, as our surety, to undergo the penalty of the law for us in our stead because we have all sinned, then it was also necessary for him to yield obedience to the receptive part of the law for us. And if the imputation of the former is necessary for our justification before God, then the imputation of the latter is also necessary to the same end." Why was it necessary for the Lord Christ, as the surety of the covenant, to undergo the curse and penalty of the law, which we had incurred by sin, so that we may be justified in God's sight? Was it not that the glory and honor of his righteousness, as the author of the law and the supreme governor of all mankind, might not be violated by the absolute impunity of the infringers of the law?

And if it was necessary to the glory of God that the penalty of the law should be suffered by our surety in our stead because we had sinned, is it not just as necessary to the glory of God that the receptive part of the law be complied with for us? We are no more able to fulfill the law to be justified than to undergo its penalty. So no reason can be given why God would not be as concerned, in honor and glory, that the receptive part of the law be complied with by perfect obedience, as he is that the sanction of the law be established by undergoing its penalty. Therefore, on the same grounds that the Lord Christ's suffering for us was necessary to justify us in the sight of God, and impute his satisfaction to us, it was equally necessary for him to fulfill the receptive part of the law in his perfect obedience to it, which also is imputed to us for our justification.

### I. The First Objection

The first objection to the satisfaction of Christ and its imputation to us comes from the Socinians. I have elsewhere written so much in the vindication of the truth of it, that I will not repeat the same arguments here. I will only go so far as to say that the obedience of Christ to the law, and the imputation of that obedience to us, are no

less necessary to our justification before God than his suffering of the penalty of the law, and the imputation of that satisfaction to us.

I will use testimonies of the Scripture to prove later that the obedience of Christ the mediator is imputed to us. Here I only intend to vindicate the argument as laid down before, which will take up a little more time than ordinary. For there is nothing in the whole doctrine of justification which meets with a more fierce and various opposition. But the truth is great, and it will prevail. The things that are vehemently urged against the imputation of the obedience of Christ to our justification may be reduced to three points:

1. It is pleaded to be impossible on this single ground, “That the obedience of Christ to the law was due from him on his own account, and performed by him for himself, as a man made under the law.” Now, what was necessary to himself, and done for himself, cannot be said to be done for us, so as to be imputed to us.
2. It is pretended to be useless for that reason, because all “our sins of omission and commission being pardoned in our justification on the account of the death and satisfaction of Christ, we are thereby made completely righteous. So there is not the least need or use for the imputation of the obedience of Christ to us.”
3. They also say it is pernicious by taking away “the necessity of our own personal obedience, introducing antinomianism, libertinism, and all manner of evils.”

For this last part of the charge, I refer it to its proper place. If we granted that the obedience of Christ to the law is not imputed to us to our justification, then we would not be freed from this false accusation unless we renounced the whole satisfaction and merit of Christ as well. We do not intend to purchase our peace with the whole world at so dear a rate. Therefore, I will in its proper place give this part of the charge its due consideration, as it reflects on the whole doctrine of justification, and all the causes of which we believe and profess.

Socinus de Servat., part 3 cap. 5. supposes that if all Christ did by way of obedience was on his own account, and it was only the duty which he owed to God for himself in his station and circumstances as a man in this world, then it cannot be meritorious for us nor imputed to us. In like manner, to weaken the doctrine of Christ’s satisfaction

and its imputation to us, he contends that what Christ offered on the cross was as a priest for himself, part 2 cap. 22. Whatever was offered or sacrificed in the death of Christ, it was for himself. That is, it was an act of obedience to God, which pleased him, as the savor of a sweet-smelling sacrifice. His offering for us is only the presentation of himself in the presence of God in heaven. The truth is, if the obedience of Christ was only for himself, I see no foundation left to assert his merit upon believers, nor the imputation of his righteousness to them.

What we argue is that the Lord Christ fulfilled the whole law for us. He not only underwent the penalty of it due to our sins, but also yielded that perfect obedience which it required. I will not mix myself in the debate of the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ. He exercised the highest active obedience in his suffering when he offered himself to God through the eternal Spirit. And all his obedience, considering his person, was mixed with suffering as a part of his exinanition. For that reason it is said that “though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). It must be said that the sufferings of Christ, as they were purely penal, are imperfectly called his passive righteousness. For all righteousness is either in habit or in action, while suffering is neither. Nor is any man righteous or esteemed righteous from what he suffers. Neither does suffering give satisfaction to the commands of the law which require only obedience. It will unavoidably follow that we have need of more than the mere sufferings of Christ to be justified before God. But the whole of my intent is that Christ’s fulfilling of the law, in obedience to its commands, is no less imputed to us for our justification than his undergoing its penalty.

It must sound ill in the ears of all Christians, “That the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ, as our mediator and surety, was done for himself alone and not for us” especially considering that the faith of the church is that he was given to us and born to us. He came down from heaven for us and for our salvation, and did and suffered what was required of him. But because some who deny the imputation of the obedience of Christ to us for our justification insist that imputation has no usefulness, under this part of the discussion I will consider only the arguments of Socinus.

The substance of his plea is that our Lord Jesus Christ was obliged to all that obedience which he performed only for himself. He endeavors to prove it with this reason, "Because if it were otherwise, then he might have chosen to neglect the whole law of God, and have broken it at his pleasure." Socinus forgot to consider that if Christ were not obliged to it on his own account, but was obliged to it on ours, then his obligation to most perfect obedience would be the same as if he had been originally obliged on his own account. However, he infers that "what he did could not be for us, because it was only for himself. No more than what any man is bound to do for himself can be esteemed to have been done for another." He shows no consideration of the person of Christ which make what he did and suffered different than what can be done or suffered by any other man. All that he adds is, "whatever Christ did that was not required by the law in general, was upon the special command of God, and so it was done for himself. For that reason it cannot be imputed to us." Hereby he excludes the church from any benefit by the mediation of Christ other than his doctrine, example, and the exercise of his power in heaven for our good, which was the aim of Socinus' objection.

To clarify the truth, the following things must be observed,

1. The obedience we are speaking of was the obedience of Christ the mediator. But the obedience of Christ as "the mediator of the covenant" was the obedience of his person. For "God redeemed his church with his own blood," Acts 20:28. It was performed in his human nature, but it was the person of Christ that performed it. In the person of a man, the immediate operation of some of his acts were acts of the body, and some were acts of the soul. Yet, in their performance and accomplishment, they were the acts of the person. So the acts of Christ in his mediation, as to their *ejnergh>mata* "energemata" or immediate operation, were the acts of his distinct natures, some divine and some human. But as to his official acts, *ajpotele>smata* "apotelesmata," and the perfecting efficacy of them, they were the acts of his whole person. His acts were those of someone whose power of operation was a property of who he was. Therefore, the obedience of Christ, which we argue was for us, was the obedience of the Son of God. However, the Son of God was never made absolutely "hupo nomon," under the law, nor could he be

formally obliged by the law. As the apostle testifies, he was indeed made under the law in his human nature, and in which he performed this obedience: “What was made of a woman, was made under the law,” Gal. 4:4. He was made under the law only in so far as he was made of a woman. In his person he lived as “Lord of the Sabbath,” Mark 2:28; and therefore he was Lord of the whole law. But the obedience itself was the obedience of someone who was never made absolutely under the law in his whole person. That is because the divine nature cannot be subjected to an outward work of its own, such as the law; nor can the law have an authoritative, commanding power over the divine nature, as it must have if it were *uJpo< no>mon* “*hupo nomon*,” under the law.

Thus the apostle argues that “Levi paid tithes in Abraham” because he was then in his loins when Abraham himself paid tithes to Melchizedek, Heb. 7. Thereby he proves that Abraham was inferior to the Lord Christ, of whom Melchizedek was a type. But may it not be replied that the Lord Christ was no less in the loins of Abraham than Levi? “For truly,” as the same apostle speaks, “he took on him the seed of Abraham.” It is true that he was in the loins of Abraham in respect to his human nature. But as he was typed and represented by Melchizedek in his whole person, he was “without father, mother, genealogy, beginning of days, or end of life” (Heb. 7:3). So he was not absolutely in Abraham’s loins, and he was exempted from being tithed in him. Therefore, the obedience we speak of is not the abstract obedience of the human nature, even though performed in and by the human nature. Instead, it is the obedience of the person of the Son of God, in whatever way his human nature was subject to the law (which we will discuss shortly). It was not for himself, nor could it be for himself; because his whole person was not obliged to it. It is therefore an irrational thing to compare the obedience of Christ with that of any other man whose whole person is under the law. Christ’s obedience may not be for himself and others; indeed, it must be for others and not for himself. We must strictly hold to this. If the obedience that Christ yielded to the law was for himself, then it would have to be the act of his whole person, and the divine nature in that person would have to be “made under the law,” which cannot be. Even though it is acknowledged that in the ordination of God, Christ’s exinanition was to precede his glorious, majestic exaltation



(Phil. 2:8-9; Luke 24:26; Rom. 14:9), yet his glory was an immediate consequence of the hypostatical union between his two natures, Heb. 1:6; Matt. 2:11.

Socinus evades the force of this argument by denying the divine person of Christ. But in this dispute, I take that divine nature for granted, having proved it elsewhere beyond what any of his followers are able to contradict. If we may not build on truths that Socinus denies, then we will scarcely have any principle of evangelical truth left from which to prove anything.

2. Because our Lord Jesus Christ did not owe this obedience for himself, by virtue of any authority or power that the law had over him, he did not design and intend it for himself, but for us. This gives full evidence for the truth we assert when added to the consideration of his natures. If he was not obliged to obedience for himself because he was not absolutely under the law, and if he did not intend it for himself, then his obedience must be for us or it would be useless. It was in our human nature that he performed all this obedience. The acceptance of our nature was a voluntary act of his own, done with a purpose. And the purpose for assuming our nature was the purpose for all that he did in that nature. It was for us, and not for himself, that he assumed our nature. Nor was anything added to him by assuming our nature. Therefore, in the issue of his work, his only declared intent is that he may be “glorified with that glory which he had with the Father before the world began” (Jn. 17:5) by removing that vail which was put upon his glory in his exinanition. The foundation of Christian religion is that it was for us that he assumed our nature, as asserted by the apostle, Heb. 2:14; Phil. 2:5-8.

Some of the ancient schoolmen disputed whether the Son of God would have been incarnate if man had not sinned and fallen. But none of them once imagined that he would have been made so much a man as to be made under the law and obliged to the obedience he performed. Instead they judged that immediately he would have been a glorious head to the whole creation. It is a common presumption of all Christians that the obedience which Christ yielded to the law on the earth, in the state and condition in which he yielded it, was not for himself but for the church. The church was obliged to perfect obedience, but was not able to accomplish it. If I am not mistaken, it is a fundamental article of the creed of most Christians

in the world that this was Christ's sole purpose and design. To deny it consequently overthrows all the grace and love of both the Father and the Son in his mediation.

It is said by Socinus that, "this obedience was necessary as a qualification of his person, so that he might be fit to be a mediator for us; and therefore it was for himself." It does belong to the necessary constitution of his person with respect to his mediatory work; but I positively deny that it was therefore for himself. The Lord Christ was in every way fit for the whole work of mediation by the ineffable union of the human nature with the divine, which exalted that work in dignity, honor, and worth, above all things that ensued from it. Hereby, in his whole person, he became the object of all divine worship and honor. For "when he brings the First-begotten into the world, he says, 'let all the angels of God worship him'" (Heb. 1:6). Again, what he did as mediator did not make him fit to be so. But with his role as mediator came all the obedience which he yielded to the law, because as such "it became him to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15).

His obedience as a man to the law in general, and as a son of Abraham to the law of Moses in particular, was for us and not for himself. This is because he was not made a man or the posterity of Abraham for himself, but for the church. And thereby he became the surety of the covenant and representative of the whole. It was so designed, and so performed, that if it was without respect to the church, then it was of no use to himself. He was born to us, given to us, lived for us, died for us, obeyed for us, and suffered for us, so that "by the obedience of one many might be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). This was the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," and this is the faith of the catholic church. What he did for us is imputed to us. This is included in the very notion of his doing it for us. It does not make any sense unless what he did is imputed to us. I think men ought to be wary that they do not, by distinctions and evasions meant to defend their private opinions, shake the foundations of Christian religion. I am sure it will be easier for them to wrest the club out of the hand of Hercules, as it says in the proverb, than to dispossess the minds of true believers of this persuasion: "That what the Lord Christ did in obedience to God, according to the law, he designed in his love and grace to do for them." He needed no obedience for

himself. He did not come to yield obedience for himself. He did it for us. And therefore it was for us that he fulfilled the law in obedience to God according to the terms of the law. The obligation to obedience that was on him was no less necessary for us, and no more necessary for him, than the obligation that was on him originally as the surety of the covenant to suffer the penalty of the law.

3. If we set aside the consideration of the grace and love of Christ, the compact between the Father and the Son as to his undertaking for us, and the human nature of Christ by virtue of its union with the person of the Son of God, then Christ had a right to be immediately admitted into the highest glory without any prior obedience to the law. For that reason, it is apparent from the first instant of that union, that the whole person of Christ was the object of all divine worship from angels and men. And in that consists the highest exaltation of that nature.

It is true that there was a particular glory that he was to partake of with respect to his obedience and suffering, Phil. 2:8, 9. The actual possession of this glory was, in the ordination of God, to be a consequence of his obeying and suffering, not for himself, but for us. But the human nature itself was due all the glory it was capable of from the instant of its union. For in that union it was exalted above the condition that any creature is capable of by mere creation. It is a Socinian fiction that the first foundation of the divine glory of Christ was laid in his obedience. That was only the way by which he actually possessed that part of his glory resulting from his mediatory power and authority over all. The real foundation of the whole glory of Christ was laid in the union of his person. That is the reason he prays that the Father would glorify him (manifest him) with that glory which he had with him before the world began.

I will grant that the Lord Christ was “viator” [bailiff or steward] while he was in this world, and not absolutely “possessor.” Yet I say that any such condition was unnecessary to him for himself. He took it upon himself as a special dispensation for us. And thus the obedience he performed in that condition was for us, and not for himself.

4. It is granted, therefore, that the human nature of Christ was made “hupo nomon,” as the apostle affirms, “What was made of a woman, was made under the law” (Gal. 4:4). Hereby obedience became

necessary to him while he was “viator.” But this was by special dispensation and condescension, as intimated in the expression that he was “made under the law” as he was “made of a woman,” and as expressed in Phil. 2:6-8. The obedience he yielded was for us, and not for himself. This is evident from the fact that under the law, not only did he owe obedience to its precepts, but he was made liable to its curse. We owed obedience to the law, and we were liable to its curse, or  $\text{uJpo} > \text{dikoi tw} \sim | \text{Qew} \sim$  “hupodikoi tooi Theooi” [guilty before God]. Obedience was required of us and it was necessary if we would enter into life, just as answering the curse for us was necessary if we would escape eternal death. Christ, as our surety, is “made under the law” for us, by which he becomes liable and obliged to the obedience which the law requires, and the penalty that it threatens. Who will now dare to say that he underwent the penalty of the law for us, but he yielded obedience to it only for himself? The whole harmony of the work of his mediation would be disordered by such a supposition.

Judah, the son of Jacob, undertook to be a bondsman on behalf of Benjamin his brother, so that Benjamin might go free, Gen. 44:33. There is no doubt that Joseph might have accepted the stipulation. Had he done so, the service and bondage Judah undertook would have become necessary and righteous for him to bear. Even so, he underwent and performed his duty in it, not for himself, but for his brother Benjamin. To Benjamin it would have been imputed in his liberty. So when the apostle Paul wrote these words to Philemon concerning Onesimus, v. 18, “If he has wronged you, dealt unrighteously or injuriously with you, ‘or owes you something,’ in which you have suffered loss by him, ‘put that on my account,’ or impute it all to me, ‘I will repay it,’ or answer for it all.” He supposes that Philemon might have a double action against Onesimus, the one “injuriarum,” of wrong and injury, and the other “damni” or “debiti,” of loss or debt, which are distinct actions in the law: “If he has wronged you, or owes you something...” He obliges himself by his express obligation: “I Paul have written it with mine own hand,” that he would answer for both, and pay back a valuable consideration if required. Hereby he was obliged in his own person to make satisfaction to Philemon. Yet he was to do it for Onesimus, and not for himself. Whatever obedience was due from the Lord Christ as to

his human nature, while in the form of a servant, either as a man or as an Israelite, he was not bound by the necessity of nature for himself, but by voluntary condescension and stipulation for us. Therefore, it was for us, and not for himself.

5. The Lord Christ, in his obedience, was not a private but a public person. He obeyed as the surety of the covenant, as the mediator between God and man. I suppose this will not be denied. He cannot be considered out of that capacity. What a public person does as a public person, that is, as a representative of others and as an undertaker for them, he does for them. It does not matter what his own concern may be in doing it. If what he did was not for them, then it would be of no use or significance to them. It implies a contradiction that anyone would do anything as a public person, and do it only for himself. Someone who is a public person may do something in which he alone is concerned, but he cannot do so in a public capacity. Socinus would have Christ make an offering for himself, which is to make him a mediator for himself because his offering is a mediatory act. That is both foolish and impious. To affirm that his mediatory obedience as a public person was for himself and not for others, has little less impiety in it.

6. It is granted that the Lord Christ, having a human nature, was a creature. As such, it was impossible not to be subject to the law of creation, because there is a relation that necessarily arises between a creator and a creature. Every rational creature is eternally obliged, from the nature of God and its relation to him, to love him, obey him, depend upon him, submit to him, and make him its end, blessedness, and reward. The law of creation is not only about the world and this life, but the future state of heaven and eternity also. The human nature of Christ is subject to this law in heaven and glory, and must be so while it is a creature and not God, that is, while it has its own being. No one contemplates transfusing divine properties into the human nature of Christ to make it self-subsisting and unlimited, because that would openly destroy it. Yet none will say that he is now *uJpo< no>mon* “hupo nomon,” under the law, in the sense meant by the apostle. But, in that sense, the human nature of Christ was subject to the law on its own account while he was in this world. And this is sufficient to answer the objection of Socinus, that if the Lord

Christ were not obliged to obedience for himself, then he might neglect the whole law or infringe it if he chose. It is a foolish conjecture concerning that “holy thing” which was hypostatically united to the Son of God, and thereby rendered incapable of any deviation from the divine will. The eternal, indispensable law of love, adherence, and dependence on God, under which the human nature of Christ was and is a creature, gives sufficient security against such conjectures.

There is another consideration of the law of God. It is imposed on creatures by special dispensation for a fixed time and a certain end, with some considerations, rules, and orders that are not essential to the law as previously described. This is the nature of the written law of God, which the Lord Christ was made under, not necessarily as a creature, but by special dispensation. The law under this consideration is presented to us not as absolute and eternal, but only while we are in this world. And it has this special end, that by obedience to it we may obtain the reward of eternal life. It is evident that the obligation of the law, under this consideration, ceases when we come to the enjoyment of that reward. It no longer formally obliges us by its command to “do this, and live” when the life promised is being enjoyed. In this sense, the Lord Christ was not made subject to the law for himself, nor did he yield obedience to it for himself, because he was not obliged to it by virtue of his created condition. At the first instant of the union of his natures, being “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” (Heb. 7:26), he might have been placed in glory except for the law that he was made subject to. Being the object of all divine worship, he did not need any new obedience to procure a state of blessedness for himself. And merely by virtue of his being a creature, had he naturally been subject to the law in this sense, he must have been subject to it eternally, which he is not. Those things which depend solely on the natures of God and the creature are eternal and immutable. Therefore, as the law in this sense was not given to us absolutely, but only with respect to a future state and reward, so the Lord Christ voluntarily subjected himself to it for us. His obedience to it was for us, and not for himself. These things, added to what I have formerly written on this subject, are sufficient to discharge the first part of that objection concerning the impossibility of imputing the

obedience of Christ to us. That, indeed, is equal to claiming the impossibility of imputing the disobedience of Adam to us, by which the apostle tells us that “we were all made sinners.”

## **II. The Second Objection**

The second part of the objection or charge against the imputation of the obedience of Christ to us is, “That it is useless to the persons who are to be justified. Because the pardon of all their sins is included in their justification, they are thereby righteous and have a right or title to life and blessedness. Someone who is pardoned and who is esteemed not guilty of any sin of omission or commission, needs nothing that is included in that pardon. He is supposed to have done everything that he should, and to have omitted nothing that is required of him in a way of duty. Hereby he becomes not unrighteous, which is the same as being righteous, just as he that is not dead is alive. Nor can there be any middle state between death and life. Therefore, those who have all their sins forgiven have the blessedness of justification. There is no need or use for any further imputation of righteousness to them.”

**Answer:** This cause is of more importance, and is more evidently stated in the Scriptures, than to be turned into such niceties, which have more philosophical subtlety than theological solidity in them. The subject of the objection is used by a number of learned persons who still agree with us in the substance of the doctrine of justification, namely, that it is by faith alone, without works, through the imputation of the merit and satisfaction of Christ. So I will uncover the mistakes that it proceeds upon as briefly as I can.

1. It includes a supposition that someone who is pardoned of his sins of omission and commission is esteemed to have done all that is required of him, and to have committed nothing that is forbidden. But it is far otherwise. The bare pardon of sin will neither make, declare, nor constitute any man righteous. Neither God nor man judges that someone who has sinned has not sinned. That is what must be done if someone who is pardoned is esteemed to have done all that he should, and to have done nothing that he should not do. If a man is brought to trial for any evil act, legally convicted, and then discharged by sovereign pardon, it is true that in the eye of the law he is freed from the punishment that was due to him. But no one thinks

that he is made righteous by that pardon, or that he is esteemed not to have done what he really did and was convicted of. Joab and Abiathar the priest were guilty of the same crime at the same time. Solomon gives an order that Joab be put to death for his crime. But to Abiathar he gives a pardon. Did he thereby make, declare, or constitute him righteous? He expresses the contrary, affirming him to be unrighteous and guilty; he only remitted the punishment of his fault, 1 Kings 2:26.

Therefore, the pardon of sin discharges the guilty person from being liable or obnoxious to anger, wrath, or punishment due to his sin. But it does not assume or imply in the least, that he is thereby esteemed or adjudged to have done no evil, or to have fulfilled all righteousness. Some say pardon gives a righteousness of innocence, but not of obedience. But it cannot give a righteousness of absolute innocence, such as Adam had, for he had actually done no evil. It only removes guilt, which is the relation of sin to punishment that ensues from the sanction of the law. And this supposition, which is an evident mistake, animates this whole objection.

The same may be said of the supposition that not being unrighteous, which is what a man is when pardoned of sin, is the same as being righteous. It supposes that one who is not unrighteous has done all the duty that is required of someone who is righteous. But it is not true. At best, it only supposes that a man has done nothing yet that is actually against the rule of righteousness. This may be the case when he has not yet performed any of the duties that are required to constitute him righteous. So it was with Adam in the state of innocence, which is the height of what can be attained by the complete pardon of sin.

2. It also proceeds on the assumption that the law, in the case of sin, does not mandate both punishment and obedience. This, in my judgment, is an evident mistake. The law is not satisfied, fulfilled, or complied with, unless it is answered with respect to both. If this were not so, then the pardon of sin, which only frees us from the penalty of the law, still leaves it necessary that obedience be performed in all that is required. That which does not “establish the law, makes it void,” And this I will demonstrate:



(1.) The law has two parts or powers. First, its receptive part, commanding and requiring obedience with a promise of life annexed: "Do this, and live." Secondly, the sanction for disobedience binding the sinner to punishment or a fitting reward: "On the day you sin you shall die." Every proper law proceeds on these suppositions of obedience or disobedience. For that reason, its commanding and punishing power are inseparable from its nature.

(2.) This law of which we speak was first given to man in innocence, and therefore its first power was only in acting. It only obliged obedience because an innocent person could not be liable to its sanction, which only obliged punishment for disobedience. It could not, therefore, oblige our first parents to both obedience and punishment. That is because its obligation to punishment could not be in actual force without actual disobedience, and they were innocent. The law was a moral reason and motive for obedience, and it had an influence in preserving man from sin. To that end it was said to him, "On the day you eat, you shall surely die." The neglect of that law, and of that ruling influence which it ought to have had on the minds of our first parents, opened the door to the entrance of sin. But it implies a contradiction, that an innocent person should be under an actual obligation to punishment from the sanction of the law. It bound them only to obedience, as all laws with penalties do before their transgression. But,

(3.) On committing sin, as it is with everyone who is guilty of sin, man came under an actual obligation to punishment. This is no question that at first he was under an obligation to obedience. But then the question is, whether the first obligation of the law to obedience ceases to affect the sinner, or does it continue to oblige him to obedience and punishment, both its powers now being active towards him? And to this I say,

[1.] Had the punishment threatened been immediately inflicted to the utmost of what it contained, there would have been no question. Man would have died immediately, both temporally and eternally, and been cast out of that state in which he could stand in any relation to the receptive power of the law. Someone who is finally executed has fulfilled the law so that he owes no more obedience to it. But,

[2.] God, in his wisdom and patience, has disposed of things otherwise. Man is still continued as a “viator” [traveler] on the path to his end. He is not fully stated in his eternal and unchangeable condition in which neither promise nor threat, reward nor punishment, could be proposed to him. In this condition he falls under a twofold consideration: First, he is considered a guilty person who is obliged to the full punishment that the law threatens. This is not denied. Second, he is considered a man, a rational creature of God, who has not yet been brought to his eternal end.

[3.] In this transient state, the law is the only instrument and means of continuing the relation between God and him. Therefore, under this consideration, it must still oblige him to obedience, unless we say that by his sin he has exempted himself from the government of God. Therefore, it is by the law that the rule and government of God over men is continued while they are in “statu viatorum” [a state of travelling]. Every disobedience, every transgression of its rule and order as to the law’s commanding power, casts us further under its power of obliging us to punishment.

These things cannot be otherwise. Every man living, even the worst of men, must consider himself obliged to give obedience to the law of God, according to the notices that he has of it by the light of nature or otherwise. A wicked servant that is punished for his fault, if he continues his state of servitude, is not freed from an obligation to duty by his punishment. Indeed, his obligation to duty with respect to that crime for which he was punished, is not dissolved until his punishment is capital, thus putting an end to his state of servitude. Therefore, seeing that the pardon of sin only frees us from the obligation to punishment, our justification still requires an obedience to what the law requires.

This greatly strengthens our argument. Being sinners, we were liable both to the command and the curse of the law. Both must be answered, or we cannot be justified. And as the Lord Christ could not by his most perfect obedience satisfy the curse of the law, “Dying you shall die,” so by his utmost suffering he could not fulfill the command of the law, “Do this, and live.” Passion, as passion, is not obedience, even though there may be obedience in

suffering, as there was in Christ's suffering. Therefore, we plead that the death of Christ is imputed to us for our justification, but we deny that it is imputed to us for our righteousness. By imputing the sufferings of Christ, our sins are pardoned and we are delivered from the curse of the law which he underwent in our stead. But we are not for that reason esteemed just or righteous. We cannot be without fulfilling the commands of the law, or the obedience that it requires.

3. The objection also assumes that pardon of sin gives title to eternal blessedness in the enjoyment of God. It does not. Justification does. According to the authors of this objection, no other righteousness is required for justification than the pardon of sin. That is not true. It is justification that gives right and title to adoption, acceptance with God, and the heavenly inheritance, as was proved already. However, pardon of sin depends solely on the death or suffering of Christ: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. 1:7. But suffering for punishment gives right and title to nothing. It only satisfies something. Nor does it deserve any reward. It nowhere says, "Suffer this, and live." Instead, it says "Do this, and live."

These things, I confess, are inseparably connected in the ordinance, appointment, and covenant of God. Whoever has his sins pardoned is accepted with God, and has a right to eternal blessedness. These things are inseparable; but they are not one and the same. And by reason of their inseparable relation, they are put together by the apostle, Rom. 4:6-8, "Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works: Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." It is the imputation of *righteousness* that gives the right to blessedness. But pardon of sin is inseparable from it; it is an effect of it. Both are opposed to justification by works, or an internal righteousness of our own. It is one thing to be freed from being liable to eternal death, and another to have right and title to a blessed and eternal life. It is one thing to be redeemed from under the curse of the law, and another to receive the adoption of sons. It is one thing to be freed from the curse, and another to have the blessing of Abraham come upon us. The apostle distinguishes these things in Gal. 3:13, 14; 4:4, 5; and so

does our Lord Jesus Christ in Acts 26:18, “That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance” (a lot and right to the inheritance) “among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

Forgiveness of sins, “afesis hamartioon,” [NT:859 266] (Acts 13:38) which we have by faith in Christ, is only a dismissal of sin from being used to condemn us. On this account “there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). But it does not give a right and title to glory, or the heavenly inheritance. Can it be supposed that all the great and glorious effects of present grace and future blessedness should be the effect of the mere pardon of sin? Does our pardon mean we must thereby necessarily be made sons, heirs of God, and coheirs with Christ?

With respect to the sinner, pardon of sin is a free and gratuitous act of God: “Forgiveness of sin through the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). But with respect to the satisfaction of Christ, it is an act of judgment. On considering Christ’s satisfaction as imputed to him, God absolves and acquits the sinner at his trial. But pardon at a juridical trial, on whatever consideration it is granted, gives no right or title to any favor, benefit, or privilege. It is a mere deliverance. It is one thing to be acquitted of crimes before the throne of a king by reason of clemency. It is quite another to be made his son by adoption, and heir to his kingdom.

These things are represented to us in the Scripture as distinct, and dependent on distinct causes. In the vision concerning Joshua the high priest, Zech. 3:4, 5, “And he answered and spoke to those who stood before him saying, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him.’ And to him he said, ‘Behold, I have caused your iniquity to pass from you, and I will clothe you with change of raiment.’ And I said, ‘Let them set a clean cloth upon his head.’ So they set a clean cloth upon his head, and clothed him with garments.” It has been generally granted that we have here a representation of the justification of a sinner before God. Taking away the filthy garments is expounded by the passing away of iniquity. When a man’s filthy garments are taken away, he is no longer defiled with them; but he is not thereby clothed. It is an additional grace and favor to be clothed with a change of garments. What this raiment includes is declared in Isa. 61:10, “He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness;” which the apostle

alludes to in Phil. 3:9. Therefore these things are distinct: taking away the filthy garments (the pardon of sin), and clothing us with a change of raiment (the robe of righteousness). By the one we are freed from condemnation; by the other we have a right to salvation. The same is represented in Ezek. 16:6-12.

There is no force in comparing these things to natural life and death, which are immediately opposed: "So that he who is not dead is alive, and he who is alive is not dead." There is no distinct state between that of life and death because these things are of different natures; so the comparison between them has no argumentative value. Though this may be so in life and death, it is different in things that are moral and political. This is where a proper representation of justification may be taken as forensic. If there were no difference between being acquitted of a crime at the bar of a judge, and a right to a kingdom, then it would prove that there is no intermediate state between being pardoned and having a right to the heavenly inheritance. But this is a fond imagination.

It is true that right to eternal life does bring freedom from the guilt of eternal death: "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among those who are sanctified." It does so not because of the nature of punishment and reward, but only because of the free constitution of God. Believers have the pardon of sin and an immediate right and title to the favor of God, adoption as sons, and eternal life. But there is another possibility in the nature of punishment and reward, and God might have made it so had it seemed good to him. There could also have been a "status" or "conditio personae" in which a person has neither the guilt of condemnation, nor an immediate right and title to inherit glory. God might have pardoned men of all their past sins and, in order to live, made them seek future righteousness by the works of the law. This would address the original state of Adam. But God has not done so. Nonetheless, because it is a possibility, it is evident that this right to life and salvation does not depend on the pardon of sin. It has another cause. And that cause is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us, because he fulfilled the law for us.

In truth, such a possibility is the opinion of most of our adversaries. They contend that over and above the remission of sin, which some of them say is absolute, and without any consideration of the merit

or satisfaction of Christ, there is a righteousness of works required for our justification. Only they say it is our own incomplete, imperfect righteousness that is imputed to us as if it were perfect. That is, it is imputed to us for what it is not; and the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to us for what it is.

From what has been said, it is evident that our justification before God requires not only that we be freed from the damnatory sentence of the law, which we are by the pardon of sin, but moreover, “that the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us.” We must have a righteousness that answers the obedience that the law requires, and on which our acceptance with God and our title to the heavenly inheritance depend. We do not have this in and of ourselves, nor can we attain to it, as has been proved. Therefore, either the perfect obedience and righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, or we can never be justified in the sight of God.

The cavils of the Socinians are no help in determining the truth. They tell us that, “If the righteousness of Christ can be imputed to any, it can only be imputed to one. Who can imagine that the same righteousness of one could become the righteousness of many, even of all who believe? Besides, he did not perform all the duties that are required of us in all our relations, because he was never placed in them.” These things are both foolish and impious, destructive to the whole gospel. All these things depend on the ordination of God. It is his ordinance that as “through the offense of one many are dead,” so “disgrace, and the gift of grace, through one man, Christ Jesus, has abounded to many;” and “as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all to the righteousness of life;” and “by the obedience of one many are made righteous;” as the apostle argues in Rom. 5. For “God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,” chap. 8:3, 4. He was “the end of the law” (the whole end of it), “for righteousness to those who believe,” chap. 10:4.

It is through the wisdom, righteousness, and grace of God, that the whole righteousness and obedience of Christ should be accepted as our complete righteousness before him. It is imputed to us by his grace, and applied to us or made ours through believing. If the actual sin of Adam is imputed to all of us who derive our nature from him,

to our condemnation, even though he did not sin in all our circumstances and relations, is it strange that the actual obedience of Christ should be imputed to all those who derive a spiritual nature from him, to their justification? Besides, both the satisfaction and the obedience of Christ were in some sense infinite. That is, they were of infinite value; and so they cannot be considered in parts as though one part of it were imputed to one thing, and another part to something else. The whole is imputed to everyone who believes. If the Israelites could say that David was “worth ten thousand of them,” 2 Sam. 18:3, then we may well allow the Lord Christ, and what he did and suffered, to be more than all of us, and all that we can do and suffer.

There are a number of other mistakes affecting that part of the objection we are considering. For example, his righteousness. The apostle uses two words in Rom. 5:18, 19 as [ijsodunamou~nta](#) “isodunamounta” – having the same meaning. They are [dikai>wma](#) “dikaiooma” and [uJpakoh>](#) “hupako-e,” which are “righteousness” and “obedience.” That being true, there are mistakes such as these:

- that remission of sin and justification are the same;
- that justification consists only in the remission of sin;
- that faith itself is imputed to us for righteousness as our act and duty because it is the condition of the covenant;
- that we have a personal, inherent righteousness of our own that, one way or another, is our righteousness before God for justification;
- that our personal righteousness is either a condition of our justification, or a disposition of our justification;
- that it has some effect in deserving the grace of justification,
- that it is a downright merit of our justification;

All of these are various expressions of the same thing. But they have all been considered and removed in our preceding discourses.

To close our vindication of this argument, and to obviate an objection, I acknowledge that our blessedness and eternal life is often ascribed in the Scripture to the death of Christ. But,

1. It is so [kat j ejxoch>n](#) “kat’ exochen” – as the principal cause of the whole, something without which no imputation of obedience could

have justified us. Undergoing the penalty of the law was indispensable.

2. It is so *kata*< *sugge*>*neian* “kata sungeneian” – not exclusive of all obedience. And so his death is also ascribed to his resurrection *kat j e[ndeixin* “kat’ endeixin,” with respect to evidence and manifestation. But the death of Christ, excluding his obedience, is nowhere asserted as the cause of eternal life, comprising that exceeding weight of glory which accompanies it.

So far we have treated and vindicated the imputation of the active obedience of Christ to us. The truth of it was deduced from the preceding argument about the obligation of the law of creation. I will now briefly confirm it with other reasons and testimonies:

1. What Christ did in obedience to God, in the discharge and performance of his office as the mediator and surety of the covenant, he did for us; and that is imputed to us. This has been proved already, and it has too great an evidence of truth to be denied. He was “born to us, given to us,” Isa. 9:6; for “what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,” Rom. 8:3, 4. Whatever is spoken of the grace, love, and purpose of God in sending or giving his Son, or of the love, grace, and condescension of the Son in coming and undertaking the work of redemption designed for him, or of assuming the office of a mediator or surety, gives testimony to this assertion. Indeed, it is the fundamental principle of the gospel, and of the faith of all who truly believe. At present we do not consider those who deny the divine person and satisfaction of Christ, and thereby evert the whole work of his mediation. Therefore, let us review what he did.

(1.) The Lord Christ, our mediator and surety, was made “hupo nomon,” under the law, in his human nature Gal. 4:4, 5. We proved before that he was not made so for himself, by the necessity of his condition. Therefore it was for us. But as made under the law, he yielded obedience to it. And therefore this was for us; and it is imputed to us. The exception of the Socinians, that it is only the judicial law that is meant, is too frivolous to entertain. He was made under that law whose curse we are delivered from. If we are



delivered only from the curse of the law of Moses, which the Socinians contend had neither eternal promises nor threats beyond this present life, then we are still in our sins. We would still be under the curse of the moral law, notwithstanding any acts that Christ has done for us. A more sober exception is raised that he was made under the law only as to its curse. But it is plain in the text that Christ was made under the law as we are under the law. He was “made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law.”

If he was not made under the law as we are under the law, then there is no consequence from his being made under it to redeem us from it. We were made not only liable to the curse under the law, but we were obliged to all the obedience that it required, as has been proved. If the Lord Christ has redeemed us only from the curse of it, and we are left to answer its obligation to obedience for ourselves, then we are not freed or delivered. The expression “under the law” properly means being under its obligation to obedience, and only consequentially under its curse. In Gal. 4:21, it says “Tell me, you that desire to be *uJpo< no>mon* ‘hupo nomon,’” under the law. They did not desire to be under the curse of the law, but only its obligation to obedience. In common usage, this is the first and proper sense of that expression. Therefore, the Lord Christ, being made under the law for us, yielded perfect obedience for us, which is imputed to us. What he did was done for us, and it depends solely on imputation.

(2.) As he was made under the law, he actually fulfilled it by his obedience to it. So he testifies concerning himself, “Do not think not that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill,” Matt. 5:17. The Jews continually object to Christians based on these words of our Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded by the evangelist. They believe it contradicts what they pretend to be done by him, which is that he has destroyed and taken away the law. Maimonides, in his treatise *De Fundamentis Legis*, has many blasphemous reflections on the Lord Christ as a false prophet in this matter of the law. But the reconciliation is plain and easy. There was a twofold law given to the church, the moral and the ceremonial law. The first, as we have proved, has an eternal obligation; the other was only given for a time. The

ceremonial law was to be taken away and abolished. In his Epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle proves this against the obstinate Jews with invincible testimonies out of the Old Testament.

Yet it was not to be taken away without being accomplished. Therefore, our Lord Christ did not dissolve or destroy that law in any way other than by accomplishing it. And that is how he did put an end to it, as is fully declared in Eph. 2:14-16. But the law [kat j ejxoch>n](#) “kat’ exochen,” which obliges all men to obedience to God always, he did not come [katalu>sai](#) “katalusai,” [NT:2647] to destroy, or [ajqeth~sai](#) “athetesai,” [NT:115] to abolish, as this word is applied to the Mosaical law in Heb. 9:26. It is used in the same destructive sense in Matt. 24:2; 26:61; 27:40; Mark 13:2; 14:58; 15:29; Luke 21:6; Acts 5:38, 39; 6:14; Rom. 14:20; 2 Cor. 5:1; Gal. 2:18, mostly with an accusative case of the things spoken of. Nor was it [katargh~sai](#) “katare-esai,” [NT:2673 – katargou’men], which the apostle denies was done by faith in Christ. “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; no, we establish the law,” Rom. 3:31. [No>mon iJsta>nai](#) “Nomon histanai” [NT:3551 2476] (establish) is to confirm its obligation to obedience. This confirmation is done by faith only with respect to the moral law. The other ceremonial law is evacuated as to any power of obliging us to obedience.

This, therefore, is the law that our Lord Christ affirms he did not come “to destroy,” He expressly declares so in his ensuing discourse, showing both its power to always oblige us to obedience, and giving an exposition of it. This is the law that the Lord Christ came [plhrw~sai](#) “pleroosai.” In the Scripture, [Plhrw~sai to<n no>mon](#) “pleroosai ton nomon” is the same as [ejmplh~sai to<n no>mon](#) “emplesai ton nomon” in other writers. It means to yield full, perfect obedience to the commands of the law, by which they are absolutely fulfilled. [Plhrw~sai no>mon](#) “Pleroosai nomon” is not to make the law perfect; for it was always [no>mov te>leiov](#) “nomos teleios,” a “perfect law,” James 1:25. It means to yield perfect obedience to it. This is what our Savior calls [plhrw~sai pa~san dikaiosunh](#) “pleroosai pasan dikaiosunen,” Matt. 3:15, “to fulfill all righteousness,” by obedience to all God’s commands and institutions as is evident in the passage. The apostle uses the same

expression in Rom. 13:8, “He that loves another has fulfilled the law.”

2. It is a vain exception that Christ only fulfilled the law by his exposition of its doctrine. The opposition between the words [plhrw~sai](#) “pleroosai” and [katalu>sai](#) “katalusai,” to fulfill and to destroy, does not allow any such interpretation. In Matt. 5:19, our Savior himself explains that this “fulfilling of the law” comes by doing its commands. Therefore, what the Lord Christ did as our mediator and surety in fulfilling the law, he did by yielding perfect obedience to it. He did it for us; and it is imputed to us.

This is plainly affirmed by the apostle in Rom. 5:18, 19. “Therefore, as by the offense 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 shall many be made righteous.” The apostle expressly affirms that “by the obedience of Christ we are made righteous,” or justified, which we cannot attain except by its imputation to us. I have met with nothing to elude this express testimony, except that Christ’s death and sufferings are intended to be his obedience to God. As the apostle says, he was “obedient to death, even the death of the cross,” Phil. 2:8.

(1.) It is acknowledged that there is such a tie between the obedience of Christ and his sufferings, that though they may be distinguished, they cannot be separated. He suffered in the whole course of his obedience, from the womb to the cross, and he obeyed in all his sufferings to the last moment in which he expired. Yet they really are distinct things, as we have proved. And they were distinct in him who “learned obedience by the things that he suffered,” Heb. 5:8.

(2.) In this passage, [uJpakoh>](#) “hupako-e,” (Rom. 5:19), and [dikai>wma](#) “dikaiooma,” verse 18, are the same: obedience and righteousness. “By the righteousness of one,” and “by the obedience of one,” are the same. But suffering, as suffering, is not [dikai>wma](#) “dikaiooma.” It is not righteousness. If it were, then everyone who suffers what is due to him would be righteous, and so be justified, even the devil himself.

(3.) The righteousness and obedience used here are opposed to the offense, [tw~| paraptw>mati](#) “tooi paraptoomati,” “By the offense of one.” But the offense meant was an actual transgression of the law; [para>stwma](#) “paraptooma,” is to fall away from the course of obedience. Therefore the [dikai>wma](#) “dikaiooma,” or righteousness, must be an actual obedience to the commands of the law, or the force of the apostle’s reasoning and antithesis cannot be understood.

(4.) Particularly, it is an obedience that is opposed to the disobedience of Adam: “one man’s disobedience” versus “one man’s obedience.” But the disobedience of Adam was an actual transgression of the law. And therefore the obedience of Christ meant here was his active obedience to the law, which is what we argue.

## 13. The Difference in the Covenants

What we plead in the third place as to the nature of justification, is the difference between the two covenants.

1. I understand the two covenants to mean those which were absolutely given to the whole church to bring it “*εις τελειότητα*” “*eis teleiōtēta*,” to a complete and perfect state. These are the *Covenant Of Works*, or the law of our creation, as it was given to us with its promises and threats, rewards and punishments; and the *Covenant Of Grace*, as revealed and proposed in the first promise (Gen. 3:15). The differences between the covenant of Sinai and the new testament do not belong to our present argument.

2. The entire nature of the covenant of works consisted in this: that upon our personal obedience, according to the law and its rule, we would be accepted with God and rewarded with him. This is the essence of it. Whatever covenant proceeds on these terms, or has their nature in it, despite varied additions or alterations, it is still the same covenant. God often made renovations and additions to the promise containing the essence of the covenant of grace (as he did with Abraham and David), yet it was still the same covenant in its substance, and not another. Whatever variations or additions may be made to the dispensation of the first covenant, so long as this rule is retained, “Do this, and live,” it is still the same covenant in its substance and essence.

3. For that reason, two things belonged to this covenant. First, all things were transacted immediately between God and man. There was no mediator and no one to undertake anything between them, either on the part of God or man. The whole depended on everyone’s personal obedience. There was no place for a mediator. Secondly, nothing but perfect, sinless obedience would be accepted with God, or preserve the covenant in its primitive state and condition. There was nothing in it as to pardon of sin, and no provision for any defect in personal obedience.

4. Therefore, once established between God and man, this covenant could not be replaced with a new covenant unless its essential nature changed. Our own personal obedience could not continue to be the rule and cause of our acceptance and justification before God, or the

covenant would still be the same. It would not matter how its dispensation might be reformed or reduced to suit to our present state and condition. Whatever grace might be introduced into the existing covenant, it could not exclude all works from being the cause of our justification. But if a *new* covenant was made, then such grace must be absolutely inconsistent with any works of our own, because they were the ends of the original covenant. The apostle declares this in Rom. 11:6, "If it by grace, then it is no longer of works. If it were, then grace is no more."

5. Therefore, assuming the covenant of grace is a new, real, absolute covenant, and not a reformation of the old one, then it must differ in its essence, substance, and nature from that first covenant of works. This cannot be if we are justified before God based on our personal obedience. That was the essence of the first covenant. If the righteousness by which we are justified before God is our own personal righteousness, then we are still under the first covenant, and no other.

6. But things in the new covenant are indeed quite another thing. First, it is of grace, which wholly excludes works. That is, our own works are not the means of justification before God. Secondly, It has a mediator and surety. This is because we cannot do ourselves what was originally required of us. What the law of the first covenant cannot enable us to perform, is performed for us by our mediator and surety. This is the very first idea of a mediator and surety. He voluntarily interposes himself, openly acknowledging that those for whom he undertakes responsibility are utterly insufficient to perform what is required of them. This is the supposition on which all the truth of the Scripture depends. It is one of the very first notions of Christian religion. The Lord Christ was given to us, born to us, to be a mediator, and to do for us what we could not do for ourselves, and not merely to suffer what we had deserved. Here, instead of our own righteousness, we have the "righteousness of God." Instead of being righteous in ourselves before God, he is "The LORD our Righteousness." Only a righteousness of another kind and nature could constitute another covenant. Therefore, the righteousness by which we are justified is the righteousness of Christ imputed to us. If not, we are still under the law, and under the *Covenant Of Works*.

It may be said that no one is asserting that our personal obedience is the righteousness by which we are justified before God in the same way that it was under the covenant of works. The argument is not about the way or manner in which it is applied, but about personal righteousness itself. Yet, if it is applied toward our justification in any way or manner, under whatever qualifications, then we are still under that covenant of works. If it is of works in any way, then it is not of grace at all. The following arguments are made by some to advocate personal obedience while keeping the two covenants effectively distinct:

1. "Perfect, sinless obedience was required in the first covenant. But in the new, what is imperfect and accompanied with many sins and failings is accepted." Answer: This is "gratis dictum," and begs the question. Only perfect righteousness is or can be accepted to obtain justification before God.
2. "Grace is the original cause of all our acceptance before God in the new covenant." Answer: This was also true in the old covenant. The creation of man in original righteousness was an effect of divine grace, benignity, and goodness; and the reward of eternal life in the enjoyment of God was mere sovereign grace. What was of works was not of grace then, any more than it is now.
3. "There would have been merit of works then, which is now excluded." Answer: Any merit arising from an equal proportion between works and reward, by the rule of commutative justice, would not have been in the works of the first covenant. In no other sense is it now rejected by those who oppose the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.
4. "All is now resolved into the merit of Christ, and on which account our own personal righteousness is accepted before God to our justification." Answer: The question is not on what account, nor for what reason, it is so accepted. It is whether it is or is not acceptable at all. Being acceptable effectually constitutes a covenant of works.

## 14. The Exclusion of Works from Justification

We will take our fourth argument from the express exclusion of all works, of whatever sort, from our justification before God. We argue that no acts or works of our own are the causes or conditions of our justification. Instead, the whole of our justification is resolved into the free grace of God, through Jesus Christ, as the mediator and surety of the covenant. The Scripture expressly affirms this. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law,” Rom. 3:28. “But to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,” Rom. 4:5. “If it be of grace, then is it no more of works,” Rom. 11:6. “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified,” Gal. 2:16. “For by grace are you saved through faith ... not of works, lest any man should boast,” Eph. 2:8, 9. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,” Tit. 3:5.

These and similar testimonies are explicit. In positive terms they assert all that we contend for. I am persuaded that no unbiased person can help but conclude that all works whatever, at any time or by any means, whether performed by sinners or believers, are in every way and sense excluded from our justification before God. If that is so, then it is the righteousness of Christ alone that we must turn to, or this matter must cease forever. The apostle himself makes this inference from one of the testimonies mentioned before, Gal. 2:19-21. He adds, “Through the law I am dead to the law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

Our adversaries are extremely divided among themselves. They can come to no consistency as to the sense and meaning of the apostle in



these assertions. They will not allow what is proper and obvious to all men's understanding, especially from the opposition that is made between the law and works on the one hand, and faith, grace, and Christ on the other. Nor can they do so without ruining the opinions they plead for. Therefore, their various conjectures will be examined to show their inconsistency, and to confirm the truth of our present argument:

1. Some say it is the works of the ceremonial law alone that are meant. This is the law that was given to Moses on mount Sinai, containing the entire covenant that was abolished afterwards. This was the common opinion of the schoolmen, though it is now generally rejected. The opinion lately is that the apostle Paul excludes justification from the works of the law. Or at least he excludes absolutely perfect works and sinless obedience. He does so not because no man can yield that perfect obedience which the law requires, but because the ceremonial law which he intends could not justify anyone by observing it. This is nothing but the renovation of this obsolete notion that it is only the ceremonial law given on mount Sinai, abstracted from the grace of the promise, that could not justify anyone by observing its rites and commands.

Of all the conjectures, this is the most impertinent and contradictory to the apostle's design. It is therefore rejected by Bellarmine himself. In Rom. 2:13, the apostle speaks of that law whose doers will be justified. The authors of this opinion would have it be a law that can justify no one who does it. The law that the apostle intends is the one by which we have knowledge of sin. He gives this reason why we cannot be justified by its works: because "by it is the knowledge of sin," chap. 2:20. He expressly declares what law gives the knowledge of sin when he affirms that he "had not known lust, except the law had said, 'You shall not covet,'" chap. 7:7. This is the moral law alone. That is the law he means to stop the mouth of all sinners, and that makes all the world liable to the judgment of God, chap. 3:19. The only law that can do that is the law written in the heart of men at their creation, chap. 2:14, 15. It is that law which "if a man does its works, he shall live in them," Gal. 3:12, Rom. 10:5. It is the law that brings all men under its curse for sin, Gal. 3:10. It is the law that is established by faith, and not made void, Rom. 3:31. It is *not* the

ceremonial law, nor the covenant of Sinai. It is the law whose righteousness is “to be fulfilled in us,” Rom. 8:4.

The example the apostle gives of justification without the works of that law, namely that of Abraham, was some hundreds of years before the ceremonial law was given. I am not saying that the ceremonial law and its works are excluded from the apostle’s intent. For when that law was given, its observation was a special instance of that obedience we owed to the first table of the decalogue. The exclusion of its works from our justification, inasmuch as their performance was part of that moral obedience which we owed to God, is part of the exclusion of all other works as well. But saying that it is the only law that Paul meant here is a fond imagination, and contradicts the apostle’s express assertion.

2. Some say the apostle only excludes the perfect works required by the law of innocence; which is diametrically opposed to the foregoing. This best pleases the Socinians. But,

(1.) Here they grant the whole of what we plead for: that the apostle intends this to mean the moral, indispensable law of God. It is the law under which no man can be justified by doing its works; indeed, all its works are excluded from our justification. If the works of this law are performed according to it, then it will justify those who perform them, as the apostle affirms, Rom. 2:13. The Scripture elsewhere witnesses that “he that does them shall live in them,” 10:5. But because this can never be done by any sinner, all consideration of them is excluded from our justification.

(2.) It is a wild imagination that the apostle is arguing that the perfect works of the law will not justify us, but imperfect works which do not answer the law will do so.

(3.) Granting that the law intended is the moral law of God, the law of our creation, there is no distinction intimated in the least by the apostle, that we are not justified by the perfect works that we cannot perform, but by some imperfect works that we can perform. Nothing is more foreign to the design and express words of his whole discourse.

(4.) The evasion which they resort to, that the apostle opposes justification by faith to that of works, is altogether vain. They would have this faith be our obedience to the divine commands, in any

imperfect way that we can perform them. When the apostle has excluded all such justification by the law and its works, he does not advance our own faith and obedience in their stead. He adds, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

3. Some of late among ourselves assert that the works which the apostle excludes from justification are only the outward works of the law, performed without an inward principle of faith, fear, or the love of God. They say that servile works, done in response to the threats of the law, are the only ones which will not justify us. This opinion is not only false, but impious. For,

(1.) The apostle excludes the works of Abraham, which were not such outward, servile works as are imagined.

(2.) The works excluded are those which the law requires, and the law is holy, just, and good. But a law that requires only outward works, without internal love toward God, is neither holy, just, nor good.

(3.) The law condemns all such works that are separated from the internal principle of faith, fear, and love. It requires that in all our obedience we should love the Lord our God with all our hearts. The apostle says that we are justified not by the works which the law condemns, but by those which the law commands.

(4.) It highly reflects on the honor of God that he would give a law requiring outward, servile works only. It is his divine prerogative to know the hearts of men, and therefore he regards them in all the duties of their obedience. If the law intended required more, then those are not the only works excluded from our justification.

4. Some say it is only the Jewish law that is intended, hoping to discard the whole difficulty thereby. If by the Jewish law, they mean the ceremonial law, or the law given by Moses, then we have already shown the vanity of that pretence. If they mean the whole law or rule of obedience given to the church of Israel under the Old Testament, then they express much of the truth. But that may be more than they designed.

5. Some say that the apostle is excluding works with a conceit of merit, something that makes the reward a debt, and not of grace. But no such distinction appears in the text or context.

(1.) The apostle excludes all works of the law, that is, all that the law requires of us in a way of obedience, no matter what sort of works they may be.

(2.) The law requires no works with a conceit of merit.

(3.) Works of the law originally included no merit, as something arising from the proportion of one thing to another in the balance of justice. And that is the only sense in which it is rejected by those who plead for an interest of works in justification.

(4.) The merit which the apostle excludes is what is inseparable from works. It cannot be excluded unless the works themselves are excluded. As to their merit, two things concur. First, there is a comparative boasting. It is not boasting before God, but what gives one man a preference above another in obtaining justification. Grace will not allow it, Rom. 4:2. Secondly, the reward cannot be absolutely of grace, but is given in respect to works. That makes it out to be a debt, not out of any inherent worth, which would not have existed under the law of creation, but out of some agreement with respect to the promise of God, verse 4. In these two regards, merit is inseparable from works. The Holy Ghost, to utterly exclude it, excludes all works which include it. Therefore,

(5.) The apostle does not speak one word about the exclusion of the merit of works only. Instead, he excludes all works whatever, and that would necessarily include merit in the sense described, which is inconsistent with grace.

6. Some contend that the apostle excludes only works done before believing, done in the strength of our own wills and natural abilities, and without the aid of grace. They suppose that the works required by the law are those we perform by the direction and command of the law alone. This is what the most learned and judicious of the Roman church now generally assert. But the law of faith requires works done in the strength of the supplies of grace, which are not excluded. Those Protestants who plead for works in our justification dislike those works being called meritorious, and they want to distinguish themselves from the Roman church. The term is likewise

renounced by all the Socinians. Therefore, they evade it by saying that only meritorious works are excluded by the apostle, even though the apostle's plain argument is that they are excluded because such a merit is inconsistent with grace.

But the Roman church cannot part with merit in this way. Therefore, they need to find a sort of works to exclude which are not meritorious. These, they say, are those done before believing, and without the aids of grace. Such are all the works of the law. They do this with a little more modesty and sobriety than those Protestants who would exclude only external works and observances. For they grant that a number of internal works, such as attrition and sorrow for sin, are of this nature. But the works of the law are excluded. This whole plea, and all the sophisms by which it is countenanced, have been so discussed and defeated by Protestant writers of all sorts against Bellarmine and others, that it is needless to repeat the same things or add anything to them. It will be shown to be false in what we immediately prove concerning the law and works that are meant by the apostle.

(1.) The apostle excludes all works, without distinction or exception. And we are not to distinguish what the law does not distinguish before us.

(2.) All the works of the law are excluded; therefore all works done after believing by the aids of grace are excluded as well; for they are all required by the law. See Psa. 119:35; Rom. 7:22. Works not required by the law are no less an abomination to God than sins against the law.

(3.) The works of believers after conversion, performed by the aids of grace, are expressly excluded by the apostle. So are those of Abraham after he had been a believer many years, and abounded in them to the praise of God. He excludes his own works after his conversion, Gal. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:4; Phil. 3:9; and he excludes the works of all other believers, Eph. 2:9, 10.

(4.) All works are excluded that might give countenance to boasting, Rom. 4:2; 3:27; Eph. 2:9; 1 Cor. 1:29-31. But this refers more to good works done by regenerate persons than to any works done by unbelievers.

(5.) The law required faith and love in all our works. Therefore, if all the works of the law are excluded, then the best works of believers are excluded.

(6.) All works are excluded which are opposed to grace working freely in our justification; by this all works whatever are excluded, Rom. 11:6.

(7.) In the Epistle to the Galatians, the apostle excludes from our justification all those works which the false teachers pressed as necessary to it. But those false teachers urged the necessity of the works of believers, those who were already converted to God by grace.

(8.) The apostle excludes good works from our justification. For there can be no pretence of gaining justification by those works that are not good, or which do not have all the essentially requisite things to make them good. But such are all the works of unbelievers performed without the aids of grace. They are not good, nor can they be accepted with God. They lack what is essentially requisite to good works. It is ridiculous to think that the apostle argues about excluding such works from our justification. No man in his right wits would think to have any part in that.

(9.) The reason why no man can be justified by the law, is because no man can yield perfect obedience to it. Only by perfect obedience will the law justify, Rom. 2:13; 10:5. Therefore, all works that are not absolutely perfect are excluded. Even the best works of believers are not perfect, as we proved before.

(10.) If there is a place for the works of believers in our justification, performed by the aid of grace, it is that either they are concurrent causes of it, or they are indispensably subservient to those things that do cause it. It is not absolutely affirmed that they are concurrent causes of our justification; neither can it be said that they are necessarily subservient to those that are. They are not the efficient cause of our justification. That is the grace and favor of God alone, Rom. 3:24, 25; 4:16; Eph. 2:8, 9; Rev. 1:5. Nor are they the meritorious cause of it. That is Christ alone, Acts 13:38; 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:18-21. Nor are they the material cause of it. That is the righteousness of Christ alone, Rom. 10:3, 4. Nor are they faith, for faith is only mentioned wherever we are taught how the

righteousness of Christ is derived and communicated to us. There is no intimation of joining works with faith. Works are placed in opposition and contradiction to faith in our justification, Rom. 3:28.

7. Some affirm that the apostle excludes all works from our first justification, but not from the second, or as some put it, the “continuation” of our justification. But we have examined these distinctions before, and found them groundless.

It is evident, therefore, that men put themselves into an uncertain, slippery station, when they do not know what to fix upon, or where to find an appearance truth that supports their denial of the plain and frequently repeated assertions of the apostle.

Therefore, to confirm the present argument, I will inquire more particularly into what the apostle means by the law and works that he refers to. As to our justification, whatever these are, they are absolutely and universally opposed to grace, faith, the righteousness of God, and the blood of Christ. This cannot be denied because it is the plain design of the apostle to prove that inconsistency.

1. In general, it is evident that what he means is what the Jews understood by the law, and their own obedience to it. I suppose this cannot be denied. Without a concession of this, there is nothing proved against the Jews, nor does he instruct them in anything. If those terms were equivocal between them, then nothing can be rightly concluded from what is spoken. Therefore, the apostle takes for granted that the meaning of these terms, “the law” and “works,” are very well known. They are agreed upon between himself and those with whom he dealt.

2. What the Jews meant by “the law” is what the Scriptures of the Old Testament meant by that expression. They are nowhere blamed for any false notion concerning the law, or for considering the law to be anything other than what it was called in the Scripture. Their present oral law was not yet hatched, though the Pharisees were brooding over it.

3. “The law” under the Old Testament immediately refers to the law given at mount Sinai. This is commonly called “the law” absolutely. But most frequently it is called “the law of God,” “the law of the Lord,” and sometimes “the law of Moses,” because of his special

ministry in giving it. “Remember the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded to him,” Mal. 4:4. This is what the Jews meant by “the law.”

4. The law given at Horeb was distributed in three parts.

(1.) There was  $\mu y r i b ; D ] h t r , c , [ \}$  “aseret hadevarim,” Deut. 4:13, or “the ten words” chap. 10:4, that is, the ten commandments written upon two tables of stone. This part of the law was given first. It was the foundation of the whole, and contained that perfect obedience which was required of mankind by law of creation. It was received into the church with the highest attestations of its indispensable obligation to obedience or punishment.

(2.) There was  $\mu y Q , j u$  “chukim,” which the LXX render by  $d i k a i w > m a t a$  “dikaioomata,” that is, “jura,” “rites,” or “statutes.” For that reason, the Latin is “justificationes” (justifications), which has given great occasion for mistakes in many ancient and modern divines. We call it “the ceremonial law.” The apostle distinctly calls this part of the law,  $N o > m o v e j n t o l w \sim n e j n d o > g m a s i$  “Nomos entoloon en dogmasi,” or “The law of commandments contained in ordinances,” Eph. 2:15. That is, it consists of a multitude of arbitrary commands.

(3.) Finally, there is  $\mu y t i P ; v ] m i$  “mishpatim,” which we commonly call “the judicial law.” This distribution of the law shuts up the Old Testament, as it is used in numerous places. Only the  $\mu y r i b ; D ] h t r , c , [ \}$  “aseret hadevriem,” “the ten words,” is expressed by the general word  $h r ; w O T$  “torah” for “the law,” Mal. 4:4.

5. These being the parts of the law given to the church in Sinai, the whole of it is constantly called  $h r ; w O T$  “torah,” [OT:8451] or “the law.” The torah is the instruction (as the word signifies) that God gave to the church, in the rule of obedience which he prescribed to it. This is the constant meaning of that word in Scripture. It does not signify precisely the law as given at Horeb. It comprehends all the revelations that God made under the Old Testament, in the explanation and confirmation of that law, in its rules, motives, directions, and enforcements of obedience.

6. Therefore,  $h r ; w O T$  “torah” or “the law” is the whole rule of obedience which God gave to the church under the Old Testament,



with all the efficacy which accompanied the ordinances of God. It includes all the promises and threats that might be motives for the obedience that God required. This is what God and the church called “the law” under the Old Testament, and which the Jews called “the law” whom our apostle dealt with. What we call “the moral law” was the foundation of the whole law. Those parts of it that we call “the judicial and ceremonial law,” were peculiar instances of the obedience to which the church under the Old Testament was obliged. They addressed the special polity and divine worship that were necessary to the church in that season. The Scripture testifies to two things concerning this law:

(1.) It was a perfect and complete rule of all the internal spiritual and moral obedience which God required of the church. “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple,” Psa. 19:7. And this was true of all the external duties of obedience, for their matter and manner, time and season. It was provided so that in both internal and external obedience, the church might walk “acceptably before God,” Mic. 6:8. Although the original duties of the moral part of the law are often preferred before the particular instances of obedience in duties of outward worship, the whole law was always the whole rule of all the obedience, internal and external, that God required of the church, and which he accepted in those who believed.

(2.) This law, this rule of obedience, was ordained by God to be the instrument of his rule of the church. It was adapted to the covenant made with Abraham, which the introduction of the law on Sinai did not annul. As such, it was accompanied with a power and efficacy that enabled obedience. The law itself, being merely receptive and commanding, administered no power or ability to yield obedience for those who were under its authority; nor do the mere commands of the gospel. Instead, under the Old Testament, the law enforced obedience on the minds and consciences of men by the manner of its first delivery, and the severity of its sanction, filling them with fear and bondage. Besides that, it was accompanied with such burdensome rules of outward worship, that it became a heavy yoke to the people. But as it was God’s doctrine, teaching, and instruction in all acceptable obedience, and it was adapted to the covenant of Abraham, it was accompanied with an administration

of effectual grace, which procured and promoted obedience in the church. The law is not to be looked on as separated from those aids to obedience which God administered under the Old Testament. They are therefore ascribed to the law itself. See Psa. 1, 19, 119.

Our next inquiry is, what was their understanding of “works,” or “works of the law?” It is plain that they meant the universal sincere obedience of the church to God, according to this law. The law of God does not acknowledge other works. In fact, it expressly condemns all works that have any defect in them that would render them unacceptable to God. For that reason, notwithstanding all the commands that God had positively given for the strict observance of sacrifices, offerings, and the like, when the people performed them without faith and love, he expressly affirms that he “commanded them not.” Their personal righteousness consisted in these works as they walked “blameless in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord,” Luke 1:6; and in which they “instantly served God day and night,” Acts 26:7. They considered this to be their own righteousness, their righteousness according to the law; as it really was, Phil. 3:6, 9. For although the Pharisees had greatly corrupted the doctrine of the law, and put false glosses on a number of its precepts, yet the church in those days understood its duty of obedience by “the works of the law.” This included its ceremonial duties, external works, works with a conceit of merit, works done without faith and love to God, or anything else involving their own personal sincere obedience to the whole doctrine and rule of the law.

1. All this is perfectly stated in the suffrage which the scribe gave of the sense and design of the law, and the nature of the obedience which it requires. “And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?” (or as it is in Matt. 22:36, “Which is the great commandment in the law?”) “And Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our Gods is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength; this is the first commandment. And the second is alike, namely this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”” And the scribe said to him, ‘Well, Master, you have said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none but he: and to love

him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices.” Mark 12:28-33.

And this faith and love is expressly given by Moses as the sum of the law, and the principle of all our obedience, Deut. 6:4, 5. It is marvelous what would induce any learned, sober person to fix upon any other sense of it. What would induce them to suppose that it involves ceremonial or external works only, or that it may be done without faith or love? This is the law which the apostle disputes, and this the obedience in which its works consist. God never did nor ever will require anything other than this in the way of obedience from anyone in this world. Therefore, the law and the works which the apostle excludes from justification, are those by which we are obliged to believe in God as one God, the only God, and to love him with all our hearts and souls, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. I do not know what other works can be found in anyone, regenerate or unregenerate, whether performed in the strength of grace or without it, which are acceptable to God.

2. The apostle himself declares that it is this sense of the law and its works that he excludes from our justification. The law he speaks of is “the law of righteousness,” Rom. 9:31. It is the law whose righteousness is “fulfilled in us,” that we may be accepted with God and freed from condemnation, chap. 8:4. It is our own personal righteousness which consists in obedience to this law, whether before conversion, Rom. 10:3, or after it, Phil. 3:9. It is the law that if a man observes it, “he shall live,” and be justified before God, Rom. 2:13; Gal. 3:12; Rom. 10:5. It is that law which is “holy, just, and good,” and which discovers and condemns all sin whatsoever, chap. 7:7, 9.

From what has been said, these two things are evident to confirm our present argument: First, that the law meant by the apostle, when he denies that anyone can be justified by the works of the law, is the entire rule and guide of our obedience to God. It includes the whole frame and spiritual constitution of our souls, with all the acts of obedience or duties that God requires of us. And secondly, that the works of this law, which he so frequently and plainly excludes from our justification, are all the duties of obedience that God requires of

us. It does not matter whether they are ritual, internal, external, supernatural, or however we are enabled to perform them. These things being excluded, it is the righteousness of Christ alone, imputed to us, that is the account on which we are justified before God.

So far as I can discern, the truth is that the real difference among us today about the doctrine of our justification before God is the same difference that existed between the apostle and the Jews, and no other. Controversies in religion make a great appearance of being new, when they only vary in the terms and expressions used when handling them. Such is the controversy about nature and grace. Its true nature is the same today as it was between the apostle Paul and the Pharisees, and between Austin [Augustine] and Pelagius afterwards. But it has now passed through so many forms and labels that it can scarcely be known for what it is. Many today will condemn both Pelagius and the doctrine that he taught, in the words in which he taught it, and yet they will embrace and approve the very things he meant by them. Every change in philosophical approach gives an appearance of a change in the controversies which it manages. But take off the philosophical covering of labels, artificial distinctions, metaphysical concepts, and terms of art, and the difference between grace and nature remains the same as it always did, and as allowed by the Socinians.

Thus the apostle, addressing our justification before God, does it in those terms which describe the thing itself, and were well understood by those with whom he dealt. These were the terms that the Holy Spirit consecrated to their proper use through revelation. On the one hand, Paul expressly excludes the law, our own works, or our own righteousness, from any interest in our justification. In opposition to these, he ascribes our justification wholly to the righteousness of God. It is a righteousness that is imputed to us, the obedience of Christ, Christ made righteousness to us, the blood of Christ as a propitiation. It comes by faith, receiving Christ, and the atonement. Any awakened conscience, guided by the least beam of spiritual illumination, plainly understands these things and what they mean. But by introducing philosophical terms and notions into our way of teaching spiritual things in religion, a new face is put on the whole matter. A composite image is made of those things that the apostle

teaches are directly opposite, contrary, and inconsistent to one another.

For that reason, our discussions are all about preparations, dispositions, conditions, merits “de congruo et condigno,” and such a train of distinctions, that if some bounds are not set to their invention and coining, we will not long be able to look through them to discover the things they mean, or to rightly understand each other. It may be said of arbitrary distinctions what someone said of lies: they must be continually thatched over, or it will rain through. The best thing to do is to cast off all these coverings. Then we will quickly see that the real argument about the justification of a sinner before God is the same as it was between the apostle Paul and the Jews. All those things which men plead with respect to a causality in our justification before God, whether under the name of preparation, condition, disposition, merit, first or second justification, are as effectually excluded by the apostle as if he had expressly named every one of them. Despite our conceptions and learned terms in this passing age, this plea for our own personal righteousness is the same plea that the Jews maintained against the apostle. And the true understanding of what he intends by the law, its works, and righteousness, would be sufficient to resolve this controversy, except that men have grown very skillful in the art of endless wrangling.

## 15. Faith Alone

The truth which we plead has two parts:

1. That the righteousness of God which is imputed to us for the justification of life, is the righteousness of Christ, by whose obedience we are made righteous.
2. That it is faith alone which is required on our part to gain us an interest in that righteousness, or by which we comply with God's grant and communication of it, or receive it for our use and benefit. Faith, in itself, is the radical principle of all obedience. Yet as we are justified by it, the nature of faith is such that no other grace, duty, or work, can be considered with it. Faith on all occasions evidences, proves, shows, or manifests itself by works.

Both of these are evidently confirmed in that description given to us in the Scripture of the nature of faith and believing to the justification of life.

I know that many expressions used in the declaration of the nature and work of faith are metaphorical, or at least are generally considered so. But they are what the Holy Ghost, in his infinite wisdom, thought fit to instruct and edify the church. I must say that those who do not understand how effectually the light of knowledge and understanding is communicated to the minds of believers by such expressions, do not seem to seriously consider them. Whatever skill we pretend to have, we do not always know which expressions of spiritual things are metaphorical. Often, those that may seem to be, are properly so. However, it is safest for us to adhere to the expressions of the Holy Spirit, and not to embrace interpretations that are inconsistent or opposite to them. Therefore,

1. In the New Testament, the faith by which we are justified is most frequently expressed by *receiving* it. This idea of faith has been addressed before, in our general inquiry into its use in our justification. We may observe two things concerning this receiving of faith:

*First*, it is received with respect to the whole object of our faith, or to all that concurs with our justification. We are said to receive

Christ himself: “As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God,” John 1:12. “As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord,” Col. 2:6. In opposition to this, unbelief is expressed by not receiving him, John 1:11; 3:11; 12:48; 14:17. Faith is receiving Christ as “The LORD our Righteousness,” as he is made righteousness to us by God. Because no grace or duty can have any cooperation with faith in this, the reception of Christ does not belong to the nature or exercise of grace or duty. So it excludes any other righteousness from our justification but that of Christ alone; for we are “justified by faith.” Faith alone receives Christ. And what faith receives is the cause of our justification, and by which we become the sons of God. So we “receive the atonement” made by the blood of Christ, Rom. 5:11; for “God has set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.”

This receiving of the atonement includes the soul’s approval of the way of salvation through the blood of Christ, and the appropriation of the atonement that is made by faith. That is also how we receive the forgiveness of sins: “That they may receive forgiveness of sins by faith that is in me,” Acts 26:18. In receiving Christ, we receive the atonement; and in the atonement, we receive the forgiveness of sins. Moreover, the grace of God, and righteousness itself, as the efficient and *material* causes of our justification, are also received. Through faith in Christ we receive the “abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness,” Rom. 5:17. Faith is expressed by “receiving” because it also receives the promise, the *instrumental* cause of our justification on the part of God, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized,” Acts 2:41; “That those called may receive the promise of an eternal inheritance,” Heb. 9:15.

*Secondly*, because the nature of faith consists in receiving, its object must be offered, tendered, and given to us as what is not our own. It is made our own by that giving and receiving. Because no other grace or duty can concur with it, the righteousness by which we are justified cannot be our own prior to this receipt, nor can it at any time be inherent in us. For that reason, we argue that if the work of faith in our justification is receiving what is freely granted, given, communicated, and imputed to us, then our other graces, obedience, duties, and works have no influence on our justification.

Nor are they the causes or conditions of it. This is because they are neither the faith that receives the gift, nor the gift that is received.

2. Faith is expressed by *looking* to Christ: “Look to me, and you will be saved,” Isa. 45:22; “A man shall look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel,” chap. 17:7; “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced,” Zech. 12:10. See Psa. 123:2. The nature of this is expressed in John 3:14, 15, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” That is how Christ was to be lifted up on the cross in his death, John 8:28, chap. 12:32. The story is recorded in Numb. 21:8, 9. I assume no one doubts that the stinging of the people by fiery serpents, and the death that ensued from that, were types of the guilt of sin, and the sentence of the fiery law from that. These things happened to them in types, 1Cor. 10:11. If anyone resorted to any other remedies when stung or bitten, he died and perished. Only those who looked to the brazen serpent that was lifted up were healed and lived. This was the ordinance of God. This was the only way of healing he had appointed. And their healing was a type of the pardon of sin, with the cure of everlasting life.

So the nature of faith is expressed by looking, as our Savior plainly expounds it in this passage: “So must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him,” as the Israelites looked to the serpent in the wilderness, “should not perish.” Although this expression of the great mystery of the gospel by Christ himself has been derided by some, or “exposed” as they call it, yet it is really as instructive of the nature of faith, justification, and salvation by Christ as any passage in the Scripture. Now, if faith is looking to Christ, then it excludes all other graces and duties by which we are justified. For we neither look by them, nor are they the things we look for. This looking is the exercise of our faith, in which we are under such a sense of the guilt of sin and our lost condition, that we seek our only help and relief for deliverance, righteousness, and life. This is the nature and exercise of faith expressed by the Holy Ghost; and those who believe understand his mind. Whatever may be pretended to be metaphorical in the expression, faith is that act of the soul by which those who are hopeless, helpless, and lost in themselves, in an expectant and trustful way, seek all help and relief in Christ alone, or there is no



truth in it. And this also sufficiently proves the nature of our justification by Christ.

3. Faith is frequently expressed by *coming* to Christ: “Come to me, all you that labor,” Matt. 11:28. See John 6:35, 37, 45, 65; 7:37. To come to Christ for life and salvation, is to believe in him for the justification of life. No other grace or duty is coming to Christ, and therefore they have no place in justification. Anyone who has been convinced of sin, who has been wearied with the burden of it, who has really designed to fly from the wrath to come, and has heard the voice of Christ in the gospel inviting him to come to him for help and relief, will tell you this: coming to Christ consists in a man’s complete renunciation of all his own duties and righteousness, and turning with all his trust and confidence to Christ alone, relying on his righteousness for pardon of sin, acceptance with God, and a right to the heavenly inheritance. Some may say this is not believing, but canting [begging]. So be it: we refer the judgment of it to the church of God.

4. Faith is expressed by *fleeing* for refuge: “Who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us,” Heb. 6:18. See Prov. 18:10. For that reason some have defined faith to be “*perfugium animae*,” the flight of the soul to Christ for deliverance from sin and misery. Much light is given to its understanding by that. It is assumed that one who believes is previously convinced of a number of things:

- he is convinced of his lost condition, and that if he continues in it, he must perish eternally;
- that he has nothing of himself to deliver him from it;
- that he must turn to something else for relief;
- that to this end he considers Christ as proposed and set before him in the promise of the gospel;
- that he judges this to be a holy and safe way to be delivered and accepted with God.

At this point he flees to the gospel for refuge with diligence and speed, so that he will not perish in his present condition. He turns to it by placing his whole trust and affiance on that promise. The whole nature of our justification by Christ is better declared by this illustration, as far as the supernatural understanding and experience of believers, than by a hundred philosophical arguments about it.

5. The terms and concepts by which it is expressed under the Old Testament are these:

- *leaning* on God, Mic. 3:11; or Christ, Cant. 8:5;
- *casting* or rolling ourselves and our burden on the Lord, Psa. 22:8, 37:5;
- *resting* on God, or in him, 2 Chron. 14:11; Psa. 37:7;
- *cleaving* to the Lord, Deut. 4:4; Acts 11:23;

It is also expressed in numerous places by trusting, hoping, and waiting. It may be observed that those whose faith acted in these ways, declare themselves to be lost, hopeless, helpless, desolate, poor, and orphans; and so they place all their hope and expectation on God alone.

All I would infer from these things is that the faith by which we believe to the justification of life, or the faith which is required of us as a duty that we may be justified, is an act of the whole soul. By this act, convinced sinners go entirely out of themselves to rest upon God in Christ for mercy, pardon, life, righteousness, and salvation. The heart acquiesces in that act. That is the whole of the truth pleaded for.

## 16. Testimonies of Scripture

What we now consider are those express testimonies of Scripture which support the truth pleaded for, especially those places where the doctrine of the justification of sinners is expressly handled. From them we must learn the truth, and resolve our faith. All the arguments and objections of men must give way to their authority. More light is conveyed by them to promote the understanding of believers than the most subtle arguments. It is scandalous to see among Protestants whole books written about justification in which scarcely one testimony of Scripture is produced. This is particularly so when you consider that the apostle Paul has most fully and expressly declared and vindicated the doctrine of evangelical justification. A number of writers fail to declare their thoughts and faith concerning justification using his writings. As a result, they reflect on his writings obscurely, and give occasion to dangerous mistakes. It is as though we have grown wiser than he, or wiser than the Spirit who inspired, guided, and acted in all that Paul wrote. The genius of the Christian religion is to endeavor to humbly learn the mystery of the grace of God in the declaration that Paul made of it. But the foundation of God stands sure, whatever course men may be pleased to take in their profession of religion.

In the case of justification, there is weight deservedly laid on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As promised and given to us, “he will be called Jehovah, the LORD our Righteousness,” Jer. 23:6. The name Jehovah being ascribed to him, we have a full indication of his divine person. So the addition of his being our righteousness sufficiently declares that, by him alone, we have righteousness or we are made righteous. So he was typed by Melchizedek as first the “King of righteousness,” and then the “king of peace,” Heb. 7:2. By his righteousness alone we have peace with God. Some of the Socinians would evade this testimony by observing that righteousness in the Old Testament sometimes means benignity, kindness, and mercy. Most of them, avoiding this palpable absurdity, refer to the righteousness of God in the deliverance and vindication of his people. But these are evasions of bold men, who do not care whether they agree with the analogy of faith, or the plain words of the Scripture.

Bellarmino, more wary to give the appearance of truth, offers other reasons why he is called “The LORD our Righteousness.” And then, whether unaware or overpowered by the evidence of truth, grants the meaning we plead for. “Christ,” he says, “may be called ‘The LORD our Righteousness,’ because he is the efficient cause of our righteousness,” as God is said to be our “strength and salvation.” Again, “Christ is said to be our righteousness, as he is our wisdom, our redemption, and our peace; because he has redeemed us, and makes us wise and righteous, and reconciles us to God.” But not trusting to these expositions, he adds, “Christ is said to be our righteousness because he has made satisfaction for us to the Father; he gives and communicates that satisfaction to us when he justifies us, in a way that may be said to be our satisfaction and righteousness. And in this sense it would not be absurd if anyone said that the righteousness of Christ and his merits are imputed to us, as if we ourselves had satisfied God.” De Justificat., lib. 2 cap. 10.

In this sense we say that Christ is “The LORD our Righteousness.” There is nothing that we support of importance in the whole doctrine of justification, that is not granted here by the cardinal. I will therefore look a little further into this testimony which has wrested so eminent a confession of the truth from so great an adversary. “Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will raise up to David a righteous Branch; ... and this is his name by which he shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness,” Jer. 23:5, 6. Christians declare that this is an illustrious renovation of the first promise concerning the incarnation of the Son of God, and our salvation by him. This promise was given when we lost our original righteousness, and we were considered to be those who had sinned and come short of the glory of God. In this condition, a righteousness was absolutely necessary to again be accepted with God. Without a perfect and complete righteousness, we could never be so. In this condition, it is promised that he will be our “righteousness,” or as the apostle expresses it, “the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe” (Rom. 10:4). There can be no question that he is our righteousness. The whole question is, *how* is he our righteousness?

Our adversaries say it is because he is the efficient cause of our righteousness. That is, *his righteousness is in us*, as our personal, inherent righteousness. This kind of personal righteousness may be

considered an effect of God's grace; and so it is good and holy, but it is not perfect and complete. Or it may be considered inherent in us, and accompanied with the remaining defilements of our nature. If this righteousness is in us, then the prophet affirms that in the sight of God, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" Isa. 64:6. [Wnyteqod\]xiAlK](#); "Kol tsidkoteinu" [OT:6666] comprises our whole personal, inherent righteousness. The Lord Christ could not therefore be called [Wnqed\]xi hw;hoy](#) "Yehovah Tsidkenu," "The LORD our Righteousness," because this kind of righteousness is as filthy rags. It must therefore be a righteousness of another sort that is the reason for this phrase and the name given to him.

He is our righteousness because *all our righteousness is in him*. So the church, which confesses all her own righteousness to be as filthy rags, says, "In the LORD have I righteousness," Isa. 45:24, (which is expounded in Rom. 14:11); [twOqd;x\] yli hwO;hyB èa](#) "ach bayhovah li tsdakot," – "Only in the LORD are my righteousnesses:" The apostle expresses this in two places, Phil. 3:8, 9, "That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law" (in this case as filthy rags), "but what is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." For that reason we read, "In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified," Isa. 45:25. He is our righteousness in what he is to us, and what he did for us, and our righteousness is all in him. This totally excludes our own personal, inherent righteousness from any interest in our justification, and wholly ascribes it to the righteousness of Christ.

And thus we find that emphatical expression of the psalmist, "I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD." For as to holiness and obedience, all our spiritual strength is from him alone. "I will make mention" [òD,bl\] òt\]q;d\]xi](#) "tsidkotcha levadecha," Psa. 71:16, "of your righteousness, of yours only." The redoubling of the affix excludes all confidence and trusting in anything but the righteousness of God alone. The apostle affirms that this is God's design in making Christ to be righteousness to us, "that no flesh should glory in his presence; but he that glories, should glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. 1:29, 31. It is by faith alone, mentioning only the righteousness of God in our justification, that excludes all boasting, Rom. 3:27. The Scripture

eminently declares how he is “The LORD our Righteousness” because he “makes an end of sin and reconciliation for iniquity, and brings in everlasting righteousness,” Dan. 9:24. Our justification is completed by the satisfaction he made for sin, the pardon of sin that reconciles us to God, and providing an everlasting righteousness for us. Therefore, he is “The LORD our Righteousness,” and he is rightly called by that name.

In summary, we lost our original righteousness, had none of our own remaining, and we stood in need of a perfect, complete righteousness to procure our acceptance with God, and to exclude all boasting of anything in ourselves. Thus, the Lord Christ was given to us, and made “The LORD our Righteousness,” in whom we have all our righteousness. By making an end of sin, reconciling our iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness, it can be said that it is by his righteousness alone that we are justified in the sight of God, and in which we glory. This is the substance of what we plead for; and what is delivered in Scripture.

## 17. Testimonies of the Evangelists

It was explained earlier why the doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ is more fully and clearly delivered in other New Testament passages than it is in the evangelists. They primarily wrote the history of the life and death of Christ. Yet they also sufficiently attest to what the state of the church was before the death and resurrection of Christ. I will consider a few of the many testimonies which may be used for that purpose out of their writings.

The principal design of our blessed Savior's sermon in Matt. 5 is to declare the true nature of righteousness before God. He intended to vindicate the consciences of those who heard him from a bondage to the doctrines of the scribes and Pharisees. They placed all our righteousness before God in the works of the law, or in men's own obedience to the law. They taught this to the people, and they justified themselves in this teaching. He charges them with this in Luke 16:15, "You justify yourselves before men; but God knows your hearts, for what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." He makes this evident in his sermon as well. Under their conduct they sought to "establish their own righteousness, as it were by the works of the law," Rom. 9:32; 10:3. They were convinced in their own consciences that they could not live up to the law of righteousness, or to that perfect obedience which the law required. But they would not forego their proud, fond imagination of justification by their own righteousness. As all men do, they invented ways to relieve their consciences. To this end, they corrupted the whole law by false glosses and interpretations to bring down and debase the meaning of the law. They boasted in themselves of what they performed. By way of a parable in Luke 18:11, 12, our Savior gives an instance of the principle and practice of the whole society; the young man affirmed that he had kept the whole law from his youth, in their sense (Matt. 19:20).

To uproot this pernicious error from the church, our Lord Jesus Christ in many instances gives the true, spiritual sense and intent of the law. He manifests what righteousness the law requires, and on what terms a man may be justified by it. Among other things, he evidently declares two things:

1. The law, in its precepts and prohibitions, regulates the heart, with all its first stirrings and acts. He asserts that the inmost thoughts of the heart, and its first stirrings of desire, are directly forbidden in the law. This is true even though not consented to, much less actually accomplished in outward deeds of sin. He asserts this in his holy exposition of the seventh commandment, Matt. 5:27-30.
2. He declares that the penalty of the law for the least sin is hellfire, pointing out that causeless anger is as forbidden in the sixth commandment as murder itself. If men would only try themselves by these rules, and others given there by our Savior, it might keep them from boasting in their own righteousness as to their justification.

But as it was then, so it is now. Most of those who would maintain that there is a justification by works, attempt to corrupt the sense of the law, and accommodate it to their own practice. The spirituality of the law, with a sanction that extends to the least and most imperceptible stirrings of sin in the heart, is not believed, or is not correctly considered, by those who plead for justification by works in any sense. Therefore, the principal design of the sermon of our Savior is to declare the nature of that obedience which God requires by the law. This is to prepare the minds of his disciples to seek after another righteousness. The cause and means of this righteousness was not yet plainly declared; but many of them, prepared by the ministry of John, hungered and thirsted after it.

He affirms that he “came to fulfill the law,” Matt. 5:17, so that its righteousness might be fulfilled in us. If we ourselves cannot fulfill the law in the proper sense of it, and we cannot avoid the curse and penalty of the law for its transgression, and if Christ came to fulfill it for us, then his righteousness is the righteousness by which we are justified before God. There is a twofold righteousness proposed to us. One is the fulfillment of the law by Christ; the other is our own perfect obedience to the law. As a result, it is left to the consciences of convinced sinners which of these two they will adhere to and trust. Directing them in this choice is the principal purpose we ought to have in declaring this doctrine.



The representation of the way and means by which we are justified before God, is made by our Savior himself, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. “And he spoke this parable to certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank you, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat upon his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’ I tell you, that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself shall be abased; and everyone who humbles himself shall be exalted.” Luke 18:9-14

Our Savior’s purpose was to represent the way of our justification before God. This is evident,

1. From the description he gives of the persons in verse 9. They “trusted in themselves that they were righteous,” or that they had a righteousness of their own before God.
2. From the general rule by which he confirms the judgment he gave concerning the persons described: “Everyone who exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted,” verse 14. As applied to the Pharisee and his prayer, it declares plainly that every plea of our own works, as to our justification before God, is a self-exaltation which God despises. As applied to the publican, it declares that a sense of sin is the only preparation on our part for acceptance with him. Both people were seeking to be justified, for that is how our Savior expresses the issue of their address to God. The one was justified, the other was not.

The plea of the Pharisee to this end has two parts:

1. That he fulfilled the condition on which he might be justified. He makes no mention of any merit, either of conformity or worth. It is only because there were two parts of God’s covenant with the church at that time, that the Pharisee pleads observance of the conditions of both the moral and the ceremonial law. Then he adds the way that he took to further himself in this obedience, somewhat beyond what was required: he fasted twice during the week. When men begin seeking

righteousness and justification by works, they quickly think their best stock lies in doing something extraordinary, something more than other men, and more than is required. This is the source of all the pharisaical austerities in the Papacy. It is also significant that he was a hypocrite and a boaster, for it would seem to apply to all who seek justification by works. Neither of these things are held against him in his justification. It is only that he “exalted himself” in “trusting to his own righteousness.”

2. He ascribes all that he did to God: “God, I thank you.” Although he did all this obedience himself, he admitted that in all of it, it was with the aid and assistance of God by his grace. He considered himself much different than other men, but he did not ascribe this difference to himself. All the righteousness and holiness which he laid claim to, he ascribed to the benignity and goodness of God. Therefore, he did not plead any merit in his works, nor that any works were performed in his own strength, without the aid of grace. All that he pretends is that, by the grace of God, he had fulfilled the condition of the covenant; and based on that he expected to be justified. Whatever words men use in their vocal prayers, God interprets their minds according to what they trust in as to their justification before him. If some men were honest, this is the prayer that, with the necessary changes to their words, they actually offer.

If it is charged that the reason this Pharisee was rejected was because he “trusted in himself” and “despised others,” I answer that,

1. This charge does not address the motives of the person, only the logical tendency of the statement. Justification by works includes a contempt for other men; for “if Abraham had been justified by works, he would have had something in which to glory,” (Rom. 4:2).

2. Those whom he despised were those who placed their whole trust in grace and mercy, as this publican did. He wished that others did not do so.

The issue with this person is that he was not justified. No one will ever be justified on the account of his own personal righteousness. For our Savior has told us that when we have done all we can do, instead of pleading it to our justification, we should say that we are [dou~loi ajcrei~oi](#) “douloi achreioi,” “unprofitable servants,” Luke 17:10. The apostle says, “I know nothing against myself; yet am I not

justified by that,” 1Cor. 4:4. Someone who is [dou~lov ajcrei~ov](#) “doulos achreios,” and has nothing to trust in but his service, will be cast out of the presence of God, Matt. 25:30. Therefore, to confess ourselves [dou~loi ajcrei~oi](#) “douloi achreioi,” despite the best of our obedience, is to confess that in ourselves we deserve to be cast out of the presence of God.

In opposition to this is the prayer of the publican, with the same design of seeking justification before God. His outward acts are mentioned as expressing the inward frame of his mind: “He stood afar off,” and “did not so much as lift up his eyes;” he “beat upon his breast.” These represent a despondent person, despairing in himself. This is the nature and effect of that conviction of sin which we asserted was necessary prior to justification. Remorse, sorrow, a sense of danger, and fear of wrath, are all present with him. In brief, he declares himself guilty before God, and his mouth stopped as to any apology or excuse. His prayer is a sincere plea for sovereign grace and mercy, to be delivered out of the condition which the guilt of sin has caused. In using the word; [iJla>skomai](#) “hilaskomai,” there is a reference to propitiation. In the whole of his address there is,

1. Self-condemnation and abhorrence.
2. Remorse and sorrow for sin.
3. A universal renunciation of all works of his own, as any condition of his justification.
4. An acknowledgment of his sin, guilt, and misery.

This is all that is required on our part for justification before God, except for that faith by which we apply to him for deliverance.

Some make a weak attempt from this to prove that justification consists wholly in the remission of sin because, based on the prayer of the publican for mercy and pardon, he is said to be “justified.” There is no force in this argument for,

1. The whole nature of justification is not declared here, only what is required on our part. The mediation of Christ was not yet expressly brought to light, as shown before.
2. Although the publican makes his address to God under a deep sense of the guilt of sin, he does not pray for the bare pardon of sin,

but for all the sovereign mercy or grace that God has provided for sinners.

3. The term “justification” must have the same meaning when applied to the Pharisee as when applied to the publican. If its meaning with respect to the publican is that he was pardoned, then it has the same meaning with respect to the Pharisee; he was not pardoned. But he came on no such errand. He came to be justified, not pardoned. Nor does the Pharisee make the least mention of his sin, or any sense of it.

Therefore, although the pardon of sin is included in justification, justifying here refers to a righteousness by which a man is declared just and righteous. On the part of the publican, it is wrapped up in the sovereign producing cause of justification, which is the mercy of God.

A few testimonies may be added from the other evangelist in whom they abound: “As many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name,” John 1:12. Faith is expressed by receiving Christ. To receive him and to believe on his name are the same. It receives him as a propitiation for sin, as set forth by the great ordinance of God for the recovery and salvation of lost sinners. Therefore, this idea of faith includes,

1. An assumption that Christ has been proposed and tendered to us for some purpose.
2. That this proposal is made to us in the promise of the gospel. For that reason, when we receive Christ, we are said to receive the promise also.
3. The purpose for which the Lord Christ is proposed to us in the promise of the gospel is the recovery and salvation of lost sinners.
4. In the tender of his person, there is a tender made of all the fruits of his mediation, because they contain the way and means of our deliverance from sin and acceptance with God.
5. There is nothing required on our part to gain an interest in that end, except receiving him, or believing on his name.
6. By this, we are entitled to the heavenly inheritance. We have power to become the sons of God, in which our adoption is asserted, and our justification is included.

What this receiving of Christ is, and what it consists of, has been declared before in the consideration of the faith by which we are justified. What we argue is that nothing more is required to obtain a right and title to the heavenly inheritance than faith alone in the name of Christ. Receiving Christ is the ordinance of God for our justification and salvation. It gives us our original right to this inheritance, leading to our acceptance with God and our justification, although more is required to actually acquire and possess it. It is said by some that other graces and works are not excluded, even though faith alone is expressed. But everything which is not receiving Christ is indeed excluded. This is so because it would not be the nature of what is required. When we speak of seeing something, we do not exclude any other member from being a part of the body; but we do exclude all except the eye from the act of seeing. If faith is required to receive Christ, then every grace and duty which is not required to receive him is excluded from our justification.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world might be saved through him. He that believes on him is not condemned; but he that does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God,” John 3:14-18.

I will observe only a few things from this passage. It conveys to believers a better understanding of this mystery than many long discourses of some learned men:

1. It is about the justification of men, and their right to eternal life. This is plain in verse 18, “He that believes on him is not condemned; but he that does not believe is condemned already.”
2. The only means of attaining this condition on our part is believing, as positively asserted three times.
3. The nature of this faith is declared,
  - (1.) By its object, which is Christ himself, the Son of God. “Whoever believes in *him*.”

(2.) He is the object of faith as the ordinance of God. He is given, sent, and proposed, from the love and grace of the Father: “God so loved the world, that he gave;” “God sent his Son.”

(3.) In the type of act, illustrated by those looking to the brazen serpent lifted up in the wilderness who were stung with fiery serpents. This is what our faith in Christ is doing, and it includes a trust in him alone for deliverance and relief.

This is the way, and these are the only causes and means, of the justification of condemned sinners. They are the substance of all that we plead for.

It may be said that all this does not prove the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us, which is what we are principally inquiring about. Yet if nothing is required on our part for justification but faith acted on Christ, and that is the ordinance of God for our recovery and salvation, then it is everything that we plead for. Justification by the remission of sins alone, without a righteousness that gives us acceptance with God and a right to the heavenly inheritance, is alien to the Scripture and to our common understanding of justification. What this righteousness must be, assuming that only faith is required on our part to participate in it, is too often asserted in Scripture to be denied: Christ himself is the object of our faith to that purpose.

Other testimonies might be produced here, but the sum of the doctrine declared by the evangelist John, is that the Lord Jesus Christ was “the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world.” That is, he takes away sin by his sacrifice, in which he answered and fulfilled all the typical sacrifices of the law. To this end he sanctified himself, that those who believe might be sanctified, or perfected forever, by offering himself. In the gospel, it is proposed that he was lifted up and crucified for us, bearing all our sins in his body on the tree. By faith in him we have adoption, justification, freedom from judgment and condemnation, and a right and title to eternal life. Those who do not believe are condemned already, because they do not believe on the Son of God. As he elsewhere expresses it, those who do not believe his testimony “make God a liar” when he says that “he has given us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son.” Nowhere does he make mention of any other means, cause, or condition of

justification on our part besides faith alone; although, he does abound in precepts to believers for love, and keeping the commands of Christ. This faith is the receiving of Christ in the sense declared. And this is the substance of Christian faith in this matter of justification. We often obscure rather than illustrate it by considering anything other than the grace and love of God, the person and mediation of Christ, and our faith in them.

## 18. The Nature of Justification in Paul's Epistles

The manner of our justification before God, with all its causes and means, are designedly declared by the apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, chapters 3, 4, and 5. Because he vindicates it in response to objections, his discourse is the proper seat of this doctrine, and for that reason it is the principal one to learn. Some object lately that this doctrine of justification by faith without works is found only in the writings of St. Paul, and that his writings are obscure and intricate. These allegations are both false and scandalous to Christian religion. We will not afford them the least consideration. He wrote *uJpo< Pneu>matov aJgi>ou fero>menov* “hupo Pneumatos hagiou feromenos,” as he was “moved by the Holy Ghost.” In the same way that all the material delivered by him was sacred truth, and immediately requires our faith and obedience, so the way and manner in which he declared it was what the Holy Ghost judged most expedient to edify the church.

He confidently said that the gospel he preached, though considered foolishness by others, was hidden from them so they could not understand or comprehend the mystery of it. It was “hid to those who are lost.” So we may say that if what he delivers concerning our justification before God seems obscure, difficult, or perplexing to us, then it is from our prejudices, corrupt desires, or weakness of understanding at best. Our inability to comprehend the glory of this mystery of the grace of God in Christ, is not from any defect in his way and manner of revealing it. Rejecting all such perverse insinuations, with a due sense of our own weakness, and acknowledging that at best we know only in part, we will humbly inquire into the blessed revelation of this great mystery of the justification of a sinner before God. I will do it with all briefness possible so as not to repeat what has already been spoken, or anticipate what may be spoken later.

### **The Righteousness of God**

The first thing he does is to prove that all men are under sin, and guilty before God, chap. 3:19, 23. This is the conclusion of what he



proved in his preceding discourse, chap. 1:18. The question arises, “how can anyone be justified before God?” Because justification is a sentence imposed upon the consideration of a righteousness, his grand inquiry is what that righteousness is. Concerning this, he affirms expressly that it is not the righteousness of the law, nor the works of the law. Therefore, in general, he declares that the righteousness by which we are justified is the righteousness of God, as opposed to any righteousness of our own, chap. 1:17; 3:21, 22. And he describes this righteousness of God by three properties:

1. It is *χωρις νομου* “choris nomou,” “without the law,” 3:21. It is separated in all its concerns from the law. It is not attainable by the law, nor by any works of the law. It is not our obedience to the law, nor is it attainable by our obedience to the law. No expression of it can more completely separate and exclude the works of obedience to the law from any concern in our justification than this does. Therefore, whatever is or can be performed by ourselves in obedience to the law, is rejected from any interest in this righteousness of God, or in its procurement by us.

2. Yet, this righteousness “is witnessed to by the law and the prophets,” (3:21).

The apostle, by differentiating the books of the Old Testament into “the law and the prophets,” indicates that he understands the books of Moses to be the “law.” Testimony to this righteousness of God is given in the books of Moses in four ways:

(1.) By declaring the reasons why it is necessary to our justification. This is done in the account given of our apostasy from God, of the loss of his image, and the state of sin that ensued from that. This is how an end was put to all possibility and hope of acceptance with God by our own personal righteousness. By the entrance of sin, our own righteousness went out of the world. So there must be another righteousness prepared and approved of God, and called “the righteousness of God,” in opposition to our own. Without it, all relation of love and favor between God and man must cease forever.

(2.) By declaring the way of recovery from this state contained in the first promise of the blessed seed (Gen. 3:15), in whom this righteousness of God was to be accomplished. For he alone was “to make an end of sin, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,”

μymil;[O qd,x, “tsedek ‘olamim,” Dan. 9:24. This righteousness of God would be the means of the justification of the church in all ages, and under all dispensations.

(3.) By stopping up the way to any other righteousness through the threats of the law, and the curse which every transgression of it includes. Hereby it was plainly and fully declared that there must be a righteousness provided for our justification before men that would answer and remove that curse.

(4.) By foreshadowing and representing the only way and means by which this righteousness of God was to be done. The law did this in all its sacrifices, especially in the great anniversary sacrifice on the Day of Atonement, in which all the sins of the church were laid on the head of the sacrifice, and so carried away.

3. He describes this righteousness by the only way we can participate in it, the only means we have on our part to communicate it to us. And this is by faith alone: “The righteousness of God which is by the faith of Jesus Christ to all and upon all those who believe; for there is no difference,” Rom. 3:22. Faith in Christ Jesus is the only way and means by which this righteousness of God comes upon us, or is communicated to us. It is so for all who have this faith, and only for them; the consideration of anything else making no difference. Although faith may be used in various senses, as thus specified and limited, it is the faith of Christ Jesus, or as he calls it, “the faith that is in me,” Acts 26:18. It can mean nothing but receiving him, and trusting in him, as the ordinance of God for righteousness and salvation.

This description of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel fully confirms the truth we plead for. The apostle asserts it is the only means and cause of our justification before God. And the only way we can participate in it and have it communicated to us, is by faith in Christ Jesus. If the righteousness by which we must be justified before God is not our own, but the righteousness of God (because these things are directly opposed, Phil. 3:9); and if the only way by which it comes upon us, or we are made partakers of it, is by faith in Jesus Christ; then our own personal, inherent righteousness or obedience has no involvement in our justification before God. This argument cannot be dissolved and the force of it cannot be waived by

any distinctions whatsoever, if we keep a due reverence of the authority of God in his word.

Paul has fully proved that no men living have any righteousness of their own by which they may be justified. They are all shut up under the guilt of sin. He has declared that there is a righteousness of God, now fully revealed in the gospel, by which alone we may be justified. This leaves all men to their own lot in themselves, because “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,” (3:23). Paul then proceeds to declare the nature of our justification before God in all its causes. “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus,” Rom. 3:24-26.

If anywhere, it is here that we ought to expect the interest of our personal obedience in our justification to be declared. If it was assumed in Paul’s foregoing discourse, that the apostle excluded only the works of the law as absolutely perfect, or as done in our own strength without the aid of grace, or as meritorious, then he would have assigned it a place and consideration here. He would at least have made some mention of it here, under the qualification of gracious, sincere, or evangelical righteousness, so that it might not seem to be absolutely excluded. Having generally excluded all works from our justification, verse 20, without distinction or limitation, it might well be expected that in fully declaring the nature and way of our justification, in all its causes, personal obedience would be the first, second, or other continuation of this necessary righteousness – something. It is plain the apostle thought of no such thing. Nor did he entertain any reflection on his doctrine that might negate the necessity of our own obedience. Considering the apostle’s design, with the circumstances of the context, and his utter silence about our personal righteousness in our justification before God, his argument is irrefutable. But this is not all that is expressly and directly excluded by him.

Any unprejudiced person would have to think that no words could be used that are more express and emphatical than those used here by the apostle. The whole of our justification is secured by the free grace

of God, through the blood or mediation of Christ, in which faith alone gives us an interest. I myself do not know how to express myself in this matter in words and terms that could be more express or significant of the concept in my mind. There might be an end to this controversy if we could all subscribe to the answer given here by the apostle to the question of how, by what means, on what grounds, or by what causes, we are justified before God: “We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,” (3:24, 25).

### **God’s Grace is the Cause of our Justification**

But the principal passages of this testimony must be separately considered. First, the principal efficient cause of our justification is expressed with a peculiar emphasis, or the “causa proegoumene.” “Dikaioumenoi doorean tei autou chariti,” – “Being justified freely by his grace.” God is the principal efficient cause of our justification, and his grace is the only moving cause of that. Exception is taken by those of the Roman church, that what is meant is *th~| ca>riti aujtou~* “tei chariti autou” (which their translation renders “per gratiam Dei”). This is the internal, inherent grace of God, which they make the formal cause of justification. They have nothing to prove it except what defeats it, namely, that it is added to *dwrea>n* “doorean,” “freely.” Adding it would be unnecessary if it signified the free grace or favor of God. The reason that both of these expressions, “gratis per gratiam,” and “freely by grace,” are put together is to give the greater emphasis to this assertion that the whole of our justification comes from the free grace of God. So far as they are distinguishable, the one expression denotes the principle from which our justification proceeds, which is grace; and the other, the manner of its operation – it works freely. Besides, the grace of God in this undeniably and constantly signifies his goodness, love, and favor; as has been proved by many. See Rom. 5:15; Eph. 2:4, 8, 9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Tit. 3:4, 5.

Being justified *dwrea>n* “doorean” (so the LXX render the Hebrew particle “chinam”) means justified without price, without merit, without cause. Sometimes it is used for “without purpose,” that is, what is done in vain. This is how “doorean” is used by the apostle in

Gal. 2:21. It means without price or reward in Gen. 29:15; Exod. 21:2; 2Sam. 24:24; it means without cause, merit, or any means of procurement in 1Sam. 19:5; Psa. 69:4; This is the sense rendered by [dwrea>n](#) “doorean” in John 15:25. The intent of the word is to exclude all consideration of anything in us that would be the cause or condition of our justification. [Ca>riv](#) “Charis” or “favor” may refer to something in a person towards whom it is shown. So it is said that Joseph found grace or favor, [ca>rin](#) “charin,” in the eyes of Potiphar, Gen. 39:4. But he did not find it [dwrea>n](#) “doorean,” without any consideration or cause. For he “saw that the LORD was with him, and made all that he did to prosper in his hand,” verse 3. No more emphatic words can be found to free our justification before God from anything in ourselves, than these of the apostle: [Dwrea<n th~|aujtu~ ca>riti](#) “Doorean tei autou chariti,” “Freely by his grace.”

We have asserted that this righteousness of God is the cause and means of our justification before him, in opposition to all righteousness of our own. We have declared that God’s part in causing its communication to us is mere free and sovereign grace. The means on our part by which we receive or are made partakers of that righteousness of God, is by faith: [Dia< th~v pi>stewv ejn aujtu~ ai\[mati](#) “Dia tes pisteos en outou haimati,” that is, “By faith alone,” Nothing else is proposed, nothing else is required to this end. It is replied by some that there is no intimation that it is by faith alone, or that faith is exclusive of other graces or works. But there is such an exclusion directly included in the description given of that faith by which we are justified. It is with regard to its special object: “By faith in his blood.” It is faith in the blood of Christ by which propitiation is made for sin. It is with regard to this alone that the apostle affirms we are justified through faith. He admits no association with any other graces or duties. Neither is it any part of the nature of other graces or works to fix on the blood of Christ for justification before God; therefore they are all directly excluded here.

Another evasion will not yield our adversaries any relief either. They claim that faith does not mean the single grace of faith, but the whole obedience required in the new covenant: faith and works together. However, all works whatever are excluded in the declaration of the

causes of our justification on the part of God ([Dwrea<n th~| aujtou~ca>riti](#) “doorean tei outou chariti,” – “Freely by his grace”). This is true by virtue of that great rule in Rom. 11:6, “If by grace, then no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace.” So the duty of faith is to look to its object, the blood of Christ, absolutely excluding all works from an interest in that duty. Thus, whatever looks to the blood of Christ for justification is faith, and nothing else. As for calling it a single act or duty, I refer you to our preceding discourse about the nature of justifying faith.

The apostle infers three things from the declaration he made of the nature and causes of our justification before God. All of them further illustrate the meaning and sense of his words:

1. Boasting is excluded: [Pou~ ou+n hJ kau>chsiv; ejxeklei>sqh](#) “Pou oun he kauchesi? exekleisthe,” Rom. 3:27. It is apparent for that reason, and from what he affirms concerning Abraham, chap. 4:2, that a great part of the controversy he had about justification, was whether it allowed boasting in those who were justified. It is known that the Jews placed all their hopes in things about which they thought they could boast, namely, their privileges and righteousness. But from the declaration made of the nature and causes of justification, the apostle infers that all boasting whatever is utterly shut out of doors, [ejxeklei>sqh](#) “exekleisthe.” Boasting in our language is a vice; it is never used in a good sense. But [kau>chsiv](#) “kauchesis” and [kau>chma](#) “kauchema,” [NT:2746] the words used by the apostle, are [ejk tw~n me>swn](#) “ek toon mesoon,” indifferent in meaning. As applied, they may denote a virtue as well as a vice. In Heb. 3:6, “kauchema” is translated as “rejoicing,” a virtue.

But they always refer to something that is peculiar to what they are ascribed to. Wherever anything good is ascribed to one and not another, there is a [kauch>sewv](#) “foundation for boasting.” The apostle says, in the matter of our justification, that all this is utterly excluded. Whenever any condition or qualification exists in one more than another, especially if works based, it also gives a ground of boasting, as he affirms in Rom. 4:2. It appears, from comparing that verse with 3:27, that wherever there is any influence of our own works on our justification, there is a foundation for boasting. But in

evangelical justification, no such boasting of any kind can be admitted. Therefore, there is no place for works in our justification before God. If there were, a [kau>chma](#) “kauchema” of one kind or other, before God or man, must be allowed.

2. He generally concludes, “That a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law,” chap. 3:28. If we are justified freely through faith in the blood of Christ, that faith has the propitiation of Christ as its special object. As such, it cannot be partnered with any other grace or duty in this. That is because all boasting is excluded as necessarily resulting from differing graces or works in ourselves; and all works of the law are excluded from consideration. Therefore, it is certain that it is by faith alone in Christ that we are justified.

3. He asserts for that reason, that we “do not make void the law through grace,” but establish it, verse 31; how this is done, and how alone it can be done, has been declared before.

This is the substance of the resolution the apostle gives to that great inquiry, “how may a guilty convinced sinner come to be justified in the sight of God?” The sovereign grace of God, the mediation of Christ, and faith in the blood of Christ, are all that he requires. Whatever notions men may have about justification in other respects, it will not be safe to venture on any other resolution of this case and inquiry; nor are we wiser than the Holy Ghost.

### **Works are Excluded from our Justification**

In the beginning of Romans chapter four, Paul confirms what he doctrinally declared before, using a striking instance. This is the justification of Abraham. Being the father of the faithful, his justification is proposed as our pattern, as Paul expressly declares in verses 22-24. Some fear what I am about to observe on our passage to the fifth verse.

1. He denies that Abraham was justified by works, verse 2.

(1.) These works were not those of the Jewish law, which some pretend are excluded from our justification in this passage. They were the works he performed some hundreds of years before the law was given at Sinai. Therefore, they are the works of his moral obedience to God.

(2.) These works must be understood as Abraham was then. They were works of righteousness, performed in faith and love to God. They were works of new obedience under the conduct and aids of the Spirit of God. And they were works required in the covenant of grace. These are the works that were excluded from the justification of Abraham. These things are plain, express, and evident. They are not to be eluded by any distinctions or evasions. All of Abraham's evangelical works are expressly excluded from his justification before God.

2. He proves the nature and grounds of Abraham's justification by the testimony of Scripture. He was justified no other way than what he declared before. It was by grace, through faith in Christ Jesus, verse 3. "Abraham believed God" (in the promise of Christ and his mediation), "and it was counted to him for righteousness," verse 3. He was justified by faith in the same way described before (there is no other justification than by faith), in opposition to all his own works and personal righteousness.

3. From the same testimony he declares how he came to partake in that righteousness on which he was justified before God. It was by imputation: it was counted or imputed to him for righteousness. The nature of imputation has been declared before.

4. He asserts and proves the special nature of this imputation, which is of grace without regard to works, by showing what is contrary to it. Verse 4: "Now to him who works, the reward is not reckoned to be of grace, but of debt." Where works are any consideration, there is no room for that kind of imputation by which Abraham was justified. It was a gracious imputation. That is not what is our own prior to this, but what is made our own by that imputation. For what is our own cannot be imputed to us by grace; it is considered ours as a debt. What is our own is due to us, with all its effects. Those who plead that faith itself is imputed to us, giving some support to imputed grace, say that it is imputed not for what it is, for then it would be considered a debt, but for what it is not. We have disproved this before. But all works are inconsistent with that imputation by which Abraham was justified. Being justified by works is not what happened with him.



Some say, “All works that are meritorious, that are performed to gain merit, that make the reward one of debt, are excluded; but other works are not.” This distinction is not learned from the apostle. For, according to him, if this is meritorious, and the reward is considered a debt, then all works in justification are meritorious. Without distinction or limitation, he affirms that “to him who works, the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt.” He does not exclude some sort of works, or works in some sense, because they would make the reward of debt. Instead, he affirms that all works would do so, to the exclusion of gracious imputation, For if the foundation of imputation is in ourselves, then imputation by grace is excluded. In the fifth verse, the sum of the apostle’s doctrine is expressed: “But to him who does not work, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” It is granted by everyone that the close of the verse, “His faith is counted for righteousness,” expresses the justification of the person intended. He is justified. And the way of his justification is this: his faith is counted, or imputed to him, for righteousness. Therefore, this is all that is required on his part to be justified.

It is said of the justified person that he is one *oJ mh< ejrgazo>menov* “ho me ergadzomenos,” “who works not.” He is not required to work to be *justified*. That does not mean he is free from performing any duties of obedience to God of any kind. For every person in the world is always obliged to perform all duties of obedience, according to the light and knowledge of the will of God, and the means afforded to him. The expression is limited to the subject-matter addressed. He “who works not,” is said only with respect to justification. To say that someone who does not work is justified through believing, is to say that his works, whatever they may be, have no influence on his justification, nor has God considered them in justifying him. God considers no man’s works in his justification, no man’s duties of obedience. That is because we are justified *th~| aujtou~ ca>riti* “tei outou chariti,” – “freely by his grace.” When God expressly affirms that he justifies someone who does not work, and does so freely by his grace, I cannot understand what place our works or duties of obedience can have in our justification. Why should we trouble ourselves to invent what kind of consideration they may have in our justification before God, when he himself affirms that they have none

at all? The words are incapable being interpreted any other way. He that does not work is he that does not work. It is bold for anyone to rise up in opposition to such express divine testimonies, however philosophically phrased or argued. These are but thorns and briers, which the word of God will pass through and consume.

The apostle further adds that God “justifies the ungodly.” This is an expression that has stirred up so much wrath among many, and the reason some seem to be very displeased with the apostle himself. If anyone else said that God justifies the ungodly, his doctrine would be thought to overthrow the necessity for godliness, holiness, obedience, or good works; “for what need can there be of any of them, if God justifies the ungodly?” Nevertheless, this is illustrative of God, that he is *oJ dikaiw~n to<n ajsezh~* “ho dikaioon ton asethe,” “he that justifies the ungodly.” This is his prerogative and property. As such he will be believed in and worshipped, which adds weight and emphasis to the expression. No matter how it angers men, we must not ignore this testimony of the Holy Ghost.

“But the difference is about the meaning of the words.” If so, it must be granted without mutual offense, even though we mistake their proper meaning. God “justifies the ungodly.” Some say it refers to “those who formerly were ungodly, not those who continue to be ungodly after they are justified.” And this is most true. All who are justified were ungodly before; and all who are justified are made godly at the same instant. The question is, “Were they godly or ungodly prior to their justification?” If they are godly, then the apostle’s words that God justifies the ungodly are not true; for the contradictory proposition would have to be true, that God justifies none but the godly.

Therefore, although the justification of a sinner makes him godly, prior to this justification he is ungodly. He is considered ungodly, as someone who does not work, as one whose duties and obedience contribute nothing to his justification. But he is endowed with faith, which purifies the heart and is a vital principle of all obedience. In his justification, his conscience is purged from dead works by the blood of Christ, and so he is considered godly. Because he does not work, all his works are excluded from being the “causa per quam” of his justification, the reason it is possible. And because he is ungodly,

they are excluded from being the “*causa sine qua non*” of his justification, the indispensable condition of it.

The means by which he actually becomes justified and godly is faith, or believing: “But believes on him who justifies the ungodly.” It is faith alone. It is the faith of one who does not work, specifically, faith in its special object. God justifies the ungodly, exclusive of the contribution of any works whatever. It is impossible to express faith alone without the literal use of that word “alone.” Because faith is asserted in opposition to all works of ours, no place is left for any works to make the least impact on our justification before God, whatever distinction we might make: “to him that does not work.” Its special nature is declared in its special object, which is God “justifying the ungodly,” that is, freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The nature of justifying faith is also determined here. It is not a mere assent to divine revelations. It is not such a firm assent to them that it would cause us to yield obedience to all the precepts of the Scripture, although these things are included in it. But it is believing in and trusting to him that justifies the ungodly, through the mediation of Christ.

Concerning this justified person, the apostle affirms that “his faith is counted for righteousness.” That is, he is justified in the way and manner that was declared before. But there is a difference about the meaning of these words. Some say their meaning is that faith, as an act, grace, duty, or work of ours, is imputed for righteousness. Others say that what is imputed to us is faith as it apprehends Christ and his righteousness. So they say that faith justifies, or is counted for righteousness, only relatively and not directly with respect to its object; it is a figure of speech. This is fiercely stated as though they denied the express words of the Scripture, used only once, when in fact they are only interpreting this expression as many others have done. Those who take the first meaning, affirm that faith here includes our obedience or works, either as the form and essence of this faith, or as having the same influence with it in our justification. They give this meaning to it: “To him that does not work, but believes in him that justifies the ungodly, his faith and works are counted to him for righteousness.” This not only denies what the apostle affirms, but it plainly contradicts him.

I marvel a little that any unprejudiced person would expound this solitary expression in a way that contradicts the design and words of the apostle, and the whole ensuing context. What the apostle proposes is that we are justified by the righteousness of God, through faith in the blood of Christ. It will be made evident that this faith cannot be a work itself. In the words of the text, all works are excluded. But it is said that faith absolutely, as a single grace, act, and duty of ours, and much more if it includes obedience in it, is a work – and in the latter sense, it is all works. In the ensuing context, Paul proves that Abraham was not justified by works. But not to be justified by works, and to be justified by some works, if faith itself is a work, are contradictory. Therefore, I will make a few arguments opposing this feigned sense of the apostle's words:

1. Faith is an act and duty of ours. As such, faith is a work, though a special kind of working. In this sense, it is not opposed to work. But in our justification, faith and works are opposed: "To him that does not work, but believes." Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8, 9.

2. The righteousness of God is what is imputed to us; for we are "made the righteousness of God in Christ," 2 Cor. 5:21; "The righteousness of God upon those who believe," Rom. 3:21, 22. But faith, absolutely considered, is not the righteousness of God. "God imputes to us righteousness without works," chap. 4:6. There is no intimation of double imputation, or two sorts of righteousness, the righteousness of God and what is not so. Faith is not the righteousness of God because,

(1.) It is to faith that the righteousness of God is revealed, and by faith we believe and receive his righteousness. Therefore, it is not itself the righteousness of God, for nothing can be the cause or means of itself. The righteousness of God is "revealed to faith," chap. 1:17; and by this faith it is "received," chap. 3:22; 5:11.

(2.) Faith is not the righteousness of God. Instead, the righteousness of God is imputed to us by faith. Rom. 3:22; Phil. 3:9.

(3.) The thing by which the righteousness of God is sought, obtained, and submitted to, is not that righteousness itself; it is faith, Rom. 9:30, 31; 10:3, 4.

(4.) The righteousness which is imputed to us is not our own prior to imputation: "That I may be found in him, not having mine own

righteousness,” Phil. 3:9. But faith is a man’s own: “Show me your faith..., and I will show you my faith,” James 2:18.

(5.) “God imputes righteousness” to us, Rom. 4:6; and that righteousness which God imputes to us is the righteousness by which we are justified. We are justified by the obedience and blood of Christ: “By the obedience of one we are made righteous,” chap. 5:19; “Much more now being justified by his blood,” verse 9; “He has put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” Heb. 9:26; Isa. 53:11, “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.” But faith is neither the obedience nor the blood of Christ.

(6.) Faith is our own. But the apostle is talking about what is *not* our own prior to imputation. It is something that is made our own by imputation, for it is of grace. Imputing to us what is really our own prior to imputation is not of grace. Imputation is the judgment of God concerning the thing imputed, with respect to those to whom it is imputed. So the act of Phinehas was imputed to him for righteousness (Psa. 106:31). God judged it, and declared it to be a righteous, rewardable act. Therefore, if our faith and obedience are imputed to us, then it is only the judgment of God that we are believers, and that we are obedient. “The righteousness of the righteous,” says the prophet, “shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him,” Ezek. 18:20. That is, their righteousness is imputed to them, and their wickedness is imputed to them. Therefore, if faith is imputed to us accompanied with works of obedience, then it must be imputed to us either as a perfect righteousness, which it is not, or as an imperfect righteousness, which it is. But none of this can be accepted:

[1.] It is not imputed to us for the perfect righteousness required by the law, because it is not perfect. Episcopius confesses in his disputation, dispute. 45, sect. 7, 8, that the righteousness which is imputed to us must be “absolutissima et perfectissima,” “most absolute and most perfect.” No man will pretend that faith is a most absolute and most perfect righteousness, in a way that fulfills the righteousness of the law in us by imputation.

[2.] It is not imputed to us for an imperfect righteousness. First, that would be of no advantage to us, for we cannot be justified

before God by an imperfect righteousness. This is evident in the prayer of the psalmist, Psa. 143:2, "Enter not into judgment with your servant, for in your sight no man living" (no servant of your who has the most perfect or highest measure of imperfect righteousness) "shall be justified." Secondly, The imputation of anything to us that was ours prior to that imputation, is contrary to the imputation described by the apostle, as proved.

[3.] This imputation of faith for righteousness cannot be judging something which is imperfect to be perfect, because the judgment of God is according to truth. But without judging it to be perfect, it cannot be accepted as perfect. To accept anything for what we judge it to be, and not for what it is, is to be deceived.

*Lastly*, if faith as a work is imputed to us, then it must be imputed as a work done in faith, for no other work is accepted with God. That faith must also be imputed to us, and it also becomes a good work. And that good work must be done in faith, and so on "in infinitum."

### **Pardoned Sin**

Rom. 4:6-8. The apostle pursues the area of pardoned sin in his argument for justification without works. He does this using the testimony of the psalmist, who places the blessedness of a man in the remission of his sins. His intent is not to declare the full nature of justification, which he did before, but only to prove its freedom from any works. "Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works," (which was the only thing he meant to prove by this testimony), "saying, Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven." He describes their blessedness by this pardon; not that their whole blessedness consists in it, but pardon does attend it. There can be no possible regard to any works whatever. He describes this blessedness in terms of both the imputation of righteousness, and the non-imputation of sin. These two things are inseparable. Because remission of sin is the first part of justification, and the principal part of it, and the imputation of righteousness always accompanies it, the blessedness of a man may be well described thereby. Because all spiritual blessings go together in Christ, Eph. 1:3, a man's blessedness may be described by any one of them. Yet the imputation of righteousness and the remission of sin are not the same, nor does the apostle suggest they are. He mentions

them distinctly, both being equally necessary to our complete justification, as has been proved.

### **Imputed Sin Leads to Death**

Rom. 5:12-21. “Therefore, as sin entered into the world by one man, and death by sin; so death passed on all men, for all have sinned: (For sin was in the world prior to the law: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the way of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if through the offense of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many. And the gift is not as it was by one that sinned: for the judgment by one was to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses to justification. For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ:) Therefore, as by the offense 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 shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offense might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin has reigned to death, even so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In chap. 3:27, the apostle affirms that in justification all boasting – “kauchema” – is excluded. But in the verse preceding the quoted passage (5:11), he grants that there is a boasting. “And not only so, but we also glory [kauchema] in God.” He excludes boasting in ourselves, because there is nothing in us to procure or promote our own justification. He allows our boasting in God because of the eminence and excellence of the way and means of our justification, which God has provided in his grace. The [kau>chma](#) “kauchema,” or boasting in God that is allowed here, is in regard to what the apostle will discuss further. “And not only so,” refers to what he said concerning the pardon of sin in our justification. For although he mentions the imputation of righteousness, he principally declares

our justification by the pardon of sin and our freedom from condemnation, which excludes all boasting in ourselves. But here he intends to progress to what our glorying in God depends upon: a right and title to eternal life freely given to us. This is the imputation of the righteousness and obedience of Christ to the justification of life; it is the reign of grace through righteousness to eternal life.

Some have complained greatly about the obscurity of the passage, its many ellipses, and the figures of speech which they claim it contains. However, I would think that men acquainted with the common principles of Christian religion, knowing the nature and guilt of our original apostasy from God, and reading this passage without prejudice, would grant that the apostle intends to prove a point. The sin of Adam was imputed to all men to their condemnation, and so the righteousness or obedience of Christ is imputed to all who believe to their justification of life. The differences between interpreters about the exposition of these words relates to the use of some particles, prepositions, and the dependence of one passage upon another. The confirmation of the truth argued for depends on none of these.

Socinus acknowledges that this passage gives the greatest support to our opinion in this matter. He cannot deny that a great deal of what we believe is represented in the words of the apostle. Therefore he does his utmost to twist and corrupt them. And yet, although most of his cleverness is commentary on the annotations of others on the passage, his own material is taken out of Origen, and the comment of Pelagius on this epistle. This is extant in the works of Jerome, and was urged before him by Erasmus. The substance or what he says is that the actual transgression of Adam is not imputed to his posterity, and therefore a depraved nature is not communicated to them. However, because he incurred the penalty of death, all who derive their nature from him are subject to death. As for our corrupt nature, or proneness to sin, he says it is not derived from Adam. It is a habit contracted by our own continued acts. The obedience or righteousness of Christ is not imputed to us either. It is only when we make ourselves his children by our obedience that we partake of its benefits. Christ obtained eternal life only for himself by his obedience to God. This is the substance of his long argument on this subject, *De Servatore*, lib. 4 cap. 6. This does not expound the words



of the apostle; it expressly contradicts them, as we will see in the ensuing consideration.

A comparison is proposed here between the first Adam, by whom sin was brought into the world, and the second Adam, by whom it is taken away. It is a comparison *ejk tou~ ejnanti>ou* “ek tou enantiou,” of contrary things. There is a similitude in some things, and a dissimilitude in others, both illustrating the truth. The general proposition is contained in verse 12: “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed on all men, for all have sinned.” Sin and punishment entered into the world by one man; and that by one sin. Yet they were not confined to that one man, but belonged equally to all. In the entrance, he first mentions the cause (sin), and then the effect (punishment): “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;” but in its application to all men, he first expresses the effect and then the cause: “Death passed on all men, for all have sinned.” On the first entrance of sin, death passed on all. That is, all men became liable to death as the punishment due to sin. All men that ever were, are, or will be, did not exist then. Yet, upon the first entrance of sin, they were all made subject to death, or liable to punishment. They were made so by virtue of divine constitution, based on their federal existence in the one man that sinned. They actually became liable to the sentence when they were born children of wrath.

It is obvious what sin the apostle means. It is the actual sin of Adam, the one sin of that one person committed while he lived. The corruption and depravity of our nature necessarily ensues from that one sin in everyone who is born into the world. Yet it is the guilt of Adam’s actual sin alone that rendered them all liable to death upon the first entrance of sin into the world. So death entered by sin, along with the guilt and liability of it; and that is true for all men universally.

Death here comprises the whole punishment due to sin: “The wages of sin is death,” Rom. 6:23, Whatever sin deserves in the justice of God, whatever punishment God at any time appointed or threatened for it, it is comprised in death: “In the day you eat of that, you shall die the death.” Therefore this is what the apostle lays down as the foundation of his discourse, and of the comparison he intends. In

and by the actual sin of Adam, all men are made liable to death, which is the whole punishment due to sin. In other words, the guilt of that sin is imputed to them. The imputation of sin to someone means nothing more than rendering them justly liable to the punishment due to that sin; just as not imputing sin means freeing them from being liable to punishment. This is the vanity of the Pelagian gloss, that death passed on everyone by natural propagation from the one who deserved it, without imputing the guilt of that sin to them. This contradicts the plain words of the apostle. For it is the guilt of sin, and not natural propagation, that he affirms is the cause of death.

Having mentioned sin as the only cause of death, or the guilt of sin as the only cause of the punishment of death, he declares how all men became liable to this punishment, or guilty of death: *Ἐφ' ἧς πάντες ἥμαρτον* “Eph’hooi pantes hemarton,” – “In quo ones peccaverunt,” – “In whom all have sinned.” It relates to the one man that sinned, and in whom all sinned. This is evident from its effect, “in him all died,” 1 Cor. 15:22. As it is said here, on his sin “death passed on all men.” This is the meaning of the words, “epi” being substituted for “en,” which is not unusual in the Scripture. See Matt. 15:5; Rom. 4:18; 5:2; Phil. 1:3; Heb. 9:17. Austin [Augustine] contends for this reading of the words against the Pelagians. He rejected their “eo quad” or “propterea.” But I will not contend about the reading of the words. It is the ploy of our adversaries to persuade men that the force of our argument depends solely on interpreting the words, “epi’hooi,” to mean “in whom.” We will grant them their desire that they are better rendered by “eo quod,” “propterea,” or “quatenus,” – “inasmuch” or “because.” However, a reason is given here why “death passed on all men.” It is because “all have sinned.” That is, death entered into the world by that sin.

Under the original constitution of the law, death is due whenever a sin is committed. But the present inquiry is, how has death passed at once on all men? How did they become liable to it on its first entrance into the world by Adam’s actual sin? This sin cannot be their own actual sin. Indeed, in the next few verses the apostle affirms that death passed onto those who never actually sinned as Adam did. If the actual sins of men were meant, in imitation of Adam’s original sin, then men would be made liable to death before

they actually sinned. For, on its first entrance into the world, death passed on all men. Death fell on them before anyone, besides Adam, had actually sinned. It is an open contradiction for men to be liable to death, as the punishment for sin, when they have not sinned. Although God, by his sovereign power, might sentence an innocent creature to death, it is impossible for that innocent creature to be guilty of death. For being guilty of death means having sinned. Therefore this expression, "Inasmuch as all have sinned," expresses the guilt of death that arose when sin and death first entered into the world. No sin can be meant by this except the sin of Adam, and our interest in that sin. Our interest in that sin can only be explained by the imputation of the guilt of that sin to us. Because Adam's act is not our own inherent and subjective act, only the imputation of its guilt can give us an interest in its effect. Communicating something to us that is not inherent in us, is what we mean by imputation.

In this, the apostle lays the foundation of all that he afterwards infers and asserts in the whole comparison. Some say he lays down the proposition on the part of Adam here, but he does not show what answers it to the contrary in Christ. Origen gives the reason for the apostle's silence. It is for fear that what is said would be an excuse for sloth and negligence. He says that because [w\[sper](#) "hoosper," [NT:5618] "as" (which is a note of similarity) "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;" the counterpart should be, "so by one righteousness entered into the world, and life by righteousness." He acknowledges this would be the genuine completion of the comparison. It was not expressed by the apostle for fear that men would abuse it to their negligence or false security, supposing that what should be done afterwards was done already. Such an assumption would plainly contradict and evert most of what he further asserts in the exposition of the passage; the apostle did not conceal any truth for such considerations. In verse 19, he plainly expresses what he only intimates here. He shows how foolish and wicked it would be to suppose that this condones men indulging themselves in their sins.

While the apostle does conceal the expression of what is ascribed to Christ, in opposition to what he had affirmed of Adam and his sin, it is sufficiently included in the close of verse 19. There he affirms that

Adam was “the figure of him that was to come.” The way and manner by which this person introduced righteousness and life, and communicated them to men, answered the way and manner by which Adam introduced sin and death, which passed on all the world. Look at how it was with Adam with respect to his natural posterity, and with respect to sin and death; so it is with the Lord Christ, the second Adam, and his spiritual posterity, with respect to righteousness and life. For that reason, if the actual sin of Adam was imputed to all his posterity, and considered to be their own sin to their condemnation, then the actual obedience of Christ, the second Adam, was imputed to all his spiritual seed (that is, to all believers) to their justification. I will not press this argument further here, because I will give the grounds for it later. I will bypass the next two verses which contain an objection and response, and in which we have no immediate concern.

Verses 15, 16. The apostle proceeds to explain his comparison between those things which are dissimilar: “But the free gift [“charisma”] [NT:5486] is not like the offense [“paraptooma”] [NT:3900]. For if through the offense of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many.” The comparison is between “charisma” on the one hand, and “paraptooma” on the other. A dissimilarity between them is asserted, not as to their opposite effects of life and death, but only as to the degrees of their efficacy with respect to those effects. “Paraptooma” is the offense, the fall, the sin, the transgression; that is, *to~ eJno<v parakoh<* “*to*u henos parako-e,” “the disobedience of one,” verse 19. Hence, the first sin of Adam is generally called “the fall,” or *to< para>ptwma* “to paraptooma.” What is opposed to this is *to< ca>risma?* “to charisma,” which is immediately explained to be “The grace of God, and the free gift by grace, through Jesus Christ.” Therefore, although this word in the next verse precisely signifies the righteousness of Christ, here it comprehends all the causes of our justification. It does so in opposition to the fall of Adam, and to the entrance of sin that resulted.

The consequence and effect of the offense, or the fall, is that “many be dead.” The only thing meant here by “many” is that the effects of

that one offense were not confined to one person. If we ask who or how many those are, the apostle tells us that they are all men universally, all the posterity of Adam. By this one offense they are all dead, and therefore they all sinned. That is, they are rendered liable to death as the punishment due to that one offense. Thus it is vain to twist the words of verse 12, "Inasmuch as all have sinned," to refer to any other sin but the first sin in Adam. It is given as the reason why death passed on them. It is plainly affirmed here "that they are dead," or that death passed on them, by that one offense.

### **The Free Gift of Righteousness**

In contrast to death, the efficacy of the free gift is expressed as something that abounded much more. Besides asserting the thing itself, the apostle seems to me to argue the equity of our justification by grace, through the obedience of Christ. He compares it with the condemnation that befell us by the sin and disobedience of Adam. If it was just, fitting, and equal, that all men should be condemned for the sin of Adam, then it is much more fitting that believers should be justified by the obedience of Christ, through the grace and free donation of God. But afterwards he declares in particular how the gift by grace abounded to many, beyond the effect of the fall to condemn. And he declares what freed us from condemnation, more eminently than we are made liable to it by the fall and sin of Adam, that thing alone by which we are justified before God. "How" is by the grace of God, and "what" is the gift, given by grace, through Jesus Christ alone. This is what we plead for, verse 16. There is another difference between the things compared, or rather the specific dissimilarity that was only expressed in general before:

"And the gift is not as it was by one that sinned: for the judgment by one was to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offenses to justification."

[Di j ejno<v aJmarth>santov](#) "Di' henos hamartasantos," "By one that sinned," is the same as [di jeJno<v paraptw>matov](#) "di' henos paraptoomatos," "by one sin." It indicates one offense, or the man's one sin. [Kri~ma](#) "Krima," [NT:2917] which we render "judgment." Most interpreters use "reatus" meaning "guilt," or "crimen," which is derived from it. [tP;v\]mi](#) "Mishpat" is used this way in Hebrew for guilt. In Jer. 26:11, the phrase [hZ,h vyail; tw,m;AfPv\]mi](#) "mishpat-

mawet la'ish hazeh" means "The judgment of death is to this man, this man is guilty of death, or has deserved to die." First, there was [para>ptwma](#) "paraptooma," the sin, the fall, [ou~ ejnov ajmarth>santov](#) "tou henos hamartasantos," of one man that sinned; it was his actual sin alone. From that followed [kri~ma](#) "krima," or "reatus" meaning "guilt," which was common to all men. By that one sin, guilt came upon all. And the end of this is that it rendered men liable to "katakrima," or "condemnation," guilt to condemnation. This guilt to condemnation which came upon all, was "ex henos," of one person, or sin.

This is the order of events on the part of Adam:

- (1.) [Para>ptwma](#) "Paraptooma," the one sin;
- (2.) [Kri~ma](#) "Krima," the guilt from that sin which ensued to all;
- (3.) [Kata>krima](#) "Katachrma," the condemnation which that guilt deserved.

Their "antitheta," or opposites, in the second Adam are:

- (1.) [Ca>risma](#) "Charisma," the free donation of God;
- (2.) [Dw>rhma](#) "Doorema," the gift of grace itself, or the righteousness of Christ;
- (3.) [Dikai>wma](#) "Dikaiooma," or [dikai>swiv zwh~v](#) "dikaioosis dzooes," "justification of life."

Though the apostle distinguishes these things to compare and contrast them, what he intends by all of them is the righteousness and obedience of Christ, as he declares in verses 18, 19. In the matter of our justification, he calls this,

- (1.) [Ca>risma](#) "Charisma," with respect to its free, gratuitous grant by the grace of God, [Dwrea< th~v ca>ritov](#), "Doorea tes charitos," and
- (2.) [Dw>rhma](#) "Doorema," with respect to us who receive it. It is a free gift it is to us, and
- (3.) [Dikai>wma](#) "Dikaiooma," with respect to its effect in making us righteous.

Therefore, because guilt came on all men to condemnation by the sin of Adam, which was imputed to them, we must ask in what way the

free gift was different: “The gift is not as it was by one that sinned.” And it was different in two things:

1. Condemnation came upon all by one offense. But being under the guilt of that one offense, we contract the guilt of innumerable offenses. If the free gift referred only to that one offense and no others, then we could not be delivered. Therefore it is said to be “of many offenses” (v. 16), that is, of all our sins and trespasses whatever.

2. Adam and all his posterity in him were accepted with God, and given a way to obtain eternal life and blessedness, a state in which God himself would have been their reward. In this estate, by the entrance of sin into the world, they lost the favor of God. They incurred the guilt of death or condemnation, for they are the same thing. But they did not lose an immediate right and title to life and blessedness. They could not lose what they did not have, and could not have before the course of obedience prescribed to them was accomplished.

Therefore, what they lost by the one offense was God’s favor, and what they gained was the judgment or guilt of death and condemnation. But an immediate right to eternal life was not lost by that one sin. The free gift is not lost. We are freed by it, not only from one sin, but from all our sins. And we also have a right and title to eternal life by it. For in that gift, “grace reigns through righteousness to eternal life,” verse 21.

The same truth is further explained and confirmed in verse 17. “For if by one man’s offense death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” I will only observe from this those things which immediately concern our present subject.

1. It is worth observing what a variety of expressions the apostle uses to set forth the grace of God in the justification of believers: [Dikai>wma](#), [dw>rhma](#), [ca>riv](#), [ca>risma](#), [perissei>a ca>ritov](#), [dwrea< th~v dikaiosunhv](#) “Dikaiooma, doorema, charis, charisma, perisseia charitos, doorea tes dikaiosunes.” Nothing is omitted that in any way may express the freedom, sufficiency, and efficacy of grace to that end. Although some of these terms seem to be synonymous, and used indiscriminately, every one includes something that is unique; all of

them set forth the whole work of grace. [Dikai>wma](#) “Dikaiooma” [NT:1345 justification, or righteous deed] seems to me to be used in this argument for [dikaiolo>ghma](#) “dikaiologema,” which is the foundation of a cause in trial, the matter pleaded, or the basis on which the person tried is to be acquitted and justified. This basis is the righteousness of Christ, “of one.” [Dw>rhma](#) “Doorema,” [NT:1431 gift] or a free donation, excludes all merit or conditions on the part of those who receive it. It is what frees us from condemnation, and gives us a right to the justification of life. [Ca>riv](#) “Charis” [NT:5485 grace] is the free grace and favor of God. It is the original or efficient cause of our justification, as was declared in chap. 3:24. [Ca>risma](#) “Charisma” has been explained before. [Perissei>a ca>ritov](#) “Perisseia charitos,” or “the abundance of grace,” is added to assure believers of the certainty of the effect. It shows that nothing is lacking to our justification. [Dwrea< th~v dikaiosunhv](#) “Doorea tes dikaiosunes” [NT:1431 3588 1343: “gift of righteousness”] expresses the free grant of that righteousness which is imputed to us to the justification of life. Afterward, it is called “the obedience of Christ.” It becomes all of us to learn to think and speak of these divine mysteries from this blessed apostle, who knew them better than any of us, and besides that, who wrote by divine inspiration.

I marvel how men can break through his expression of the grace of God, and the obedience of Christ in the work of our justification before God, to introduce their own works of obedience, and to find a place for them in that justification. The design of Paul and others in declaring this point of our justification before God, seems to be very opposite and contrary to such an introduction. His whole discourse concerns the grace of God, the death, blood, and obedience of Christ, as if he could never sufficiently satisfy himself in setting out and declaring them. There is not the least mention of any works or duties of our own, or the least intimation that they have any use in this justification. Yet all the pleas of our detractors are for their own works and duties. They have invented as many terms for them as the Holy Ghost has used to express and declare the grace of God. Instead of the words of wisdom mentioned before, which the Holy Ghost has taught and uses to fill his discourse, theirs are filled with conditions, preparatory dispositions, merits, causes, and I know not what other



trappings for our own works. For my part, I choose to learn from him, and accommodate my conceptions and expressions of gospel mysteries to his, especially concerning this topic of justification. I would rather trust the Holy Ghost, who cannot deceive me, than trust to any other source, however specious its pretences may be.

2. It is plain in this verse that the only requirement for anyone's justification, is that he receive the "abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness." This is the description the apostle gives of anything required on the part of those who are justified. This excludes all works of righteousness that we do. We do not receive the abundance of grace, or the gift of righteousness by them. Thus it also excludes the imputation of faith itself to our justification, because it is an act and duty of our own. Faith is how we receive the gift of righteousness by which we are justified. It will not be denied that we are justified by the gift of righteousness, or the righteousness which is given to us. By this gift we have right and title to life. But our faith is not this gift; because what receives a gift, and the gift that is received, are not the same.

3. Where abounding grace and superabounding grace are exerted in our justification, nothing more is required. Such grace not only frees us from condemnation, but gives us a title to life. How can it be said to abound or superabound if our justification is in any way supplied or eked out by works and duties of our own?

4. A gift of righteousness is required to our justification. All who are to be justified must receive it, and all who do receive it are justified. Those who receive it will "reign in life by Jesus Christ." For that reason it follows,

- (1.) That the righteousness by which we are justified before God can be nothing of our own, nothing inherent in us, and nothing performed by us. It is something that is freely given to us. This donation is made by imputation: "Blessed is the man to whom God imputes righteousness," chap. 4:6. By faith we receive what is given and imputed. We contribute nothing else to it. This is what it means to be justified in the sense of the apostle.
- (2.) Such a righteousness gives right and title to eternal life; those who receive it will "reign in life." Therefore, it cannot consist in the pardon of sin alone.

[1.] The pardon of sin cannot, in any tolerable sense, be called “the gift of righteousness.” Pardon of sin is one thing, and righteousness is another.

[2.] Pardon of sin does not give us the right and title to eternal life. It is true that someone who has his sins pardoned will inherit eternal life. But this is not by virtue of that pardon. It comes through the imputation of righteousness that inseparably accompanies the pardon, and which creates the ground for that pardon.

### **No Condemnation**

A description is given here of our justification by grace. It is in contrast to the condemnation that we were made liable to by Adam’s sin. It is exalted above it. The efficacy of grace is far above that of the first sin in that not one but *all* sins are forgiven. Not only this, but a right to eternal life is communicated to us. “That we receive the grace of God, and the gift of righteousness;” which gives us a right to life by Jesus Christ. This is being justified by imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, and it is received by our faith alone. This conclusion and comparison is fully expressed and further confirmed in chapter 5:18, 19.

Verse 18. “Therefore, as by the offense 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.” We read the words, “By the offense of one.” The Greek copies vary here. Some read, *Tw~| eJni< paraptw>mati* “Tooi heni paraptoomati,” which is “By one offense.” Beza follows this reading, and our translation contains this in the margin. Most read *Di j eJno<v paraptw>matov* “Di henos paraptoomatos,” which is “By the offense of one.” It reads this way afterwards referring to righteousness. Both have the same purpose. The one offense meant is the offense of one: Adam; and the one righteousness is the righteousness of one: Jesus Christ.

Introducing this with *a]ra ou+n* “ara oun” [NT:686 3767 therefore] gives a note of syllogistic inference. It declares the substance of the truth pleaded for. The comparison is continued in the same way, using *wjv* “hoos” and “houtoos” [NT:5613 3779 as this is..., so that is].

What is affirmed on the one side of the syllogism is, [Di j eJno<V paraptw>matov eijv pa>ntav ajvqrw>pouv eijv kata>krima](#) “Di’ henos paraptoomatos eis pantas enthroopous eis katakrima,” which is “By the sin or fall of one, on all men to condemnation.” That is, judgment falls on all men, repeating [kri~ma](#) “krima” from the foregoing verse. But [kri~ma eijv kata>krima](#) “krima eis katakrima” is guilt, and only guilt. By the sin of one, all men became guilty, and they were made liable to condemnation. The guilt of that sin is imputed to all men. Otherwise the sin cannot come upon all of them to condemnation, nor can they be rendered liable to death and judgment on its account. We already proved that death and condemnation means the whole punishment due to sin. This is plain and evident.

In answer to this, the [dikai>wma](#) “dikaiooma” of one [NT:1345 righteousness] causes justification. It is opposed to the [para>ptwma](#) “paraptooma” of the other [NT:3900 offense], which causes condemnation. [Di j eJno<v dikaiw>matov](#) “By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.” That is, the righteousness is pleadable [eijv dikai>wsin](#) “eis dikaioosin,” [NT:1519 1347] for the purpose of justification. Our translators have repeated the word “charisma” (free gift) from the foregoing verse, as they had done with “krima” before. The Syrian translation does not repeat it: “Therefore, as by the sin of one, condemnation was to all men, so by the righteousness of one, justification to life shall be to all men.” The sense of the words is made plain without putting another word into the text. But because in the original the words are not [kata>krima eijv pa>ntav ajnqrw>pouv](#) “katakrima eis pantas anthroopous,” but [eijv pa>ntav ajnqrw>pouv eijv kata>krima](#) “eis pantas anthroopous eis katakrima,” in the latter clause (to mirror his own foregoing words) they filled in the words according to the intention of the apostle. The righteousness of one, Christ Jesus, is freely granted to all *believers*, to the justification of life. The phrase “all men” here is limited to those who “receive the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness by Christ,” verse 17.

Some vainly pretend from “all men” that there is a general grant of righteousness and life to all men, the greatest part of which are never made partakers. Nothing could be more contradictory to the apostle’s design. Men are not made guilty of condemnation from the

sin of Adam so that by some condition they may or may not be liable to it. Everyone at birth, by virtue of being a descendant from the first Adam, is actually in his own person liable to guilt; the wrath of God abides on him. On the other side, only those who have a relation to the Lord Christ through faith, will actually partake in the justification of life. The controversy is not about the universality of redemption by the death of Christ. Those who assert universal redemption acknowledge that it does not mean the free gift necessarily comes to all; they know it does not.

This passage says nothing about the provision of righteousness and life for those who believe, although it is true. It only declares the certain justification of those who believe. Nor will it permit any interpretation that says “all” refers to only those who derive their being from Adam by natural propagation. If anyone did not derive his being from Adam, he would not be concerned with his sin or fall. And so it was with the man Christ Jesus. On the other hand are those who derive a spiritual life from Christ. Suppose a man did not derive a spiritual life from Christ. He has no interest in the righteousness of the “one” to the justification of life. Our argument from the text is this: the sin of one brought condemnation on all, because the sin of the first Adam was imputed to all. In the same way, the righteousness of one brought justification of life to all believers, because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them all. I do not know what can be more clearly affirmed, or more evidently confirmed, than the apostle does here. And yet, it is even more plainly expressed in verse 19: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous.”

What he called [para>ptwma](#) “paraptooma” and [dikai>wma](#) “dikaiooma” before, he now calls [parakoh>](#) “parako-e” [NT:3876] and [uJpakoh>](#) “hupako-e,” [NT:5218] “disobedience” and “obedience.” The [parakoh>](#) “parako-e” of Adam, or his disobedience, was his actual transgression of the law of God. By this, says the apostle, “many were made sinners,” sinners liable to death and condemnation. They could not be made liable to death unless they were first made sinners or guilty. And they could not be made sinners or guilty unless they were esteemed to have sinned in Adam, for which the guilt of his sin was imputed to them. Paul affirms that the actual sin of Adam was the sin

of all men. They were made sinners thereby. And they became liable to death and condemnation as a result.

What he juxtaposes to this is [hJ uJpakoh](#) > “he hupako-e,” which is “the obedience of one,” Jesus Christ. This was the actual obedience that he yielded to the whole law of God. In the same way that the disobedience of Adam was his actual transgression of the whole law, so the obedience of Christ was his actual accomplishment or fulfilling of the whole law. The antithesis requires this.

Hereby many are made righteous. How? By the imputation of that obedience to them. This is the same way that men are made sinners by the imputation of the disobedience of Adam. And this imputation of righteousness is what gives us a right and title to eternal life, as the apostle declares in verse 21, “That as sin reigned to death, even so might grace reign through righteousness to eternal life.” This righteousness is none other than the “obedience of one,” of Christ, as it is called in verse 19. It is said to “come” upon us, or it is imputed to us, for “Blessed is the man to whom God imputes righteousness” (Rom. 4:6). By this, we not only have deliverance from that death and condemnation to which we were liable by the sin of Adam, but we have the pardon of many offenses (all of our personal sins), and a right to eternal life through the grace of God. For we are “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

These things are thus plainly and fully delivered by the apostle. It is our duty to accommodate our sense and expressions to his. What is offered in opposition is made up of exceptions, evasions, and confused arguments. They lead us so far off from the plain words of the Scripture, that a convinced sinner would not know what to fix upon to gain rest and satisfaction for his conscience, nor what to believe about justification.

Piscatory, in his scholia on this chapter and elsewhere, insists on a specious argument against the imputation of the obedience of Christ to our justification. It is evidently based on an open mistake and false supposition. It is contradictory to the plain words of the text as well. As he observes and proves, our redemption, reconciliation, pardon of sin, and justification, are often ascribed to the death and blood of Christ in a conspicuous manner. The reasons for that, in part, have

been intimated before; a further explanation will be given immediately. It does not follow that the obedience of his life, in which he fulfilled the whole law, is excluded from causing that justification, or that his obedience is not imputed to us.

His whole argument proceeds from an evident mistake. It assumes that Christ's righteousness in fulfilling the law is first imputed to us, and then the righteousness of his death is imputed to us afterwards. Otherwise, he says, imputing his righteousness would be of no use. No such order of events is pleaded or pretended in our justification. It is true that the life of Christ and his obedience to the law preceded his sufferings. Undergoing the curse of that suffering could not precede it. This order was made necessary by the law of nature. But it does not follow that they are imputed to us in that same order. This is an effect of sovereign wisdom and grace. It is not in regard to the natural order of Christ's obedience and suffering, but to the moral order of the things to which they are appointed. We do not need to separately impute Christ's obedience to obtain the right and title to eternal life, and then impute Christ's suffering to obtain the pardon of our sins. By both we have both, according to the ordinance of God. This is so that Christ may be all in all. The effect of these separate acts is that they are God's method of bringing sinners to justification, of applying the death of Christ to them, of pardoning their sin, and of freeing them from condemnation. In the order of nature and the exercise of faith, these effects precede the application of Christ's obedience to us for a right and title to eternal life.

The person to be justified is in a state of sin and wrath. He is liable to death and condemnation. This is what a convinced sinner understands. It is the only thing he seeks deliverance from in the first place. "What shall we do to be saved?" His deliverance is represented to him in the doctrine and promise of the gospel, which is the rule and instrument of its application. This application is by the death of Christ. Without this, no actual righteousness is imputed to him to give him relief. He understands that he has sinned, and thereby he has come short of the glory of God, and he is under the condemnatory sentence of the law. Until he receives deliverance from that, it is useless to propose something to him that gives him a right to eternal life. This does not mean he is unconcerned with what

gives him that title, but in the order of these things, his conscience is primarily concerned with being delivered from condemnation.

### **The Fruit of Christ's Mediation**

This order is expressed in the declaration of the fruit and effects of the mediation of Christ: "To make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness," Dan. 9:24. There is no force in the objection that the actual obedience of Christ preceded his suffering. How they are applied to us is not determined by that. The state of sinners who are to be justified, and the nature of their justification, requires that their application be otherwise, as God has ordained. The obedience and sufferings of Christ were necessarily from first to last, and both belong equally to his state of exinanition. They cannot be separated in any act or instance, unless by our imagination. He suffered in all his obedience and obeyed in all his sufferings, Heb. 5:8. Neither part of our justification can exist without the other, whether in gaining freedom from condemnation, or obtaining the right to eternal life. This is according to the ordinance and constitution of God. The whole effect is jointly ascribed to the whole mediation of Christ. He acted in our behalf towards God by fulfilling the whole law, both as to the penalty exacted of sinners and the righteousness it requires for a reward of eternal life. There are many reasons why our justification is eminently ascribed in the Scripture to the death and blood-shedding of Christ.

1. The grace and love of God, which is the principal, efficient cause of our justification, are made most eminent and conspicuous in his death. In the Scripture, this is most frequently proposed as the highest instance and undeniable demonstration of divine love and grace. And this is what we are to principally consider in our justification. Their glory is God's purpose in that. He "made us accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of his grace," Eph. 1:6. Therefore, this is the fountain, spring, and sole cause of both the obedience of Christ and its imputation to us, along with the pardon of sin and righteousness that accompany it. The Scripture proposes everywhere that it is the prime object of our faith in our justification. It directly opposes all our own works whatever. This is God's whole design, that "grace may reign through righteousness to eternal life"

(Rom. 5:21). Because this is made most evident and conspicuous in the death of Christ, our justification is peculiarly associated with it.

2. The love of Christ himself and his grace are peculiarly exalted in our justification: "That all men may honor the Son even as they honor the Father." They are frequently expressed with this purpose, 2Cor. 8:9; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 2:6, 7; Rev. 1:5, 6. Those two things are also most eminently exalted in his death. All their effects and fruits are peculiarly ascribed to it. Nothing is more common than to have the same effect among many things. And so these effects are ascribed to what is most eminent among them, especially because it cannot be conceived as separated from the rest.

3. This is the clearest testimony that what the Lord Christ did and suffered was for us, and not for himself. Without considering this, all the obedience which he yielded to the law might be looked on as due only on his own account. He would have been the Savior the Socinians imagine, who did everything with us for God, and nothing with God for us. Suffering the curse of the law by someone who was not only an innocent man, but also the Son of God, openly testifies that what he did and suffered was for us, and not for himself. It is no wonder, therefore, that our faith is principally directed to his death and blood-shedding.

4. All of Christ's obedience was directed to his ensuing sacrifice. In that sacrifice it was finally accomplished, and its efficacy for our justification depended on it. No imputation of actual obedience would free sinners from the condemnation that was passed to them for the sin of Adam. Although the obedience of Christ was not a mere preparation or qualification for his suffering, yet its efficacy for our justification depended on his ensuing suffering, when his soul was made an offering for sin.

5. Reconciliation and the pardon of sin through the blood of Christ directly relate to our relief from the state we were placed in by the sin of Adam. In this state we have lost the favor of God, and we have become liable to death. Therefore, this relief is what a lost and convinced sinner, such as Christ calls to himself, principally looks for. And so justification is eminently and frequently proposed as the effect of the blood-shedding and death of Christ. These are the direct cause of our reconciliation and pardon of sin. Yet it does not follow



from one of these considerations that the obedience of the one man, Christ Jesus, is not imputed to us.

The same truth is fully asserted and confirmed in Rom. 8:1-4. This passage has been so explained of late, and vindicated by Dr. Jacomb in his learned and judicious exposition of it, that nothing of weight remains to be added (see part 1 verse 4, p. 587 and onwards). Indeed, the arguments by which he confirms the truth against the most usual and important objections, are sufficient to satisfy the minds of unbiased persons. I will therefore pass over this testimony and not press the same things.

Rom. 10:3, 4. "For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." 'They' refers to the Jews, who had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

This is a continuation of what the apostle proposed in chap. 9:30. Because what he proposed was somewhat strange and complicated, he prefaces it with, "What shall we say then?" or, "What shall we say to these things?" He asserts, "That the Gentiles, who did not follow after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith; but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness," that is, to righteousness before God.

Nothing seems more contrary to reason than what is said here. The Gentiles lived in sin and pleasures, not once endeavoring to attain to any righteousness before God, and yet they attained to it upon the preaching of the gospel. Israel, on the other hand, which followed after righteousness diligently in all the works of the law, and duties of obedience to God, did not attain to it. They came short of it. All preparations, dispositions, and merit as to righteousness and justification, are excluded from the Gentiles. These would more or less be following after righteousness, which it denies they did. Only by faith in him who justifies the ungodly did they attain righteousness. To attain righteousness by faith, and to attain the righteousness which is of faith, are the same. Therefore, all things that are in any way following after righteousness, such as all our duties and works, are excluded from any influence on our

justification. This is expressed to declare the sovereignty and freedom of the grace of God in this. We are justified freely by his grace, and on our part all boasting is excluded. Let men argue what they please, those who attain to righteousness and justification before God do not follow after righteousness. They do it by the gratuitous imputation of the righteousness of another to them.

Some may say: "It is true that as heathens they did not follow after righteousness at all. But when the truth of the gospel was revealed to them, they followed after righteousness, and attained it."

1. This directly contradicts the apostle, who says that they did not attain righteousness despite following after righteousness.
2. It takes away the distinction which he puts between Israel and the Gentiles, namely, that the one followed after righteousness, and the other did not.
3. In this passage, to follow after righteousness is to follow after a righteousness of our own: "To establish their own righteousness," chap. 10:3. This is so far from being a means to attain righteousness, that it becomes its most effective obstruction.

Therefore, if those who have no righteousness of their own, who are so far from it that they never endeavored to attain it, yet received that righteousness by faith, and are justified by it before God, then they are justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to them.

### **The Example of Israel**

Three things are said concerning Israel: 1. Their attempt. 2 Their success. 3. The reason for it.

1. Their attempt was that they "followed after the law of righteousness." [Diw>kw](#) "Diokoo," [NT:1377] the word by which their endeavor is expressed, signifies what is earnest, diligent, and sincere. By using it, the apostle declares what this endeavor was and ought to be in the duties and exercise of gospel obedience, Phil. 3:12. They were diligent in this matter; they "instantly served God day and night." Nor were they hypocritical. The apostle records that "they had a zeal of God," Rom. 10:2. And what they endeavored after was [no>mov](#) [dikaiousu>nhv](#) "nomos dikaiosunes," "the law of

righteousness” that prescribed a perfect personal righteousness before God. These were “the things which, if a man do them, he shall live in them,” chap. 10:5. Therefore, the apostle is not referring to the ceremonial law here, but to the moral law, and the obedience that belonged to it. When he speaks of the ceremonial law separately, he calls it “the law of commandments contained in ordinances.” Nowhere is it called “the law of righteousness,” the law whose righteousness is fulfilled in us, chap. 8:9a. Therefore, following after this law of righteousness was their diligence in performing all duties of obedience, according to the directions and precepts of the moral law.

2. The issue of this attempt is whether it was successful. They “did not attain to the law of righteousness,” [eijv no>mon dikaiosun>nhv oujk e\]fqase](#) “eis nomon dikaiosunes ouk efhase.” Though this was the purpose of the law, namely, to attain a righteousness before God in which a man might live, yet they could never attain it.

3. A reason is given for their failing to attain what they so earnestly endeavored after. It was a double mistake. First, in the means used to attain it; secondly, in the righteousness they sought. The first mistake is declared in chap. 9:32, “Because not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law.” Faith and works are the only two ways by which righteousness may be attained. They are opposites so that no one can seek after righteousness by them both. They cannot be mixed and made into one means of attaining it. They are as opposed as grace and works; what is of the one is not of the other, chap. 11:6. And the reason is that the righteousness which is attainable by faith, is what is given to us, imputed to us. Only faith can receive it. It receives “the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness.” But what is attainable by works is our own. It is inherent in us, done by us, and not imputed to us. It is nothing but those works themselves with respect to the law of God.

If righteousness before God is obtained by faith alone, and that contradicts all works, then it is by faith alone that we are justified before God. Nothing else is required on our part for this purpose. What the nature of this righteousness is must be evident.

If faith and works are opposed, contrary, and inconsistent with each other as a means of attaining righteousness or justification before

God, then it is impossible to be justified before God by both of them in the same sense, way, and manner. Therefore, when the apostle James affirms that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only, he cannot be referring to our justification before God. It would be impossible for them both to concur in that. Not only are they declared inconsistent by the apostle in this passage, but it would introduce several sorts of righteousness into justification which are inconsistent with and destructive of each other. This was the first mistake of the Jews – they did not seek righteousness by faith, but by the works of the law.

Their second mistake concerned the righteousness they were seeking to be justified before God. They judged it to be their own righteousness consisting of their own duties of obedience, chap. 10:3. They set about to establish it as the Pharisee did in Luke 18:11, 12. This mistake, along with their intent “to establish their own righteousness,” was the principal cause for them rejecting the righteousness of God, as do many these days.

Whatever is done or performed by us as obedience to God is our own righteousness. Even if it is done in faith, and by the aids of God’s grace, it is still subjectively ours; it is our own righteousness. But our own righteousness is so far separated from the righteousness which justifies us before God, that it is ineffectual as a means to attain justification. It makes us refuse to accept or submit to that righteousness which alone justifies us. This ruined the Jews; and it will be the ruin of all who follow their example in seeking after justification by personal righteousness. Yet is it not easy for men to take any other way, or to quit this one. So the apostle says, “They did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.” This righteousness of God is something that the proud mind of man is altogether unwilling to bow and submit to. But it cannot be attained other than by total renunciation of any righteousness of our own. We affirm that anyone who endeavors after morality, or moral righteousness, and depends on them to be justified, is not in good stead for participating in the grace of God by Jesus Christ. Those who reproach that affirmation deride the doctrine of the apostle, and of the Holy Ghost himself.

The apostle declares that not only are the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of our own by works inconsistent as to our

justification before God, but intermixing them wholly diverts us from accepting or submitting to the righteousness of God. The righteousness of faith is not our own; it is the righteousness of God. It is what he imputes to us. But the righteousness of works is our own; it is what is done in us and by us. Works have no ability in themselves to attain or receive a righteousness which is imputed to us, because such righteousness is not our own. They are repugnant to it, and cannot be our legal righteousness. In the same way, faith has no ability in itself to be an inherent righteousness, or to be esteemed as such. Its principal strength consists in fixing all the trust, confidence, and expectation of the soul upon another for righteousness and acceptance with God.

Here was the ruin of those Jews: they judged it better, more probable, even more righteous and holy, to endeavor after a righteousness of their own, by duties of obedience to the law of God, than to imagine they could be accepted with God by faith in another. You may tell someone that they can use the legs of their own righteousness to stand before God, but the law will not allow it; it will condemn them.

To demolish this last sort of unbelief, the apostle grants that the law must have its end. It must be completely fulfilled, or we cannot appear to be righteous before God. He shows them how this is done, and where it can be sought. For “Christ,” he says, “is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes,” Rom. 10:4. We need not trouble ourselves to inquire in what various senses Christ may be said to be *telos nomou* “telos nomou,” that is, “the end of the law,” meaning its complement or perfection. The apostle sufficiently reveals his intent by affirming that Christ is not the end of the law absolutely. He is the end of the law *eis dikaiosunen* “eis dikaiosunen,” “for righteousness” to everyone who believes. This righteousness applies to our justification before God, and this is acknowledged to be the righteousness which the law requires. God looks for no righteousness from us except what the law prescribes. The law is nothing more than the rule of righteousness. It is God’s prescription of righteousness to us, with all its duties. The original end of the law was that we use it to be righteous before God. Its present ends, the conviction of sin and judging or condemning by it,

were accidental to its primitive constitution. This righteousness that the law requires is the only righteousness that God requires of us. The Jews sought it by their own personal performance of the law's works and duties. But in the utmost of their endeavors, they could never fulfill this righteousness, or attain this end of the law. Yet if men do not fulfill this righteousness, they must perish forever.

Therefore, the apostle declares that all this is done another way. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled, and the end of the law is accomplished, in and by Christ. And this righteousness is accounted or imputed to everyone who believes.

In this discourse, the apostle thoroughly investigates the righteousness by which we may be justified before God, and in particular, how the demands of the law are satisfied. What we could not do, what the law could not effect in us because of the weakness of the flesh, what we could not attain by the works and duties of the law, Christ has done for us. And so "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" is accomplished.

The law demands a righteousness of us. The accomplishment of this righteousness is its end. It is necessary to our justification before God. It cannot be attained by any works of our own, or by any righteousness of our own. But the Lord Christ is this righteousness for us, and to us. How he is or can be this righteousness apart from the imputation of his obedience and righteousness in the accomplishment of the law, I cannot understand. I am sure the apostle does not declare it either.

The way by which we attain this end of the law, which we cannot do by our utmost endeavors to establish our own righteousness, is by faith alone. For "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." To mix anything with faith in attaining this righteousness, would be repugnant to the nature of faith and works. So it would be directly contradictory to the express design and words of the apostle as well.

Let men have their distinctions, cavils, objections, and feigned consequences. I do not value them. I forever desire to fix my soul and acquiesce in this, that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." I suppose that when the time for disputing is over, all those who understand aright what the law of

God requires of them, how needful it is to comply with it, and that its end will be accomplished, will turn to that same refuge and rest. They will understand the utter insufficiency of their own endeavors to those ends.

### **What We Have in Christ**

The next place I will consider in the epistles of this apostle is, 1Cor. 1:30. “But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

The design of the apostle in these words is to show that whatever is wanting in us so that we may please God, live to him, and come to enjoy him, is what we have in and by Jesus Christ. This is done on the part of God from mere free and sovereign grace, as verses 26-29 declare. We have all these things by virtue of our insertion or implantation in him: *ejx aujtou~* “ex autou,” meaning from, of, or by him. He is the principal, efficient cause of these things by his grace. The effect is that we are “in Christ Jesus.” That is, we are ingrafted in him, or united to him, as members of his mystical body. This is the constant sense of that expression in the Scripture. The benefits that we receive are enumerated in the following words. The way that we partake of them, or that they are communicated to us, is declared first: “Who of God is made to us.” It is ordained by God that Christ will be made or become all of this to us: *Ov ejgenh>qh hJmi~n ajpo< Qeou~* “Hos egenethe hemin apo Theou,” where *ajpo>* “apo” denotes the efficient cause, just as “ex” did before. But how is Christ thus made to us of God, or what act of God is meant thereby? Socinus says it is “a general act of the providence of God, from which it comes to pass, that one way or the other the Lord Christ is said to be all of this to us.”

But what is meant is a special ordinance and institution of God’s sovereign grace and wisdom. He designs that Christ be all of this to us and for us. Actual imputation comes from that and nothing else. Therefore, whatever interest we have in Christ, and whatever benefit we have by him, it all depends on the sovereign grace and constitution of God, and not on anything in ourselves. Because we have no righteousness of our own, Christ is appointed by God to be our “righteousness,” and he is made so to us. It can only be that his

righteousness is made ours. For he is made righteousness to us so that all boasting in ourselves is utterly excluded, and so that “he who glories should glory in the Lord,” verses 29-31. Now, there is a righteousness that we may glory in somewhat (Rom. 4:2), and which does not exclude boasting, (Rom. 3:27). This cannot possibly be anything but our own righteousness, inherent in us. However it is procured, purchased, or done in us, it is still our own.

This kind of righteousness is excluded here. Because the Lord Christ is made righteousness to us of God in a way that excludes all boasting and glorying on our part, the righteousness referred to can only come to us by imputation. Thereby the grace of God, the honor of his person, and the mediation of Christ are exalted, and all occasion of glorying in ourselves is utterly removed from consideration. The only thing we desire from this testimony is that, because we are destitute in ourselves of all righteousness in the sight of God, Christ is made righteousness to us by God. He does so by a gracious act of divine imputation. It is done in such a way that all our glorying ought to be in the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ himself. Bellarmine attempts three answers to this testimony. The first two are coincident, and the third, being on the rack of light and truth, grants all that we plead for.

1. He says that, “Christ is said to be our righteousness because he is the efficient cause of it, as God is said to be our strength; and so this figure of speech is the effect for the cause.” I agree that the Lord Christ by his Spirit is the efficient cause of our personal, inherent righteousness. By his grace it is effected and done in us. He renews our natures into the image of God. Without him we can do nothing. And so our habitual and actual righteousness is from him. But this personal righteousness is our *sanctification*, and nothing else. Although inherent grace, with its operations, is alternately called our sanctification and our righteousness, it is never split into the two. The righteousness in this passage is absolutely distinct from the righteousness that results from our sanctification. Sanctification is that inherent righteousness which is wrought in us by the Spirit and grace of Christ. The personal righteousness that results from his working in us for our sanctification, and the legal righteousness that is imputed to us for our justification before God, are consistent with each other. In fact, the former cannot exist without the latter.



2. He pleads that, "Christ is said to be made righteousness to us, in the same way that he is said to be made our redemption. Now, he is made our redemption, because he has redeemed us. So he is said to be made righteousness to us, because we become righteous by him;" or, as another puts it, "because by him alone we are justified." This is the same plea made in the previous answer. He is saying that there is a figure of speech showing the effect for the cause. Yet I do not understand what cause they mean when they say, "By him alone we are justified." Bellarmine is approaching the truth. Christ is said to be made redemption to us by God, because we are redeemed by his blood. We are freed from sin, death, and hell by the ransom that he paid for us. We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And so he is said to be made righteousness to us because we are justified through his righteousness which is granted to us by God. God's making him our righteousness, and our becoming the righteousness of God in him, and the imputation of his righteousness to us so that we may be righteous before God, are all the same.

His third answer, as mentioned before, grants everything we plead. It is the same answer he gave to Jer. 23:6 earlier. It has the same sense and importance, and he gives up his whole cause in satisfying them by the words he uses, lib. 2 cap. 10.

Socinus' answer is so improper for the purpose, that he prefaces it by saying he would admire anyone making use of it, or pleading it in this cause. The use of this testimony, which reduced Bellarmine to so great a strait, is admired only because it is proposed by Socinus. Yet his exceptions to the doctrine of imputation are such that I have to wonder why any learned man would bother with them, or be seduced by them. He only pleads that, "If Christ is said to be made righteousness to us because his righteousness is imputed to us, then he is said to be made wisdom to us because his wisdom is so imputed. The same would be true of his sanctification, which no one will allow. Indeed, he must be redeemed for us, and his redemption be imputed to us." There is no force or truth in this pretence. It is built on the supposition that Christ must be made all these things to us by God in the same way. Because they are of such different natures, it is utterly impossible that he should be made all these things to us.

For instance, he is made sanctification to us, in that by his Spirit and grace we are freely sanctified. But he cannot be said to be made redemption to us, in that by his Spirit and grace we are freely redeemed. And if he is said to be made righteousness to us, because by his Spirit and grace he works inherent righteousness in us, then is it plainly the same as being made sanctification to us. Socinus himself does not believe that Christ is made all these things to us in the same way and manner. Therefore he does not tell us how he is made all these things. Instead, he clouds it in an ambiguous expression that somehow he becomes all these things to us in the providence of God. Ask him in particular how Christ is made sanctification to us, and he will tell you that it was by his doctrine and example alone, with some general assistance from the Spirit of God. But this is not the way by which Christ was made redemption to us at all. Our redemption is an external thing that is not done in us. Christ can only be made redemption to us by imputing to us, or reckoning to our account, what he did so that we might be redeemed. He was not redeemed for us, as Socinus childishly cavils. He did that thing by which we are redeemed. Therefore, Christ is made righteousness to us by God in a way that the nature of the thing requires. Some say, "It is because we are justified by him." However, the text does not say that we are justified by him. It says that he is made righteousness to us by God. This is not our justification. It is the ground, cause, or reason for which we are justified.

Righteousness is one thing, and justification is another. Therefore we must ask how we come to have that righteousness by which we are justified. The apostle tells us plainly that it is by imputation: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputes righteousness," Rom. 4:6. It follows, then, that Christ being made righteousness to us by God, can have no other meaning than his righteousness is imputed to us. That is what this text undeniably confirms. The truth is more emphatically expressed here: "For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," 2Cor. 5:21.

### **Christ is Made Sin For Us**

To set out the greatness of the grace of God in our reconciliation by Christ, he describes him as one "who knew no sin," or "who knew not

sin.” He knew sin in the sense of understanding its nature, and he knew it experimentally in the effects which he underwent and suffered. But he did not know it in the sense of its commission or guilt. Saying that “he knew no sin,” is no more than saying “he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth,” as it is expressed in 1 Pet. 2:22. He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” Heb. 7:26. However, there is an emphasis in the expression, that is not to be neglected. Chrysostom and others have observed that 2Cor. 5:21 contains an auxesis (oujci to<n mh< aJmarta>nonta mo>non le>gei ajlla< to<n mh>de gno>nta aJmarti>an “ouchi ton me hamartanonta monon legei alle ton mede gnonta hamartian”). That is, its words are arranged in a sequence of increasing force toward a climax. Those who want to learn the excellence of God’s grace in this, will get an impression of its meaning from this emphasis. The Holy Ghost chose to make use of it to that end, and so it should not be ignored.

Many expositors say that “He has made him to be sin” means he was made “a sacrifice for sin.” That is why the sin and trespass-offering are often expressed by taF;j “chattat” and μv;a; “asham,” “the sin” and the “trespass,” or “guilt.” I will not argue about this exposition. But there is another more proper sense of the word aJmarti>a “hamartia” [NT:266], meaning “sin,” being used here for aJmartwlo>v “hamartoolos” [NT:268], which is a “sinner.” That is, the phrasing and force of the antithesis seem to require “sinner” to be passively substituted for “sin” by imputation. This is the interpretation of the Greek scholiasts. Luther was not the first to affirm that Christ was made the greatest sinner by imputation. But we will allow the former exposition that he was a sacrifice, provided that the true notion of a sin-offering, or expiatory sacrifice, is admitted. Although this cannot mean that the person’s inherent sin is transfused into the sacrifice, yet the guilt of the sinner is translated to it, as fully declared in Lev. 16:20, 21.

I grant this meaning of the word only to avoid contention. Although some say that aJmarti>a “hamartia” signifies sin, and a sacrifice for sin, it cannot be allowed. af;j; “Chatta’,” in the Hebrew Kal tense, signifies “to err, to sin, to transgress the law of God.” In the Hebrew Piel tense it has a contrary meaning, namely, “to cleanse from sin,”

or “to make expiation of sin.” Hence, **taF;j** “chattat” is used most frequently with the first conjugation, signifying “sin,” “transgression,” and “guilt.” But sometimes, with the second conjugation, it signifies “a sacrifice for sin, to make expiation of it.” And so it may be rendered by the LXX as **iJlasmov** “hilasmos,” as in Ezek. 44:27, and sometimes as **ejxilasmov** “exilasmos,” meaning a “propitiation,” or a “propitiatory sacrifice,” Exod. 30:10, Ezek. 43:22. Sometimes it is rendered by **a[gnisma** “hagnisma,” as in Num. 19:19, and **aJgnismov** “hagnismos,” “purification,” or “cleansing.” But absolutely nowhere does **aJmartia** “hamartia” signify a sacrifice for sin, unless it is allowed in this one place alone. The LXX constantly renders **taF;j** “chattat” by **aJmartia** “hamartia,” where it signifies sin. Where it does denote an offering for sin, and they retain that word, they do it by **peri< aJmartia>av** “peri hamartias.” This is an elliptical expression which they invented because they knew that “hamartia” by itself could not mean sacrifice, Lev. 4:3, 14, 32, 35; 5:6-11; 6:30; 8:2. And they never omit the preposition unless they name the sacrifice, for example, **mo>scov th~v aJmartia>av** “moschos tes hamartias.”

This is also observed by the apostle in the New Testament. Twice, expressing the sin-offering by this word, he uses that phrase **peri< aJmartia>av** “peri hamartias,” Rom. 8:3, Heb. 10:6. But nowhere does he use **aJmartia** “hamartia” on its own for that purpose. Therefore, if it has that meaning in this passage, then this is the only place that it does. Some think it corresponds to “piaculum” in the Latin, which is also a mistake. “Piaculum” is properly a sacrifice. It is anything by which sin is expiated, or satisfaction is made. Very rarely is it abused to denote the sin or crime itself that deserves public expiation, and cannot otherwise be pardoned. But we will not contend about words, while we can agree about what is meant.

The only inquiry is, how God did make Christ to be sin? An act of God is intended. This is expressed elsewhere by “laying all our iniquities upon him,” Isa. 53:6. This was done by imputing our sins to him, just as the sins of the people were put on the head of the goat. They would be their sins no more. They became his sins so that he could carry them away from the people. Take sin as meaning either a sacrifice for sin, or a sinner, and it must be understood that the guilt

of sin was imputed prior to its punishment. In every sacrifice for sin, there was an imposition of sin on the beast prior to its sacrifice, and prior to suffering death. The one who brought the beast was to “put his hand on the head of it,” Lev. 1:4. That signified the transfer of the guilt of sin to the offering, as expressly declared in Lev. 16:21.

Therefore, if God made the Lord Christ a sin-offering for us, it was by imputing the guilt of our sin to him prior to his suffering. No offering could be made for sin without a typical translation of the guilt of sin to it. To expiate the guilt of an unsolved murder, an offering was made by the elders of the city that was next to the place where the man was slain. They were not to offer a sacrifice, because there was no one to confess guilt over it, or to lay guilt upon it. But the neck of a heifer was to be broken, to declare the punishment due to blood. They were to wash their hands over it to testify to their own innocence of the shed blood, Deut. 21:1-8. But there could not be a sacrifice for sin without the imputation of guilt. If the word “hamartia” is taken to mean a sinner by imputation, or by God’s esteeming it to be such, then it must be done by imputing guilt. For no one can be called a sinner because of mere suffering. Indeed, no one says that Christ was made sin by imputing punishment to him. They say that sin was imputed to him to warrant punishment. That is, the guilt of sin was imputed to him. The guilt of sin is the obligation that attends sin, which is punishment.

It is impossible for anyone to be punished for sin without imputing sin’s guilt to him. If it were possible, it would be unjust. It is not possible for anyone to be properly punished for sin, if that sin is not his. And if it is not his by inhesion, then it must be his by imputation. One may suffer for another’s sin that is not made his own, but he cannot be punished for it. Punishment is recompense for the guilt of sin. And if it were possible, where is the righteousness in punishing someone who is not guilty? Besides, imputing sin and punishing the guilt of sin are distinct acts. One precedes the other; and the former imputes only the guilt of sin. Therefore, the Lord Christ was made sin for us, by imputing the guilt of our sins to him.

It may be said that, if “the guilt of sin were imputed to Christ, then he would be excluded from all possibility of merit, because he suffered only what was due him. The whole work of Christ’s satisfaction is subverted. This must be so if God reckoned him to be guilty and to be

a sinner in his judgment.” This statement is ambiguous. If it means that God reckoned him inherently guilty and a sinner, in his own person, then no such thing is meant by imputation. God laid all our sins on him and, in judging him, God did not spare him from what was due for those sins. Christ did not suffer what was due on his own account, but what was due on our account, because of our sin. It is impious to deny this. Otherwise Christ died in vain, and we are still in our sins. His satisfaction consists in being punished for the guilt of our sins; he could not satisfy the law without it. So this does not in the least derogate from his merit. Assuming the infinite dignity of his person, his voluntary acceptance to answer for our sin did not alter his own state or condition. His obedience in this was highly meritorious.

By virtue of this acceptance, we are made “the righteousness of God in him.” This was the result of his being made sin for us. And by whom are we made righteous? It is by God himself. For “it is God that justifies,” Rom. 8:33. It is God who “imputes righteousness,” chap. 4:6. Therefore this act of God is intended in our justification. To be made the righteousness of God is to be made righteous *before* God, although it is emphatically expressed by the abstract (esteemed) for the concrete (obedience). To be made the righteousness of God is to be justified. And to be made righteous in Christ, as he was made sin for us, is to be justified by imputing his righteousness to us, just as our sin was imputed to him.

There is no other way by which he was made sin, but by God’s laying all our iniquities upon him; that is, by imputing our sin to him. How, then, are we made the righteousness of God in him? “By infusing a habit of grace in us,” say the Papists in general. Then, following the rule of antithesis, Christ must be made sin for us by infusing a habit of sin in him, which would be blasphemous. It is done “by his meriting, procuring, and purchasing righteousness for us,” say others. So, possibly, we might be made righteous by him; but so we cannot be made righteous in him. This can only be by his righteousness as we are in him, or united to him. To be righteous in him is to be righteous with his righteousness, as we are one mystical person with him. Therefore,--

To be made the righteousness of God in Christ, in the same way that he was made sin for us, can only mean to be made righteous by the

imputation of his righteousness to us, as we are in him or united to him. All other expositions of these words are both childish and forced. They lead the mind away from the first, plain, and obvious sense of them.

Bellarmino takes exception to this interpretation. It is his first argument against the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. The Protestant divines have so fully and frequently answered this objection that I would not have mentioned it except that a number among ourselves are pleased to borrow it. They say, "If the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us so as to make it ours, then we are as righteous as Christ himself, because we are righteous with his righteousness." In answer, I say:

1. These things are plainly affirmed in the Scripture. As to ourselves, "we are all an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is like a filthy rag," Isa. 64:6, on the one hand; yet "in the LORD we have righteousness and strength; in the LORD we are justified and shall glory," Isa. 45:24, 25, on the other. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves:" and yet we are "the righteousness of God in Christ." These things are consistent in Scripture, whatever cavils the wit of men can raise against them. They must be esteemed, unless we comply with Socinus's rule of interpretation that where anything seems repugnant to our reason, no matter how expressly affirmed in the Scripture, we are not to admit it. We must find some interpretation, however forced, to make the meaning of the words sensible to our reason.

2. Notwithstanding the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us, and our being made righteous with it, we are sinners in ourselves; so we who are sinners cannot be said to be as righteous as Christ, but only to be made righteous in him.

3. To say that we are as righteous as Christ, is to make a comparison between the personal righteousness of Christ and our personal righteousness, as if they were of the same kind. But this is a foolish and impious comparison: notwithstanding all our personal righteousness, we are still sinful while he knew no sin. If the comparison is between Christ's personal, inherent righteousness, and the righteousness that is imputed to us, inhesion in him and imputation to us are different kinds of things. Such a comparison is

foolish and of no consequence. Christ was actively righteous; we are passively righteous. When our sin was imputed to him, he did not thereby become a sinner as we are. He did not become actively and inherently a sinner; it was passive, and only in God's estimation. As he was made sin, knowing no sin, so we are made righteous, though sinful in ourselves.

4. The righteousness of Christ, because it was personally his, was the righteousness of the Son of God. In this respect it was infinitely perfect, and it had value in itself. But it is imputed to us only with respect to our personal need. It is not satisfactory for everyone, but only for those who stand in need of it, as they are made partakers of it. Therefore, there is no basis for comparing his inherent righteousness with our imputed righteousness.

5. Bellarmine adds that, because of this, we may be said to be redeemers and saviors of the world. The absurdity of the assertion falls in upon himself; we are not concerned in it. He affirms directly, lib. 1, De Purgator., cap. 14, that "a man may be rightly called his own redeemer and savior;" which he endeavors to prove from Dan. 4. Some of his church affirm that the saints may be called the redeemers of others, but they do so improperly. From the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, it only follows that those to whom it is imputed are redeemed and saved, not that they are redeemers and saviors themselves.

The vindication of this testimony further shows the vanity of his seventh argument, because that too is made use of by some among ourselves. This is the argument: "If we may be truly said to be righteous by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and we are the sons of God, then Christ may be said to be a sinner by the imputation of our unrighteousness, and he is a child of the devil." In answer:

1. What the Scripture affirms concerning the imputation of our sins to Christ is that "he was made sin for us." This is what the Greek expositors, Chrysostom, Theophylact, and Oecumenius, with many others, take for "a sinner." But all affirm that imputation only means that he had sin imputed to him, and underwent the punishment due to it, as we have righteousness imputed to us, and enjoy the benefit of it.



2. The imputation of sin to Christ did not carry with it any of the pollution or filth of sin in a way that communicated it to him by transfusion. That would be impossible. Hence, no designation of “sinner” can arise which would include them. A thought of this is impious, and dishonorable to the Son of God. But being made sin through the imputation of the *guilt* of sin, is his honor and glory.

3. The imputation of the sin of fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, etc., such as the Corinthians were before their conversion to Christ, does not on any ground classify him as being any of these things. The Corinthians were sinners in themselves, actively, inherently, and subjectively. That is the reason they were called these things. But it is a fantasy to say that he who knew no sin, voluntarily answering for the guilt of those sins, is an idolater, etc. His answering for the guilt of these sins was an act of righteousness, and the highest obedience to God. Designating someone as a sinner, when the sin is inherent and actually committed by the person, is a reproach. Such sin defiles the soul, and the label signifies the utmost unworthiness. But calling someone a sinner by the *imputation* of sin, when there is not the least personal guilt or defilement by the one to whom it is imputed, and it is done as an act of the highest obedience, and it is intended to bring the greatest glory to God, is highly honorable and glorious.

4. The imputation of sin to Christ preceded any real union between him and sinners. But the imputation of his righteousness to believers is a consequence of their union with him. So there is no parity of reason by which he should be accounted a sinner because they are accounted righteous.

5. We acquiesce that on the imputation of sin to Christ, “God made him to be sin for us,” which could only happen by imputing our sin to him. He was made sin for us by an act that was transient in its effects, lasting only for a time. During that time he underwent the punishment due to that sin. But on the imputation of his righteousness to us, we are “made the righteousness of God” (2Cor. 5:21) with an everlasting righteousness (Psa. 119:142). It abides always.

6. To be a child of the devil by sin, is to do the works of the devil, John 8:44. But the Lord Christ, in taking our sins upon himself by imputation, did the work of God in the highest act of holy obedience.

He evidenced himself to be the God of God thereby, and destroyed the work of the devil. It is so foolish and impious to think that any absolute change of state or relation in him ensued from that.

### **We are Made the Righteous of God**

That “the righteousness of God” could refer to our own faith and gospel obedience, as some would have it, is so alien to the scope and sense of the words in this passage, that I will not examine it specifically. The righteousness of God is revealed to faith, and received by faith. Therefore, it is not faith itself. The force of the antithesis is quite perverted by this conceit. Where is it that he was made sin by the imputation of our sin to him, and we are made righteousness by the imputation of our own faith and obedience to ourselves? Christ had no interest in sin except as God made him sin; it was never in him inherently. In the same way, we have no interest in this righteousness except as it is imputed to us; it is not in us inherently. Besides, God’s act of making us righteous justifies us.

This act is not done by infusing a habit of faith and obedience in us, as we have proved. I do not know what act of God is meant by those who affirm that the righteousness of God is our own righteousness. It cannot be the constitution of the gospel law, because that makes no man righteous. Believers are the object of this act of God as they are considered in Christ. The epistle to the Galatians is wholly designed to vindicate the doctrine of justification by Christ, without the works of the law. The sum of his design is laid down in the repetition of his words to the apostle Peter, on the occasion of his failure, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified,” Gal. 2:16.

What he asserts here was such a known and fundamental principle of truth among all believers, that their conviction and knowledge of it was the basis for their transition from Judaism to the gospel, and to faith in Jesus Christ.

In the words used, the apostle answers that great question as to how a man may be justified before God. The subject is expressed indefinitely as “a man.” And so it refers to *any* man, Jew or Gentile, believer or unbeliever, the apostle who spoke or those to whom he

spoke – specifically the Galatians, who for some time had also believed and made a profession of the gospel.

The answer given to the question is both negative and positive. It is asserted with the highest assurance as the common faith of all Christians, except those who had been misled by seducers. He asserts that this is not, and cannot be, “by the works of the law.” What is meant by “the law” in these arguments of the apostle, was previously declared and proved. The law of Moses is sometimes signified, not absolutely, but as an instance of men’s holding onto the law of righteousness, and not submitting themselves therefore to the righteousness of God. But it is vain to think that he is excluding the moral law and its duties anywhere in this argument. Indeed, that would exclude the ceremonial law itself. Observing the ceremonial law, while it was in force, was a duty of the moral law.

The works of the law are the works and duties of obedience which this law of God requires. They are to be performed in the manner that it prescribes, which is in faith and out of love to God above all (as was proved). To say that the apostle excludes only absolutely perfect works, which no one ever did or could perform since sin entered the world, is to suppose him to argue against what no one has asserted, and which he does not once mention in all his discourse. Nor can he be said to exclude only meritorious works, seeing that he excludes all works whatever so that there is no place for merit in our justification, (which has also been proved). Nor did these Galatians look for justification from any works but those they performed when they were believers, so that all sorts of works are excluded from any interest in our justification. The apostle lays so much weight on this exclusion of works from our justification, that he affirms its admission would overthrow the whole gospel, verse 21: “For if righteousness is by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.” It is dangerous to venture on so sharp a fence.

It is not this or that sort of works, this or that manner of performing them, this or that kind of interest in our justification that are excluded. All works or duties of obedience, of whatever sort, and however performed, are excluded from any kind of consideration in our justification. These Galatians, whom the apostle reproves, only desired that their works of the law, or duties of obedience, might be

used in conjunction or co-partnership with faith in Christ Jesus in their justification. Nothing is intimated that they would exclude faith in him, or assign justification to works without faith. It is a fantasy to think so. In opposition to this, Paul positively ascribes our justification to faith in Christ alone. “Not by works, but by faith,” is by faith alone. The particles [eja<n mh>](#) “ean me” [NT:3362] are not exceptive but adversative. This has not only been undeniably proved by the Protestant divines, but it is acknowledged by those of the Roman church who have any modesty in this controversy. It is improbable that we will have an end of arguing in this world, when men will not acquiesce in such plain determinations of controversies given by the Holy Ghost himself.

Joining works to faith is saying that men cannot be justified by works which they cannot perform, that is, by Christ’s absolutely perfect works, but they may and are justified by works which they can and do perform, if not in their own strength at least by the aid of grace. It is also saying that faith in Christ Jesus, which the apostle sets in absolute opposition to all works whatever, includes all those works which he excludes, and it does so to that very end for which they are excluded. This cannot be supposed suitable to the mind of the Holy Ghost. “For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” Eph. 2:8-10.

Unless the Holy Ghost was going to include and rebut in this passage all the evasions and subterfuges which the wit of man in subsequent ages could invent to pervert the doctrine of our justification before God, it is impossible to have more plainly countered them all than he has. If we may consider it a little without prejudice, I hope what is affirmed will become evident.

It cannot be denied that the design of the apostle, from the beginning of this chapter to the end of verse 11, is to declare the way by which lost and condemned sinners come to be delivered; they are translated out of their lost condition into a state of acceptance with God, and thereby gain eternal salvation. Therefore, he first fully describes their natural state, with their liability to the wrath of God.

It was his method to constantly premise his declaration of the grace of God with the consideration of our sin, misery, and ruin. Others today do not like this method so well. To this purpose, he declares to the Ephesians that they “were dead in trespasses and sins.” This expresses the power that sin had on their spiritual life, and all its actions. They lived and walked in sin, and on all accounts were the “children of wrath,” or subject and liable to eternal condemnation, Eph. 2:1-3.

There are many terms to express what such people can do towards their own deliverance. They all pass my understanding, for the entire design of the apostle is to prove that they can do nothing at all. But he finds what can be done to that end; and what he finds is in direct, express opposition to anything that may be done by ourselves: “Ho de Theos plousios oon en ele-ei,” Eph. 2:4. It is not a work for us to undertake; it is nothing we can contribute to: “But God, who is rich in mercy.” The adversative “but” includes an opposition to everything on our part, and it encloses the whole work to God. If men had rested on this divine revelation, the church of God would have been free from many of those perverse opinions and wrangling disputes which pester it. But they will not easily part with thoughts of some kind of interest in being the authors of their own happiness.

### **Our Deliverance from Sin**

Therefore, we may observe two things in the apostle’s assignment of the causes of our deliverance from a state of sin, and acceptance with God:

1. He assigns the whole of this work absolutely to grace, love, and mercy, excluding the consideration of anything on our part; as we will see immediately, Eph. 2:5, 8.
2. He magnifies this grace in a marvelous manner. First, he expresses it by all the names and titles by which it is signified, such as [e\]leov](#) “eleos,” [ajla>ph](#) “agape,” [ca>riv](#) “charis,” [crhsto>thv](#) “chrestotes,” which are “mercy,” “love,” “grace,” and “kindness.” He would have us to look only to grace in this. Secondly, he ascribes such labels to divine mercy and grace, which is the sole cause of our deliverance in and by Jesus Christ. This renders it unique, and solely to be adored in this: [plou>siov ejn e\]le>ei](#), [dia< th<n pollh<n ajga>pthn? u\]perza>llwn](#)

plou~tov th~v ca>ritov? “plousios en ele-ei, die ten pollen agapen; hupertalloon ploutos tes charitos”, meaning “rich in mercy;” “great love by which he loved us;” “the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness,” Eph. 2:4-7. It cannot reasonably be denied that the apostle intends to deeply affect the mind and heart of believers with a sense of the grace and love of God in Christ, as the only cause of their justification before God. I think no words can express those concepts of the mind which this representation of grace suggests. There are those who scarcely ever mention the grace of God, unless to diminish its efficacy. To them, ascribing justification to it, as Paul does here, is a matter of contempt. It is not hard to judge whether they think it is their duty to be like-minded, and comply with the apostle in this design.

The inquiry which the apostle has in hand, and by which he determines the truth with which to instruct the Ephesians, and in them the whole church of God, is how a lost, condemned sinner may come to be accepted with God, and based on that be saved? This is the sole inquiry we are concerned with. His position and determination is that, “we are saved by grace.” He occasionally interposes this determination in his enumeration of the benefits that we receive by Christ, Eph. 2:5. But not content with that, he again directly asserts it in verse 8, in the same words. He seems to have considered how slow men would be to admit this truth, which deprives them at once of all boasting in themselves.

What he means by being saved must be inquired into. It would advance the truth we plead for if he meant eternal salvation. But that cannot be its meaning in this passage, other than to say that salvation is included in its causes. Nor do I think that the expression, “By grace are you saved,” intends only our justification, although it primarily does. Conversion to God and sanctification are also included in being saved, as evident from Eph. 2:5, 6; and they are no less of sovereign grace than our justification itself. But the apostle speaks of what the Ephesians were made partakers of *in this life*, by virtue of now being believers. This is obvious in the whole context. He described their nature and condition in the beginning of the chapter, which they held in common with all the posterity of Adam (Eph. 2:1-3). As Gentiles, idolaters, and atheists, he then contrasts

their particular condition with the Jews, (verses 11, 12). They were presently delivered by Jesus Christ from this whole miserable state and condition, both as to what they had in common with all mankind, and the particular misery they suffered in themselves. This is what he intends by being “saved.” The principal purpose in describing this state is that in it, and because of it, they were liable to the wrath of God. They were guilty before him, and liable to his judgment.

He expresses this in verse 3, using the same method and grounds he uses everywhere to declare the doctrine of justification (see Rom. 3:19-24; Tit. 3:3-5). They were delivered from this state by faith in Christ Jesus; for to as many as receive him, power is given to be the sons of God, John 1:12. “He that believes on him is not condemned,” John 3:18. That is, he is saved in the same sense the apostle intends in Eph. 2:8. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life” (is saved); “and he that believes not the Son, the wrath of God abides on him,” Jn. 3:36. The words “saved” and “salvation” are frequently used in this sense in the Scripture. Besides, he gives us so full a description of the salvation which he intends, from Eph. 2:13 to the end of the chapter, that there can be no doubt of it. This salvation is being “near by the blood of Christ,” verse 13; our “peace” with God by his death, verses 14, 15; our “reconciliation” by the blood of the “cross,” verse 16; our “access to God;” and all the spiritual privileges that depend on that, verses 18-20, etc.

Therefore, the inquiry and determination of the apostle concerns the causes of our justification before God. He declares and fixes these causes both positively and negatively. *Positively,*

1. The supreme moving cause is on the part of God. This is that free, sovereign grace and love of his, which he illustrates by its associated actions and properties mentioned before.
2. The meritorious procuring cause of it is Jesus Christ. This is in the work of his mediation, as the ordinance of God for rendering this grace effectual to his glory, Eph. 2:7, 13, 16.
3. The only means or instrumental cause on our part is faith: “By grace are you saved through faith,” Eph. 2:8. And lest he seem to take anything from the grace of God by asserting the necessity and use of faith, he adds, “ And that not of yourselves; it is the gift of

God.” The communication of this faith to us is no less an act of grace than is the justification which we obtain by it. So he has tied the whole work of justification to the grace of God through Christ, in which we gain an interest by faith alone.

Not content with this, he describes this work *negatively*. He excludes what might be pretended to have a concern in that justification. Three things are stated distinctly: what he excludes, the reason he excludes it, and the confirmation of that reason, obviating any objection that might arise from it:

1. What he excludes is works: “Not of works,” Eph. 2:9. What works he principally means, he declares. Some say he meant “works of the law, the law of Moses.” But what concern did these Ephesians have in the law of Moses, that the apostle should inform them that they were not justified by those works? They were never under that law, never sought righteousness by it, nor had any regard for it, except that they were delivered from it. But it may be that he means only works done in the strength of our own natural abilities, without the aids of grace, and before believing. But he declared what the works of these Ephesians were prior to believing. For, “being dead in trespasses and sins,” they “walked according to the course of this world in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind,” Eph. 2:1-3. It is certain enough that these works have no influence on our justification. It is just as certain that the apostle had reason to exclude them. No one could pretend to gain an advantage by them, especially in an act that is meant to deliver us from them.

Therefore, the works excluded here by the apostle are those works which the Ephesians now performed as believers, quickened with Christ. These are the “works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them,” as he expressly declared in verse 10. And he excludes these works, not only as being in opposition to grace, but as being in opposition to faith: “Through faith; not of works.” He not only rejects their merit as inconsistent with grace, but their co-interest with faith in the work of justification before God.

If we are saved by grace, through faith in Christ, exclusive of all works of obedience whatever, then such works cannot be the whole or any part of our righteousness to the justification of life. Therefore, we must have another righteousness, or perish forever. I know many



things are offered here, and many distinctions are coined to retain some interest of works in our justification before God. But whether it is safest to trust in them, or to trust in this plain, express, divine testimony, will not be hard for anyone to determine in their own case.

2. The apostle adds a reason for excluding works: “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” God has ordained the order and method of our justification by Christ, so that no man might have ground, reason, or occasion to glory or boast in himself. So it is expressed in 1Cor. 1:21, 30, 31, and Rom. 3:27. God’s design is to exclude all glorying or boasting on our part. Boasting consists in ascribing something to ourselves that is not in others, in order to obtain justification. And it is works alone that can give any occasion for this boasting: “For if Abraham were justified by works, he has something of which to glory,” Rom. 4:2. It is specifically excluded by the “law of faith,” Rom. 3:27; for the nature and use of faith is to find righteousness in another. If applied to justification, all works are apt to beget this boasting in the minds of men. Where there is any boasting of this nature, the design of God towards us in this work of his grace is frustrated.

What I principally insist on is that nothing in Scripture gives works an interest in justification, so no boasting in them should be included either. The Papists make works meritorious of justification, or at least of our second justification, as they call it. Some say “This ought not to be admitted, for it includes boasting. Merit and boasting are inseparable.” Therefore, say others, works are only “*causa sine qua non*,” they are the condition of justification; or they are our evangelical righteousness before God, on which we are evangelically justified; or they are a subordinate righteousness on which we obtain an interest in the righteousness of Christ; or they are comprised in the condition of the new covenant by which we are justified; or they are included in faith, being the form that faith takes, or the essence of faith. In this, men express themselves in great variety. But so long as our works are asserted in order to obtain our justification, how can anyone be certain that they do not include boasting, or that they express the true sense of these words, “Not of works, lest any man should boast?”

We ascribe something to ourselves in boasting. If anyone says that they know well enough what they are doing, and they know that they do not boast in what they ascribe to works, I must say that in general I cannot agree. The Papists affirm that they are the most remote from boasting, yet I am very well satisfied that boasting and merit are inseparable. The question is not what men think they do, but what the Scripture judges they actually do. If it is said that we have the grace and gift of God, which excludes all boasting in ourselves, then I say it was so in the Pharisee, and yet he was a horrible boaster. However these works are done, if they are done by us, and they are the “works of righteousness which we have done,” then I fear introducing them into our justification includes boasting. I say so because the apostle says, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Because this is a dangerous point, unless someone can give a direct, plain, indisputable boundary for introducing our works into our justification, which cannot include boasting, it is safest to exclude them utterly. Then there is no danger of being unadvisedly seduced into boasting, and thus lose all the benefits otherwise expected by the grace of God.

3. The apostle gives another reason why it cannot be of works. With it he obviates an objection which might arise from what he declared in Eph. 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.” The force of his reason consists in this: that all good works, those evangelical works which he speaks of, are the effects of the grace of God in those who are in Christ Jesus; and so they are truly justified prior to these works. But what he principally designed in these words was to obviate an objection that he foresaw some would make against it. The objection is this, “If good works are thus excluded from our justification before God, then what use are they? We may live as we please, utterly neglect them, and yet be justified.” Some men continue to make this very objection against justification with great vehemence. We meet with nothing in the cause of this doctrine more frequently than “if our justification before God is not of works, if they are not required prior to justification, and if they are not a previous condition of obtaining it, then there is no need of them. Men may safely live in utter neglect of all obedience to God.”

### **The Purpose of Good Works**

For the present, I will only say that if the answer given here by the apostle is not satisfactory to them, then I do not consider myself obliged to attempt to satisfy them further. “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but what is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,” Phil. 3:8, 9.

This is the last testimony which I will insist upon. Although it is of great importance, I will be brief in considering it. It has been recently pleaded and vindicated by another, and I do not expect there will be any tolerable reply. What reply has since been attempted by one person has no weight. The things that I would observe concerning this testimony may be reduced to the ensuing topics:

1. What the apostle intends to do from the beginning of this chapter, and in these verses, is to declare in a special way the basis on which we are accepted with God, and have cause to rejoice. In general, he fixes on gaining an interest in Christ by faith. He does so in opposition to all the legal privileges and advantages that the Jews boasted and rejoiced in: “Rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,” verse 3.

2. He supposes that righteousness is necessary for that acceptance before God in which we are to rejoice; whatever it is, it is the sole ground of that acceptance.

3. To give evidence for this, he declares that there is a twofold righteousness that may be pleaded in our defense, and trusted in for this purpose:

- (1.) “Our own righteousness, which is of the law” (Phil. 3:6), and

- (2.) “That which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” (Phil. 3:9)

He presents these as opposite and inconsistent as to our justification and acceptance with God: “Not having my own righteousness, but what is,” etc. (verse 9). He does not acknowledge an intermediate righteousness between these two.

4. Using his own example, he declares emphatically which of these two he adhered to and placed his confidence in. In handling this subject, there were some things that engaged his holy mind in earnestly exalting one of them: the righteousness which is of God by faith; he depressed the other, which was his own righteousness.

(1.) This was the turning point on which he and others had forsaken their Judaism, and committed themselves to the gospel. This became the main issue of the greatest controversy that was ever debated in the world. So he expresses it in Gal. 2:15, 16, "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law."

(2.) Based on this issue, the Jews greatly opposed the doctrine of justification in all places. In many of those places, the minds of the multitudes were turned off from the truth, which most are prone to do, and the simplicity of the gospel was perverted. This greatly affected Paul's holy soul; he takes notice of it in most of his epistles.

(3.) The weight of the doctrine itself lays the axe to the root of all spiritual pride, elation of mind, and self-pleasing whatever. Couple that with men's natural unwillingness to embrace it, and you have the reason that innumerable subterfuges have been sought to avoid its efficacy, and to keep men from resigning themselves to sovereign grace in Christ. This also affected him.

(4.) Paul himself had been a great sinner in the days of his ignorance, by his specific opposition to Christ and the gospel. He was deeply conscious of this, and thus of the excellence of the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ by which he was delivered. Men must have some experience of what he felt in himself as to sin and grace before they can well understand his passionate expressions about them.

5. It was for this reason in many other places of his writings, but especially in this, that he treats these things with a greater earnestness and vehemence of spirit than ordinary.

(1.) As to Christ, whom he exalts, he mentions not only the knowledge of him, but "to huperechon tes gnooseos," or "the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," with an

emphasis in every word. Other emphatic expressions – “all loss for him;” “that I may win him;” “that I may be found in him;” “that I may know him,” – all reveal the working of his emotions under the conduct of faith and truth, to acquiesce in Christ alone, as all and in all. This frame of mind is somewhat necessary to those who would believe his doctrine. Those who are utter strangers to the mindset will never receive the doctrine.

(2.) In his treatment of all other things that are our own, that are not Christ, we find the same vehemence. Whether they are privileges or duties, however good, useful, or excellent they may be in themselves, yet, in comparison to Christ and his righteousness, and with regard to their effect on our standing before God, he casts contempt on them. He calls them [sku>zala](#) “skutala” (“dog’s meat”) [NT:4657] to be left for those whom he calls “dogs.” These are the evil workers of the concision [NT:2699], or the wicked Jews who adhered stubbornly to the righteousness of the law, Phil. 3:2. The earnestness of the apostle in this argument, and the warmth of his expressions, I thought appropriate to shed light on the whole of his design.

6. The inquiry is what anyone who desires acceptance with God, or a righteousness on which he may be justified before him, ought to commit himself to. Either he must comply with the apostle in his resolution to reject all his own righteousness, and to commit himself to the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus alone, or he must find some exceptions to the apostle’s conclusion, or some distinctions that may prepare a reserve for his own works in his justification before God. Here everyone must choose for himself. In the meantime, we argue that if our own righteousness, and the righteousness of God which comes by faith in Christ Jesus, are opposite and inconsistent in the work of justification before God, then we are justified by faith alone (Rom. 4:6;5:17). This is plain from the removal of all other ways, causes, means, and conditions of our justification. But our own righteousness is expressly excluded by the apostle: “Not my own righteousness, but that of God” (Phil. 3:9). Again,

How we are “found in Christ” is the only way we are justified before God; for to be found in Christ is to be justified before God; the

opposite is to be found in ourselves. The judgment of God concerning us is based on whether we are found in Christ, or found in ourselves. As for those who are found in themselves, we know what their portion will be. But we are found in Christ by faith alone (Phil. 3:9).

All kinds of evasions are used by some people to escape the force of this testimony. Some say, in general, that no sober-minded man can imagine that Paul meant gospel righteousness when he referred to his own righteousness, or that he did not desire to be found in gospel righteousness; for that alone can entitle us to the benefits of Christ's righteousness. "Nollem dictum," such people refuse instruction:

(1.) This censure is too severe to cast on all Protestant writers, without exception, who have expounded this passage. It is also too severe to cast on all others, except a recent few, who are influenced by the heat of the controversy in which they are engaged.

(2.) If the gospel righteousness meant is his own personal righteousness and obedience, then there is some lack of consideration in affirming that he desired to be found in this kind of righteousness. What we are found in, is what we will be judged by. If we are found in our own evangelical righteousness before God, we will enter into judgment with God based on that; those who correctly understand anything of God and themselves will not be encouraged by that. And it does not seem to be a proper interpretation to make his words mean this: "I do not desire to be found in my own righteousness which is after the law, but I desire to be found in my own righteousness which is according to the gospel." Because they are both his own inherent righteousness, they are both the same. This interpretation will be disproved immediately.

(3.) Saying that our personal gospel righteousness entitles us to the benefits of Christ's righteousness, that is, to our justification before God, is "gratis dictum," a bare assertion. Not one testimony of Scripture can be produced that gives the least countenance to such an assertion. It is contrary to many express testimonies, and it is inconsistent with the freedom of the grace of God in our justification, as presented in the Scripture; this has been proved earlier. Nor do any of the passages which assert the necessity of obedience and good works in believers, that is, in already justified

persons, in any way prove this assertion. In particular, this assertion expressly contradicts that of the apostle in Tit. 3:4, 5.

### **Interpretations of the Righteousness of Christ**

I will stop here and proceed to considering the special responses that are given to this testimony, especially those of Bellarmine, in which I have yet to see anything with any pretence of reason in it:

1. Some say that by his own righteousness (which the apostle rejects) he only means his righteousness “ek nomou,” or “by the works of the law.” This, they say, was only an outward, external righteousness, consisting in the observation of rites and ceremonies, without respect to the inward frame or obedience of the heart. This is an impious fantasy. The righteousness which is by the law is the righteousness which the law requires. It is those works which, if a man does them, he shall live in them; for “the doers of the law shall be justified,” Rom. 2:13. God never gave any law of obedience to man that did not oblige him to “love the LORD his God with all his heart, and all his soul” (Mt. 22:37). It is completely untrue that, by the law, God required only an external righteousness. He frequently condemns it as an abomination to him when it is alone.

2. Others say that it is the righteousness that he had during his Pharisaism. In that state, he “lived in all good conscience, instantly to have served God day and night,” and respected the internal and external works of the law. Yet, because all these works were before faith, and before conversion to God, they are rejected from consideration as to our justification. But works done in faith, by the aid of grace, that is, evangelical works, are another consideration. Together with faith, they are the condition of our justification.

#### **Answer:**

1. In the matter of our justification, the apostle opposes evangelical works, not only those done by the grace of God, but also those done by the faith of believers. This was proved in the consideration of the foregoing testimony.

2. He makes no such distinction that works are of two sorts, one to be excluded from any interest in our justification, and the other to be included. Nor does he intimate any such distinction anywhere else on the same subject. On the contrary, he rejects the use of all works

of obedience in those who believe, exclusive of any such distinction. In this rejection, he directly expresses his own righteousness, that is, his personal, inherent righteousness, whatever it may be, and however it may be done.

3. He makes a plain distinction in his two-fold estate, between Judaism, which he was in before his conversion, and what he had by faith in Christ Jesus. In the first state, he considers its privileges, and declares the judgment he made about them when Jesus Christ was revealed to him. Essentially he says, "I considered them, with all the advantages, gain, and reputation which I had by them; but rejected them all for Christ: because esteeming them and continuing in them as privileges, was inconsistent with faith in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:3-9). Secondly, he gives an account of himself and his thoughts as to his present condition. One might suppose that although he had parted with all his legal privileges for Christ, yet now, being united to him by faith, he had something of his own in which he might rejoice, something by which he might be accepted with God. Otherwise he parted with everything for nothing.

But Paul, who reserved nothing that he might glory in, plainly declares his judgment as to all his present righteousness, and the ways of obedience that he is now engaged in, with respect to his acceptance with God. Phil. 3:8: *jAlla< menou~nge kai< hJgou~mai*. "Alla menounge kai hegoumai." "To the contrary, rather I consider..." Simply bringing into this verse what was affirmed before concerning his Judaical privileges, would be a very superficial consideration of its context. For,

(1.) There is a plain *au[chsiv* "auxesis," or expansion, in these words, *j jAlla< menou~nge kai<* "Alla menounge kai." He could not more plainly express the heightening of what he just affirmed than by proceeding to other things, or considering himself in another state: "But, moreover, beyond what I have already asserted."

(2.) The timeframe expressed in verse 7 by *h[ghmai* "hegemai," [NT:2233] regarding what was past, is changed to *hJgou~mai* "hegoumai" in verse 8, regarding only what was present. This does not refer to what he had rejected and forsaken before, but what he rejects and forsakes in the present. This makes evident his progression to things of another nature. Therefore, having rejected



all his former Judaical privileges, he now adds his judgment concerning his own present personal righteousness.

Because it might be objected that rejecting everything both before and after conversion, Paul had nothing left to rejoice in, to glory in, or to give him acceptance with God, he assures us of the contrary. He found all these things in Christ, and in the righteousness of God which is by faith. In these words, “Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,” he shows that he does not mean the righteousness which he had before his conversion at all.

Some interpret our being “in Christ,” and being “found in him,” as meaning no more than our profession of faith in the gospel. The faith of the catholic church in all ages concerning the mystical union of Christ and believers is not to be blown away with a few empty words and unproved assertions. The answer to the general objection that the apostle rejects our legal, but not our evangelical righteousness is full and clear:

(1.) The apostle does not reject, disclaim, or disown anything at all. He does not reject the one or the other kind of righteousness absolutely. He does so only in comparison to Christ, and with respect to our justification before God, or having a righteousness in his sight.

(2.) In that sense, he rejects all our own righteousness. But our evangelical righteousness, in the sense pleaded for, is our own righteousness. It is inherent in us and performed by us.

(3.) Our legal righteousness, and our evangelical righteousness, as far as inherent righteousness is meant, are the same thing. That distinction only refers to the different purposes and uses of the same righteousness. It is evangelical with respect to its motives, purposes, and special causes for its acceptance with God. It is legal with respect to its original prescription, rule, and measure. When anyone can provide an instance in which any righteous act or duty, any habit or its effect, is not required by that law which enjoins us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves, they will be addressed.

(4.) The apostle in this case rejects all the “works of righteousness which we have done,” Tit. 3:5; yet our evangelical righteousness consists in the works of righteousness which we do.

(5.) He disclaims all that is our own. If the evangelical righteousness that is meant is our own, he sets up another righteousness in opposition to it; therefore, it is not our own. It is imputed to us.

I will add some other reasons which show the falseness of this pretence:

(1.) Where the apostle does not distinguish or limit what he speaks of, what ground do we have to distinguish or limit his assertions? “Not by works,” he sometimes says, absolutely; sometimes he says “the works of righteousness which we have done.” Those who argue to the contrary say, “That is, not by some sort of works, whether evangelical or legal.” But by what warrant do they qualify his assertion?

(2.) The works that they pretend are excluded, which are included in our own righteousness, are works done without faith, and without the aid of grace. But these are not good works, nor can any of them be called righteous; nor does any righteousness consist in them alone. For “without faith it is impossible to please God.” To what purpose would the apostle exclude evil and hypocritical works from our justification? Whoever imagined that anyone could be justified by them? There might have been some pretext for this gloss had the apostle said his own works. But because he rejects his own righteousness, it is absurd to restrict it to works that are not righteous, as none at all are righteous.

(3.) Works done in faith, if applied to our justification, give occasion to boasting more than any other works, because they are better and more praiseworthy.

(4.) The apostle elsewhere excludes from justification the works that Abraham had done, when he had been a believer many years (Rom. 4:2); and he excludes the works of David, when he described the blessedness of a man by the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 4:6).

(5.) The question which he handles in his Epistle to the Galatians, was expressly about the works of those who believe; he does not dispute against the Jews, who would not be impressed in the least with his arguments. If the inheritance were by the law, then the promise was of no effect. And if righteousness were by the law, then Christ died in vain. They would readily grant these things. Instead,

he speaks to those who were believers, with respect to those works which they would have added to Christ and the gospel, in order to obtain justification.

(6.) If it was the mind of the apostle to exclude one sort of works, and assert the necessity of another to the same end, why did he not once say so? Why was there not the least intimation of any such distinction? This is especially revealing considering how important it was to answer those objections against his doctrine that he takes notice of, and that he returns to answer on other grounds,

Bellarmino considers this testimony in three places, lib. 1 cap. 18, lib. 1 cap. 19, lib. 5 cap. 5, De Justificat. And he returns three answers to it, which contain the substance of all that is pleaded by others to the same purpose. He says that,

(1.) “The righteousness which is by the law, and which is opposed to the righteousness which is by faith, is not the righteousness written in the law, or which the law requires. It is a righteousness done without the aid of grace, by the knowledge of the law alone.”

(2.) “The righteousness which is by faith in Christ is ‘opera nostra justa facta ex fide’, our own righteous works done in faith, which others call our evangelical works.”

(3.) “It is blasphemous to call the duties of inherent righteousness *zhmi>an kai< sku>zala*, “dzemian kai skutala,” or ‘loss and dung.’” But he labors in the fire entirely with sophistry.

As to the first artificial distinction,

(1.) Saying that righteousness which is by the law does not mean righteousness which the law requires is a bold assertion, and expressly contradicts the apostle in Rom. 9:31;10:5. In both places he declares the righteousness of the law to be the righteousness that the law requires.

(2.) The works which he excludes, he calls “the works of righteousness that we have done,” Tit. 3:5, which are the works that the law requires.

To the second definition of works by faith, I say,

(1.) The result is that the apostle would profess, “I desire to be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness, but having my

own righteousness.” For evangelical inherent righteousness was properly his own righteousness. I am sorry that some understand these words to mean that the apostle desired to be found in his own righteousness in the presence of God, as to his justification. Nothing can be more contrary to the perpetual tenor and design of all his discourses on this subject, and to the testimony of all other holy men in the Scripture to the same purpose, as we proved before. I suspect that there are very few true believers at present who desire to be found in their own personal evangelical righteousness in their trial before God.

(2.) “The righteousness which is of God by faith,” is not our own obedience or righteousness, but what is opposed to it. It is what God imputes to us, Rom. 4:6, and what we receive as a gift, Rom. 5:17.

(3.) That “the righteousness which is through faith in Christ;” does not mean our own inherent righteousness, is evident from the fact that the apostle excludes all his own righteousness at the point he was found in Christ. That is, it excludes all that he did as a believer. If these words do not oppose a righteousness that is our own to what is not our own, then I do not know what words can express it.

To the third accusation of blasphemy, I say,

(1.) The apostle does not call our inherent righteousness “dung.” He only “counts” it so.

(2.) He does not count it “dung” absolutely, but only in comparison with Christ.

(3.) He does not consider it dung in itself; but only as to his trust in it with respect to one special end, namely, our justification before God.

(4.) In the same way, the prophet Isaiah calls all our righteousness “filthy rags,” chap. 64:6; The Hebrew [uyDi\[i dn,b](#), “begeg ‘idim” [OT:899, 5708] is an expression denoting as much contempt as [sku>zala](#) “skutala.”

3. Some say that all works are excluded as meritorious of grace, life, and salvation, but not as the condition of our justification before God. But,

(1.) Whatever the apostle excludes, he excludes absolutely and in all respects, because he sets up something else in opposition to it.

(2.) There is no ground left for any such distinction in this passage. All that the apostle requires for our justification is the substance of what we plead for,

[1.] That we be found in Christ, not in ourselves.

[2.] That we have the righteousness of God, not our own.

[3.] That we be made partakers of this righteousness by faith.

## 19. Objections to the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ

What remains in this discourse is to consider some objections against the truth pleaded for. We have already met and removed many of the principal ones that are currently insisted on. The Scripture proofs urged by those of the Roman church for justification by works have so fully and frequently been answered by Protestant divines, that it is unnecessary to repeat them. What remains, for the most part, are artificial quibblings from supposed absurd consequences, rather than real theological arguments. Some of those who walk most warily between the imputation of the righteousness of Christ and justification by our own works, either cannot choose which side they are on, or they express themselves so cautiously that it is difficult to understand their minds. Therefore I will not say that this or that is anyone's opinion. I will only say that I approve or disapprove of it.

I will also say that the common doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, declines daily towards a direct assertion of justification by works. This is more clearly seen in the objections made by some against the truth, than in what they plead in defense of their own opinions. They speak warily of their own opinions, with a pretence of accuracy to avoid extremes. But in their objections, they use only what can be assumed to be justification by works in its grossest sense. There are only two things that are generally pleaded by Papists, Socinians, and others with whom we contend. The first, which is the fountain of all the others, is that the doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ renders our personal righteousness needless, and it overthrows all necessity for a holy life. The other is that the apostle James, in his epistle, plainly ascribes our justification to works; and what he affirms there is inconsistent with all the other testimonies of Scripture that we plead for.

Socinus fiercely makes this charge against the doctrine of the Reformed churches, *De Servat. par. 4, cap.1*. He made it the reason why he opposed the doctrine of the imputation of the satisfaction of Christ. He has written a treatise to the same purpose, defended by

Schlichtingius against Meisnerus. And he takes the same honest course in this that others did before him. For he charges that the divines of the Protestant churches taught that God justifies the ungodly, not only those who are so, and while they are so, but while they continue to be so. He charges that they required no inherent righteousness or holiness in anyone, nor could they do so based on their principles: the imputed righteousness of Christ is sufficient for them, even though they live in sin, and they are not washed or cleansed, and they do not give themselves up to duty and obedience to God by which he may be pleased. And so, he says, they bring libertinism and antinomianism into the church. He thinks it is a sufficient refutation of this doctrine to allege that “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,” etc., “shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

For my part, I believe that all unregenerate unbelievers, who do not obey the gospel, will be damned, whatever their religion, and whatever their outward profession of being a Christian. All who are born again, who truly believe and obey the gospel, will be saved, whatever their Christian denomination. The way in which these things are most effectually promoted, is for them to be embraced by everyone who takes charge of his own salvation. If they are obstructed by any church or way, then that church or way is to be forsaken, so far as it obstructs them. If there is any profession or church teaching that is absolutely destructive of, or inconsistent with, these things and it is made mandatory for its professors, then no salvation will be obtained through it. In other things, every man is to walk according to the light of his own mind, for whatever is not of faith is sin.

The objection itself is this and no other: “If God justifies the ungodly merely by his grace, through faith in Christ Jesus, so that works of obedience are not necessary prior to justification before God, nor are any part of that righteousness on which they are justified, then they are in no way necessary; men may be justified and saved without them.” It is said that we assert there is no connection between justifying faith and the necessity of holiness, righteousness, or obedience. By grace we are set at liberty to live as we please, in all manner of sin, and yet be assured of salvation. For if we are made righteous with the righteousness of another, then we have no need of

any righteousness of our own. It would be good if those who use this argument would try to exemplify their admiration for these things. Arguing for the necessity of holiness, while living in its neglect, is unattractive.

I will be brief in answering this objection. It is sufficiently answered or obviated in what has been said before concerning the nature of that faith by which we are justified, and the continuation of the moral law in its force as a rule of obedience for all believers. An unprejudiced consideration of what has been proposed on these topics will reveal the iniquity of this charge, and how it is not in the least countenanced by the doctrine. Besides, I have published an entire discourse concerning the nature and necessity of gospel holiness, with the grounds and reasons for it, in compliance with the doctrine of justification. I do not think it necessary to add anything to this. And I do not doubt that perusing it will abundantly show the vanity of this charge (see Dispensation of the Holy Spirit, chap. 5). A few things may be said now:

1. It is not being argued that all those who profess this doctrine, have exemplified it in a holy and fruitful way of life. Many, it is to be feared, have lived and died in sin. I suspect that some may have abused this doctrine to countenance themselves in their sins and their neglect of duty. The best of holy things or truths cannot be kept from abuse, so long as the wiles of the old serpent have an influence on the lusts and depraved minds of men. So it was with those of old who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, or countenanced their ungodly deeds from its doctrine. From the beginning, the whole doctrine of the gospel was abused in this way, even with the grace of God declared in it. Nor were all those who made a profession of the gospel immediately rendered holy and righteous thereby. From the first, many walked in a way that made it evident that their belly was their god, and their end was destruction. It is one thing to have the conviction of truth in our minds, and another to have its power in our hearts. The former will only produce an outward profession; the latter will effect an inward renovation of our souls. However, I must add three things to this concession:

- (1.) In the last ages, both in this and other nations, many prominent people firmly adhered to this doctrine, and constantly testified to the effectual influence it had on their walking before God. I am not



satisfied that any of those who at present oppose this doctrine surpass their predecessors in holiness or righteousness, whether in the exercise of faith, love, zeal, self-denial, or any other Christian grace. Nor do I know that any can be named among our own, in the former ages, who were eminent in holiness (and there were many), who did not cordially assent to that imputation of the righteousness of Christ which we plead for. I do not doubt in the least that many who greatly differ from others in the explication of this doctrine, may be eminently holy, and sincerely so. But it is unseemly that some others, who oppose the doctrine on this ground, give very little evidence in themselves of “that holiness without which no man shall see God” (Heb. 12:14). It is also curious to hear them vehemently denounce that doctrine as destructive of holiness, when it was so fruitful in holiness in former days.

(2.) It does not appear yet that introducing a doctrine contrary to it has had any great success in reforming the lives of men. Nor, from what may be observed, has personal righteousness or holiness thrived much under a contrary doctrine. There will be time enough to countenance such a doctrine by denouncing what formerly had better effects, when it has commended itself a little more by its fruits.

(3.) It would not be amiss if this part of the controversy might be settled among us all using the advice of the apostle James in chap. 2:18, “Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” Let us all labor so that the extent of our fruits of righteousness and holiness may determine the usefulness of our doctrines. For faith which does not evidence itself by works, that does not have this index which James calls for, and by which it may be found out and examined, is of no use or consideration in this.

2. The same objection was raised from the beginning against Paul’s doctrine. That is enough to show that it is the same doctrine that is now assaulted. He takes notice of it more than once. “Do we make void the law through faith?” Rom. 3:31. He anticipates this objection against his doctrine. The substance of the charge is that he destroyed the law, removed all obligation to obedience, and brought in Antinomianism. So again in Rom. 6:1 he asks, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” Some

thought this was the natural and genuine consequence of what he had largely said concerning justification, and some still think so: “If what he taught concerning the grace of God in our justification is true, it will not only follow that there will be no need to relinquish sin on our part, but also a continuance in sin must tend to exalt that grace which he so extolled.” He repeats the same objection in verse 15, “What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?” And in a number of other places he obviates the same objection, especially in Eph. 2:9, 10. Therefore we have no reason to be surprised or moved by this objection and charge. It is the same one that was brought against the doctrine of the apostle himself, regardless of the current subtle arguments or rhetorical exaggerations. It is evident that there are natural prejudices against this part of the mystery of the gospel in the minds of men. They happened to manifest themselves, and continued until they corrupted the whole doctrine of the church in this. It would not be difficult to discover the primary ones if that were our present business. However, it has been done previously in part.

3. It is granted that this doctrine, or whatever else concerns the grace of God, is liable to abuse by those in whom darkness and the love of sin are predominant. From the very beginning of our religion, some fancied that a bare assent to the gospel was that type of faith by which they could be saved, though continuing to live in sin and neglecting all duties of obedience. This is evident from the epistles of John, James, and Jude especially. We can give no relief against this pernicious evil because, while men love darkness more than light, their deeds are evil. It would be a fantasy to think that their modeling this doctrine in such a way will prevent future abuse, for it has always been liable to abuse by such people.

These general observations are enough to discard this objection. I will only add the consideration of the answers that the apostle Paul gave, with a brief application of them for our purpose.

The objection made to the apostle was that he made the law void, that he made good works unnecessary, and that based on his doctrine, men might live in sin to the advancement of grace. As to his understanding of this we may observe,

1. He never once answers this objection with the necessity of our own personal righteousness and obedience in order to be justified before God. It is an unreasonable assumption that, by “faith *without* works,” he understands it to mean faith *and* works. If anyone still pretends that he has given such an answer, let them produce it, for as yet it has not appeared. The alleged truth is that our personal righteousness, holiness, and works, influenced our justification, and were part of our righteousness before God in that justification. Is it not strange that if this was indeed his doctrine, and the contrary was a mistake, that he would not make use of this truth to answer an objection that he rendered them all needless and useless? Yet, in an eminent manner, he presses their necessity everywhere, and shows their true nature and use, both in general and in their particular duties, and does so beyond any of the other writers of the New Testament.

This objection was urged against his doctrine, as he himself acknowledged. And because of it, the doctrine was rejected by many, Rom. 10:3, 4; Gal. 2:18. He saw and knew that the corrupt lusts and depraved affections in the minds of many would supply them with subtle arguments against it. His writings show that he foresaw by the Holy Spirit that it would be perverted and abused. Surely it was highly incumbent on him to state his doctrine in such a way that, upon this objection, no countenance might ever be given to it. And is it not strange that on this occasion he did not once at least, somewhere or other, intimate that although he rejected the works of the law, yet he maintained the necessity of evangelical works to obtain our justification before God, either as its condition, or as the means by which we are justified according to the gospel? If this were indeed his doctrine, it would easily solve this difficulty and answer this objection. Certainly his wisdom and care of the church, under the guidance of the infallible Spirit, would not allow him to omit this reply if it were consistent with the truth that he delivered. But he is so far from any such plea, that when the most unavoidable opportunity arose, he not only waives any mention of it, but in its stead he affirms what plainly shows that he did not accept it. See Eph. 2:9, 10.

Having positively excluded works from our justification (“Not of works, lest any man should boast”), it is natural to inquire, “What

purpose do works serve? Or is there any need for them?” Instead of distinguishing between legal and evangelical works in order to obtain our justification, he asserts the necessity of evangelical works on other grounds, for other reasons and other motives. This shows that these in particular were what he excluded, as we saw when we considered the passage. We should not abandon his pattern and example in this cause, seeing that he was wiser and holier than we all are. He knew more of the mind of God, and had more zeal for personal righteousness and holiness in the church than we all do. Therefore, if we are pressed a thousand times with this objection, we will never seek to avoid it by answering that we will allow these works to be the condition or causes of our justification, or the substance of our righteousness before God, because Paul would not do so.

2. We may observe in his answer to this objection that nowhere does he insist that the motive for good works is the common principle of moral duties. Instead, he presents the motives and reasons of holiness, obedience, and good works alone, which are unique to *believers*. The question was not whether all mankind is obliged to obey God and the duties of the moral law. It is whether the gospel obliges *believers* to righteousness, holiness, and good works, and does so in a way that is suited to affect their minds and compel them to these works. The only question is this: assuming our gratuitous justification through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, does the gospel contain grounds, reasons, and motives, that effectively influence the minds of believers, and make their obedience and good works necessary?

We have nothing to do with those who are not believers in this matter, nor do we plead that evangelical grounds and motives are suited or effective to move them to obedience. In fact, we know that the contrary is true, and that they are apt to both despise and abuse them. See 1Cor. 1:23, 24; 2Cor. 4:4. Such persons are under the law, and there we leave them to the authority of God in the moral law. But it is evident that the apostle confines his inquiry to believers in every place that he makes mention of it. “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer in that?” Rom. 6:2, 3; “For we are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus to good works,” Eph. 2:10. Therefore, we will not at all contend what cogency there is in

gospel motives and reasons, that would persuade unbelievers to duties of holiness, whatever the truth may be in that case. We are concerned with what their power, force, and efficacy is towards those who truly believe.

3. The answers that the apostle returns positively to this objection are large and many. In them, he declares the necessity, nature, ends, and use of evangelical righteousness and good works. They comprise a large part of the doctrine of the gospel. I will only mention the main points of some of them, which are the same ones that we plead to vindicate the truth of this doctrine:

(1.) He argues that it is the ordination of God: “God has before ordained that we should walk in them,” Eph. 2:10. In establishing the causes of salvation, God has designed that those who believe in Christ should live, walk, and abound in good works, and in all their duties of obedience to God. To this end, there are precepts, directions, motives, and encouragements, found everywhere in the Scripture. Therefore, we say that good works are necessary by the ordination of God and by his will and command. They are necessary because they produce the gradual progressive renovation of our natures, our growth and increase in grace, and fruitfulness in our lives. What need is there for any further dispute about the necessity of good works among those who know what it is to believe, or what regard exists in the souls and consciences of believers to the commands of God?

Some ask, “What force is in this command or ordination of God when, even if we do not apply ourselves to obedience, we will be justified by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and so may be saved without them?” I say,

First, as mentioned, this inquiry concerns believers alone. Not one of them will fail to conclude that this a most unreasonable and senseless objection, arising from utter ignorance of their state and relation to God. The minds of believers are as much and as effectually influenced with the authority and commands of God to duty and obedience, as if they were all given in order to obtain their justification. Supposing otherwise is to ignore what faith is, what it means to be a believer, and the relation that we stand in to God by faith in Christ Jesus. It ignores the arguments and motives

that principally affect and constrain the minds of such believers. This is the answer which the apostle gives at large to this exception in Rom. 6:2-4.

Secondly, the whole fallacy of this exception lies in separating the things that God has made inseparable; these are justification and sanctification. To suppose that the one may exist without the other is to overthrow the whole gospel. It combines those things that are distinct; these are justification and eternal actual salvation. The relationship of works and obedience to each of these is not the same, as has been declared.

Therefore, it is an absurd figment of the imagination that God's commands to duty are not as obligatory on the consciences of believers, as if they had all been given in order to obtain their justification before God. In fact, they have a greater power over them than they could have had if they were required prior to their justification; for these commands would have to be assumed to be efficacious before these people truly believed. To say that a man may truly believe in answer to the commands of the gospel, and not in the same instant of time be absolutely justified, is not a dispute about a point of religion. It plainly denies the whole truth of the gospel. It is faith alone that gives power and efficacy to gospel commands to effectively influence the soul to obedience. Therefore, this obligation is more powerfully constraining on those who are justified, than if it would be if it was given to them in order to obtain their justification.

(2.) The apostle answers as we do, "Do we then make the law void through faith? God forbid; indeed, we establish the law." Although the law is principally established in and by the obedience and sufferings of Christ (Rom. 8:3, 4; 10:3, 4), it is not voided as to believers. The doctrine of faith, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, do not exempt believers from that obligation to universal obedience that is prescribed in the law. They are still obliged, by virtue of that law, to "love the LORD their God with all their hearts, and their neighbors as themselves." They are indeed freed from the law, and all its commands to duty, as far as its promise to "Do this, and live," and as far as its curse, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do all things written in the law." Someone who is obligated under the law, in order to obtain

justification and life, inevitably falls under its curse for any transgression.

But we are made free to give obedience to it on gospel terms, and for gospel ends, as the apostle declares at large in Romans chapter 6. The obligation of the law on believers is such that the least transgression of it has the nature of sin. But are they bound over by the law to everlasting punishment? As some phrase it, “will God damn those who transgress the law?” without which all this means nothing. I ask people what they think of this; and supposing that he will damn transgressors, what do they think will become of themselves? For my part, I say, No. The apostle says, “There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” They will then ask, “Where is the necessity of obedience from the obligation of the law, if God will not damn those who transgress it?” And I say, it would be good if some men did think that their obedience was required to obtain justification, or would learn, for a while at least, to hold their peace. The law requires equal obedience in all duties, if it requires any at all. As to its obligatory power, it can neither be dispensed with nor relaxed, so long as good and evil remain. If everyone is obliged to duty by virtue of the law’s commands, but they must fall under its curse for every transgression, then either it obliges no one at all, or no one can be saved. We are freed from the curse and condemnation of the law by Him who has made an end of sin and brought in everlasting righteousness. Yet, while we remain “viatores” [stewards] in order to accomplish God’s plan to restore his image in us, we are obliged to endeavor after all the holiness and righteousness that the law requires of us.

(3.) The apostle answers this objection by discovering the necessary relation that faith has to the death of Christ, the grace of God, and the nature of sanctification. He also discovers the excellence, use, and advantage of gospel holiness, with the purpose that God has appointed for it. He does this at large in the whole sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, showing the consistency of justification by faith alone with the necessity of personal righteousness and holiness. The apostle has presented the chief motivations and reasons for evangelical obedience, all of which are consistent with the doctrine of justification by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. The proper argument of these things would require a just

and full exposition of that chapter. I will only say that there are those to whom the reasons and motives expressed there are not effective for their own personal obedience, and do not demonstrate the indispensable necessity of it. These people are unacquainted with the gospel, the nature of faith, the genius and inclination of the new creature, the constraining efficacy of the grace of God and love of Christ, and the economy of God in the disposition of the causes and means of our salvation. Let men scoff as they please, "he that is in Christ Jesus is a new creature." I will not trouble myself to contend with them about these things.

There are various other considerations that I thought to add for the same purpose, and have already demonstrated,

1. To prove the necessity of inherent righteousness and holiness, we make use of the arguments that are suggested to us in the Scripture.
2. We make use of all of them in the same sense, and for the declared purposes, that they are urged in the Scripture, in perfect compliance with what we teach concerning justification.
3. All the pretended arguments or motives for evangelical holiness, that are inconsistent with the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, obstruct and evert that doctrine.
4. The nature of holiness that is necessary to the salvation of those who believe is more excellent, sublime, and heavenly in its causes, essence, operations, and effects, than what is accepted or believed by most of those who oppose the doctrine of justification.
5. The holiness and righteousness which is pleaded for by the Socinians and those who follow them, does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees in anything; nor based on their principles can anyone go beyond them.

Because this discourse has already far exceeded my first intention, and as I said before, I have already addressed the doctrine of the nature and necessity of evangelical holiness elsewhere, I will at present omit any further handling of these things. I acquiesce in the answers given by the apostle to this objection.



## 20. The Doctrine of the Apostle James concerning faith and works

Many take advantage of the seeming difference that exists between the apostles Paul and James concerning faith, works, and justification. This requires our consideration of it. Some of the words and expressions used by James seem to directly oppose the doctrine fully and plainly declared by Paul. But whatever appears to do so, has already been so satisfactorily answered and removed by others, that there is no great need to repeat them. Although I suppose there will be no end of contending and writing about these things, the doctrine has not been in the least impeached, nor has any new difficulty arisen in any recent discourses to that purpose. While we “know in part, and prophecy in part,” I must say that, in my judgment, there is no problem in securing the doctrine of justification by faith, through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, from any concern or contradiction in the discourse of St. James, chap. 2:14, to the end. Therefore, I will refrain from saying anything except what I suppose will be expected in a discourse of this nature. I hope that I may contribute some light to the clearing and vindication of the truth. To this purpose it may be observed that,

1. It is taken for granted, on all hands, that there is no real inconsistency or contradiction between what is delivered by these two apostles. If there were, the writings of one of them must be pseudepistolae, or falsely ascribed to those whose names they bear, and uncanonical. Some have highly but rashly questioned the authority of the Epistle of James historically and of late. Therefore, their words are certainly capable of a just reconciliation. The only reasons why any of us might not agree to this, is because of the darkness of our own minds, the weakness of our understandings, and with too many, the power of prejudices.

2. It is also taken for granted, when there is an appearance of contradiction in any passages of Scripture, that if any of them treat the contradicted matter directly, designedly, and extensively, while others speak of the same things only occasionally, transiently, or for other purposes, then the truth is to be determined from the former. The interpretation of those passages where any truth is mentioned

only occasionally, with reference to other things or purposes, is to be taken from and accommodated to those other passages whose design and purpose is directed to that truth. It guides the faith of the church in that truth. There is no more rational and natural rule of the interpretation of Scripture agreed upon by common consent.

3. According to this rule, it is unquestionable that the doctrine of justification before God is to be learned from the writings of the apostle Paul. Light is to be taken from them to all the other places of Scripture where it is occasionally mentioned. This is especially true considering how exactly this doctrine represents the whole scope of the Scripture. It is affirmed numerous times by particular testimonies speaking to the same truth. It must be acknowledged that Paul wrote about our justification before God on purpose, to declare it for its own sake, and for its use in the church. He does that fully, extensively, and frequently, in a constant harmony of expressions. And he acknowledges the reasons that pressed him to fullness and accuracy in this:

(1.) The importance of the doctrine itself. He declares that our salvation immediately depends on it, and that it is the hinge on which the whole doctrine of the gospel turns, Gal. 2:16-21; 5:4, 5.

(2.) The plausible and dangerous arguments made against it. They were presented with such specious pretences, that very many were turned from the truth by it (as were the Galatians). Many others were detained from the faith of the gospel by their dislike for it, Rom. 10:3, 4. Anyone who declares truth knows the care and diligence it requires. The zeal, care, and circumspection it stirred up in the apostle is obvious in all his writings.

(3.) The abuse that the corrupt nature of man is apt to heap on this doctrine of grace. He takes notice of this, and thoroughly vindicates the doctrine from giving the least countenance to such distortions and unfair demands. Certainly, there was never a greater necessity incumbent on anyone to fully and plainly teach and declare a doctrine of truth, than was on Paul at that time, considering the place and duty that he was called to. There is no imaginable reason why we should not learn the truth of it principally from his declaration and vindication of it, especially if we believe that he was divinely inspired and guided to reveal its truth to the church.

As for what was delivered by the apostle James regarding our justification, things are quite different. He does not undertake a declaration of the doctrine of our justification before God. He had another purpose in mind, as we will see immediately. He vindicates the doctrine from the abuse that some had put it to in those days, as they did with other doctrines of the grace of God. They turned it into licentiousness. We primarily learn the truth in this matter from the writings of the apostle Paul. And he plainly declares how the interpretation of other passages is to be accommodated.

4. Some recently are not of this mind. They earnestly contend that Paul is to be interpreted by James, and not the contrary. To this end, they tell us that the writings of Paul are obscure. They tell us that various ancients agree, and that many find errors in them, or things of a similar nature that are scandalous to Christian religion. Because James is writing after Paul, they say he is presumed to give an interpretation to Paul's sayings. Therefore Paul is to be understood by that interpretation.

In Answer to this:

*First*, there is no need to vindicate the writings of St. Paul, which are beginning to be criticized. This is one effect of the secret prevalence of Atheism today. That will be left for a more proper place. I do not know how anyone, who pretends to have the least acquaintance with antiquity, can take a passage out of Irenaeus, in which he was obviously mistaken, or a rash word from Origen or the like, to derogate the perspicuity of the writings of this apostle. They must know how easy it is to overwhelm their charges with testimonies to the contrary from all the famous writers of the church in several ages. For example, there are forty places in which Chrysostom explains why some men did not understand Paul's writings, which were so gloriously evident and perspicuous. So for their satisfaction, I refer them only to the preface to his exposition of Paul's epistles, and to similar evidence in due season. But Paul does not need the testimony of men, nor of the combined church, whose safety and security is built on the doctrine which he taught. In the meantime, it would not be unpleasant to consider how those who have the same purpose agree in their conception of his writings. Most of his epistles were written against the Gnostics, to refute their error. Others point out that the Gnostics were mistaken in their understanding of his

writings. Men are so bold to use divine things to satisfy their present interest.

*Secondly*, this criticism was not the judgment of the ancient church for three or four hundred years. Because the epistles of Paul were always esteemed the principal treasure of the church, the great guide and rule of the Christian faith, this epistle of James was scarcely accepted as canonical by many, and doubted by most, as both Eusebius and Jerome testify.

*Thirdly*, the purpose of the apostle James was not at all to explain the meaning of Paul in his epistles, as some pretend. It was only to vindicate the doctrine of the gospel from its abuse by those who used their liberty to cloak maliciousness, and who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. They continued in their sin under a pretence that grace had abounded to that end.

*Fourthly*, the apostle Paul vindicates his own doctrine from the exceptions and abuses that men turned it into. There is no other doctrine in his epistles than what he preached the world over, and by which he laid the foundation of Christian religion, especially among the Gentiles.

These things being said, I will briefly show there is not the least inconsistency or contradiction between what is declared by these two apostles as to our justification or its causes. And this I will do,

1. By some general considerations of the nature and purpose of both their discourses.
2. By a particular explication of the context of James.

Under the first I will show,

(1.) That they do not have the same scope, design, or purpose in their discourses. They do not consider the same question, state the same case, or determine the same inquiry. Thus, they are not speaking “ad idem,” to the same thing, and do not contradict one another.

(2.) That because faith has various meanings in the Scripture, and denotes various kinds of things, they are not speaking of the same kind of faith. Therefore, there can be no contradiction in what the one ascribes to it and the other takes from it.

(3.) That they do not speak of justification in the same sense, or to the same ends.

(4.) That by works, they both mean works done in obedience to the moral law.

(1.) As to the scope and design of the apostle Paul: the question which he answers, and the case which he presents, are manifest in all his writings, especially in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians. His whole purpose is to declare how a guilty, convicted sinner comes to be accepted by God. He says it is through faith in the blood of Christ. Hereby he has all his sins pardoned, and he obtains a right to the heavenly inheritance; that is, he is acquitted and justified in the sight of God. This doctrine belonged eminently to the gospel. Its revelation and declaration to the Gentiles was uniquely committed to Paul. As we have newly observed, he had a special reason to insist on it because of the opposition that was made to it by the Jews and judaizing Christians. They ascribed this privilege to the law, and to our own works of obedience done in compliance with the law. This is the case that he states. This is the question that he determines in all his discourses about justification. And in its explication, he declares the nature and causes of our justification, and vindicates it from all exceptions.

All men naturally desire what God has made eternally inconsistent. They want to live in sin here, and come to blessedness hereafter. Men of corrupt minds, who are willing to indulge their lusts, might conclude that if we are justified freely, through the grace of God, by the imputation of a righteousness that originally and inherently is not our own, then no more is required of us. There is no need to relinquish sin, no need to attend to the duties of righteousness and holiness. Paul obviates such impious suggestions, and shows they are not a necessary consequence of the doctrine that he taught. But he does not do this by intimating or granting that our own works of obedience or righteousness are necessary to our justification before God, nor that they cause it. If such were true, it would be inconsistent with the whole of his doctrine, and destructive of it. He would not have omitted such an assertion, as we have shown. It is foolish and impious to suppose that it was necessary for anyone else, like James, to explain Paul's doctrine, or to defend it against the

same exceptions that Paul identifies, using a plea that he would not make himself, a plea which indeed he rejects.

The apostle James, on the other hand, had no such scope or design, nor did he have any such occasion for what he wrote in this matter. He does not inquire about it, or intimate any such inquiry. He does not state the case for how a guilty, convinced sinner, whose mouth is stopped as to any plea or excuse for himself, may come to be justified in the sight of God. He does not address how he may receive the pardon of sins and the gift of righteousness to life. To resolve this question through our own works, is to overthrow the whole gospel. Instead, he had in mind a business of quite another nature. As we have said, there were many in those days who professed faith in the gospel, presuming that because they were already justified, there was nothing more needed to be saved. They thought they had attained a desirable estate, suited to all the interests of the flesh. They thought they might live in sin, neglecting all their duties of obedience, and yet be eternally saved. Some believe they imbibed this pernicious conceit from the poisonous opinions that some then espoused. The apostle Paul foretold that this would come to pass in 2Tim. 4:1-4. It is generally agreed that, by this time, Simon Magus and his followers had infected the minds of many with their abominations. Among them was that faith meant a liberty from the law and a freedom to sin. It took away all difference between good and evil. This was later expanded by Basilides, Valentinus, and the rest of the Gnostics.

Or it may be that it was only the corruption of men's hearts and lives that prompted them to seek after such a countenance to sin. I judge that this was their motivation. Among professed Christians then, were those who assumed that their faith, or whatever religion they professed, would save them. And it would do so even though they lived in flagrant wickedness, utterly devoid of good works or duties of obedience. There is no other occasion intimated in the epistle. Paul makes no mention of seducers, as John expressly and frequently does some time later. Against these sorts of people, to convict them, James designs two things,

First, to prove the necessity of works for all those who profess the gospel and thereby faith in Christ. Second, to evidence the vanity and folly of their pretence to being justified, and that they should be saved by a faith that was so far from being fruitful in good works, as

to countenance their sin. These are the purposes of all his arguments, and no other. He effectively proves that faith which is completely barren and fruitless as to obedience, and which men pretend can countenance their sins, is not that faith by which we are justified, and by which we may be saved. It is a dead carcass, of no use or benefit, as James declares by the conclusion of his whole dispute in the last verse of chapter 2. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

He does not tell anyone how to be justified before God, but convinces some that they are not justified by trusting to such a dead faith. He declares how anyone may evidence and display that he is justified indeed. His design is so plain that nothing can be more evident. Therefore, the principal design of these two apostles being so distant from each other, there is no inconsistency in their assertions, despite the appearance of their words. They do not speak of the same things in the same respect. James does not once inquire how a guilty, convinced sinner, condemned by the law, may come to be justified before God; and Paul speaks of nothing else. Therefore, we must apply each of their declarations to their proper design and scope, or we will depart from sober rules of interpretation, and render it impossible to correctly understand either of them. There is no disagreement, or appearance of it, between them.

(2.) They do not speak of the same faith. Therefore, there can be no discrepancy in what one ascribes to faith and the other denies concerning it. If one person says he is talking about a real fire, and another says he is talking about a painting of a fire, there is no contradiction between them if the first says that his fire will burn and the other denies that his own will. We proved before that there are two sorts of faith, one by which men are said to believe the gospel, and another by which they make a profession of it. What belongs to one does not belong to the other. I do not believe that anyone will deny that the kind of "faith" necessary to our justification is what St. Paul properly calls [ku>riov](#) "kurios." The only kind he means is the "faith of God's elect," "precious faith," "more precious than gold," "the faith that purifies the heart, and works by love," "the faith by which Christ dwells in us, and we abide in him, by which we live to God," "a living faith." He ascribes all these things and more to the

faith that he insists is the only means on our part to obtain our justification before God. But the faith meant by the apostle James has none of this assigned to it. What he means is what he calls it: a dead faith, a carcass without breath, the faith of devils, a wordy faith. It is no more truly faith than sending away naked and hungry people without relief would be truly charity. He may well deny that any justification results from this kind of faith, whatever the boasting; and yet justification may properly be ascribed to the kind of faith that Paul speaks of.

Bellarmino uses several arguments to prove that the faith meant by James here is justifying faith when considered in itself. But these arguments are contemptibly weak, being built on the assumption that true justifying faith is nothing but an assent to catholic doctrine, or divine revelation: *De Justificat. lib. 1 cap. 15.*

His *first* argument is that, “James calls it ‘faith’ absolutely, by which the Scripture always means true faith.”

**Answer:**

1. James calls it a dead faith, the faith of devils; and he casts all manner of reproach on it. He would not have done that if he meant any duty or grace that was truly evangelical.
2. Not every faith that is true, as to the reality of the assent it gives to the truth, is living, justifying, or saving faith, as has been proved.
3. There are those who are said to have faith absolutely, or who absolutely believe, who never had true and saving faith; John 2:23 (they believed in his name, but Jesus did not commit himself to them); Acts 8:13, 21 (Simon Magus believed, but had neither part nor portion in the kingdom).

*Secondly*, Bellarmine urges that, “in the same place and chapter that he addresses the faith of Abraham, James affirms that it was wrought with his works, James 2:22, 23; a vain shadow of faith does not do this. Therefore it was true faith that the apostle meant, and it is most properly called so.”

**Answer:**

This pretence is ridiculous. The apostle does not give the faith of Abraham as an instance of the kind of faith that he treated so



severely, but what is directly contrary to it. By this faith he planned to prove that the other faith was of no use or advantage to those who had it; for this faith of Abraham produced good works, which the other faith did not.

*Thirdly*, he urges verse 24, “‘You see then how a man is justified by works, and not by faith only;’ for the faith that James speaks of justifies with works, but a false faith, the shadow of a faith, does not. Therefore it is true, saving faith of which the apostle speaks.”

**Answer:**

Bellarmino is utterly mistaken. The apostle does not ascribe justification partly to works, and partly to faith. In the sense he meant it, he ascribes justification entirely to works, in opposition to the faith he speaks of. There is a plain antithesis between works and faith as they relate to justification, in the sense he meant. A dead faith, a faith without works, the faith of devils, is excluded from having any influence on justification.

*Fourthly*, Bellarmine adds that, “the apostle compares this faith without works to a rich man that gives nothing to the poor, verse 16; and a body without a spirit, verse 26. Therefore, just as a rich man’s knowledge of the wants of the poor is true and real, and a dead body is still a true body; so faith without works is still true faith, and is considered as such by St. James.”

**Answer:**

These things clearly destroy what they are produced to confirm, except that the cardinal helps them out with a little sophistry. Because the apostle compares this faith to the charity of a man that gives nothing to the poor, he suggests that this man has knowledge of their poverty. And his knowledge may be true. But the more true and certain it is, the more false and feigned is his pretended charity expressed in these words, “Go, and be fed and clothed.” Such is the faith that the apostle speaks of. And although a dead body is a true body in being a carcass, it is not the essence of a living man. A carcass does not have the same nature as the body of a living man in being prepared and fitted for all vital acts. And we assert no other difference between the faith spoken of by the apostle and justifying

faith, than the difference that exists between a dead, breathless carcass, and a living animated body. Therefore, it is evident beyond all contradiction, unless we want to be contentious, that the faith which the apostle James refers to here is only a dead, barren, lifeless faith. It is the kind usually pretended by ungodly men to countenance their sins. And this is not the kind of faith asserted by Paul.

(3.) They do not speak of justification in the same sense or for the same purpose. The apostle Paul addresses our absolute justification before God, including our acceptance with God, and the grant of a right to the heavenly inheritance, and that alone. He declares all the causes of that justification, all that is involved on the part of God, and on our part. He does not address the evidence, knowledge, sense, fruit, or manifestation of it in our own consciences, in the church, or to others that profess the faith. He speaks of those things separately on other occasions. There is only one justification he speaks of, that is at once accomplished before God, changing the relative state of the person who is justified. It is capable of being evidenced various ways, to the glory of God and the consolation of those who truly believe.

The apostle James does not address this at all. His whole inquiry is about the nature of that faith by which we are justified, and the only way by which it may be evidenced as the right kind, or one that a man may safely trust to. Therefore, he addresses justification only as to its evidence and manifestation. He had no reason to do otherwise, and this is apparent from both instances he uses to confirm his purpose. The first is that of Abraham, verse 21-23. He says that, by Abraham's being justified by works, in the way James asserts, "the Scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness." If his intention was to prove that we are justified before God by works, and not by faith, because Abraham was justified that way, then the testimony he uses directly contradicts what it should prove. Accordingly it is left to Paul to prove that Abraham was justified by faith without works, as the words plainly signify. No one can declare how the proposition that, "Abraham was justified by works," (meaning absolute justification before God,) could fulfill this Scripture, "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness." This is especially true

considering the opposition that is made both here and elsewhere between faith and works in this matter of justification.

Besides, Bellarmine asserts that Abraham was justified by works when he offered his son on the altar (Gen. 22:12). We believe the same thing, but we ask in what sense he was justified by that. For the testimony of Scripture is that this was thirty years or so after “he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). And when righteousness was imputed to him, he was justified. He was not justified twice in the same sense, in the same way, and with the same kind of justification. How, then, was he justified by works when he offered his son on the altar? It was only that, by his work in offering his son, he evidenced and declared in the sight of God and man that he was already justified long before. This is unquestionable and confessed by all. He was justified in the sight of God as declared in Gen. 22:12, and he gave a signal testimony to the sincerity of his faith and trust in God, which manifested the truth of the Scripture that, “He believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness.” In quoting this testimony, the apostle James openly acknowledges that he was truly accounted righteous, had righteousness imputed to him, and was justified before God, long before the justification that he ascribes to his works. Therefore, his works can only be the evidencing, proving, and manifesting his justification. Hence, it also becomes apparent what the nature of faith is that justifies us, the declaration of which is the principal design of the apostle. In brief, Bellarmine alleges that the Scripture, “Abraham believed, and it was imputed to him for righteousness,” was fulfilled when he was justified by works as he offered his son on the altar. This was done either by imputing righteousness to him, or by a real efficacious righteousness inherent in him, or by manifesting and evidencing his former justification, or by some other way that must be found out.

First, it is plain in the text that it was not by imputation, because it was imputed to him long before, and in a way by which James proves that righteousness is imputed without works. Secondly, it is also plain that he was not justified by inherent righteousness, because he was righteous in that sense long before his justification; he abounded in works of righteousness to the praise of God. It remains, therefore,

that he was justified to evidence and manifest his prior faith and justification.

James' other instance is Rahab. He asserts she was "justified by works, when she received the messengers, and sent them away." But she received the spies "by faith," as the holy Ghost witnesses in Heb. 11:31. And therefore she had true faith before they came. If so, she was really justified then, for no one can be a true believer and not be justified; that would destroy the foundation of the gospel. In this condition, she received the messengers and made a full declaration of her faith to them, Josh. 2:9-11. After believing, and being justified based on that, and after the confession she made of her faith, she endangered her life by concealing and sending them away. Hereby she justified the sincerity of her faith and confession. In that sense alone, she is said to be "justified by works." In no other sense does the apostle James mention justification in this passage.

(4.) As to the "works" that are mentioned by both apostles, they mean the same works. There is no disagreement in the least about them. The apostle James means works of obedience to God according to the law. This is evident from the whole first part of the chapter which discusses faith and works. The same is meant by the apostle Paul, as we proved before. And as to their necessity in all believers as evidence of their faith and justification, it is no less pressed by one than the other; as has been declared.

These things being premised, we may observe some things in particular from the discourse of the apostle James. They sufficiently evidence that there is no contradiction in what is delivered by the apostle Paul concerning our justification by faith, the imputation of righteousness without works, and the doctrine we have learned from him and declared.

1. He makes no compromise or mixture between faith and works in our justification, but opposes one to the other, affirming the one and rejecting the other as to our justification.

2. He makes no distinction between a first and second justification, or the beginning and continuation of justification. He speaks of only one justification, which is our first personal justification before God. Nor are we concerned with any other justification.

3. He ascribes this justification entirely to works, in contradistinction to faith in that sense of justification which he meant, and the faith which he discussed. Therefore,

4. He does not inquire or determine how a sinner is justified before God at all. Instead, he is concerned with how those who profess the gospel can prove or demonstrate that they are believers, so that they do not deceive themselves by trusting in a lifeless and barren faith. All these things will be further evidenced in a brief consideration of the context itself, by which I will close this discourse.

From the beginning of chapter 2 to verse 14, he reproves those to whom he wrote for their many sins against the law, the rule of their sins and obedience, or at least he warns them of them. Having shown them the danger they were in, he reveals the root and principal cause of it in verse 14. This was none other than a vain and deceptive presumption that the faith required in the gospel was nothing but a bare assent to its doctrine. They presumed that they were delivered from all obligation to moral obedience or good works, and that they might, without any danger to their eternal state, live in whatever sins their lusts inclined them to, chap. 4:1-4; 5:1-6. The whole topic he addresses is the state of such people, and it defines and measures the interpretation of all his future arguments: "What does it profit, my brethren, though a man say he has faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" (2:14).

Suppose someone is guilty of the sins charged in the foregoing verses, and yet he boasts that he has faith. He makes a profession of the gospel. He has left either Judaism or Paganism, and committed himself to the faith of the gospel. Therefore, although he is destitute of good works and lives in sin, he believes he is accepted with God, and will be saved. Will this faith indeed save him? This is the question. The gospel says plainly that, "he who believes shall be saved." The issue is whether faith that indulges sin, and neglects duties of obedience, is that faith to which the promise of life and salvation is annexed? How may any man, who says he has faith, prove and evidence that he has that faith which will secure his salvation? The apostle denies that this faith can exist without works, or that any man can evidence himself to have true faith without works of obedience. His whole ensuing discourse consists of the proof of this. Not once does he consider the means and causes of the

justification of a convinced sinner before God, nor had he any reason to do so. His words are openly twisted when applied to any such intention.

The faith that he means and describes is altogether useless to attain salvation. He proves this by comparing it with love or charity of a like nature in verses 15 and 16. "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled,' despite you not giving them those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit?" This love or charity is not that gospel grace which is required of us; for the love of God does not dwell in him who behaves thus towards the poor, 1 John 3:17. Whatever name it may have, whatever it may pretend to be, whatever it may be professed for, it is not love, nor does it have any of the effects of love. It is neither useful nor profitable. Hence, the apostle infers in verse 17, "Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone." He did not undertake to prove that we are justified before God by faith alone, without works. He undertook to prove that faith which is alone, without works, is dead, useless, and unprofitable.

Having given this first evidence to prove his thesis, he resumes the question and states it as a hypothesis in verse 18, "Yea, a man may say, 'You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith which is without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.'" It is undeniably plain, that the apostle here again proposes his main question, but on an assumption that there is a dead, useless faith, which he proved before. For now, the only inquiry remaining is how true faith, of the right gospel kind, may be shown, evidenced, or demonstrated, so that it exposes the folly of trusting any other faith. [Dei~xo>n moi th<n pi>stin sou](#) "Deixon moi ten pistin sou," meaning "Evidence or demonstrate your faith to be true by its only means, which is works." He says, "You have faith, and I have works" or, "You profess and boast that you have that faith by which you may be saved, and I have works." What he does not say is, "Show me your faith by your works, and I will show you my works by my faith," which would be the antithesis. Instead he says, "I will show you my faith by my works." The whole question concerns evidencing faith, not works.

He further proves that this alleged faith is not the faith that will justify or save us. Faith cannot be evidenced by works which it does not produce. It consists only in a bare assent to the truth of divine revelation. This is no different than what the devils themselves have. No man can think or hope to be saved by what he has in common with devils, and in which he exceeds them. Verse 19, "You believe there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble." The belief in one God is not the whole of what the devils believe, but it is singled out as the principal, fundamental truth. Once conceded, an assent to all divine revelation necessarily ensues. And this is the second argument by which he proves an empty, barren faith is dead and useless.

The second confirmation being given to his principal assertion, he restates it again in a way that will lead to his final confirmation: "But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" verse 20. Consider the words. First, he calls the person with whom he deals a vain man. This is not in general, because every man living is vain. He is someone who especially puffed up in his own vanity and fleshly mind. He is someone who has entertained vain dreams of being saved by an empty profession of the gospel, without any fruit of obedience. Secondly, what he plans to do is convict this vain man. It is a conviction of that foolish and pernicious error that he imbibed: "Will you know, O vain man?" Thirdly, what he planned to convince him of alone is that "faith without works is dead;" that is, faith without works is barren and unfruitful; it is dead and useless. This is all that he undertakes to prove by his following examples and arguments. To twist his words for any other purpose, when they are all proper and suited to what he expresses as his only design, is to do violence to them.

He proves this thesis by considering the faith of Abraham, verse 21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Some things must be observed to clarify the mind of the apostle in this:

1. It is certain that Abraham was justified many years before the work referred to was performed. And long before, this testimony was given concerning him, "He believed in the LORD, and he counted it to him for righteousness." The imputation of

righteousness upon believing is all the justification we inquire or contend about.

2. It is certain that, in relating the story repeated here by the apostle, not one word is spoken of Abraham's being justified before God by that or any other work.

3. It is plain and evident that, in the place referred to, Abraham was declared to be justified by a sincere and open attestation to his faith and fear of God, and that he evidenced these in the sight of God himself. God condescends to assume human affections in Gen. 22:12, "Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." It cannot be denied that this is the justification which the apostle means; and this was the manifestation and declaration of the truth and sincerity of his faith by which he was justified before God. Hereby the apostle directly and undeniably proves what he produces this example for: that "faith without works is dead."

4. It is just as evident that the apostle had not said anything before as to our justification and its means. It is therefore absurd to introduce this passage as the proof of what he had asserted before, that we are justified by works, which it does not prove at all.

5. The only safe rule of interpreting the apostle's meaning, next to the scope and design of his present discourse, is the scope and circumstances of the passages which he takes his proof from. They were plainly these, and no other: Abraham had long been a justified believer, for there were thirty years or so between the testimony given to this in Gen. 15, and the story of sacrificing his son in Gen. 22. All the time he walked with God, he was upright in holy and fruitful obedience. Yet after many others, it pleased God to put his faith to his greatest and last trial. It is God's way, in the covenant of grace, to try the faith of those who believe by such ways as seem appropriate to him. Hereby he manifests how precious the trial of our faith is, making it "more precious than gold," 1 Pet. 1:7. It raises up glory to himself; which it is the nature of faith to give him, Rom. 4:20.

This is the case proposed by the apostle: how to determine whether the faith which men profess is genuine, precious, and of the same nature as that to which the gospel promise of salvation is annexed.



*Secondly*, this trial was based on works, by one signal duty of obedience that was prescribed to him for that very purpose. For Abraham was to be a pattern to all who would afterwards believe. And God provided a signal way for the trial of his faith, which was by an act of obedience. This was so far from being commanded by the moral law, that it seemed contrary to it. If he is a pattern for us of justification by works, then these must be works that God has not required in the moral law, because they seem to be contrary to it. Nor can anyone be encouraged to expect justification by works, by telling him that Abraham was justified by works when he offered up his only son to God. For it will be easy for him to say, that because no such work was ever performed by him, none was ever required of him. But,

*Thirdly*, upon Abraham's compliance with the command of God, given to him as a trial, God himself [ajnrwpopaqw~v](#) "anthropopathos" [as if a man] declares the sincerity of Abraham's faith, and graciously accepts and justifies him based on that. This is the whole design of the passage which the apostle fits to his purpose. It contains the whole of what he was to prove, and no more. Plainly, it grants that we are not justified by our works before God, because he only gives one instance of a work that was performed by a justified believer many years after he was absolutely justified before God. But this manifestly proves that "faith without works is dead." This is because justifying faith alone produces works of obedience, as is evident in the case of Abraham. On such a faith alone, a man is evidenced, declared, and pronounced to be justified or accepted with God. Abraham was not first justified at this point. He was declared to be previously justified by this work. This is the whole of what the apostle meant to prove.

There is, therefore, no appearance of the least contradiction between Paul and this apostle. Paul asserts that Abraham was not justified by works. James only declares that the works which he performed after he was justified manifested and declared him to be justified. In the next verse 22, he indicates that this was his whole design, "See how faith was wrought with his works, and by works his faith was made perfect?" He reinforces two things concerning the conviction of Abraham: 1. That true faith operates by works; it is effective in

obedience. 2. That faith is made perfect by works; that is, it is evidenced as faith –nowhere in the Scripture does the word [te>leiov, teleiou~mai](#) “teleios, teleioumai,” signify the internal, formal perfecting of any thing. It only indicates its external complement or perfection, its manifestation. It was complete when he was first justified; and that was now manifested. See Matt. 5:48; Col. 4:12; 2 Cor. 12:9. The apostle says, “This I have proved in the instance of Abraham, namely, that it is works of obedience alone that can prove a man is justified, or to have that faith by which he may be so.” To confirm this affirmation, he adds, “And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, and he was called The friend of God.’” (Jms. 2:23). The apostle affirms two things in this:

1. The Scripture mentioned was fulfilled. It was fulfilled in the justification by works which he ascribes to Abraham. But the only way to explain how this Scripture was fulfilled in this, either as to its timing or as to the justification itself, is that it was evidenced and declared. What the Scripture affirmed about Abraham so long before, was then evidenced to be true by the works which his faith produced; thus this Scripture was accomplished. Otherwise, taking into account the distinction he made between faith and works, and adding the sense of this passage given by the apostle Paul, nothing can be more contradictory to his design than quoting this Scripture if he meant to prove our justification is by works. Therefore, this quoted Scripture was not, and cannot be, fulfilled by Abraham’s justification by works. It is only that, by his works, Abraham was manifested to be justified.

2. He adds that, because of this, Abraham was called the friend of God, see also Isa. 41:8; 2Chron. 20:7. This has the same importance as his being justified by works. For he was not called God’s friend merely as a justified person, but as one who received unique privileges from God, and responded to them walking holy before him. Therefore, his being called “The friend of God,” was God’s approval of his faith and obedience. This is the justification by works that the apostle asserts.

Based on this, he makes a double conclusion (Rahab’s example is the same kind, so I will not repeat it here):

1. His first conclusion is, "That by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Essentially, he is saying, "You, whom I intend to convince of the vanity of your imagination, dream that you are justified by a dead faith, a breathless carcass of faith, a mere assent to the truth of the gospel, and profession of it, while you continue in all kinds of impiety, wholly destitute of good fruits. Let me show you what kind of faith is required for justification and salvation. For Abraham was declared to be righteous, to be justified, on that faith which is wrought by works, and not at all by the kind of faith you pretend to have." A man is justified by works, as Abraham was justified when he offered up his son to God. That is, what he really was by faith long before, as the Scripture testifies, was then and thereby evidenced and declared. And, therefore, let no one suppose that he can be justified by the faith which these people boasted of, seeing that the faith by which Abraham was declared to be justified, evidenced itself by its fruits.

2. He lays down that great conclusion which he planned to confirm, and proved, by his whole argument, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (2:26). A breathless carcass and an unworking faith are alike, as to all the outcomes of natural or spiritual life.

This was what the apostle designed from the beginning to convict vain and barren professors of faith. Accordingly, this is what he gave sufficient reason and testimony for.

# Notes

[←1]

Epist. Ad Diognet.

[←2]

Orat. 2 in Cant.

[←3]

Epist. Ad Corinth. Cap. 5 hom. 11.

[←4]

Editor's note: will the simple-minded or insane who cannot grasp their own sin, yet who are chosen of God, never find salvation? Do aborted fetuses thwart God's plan for their salvation? Was David mistaken when he said he would see his dead child again? Those who lack capacity must be exempted from this stated pre-condition.