



**GOD'S GOSPEL
OF
GRACE**

*The doctrine of salvation from the pages of the
Free Grace Broadcaster*

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*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see,
and ask for the old paths, where is the good way,
and walk therein, and ye shall find rest
for your souls.—Jeremiah 6:16*

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FOREWORD

THE inspired, infallible Word of God was written by about forty different human authors over a period of some 1,600 years. The Holy Spirit inspired each author to write without error.

Today, many false teachers seek to create their own followings; thus they obscure and distort Biblical truth. How are we to recover God's unchanging truth preserved for us in the Bible? First, by carefully studying God's Word and then by hearing the voice of outstanding, godly teachers *from prior centuries*, including many who have faithfully proclaimed God's truth since the Reformation.

This volume contains the sermons and writing of some of these faithful men, who with one voice speak to each new generation with conviction, clarity, skill, and power. Each of the following articles is from the pages of the *Free Grace Broadcaster*.

The *FGB* is a digest of Christ-centered sermons and articles that focuses on a different theme each quarter. It is useful for personal study, discipleship, family worship, and sermon preparation. Chapel Library mails the *FGB* free of charge in North America. Many other countries receive it via international distributors (see our website for more information). Past and present issues of these 48-page booklets are available either in print or by download from www.chapellibrary.org.

God's Gospel of Grace is compiled from the pages of the *Free Grace Broadcaster*, the digest on Biblical themes from the old writers, published quarterly by Chapel Library since 1988. Discovering Biblical truth from the unified voices of godly men through the centuries gives both confidence and wonderful insight. Many forces are pushing evangelicalism in our day to the right and left of the historic Reformation faith once handed down to us. Here let the reader find once again the truth vital for us to continue in the old paths.

Chapters are taken from the following *FGB* issues:

Chapter 1: *The Gospel*, #198, November 2006

Chapter 2: *Substitution*, #207, February 2009

Chapter 3: *Justification*, #187, February 2004

Chapter 4: *Imputed Righteousness*, #191, February 2005

Chapter 5: *Repentance*, #203, February 2008

W.F. Bell was founding editor of the *Free Grace Broadcaster* in 1970. Pastor L.R. Shelton Jr. served from 1988 until his death in 2003. Jeff Pollard has served as editor since then, increasing the *FGB* usefulness by covering the important aspects of a different theme in each issue: definition, exposition from the Scriptures, and application. As such, it serves as a wonderful tool for Biblical training.

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PART 1

THE GOSPEL

A REPORT FROM HEAVEN

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

THE gospel is a report from heaven to be believed and trusted to for salvation. *First*, we shall view the gospel in the nature of a report in general. And,

1. There is the *subject* of a report or the thing that is reported, viz.,¹ **some design, action, or event, true or false.** The subject of the gospel report is a love-design in God for the salvation of sinners of mankind (2Ti 1:9-10). Such was the gospel report that was first made in the world (Gen 3:15). It is the report of an act of grace and kindness in God, in favor of them, whereby He has given them His Son for a Savior (Joh 3:16; Isa 9:6) and eternal life in Him (1Jo 5:11); the report of the event of Christ's dying for sinners and a crucified Christ's being ready for marriage with sinners (Mat 22:4), [which is] a subject of the utmost importance.

2. **There is the place whence the report originally comes.** And the place here is heaven, the bosom of the Father. Hence, the gospel is called "heavenly things" (Joh 3:12), revealed from the bosom of the Father. The original place of a report is the place of the transaction, and that at some distance from where it is reported. So,

(1) *The gospel is a report from heaven, where the design of love was contrived, the gift of the Son was made, and from whence He came to die for sinners, and where He is ready to match² with them.* The gospel may come from one place of the earth to another, as it did from Jerusalem to other places of the world (Isa 2:3; Luk 24:47). But it came from heaven originally (Luk 2:13-14).

(2) *The gospel is good news from a far country, and so should be as acceptable as cold water to the thirsty* (Pro 25:25). The farther off a country is from whence a report comes, we think ourselves the less concerned in it; and so do carnal men treat the gospel report. Far indeed it is. But as far as it is, we must spend our eternity in it or else in hell; and therefore it does most nearly concern us.

¹ viz. – Latin for *videlicet*: that is; namely.

² match – join in companionship.

3. The matter of a report is something unseen to them to whom the report is made. And so is the matter of the gospel report. It is an unseen God (Joh 1:18), an unseen Savior (1Pe 1:8), and unseen things (2Co 4:18) that are preached unto you by the gospel. So the gospel is an object of faith, not of sight (Heb 11:1). We receive it by hearing, not by seeing (Isa 55:3). It is not what we credit on our eyesight, but upon the testimony of another, viz., of God. Hence, the carnal world are fond of seen objects (Psa 4:6), but slow to believe the gospel.

4. There is a reporter or reporters. And in this case, the report is made by many. But,

(1) *The firsthand reporter is an eyewitness, viz., Jesus Christ.* Christ Himself was the raiser of the report of the gospel (Heb 2:3). And who else could have been so (Joh 1:18)? What He reported, He saw and gives us His testimony of the truth of it on His eyesight (Joh 3:11). Hence, He is proposed to us as the Faithful and True Witness (Rev 3:14), Who was from eternity privy³ to the whole design revealed to us in the gospel.

(2) *The prophets, apostles, and ministers of the gospel.* They are the secondhand reporters. The former had it immediately⁴ from Christ, the latter from them again...

5. Lastly, there is a manifestation of the thing by the report to the parties to whom the report is made. So is the grace of God to poor sinners, manifested to them by the gospel (2Ti 1:9-10). It is no more kept a secret from them, but they are let into the knowledge of the design, action, and events that concern their salvation. The gospel opens up and reveals the secret of God's grace to sinners with the method of communicating it, even the whole plan of salvation, which from eternity was hid in the breast of God (Joh 1:18)...

We shall consider the report of the gospel and the trusting to it conjunctly:⁵

1. The gospel is a report from heaven of salvation for poor sinners from sin (Mat 1:21) and from the wrath of God (Joh 3:16). [It is] dear bought, yet freely made over to you in the word of promise, so as that ye may freely take possession of it (Isa 55:1). This report being brought to the sinner, faith trusts it as a true report, believing that God has said it and trusts to it as good, laying our own salvation upon it. So the soul greedily embraceth the Savior and

³ **privy** – made a participant in knowledge of something private or secret.

⁴ **immediately** – directly; without intervention.

⁵ **conjunctly** – joined together.

the salvation brought to it in that report, as ever a drowning man would take hold of a rope let down to bring him out of the waters.

2. The gospel is the report of a crucified Christ made over to sinners as the device of heaven for their salvation. It is proclaimed by the authority of heaven that Christ has died, and by His death purchased life and salvation for lost children of Adam, and that they and every one of them may have full and free access to Him (Mat 22:4). Faith trusting this report as good and true, the soul concludes, “The Savior is mine,” and leans on Him for all the purchase of His death, for life and salvation to itself in particular (1Co 2:2).

3. The gospel is the report of a righteousness wherein we guilty ones may stand before a holy God. “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Rom 1:17). And by faith, one believes there is such righteousness that it is sufficient to cover him, and that is held out to him to be trusted on for righteousness. And so the believer trusts it as his righteousness in the sight of God, disclaiming all other, and betaking himself to it alone (Gal 2:16).

4. The gospel is the report of a pardon under the great seal of heaven, in Christ, to all who will take it in Him. “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things” (Act 13:38-39). This pardon is proclaimed openly by the authority of heaven, full and free, without exception of any of lost Adam’s race to whom the report comes. The soul by faith believes this to be true and applies it to itself, saying, This pardon is for me! It is good and suitable to my case. I will therefore lean to this word of grace for my pardon and come in, for this is the Word of God that cannot lie.

5. The gospel is the report of a Physician that cures *infallibly*⁶ all the diseases of the soul (Mat 9:12-13; Heb 7:26), and *freely* (Hos 14:4), and *rejects* no patients (Joh 6:37). The soul believes it, applies it to its own case, and says, “Then I will trust Him for the removing the stony heart out of my flesh, for curing me of the falling evil of backsliding, the fever of raging corruption, the running issue of the predominant lust, and the universal leprosy of the corruption of my nature.”

6. The gospel is the report of a feast for hungry souls (Isa 25:6), to which all are bid welcome, Christ Himself being the Maker and

⁶ *infallibly* – without fail.

Matter of it too (Isa 55:2). The soul, weary of the husks of created things and believing this report, accordingly falls a-feeding on Christ—His flesh which is meat indeed and His blood which is drink indeed—believing and applying to itself all that Christ was, did, and suffered, as that whereof the soul shall reap the benefit, which is the feeding by faith on a slain Savior.

7. The gospel is the report of a treasure (2Co 4:7). In it are the precious promises. Within them [is] precious Christ with His merit, like the gold mentioned: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich” (Rev 3:18). The field it is hid in may be yours (Mat 13:44); the gospel offers you the covenant as that field. Faith believes the report; and the soul lays hold on the covenant and trusts entirely to the treasure hid there for the payment of all its debt, for its through-bearing⁷ during life and through death, and for procuring it eternal happiness.

8. The gospel is the report of a victory won by Jesus Christ over sin, Satan, death, and the world, and that [for the benefit] of all who will join the glorious Conqueror (Psa 98:1). Faith believes this report; and the soul trusts to it for its victory over all these as already foiled enemies (1Jo 5:4)...

9. Lastly, the gospel is the report of a peace purchased by the blood of Christ for poor sinners (Eph 2:14)...Faith believes it; and trusting to it, the soul comes before God as a reconciled Father in Christ, brings in its supplications for supply before the throne, believing the communication to be opened betwixt heaven and them...

USE: This shows that the gospel is the means of divine appointment for the salvation of sinners. Therefore, it is called “the gospel of our salvation” (Eph 1:13), and [it] “bringeth salvation” (Ti 2:11). The light of nature is not the external means or instrument of salvation, for it brings no report of Christ (Act 4:12). The Law is not it either—it is the ministration of death and condemnation (2Co 3:7, 9)—but the gospel only. For it is in the gospel only that a righteousness is revealed for the unrighteous (Rom 1:16-17), and in which the Spirit is conveyed to dead sinners (Gal 3:2). To slight the gospel, then, is to slight the only means of salvation...Wherefore know, that your life lies here, and that there is no salvation but in the way of trusting to the report of the gospel.

From “The Unsuccessfulness of the Gospel...” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. 10, reprinted by Richard Owen Roberts Publishers.

⁷ **through-bearing** – support; livelihood.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL MESSAGE?

J. I. Packer

IN a word, the evangelistic message is the gospel of Christ and Him crucified, the message of man's sin and God's grace, of human guilt and divine forgiveness, of new birth and new life through the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is a message made up of four essential ingredients.

1. **The gospel is a message about God.** It tells us Who He is, what His character is, what His standards are, and what He requires of us, His creatures. It tells us that we owe our very existence to Him; that for good or ill, we are always in His hands and under His eye; and that He made us to worship and serve Him, to show forth His praise and to live for His glory. These truths are the foundation of theistic¹ religion; and until they are grasped, the rest of the gospel message will seem neither cogent² nor relevant. It is here with the assertion of man's complete and constant dependence on his Creator that the Christian story starts.

We can learn again from Paul at this point. When preaching to Jews, as at Pisidian Antioch, he did not need to mention the fact that men were God's creatures. He could take this knowledge for granted, for his hearers had the Old Testament faith behind them. He could begin at once to declare Christ to them as the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes. But when preaching to Gentiles, who knew nothing of the Old Testament, Paul had to go further back and start from the beginning. And the beginning from which Paul started in such cases was the doctrine of God's Creatorship and man's creaturehood. So, when the Athenians asked him to explain what his talk of Jesus and the resurrection was all about, he spoke to them first of God the Creator and what He made man for. "God...made the world...seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made...all nations...that they should seek the Lord" (Act 17:24-27). This was not, as some have supposed, a piece of philosophical apologetic³ of a kind that Paul afterwards renounced, but the first and basic lesson in theistic faith. The gospel starts by teaching us that we, as creatures, are absolutely dependent on God, and that He, as Creator, has an absolute claim on us.

¹ **theistic** – believing in a personal Creator and Ruler of the world.

² **cogent** – appealing to the powers of reasoning; convincing.

³ **apologetic** – defensive method of argument.

Only when we have learned this can we see what sin is, and only when we see what sin is can we understand the good news of salvation *from* sin. We must know what it means to call God *Creator* before we can grasp what it means to speak of Him as *Redeemer*. Nothing can be achieved by talking about sin and salvation where this preliminary lesson has not in some measure been learned.

2. The gospel is a message about sin. It tells us how we have fallen short of God's standard, how we have become guilty, filthy, and helpless in sin, and now stand under the wrath of God. It tells us that the reason why we sin continually is that we are sinners by nature, and that nothing we do or try to do for ourselves can put us right or bring us back into God's favor. It shows us ourselves as God sees us and teaches us to think of ourselves as God thinks of us. Thus, it leads us to self-despair. And this also is a necessary step. Not until we have learned our need to get right with God and our inability to do so by any effort of our own can we come to know the Christ Who saves from sin.

There is a pitfall here. Everybody's life includes things that cause dissatisfaction and shame. Everyone has a bad conscience about some things in his past, matters in which he has fallen short of the standard that he set for himself or that was expected of him by others. The danger is that in our evangelism we should content ourselves with evoking thoughts of these things and making people feel uncomfortable about them, and then depicting Christ as the One Who saves us from these elements of ourselves, without even raising the question of our relationship with God. But this is just the question that has to be raised when we speak about sin. For the very idea of sin in the Bible is of an offence against God that disrupts a man's relationship with God. *Unless we see our shortcomings in the light of the Law and holiness of God, we do not see them as sin at all.* For sin is not a social concept; it is a *theological* concept. Though sin is committed by man, and many sins are against society, *sin cannot be defined in terms of either man or society.* We never know what sin really is until we have learned to think of it in terms of God and to measure it, not by human standards, but by the yardstick of His total demand on our lives.

What we have to grasp, then, is that the bad conscience of the natural man is not at all the same thing as conviction of sin. It does not, therefore, follow that a man is convicted of sin when he is distressed about his weaknesses and the wrong things he has done. It is not conviction of sin just to feel miserable about yourself, your failures, and your inadequacy to meet life's demands. Nor would it

be saving faith if a man in that condition called on the Lord Jesus Christ just to soothe him, and cheer him up, and make him feel confident again. Nor should we be preaching the gospel (though we might imagine we were) if all that we did was to present Christ in terms of a man's felt wants: "Are you happy? Are you satisfied? Do you want peace of mind? Do you feel that you have failed? Are you fed up with yourself? Do you want a friend? Then come to Christ; He will meet your every need"—as if the Lord Jesus Christ were to be thought of as a fairy godmother or a super-psychiatrist... To be convicted of sin means not just to feel that one is an all-round flop, but to realize that one has offended God, and flouted⁴ His authority, and defied Him, and gone against Him, and put oneself in the wrong with Him. To preach Christ means to set Him forth as the One Who through His cross sets men right with God again...

It is indeed true that the real Christ, the Christ of the Bible, Who [reveals] Himself to us as a Savior from sin and an Advocate with God, does in fact give peace, and joy, and moral strength, and the privilege of His own friendship to those who trust Him. But the Christ who is depicted and desired merely to make the lot of life's casualties easier by supplying them with aids and comforts is not the real Christ, but a misrepresented and misconceived Christ—in effect, *an imaginary Christ*. And if we taught people to look to an imaginary Christ, we should have no grounds for expecting that they would find a real salvation. We must be on our guard, therefore, against equating a natural bad conscience and sense of wretchedness with spiritual conviction of sin and so omitting in our evangelism to impress upon sinners the basic truth about their condition—namely, that their sin has alienated them from God and exposed them to His condemnation, and hostility, and wrath, so that their first need is for a restored relationship with Him...

3. The gospel is a message about Christ—Christ, the Son of God incarnate; Christ, the Lamb of God, dying for sin; Christ, the risen Lord; Christ, the perfect Savior.

Two points need to be made about the declaring of this part of the message: (i) *We must not present the Person of Christ apart from His saving work*. It is sometimes said that it is the presentation of Christ's Person, rather than of doctrines about Him, that draws sinners to His feet. It is true that it is the living Christ Who saves and that a theory of the atonement, however orthodox, is no substi-

⁴ **flouted** – mocked; showed contempt.

tute. When this remark is made, however, what is usually being suggested is that doctrinal instruction is dispensable in evangelistic preaching, and that all the evangelist need do is paint a vivid word-picture of the man of Galilee Who went about doing good, and then assure his hearers that this Jesus is still alive to help them in their troubles. *But such a message could hardly be called the gospel.* It would, in reality, be a mere conundrum,⁵ serving only to mystify...*The truth is that you cannot make sense of the historic figure of Jesus until you know about the incarnation*—that this Jesus was in fact God the Son, made man to save sinners according to His Father’s eternal purpose. Nor can you make sense of His life until you know about the atonement—that He lived as man so that He might die as man for men, and that His passion, His judicial murder, was really His saving action of bearing away the world’s sins. Nor can you tell on what terms to approach Him now until you know about the resurrection, ascension, and heavenly session—that Jesus has been raised, and enthroned, and made King, and lives to save to the uttermost all who acknowledge His Lordship. These doctrines, to mention no others, are essential to the gospel...In fact, without these doctrines you would have no gospel to preach at all.

(ii) *But there is a second and complementary point: we must not present the saving work of Christ apart from His Person.* Evangelistic preachers and personal workers have sometimes been known to make this mistake. In their concern to focus attention on the atoning death of Christ as the sole sufficient ground on which sinners may be accepted with God, they have expounded the summons to saving faith in these terms: “Believe that Christ died for your sins.” The effect of this exposition is to represent the saving work of Christ in the past, dissociated from His Person in the present, as the whole object of our trust. But it is not biblical thus to isolate the work from the Worker. *Nowhere in the New Testament is the call to believe expressed in such terms.* What the New Testament calls for is faith *in (en) or into (eis) or upon (epi)* Christ Himself—the placing of our trust in the living Savior Who died for sins. The object of saving faith is thus not, strictly speaking, the atonement, *but the Lord Jesus Christ, Who made atonement.* We must not, in presenting the gospel, isolate the cross and its benefits from the Christ Whose cross it was. For the persons to whom the benefits of Christ’s death belong are just those who trust His Person and believe, not upon His saving death simply, but upon Him, the living Savior. “Believe

⁵ **conundrum** – a puzzling question or problem.

on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,” said Paul (Act 16:31). “Come unto me...and I will give you rest,” said our Lord (Mat 11:28).

This being so, one thing becomes clear straight away: namely, that the question about the extent of the atonement, which is being much agitated in some quarters, has no bearing on the content of the evangelistic message at this particular point. I do not propose to discuss this question now; I have done that elsewhere.⁶ I am not at present asking you whether you think it is true to say that Christ died in order to save every single human being, past, present, and future, or not. Nor am I at present inviting you to make up your mind on this question, if you have not done so already. All I want to say here is that even if you think the above assertion is true, your presentation of Christ in evangelism ought not to differ from that of the man who thinks it false.

What I mean is this: it is obvious that if a preacher thought that the statement, “Christ died for every one of you,” made to any congregation, would be unverifiable and probably not true, he would take care not to make it in his gospel preaching. You do not find such statements in the sermons of, for instance, George Whitefield⁷ or Charles Spurgeon. But now, my point is that, even if a man thinks that this statement would be true if he made it, it is not a thing that he ever needs to say or ever has reason to say when preaching the gospel. For preaching the gospel, as we have just seen, means [calling] sinners to come to Jesus Christ, the living Savior, Who, by virtue of His atoning death, is able to forgive and save all those who put their trust in Him. What has to be said about the cross when preaching the gospel is simply that Christ’s death is the ground on which Christ’s forgiveness is given. And this is all that has to be said. The question of the designed extent of the atonement does not come into the story at all...*The fact is that the New Testament never calls on any man to repent on the ground that Christ died specifically and particularly for him.*

The gospel is not, “Believe that Christ died for everybody’s sins, and therefore for yours,” any more than it is, “Believe that Christ died only for certain people’s sins, and so perhaps not for yours”...We have no business to ask them to put faith in any view of the extent of the atonement. Our job is to point them to the living Christ, and summon them to trust in Him...This brings us to the final ingredient in the gospel message.

⁶ *Introductory Essay* available as a small booklet from Chapel Library.

⁷ **George Whitefield** (1714-1770) – the best-known evangelist of the 18th century.

4. **The gospel is a summons to faith and repentance.** All who hear the gospel are summoned by God to repent and believe. “God...commandeth all men every where to repent,” Paul told the Athenians (Act 17:30). When asked by His hearers what they should do in order to “work the works of God,” our Lord replied, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (Joh 6:29). And in 1 John 3:23 we read: “This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ...”

Repentance and faith are rendered matters of duty by God’s direct command, and hence impenitence⁸ and unbelief are singled out in the New Testament as most grievous sins. With these universal commands, as we indicated above, go universal promises of salvation to all who obey them. “Through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Act 10:43). “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev 22:17). “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). These words are promises to which God will stand as long as time shall last.

It needs to be said that faith is not a mere optimistic feeling, any more than repentance is a mere regretful or remorseful feeling. Faith and repentance are both acts, and acts of the whole man...faith is essentially the casting and resting of oneself and one’s confidence on the promises of mercy which Christ has given to sinners, and on the Christ Who gave those promises. Equally, repentance is more than just sorrow for the past; repentance is a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self and serving the Savior as King in self’s place...Two further points need to be made also:

(i) ***The demand is for faith as well as repentance.*** It is not enough to resolve to turn from sin, give up evil habits, and try to put Christ’s teaching into practice by being religious and doing all possible good to others. Aspiration,⁹ and resolution, and morality, and religiosity,¹⁰ are no substitutes for faith...*If there is to be faith, however, there must be a foundation of knowledge:* a man must know of Christ, and of His cross, and of His promises before saving faith becomes a possibility for him. In our presentation of the gospel, therefore, we need to stress these things, in order to lead sinners to abandon all

⁸ **impenitence** – hardness of heart; unrepentant.

⁹ **aspiration** – longing desire for high achievement.

¹⁰ **religiosity** – religious feelings or sentiments.

confidence in themselves and to trust wholly in Christ and the power of His redeeming blood to give them acceptance with God. For nothing less than this is faith.

(ii) *The demand is for repentance as well as faith*...If there is to be repentance, however, there must, again, be a foundation of knowledge...More than once, Christ deliberately called attention to the radical break with the past that repentance involves. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me...whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Mat 16:24-25). “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also [i.e., put them all decisively second in his esteem], he cannot be my disciple...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luk 14:26, 33). The repentance that Christ requires of His people consists in a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims that He may make on their lives...He had no interest in gathering vast crowds of professed adherents who would melt away as soon as they found out what following Him actually demanded of them. In our own presentation of Christ’s gospel, therefore, we need to lay a similar stress on the cost of following Christ, and make sinners face it soberly before we urge them to respond to the message of free forgiveness. In common honesty, we must not conceal the fact that free forgiveness in one sense will cost everything; or else our evangelizing becomes a sort of confidence trick. And where there is no clear knowledge, and hence no realistic recognition of the real claims that Christ makes, there can be no repentance, and therefore no salvation.

Such is the evangelistic message that we are sent to make known.

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☞ Chapel Library deeply appreciates Dr. Packer’s early writings for their sound biblical content, their Christ-centered focus, and the encouragement they have been to God’s people. However, our readers must understand that our using this article is in no way an endorsement of Dr. Packer’s involvement with Evangelicals and Catholics Together. We pray that Dr. Packer will re-think his position, repent of his involvement with ECT, and return to a defense of the gospel that he ably proclaims in this article. ☞

GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE LOVE

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish,
but have everlasting life.”—John 3:16*

IN these words, you have the sum and substance of the gospel. In them, observe, 1. The fountain and original of all that grace and salvation that is brought unto us, God’s unspeakable love to mankind: *God so loved the world*. 2. The way that God took to recover our lapsed condition, or the effect and fruit that flows from this fountain: *that He gave His only-begotten Son*. 3. The end of it: *that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life...*

FIRST, THE RISE AND BEGINNING OF ALL IS GOD’S INCONCEIVABLE LOVE: “God so loved the world.” Where observe, 1. The object: the *world*; 2. The act: *loved*; 3. The degree: *so loved*...Observe from the words that the beginning and first cause of our salvation is the mere love of God. The outward occasion was our misery; the inward moving cause was God’s love.

1. Love is at the bottom of all. We may give a reason of other things, but we cannot give a reason of His love. God showed His wisdom, power, justice, and holiness in our redemption by Christ. If you ask why He made so much ado about a worthless creature, raised out of the dust of the ground at first, had now disordered himself, and could be of no use to Him, we have an answer at hand: because He loved us. If you continue to ask, “But why did He love us?” we have no other answer but, “Because He loved us”; for beyond the first rise of things, we cannot go. And the same reason is given by Moses: “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you” (Deu 7:7-8), that is, in short, *He loved you because He loved you*. The same reason is given by our Lord Jesus Christ: “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight” (Mat 11:26). All came from His free and undeserved mercy; higher we cannot go in seeking after the causes of what is done for our salvation.

2. **The most remarkable thing that is visible in the progress and perfection of our salvation by Christ is love.** And it is [fitting] that the beginning, middle, and end should suit. Nay, if love be so conspicuous in the whole design and carrying on of this blessed work, it is much more in the rise and fountain. God's great end in our redemption was the demonstration of His love and mercy to mankind, yea, not only the demonstration, but the commendation of it. That is the Apostle's word: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). A thing may be demonstrated as real that is not commended or set forth as great. God's design was that we should not only believe the reality, but admire the *greatness* of His love. Now, from first to last, love is so conspicuous that we cannot overlook it. Light is not more conspicuous in the sun than the love of God in our redemption by Christ.

3. **If there were any other cause, it must be either the merit of Christ or some worthiness on our part.**

(1) *The merit of Christ was not the first cause of God's love, but the manifestation, fruit, and effect of it.* The text telleth [us that] He first loved the world and then gave His only-begotten Son. It is said, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us" (1Jo 3:16). Look, as we perceive and find out causes by their proper effects, so we perceive the love of God by the death of Christ. Christ is the principal means whereby God carrieth on the purposes of His grace, and therefore is represented in Scripture as the Servant of His decrees.¹

(2) *No worthiness in us:* For when His love moved Him to give Christ for us, He had all mankind in His prospect and view, as lying in the polluted mass, or in a state of sin and misery, and then provided a Redeemer for them.² God at first made a perfect law, which forbade all sin upon pain of death. Man did break this law, and still we break it day by day in every sin. Now when men lived and went on in sin and hostility against God, He was pleased then to send His Son to assume our nature and die for our transgressions. Therefore, the giving of a Redeemer was the work of His free mercy. Man loved not God, yea, was an enemy to God, when Christ came to make the atonement: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation

¹ **decrees** – "God's eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass" (*Shorter Catechism*, Q.7).

² Not all Puritan or Reformed theologians hold the same view of the order of God's decrees displayed here.

for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled” (Col 1:21). We were senseless of our misery, careless of our remedy, so far from deserving that we desired no such matter. *God’s love was at the beginning, not ours.*

USE 1: *Is to confute³ all misapprehensions of God.* It is the grand design of Satan to lessen our opinion of God’s goodness. So he assaulted our first parents, as if God (notwithstanding all His goodness in their creation) was envious of man’s felicity⁴ and happiness. And he hath not left off his old wont.⁵ He seeketh to hide God’s goodness and to represent Him as a God that delighteth in our destruction and damnation, rather than in our salvation, as if He were inexorable⁶ and hardly entreated to do us good. And why? That we may stand aloof from God and apprehend Him as unlovely. Or if he cannot prevail so far, he tempteth us to poor, unworthy, mean thoughts of His goodness and mercy. Now we cannot obviate⁷ the temptation better than by due reflections on His love in giving His Son for the world. This showeth that He is fuller of mercy and goodness than the sun is of light or the sea of water. So great an effect shows the greatness of the cause. Wherefore did He express His love in such a wonderful, astonishing way, but that we might have higher and larger thoughts of His goodness and mercy? By other effects, we easily collect the perfection of His attributes: that His power is *omnipotent* (Rom 1:20), that His knowledge is *omniscient* (Heb 4:12-13). And by this effect, it is easy to conceive that His love is infinite or that God *is* love.

USE 2: *Is to quicken us to admire the love of God in Christ.* There are three things that commend any favor done unto us: (1) The goodwill of him that giveth; (2) The greatness of the gift; (3) The unworthiness of him that receiveth. All concur here.

(1) ***The good will of Him that giveth:*** Nothing moved God to do this but His own love. It was from the free motion of His own heart, without our thought and asking. No other reason is given or can be given. We made no suit for any such thing; it could not enter into our minds and hearts: into our minds to conceive or into our hearts to desire such a remedy to recover the lapsed estate of mankind. Not into our minds, for it is a great mystery: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness” (1Ti 3:16). Not

³ **confute** – prove an argument to be false or defective; disprove.

⁴ **felicity** – prosperity.

⁵ **wont** – habit.

⁶ **inexorable** – rigidly severe; incapable of being persuaded to mercy.

⁷ **obviate** – avoid an anticipated difficulty by doing something to prevent its arising.

into our hearts to ask or desire, for it would have seemed a strange request that we should ask that the eternal Son of God should assume our flesh and be made sin and a curse for us. But grace hath wrought “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Eph 3:20), above what we can imagine, and above what we can pray for to Him.

(2) *The greatness of the Gift:* Great things do even force their way into our minds, whether we will or no. The gift of Jesus Christ is so great that the love of God is gone to the uttermost in it. He hath not a better Christ, nor a more worthy Redeemer, nor another Son to die for us; nor could the Son of God suffer greater indignities than He hath suffered for our sakes...So now we may know God loveth us; here is the manifest token and sign of it.

(3) *The unworthiness of him that receiveth:* This is also in the case. We were altogether unworthy that the Son of God should be incarnate⁸ and die for our sakes. This is notably improved by the Apostle: “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7-8). The Apostle alludeth to the distinction familiar among the Jews: they had their *good* men or bountiful; their *righteous* men, zealous for the Law; and their *wicked* men, obnoxious to judgment. Peradventure⁹ one would venture his life for a very merciful person, but you shall hardly find any to be so liberal and friendly as to venture his life for a righteous and just man, or a man of rigid innocence. But mark, there are abating¹⁰ terms—*scarcely* and *perhaps*. The case is rare that one should die for another, be he never so good and righteous. But God’s expression of mercy was infinitely above the proportion of any the most friendly man ever showed. There was nothing in the object to move Him to it, when we were neither good nor just, but wicked. Without respect to any worth in us, for we were all in a damnable estate, He sent His Son to die for us, to rescue and free us from eternal death, and to make us partakers of eternal life. God *so* loved the world, when we had so sinned and willfully plunged ourselves into an estate of damnation.

From Sermon XVI, “Sermons upon John III.16” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D.*, Vol. 2, reprinted by Maranatha Publications.

⁸ **be incarnate** – become flesh; John 1:14.

⁹ **peradventure** – perhaps.

¹⁰ **abating** – bringing down in size or amount; diminishing.

A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF SIN

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

“Sin is the transgression of the law.”—1 John 3:4

THE plain truth is that a right understanding of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity. Without it such doctrines as justification, conversion, sanctification, are “words and names” that convey no meaning to the mind. The first thing, therefore, that God does when He makes anyone a new creature in Christ is to send light into his heart and show him that he is a guilty sinner...I believe that one of the chief wants¹ of the contemporary church has been, and is, clearer, fuller teaching about sin.

1. I will begin the subject by supplying some definition of sin. We are all, of course, familiar with the terms “sin” and “sinners.” We talk frequently of “sin” being in the world and of men committing “sins.” But what do we mean by these terms and phrases? Do we really know? I fear there is much mental confusion and haziness on this point. Let me try, as briefly as possible, to supply an answer.

“Sin,” speaking generally is...“the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always against the spirit; and, therefore, in every person born into the world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.”² Sin is that vast moral disease that affects the whole human race of every rank, class, name, nation, people, and tongue—a disease from which there never was but one born of woman that was free. Need I say that One was Christ Jesus the Lord?

I say, furthermore, that “a sin,” to speak more particularly, consists in doing, saying, thinking, or imagining anything that is not in perfect conformity with the mind and Law of God. “Sin,” in short as the Scripture says, is “the transgression of the law” (1Jo 3:4). The slightest outward or inward departure from absolute mathematical parallelism with God’s revealed will and character constitutes a sin, and at once makes us guilty in God’s sight.

¹ **wants** – lacks; things needed but missing.

² The Ninth Article of the Anglican Church’s *Book of Common Prayer*.

Of course, I need not tell anyone who reads his Bible with attention that a man may break God's Law in heart and thought when there is no overt and visible act of wickedness. Our Lord has settled that point beyond dispute in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5:21-28)...Again, I need not tell a careful student of the New Testament, that there are sins of omission as well as commission, and that we sin, as our Prayer Book justly reminds us, by "leaving undone the things we ought to do," as really as by "doing the things we ought not to do"...I do think it necessary in these times to remind my readers that a man may commit sin and yet be ignorant of it and fancy himself innocent when he is guilty...I find our Lord expressly teaching that "the servant who knew not his master's will and did it not," was not excused on account of his ignorance but was "beaten" or punished (Luk 12:48). We will do well to remember that when we make our own miserably imperfect knowledge and consciousness the measure of our sinfulness, we are on very dangerous ground...

2. Concerning the origin and source of this vast moral disease called "sin," I am afraid that the views of many professing Christians on this point are sadly defective and unsound. I dare not pass it by. Let us, then, have it fixed down in our minds that the sinfulness of man does not begin from without, but from within. It is not the result of bad training in early years. It is not picked up from bad companions and bad examples, as some weak Christians are too fond of saying. No! It is a family disease, which we all inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with which we are born. Created "in the image of God," innocent and righteous at first, our parents fell from original righteousness and became sinful and corrupt. And from that day to this, all men and women are born in the image of fallen Adam and Eve and inherit a heart and nature inclined to evil. "By one man sin entered into the world." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." "We are by nature children of wrath." "The carnal mind is enmity against God." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries" and the like (Rom 5:12; Joh 3:6; Eph 2:3; Rom 8:7; Mar 7:21).

The fairest child, who has entered life this year and become the sunbeam of a family, is not, as his mother perhaps fondly calls him, a little "angel" or a little "innocent," but a little "sinner." Alas! As that infant boy or girl lies smiling and crowing in its cradle, that little creature carries in its heart the seeds of every kind of wickedness! Only watch it carefully, as it grows in stature and its mind develops, and you will soon detect in it an incessant tendency to that which is bad, and a backwardness to that which is good.

You will see in it the buds and germs of deceit, evil temper, selfishness, self-will, obstinacy, greediness, envy, jealousy, passion, which, if indulged and let alone, will shoot up with painful rapidity. Who taught the child these things? Where did he learn them? The Bible alone can answer these questions!...

3. Concerning the extent of this vast moral disease called “sin,” let us beware that we make no mistake. The only safe ground is that which is laid for us in Scripture. “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart” is by nature “evil” and that “continually” (Gen 6:5). “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). Sin is a disease that pervades and runs through every part of our moral constitution and every faculty of our minds. The understanding, the affections, the reasoning powers, the will are all more or less infected. Even the conscience is so blinded that it cannot be depended on as a sure guide, and is as likely to lead men wrong as right, unless it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit. In short, “from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness” about us (Isa 1:6). The disease may be veiled under a thin covering of courtesy, politeness, good manners, and outward decorum, but it lies deep down in the constitution...in spiritual things he is utterly “dead” and has no natural knowledge, or love, or fear of God. His best things are so interwoven and intermingled with corruption that the contrast only brings out into sharper relief the truth and extent of the Fall. That one and the same creature should be in some things so high and in others so low; so great and yet so little; so noble and yet so mean;³ so grand in his conception and execution of material things and yet so groveling and debased in his affections...all this is a sore puzzle to those who sneer at “God’s Word written” and scoff at us as bibliolaters.⁴ But it is a knot that we can untie with the Bible in our hands...

Let us remember, beside this, that every part of the world bears testimony to the fact that sin is the universal disease of all mankind. Search the globe from east to west and from pole to pole; search every nation of every clime in the four quarters of the earth; search every rank and class in our own country from the highest to the lowest—and under every circumstance and condition, the report will be always the same...Everywhere the human heart is naturally “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9). For my part, I know no stronger proof of the inspiration of

³ **mean** – common; base.

⁴ **bibliolaters** – those who idolize the Bible.

Genesis and the Mosaic account of the origin of man, than the power, extent, and universality of sin...

4. Concerning the guilt, vileness, and offensiveness of sin in the sight of God, my words will be few...I do not think, in the nature of things, that mortal man can at all realize the exceeding sinfulness of sin in the sight of that holy and perfect One with Whom we have to do. On the one hand, God is that eternal Being Who charged His angels with “folly” and in whose sight the very “heavens are not clean.” He is One Who reads thoughts and motives as well as actions, and requires “truth in the inward parts” (Job 4:18; 15:15; Psa 51:6). We, on the other hand—poor, blind creatures, here today and gone tomorrow, born in sin, surrounded by sinners, living in a constant atmosphere of weakness, infirmity, and imperfection—can form none but the most inadequate conceptions of the hideousness of evil. We have no line to fathom it and no measure by which to gauge it...But let us nevertheless settle it firmly in our minds that sin is “the abominable thing that God hateth”; that God “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon that which is evil”; that the least transgression of God’s Law makes us “guilty of all”; that “the soul that sinneth shall die”; that “the wages of sin is death”; that God will “judge the secrets of men”; that there is a worm that never dies and a fire that is not quenched; that “the wicked shall be turned into hell” and “shall go away into everlasting punishment”; and that “nothing that defiles shall in any wise enter” heaven (Jer 44:4; Hab 1:13; Jam 2:10; Eze 18:4; Rom 6:23; 2:16; Mar 9:44; Psa 9:17; Mat 25:46; Rev 21:27). These are indeed tremendous words, when we consider that they are written in the book of a most merciful God!

No proof of the fullness of sin, after all, is so overwhelming and unanswerable as the cross and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the whole doctrine of His substitution and atonement. Terribly black must that guilt be for which nothing but the blood of the Son of God could make satisfaction. Heavy must that weight of human sin be which made Jesus groan and sweat drops of blood in agony at Gethsemane and cry at Golgotha, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46). Nothing, I am convinced, will astonish us so much, when we awake in the resurrection day, as the view we will have of sin and the retrospect we will take of our own countless shortcomings and defects. Never until the hour when Christ comes the second time will we fully realize the “sinfulness of sin.”

5. **One point only remains to be considered on the subject of sin...its deceitfulness.** It is a point of most serious importance, and I venture to think it does not receive the attention that it deserves. You may see this deceitfulness in the wonderful⁵ proneness of men to regard sin as less sinful and dangerous than it is in the sight of God and in their readiness to extenuate it, make excuses for it, and minimize its guilt. “It is but a little one! God is merciful! God is not extreme to mark what is done amiss! We mean well! One cannot be so particular! Where is the mighty harm? We only do as others!” Who is not familiar with this kind of language? You may see it in the long string of smooth words and phrases that men have coined in order to designate things that God calls downright wicked and ruinous to the soul. What do such expressions as “fast,” “gay,” “wild,” “unsteady,” “thoughtless,” “loose” mean? They show that men try to cheat themselves into the belief that sin is not quite so sinful as God says it is, and that they are not so bad as they really are. You may see it in the tendency even of believers to indulge their children in questionable practices, and to blind their own eyes to the inevitable result of the love of money, of tampering with temptation and sanctioning a low standard of family religion. I fear we do not sufficiently realize the extreme subtlety of our soul’s disease. We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colors, saying, “I am your deadly enemy and I want to ruin you forever in hell.” Oh, no!

And now...Let us sit down before the picture of sin displayed to us in the Bible and consider what guilty, vile, corrupt creatures we all are in the sight of God. What need we all have of that entire change of heart called regeneration, new birth, or conversion!...I ask my readers to observe how deeply thankful we ought to be for the glorious gospel of the grace of God. There is a remedy revealed for man’s need, as wide and broad and deep as man’s disease. We need not be afraid to look at sin and study its nature, origin, power, extent, and vileness, if we only look at the same time at the almighty medicine provided for us in the salvation that is in Jesus Christ.

From *Holiness (Part One): Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots*;
paperback available from Chapel Library.



⁵ wonderful – incredible.

CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, AND SUBSTITUTION

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

—Romans 6:8-11

THE facts referred to in these four verses constitute the glorious gospel that we preach: 1. **The first fact here very clearly indicated is that Jesus died.** He, Who was divine and therefore immortal, bowed His head to death. He, Whose human nature was wed to the omnipotence of His divine nature, was pleased voluntarily to submit Himself to the sword of death. He, Who was pure and perfect, and therefore deserved not death, which is the wages of sin, nevertheless condescended for our sake to yield Himself up to die. This is the second note in the gospel scale. *The first note is incarnation:* Jesus Christ became a man. Angels thought this worthy of their songs and made the heavens ring with midnight melodies. *The second note is this,* I say, that, “being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8). He died as a sacrifice. Methinks,¹ after many lambs from the flocks of men had poured out their blood at the foot of the altar, it was a strange spectacle to see *God’s* Lamb brought to that same altar to be sacrificed. He is without spot or blemish or any such thing. He is the firstling of the flock; He is the only One of the Great Master, a right royal, heavenly Lamb. Such a Lamb had never been seen before. He is the Lamb Who is worshipped in heaven, and Who is to be adored, world without end. Will *that* Sacred Head condescend to feel the axe? Will *that* glorious victim really be slain? Is it possible that God’s Lamb will actually submit to die? *He does so without a struggle.* He is dumb² in the shambles³ before the slaughterers; He gives up the warm blood of His heart to the hand of the

¹ **methinks** – it seems to me.

² **dumb** – persistently silent.

³ **shambles** – meat-market.

executioner that He might expiate⁴ the wrath of God.

Tell it! Let heaven ring with music, and let hell be filled with confusion! Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, the Lamb of Jehovah's Passover, died. His hands were pierced and His heart was broken. To prove how surely the spear had struck the mark, the vital fluid flowed in a double flood, even to the ground—Jesus died. If there were any doubt about this, there were doubt about your salvation and mine. If there were any reason to question this fact, then we might question the possibility of salvation. But Jesus died and sin is put away. The sacrifice smokes to heaven; Jehovah smelleth a sweet savor and is pleased through Christ the Victim to accept the prayers, the offerings, and the persons of His people.

Nor did He die as a victim only: He died as a *substitute*. We were drawn as soldiers for the great warfare, and we could not go; for we were feeble, should have fallen in the battle, and have left our bones to be devoured of the dogs of hell. But He, the mighty Son of God, became the Substitute for us, entered the battlefield, [and] sustained the first charge of the adversary in the wilderness (Mat 4:1-11). Three times He repulsed the grim fiend and all his host, smiting His assailants with the sword of the Spirit, until the enemy fled and angels waited upon the weary Victor. The conflict was not over, the enemy had but retired to forge fresh artillery and recruit his scattered forces for a yet more terrible affray.⁵ For three years, the great Substitute kept the field against continual onslaughts from the advance guard of the enemy, remaining conqueror in every skirmish...Devils were cast out of many that were possessed, whole legions of them were compelled to find refuge in a herd of swine, and Lucifer himself fell like lightning from the heaven of his power.

At last, the time came when hell had gathered up all its forces, and now was also come the hour when Christ, as our Substitute, must carry His obedience to the utmost length: He must be obedient unto death. He has been a Substitute up until now; will He now throw down His vicarious⁶ character? Will He now renounce our responsibilities and declare that we may stand for ourselves? Not He. He undertook and must go through. Sweating great drops of blood, He nevertheless flinches not from the dread assault. Wounded in hands and in feet, He still maintained His ground. And though, for obedience sake, He bowed His head to die, yet in that

⁴ **expiate** – pay the penalty of.

⁵ **affray** – a violent disturbance; an assault.

⁶ **vicarious** – acting in place of someone else; substitutionary.

dying He slew death, put His foot upon the dragon's neck, crushed the head of the old serpent, and beat our adversaries as small as the dust of the threshing floor. Yes, the blessed Substitute has died. I say if there were a question about this, then we might have to die, but inasmuch as He died for us, the believer shall not die. The debt is discharged to the utmost farthing...God's sword is sheathed forever, and the blood of Christ has sealed it in its scabbard. We are *free*, for Christ was bound! We *live*, for Jesus died!

Dying thus as a sacrifice and as a substitute, it is a comfort to us to know that He also died as Mediator⁷ between God and man. There was a great gulf fixed, so that if we would pass to God we could not, neither could He pass to us if He would condescend to do so...[but] Jesus comes, arrayed in His pontifical⁸ garments, wearing the breast-plate, bearing the ephod—a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb 5:6). His kingly character is not forgotten, for His head is adorned with a glittering crown; and o'er His shoulders He bears the prophet's mantle. How shall I describe the matchless glories of the Prophet-king, the Royal Priest? Will He throw Himself into the chasm? *He will*. Into the grave He plunges; the abyss is closed! The gulf is bridged, and God can have communion with man!

I see before me the heavy veil that shields from mortal eyes the place where God's glory shineth. No man may touch that veil, or he must die. Is there any man found who can rend it, [so] that man may approach the mercy seat? O that the veil that parts our souls from Him that dwelleth between the cherubims could be torn throughout its utmost length! Strong archangel, wouldest thou dare to rend it? Shouldest thou attempt the work, thine immortality were forfeited, and thou must expire. But Jesus comes, the King Immortal, Invisible, with His strong hands; *He* rends the veil from top to bottom (Mat 27:51), and now men draw nigh with confidence, for when Jesus died a living way was opened. Sing, O heavens, and rejoice O earth! There is now no wall of partition, for Christ has dashed it down!...This, then, is one of the great notes of the gospel, the fact that *Jesus died*. Oh! Ye, who would be saved, believe that Jesus died! Believe that the Son of God expired. Trust *that* death to save you, and you are saved.

2. But Jesus rises: this is no mean part of the gospel. He dies; they lay Him in the new sepulcher; they embalm His body in spices; His

⁷ **Mediator** – one who intervenes between two parties to bring reconciliation; a go-between.

⁸ **pontifical** – high-priestly.

adversaries are careful that His body shall not be stolen away. The stone, the seal, the watch, all prove their vigilance. Aha! Aha! What do ye, men? Can ye imprison immortality in the tomb? The fiends of hell, too, I doubt not, watched the sepulcher, wondering what it all could mean. But the third day comes, and with it the messenger from heaven. He touches the stone; it rolls away; he sits upon it, as if he would defy the whole universe to roll that stone back again. Jesus awakes, as a mighty man from his slumber; unwraps the napkin from His head and lays it by itself; unwinds the cerements⁹ in which love had wrapped Him and puts them by themselves; for He had abundant leisure. He was in no haste; He was not about to escape like a felon who bursts the prison, but like one whose time of jail-deliverance has come and lawfully and leisurely leaves his cell. He steps to the upper air, bright, shining, glorious, and fair. He lives! He died once, but He rose again from the dead! There is no need for us to enlarge here. We only pause to remark that this is one of the most jubilant notes in the whole gospel scale...Death is overcome! There is found a man Who by His own power was able to struggle with death and hurl him down. The grave is opened! There is found a man able to dash back its bolts and to rifle its treasures. And thus, brethren, having delivered Himself, He is able also to deliver others.

Sin, too, was manifestly forgiven. Christ was in prison as a hostage, kept there as a surety;¹⁰ now that He is suffered to go free, it is a declaration on God's behalf that He has nothing against us. Our Substitute is discharged; we are discharged. He Who undertook to pay our debt is suffered to go free; we go free in Him! "He rose again for our justification" (Rom 4:25). Nay more, inasmuch as He rises from the dead, He gives us a pledge that hell is conquered. This was the great aim of hell: to keep Christ beneath its heel. "Thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). They had gotten the heel of Christ, His mortal flesh, beneath their power, but that bruised heel came forth unwounded. Christ sustained no injury by His dying...Beloved, in this will we triumph: that hell is worsted,¹¹ Satan is put to confusion, and all his hosts are fallen before Immanuel. *Sinner, believe this!* It is the gospel of thy salvation. Believe that Jesus of Nazareth rose again from the dead, and trust Him, trust Him to save thy soul! Because He burst the gates of the grave, trust Him to bear thy sins, to justify thy person, to quicken thy spirit, and to raise thy dead body—and verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt be saved!

⁹ **cerements** – grave clothes; burial garments.

¹⁰ **surety** – one who undertakes the debt of another.

¹¹ **worsted** – defeated.

3. **We now strike a third note, without which the gospel were not complete: inasmuch as Jesus died, He is now living.** He does not, after forty days, return to the grave. He departs from earth, but it is by another way. From the top of Olivet He ascends until a cloud receives Him out of their sight. And now at this very day He lives. There at His Father's right hand He sits, bright like a sun, clothed in majesty, the joy of all the glorified spirits, His Father's intense delight! There He sits, Lord of Providence! At His girdle swing the keys of heaven, earth, and hell. There He sits, expecting the hour when His enemies shall be made His footstool. Methinks I see Him, too, as He lives to intercede. He stretches His wounded hands, points to His breastplate bearing the names of His people, and for Zion's sake He doth not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He doth not rest day nor night, but ever pleadeth, "Oh God! Bless thy heritage; gather together Thy scattered ones. 'I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am' (Joh 17:24)."

Trembling penitent, let a living Savior cheer thee. Exercise faith in Him Who only hath immortality. He lives to hear thy prayer; cry to Him, He lives to present that prayer before His Father's face. Put yourself in His hands! He lives to gather together those whom He bought with His blood, to make those the people of His flock who were once the people of His purchase. Sinner, dost thou believe this as a matter of fact? If so, rest thy soul on it, make it thine as a matter of confidence, and then thou art saved.

4. **One more note and our gospel song need not rise higher: Jesus died, He rose, He lives, and He lives forever.** He shall not die again. "Death hath no more dominion over him" (Rom 6:9)...Disease may visit the world and fill the graves, but no disease or plague can touch the immortal Savior. The shock of the last catastrophe shall shake both heaven and earth, until the stars shall fall like withered fig leaves from the tree, but nothing shall move the unchanging Savior. He lives forever! There is no possibility that He should be overcome by a new death...This, too, reveals another part of our precious gospel, for now it is certain, since He lives forever, that no foes can overcome Him. He has so routed His enemies and driven His foes off the battlefield that they will never venture to attack Him again! This proves, too, that His people's eternal life is sure...*He lives forever!*

Oh, Seed of Abraham! Ye are saved with an everlasting salvation by the sure mercies of David. Your standing in earth and heaven has been confirmed eternally. God is honored, saints are comforted, and sinners are cheered, for "he is able also to save them to the

uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

Now I would to God that on one of these four anchor-holds your faith might be able to get rest. Jesus *died*, poor trembler. If He died and took thy griefs, will not His atonement save thee? Rest here. Millions of souls have rested on nothing but Jesus’ death, and this is a granite foundation. No storms of hell can shake it! Get a good handhold on His cross; hold it, and it will hold you. You cannot depend on His death and be deceived...But if this suffice you not, He *rose again*. Fasten upon this. He is proved to be Victor over your sin and over your adversary; can you not, therefore, depend upon Him? Doubtless, there have been thousands of saints who have found the richest consolation from the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead. He rose again for our justification (Rom 4:25). Sinner, hang on that. Having risen, He *lives*. He is not a dead Savior, a dead sacrifice. He must be able to hear our plea and to present His own. Depend on a living Savior; depend on Him *now*. He *lives forever*, and therefore it is not too late for Him to save you. If thou criest to Him, He will hear thy prayer, even though it be in life’s last moment, for He lives forever! Though the ends of the earth were come and you were the last man, yet He ever lives to intercede before His Father’s face. Oh, gad¹² not about to find any other hope!

Here are four great stones for you. Build your hope on these; you cannot want¹³ surer foundations: He *dies*, He *rises*, He *lives*, He *lives forever*! I tell thee, Soul, this is my only hope, and though I lean thereon with all my weight, it bends not. This is the hope of all God’s people, and they abide contented in it. Do thou, I pray thee, now come and rest on it. May the Spirit of God bring many of you to Christ! *We have no other gospel.* You thought it a hard thing, a scholarly thing, a matter that the college must teach you, that the university must give you. It is no such matter for learning and scholarship. Your little child knows it, and your child may be saved by it. You without education, you that can scarce read in the book, you can comprehend this. He *dies*; there is the cross. He *rises*; there is the open tomb. He *lives*; there is the pleading Savior. He *lives forever*; there is the perpetual merit. Depend on Him! Put your soul in His hand—and you are saved.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, April 5, 1863, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington; reprinted by Pilgrim Publications.

¹² **gad** – to go wandering; to leave the true path.

¹³ **want** – desire; wish for.

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—Luke 13:3

REPENTANCE is one of the foundation stones of Christianity. Sixty times, at least, we find repentance spoken of in the New Testament. What was the first doctrine our Lord Jesus Christ preached? We are told that He said, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mar 1:15). What did the Apostles proclaim when the Lord sent them forth the first time? They “preached that men should repent” (Mar 6:12). What was the charge that Jesus gave His disciples when He left the world? That “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luk 24:47). What was the concluding appeal of the first sermons that Peter preached? “Repent, and be baptized.” “Repent ye, and be converted” (Act 2:38; 3:19). What was the summary of doctrine that Paul gave to the Ephesian elders when he parted from them? He told them that he had taught them publicly and from house to house, “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). What was the description that Paul gave of his own ministry when he made his defense before Festus and Agrippa? He told them that he had showed all men that they should “repent, and do works meet for repentance” (Act 26:20). What was the account given by the believers at Jerusalem of the conversion of the Gentiles? When they heard of it they said, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Act 11:18)...Surely we must all agree that these are serious considerations. They ought to show the importance of the inquiry I am now making. A mistake about repentance is a most dangerous mistake. An error about repentance is an error that lies at the very roots of our religion. What, then, is repentance? When can it be said of any man that he repents?

Repentance is a thorough change of man’s natural heart upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin as soon as we can act and think, as the bird takes to flying and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, sensuality, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions or gradually

learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude¹ of all children to these things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Ghost, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls “repentance.” The man in whom the change is wrought is said to “repent.” He may be called, in one word, a “penitent” man...

(1) **True repentance begins with knowledge of sin.** The eyes of the penitent man are opened. He sees with dismay and confusion the length and breadth of God’s holy Law, and the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. He discovers, to his surprise, that in thinking himself a “good sort of man,” and a man with a “good heart,” he has been under a huge delusion. He finds out that, in reality, he is wicked, guilty, corrupt, and bad in God’s sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is neither more nor less than a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.

(2) **True repentance goes on to work sorrow for sin. The heart of a penitent man is touched with deep remorse because of his past transgressions.** He is cut to the heart to think that he should have lived so madly and so wickedly. He mourns over time wasted, over talents misspent, over God dishonored, over his own soul injured. The remembrance of these things is grievous to him. The burden of these things is sometimes almost intolerable. When a man so sorrows, you have the second step in true repentance.

(3) **True repentance proceeds, further, to produce in a man confession of sin.** The tongue of a penitent man is loosed. He feels he must speak to that God against Whom he has sinned. Something within him tells him he must cry to God, pray to God, and talk with God about the state of his own soul. He must pour out his heart and acknowledge his iniquities at the throne of grace. They are a heavy burden within him, and he can no longer keep silence. He can keep nothing back. He will not hide anything. He goes before God, pleading nothing for himself and willing to say, “I have sinned against heaven and before Thee: my iniquity is great. God be merciful to me, a sinner!” When a man goes thus to God in confession, you have the third step in true repentance.

(4) **True repentance, furthermore, shows itself before the world in a thorough breaking off from sin.** The life of a penitent man is

¹ **aptitude** – natural tendency.

altered. The course of his daily conduct is entirely changed. A new King reigns within his heart. He puts off the old man (Eph 4:22). What God commands he now desires to practice; and what God forbids, he now desires to avoid (Cp. Luk 8:15; Psa 25:11; Luk 18:13). He strives in all ways to keep clear of sin, to fight with sin, to war with sin, to get the victory over sin. He ceases to do evil. He learns to do well. He breaks off sharply from bad ways and bad companions. He labors, however feebly, to live a new life. When a man does this, you have the fourth step in true repentance.

(5) True repentance, in the last place, shows itself by producing in the heart a settled habit of deep hatred of all sin. The mind of a penitent man becomes a mind habitually holy. He abhors that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good (Rom 12:9). He delights in the Law of God (Psa 1:2). He comes short of his own desires not infrequently. He finds in himself an evil principle warring against the Spirit of God (Gal 5:17). He finds himself cold when he would be hot, backward when he would be forward, heavy when he would be lively in God's service. He is deeply conscious of his own infirmities. He groans under a sense of indwelling corruption. But still, for all that, the general bias of his heart is towards God and away from evil. He can say with David, "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (Psa 119:128). When a man can say this, you have the fifth or crowning step of true repentance...

True repentance, such as I have just described, is never alone in the heart of any man. It always has a companion—a blessed companion. It is always accompanied by lively faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wherever faith is, there is repentance; wherever repentance is, there is always faith. I do not decide which comes first—whether repentance comes before faith or faith before repentance. But I am bold to say that the two graces are never found separate, one from the other...

Beware that you make no mistake about the nature of true repentance. The devil knows too well the value of that precious grace not to dress up spurious² imitations of it. Wherever there is good coin, there will always be bad money. Wherever there is a valuable grace, the devil will put in circulation counterfeits and shams of that grace and try to palm them off on men's souls. Make sure that you are not deceived.

² **spurious** – counterfeit.

(1) **Take heed that your repentance be a business of your heart.** It is not a grave face, or a sanctimonious³ countenance, or a round of self-imposed austerities⁴—it is not this alone that makes up true repentance towards God. The real grace is something far deeper than a mere affair of face, clothes, days, and forms. Ahab could put on sackcloth when it served his turn—but Ahab never repented (1Ki 21:27).

(2) **Take heed that your repentance be a repentance wherein you turn to God...**Felix could tremble when he heard the Apostle Paul preach (Act 24:25). But...this is not true repentance. See that your repentance leads you unto God and makes you flee to Him as your best Friend.

(3) **Take heed that your repentance be a repentance attended by a thorough forsaking of sin.** Sentimental people can cry when they hear moving sermons on Sundays, and yet return to the ball, the theatre, and the opera in the week after...feelings in religion are worse than worthless, unless they are accompanied by practice. Mere sentimental excitement, without thorough breaking off from sin, is not the repentance that God approves.

(4) **Take heed, above all things, that your repentance be closely bound up with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.** See that your convictions be convictions that never rest, except at the foot of the cross whereon Jesus Christ died. Judas Iscariot could say, “I have sinned” (Mat 27:4), but Judas never turned to Jesus. Judas never looked by faith to Jesus, and therefore Judas died in his sins. Give me that conviction of sin that makes a man flee to Christ and mourn because by his sins he has pierced the Lord Who bought him. Give me that contrition⁵ of soul under which a man feels much about Christ and grieves to think of the despite he has done to so gracious a Savior. Going to Sinai, hearing about the Ten Commandments, looking at hell, thinking about the terrors of damnation—all this may make people afraid, and has its use. But no repentance ever lasts in which a man does not look at Calvary more than at Sinai, and see in a bleeding Jesus the strongest motive for contrition. Such repentance comes down from heaven. Such repentance is planted in man’s heart by God the Holy Ghost.

From *Old Paths* reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust.

³ **sanctimonious** – holy in character; sacred.

⁴ **austerities** – severe self-disciplines or restraints.

⁵ **contrition** – sorrow or remorse for wrongdoing.

WHY IS FAITH REQUIRED?

Thomas Manton (1620-1677)

WHY is faith required, that we may receive benefit by Christ? For these reasons: 1. In respect of God; 2. In respect of Christ; 3. In respect of the creature; 4. In respect of our comforts.

1. In respect of God: that our hearts may be possessed with a full apprehension of His grace, Who in the New Covenant¹ appeareth not as a revenging and condemning God, but as a pardoning God. This reason is rendered by the Apostle, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace” (Rom 4:16). The Law brought in the terror of God by being the instrument of revealing sin and the punishment due thereunto: “Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression” (4:15), no such stinging sense of it. But the gospel brought in grace. The Law stated the breach, but the gospel showed the way of our recovery. And therefore, faith doth more agree with grace, as it makes God more amiable and lovely to us, and beloved by us, by the discovery of His goodness and grace. The saving of man by Christ—that is, by His incarnation, life, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension—all tends to possess our hearts with His abundant grace. To the same tend also His merciful covenant, gracious promises, and all the benefits given to us—His Spirit, pardon, and communion with God in glory—all is to fill our hearts with a sense of the love of God.

All this is no more than necessary. For a guilty conscience is not easily settled and brought to look for all kind of happiness from One Whom we have so much wronged. Adam, when once a sinner, was shy of God (Gen 3:30); and sin still makes us hang from² Him. Guilt is suspicious, and if we have not one to lead us by the hand and bring us to God, we cannot abide His presence. For this end serveth faith: that sinners, being possessed of the goodness and grace of God, may be recovered and return to Him by a fit means.

In the New Covenant repentance more distinctly respects God, and faith respecteth Christ: “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). Repentance respects

¹ **New Covenant** – Jer 31:31-34; Mat 26:27-28; Heb 8:6-13; 10:12-20; 12:22-24.

² **hang from** – hesitate to come close to; unwilling to come to.

God because *from* God we fell and *to* God we must return. We fell from Him as we withdrew our allegiance and sought our happiness elsewhere; to Him we return as our rightful and proper happiness.

But faith respects the Mediator, Who is the only remedy of our misery and the means of our eternal blessedness. He opened the way to God by His merit and satisfaction and actually bringeth us into this way by His renewing and reconciling grace, that we may be in a capacity to both please and enjoy God. And that is the reason why faith in Christ is so much insisted on as our title and claim to the blessedness of the New Covenant. It hath a special aptitude and fitness for our recovery from sin to God because it peculiarly respects the Mediator by Whom we come to Him.

2. In respect of Christ:

[1] *Because the whole dispensation of grace by Christ cannot well be apprehended by anything but faith.* Partly because the way of our recovery is so supernatural, strange, and wonderful, how can we be persuaded of it, unless we believe God's testimony? That the carpenter's son should be the Son of that Great Architect and Builder Who framed heaven and earth; that life should come to us by the death of another; that God should be made man, and the Judge a party; and He that knew no sin be condemned as a criminal person; that one crucified should procure the salvation of the whole world and be Lord of life and death and have such power over all flesh as to give eternal life to whom He will—reason is puzzled at these things. Faith only can unravel them...Sense only looks to things seen and felt; reason seeth effects in their causes...but faith is a believing such things as God hath revealed because *He* hath revealed them. Surely, this only can sustain us in the expectation of God's grace and mercy unto eternal life. Whilst we are employed in duties so opposite to the bent of the carnal heart and have so many temptations to the contrary, what can support us but a strong and lively faith?

[2] *Until we believe in Christ, we can have no comfort or use of all His offices.* How can we learn of Him the way of salvation, until we believe Him to be the *Prophet* sent of God to teach the world the way to true happiness? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Mat 17:5). How can we obey Him, unless we believe in Him that He is our *Lord*, Who hath power over all flesh, at Whose judgment we must stand or fall? "[God] now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he

hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Act 17:30-31). How can we depend upon the merit of His obedience and sacrifice, be comforted with His gracious promises and covenant, come to God with boldness and hope of mercy in His name, and be confident that He will justify, sanctify, and save us unless we believe that He is a *Priest*, Who once made an atonement and continually makes intercession for us (Heb 9:25)? In the days of His flesh, when any came for any benefit to Him, He put him upon this trial, “Believe ye that I am able to do this?” (Mat 9:28). “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mar 9:23). “Believest thou this?” to Martha (Joh 11:26). Thus, they were not capable of any benefit until they believed.

3. With respect to that holiness and obedience that God expected from the creature: Christ came to restore us to God, which He doth as both a Savior and Lawgiver to His church. And until we believe in Him, both these qualities and functions miss of their effect.

[1] *As a Savior, He came to take away the curse of the Law and to put us into a capacity to serve and please God by giving us His Spirit to renew our natures and heal our souls:* “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1Pe 2:24). We shall never mind our duty nor be capable to perform it, unless we believe that He is such a Savior.

[2] *As a Lawgiver, obliging us by His authority to live in obedience unto God.* The kingdom of the Mediator is clearly subordinate to the kingdom of God. For He came not to vacate our duty, but to establish it. He came to restore the lost groat³ to the owner, the lost sheep to the possessor, the lost son to the father. As the grace of Christ doth not vacate the mercy of God, so the authority of Christ...doth not free us from the authority of God. Now, who will submit to an authority that is not convinced of it or doth not believe it? But when once we believe, then we bow heart and knee.

4. With respect to our comfort: Often in Scripture, faith is represented as a quieting grace. The comfort, quietness, and peace of the soul dependeth much upon faith in Christ as an all-sufficient Savior, which banishes our fears and makes us in our greatest hardships to trust Christ with all our happiness, and to feast the soul with a constant peace and everlasting joy. Whether this world

³ **groat** – English silver coin worth four pence, used from the 14th to the 17th century.

be turned upside down and be dissolved; whether we be in poverty and sickness, or in health or wealth; whether we be under evil repute or good; whether persecution or prosperity befall us—how little are we concerned in all these if we know in Whom we have believed (2Ti 1:12)! Heaven is where it was before, and Christ is at the right hand of God. How little then should all these things disturb the peace and comfort of that soul that shall live with God forever (Psa 112:7)! But sin is our greatest trouble. If sin be your trouble, I answer, “Is it your infirmity or iniquity?” If infirmity, there is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). If iniquity, break off your sin by repentance; and then there may be comfort for you, for Christ came to save us from our sins.

USE 1: to confute men’s presumptions of their eternal good estate, whereby many damnably delude their own souls.

1. **Some, when they hear that “whosoever believeth shall be saved,” have a carnal notion of Christ.** [They think] that if He were alive, they would own Him, receive Him into their houses, and use Him more friendlyly than the Jews did. This is but a knowing Christ “after the flesh” (2Co 5:16). He is not to be received into your houses, but into your hearts. Besides, we do not know our own hearts or what we should have done, if we had lived then. A person of such contemptible appearance as Christ was, and so free in His reproofs of the sins of the times, would not have been for our turn [any] more than theirs. The Jews said, “If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets” (Mat 23:30). The memory of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram was as detestable to the carnal Jews as that of Judas and Pontius Pilate to Christians; but they were not a whit the better men. No more are we.

2. **They do great reverence to His name and memory, profess themselves Christians, and abhor Turks and infidels.** No, this will not do either. Many prize Christ’s name that neglect His office. Honoring the physician without taking his remedies never brought health. They have learned to speak well of Christ by rote after others, but they do not savingly and sincerely believe in Him to cure and heal their souls and suffer Him to do the work of a mediator there...

3. **They are very willing to be forgiven by Christ and to obtain eternal life, but this is what mere necessity requires them.** They will not suffer Him to do His whole work, to sanctify them and fit them to live to God, nor part with their nearest and dearest lusts,

and come into the obedience of the gospel; or at least, if Christ will do it for them without their improving this grace or using His holy means they are contented. But “having therefore these promises” and such a blessed Redeemer, we are to “cleanse ourselves” (2Co 7:1). The work is ours, though the grace be from Him. So Galatians 5:24, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”

4. Some have a strong conceit that they shall be saved and have benefit by Christ. This which they call their faith may be the greatest unbelief in the world. That men living in their sins shall yet do well enough is to believe the flat contrary of what God had spoken in His Word, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1Co 6:9-10). It is not strength of conceit, but the sure foundation of our hope, that will support us...

USE 2: *Do we believe in the Son of God?* Here will be the great case of conscience for settling our eternal interest.

1. If we believe, Christ will be precious to us: “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious” (1Pe 2:7). Christ cannot be accepted where He is not valued when other things come in competition with Him, and God will not be prodigal of His grace.

2. Where there is true faith, the heart will be purified: “Purifying their hearts by faith” (Act 15:9).

3. If you do believe in Christ, the heart will be weaned from the world: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4).

4. If you have the true faith, it works by love: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal 5:6).

By these things will the case be determined. Then the comfort and sweetness of this truth falls upon your hearts, that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16).

From Sermon XVI, “Sermons upon John III.16” in *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton, D.D.*, Vol. 2, reprinted by Maranatha Publications.



GOSPEL AND JUDGMENT

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.”—Acts 17:30-31

ACCORDING to the revelation of the gospel, this Judgment will be conducted by the Man Christ Jesus. God will judge the world; but it will be through His Son, Whom He has ordained and appointed actually to carry out the business of that last tremendous day. He Who shall sit upon the throne is “the Son of man.” He will be thus enthroned, I suppose, partly because it is involved in His mediatorial office, in which the Lord hath put all things in “subjection under his feet” (Heb 2:8). He is at the right hand of God, “angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him” (1Pe 3:22). God has been pleased to put the world, not under the direct government of personal deity, but under the government of the Mediator, that He might deal with us in mercy. That Mediator is Prophet, Priest, and King; and His Kingship would be shorn of its glory if the King had not the power of life and death, and the power of holding court and judging His subjects. Jesus Christ, therefore, being mediatorial King and Sovereign, all power being given unto Him in heaven and in earth, will take unto Himself His great power at the last and will judge the nations.

This high position is also awarded to our Lord as an honor from the Father, by which shall be wiped away every trace of the shame and dishonor through which He passed among the sons of men. The kings of the earth stood up to judge Him, but they shall stand before Him to be judged. The rulers took counsel together to condemn Him, but the rulers shall stand at His bar to be themselves condemned. Pontius Pilate and the chief priests shall all be there, and Caesar, and all Caesars, Czars, emperors, kings, and princes shall do homage before Him in lowliest manner, by standing before His judgment seat as prisoners to be tried by Him. There will be no recollection of the scepter of reed, for He shall break His enemies with a rod of iron (Mat 12:20; Rev 19:15). There shall be no marks of the thorn-crown, for on His head shall be many a diadem. Men shall not then be able to think of Him as the “man of tears” with visage sadly marred by grief and shame, for

His eyes shall be as a flame of fire and His countenance as the sun shining in its strength. O cross, whatever of shame there was about thee shall be wiped out forever among the sons of men, for *this* Man shall sit upon the throne of judgment! The Father designed to put this honor upon Him, and He hath right well deserved it. Jesus Christ as God hath a glory that He had with the Father before the world was; but as God-man, He hath a glory that His Father hath given Him to be the reward of that labor of life and death by which He hath redeemed His people. "Give unto the Lord glory and strength" (Psa 96:7) is the ascription of all His saints, and God the everlasting Father hath done this unto His Son, concerning Whom He hath sworn that "every knee should bow" before Him and "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phi 2:10-11). "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 1:14-15)...

It is as Son of Man as well as Son of God that our Lord will judge the world at the last great day. Be ye sure, then, of His *impartiality*. He is God, yet man, having an intense sympathy both with the King and with the subjects, having manifested His grace even to the rebellious and being yet filled with intense love to the Father and His Law. If we could have the election of a judge, what being could we suppose more impartial or so impartial as the Lord, Who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phi 2:6-7)? O blessed Judge, be Thou at once enthroned by the choice of the whole creation!...

[The Son of Man's] verdict will be final and *irreversible*. When Jesus has once pronounced it, there will be no appeal, no suing out of a writ of error, no reversal of the decree. He Himself hath said it: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Mat 25:46). There will be no delay in execution or escape from the doom. There will be no steeling of the heart to endure it and no outliving the doom. It will last on in all its terror, the final verdict of the Judge of all the earth, *pronounced by the Christ of love*. I know not how to speak upon such a theme as this, but must leave it as it stands before you. May the Holy Ghost impress it upon your minds.

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, May 25, 1879, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, reprinted by Pilgrim Publications.

PARDON FOR THE GREATEST SINNER

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*“For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.”
—Psalm 25:11*

DOCTRINE: *If we truly come to God for mercy, the greatness of our sin will be no impediment to pardon...*The following things are needful in order that we truly come to God for mercy:

That we should see our *misery* and be *sensible* of our need of mercy. They who are not sensible of their misery cannot truly look to God for mercy, for it is the very notion of divine mercy that it is the goodness and grace of God to the miserable. Without misery in the object, there can be no exercise of mercy. To suppose mercy without supposing misery, or pity without calamity, is a contradiction. Therefore, men cannot look upon themselves as proper objects of mercy, unless they first know themselves to be miserable. So, unless this be the case, it is impossible that they should come to God for mercy. They must be sensible that they are the children of wrath, that the Law is against them, and that they are exposed to the curse of it: that the wrath of God abideth on them and that He is angry with them every day while they are under the guilt of sin (Psa 7:11). They must be sensible that it is a very dreadful thing to be the object of the wrath of God, that it is a very awful thing to have Him for their enemy, and that they cannot bear His wrath. They must be sensible that the guilt of sin makes them miserable creatures, whatever temporal enjoyments they have; that they can be no other than miserable, undone creatures, so long as God is angry with them; that they are without strength and must perish, and that eternally, unless God help them. They must see that their case is utterly desperate, for anything that anyone else can do for them; that they hang over the pit of eternal misery; and that they must necessarily drop into it, if God have not mercy on them...

1. The *mercy of God* is as sufficient for the pardon of the greatest sins as for the least, because His mercy is infinite. That which is infinite is as much above what is great as it is above what is small. Thus, God being infinitely great, He is as much above kings as He is above beggars. He is as much above the highest

angel, as He is above the meanest worm. One infinite measure doth not come any nearer to the extent of what is infinite than another. So the mercy of God being infinite, it must be as sufficient for the pardon of *all* sin as of one...

2. That the *satisfaction of Christ* is as sufficient for the removal of the greatest guilt as the least: “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1Jo 1:7). “And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Act 13:39). All the sins of those who truly come to God for mercy, let them be what they will, are satisfied for, if God be true Who tells us so. And if they be satisfied for, surely it is not incredible that God should be ready to pardon them. So that Christ having fully satisfied for all sin, or having wrought out a satisfaction that is sufficient for all, it is now no way inconsistent with the glory of the divine attributes to pardon the greatest sins of those who in a right manner come unto Him for it. God may now pardon the greatest sinners without any prejudice to the honor of His holiness. The holiness of God will not suffer Him to give the least countenance to sin, but inclines Him to give proper testimonies of His hatred of it. But Christ having satisfied for sin, God can now love the sinner and give no countenance at all to sin, however great a sinner he may have been. It was a sufficient testimony of God’s abhorrence of sin that He poured out His wrath on His own dear Son, when He took the guilt of it upon Himself. Nothing can more show God’s abhorrence of sin than this...

God may, through Christ, pardon the *greatest sinner* without any prejudice to the honor of His majesty. The honor of the divine majesty indeed requires satisfaction, but the sufferings of Christ fully repair the injury. Let the contempt be ever so great, yet if so honorable a person as Christ undertakes to be a Mediator for the offender and suffers so much for him, it fully repairs the injury done to the Majesty of heaven and earth. *The sufferings of Christ fully satisfy justice.* The justice of God, as the supreme Governor and Judge of the world, requires the punishment of sin. The supreme Judge *must* judge the world according to a rule of justice...The Law is no impediment in the way of the pardon of the greatest sin, if men do but truly come to God for mercy: for Christ hath fulfilled the Law, He hath borne the curse of it, in His sufferings. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal 3:13).

3. Christ will not refuse to save the greatest sinners who in a right manner come to God for mercy, for this is His work. It is His business to be a Savior of sinners; it is the work upon which He came into the world; and therefore He will not object to it. He did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Mat 9:13). Sin is the very evil which He came into the world to remedy; therefore He will not object to any man that he is very sinful. The more sinful he is, the more need of Christ. The sinfulness of man was the reason of Christ's coming into the world...The physician will not make it an objection against healing a man who applies to him, that he stands in great need of his help...

4. Herein doth the glory of grace by the redemption of Christ much consist, viz., in its sufficiency for the pardon of the *greatest sinners*. The whole [plan] of the way of salvation is for this end: to glorify the free grace of God. God had it on His heart from all eternity to glorify this attribute; and therefore it is that the device of saving sinners by Christ was conceived. The greatness of divine grace appears very much in this: *that God by Christ saves the greatest offenders*. The greater the guilt of any sinner is the more glorious and wonderful is the grace manifested in his pardon: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom 5:20)...The Redeemer is glorified in that He proves sufficient to redeem those who are exceeding sinful, in that His blood proves sufficient to wash away the greatest guilt, in that He is able to save men to the uttermost, and in that He redeems even from the greatest misery. It is the honor of Christ to save the greatest sinners when they come to Him, as it is the honor of a physician that he cures the most desperate diseases or wounds.

Therefore, no doubt, Christ will be willing to save the greatest sinners if they come to Him. For He will not be backward to glorify Himself and to commend the value and virtue of His own blood. Seeing He hath so laid out Himself to redeem sinners, He will not be unwilling to show that He is able to redeem to the uttermost...If you see not the sufficiency of Christ to pardon you, without any righteousness of your own to recommend you, you never will come so as to be accepted of Him. The way to be accepted is to come—not on any such encouragement that now you have made yourselves better, and more worthy, or not so unworthy, but—on the mere encouragement of Christ's worthiness and God's mercy.

From "Great Guilt No Obstacle to the Pardon of the Returning Sinner" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust.

A GOSPEL WORTH DYING FOR

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.”—Acts 20:24

PAUL says that, in comparison with his great object of preaching the gospel, he did not count even his life to be dear to himself; yet we are sure Paul highly valued life. He had the same love of life as other men, and he knew besides that his own life was of great consequence to the churches and to the cause of Christ. In another place he said, “To abide in the flesh is more needful for you” (Phi 1:24). He was not weary of life, nor was he a vain person who could treat life as though it were a thing to fling away in sport. He valued life, for he prized time, which is the stuff that life is made of, and he turned to practical account each day and hour, “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16). Yet he soberly said to the elders of the church at Ephesus that he did not regard his life as a dear thing in comparison with bearing testimony to the gospel of the grace of God. According to the verse before us, the Apostle regarded life as a race that he had to run. Now, the more quickly a race is run the better: certainly, length is not the object of desire. The one thought of a runner is how he can most speedily reach the winning post. He spurns the ground beneath him; he cares not for the course he traverses except so far as it is the way over which he must run to reach his desired end. Such was life to Paul: all the energies of his spirit were consecrated to the pursuit of one object, namely, that he might everywhere bear testimony to the gospel of the grace of God. The life that he lived here below was only valued by him as a means to that end.

He also regarded the gospel and his ministry in witnessing to it as a sacred deposit that had been committed to him by the Lord Himself. He looked upon himself as “put in trust with the gospel” (1Th 2:4), and he resolved to be faithful though it should cost him his life...Before his mind’s eye, he saw the Savior taking into His pierced hands the priceless casket which contains the celestial jewel of the grace of God and saying to him, “I have redeemed thee with My blood, and I have called thee by My name, and now I commit this precious thing into thy hands, that thou mayest take care of it and guard it even with thy heart’s blood. I commission

thee to go everywhere in My place and stead and to make known to every people under heaven the gospel of the grace of God.” *All* believers occupy a somewhat similar place. We are none of us called to the apostleship, and we may not all have been called to the public preaching of the Word of God; but we are all charged to be valiant for the truth upon the earth and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Oh, to do this in the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles! As believers, we are all called to some form of ministry. This ought to make our life a race and cause us to regard ourselves as the guardians of the gospel, even as he that bears the colors of a regiment regards himself as bound to sacrifice everything for their preservation...

What was this gospel for which Paul would die? It is not everything called “gospel” that would produce such enthusiasm...we have gospels nowadays that I would not *die* for nor recommend anyone of you to *live* for, inasmuch as they are gospels that will be snuffed out within a few years. It is never worthwhile to die for a doctrine that will itself die out. I have lived long enough to see half-a-dozen new gospels rise, flourish, and decay. They told me long ago that my old Calvinistic doctrine was far behind the age and was an exploded thing. Next, I heard that evangelical teaching in any form was a thing of the past, to be supplanted by “advanced thought”...

Yet there used to be a gospel in the world that consisted of facts that Christians never questioned. There was once in the Church a gospel that believers hugged to their hearts as if it were their soul’s life. There used to be a gospel in the world which provoked enthusiasm and commanded sacrifice. Tens of thousands have met together to hear this gospel at peril of their lives. Men, to the teeth of tyrants, have proclaimed it, have suffered the loss of all things, and gone to prison and to death for it, singing psalms all the while. Is there not such a gospel remaining? Or are we arrived at cloudland,¹ where souls starve on suppositions and become incapable of confidence or ardor?² Are the disciples of Jesus now to be fed upon the froth of “thought” and the wind of imagination, whereon men become heady and high-minded? Nay, rather will we not return to the substantial meat of infallible revelation and cry to the Holy Ghost to feed us upon His own inspired Word?

What is this gospel that Paul valued before his own life? It was called by him “the gospel of the grace of God.” That which most forcibly struck the Apostle in the gospel was that it was a message

¹ **cloudland** – a region of fancy, myth, or unreality.

² **ardor** – fiery intensity of feeling.

of grace and of grace alone. Amid the music of the glad tidings, one note rang out above all others and charmed the Apostle's ear. That note was *grace*—the grace of God. That note he regarded as characteristic of the whole strain: the gospel was “the gospel of the grace of God.” In these days, that word *grace* is not often heard. We hear of moral duties, scientific adjustments, and human progress; but who tells us of “the grace of God” except a few old-fashioned people who will soon be gone? As one of those antiquated folk...I shall try to sound out that word *grace*, so that those who know its joyful sound shall be glad, and those who despise it shall be cut to the heart.

Grace is the essence of the gospel. Grace is the one hope for this fallen world! Grace is the sole comfort of saints looking forward for glory! Perhaps Paul had a clearer view of grace than even Peter, James, or John; and hence he has so much larger space in the New Testament. The other apostolic writers excelled Paul in certain respects, but Paul as to his depth and clearness in the doctrine of grace stood first and foremost. We need Paul again, or at least the Pauline evangelism and definiteness. He would make short work of the new gospels and say of those who follow them, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal 1:6-7).

Let me try to explain in a brief manner how the gospel is the good news of grace. The gospel is an announcement that God is prepared to deal with guilty man on the ground of free favor and pure mercy. There would be no good news in saying that God is just; for, in the first place, that is not news. We know that God is just; the natural conscience teaches man that. That God will punish sin and reward righteousness is not news at all. And if it were news, yet it would not be good news; for we have all sinned, and upon the ground of justice we must perish. But it is news, and news of the best kind, that the Judge of all is prepared to pardon transgression and to justify the ungodly. It is good news to the sinful that the Lord will blot out sin, cover the sinner with righteousness, and receive him into His favor, and that not on account of anything he has done or will ever do, but out of sovereign grace. Though we are all guilty without exception, and all most justly condemned for our sins, yet God is ready to take us from under the curse of His Law and give us all the blessedness of righteous men, as an act of pure mercy...

This is a message *worth dying for*, that through the covenant of grace God can be just, and yet the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; that He can be the righteous Judge of men, and yet believing men can be justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! That God is merciful and gracious and is ready to bless the most unworthy is a wonderful piece of news, worth a man's spending a hundred lives to tell. My heart leaps within me as I repeat it in this hall and tell the penitent, the desponding, and the despairing that, though their sins deserve hell, yet grace can give them heaven and make them fit for it—and that as a sovereign act of love, altogether independent of their character or deservings. Because the Lord hath said, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (Rom 9:15), there is hope for the most hopeless. Since “it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy” (Rom 9:16), there is an open door of hope for those who otherwise might despair...Ah, Paul, I can understand your getting into a holy excitement over such a revelation as that of free grace! I can understand your being willing to throw your life away that you might tell to your fellow sinners that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

But the gospel tells us much more than this, namely, that in order to His dealing with men upon the ground of free favor, God the Father has Himself removed the grand obstacle which stood in the way of mercy. God is just; that is a truth most sure. Man's conscience knows it to be so, and man's conscience will never rest content unless it can see that the justice of God is vindicated. Therefore, in order that God might justly deal in a way of pure mercy with men, He gave His only-begotten Son, that by His death, the Law might receive its due and the eternal principles of His government might be maintained. Jesus was appointed to stand in man's stead, to bear man's sin and endure the chastisement of man's guilt. How clearly doth Isaiah state this in his fifty-third chapter! Man is now saved securely, because the commandment is *not* set aside, nor the penalty revoked. All is done and suffered which could be exacted by the sternest justice, and yet grace has her hands untied to distribute pardons as she pleases. The debtor is loosed, for the debt is paid. See a dying Savior, and hear the prophet say, “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5). Here, too, everything is of grace.

Brethren, it was grace on God's part to resolve upon devising and accepting an atonement, and especially in His actually providing that atonement at His own cost. There is the wonder of it! He that was

offended Himself provides the reconciliation! He had but one Son, and sooner than there should be any obstacle in His way as to dealing with men on the footing of pure grace, He took that Son from His bosom, allowed Him to assume our frail nature, and in that nature permitted Him to die, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God...“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). This, then, is the gospel of the grace of God: that God is able, without injustice, to deal with men in a way of pure mercy, altogether apart from their sins or their merits, because their sins were laid upon His dear Son Jesus Christ, Who hath offered to divine justice a complete satisfaction, so that God is glorious in holiness and yet rich in mercy. Ah, beloved Paul, there *is* something worth preaching here.

In order to the accomplishment of the designs of grace it was necessary further that a gospel message should be issued full of promise, encouragement, and blessing. Truly, that message has been delivered to us; for that gospel that we preach today is full of grace to the very brim. It speaks on this wise: Sinner, just as you are, return unto the Lord, and He will receive you graciously and love you freely. God hath said, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:12). For Christ’s sake, and not because of any agonies, tears, or sorrows on your part, He will remove your sins as far from you as the east is from the west (Psa 103:12). He saith, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa 1:18). You may come to Jesus just as you are, and He will give you full remission upon your believing in Him.

The Lord says today, “Look not within, as though you would search for any merit there; but look unto Me, and be ye saved. I will bless you apart from merit, according to the atonement of Christ Jesus.” He says, “Look not within as though you looked for any strength for future life: I am become both your strength and your salvation; for when you were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”...The gospel message is of grace because it is directed to those whose only claim is their need. The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Come, therefore, ye morally sick; ye whose brows are white with the leprosy of sin; come and welcome, for to you is this free gospel proclaimed by divine authority. Assuredly such a message as this

is worth any exertion for its spreading; and it is so blessed, so divine, that we may gladly pour out our blood to proclaim it.

Further, brethren, that this gospel blessing might come within the reach of men, God's grace has adopted a method suitable to their condition. "How can I be forgiven?" saith one, "tell me truly and quickly!" "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Act 16:31). God asks of you no good works, nor good feelings either, but that you be willing to accept what He most freely gives. He saves upon believing. This is faith: that thou believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that thou trust thyself with Him: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (Joh 1:12). If thou believest, thou art saved. Salvation "is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom 4:16).

Dost thou say, "But faith itself seems beyond my reach"? Then, in the gospel of the grace of God we are told that even faith is God's gift and that He works it in men by His Holy Spirit. For apart from that Spirit they lie dead in trespasses and sins. Oh, what grace is this! The faith that is commanded is also conferred! "But," saith one, "if I were to believe in Christ and have my past sins forgiven, yet I fear I should go back to sin; for I have no strength by which to keep myself for the future." Harken! The gospel of the grace of God is this: that He will keep thee to the end, that He will preserve alive within thee the fire that He kindles; for He saith, "I give unto my sheep eternal life." Again He saith, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (Joh 4:14). The sheep of Christ shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hand. Dost thou hear this, thou guilty one, thou who hast no claim upon God's grace whatever? His free grace comes to thee, *even to thee*. And if thou art made willing to receive it, thou art this day a saved man, and saved forever beyond all question. I do say it again, this is a gospel so well worth the preaching that I can understand Paul saying, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"...

Do you seem inclined to accept the way and method of grace? Let me test you. Some men think they love a thing and yet they do not, for they have made a mistake concerning it. Do you understand that you are to have no claim upon God? He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I

will have compassion” (Rom 9:15). When it comes to pure mercy, then no one can possibly urge a claim. In fact, no claim can exist. If it be of grace it is not of debt, and if of debt it is not of grace. If God wills to save one man, and another be left to perish in his own willful sin, that other cannot dare to dispute with God. Or if he does, the answer is, “Can I not do as I will with my own?” Oh, but you seem now as if you started back from it! See, your pride revolts against the sovereignty of grace. Let me beckon you back again. Though you have no claim, there is another truth that smiles upon you; for, on the other hand, there is no bar to your obtaining mercy. If no goodness is needed to recommend you to God, since all must be pure favor that He gives, then also no badness can shut you out from that favor. However guilty you may be, it may be God may show favor to you. He has in other cases called out the chief of sinners: why not in your case also? At any rate, no aggravation of sin, no continuance in sin, no height of sin, can be a reason why God should not look with grace upon you; for if pure grace and nothing else but grace is to have sway then the jet black transgressor³ may be saved. In his case, there is room for grace to manifest its greatness. I have heard men make excuse out of the doctrine of election, and they have said, “What if I should not be elected?” It seems to me far wiser to say, “What if I *should* be elected?” Yea, I am elected if I believe in Jesus; for there never was a soul yet that cast itself upon the atonement of Christ but what that soul was chosen of God from before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4)!

This is the gospel of the grace of God, and I know that it touches the heart of many of you. It often stirs my soul like the sound of martial music,⁴ to think of my Lord’s grace from old eternity, a grace that is constant to its choice and will be constant to it when all these visible things shall disappear as sparks that fly from the chimney. My heart is glad within me to have to preach free grace and dying love...There is something in a free-grace gospel worth preaching, worth listening to, worth living for, and worth dying for!

My friend, if the gospel has done nothing for you, hold your tongue or speak against it. But if the gospel has done for you what it has done for some of us, if it has changed the current of your life, if it has lifted you up from the dunghill and made you to sit as on a throne, if it is today your meat and your drink, if to your life it is the very center and sun—then bear constant witness to it. If the

³ **jet black transgressor** – one who is blackened by sin.

⁴ **martial music** – military music; a march.

gospel has become to you what it is to me, the light of my innermost heart, the core of my being, then tell it, tell it wherever you go. Make men know that even if they reject it, it is to you the power of God unto salvation and will be the same to *every* man that believeth...[I conclude by] reminding you of reasons why we, my brethren, should live to make known the gospel of the grace of God:

First, because it is the *only* gospel in the world, after all. These mushroom gospels of the hour, which come and go like a penny newspaper, which has its day and then is thrown aside, have no claim on any man's zeal...But to hear the gospel of the grace of God is worth many a mile's walk, and if it were plainly set forth in all our churches and chapels I warrant we should see very few empty pews: the people would come and hear it, for they always have done so. It is your *graceless* gospel which starves the flock till they forsake the pasture...Man wants something that shall cheer his heart in the midst of his labor and give him hope under a sense of sin. As the thirsty need water, so does man want the gospel of the grace of God. And there are no two gospels in the world any more than there are two suns in the heavens. There is but one atmosphere for us to breathe and one gospel for us to live by...

Do it, next, because it is for God's glory. Do you not see how it glorifies God? It lays the sinner low; it makes man nobody, but God is all in all. It sets God on a throne and trails man in the dust; and then it sweetly leads men to worship and reverence the God of all grace, Who passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin.

Therefore, **spread it.** Spread it because thus you will glorify Christ. Oh, if He should come on this platform this morning, how gladly would we all make way for Him! How devoutly would we adore Him! If we might but see that head, that dear majestic head, would we not all bow in worship? And if He then spoke and said, "My beloved, I have committed to you my gospel. Hold it fast as ye have received it! Give not way to the notions and inventions of men, but hold fast the truth as ye have received it; and go and tell My word, for I have other sheep that are not yet of My fold, who must be brought in. And you have brothers that yet are prodigals, and they must come home!" I say, if He looked you each one in the face and addressed you so, your soul would answer, "Lord, I will live for Thee! I will make Thee known! I will die for Thee if needs be to publish the gospel of Jesus Christ."

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, August 12, 1883,
at Exeter Hall, reprinted by Pilgrim Publications.

PART 2

SUBSTITUTION

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 Corinthians 5:21

THE heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this truth preach the gospel, in whatever else they may be mistaken; but they who preach not the atonement, whatever else they declare, have missed the soul and substance of the divine message. In these days, I feel bound to go over and over again the elementary truths of the gospel. In peaceful times, we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of truth that lie far afield; but now we must stay at home and guard the hearths and homes of the church by defending the *first principles of the faith*. In this age, there have risen up in the church itself men who speak perverse things. There be many that trouble us with their philosophies and novel interpretations, whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain. It is well that some of us, who know what we believe and have no secret meanings for our words, should just put our foot down and maintain our standing, holding forth the Word of life and plainly declaring the foundation truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ...I have no desire to be famous for anything but preaching the old gospel. There are plenty who can fiddle to you the new music. It is for me to have no music at any time but that which is heard in heaven: “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood...to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!” (Rev 1:5-6)...

I have found, my brethren, by long experience that nothing touches the heart like the cross of Christ. When the heart is touched and wounded by the two-edged sword of the Law, nothing heals its wounds like the balm that flows from the pierced heart of Jesus. The cross is life to the spiritually dead...When we see men quickened, converted, and sanctified by the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice, we may justly conclude that it is the *true* doctrine of atonement. I have not known men made to live unto

God and holiness except by the doctrine of the death of Christ on man's behalf. Hearts of stone that never beat with life before have been turned to flesh through the Holy Spirit causing them to know this truth...The story of the great Lover of the souls of men Who gave Himself for their salvation is still, in the hand of the Holy Ghost, the greatest of all forces in the realm of mind...

FIRST, THEN, WITH AS MUCH BREVITY AS POSSIBLE, I WILL SPEAK UPON THE GREAT DOCTRINE. The great doctrine, the greatest of all, is this: God, seeing men to be lost by reason of their sin, hath taken that sin of theirs and laid it upon His only begotten Son, making Him to be sin for us, even Him Who knew no sin. In consequence of this transference of sin, he that believeth in Christ Jesus is made just and righteous, yea, is made to be the righteousness of God in Christ. Christ was made *sin* that sinners might be made *righteousness*. That is the doctrine of the substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf of guilty men.

Now consider, first, *who was made sin for us?* The description of our great Surety¹ here given is upon one point only, and it may more than suffice us for our present meditation. Our substitute was spotless, innocent, and pure. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became incarnate—made flesh—and dwelt here among men; but though He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He knew no sin. Though upon Him sin was laid, yet not so as to make Him *guilty*. He was not, He could not be a sinner: He had no personal knowledge of sin. Throughout the whole of His life, He never committed an offense against the great Law of truth and right. The Law was in His heart. It was His nature to be holy. He could say to all the world, "Which of you convinceth me² of sin?" (Joh 8:46). Even His vacillating³ judge enquired, "Why, what evil hath he done?" (Mat 27:23). When all Jerusalem was challenged and bribed to bear witness against Him, no witnesses could be found. It was necessary to misquote and wrest His words before a charge could be trumped up against Him by His bitterest enemies. His life brought Him in contact with both the Tables of the Law, but no single command had He transgressed. As the Jews examined the Paschal lamb⁴ before they slew it, so did scribes and Pharisees, and doctors of the Law, and rulers and princes examine the Lord Jesus without finding

¹ **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another.

² **convinceth me** – proves me guilty.

³ **vacillating** – changing between one opinion and another; undecided.

⁴ **Paschal lamb** – lamb sacrificed at the Jewish celebration of Passover.

offense in Him. He was the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot.

As there was no sin of commission, so was there about our Lord no fault of omission.⁵ Probably, dear brethren, we that are believers have been enabled by divine grace to escape most sins of commission; but I for one have to mourn daily over sins of omission. If we have spiritual graces, yet they do not reach the point required of us. If we do that which is right in itself, yet we usually mar our work...either in the motive, in the manner of doing it, or by the self-satisfaction with which we view it when it is done. We come short of the glory of God in some respect or other. We forget to do what we ought to do, or, doing it, we are guilty of lukewarmness, self-reliance, unbelief, or some other grievous error. It was not so with our divine Redeemer. You cannot say that there was any feature deficient in His perfect beauty. He was complete in heart, in purpose, in thought, in word, in deed, in spirit...No pearl has dropped from the silver string of His character. No one virtue has overshadowed and dwarfed the rest: all perfections combine in perfect harmony to make in Him one surpassing perfection.

Neither did our Lord know a sin of thought. His mind never produced an evil wish or desire. There never was in the heart of our blessed Lord a wish for any evil pleasure, nor a desire to escape any suffering or shame that was involved in His service. When He said, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," He never desired to escape the bitter potion at the expense of His perfect life-work. The "if it be possible" meant "if it be consistent with full obedience to the Father and the accomplishment of the divine purpose." We see the weakness of His nature shrinking and the holiness of His nature resolving and conquering as He adds, "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat 26:39). He took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, but though that flesh often caused Him weariness of body, it never produced in Him the weakness of sin. He took our infirmities, but He never exhibited an infirmity that had the least of blameworthiness attached to it. Never fell there an evil glance from those blessed eyes. Never did His lips let drop a hasty word. Never did those feet go on an ill errand or those hands move towards a sinful deed. Because His heart was filled with holiness and love *within* as well as *without*, our Lord was unblemished. His

⁵ **sin of commission...omission** – a sin of *commission*: when one does what is forbidden, or what is good but for the wrong reason; sin of *omission*: when one does not perform what is commanded.

desires were as perfect as His actions. Searched by the eyes of Omniscience, no shadow of fault could be found in Him.

Yea, more, there were no tendencies about our Substitute towards evil in *any* form. In us, there are always those tendencies, for the taint of original sin⁶ is upon us. We have to govern ourselves and hold ourselves under stern restraint, or we should rush headlong to destruction. Our carnal nature lusteth to evil and needs to be held in as with bit and bridle. Happy is that man who can master himself. But with regard to our Lord, it was His nature to be pure, right, and loving. All His sweet wills were towards goodness. His unconstrained life was holiness itself: He was “the holy child Jesus.” The prince of this world found in Him no fuel for the flame that he desired to kindle. Not only did no sin flow from Him, but there was no sin in Him, or inclination, or tendency in that direction. Watch Him in secret, and you find Him in prayer. Look into His soul, and you find Him eager to do and suffer the Father’s will. Oh, the blessed character of Christ! If I had the tongues of men and of angels, I could not worthily set forth His absolute perfection! Justly may the Father be well pleased with Him! Well may heaven adore Him!

Beloved, it was *absolutely necessary* that anyone who should be able to suffer in our stead should himself be spotless. A sinner obnoxious to⁷ punishment because of his own offenses—what can he do but bear the wrath that is due to his own sin? Our Lord Jesus Christ as man was made under the Law; but He owed *nothing* to that Law, for He perfectly fulfilled it in all respects. He was capable of standing in the room, place, and stead of others because He was under no obligations of His own. He was only under obligations towards God because He had voluntarily undertaken to be the surety and sacrifice for those whom the Father gave Him. He was clear Himself, or else He could not have entered into bonds for guilty men.

Oh, how I admire Him! That being such as He was—spotless and thrice holy, so that even the heavens were not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly—yet He condescended to be made sin for us! How could He endure to be numbered with

⁶ **original sin** – Q. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that state whereinto man fell? A: The sinfulness of that state whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want [*lack*] of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. (Spurgeon’s Catechism, Q. 17, booklet available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

⁷ **obnoxious to** – subject to; deserving of.

the transgressor and bear the sin of many? It may be no misery for a sinful man to live with sinful men, but it would be a heavy sorrow for the pure-minded to dwell with a company of abandoned and licentious wretches. What an overwhelming sorrow it must have been to the pure and perfect Christ to tabernacle among the hypocritical, the selfish, and the profane! How much worse that He Himself should have to take upon Himself the sins of those guilty men! His sensitive and delicate nature must have shrunk from even the shadow of sin, and yet read the words and be astonished: "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Our perfect Lord and Master bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He, before Whom the sun itself is dim and the pure azure of heaven is defilement, was made sin. I need not put this in fine words: the fact is itself too grand to need any magnifying by human language. To gild refined gold or paint the lily [would be] absurd, but much more absurd would it be to try to overlay with flowers of speech the matchless beauties of the cross.

THIS LEADS ME ON TO THE SECOND POINT...WHAT WAS DONE WITH HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN? He was "made sin." It is a wonderful expression: the more you weigh it, the more you will marvel at its singular strength. Only the Holy Ghost might originate such language. It was wise for the divine Teacher to use very strong expressions, for else the thought might not have entered human minds. Even now, despite the emphasis, clearness, and distinctness of the language used here and elsewhere in Scripture, there are found men daring enough to deny that substitution is taught in Scripture. With such subtle wits, it is useless to argue. It is clear that language has no meaning for them. To read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, to accept it as relating to the Messiah, and then to deny His substitutionary sacrifice is simply *wickedness*! It would be vain to reason with such beings: they are so blind that if they were transported to the sun they could not see. In the church and out of the church there is a deadly animosity to this truth. Modern thought labors to get away from what is obviously the meaning of the Holy Spirit *that sin was lifted from the guilty and laid upon the innocent*. It is written, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:6). This is as plain language as can be used; but if any plainer was required, here it is, "He hath made him to be sin for us."

The Lord God laid upon Jesus, Who voluntarily undertook it, *all the weight of human sin*. Instead of its resting on the sinner, who *did* commit it, it was made to rest upon Christ, Who *did not* commit it. [And] the righteousness that Jesus wrought out was placed to the account of the guilty, who had not worked it out, so that the guilty

are treated as righteous. Those who by nature are guilty are regarded as righteous, while He who by nature knew no sin whatever was treated as guilty. I think I must have read in scores of books that such a transference is impossible. But the statement has had no effect upon my mind: I do not care whether it is impossible or not with learned unbelievers. It is evidently possible with God, for He has done it. But they say it is contrary to reason. I do not care for that either: it may be contrary to the reason of those unbelievers, but it is not contrary to mine...God saith it and I believe it. And believing it, I find life and comfort in it. Shall I not preach it? Assuredly, I will...Christ was not guilty and could not be made guilty. But He was treated *as if He were guilty* because He willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yea, He was not only treated as a sinner, but He was treated as if He had been sin itself in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance! The sinless One was made to be sin.

Sin pressed our great Substitute very sorely. He felt the weight of it in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He sweat “as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luk 22:44). The full pressure of it came upon Him when He was nailed to the accursed tree. There in the hours of darkness, He bore infinitely more than we can tell. We know that He bore condemnation from the mouth of man, so that it is written, “He was numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12)...It was a cruel scorn that exhausted itself upon His blessed Person. This, I say, we know. We know that He bore pains innumerable of body and of mind: He thirsted, He cried out in the agony of desertion, He bled, He died. We know that He poured out His soul unto death and yielded up the ghost. But there was at the back, and beyond all this, an immeasurable abyss of suffering. The Greek Liturgy⁸ fitly speaks of “Thine unknown sufferings.” Probably to us they are *unknowable* sufferings. He was God as well as man. The Godhead lent an omnipotent power to the manhood, so that there was compressed within His soul and endured by it an amount of anguish of which we can form no conception...“He made him to be sin.” Look into the words. Perceive their meaning, if you can. The angels desire to look into it. Gaze into this terrible crystal. Let your eyes search deep into this opal, within whose jeweled depth there are flames of fire. The Lord made the perfectly innocent One to be sin for us. That means more of humiliation, darkness, agony, and death than you can conceive! It brought a kind of distraction and well nigh a destruction to the tender and gentle spirit of our Lord. I do not say that our

⁸ **Greek Liturgy** – rituals used in the public worship of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Substitute endured hell: that were unwarrantable. I will not say that He endured either the exact punishment for sin or an equivalent for it. But I *do* say that what He endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of His Law clearer and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom He died. The cross is under many aspects a more full revelation of the wrath of God against human sin than even Tophet⁹ and the smoke of torment that goeth up forever and ever (Rev 14:11). Who would know God's hate of sin must see the Only Begotten bleeding in body and bleeding in soul even unto death. He must, in fact, spell out each word of my text and read its innermost meaning: "He hath made him to be sin for us." Oh depth of terror, and yet height of love!...How acceptable with God must those be who are made by God Himself to be "the righteousness of God in him!" I cannot conceive of anything more complete.

As Christ was made sin and yet never sinned, so are we made righteousness, though we cannot claim to have been righteous in and of ourselves. Sinners though we be, and forced to confess it with grief, yet the Lord doth cover us so completely with the righteousness of Christ that only His righteousness is seen; and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. This is true of all the saints, even of as many as believe on His name. Oh, the splendor of this doctrine! Canst thou see it, my friend? Sinner though thou be and in thyself defiled, deformed, and debased; yet if thou wilt accept the great Substitute that God provides for thee in the Person of His dear Son, thy sins are gone from thee, and righteousness has come to thee. Thy sins were laid on Jesus, the scapegoat! They are thine no longer; He has put them away. I may say that His righteousness is imputed unto thee; but I go further and say with the text, "Thou art made the righteousness of God in him." No doctrine can be more sweet than this to those who feel the weight of sin and the burden of its curse.

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, July 18, 1886, at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington, reprinted by Pilgrim Publications.

Available as a booklet from Chapel Library.



A *surety* is one that undertakes and is bound to do a thing for another, as to pay a debt for him or to bring him safe to such or such a place or the like; so when he hath discharged what he undertook and was bound for, then the party for whom he undertook is discharged also.—*Thomas Goodwin*

⁹ **Tophet** – the Valley of Hinnom, where Jews sacrificed their children to Molech.

CHRIST'S FEDERAL WORK

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

BY the term *federal*,¹ we mean that there was an official oneness existing between the Mediator² and those for whom He mediated or, in simpler language, that there is a legal union between Christ and His people. “When, in the Old Testament, the elect are spoken of as the party with whom God makes a covenant, they are viewed as in Christ and one with Him. The covenant is not made with them as alone and apart from Christ. This is taught in Galatians 3:16: ‘To Abraham and his seed were the promises made,’ but this seed ‘is Christ.’ The elect are here (as also in 1Co 12:12) called ‘Christ,’ because of the union between Christ and the elect. And in like manner, when Christ, as in Isaiah 42:1-6, is spoken of as the party with Whom the Father covenants, the elect are to be viewed as in Him. As united and one with Him, *His* atoning suffering is looked upon as *their* atoning suffering: ‘I am crucified with Christ’ (Gal 2:20).”³

“Christ is not only the Substitute but the Surety of His people. The gospel is founded on the fact Adam and Christ are covenant heads and representatives of their respective families. Hence, they are termed ‘the first man’ and ‘the second man’ (1Co 15:47), as if there had been none other but themselves, for the children of each were entirely dependent on their head. In Adam all die; in Christ all are made alive (1Co 15:22). The first ‘all’ includes every individual of mankind, the last ‘all’ is explained by the apostle to mean ‘they that are Christ’s’ (1Co 15:23).”⁴

It was as the Head of His elect that God covenanted with Christ, so that, in a very real sense, that covenant was made with *them*. This it is that explains all those passages that speak of the saints’ oneness with Christ, as that, they were “crucified with Christ” (Gal

¹ **federal** – legal representative.

² **Mediator** – a go-between; “It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and Man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Savior of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 8.1)

³ William Greenough Thayer Shedd (1820-1894), *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 2 (New York, NY; Scribner’s Sons, 1891), 361.

⁴ James Haldane (1768-1851), *The Doctrine of the Atonement* (William Whyte & Co., 1845).

2:20), “died with him” (Rom 6:8), were “buried with him” as Scriptural baptism symbolizes (Rom 6:4), were “quickened” with him (Col 2:12), “raised with him” (Eph 2:6), and made to “sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6). So they were legally one with Him and He with them in all that He did in rendering a full satisfaction to God. On this vitally important point, we cannot do better than give a synopsis of the last section from chapter two of Hugh Martin’s invaluable work:

“How are we to formulate and establish the relation subsisting⁵ between Christ and His, as Redeemer and redeemed, unless we fall back upon the doctrine of the Covenant?⁶ *Some* relation, it is evident, must be acknowledged as subsisting between Christ and those on whose behalf He dies, else we do not even come within sight of the idea of a vicarious⁷ sacrifice. The possibility of real atonement absolutely postulates and demands a conjuncture between Him Who atones and those for whom His atonement is available. This is beyond the need of proof. And as there is an absolute and obvious necessity for *some* conjuncture or relation, so in searching for *the* conjunction or relation that actually subsists, our search cannot terminate satisfactorily until we reach and recognize the covenant oneness. The same reason that demands a relation remains unsatisfied until it meets with *this* relation.”⁸

It does not meet the necessities of the case to refer to the union between Christ and His people that is effected in their regeneration by the agency of the Holy Spirit and the instrumentality of the faith that is His gift. True, this is indispensable before any can enjoy any of the blessings of His purchase. But there must have been a relation between Christ and His people *before* He ransomed them. Nor are the necessities of the case met by a reference to the Incarnation. True, the Redeemer must take upon Him flesh and blood before He could redeem, yet there must be a bond of union more intimate than that which Christ holds alike to the saved and the unsaved. He took hold of “the seed of Abraham” (Heb 2:16), not the “seed of Adam”! Nor is it sufficient to say that the relation

⁵ **subsisting** – existing.

⁶ Moreover man having brought himself under the curse of the Law by his fall, it pleased the Lord to make a Covenant of Grace wherein He freely offereth unto sinners, life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life, His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe. (*Second London Baptist Confession*, 7.3)

⁷ **vicarious** – suffered by one person as a substitute for another.

⁸ Hugh Martin (1822-1885), *The Atonement: In Its Relations to the Covenant, the Priesthood, the Intercession of Our Lord* (London: James Nisbet, 1870), 30.

is that of suretyship and substitution; for the question still calls for answer, "What rendered it fit and righteous that the Son of God should suffer for others, the Holy One be made sin?" It is to this point the inquiry must be narrowed.

Christ was the Surety of His people because He was their *Substitute*. He acted on their behalf because He stood in their room. The relation of a substitute *justifies* the suretyship; but what shall justify the substitution? There is the hinge upon which everything turns. We heartily concur with Dr. Martin when he says, "We can obtain no satisfaction on this point, no sufficient answer to this question, and therefore no satisfactory conclusion to our whole line of investigation, until the doctrine of the everlasting covenant oneness comes into view. That is the grand underlying relation. That is the grand primary conjunction between the Redeemer and the redeemed, that alone bears up and accounts for all else in respect of relation which can be predicated as true concerning them. 'For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren' (Heb 2:11)...He is substituted *for* us, because He is one *with* us—identified with us and we with Him."⁹

Promoted by infinite love, Christ as the God-man freely accepted the terms of the Everlasting Covenant that had been proposed to Him and voluntarily assumed all the legal responsibilities of His people. As their Head, He came down to this earth, lived, wrought, and died as their vicarious Representative. He obeyed and suffered as their Substitute. By His obedience and sufferings, He discharged all their obligations. His sufferings remitted the penalty of the Law, and His obedience merited infinite blessings for them. Romans 5:12-19 explicitly affirms that the elect of God are legally "made righteous" on precisely the same principle by which they were first "made sinners." "Our union with Christ is of the same order and involves the same class of effects as our union with Adam. We call it a union both *federal* and *vital*. Others may call it what they please, but it will nevertheless remain certain that it is of such a nature as to involve an identity of legal relations and reciprocal¹⁰ obligations and rights."¹¹ "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19)—"made the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21).

⁹ Martin, *Atonement*, 35.

¹⁰ **reciprocal** – given by each of two people to the other.

¹¹ Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886), *The Atonement* (Philadelphia, Penn.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1867), 205.

More than a thousand years ago, Augustine¹² remarked, “Such is the ineffable¹³ closeness of this transcendental¹⁴ union, that we hear the voice of the members suffering when they suffered in their Head and cried through the Head on the cross, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ (Mat 27:46). And, in like manner, we hear the voice of the Head suffering when He suffered in His members and cried to the persecutor on the way to Damascus, ‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?’ (Act 9:4).”

The federal relation of Christ to His people was a real one, upon which the infallible God deemed it just to punish *Christ* for the sins of His people and to credit *them* with His righteousness, and thus completely satisfy all the demands of His Law upon them. As the result of that union, Christ was in all things “made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17), being “numbered (reckoned one) with transgressors” (Isa 53:12). They in turn are “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph 5:30). In consequence of this federal union, Christ is also made “a quickening¹⁵ Spirit” (1Co 15:45), so that, in due time, each of His people becomes a living and vital member of that spiritual body of which He is the Head (Eph 1:19-23).

The relation between Christ and those who benefit from His Atonement was therefore no vague, indefinite, haphazard one, but consisted of an actual covenant oneness, legal identity, and vital union. Suretyship presupposes it. Strict substitution demands it. Real imputation proceeds upon it. The penalty Christ endured could not otherwise have been inflicted. They for whom Satisfaction was made do, by inevitable necessity, share its benefits and receive what was purchased for them. This alone meets the objection of the injustice of the Innocent suffering for the guilty, as it alone explains the transfer of Christ's sufferings and merits to the redeemed.

From *Studies in the Scriptures*, reprinted by Chapel Library.



¹² **Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430)** – early church theologian known by some as the father of orthodox theology; born in Tagaste, North Africa.

¹³ **ineffable** – incapable of being expressed; indescribable.

¹⁴ **transcendental** – supernatural.

¹⁵ **quickening** – life-giving.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE EXPLAINED

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”—2 Corinthians 5:21

I BRING you now...the great philosophy of salvation, the hidden mystery, the great secret, the wonderful discovery that is brought to light by the gospel: how God is just and yet the justifier of the ungodly (Rom 3:26). Let us read the text again and then at once proceed to discuss it...“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Note the doctrine...There are three persons mentioned here. “He [that is, *God*] hath made him [that is, *Christ*], who knew no sin, to be sin for us [*sinners*] that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Before we can understand the plan of salvation, it is necessary for us to know something about the three persons. Unless we understand them in some measure, salvation is to us impossible.

1. **HERE IS FIRST, GOD.** Let every man know what God is. God is a very different Being from what some of you suppose. The God of heaven and of earth—the Jehovah of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, Creator and Preserver, the God of Holy Scripture, and the God of all grace—is not the god that some men make unto themselves and worship. There be men in this so-called Christian land, who worship a god who is no more God than Venus¹ or Bacchus!² A god made after their own hearts—a god not fashioned out of stone or wood, but fashioned from their own thoughts, out of baser stuff than ever heathen attempted to make a god of. The God of Scripture has three great attributes, and they are all three implied in the text.

The God of Scripture is a sovereign God. That is, He is a God Who has absolute authority and absolute power to do exactly as He pleaseth. Over the head of God, there is no law; upon His arm, there is no necessity. He knoweth no rule but His own free and mighty will. Though He cannot be unjust and cannot do anything

¹ **Venus** – Roman mythology: goddess of love and physical beauty.

² **Bacchus** or **Dionysus** – Greek and Roman mythology: the god of wine and ecstasy.

but good, yet is His nature absolutely free; for goodness is the freedom of God's nature. God is not to be controlled by the will of man, the desires of man, or by fate in which the superstitious believe. He is God, doing as He willeth in the armies of heaven and in this lower world. He is a God, too, Who giveth no account of His matters. He makes His creatures just what He chooses to make them and does with them just as He wills. If any of them resent His acts, He saith unto them, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom 9:20-21). God is good; but God is *sovereign*, absolute, knowing nothing that can control Him. The monarchy of this world is no constitutional and limited monarchy. It is not tyrannical, but it is absolutely in the hands of an all-wise God. But mark, it is in no hands but His... This is the God of the Bible. This is the God Whom we adore. No weak, pusillanimous³ God Who is controlled by the will of men, Who cannot steer the bark⁴ of providence; but a God unalterable, infinite, unerring. This is the God we worship: A God as infinitely above His creatures as the highest thought can fly, and higher still than that.

But, again, the God Who is here mentioned is a God of infinite justice. That He is a sovereign God, I prove from the words that He "hath made" Christ to be sin. He could not have done it if He had not been sovereign. That He is a just God, I infer from my text, seeing that the way of salvation is a great plan of satisfying justice. And we now declare that the God of Holy Scripture is a God of inflexible justice. He is not the god whom some of you adore. You adore a god who winks at great sins. You believe in a god who calls your crimes peccadilloes⁵ and little faults. Some of you worship a god who does not punish sin, but who is so weakly merciful and so mercilessly weak that he passes by transgression and iniquity and never enacts a punishment. You believe in a god who, if man sins, does not demand punishment for his offense. You think that a few good works of your own will pacify him, that he is so weak a ruler that a few good words uttered before him in prayer will win sufficient merit to reverse the sentence, if, indeed, you think he ever passes a sentence at all. Your god is *no* God... The God of the Bible is as severe as if He were unmerciful, and as just as if He were not

³ **pusillanimous** – lacking courage.

⁴ **bark** – small ship.

⁵ **peccadilloes** – small sins or faults.

gracious; yet He is as gracious and as merciful as if He were not just—yea, more so. And one more thought here concerning God, or else we cannot establish our discourse upon a sure basis.

The God Who is here mentioned is a God of grace. Think not that I am now contradicting myself! The God Who is inflexibly severe and never pardons sin without punishment is yet a God of illimitable⁶ love. Although as a Ruler He will chastise, yet, as the Father-God, He loveth to bestow His blessing. “As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live” (Eze 33:11). God is love in its highest degree. He is love rendered more than love. Love is not God, but God *is* love. He is full of grace; He is the plenitude⁷ of mercy; He delighteth in mercy. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are His thoughts of love above our thoughts of despair, and His ways of grace above our ways of fear. This God, in Whom these three great attributes harmonize—illimitable sovereignty, inflexible justice, and unfathomable grace—these three make up the main attributes of the one God of heaven and earth Whom Christians worship. It is *this* God before Whom we must appear. It is He Who has made Christ to be sin for us, though He knew no sin. Thus, we have brought the first person before you.

2. THE SECOND PERSON OF OUR TEXT IS THE SON OF GOD—Christ, Who knew no sin. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds: begotten, not made; being of the same substance with the Father, co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent. Is the Father Almighty? So is the Son Almighty. Is the Father infinite? So is the Son infinite. He is very God of very God: having a dignity not inferior to the Father, but being equal to Him in every respect—God over all, blessed for evermore (Rom 9:5)! Jesus Christ also is the son of Mary, a man like unto ourselves; a man subject to all the infirmities of human nature, except the infirmities of sin; a man of suffering and of woe, of pain and trouble, of anxiety and fear, of trouble and of doubt, of temptation and of trial, of weakness and death. He is a man just as we are—bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

Now, the Person we wish to introduce to you is this complex being: God and man. Not God *humanized*, not man *deified*; but God, purely, essentially God; man, purely man; man, not more than man; God, not less than God—the two standing in a sacred union together: the God-Man...Our text says that He knew no sin. It does

⁶ **illimitable** – impossible to limit.

⁷ **plenitude** – full supply.

not say that He *did* not sin. That we know. But it says more than that: He did not *know* sin. He knew not what sin was. He saw it in others, but He did not know it by experience. He was a perfect stranger to it. It is not barely said that He did not take sin into His heart, but *He did not know it*. It was no acquaintance of His. He was the acquaintance of grief, but He was not the acquaintance of sin. He knew no sin of any kind—no sin of thought; no sin of birth—no original, no actual transgression; no sin of lip or of hand did ever Christ commit. He was pure, perfect, spotless, like His own divinity: without spot, blemish, or any such thing. This gracious Person is He Who is spoken of in the text...Now I have to introduce the third person. We will not go far for him.

3. THE THIRD PERSON IS THE SINNER. And where is he? Will you turn your eyes within you and look for him, each one of you? He is not very far from you. He has been a drunkard: he has committed drunkenness, reveling,⁸ and such like. We know that the man who committeth these things hath no inheritance in the kingdom of God. There is another: he has taken God's name in vain...Ah! *There* is the sinner. Where is he? I hear that man with tearful eye and with sobbing voice exclaim, "Sir, he is here!" Methinks I see some woman here in the midst of us. Some of us have accused her perhaps, and she standeth alone trembling and saith not a word for herself. Oh! That the Master might say, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (Joh 8:11). I believe, I must believe, that somewhere amongst these many thousands, I hear some palpitating heart. And that heart, as it beats so hurriedly crieth, "Sin, sin, sin, wrath, wrath, wrath—how can I get deliverance?" Ah! *Thou* art the man—a born rebel. Born into the world a sinner, thou hast added to thy native guilt thine own transgressions. Thou hast broken the commandments of God, thou hast despised God's love, thou hast trampled on His grace, thou hast gone on hitherto until now—the arrow of the Lord is drinking up thy spirit. God hath made thee tremble. He hath made thee to confess thy guilt and thy transgression. Hear me, then, if your convictions are the work of God's Spirit: you are the person intended in the text, when it says, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we"—that is, *you*—"might be made the righteousness of God in him."

I have introduced the persons, and now I must introduce you to a scene of a *great exchange* that is made according to the text. The third person whom we have introduced is the prisoner at the bar.

⁸ **reveling** – drinking parties involving unrestrained indulgence in alcoholic beverages and accompanying immoral behavior.

God has called him as a sinner before [Himself]. He is about to be tried for life or death. God is gracious, and He desires to save him. God is just, and He must punish him. The sinner is to be tried. If there be a verdict of guilty brought in against him, how will the two conflicting attributes work in God's mind? He is loving; He wants to save him. He is just; he must destroy him! How shall this mystery be solved and the riddle be solved? Prisoner at the bar, canst thou plead "Not guilty?" He stands speechless; or, if he speaks, he cries, "I *am* guilty!"

Then, you see, if he has pleaded guilty himself, there is no hope of there being any flaw in the evidence. Even if he had pleaded "not guilty," yet the evidence is most clear. God the Judge has seen his sin and recorded all his iniquities, so that there would be no hope of his escaping. The prisoner is sure to be found guilty. How can he escape? Is there a flaw in the indictment? No! It is drawn up by infinite wisdom and dictated by eternal justice. There is no hope there...How then shall the prisoner at the bar escape? Is there *any* possibility? Oh! How did heaven wonder! How did the stars stand still with astonishment! How did the angels stay their songs a moment, when for the first time, God showed how He might be just and yet be gracious! Oh! I think I see heaven *astonished* and silence in the courts of God for the space of an hour, when the Almighty said, "Sinner, I must and will punish thee on account of sin! But I love thee; the bowels of my love yearn over thee...My justice says, 'Smite'; but my love stays my hand, and says, 'Spare, spare the sinner!' Oh! Sinner, my heart hath devised it! My Son, the pure and perfect shall stand in thy stead and be accounted guilty; and thou, the guilty, shall stand in my Son's stead and be accounted righteous!"

It would make us leap upon our feet in astonishment if we did but understand this thoroughly—the wonderful mystery of the transposition⁹ of Christ and the sinner! Let me put it so plainly that everyone can understand: Christ was spotless; sinners were vile. Says Christ, "My Father, treat me as if *I* were a sinner. Treat the sinner as if he were *Me*. Smite as sternly as Thou pleasest, for I will bear it. Thus, the [heart] of Thy love may overflow with grace, and yet Thy justice be unsullied,¹⁰ for the sinner is no sinner now." He stands in Christ's stead; and with the Savior's garments on, he is accepted.

⁹ **transposition** – reversal of order.

¹⁰ **unsullied** – spotless.

Do you say that such an exchange as this is *unjust*? Will you say that God should not have made His Son a substitute for us and have let us go? Let me remind you, it was purely *voluntary* on the part of Christ. Christ was willing to stand in our stead. He had to drink the cup of our punishment, but He was quite willing to do it. Let me tell you yet one more unanswerable thing: the substitution of Christ was not an unlawful thing because the *sovereign God* made Him a substitute...the substitution was made by the highest authority. The text says, God “hath made him to be sin for us,” and inasmuch as Christ did stand in my room, place, and stead, He did not make the exchange unlawfully. It was with the full determinate counsel of Almighty God, as well as with His own consent that Christ stood in the sinner’s place, as the sinner doth now in Christ’s place...the sinner is treated as if he were Christ, and Christ is treated as if He were the sinner. That is what is meant by the text, “[God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Let me just give you [an illustration] of this...taken from the Old Testament. When, of old, men did come before God with sin, God provided a sacrifice that should be the representative of Christ, inasmuch as the sacrifice died instead of the sinner. The Law ran, “He that sins shall die.” When men had committed sin, they brought a bullock or a sheep before the altar. They put their hand on the bullock’s head and acknowledged their guilt. By that deed, their guilt was typically removed from themselves to the bullock. Then the poor bullock, which had done no wrong, was slaughtered and cast out as a sin offering, which God had rejected. That is what every sinner must do with Christ if he is to be saved. A sinner by faith comes and puts his hand on Christ’s head. Confessing all his sin, it is not his any longer: it is put on *Christ*. Christ hangs upon the tree. He bears the cross and endures the shame; and so the sin is all gone and cast into the depths of the sea...Now, whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath peace with God because “he hath made Christ to be sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Now, I shall have finished the explanation of the text when I just bid you remember the consequences of this great substitution. Christ was made sin. We are made the righteousness of God. It was in the past, long further back than the memory of angels can reach...An eternal covenant was formed between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son did stipulate to suffer for His elect. The Father on His part did covenant to justify them through the Son. Oh, wondrous covenant, thou art the source of all the streams of

atonement love! Eternity rolled on, time came, and with it soon came the Fall. When many years had run their round, the fullness of time arrived; and Jesus prepared to fulfill His solemn engagement. He came into the world and was made a man. From that moment, when He became a man, mark the change that was wrought in Him. Before, He had been entirely happy. He had never been miserable, never sad. But now as the effects of that terrible covenant that He had made with God, His Father begins to pour wrath upon Him.

“What!” you say, “Does God actually account His Son to be a sinner?” Yes, He does. His Son agreed to be the Substitute, to stand in the sinner’s stead. God begins with Him at His birth. He puts Him in a manger. If He had considered Him as a perfect man, He would have provided Him a throne. But considering Him as a sinner, He subjects Him to woe and poverty from beginning to end. Now, see Him grown to manhood: See Him—griefs pursue Him; sorrows follow Him. Griefs, why follow ye the Perfect? Why pursue ye the Immaculate?¹¹ Justice, why dost thou not drive these griefs away?...The answer comes: “This Man is pure in Himself, but He has made Himself impure by taking His people’s sin.” Guilt is imputed to Him, and the very imputation of guilt brings grief with all its reality. At last, I see death coming with more than its usual horrors. I see the grim skeleton with his dart well sharpened. I see behind him, Hell. I mark the grim prince of darkness and all the avengers uprising from their place of torment. I see them all besetting the Savior. I notice their terrible war upon Him in the garden. I note Him, as He lies there wallowing in His blood in fearful soul-death. I see Him as in grief and sorrow. He walks to Pilate’s bar. I see Him mocked and spit upon. I behold Him tormented, maltreated, and blasphemed. I see Him nailed to the cross! I behold the mocking continued, and the shame unabated.¹² I mark Him shrieking for water, and I hear Him complaining of the forsakings of God! I am astonished! Can this be *just* that a perfect being should suffer thus?—Oh, God, where art Thou, that Thou canst thus permit the oppression of the innocent? Hast thou ceased to be King of Justice? Else, why dost Thou not shield the perfect One? The answer comes: “Be still. He is perfect in Himself, but *He* is the sinner now. He stands in the sinner’s stead. The sinner’s guilt is on Him; therefore, it is right, it is just, it is what He hath Himself agreed to that He should be punished as if He were a

¹¹ **immaculate** – spotless; undefiled; in the case of Christ, free from original sin.

¹² **unabated** – continuing at full strength.

sinner, that He should be frowned upon, that He should die, and that He should descend to Hades unblessed, uncomforted, unhelped, unhonored, and unowned. This was one of the effects of the Great Exchange that Christ made.

Now, take the other side of the question, and I have done with explanation. What was the effect on us? Do you see that sinner there dabbling his hand in lust, defiling his garments with every sin the flesh had ever indulged in? Do you hear him cursing God? Do you mark him breaking every ordinance that God hath rendered sacred? But do you see him in a little season pursuing his way to heaven? He has renounced these sins. He has been converted and has forsaken them. He is going on the way to heaven! Justice, art thou asleep? That man has broken thy Law! Is *he* to go to heaven? Hark, how the fiends come rising from the pit and cry, "That man deserves to be lost! He may not be now what he used to be, but his past sins must have vengeance!" And, yet there he goes safely on his way to heaven, and I see him looking back on all the fiends that accuse him. He cries out, "Behold, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom 8:33). And when one would think all hell would be up in arms and accuse, the grim tyrant lieth still. The fiends have naught to say! I see him turning his face heavenward to the throne of God and hear him cry, "Who is he that condemneth?" ...Oh! Justice, where art thou? This man has been a sinner, a rebel. Why not *smite* him to the dust... "Nay," says Justice, "he hath been a sinner, but I do not look upon him in that light now. I have punished Christ instead of him. That sinner is no sinner now: he is perfect." How? Perfect? *Perfect*, because Christ was perfect. I look upon him as if he were Christ ...This is the grand result to sinners of the Great Exchange.

From a sermon delivered on Sabbath morning, July 19, 1857, at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.



O blessed Lord! Upon my first believing and closing with Jesus Christ, Thou didst justify me in the court of glory from all my sins, both as to guilt and punishment. Upon my first act of believing, Thou didst pardon all my sins; Thou didst forgive all my iniquities; Thou didst blot out all my transgressions; and as upon my first believing Thou didst give me the remission of all my sins, so upon my first believing thou didst free me from a state of condemnation, and interest me in the great salvation. Upon my first believing, I was united to Jesus Christ, and I was clothed with the righteousness of Christ, which covered all my sins and discharged me from all my transgressions. Remember, O Lord, that at the very moment of my dissolution Thou didst really, perfectly, universally, and finally forgive all my sins.—*Thomas Brooks*

CHRIST'S PENAL WORK

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

SCRIPTURE plainly teaches that God is both holy and righteous, and that “justice and judgment”—not “love and pity”—are the establishment of God’s “throne” (Psa 89:14). Thus, there is that in the divine Essence that abhors sin for its intrinsic¹ sinfulness, both in its respect of pollution and in its aspect of guilt. The perfections of God are therefore displayed by both forbidding and punishing the same. He has pledged Himself that “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4). Therefore, in order for a full satisfaction to be rendered unto God, sin must be punished; the penalty of the Law must be enforced. Consequently, as Savior of His Church, Christ had to suffer vicariously the infliction of the Law’s curse.

What we shall now seek to show is that the sufferings and death of Christ were a satisfaction to divine justice on behalf of the sins of His people. In case any should object against our use of the term *satisfaction*, let us point out that this very word is found in our English Bibles, being given by the translators as the equivalent for the Hebrew word that is ordinarily rendered *atonement*: “Moreover ye shall take no *satisfaction*² for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall surely be put to death. And ye shall take no *satisfaction* for him that is fled to the city of his refuge, that he should come again to dwell in the land, until the death of the priest” (Num 35:31-32).

The deep humiliation to which the Son of God was subjected in taking upon Him the form of a servant and being made “in the likeness of sin’s flesh,” was a judicial infliction imposed upon Him by the Father, yet voluntarily submitted to by Himself. The very purpose of His humiliation, His obedience, and His sufferings makes them penal,³ for they were unto the satisfying of the claims of God’s Law upon His people. In being “made under the law” (Gal 4:4), Christ became subject to all that the Law enjoins: “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law” (Rom 3:19), which means the Law calls for the fulfillment of its terms. “Christ, in *our room* and stead, did both by

¹ **intrinsic** – belonging to something as a basic and essential feature of what it is.

² **satisfaction** – Hebrew = *kopher*.

³ **penal** – subject to punishment under the law.

doing and suffering satisfy divine justice...the legislative, the retributive, and the vindictive⁴ in the most perfect manner, fulfilling all the righteousness of the Law, which the Law otherwise required of us in order to impunity⁵ and to our having a right to eternal life.”⁶

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18). The reference here must not be restricted to what Christ endured at the hands of God while He hung upon the cross, nor to all He passed through during that day and preceding night. Beware of limiting the Word of God! No. The *entirety* of His humiliation is here included. *The whole life of Christ was one of sufferings.* Therefore was He designated “the Man of sorrows,” not simply, “sorrow.” From His birth to His death, suffering and sorrow marked Him as their legitimate victim. While yet an infant, He was driven into exile to escape the fury of those who sought His life. That was but the prophetic forerunner of His whole earthly course. The cup of woe, put to His lips at Bethlehem, was never removed until He drained its bitter dregs at Calvary.

He experienced every variety of suffering. He tasted *poverty* in its severest rigor. Born in a stable, owning no property on earth, dependent upon the charity of others (Luk 8:3), oftentimes being worse situated than the inferior orders of creation (Mat 8:20). He suffered reproach in all its bitterness. The most malignant⁷ accusations, the vilest aspersions,⁸ the most cutting sarcasm were directed against His person and character. He was taunted with being a glutton, a winebibber,⁹ a deceiver, a blasphemer, a devil. Therefore do we hear Him crying, “Reproach hath broken my heart” (Psa 69:20). He experienced temptation in all its malignity. The prince of darkness assailed Him with all his ingenuity and power, causing his infernal legions to attack Him, coming against Him like “strong bulls of Bashan,” gaping on Him with their mouths like ravening and roaring lions (Psa 22:12-13). Above all, He suffered the wrath of God, so that He was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Mat 26:38), in “an agony” (Luk 22:44), and ultimately, “forsaken of God.”

⁴ **legislatory...retributive...vindictive** – the legal, punishing, vengeful aspects of justice.

⁵ **impunity** – freedom from punishment.

⁶ Herman Witsius (1636-1708), *The Economy of the Covenants between God and Man*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Thomas Turnbull), 207.

⁷ **malignant** – extremely wicked.

⁸ **aspersions** – slanders; attacks on someone's character.

⁹ **winebibber** – one who habitually drinks too much wine or alcoholic beverage.

What then is the explanation of these unparalleled “sufferings”? Why was the most perfect obedience followed by the most terrible punishment? Why was unsullied holiness visited with unutterable anguish? David declared, “Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken” (Psa 37:25). *Why* then was the Righteous One abandoned by God? Only one answer is possible. Only one answer fully meets all the facts of the case. Only one answer clears the government of God. In taking the place of offending sinners, *Christ became obligated to discharge all their liabilities*. This involved bearing *their* sins, being charged with *their* guilt, suffering *their* punishment. Accordingly, God dealt with Him as the representative of His criminal people, inflicting upon Him all that their sins merited. As the sin-bearing substitute of His people, Christ was justly exposed to all the dreadful consequences of God’s manifested displeasure.

Of old the question was asked, “Who *ever* perished being innocent?” (Job 4:7), to which we may without the slightest hesitation answer, “None.” God never has and never will smite the innocent. Therefore, before His punitive wrath could fall upon Christ, the sins of His people must first be transferred to Him, and this is precisely what Scripture affirms. Remarkably was this foreshadowed of old in the great type of Israel’s annual Day of Atonement: “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon 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 upon the head of the goat” (Lev 16:21). So too was it plainly prophesied, “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...he bare the sin of many” (Isa 53:6, 12). So also is it expressly affirmed in the New Testament, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb 9:28). Once again we would point out there is not a hint in these passages that Christ bore the sins of His people only while He was hanging upon the cross. We are aware that many have so affirmed, but in doing so they have not only been guilty of adding to the Word of God, but also of flatly contradicting it.

We have already pointed out that the expression of Romans 8:3, made “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” clearly presupposes the transfer of His people’s sins to Christ, and that what happened immediately after His birth was in full keeping with this fact and cannot be understood apart from it. That He was “circumcised” (Luk 2:21) not only proved that He had been “made in the likeness of men” (Phi 2:7), but also evidenced that He had been made “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” So too the ceremonial “purification” of His mother (Luk 2:22) and her presentation of a “sin-offering” (Lev 12:2, 6) was in perfect keeping with the fact that, though His

humanity was immaculate, yet He had entered this world officially guilty.

As little children, we sinned—"the wicked are estranged¹⁰ from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Psa 58:3)—and therefore as a child Christ suffered. [He] suffered not only as our Substitute, but because our sins had been transferred to Him. In our youth, we sinned; and as a youth Christ suffered, and suffered at the hands of God as His own words clearly testify: "I am afflicted and ready to die from youth up: I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted" (Psa 88:15). In the prime of our manhood, we sinned; and in the prime of His manhood, Christ suffered. Let us refer once more to His being assailed by Satan. Hebrews 2:18 tells us that He "suffered being tempted," and that very suffering was penal. That Christ's "suffering" under Satan was designed and appointed as an infliction from God is proved by the statement that "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Mat 4:1).

Man having allowed himself to be overcome by Satan, God has by a just sentence delivered him up as a slave to his tyranny. Therefore was it necessary that Christ, as His sinful people's substitute, should be exposed to the harrassings of the devil, that in this respect also He might satisfy divine justice. Most assuredly Satan and his agents could never have assailed Christ had He not been so (legally) charged with the guilt of our crimes that God righteously exposed Him to injuries from them (Act 2:23). The elect themselves, as sinners, were subject to Satan's power (Col 1:13), and that by the righteous sentence of the Judge of all the earth. Therefore were they not only the "prey of the mighty," but also were "lawful captives" (Isa 49:24). Therefore, as Christ came here as Surety in their room, He, by virtue of God's sentence, also became subject to the buffetings of Satan.

"Christ's passive or suffering obedience is not to be confined to what He experienced in the garden and on the cross. This suffering was the culmination of His piacular¹¹ sorrow, but not the whole of it. Everything in His human and earthly career that was distressing belongs to His passive obedience. It is a true remark of Jonathan Edwards that the blood of Christ's circumcision was as really a part of His vicarious atonement as the blood that flowed from His pierced side. And not only His suffering proper, but His

¹⁰ **estranged** – turned aside.

¹¹ **piacular** – making atonement for sin.

humiliation also was expiatory.”¹² “The satisfaction or propitiation¹³ of Christ consists either in His suffering evil, or His being subject to abasement¹⁴... Whatever Christ was subject to, which was the judicial fruit of sin, had the nature of satisfaction for sin. But not only proper suffering, but all abasement and depression of the state and circumstances of mankind (human nature) below its primitive honor and dignity (such as His body remaining under death, and body and soul remaining separate) are the judicial fruits of sin.”¹⁵

When the Scriptures speak of the satisfaction of Christ, they ascribe it to His sufferings in general. “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa 53:4), that is, He suffered all the pains and sorrows due to us from sin. It is to be most carefully noted that the inspired declaration “the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6) comes before “He was oppressed” and before “he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.” It was at the commencement of His public ministry, and not while He hung upon the cross, that God moved one of His servants to cry, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). Christ was brought “to the slaughter” before the three hours of darkness, yet even then “affliction” lay upon Him; and our iniquity was exacted of Him. So too this very chapter (Isa 53) ascribes our “healing” to the stripes that He received from men, as plainly as other passages attribute our being delivered from the curse of the Law through God’s visiting Him with its curse.

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example” (1Pe 2:21). “To *suffer* here denotes to be in affliction; for all those sufferings are here intended in which Christ has left us an example of patience. These sufferings He affirms to be for us, that is, undergone as well in our stead as for our good. For this is ordinarily the signification of the [Greek] word *huper*...And that this is the true meaning of Peter, we conclude

¹² William Greenough Thayer Shedd (1828-1894), *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 2 (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1891), 430.

¹³ **expiatory...propitiation** – “Expiation has reference to the *guilt* of sin. To expiate is to remove or cover the guilt of sin. Propitiation has reference to the wrath or displeasure of God. To propitiate is to satisfy the divine justice and thus to appease His wrath. In the Biblical usage of the term, the justice of God is satisfied by the propitiatory sacrifice.” (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

¹⁴ **abasement** – humiliation.

¹⁵ Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), “A History of the Work of Redemption” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 1 (Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust), 574.

hence, that in 3:18 he says, 'Christ suffered *for sins*,' namely, that He might be 'the propitiation for our sins' (1Jo 4:10)."¹⁶

When the sovereign rights of God are emphasized, there is generally raised the objection that we are hereby "reducing man to a mere machine." Many are they who are prepared to hold a brief¹⁷ for human responsibility. But rare indeed is it that we ever hear anything about *transferred* responsibility. Yet, at this point lies one of the chief wonders and glories of the gospel. The responsibility of God's people was transferred to Christ: He assumed their liabilities, made Himself chargeable with their debts, *answerable to every demand of the Law against them*. Had this not been the case, how could God have righteously laid the iniquities of His people upon the head of His Holy Son? Still less could He have called for the sword of justice to smite Him. It was because Christ was "made sin" for us that He was also "made a curse" for us: the latter could not be without the former. As this is a point of such vital importance, we must amplify a little further.

Hebrews 7:22 declares that Christ is Surety of a better covenant: He was the Sponsor of His people, as Judah undertook to be for Benjamin. "I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him: if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever" (Gen 43:9). Or, as Paul was for Onesimus, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it" (Phm 1:18-19). Just so did Christ engage Himself unto His Father for us: "Reckon to Me whatever they owe Thee, and I will satisfy for it." "A surety, whose name is put into a bond,¹⁸ is not only bound to pay the debt, but he makes it his own debt also, even as well as it is the principal's, so that he may be sued and charged for the debt. So Christ, when He once made Himself a Surety, He so put Himself in the room of sinners, that what the Law could lay to their charge, it might lay to His."¹⁹

Christ must take on Him the guilt of our transgressions before He could take our punishment upon Him, and so satisfy divine justice on our behalf. That He did so is demonstrated by His own words. It is indeed remarkable to find how that Christ actually owned our sins as being *His*. First, in the 40th Psalm: That this Psalm is Messianic, we know from its quotation in Hebrews 10.

¹⁶ Witsius, *Economy*, Vol. 1, 219.

¹⁷ **hold a brief** – to express oneself like an advocate rather than an unbiased person.

¹⁸ **bond** – certificate of debt.

¹⁹ Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), "Of Christ the Mediator" in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, Vol. 5 (repr., Eureka, CA: Tanski, 1996), 184.

That it contains the very words of Christ is plainly evident from verses 7-11. He is still the speaker in verse 12, where He declared “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.” What a proof that the sins of His people had been transferred to Him! Second, in the 69th, another great Messianic Psalm: There too we find Him saying, “O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee” (v. 5). How unmistakably do those words show our sins had been reckoned to Him! Those sins were His not by perpetration,²⁰ but by imputation.²¹

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on [to] the tree” (1Pe 2:24). “ ‘Our sins’ here are our liabilities to punishment on account of our violations of the divine Law and the necessary consequences of those liabilities; in other words, guilt in the sense of binding over to punishment, and punishment itself.”²² ...In entering the Law-place of His people, Christ became answerable to the righteousness of God on their behalf. Whatever they owed must be exacted from their Sponsor: He must pay their debts, suffer the full penalty of their iniquities, and receive sin’s wages in their room. Christ now became exposed to all that the holiness of God must inflict upon sin. Therefore we read, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal 3:13). “The cross was accursed, not only in the opinion of men, but by the decree of the divine Law. Therefore when Christ was lifted up upon it, He rendered Himself obnoxious to the curse.”²³

The very mode of death that God appointed for His Son reveals to us the penal nature of it. The cross was no mere “accident,” as though it made no difference what form His death took. Fundamental reasons rendered it expedient and necessary that the Surety should die a death that was accursed of God; hence, the frequent reference in the New Testament to the “cross” and the “tree” (*cf.* Joh 12:32-33). At Calvary, God’s terrible curse on sin was publicly displayed, of which the cross was not the cause but the *symbol* (*cf.* Joh 3:14). Under the Mosaic Law (to which the Apostle refers in Galatians 3:13), hanging on a tree was a death reserved for great criminals. Hence, the force of the word *tree* in 1 Peter 2:24. Christ

²⁰ **perpetration** – the act of committing or performing.

²¹ **imputation** – being charged to one’s account.

²² John Brown of Edinburgh (1784-1854), *The First Epistle of Peter*, Vol. 1 (Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 523.

²³ John Calvin (1509-1564), *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II, xvi, 6.

hanging upon the tree was the public testimony to God's *curse* on Him. "The cause of the curse was not the hanging on the tree, but the sin with which He was charged. That mode of punishment exhibited that He was the object of God's holy displeasure, not indeed because He was suspended on the tree, but because He was the sin-bearer. The punishment of the offenses for which that ignominious²⁴ penalty was allotted was then inflicted. Divine wisdom appointed that He Who bore the sin of the world should be exposed as a curse, for the divine displeasure was there most awfully displayed."²⁵

As to why this means and method of death was selected by God out of all others possible—poisoning, stoning, beheading, etc.—Genesis 3 supplies the answer: "As the fatal sin which diffused the curse over the human race was connected with the forbidden 'tree,' God wisely ordered that the last Adam should expiate sin by being suspended on a tree; and He appointed in the Law (Deu 21:22-23) such a symbol of the curse as reminded all men of the origin of the divine curse on the world. He would not have the curse removed in any other way."²⁶ Among the Romans, death by crucifixion was the deepest possible humiliation. It was the most degrading of punishments, inflicted only on slaves and the lowest of the people. If freemen were at any time subjected to crucifixion for great crimes, such as robbery, high treason, or sedition, the sentence could not be executed until they were put into the catalogue of slaves, and that by the utmost humiliation. Their liberty was taken from them by servile stripes²⁷ and scourging, as was done to Christ. Thus, the curse of God's Law was executed upon the Head and Substitute of His people. To "preach Christ crucified" (1Co 1:23) is to proclaim and expound His being "made a curse for us."

Because Christ was "made sin" and "made a curse" for His people, the wrath of God's holiness flamed against Him and the sword of His justice pierced Him. "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd" (Zec 13:7; *cf.* Mat 26:31). God inflicted punishment on Christ as if He had been the personal offender. "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (Isa 53:10). As

²⁴ **ignominious** – marked by shame or disgrace.

²⁵ George Smeaton (1814-1889), *The Doctrine of the Atonement as Taught by the Apostles* (Carlisle, Penn.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 14.

²⁶ Smeaton, *Atonement*, 15.

²⁷ **servile stripes** – marks and wounds on the back of a slave from a whip.

all the sufferings of men, whether inflicted immediately²⁸ by God or mediately²⁹ by Satan or men (Jer 2:15-17), arise from the demerits of sin, so all the sufferings of Christ—from man, Satan, God—arose from the demerits of His peoples' sins imputed to their Substitute.

The punishment that God meted out to Christ was the very punishment that was due His people. That He was accursed of God is seen from His hanging on the tree. That He received sin's wages was evidenced by God's forsaking Him. That He was numbered with transgressors was exhibited by His dying between two thieves. True, He did not suffer eternally, for the eternity of our punishment was only a circumstance arising from our incapacity to suffer the whole weight of God's wrath in a brief season, and therefore the brevity of duration of Christ's sufferings is no valid objection against the identity of penalty that He received. Moreover, the infinite dignity of His Person more than compensated the Law. "To the enlightened eye, there is found on the cross another inscription besides that which Pilate ordered to be written there: THE VICTIM OF GUILT. THE WAGES OF SIN."³⁰

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The death of Christ on the cross, it was a bitter death, a sorrowful death, a bloody death. The bitter thoughts of His sufferings put Him into a most dreadful agony: "Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luk 22:44)...The things that our Savior strove against were not only the terror of death, as other men are wont to do—for then many Christians and martyrs might have seemed more constant and courageous than He—but with *the terrible justice of God*, pouring out His high anger and indignation upon Him on the account of all the sins of His chosen that were laid upon Him, than which nothing could be more dreadful (Isa 53:4-6). Christ was in a vehement conflict in His soul, through the deepest sense of His Father's wrath against sinners, for whom He now stood as a Surety and Redeemer. And for a close of this particular, let me say that God's justice, that we have provoked, being fully satisfied by the inestimable merit of Christ's passion, is the surest and highest ground of consolation that we have in this world.—*Thomas Brooks*

²⁸ **immediately** – directly, without the help of someone or something.

²⁹ **mediately** – indirectly, by the use of means.

³⁰ Brown, *First Peter*, Vol. 2, 143.

AN ENTIRE PARDON

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.”

—Zechariah 13:1

WE have already...remarked upon the incompetency of natural reason to understand spiritual truth: neither the nature, the harmony, or the end of divine truth can it discern. This incapacity may be traced, not to a deficiency of mental endowment or to the extreme abstruseness¹ of revelation—for the weakest intellect enlightened and sanctified by the Spirit of God may grasp the profoundest doctrine in the great system of theology, so far as the revelation of that doctrine extends—but to the *want*² of a *spiritually-renewed mind*. This is the cause and this only...It follows then as a self-evident truth that the mind must be changed, and changed by God Himself, before divine truth will either be understood or received. Hence, we find the Apostle, in behalf of the Ephesian Christians, thus praying: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Eph 1:17-18).

Of all the doctrines of the gospel, thus dark and inexplicable to an unrenewed mind, is the doctrine of Christ’s Atonement in its especial and gracious design. This can only be understood by a mind *awakened* to the nature and turpitude³ of sin. As the expiation of sin was the great design of Christ’s wondrous death, so no individual thus ignorant of sin, however vast his mental powers and however firm his belief in the truth of divine revelation, can discover and welcome this truth...It is to this natural darkness, this ignorance of sin, this want of the Spirit’s teaching that we are to attribute all the false and erroneous views that men have advanced touching the nature and design of Christ’s death.

It is our solemn belief that all error in theology, especially that which undermines the Atonement, has its rise in the setting aside

¹ **abstruseness** – the quality of being difficult to understand.

² **want** – lack.

³ **turpitude** – corruption; moral perversion.

the Law of God. Let the Law be fully recognized in its divine authority, its inflexible dignity, and its spotless purity; let its condemnatory sentence be felt in the soul; let all hope of justification⁴ by its obedience be swept away; and let the sinner stand forth in the full blaze of its terrors—then will be seen the absolute *necessity* of an Atonement, precisely such an Atonement as the adorable Redeemer offered upon the cross. No individual then, taught by the Spirit, Who is emphatically designated “The Spirit of *Truth*,” made to see the exceeding sinfulness of sin as against a holy God, emptied of all self-sufficiency, the eye open to the inward plague and laid prostrate in the dust as a poor, broken-hearted sinner—no individual thus taught would ever affirm that Jesus died with any other design than that for which He *did* die: *to offer to divine Justice a full and infinite satisfaction for sin*. This brings us to the immediate discussion of the subject.

May we feel that the ground on which we now stand is holy. If there be a subject, the consideration of which we should approach with caution, humility, and prayer, it is this. May our hearts be lifted up to God for the teachings of His Spirit, Whose blessed office in the economy of grace is to glorify Christ: Taking of the things that belong to Him and showing them to the soul (Joh 16:14). O for His holy anointing while we treat of this stupendous subject—*Christ presenting Himself a sacrifice for sin!* For the purpose of presenting the subject clearly before the mind of the reader, we shall first adduce⁵ those prominent portions of God’s Word that declare the end and design of Christ’s death to be an Atonement for sin. It will then be appropriate to show that the atonement of Christ is *a full and entire blotting out of the sins of His people...*

The Word of God, the only rule of faith and duty, distinctly and invariably represents the death of Jesus as a *sacrifice* and the especial and gracious design of that sacrifice: *an atonement*⁶ *for sin*. If this is denied, how are we to interpret the following remarkable passages? “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed...the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:5-6). “For this is my blood of the

⁴ **justification** – Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism*, Q. 32)

⁵ **adduce** – bring forward for consideration.

⁶ **atonement** – *literally* “at-one-ment”; the condition of being *at one* with another; theologically, atonement means reconciliation with God by removing or covering the guilt of sin; this was accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mat 26:28). “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1Pe 1:18-19). “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:13-14). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). How perfectly unintelligible are these declarations of God’s Word if we regard them not as so many affirmations of the great doctrine in question! Let not the reader turn away from God’s Word. If he be a disbeliever in the doctrine of Christ’s vicarious sufferings, let him be cautious how he tampers with these solemn declarations. They affirm the doctrine of the Atonement or nothing at all. They possess no meaning if interpreted in any other light. Recur⁷ again to the amazing expressions: “Wounded for our *transgressions*.” “Bruised for our *iniquities*.” On Him the “*iniquity* of us all.” “Blood shed for the remission of *sins*.” “Died for the *ungodly*.” “Made *sin*.” “Through his blood the forgiveness of *sins*.” “Propitiation for our *sins*.” What do we see here, but the atoning blood, the full satisfaction, the bearing of sin, the surety, the *substitute*?

And how shall we account for the sufferings of Christ, which were intense and mysterious, if not on the ground of their *vicarious* character? Those sufferings were intense in the extreme. There was a severity in them that, if not required by divine justice, would be perfectly unaccountable. Heaven, Earth, and Hell—all were in league against Him. Survey His eventful history: mark every step that He took from Bethlehem to Calvary. What do we learn of His sufferings, but that they were of the most extraordinary and intense character? His enemies, like dogs of war, were let loose upon Him. His professed followers themselves stood aghast at the scenes

⁷ **recur** – return in thought.

through which their Lord was passing—one betraying Him, another denying Him, and all, in the hour of His extremity, forsaking Him. Is it any wonder that in the anguish of His soul His suffering humanity should exclaim, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luk 22:42). In that awful moment, all the waves and billows of God’s wrath, due to the sins of His people, were passing over Him. The Father, the last resource of sympathy, veiled His face and withdrew from Him His sensible presence. On the cross, draining the cup of sorrow, He fulfilled the prophecy that spake of Him: “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me” (Isa 63:3).

His sufferings, too, were mysterious. Why a holy, harmless Being Whose whole life had been one act of unparalleled beneficence⁸ should be doomed to persecution so severe, to sufferings so acute, and to a death so painful and ignominious,⁹ the denier of the Atonement must be embarrassed to account. But the doctrine of a vicarious sacrifice explains it all and presents the only key to the mystery. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). All the mystery now is gone. He was “made sin for us.” He was “made a curse for us.” He bore the sin and consequently the penalty of sin. Had we been left, Christian reader, to bear our sins, we must inevitably have borne alone the punishment of our sins. But Jesus took upon Him our sins. For this, He became a party in the covenant of redemption.¹⁰ For this, He assumed our nature. For this, He sorrowed in Gethsemane. For this, the Law of God exacted its utmost claim. And for this, the justice of God inflicted the utmost penalty. O what a truth is this! The Son of God offering Himself up a sacrifice for sin! He Who knew no sin, Who was holy, harmless, and undefiled; not one thought of evil in His heart, yet made sin or a sin offering! O the bigness of the thought! If God had not Himself declared it, we could not have believed it though an angel’s trump had announced it. God Himself must proclaim it! And because He has so proclaimed it, we believe it. God alone can write it upon the heart. “O thou blessed and adorable Immanuel! Was this the end and design

⁸ **beneficence** – doing good.

⁹ **ignominious** – marked by shame and disgrace.

¹⁰ **covenant of redemption** – term used by some to describe the eternal purpose of redemption: God the Father purposed to give a people and a kingdom to His Son, and God the Son agreed to accomplish this purpose by His life, death, and resurrection.

of Thy intense and mysterious sufferings? Was it that Thou shouldest obey, bear the sin, endure the curse, and bow Thy head in death that I might go free? Was it in my stead and in my behalf? O love unexampled! O grace infinite and free! That God should become incarnate: that the Holy One should so take upon Him sin to be dealt with by stern justice, as though He were Himself the sinner; that He should drain the cup, give His back to the smiter, endure the shame and the spitting, and at last be suspended upon the cross and pour out His last drop of most precious blood—and all this for *me*, for *me* a rebel, for *me* a worm, for *me* the chief of sinners! Be astonished, O heavens! Be amazed, O earth! Was ever love like this?”

It will now be appropriate to show from God’s Word that the Atonement of the blessed Redeemer was a *full* and *entire* blotting out of the sins of the believer. Need we say aught upon the vast importance of this truth? Need we say how closely it stands connected with the peace, the sanctification, and the eternal glory of the sinner that hangs on Christ? Let not the reader be satisfied to rest upon the mere surface of the truth that Christ has made an Atonement for sin. This may be believed and yet the full blessedness, peace, and sanctification of it not enjoyed. Why? Because he enters not fully into the experience of the truth. Shall we not say, too, because his views of sin rest but on the surface of sin’s exceeding sinfulness? Deep views of sin will ever result in deep views of the sacrifice for sin: inadequate knowledge of *sin*, inadequate knowledge of *Christ*; low views of *self*, high views of *Christ*. Be satisfied then not to rest upon the surface of this wondrous truth. May God the Eternal Spirit now lead us into it!

Before we consider the completeness of Christ’s Atonement, it may be proper to glance at the *basis* or *cause* of that completeness. This arises from the infinite dignity of His Person: His Godhead forms the basis of His perfect work. It guarantees, so to speak, the glorious result of His Atonement. It was this that gave perfection to His obedience and virtue to His Atonement. It was this that made the blood He shed efficacious¹¹ in the pardon of sin, and the righteousness He wrought out complete in the justification of the soul. His entire work would have been wanting but for His Godhead. No created Savior—that dream of the Socinian¹²—could have given full satisfaction to an infinite Law broken by man and

¹¹ **efficacious** – effective.

¹² **Socinian** – a follower of the teachings of Socinus; one who rejects the deity of Christ, the Trinity, and original sin; influenced the development of Unitarian theology.

calling aloud for vengeance. How could such a sacrifice, as we would suppose a created Savior to offer, have “magnified the law, and made it honourable” (Isa 42:21)?—utterly *impossible*! A finite being had broken it—an infinite Being must repair it. Obedience was required in every respect equal in glory and dignity to the Law that was violated. The rights of the divine government must be maintained, the purity of the divine nature must be guarded, and the honor of the divine Law must be vindicated. To accomplish this, God Himself must become flesh; to carry this fully out, the incarnate God must die! O depth of wisdom and of grace! O love infinite, love rich, love free!...Stamped, as the work of Christ is, with the infinite glory and dignity of His Godhead, it will now be an easy and a delightful task to trace its perfection as it is seen first, *in the entire blotting out of all sin*, and second, *in the complete justification of the person*.

The pardon of a believer’s sins is an *entire* pardon. It is the full pardon of *all* his sins. It [would be] no pardon to him if it were not an *entire* pardon. If it were but a partial blotting out of the thick cloud, if it were but a partial cancelling of the bond,¹³ if it were but a forgiveness of *some* sins only—then the gospel were no glad tidings to his soul. The Law of God has brought him in guilty of an entire violation. The justice of God demands a satisfaction equal to the enormity of the sins committed and of the guilt incurred. The Holy Spirit has convinced him of his utter helplessness, his entire bankruptcy. What rapture would kindle in his bosom at the announcement of a *partial* atonement, of a *half* Savior, of a *part* payment of the debt? Not one throb of joyous sensation would it produce. On the contrary, this very mockery of his woe would but deepen the anguish of his spirit. But, go to the soul, weary and heavy-laden with sin, mourning over its vileness, its helplessness; and proclaim the gospel. Tell him that the Atonement that Jesus offered on Calvary was a full satisfaction for his sins. That *all* his sins were borne and blotted out in that awful moment. That the bond that divine Justice held against the sinner was *fully* cancelled by the obedience and sufferings of Christ, and that, appeased and satisfied, God was “ready to pardon.” How beautiful will be the feet that convey to him tidings so transporting as this! And are not these statements perfectly accordant¹⁴ with the declarations of God’s own Word? Let us ascertain.

¹³ **bond** – certificate of death.

¹⁴ **accordant** – in agreement.

What was the ark symbolical of, alluded to by the Apostle in the ninth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, which contained the manna, Aaron's rod, and the tables of the covenant, over which stood the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy seat? What but the entire covering of sin? For as the covering of the ark did hide the Law and Testimony, so did the Lord Jesus Christ hide the sins of His chosen, covenant people—not from the eye of God's omniscience, but from the eye of the Law. They stand legally acquitted. So entire was the work of Jesus, so infinite and satisfactory His obedience, the Law of God pronounces them acquitted—*and can never bring them into condemnation*. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom 8:1). "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died" (Rom 8:34). How could the Apostle, with any truth, have made a declaration so astounding and uttered a challenge as dauntless as this if the point we are now endeavoring to establish were not strictly as we affirm it to be?

And does not the phraseology that the Holy Ghost employs in announcing the doctrine of divine forgiveness confirm the statement we have made? "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee" (Isa 44:22). Where would be the constraining power of the motive to "return" to God, but on the ground of a full and entire blotting out of all sin? *This...subdues, overcomes, and wins back God's wandering child. This...abases the soul; deepens the conviction of its vileness; makes the sin of departure, of ingratitude, of rebellion so abhorrent, when on the broad basis of a full and free blotting out of sin, God bids the soul "return."* "I have blotted out all thy sins, therefore return. Though thou hast gone after other lovers, though thou hast departed from Me, forgotten and forsaken Me, yet have I blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions: return, for I have redeemed thee." Again, "In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found" (Jer 5:20). "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic 7:19). What an astounding truth is contained in these two passages! In the one, it is declared that if the iniquity of Israel and the sin of Judah be sought for, they shall not be found. So entire was the blotting out, so glorious was the work of Jesus, so perfect His obedience that if the eye of God's holy Law searches (and where can it not penetrate?) it cannot discover them. In the other, it is declared that so

fathomless are the depths of that sea of atoning blood, which Christ has poured out, that in it are cast, never to be found again, *all the sins* of the believer. So that the trembling soul may exclaim, “Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back” (Isa 38:17).

And who can read without deep emotion these affecting announcements by the God of heaven? Gently chiding His wayward yet beloved people, He says...“And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me” (Jer 33:8)...“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psa 103:11-12).

Look up, ye saints of God who are disconsolate¹⁵ through fear of condemnation! See all your sins charged to the account of your mighty Surety. Yea, see them all laid upon Him as your Substitute. See Him bearing them away, sinking them in the ocean of His blood, casting them behind His back. Look up and rejoice! Let not the indwelling of sin, the remains of corruption, cause you to overlook this amazing truth—*the entire blotting out of all your sins, through the atoning blood of your adorable Immanuel*. It is *truth*, and it is your privilege to live in the holy enjoyment of it. Fully received into the heart by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, its tendency will be of the most holy, sanctifying, abasing character. It will weaken the power of sin. It will draw up the heart in pantings for divine conformity. It will deaden the influence of the objects of sense, expel the love of the world and of self, impart tenderness to the conscience, and cause the soul to go softly—“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col 1:10).

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He did die. He did lay down His life. He did make His soul an offering for my sins. He did become a curse. He did endure thy infinite wrath. He did give complete satisfaction and a full compensation unto Thy justice for all my sins, debts, trespasses. *This* is my plea, O Lord! By this plea
I shall stand.—*Thomas Brooks*

¹⁵ **disconsolate** – sad beyond comforting.

SATISFACTION AND SUBSTITUTION OUTLINED

John Owen (1616-1683)

THE sum of what the Scripture reveals about this great truth, commonly called the “satisfaction of Christ,” may be reduced unto these ensuing¹ heads:

FIRST: That Adam, being made upright, sinned against God, and all mankind, all his posterity, in him: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen 1:27). “And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (Gen 3:11). “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecc 7:29). “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom 5:12, 18-19a).

SECONDLY: That, by this sin of our first parents, all men are brought into an estate of sin and apostasy from God and of enmity unto Him: “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa 51:5). “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph 4:18; *cf.* Eph 2:1; Col 2:13).

THIRDLY: That in this state all men continue in sin against God, nor of themselves can do otherwise: “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they

¹ **ensuing** – following.

are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10-12).

FOURTHLY: That the justice and holiness of God, as He is the supreme Governor and Judge of all the world, require that sin be punished: “That will by no means clear *the guilty*” (Exo 34:7). “For he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins” (Jos 24:19). “For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:² the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man” (Psa 5:4-6). “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab 1:13). “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (Isa 33:14). “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death” (Rom 1:32). “Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?” (Rom 3:5-6). “It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you” (2Th 1:6). “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb 12:29; cf. Deu 4:24).

FIFTHLY: That God hath also engaged His veracity³ and faithfulness in the sanction of the Law [so as] not to leave sin unpunished: “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them” (Deu 27:26). In this state and condition, mankind, had they been left without divine aid and help, must have perished eternally.

SIXTHLY: That God, out of His infinite goodness, grace, and love to mankind, sent His only Son to save and deliver them out of this condition: “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved” (Joh 3:16-17). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1Jo 4:9). “Herein is love, not that

² **leasing** – lies.

³ **veracity** – truthfulness.

we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1Jo 4:10). “... Even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1Th 1:10).

SEVENTHLY: That this love was the *same* in Father and Son, [carried out] distinctly in the manner that shall be afterward declared. So, vain are the pretences of men who, from the love of the Father in this matter, would argue against the love of the Son or on the contrary.

EIGHTHLY: That the way in general, whereby the Son of God being incarnate was to save lost sinners, was by *a substitution of Himself*, according to the design and appointment of God, in the room of those whom He was to save: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:7-8). “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). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1Pe 3:18). All these expressions undeniably evince⁴ a *substitution* of Christ as to suffering in the stead of them whom He was to save. [This], in general, is all that we intend by His satisfaction, namely, that He was made “sin for us,” a “curse for us,” “died for us,” that is, in our stead that we might be saved from the wrath to come...

NINTHLY: This way of His saving sinners is in particular several ways expressed in the Scripture. As,

1. **That He offered Himself a sacrifice to God to make atonement for our sins [by] His death and sufferings:** “When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin” (Isa 53:10). “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph 5:2). [He] as “a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17). “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a

⁴ **evince** – clearly display.

greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:11-14).

2. That He redeemed us by paying a price, a ransom, for our redemption: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mar 10:45). "For ye are bought with a price" (1Co 6:20; 7:23). "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time" (1Ti 2:6). "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity" (Ti 2:14). "For ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1Pe 1:18-19).

3. That He bare our sins or the punishment due unto them: "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon 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 hath laid on him the iniquity of us all...For he shall bear their iniquities" (53:5-6, 11). "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1Pe 2:24).

4. That He answered the Law and the penalty of it: "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). "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law" (Gal 4:4-5).

5. That He died for sin and sinners to expiate the one and in the stead of the other: "He was delivered for our offences" (Rom 4:25). "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom 5:10). "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1Co 15:3). "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (2Co 5:14).

6. Hence, on the part of God it is affirmed that “he spared him not, but delivered him up for us all” (Rom 8:32). [He] caused all our iniquities to meet upon Him (Isa 53:6).

7. **The effect hereof was** (1) That the righteousness of God was glorified. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins” (Rom 3:25-26). (2) The Law [was] fulfilled and satisfied, as in the places before quoted (Rom 8:3-4; Gal 3:13; 4:4-5). (3) God [was] reconciled. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:18-19). “He made reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17). (4) Atonement was made for sin: “By whom we have now received the atonement” (Rom 5:11); and peace was made with God: “For he is our peace, who hath made both one...that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph 2:14, 16). (5) [He] made an end of sin. “To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness” (Dan 9:24)...

For in that “the chastisement of our peace was upon him” and that “by his stripes we are healed,” He being punished that we might go free, [Christ] became a captain of salvation unto all that do obey Him (Heb 5:9)...These are the things that are indispensably required of us to believe that we may be able to direct and regulate our obedience according to the mind and will of God...If the Lord Christ, according to the will of the Father and by His own counsel and choice, was substituted and did substitute Himself as the Mediator of the covenant in the room and in the stead of sinners that they might be saved and therein bare their sins, or the punishment due unto their sins, by undergoing the curse and penalty of the Law, and therein also, according to the will of God, offered up Himself for a propitiatory, expiatory sacrifice to make atonement for sin and reconciliation for sinners that the justice of God being appeased and the Law fulfilled, they might go free or be delivered from the wrath to come; and if therein also He paid a real satisfactory price for their redemption then He made satisfaction to God for sin. These are the things that we intend by that expression of *satisfaction*.

From “A Brief Declaration of Vindication of The Doctrine of the Trinity” in
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GOD'S WISDOM IN CHRIST'S SUBSTITUTION

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

“To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.”
—Ephesians 3:10

THE wisdom appearing in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ is far above the wisdom of the angels. For here it is mentioned as one end of God in revealing the contrivance¹ of our salvation, that the angels thereby might see and know how great and manifold the wisdom of God is, to hold forth the divine wisdom to the angels' view and admiration...It is mentioned as a wisdom such as they had never seen before, not in God, much less in themselves. That now might be known how manifold the wisdom of God is, now four thousand years since the creation. In all that time, the angels had always beheld the face of God and had been studying God's works of creation. Yet they never, until that day, had seen anything like that, never knew how manifold God's wisdom is, as now they knew it by the Church!...

1. WE WILL CONSIDER THE CHOICE OF THE PERSON TO BE OUR REDEEMER. When God designed the redemption of mankind, His great wisdom appears in that He pitched upon² His own, His only-begotten Son to be the person to perform the work. He was a redeemer of God's own choosing, and therefore He is called in Scripture, “God's elect” (Isa 62:1). The wisdom of choosing *this* Person to be the Redeemer appears in His being every way a fit person for this undertaking. It was necessary that the person that is the redeemer should be a divine person. None but a divine person was sufficient for this great work. The work is infinitely unequal to any creature. It was requisite³ that the redeemer of sinners should be himself infinitely holy. None could take away the infinite evil of sin but one that was infinitely far from and contrary to sin himself. *Christ is a fit person upon this account.*

¹ **contrivance** – plan.

² **pitched upon** – determined.

³ **requisite** – required by the nature of things.

It was requisite that the person, in order to be sufficient for this undertaking, should be one of infinite dignity and worthiness, that he might be capable of meriting infinite blessings. *The Son of God is a fit person on this account.* It was necessary that He should be a person of infinite power and wisdom, for this work is so difficult that it requires such a one. *Christ is a fit person also upon this account.*

It was requisite that he should be a person infinitely dear to God the Father in order to give an infinite value to his transactions in the Father's esteem, and that the Father's love to him might balance the offence and provocation by our sins. *Christ is a fit person upon this account.* Therefore called "the beloved" (Eph 1:6), He hath made us accepted *in* the Beloved.

It was requisite that the person should be one that could act in this as of his own absolute right: one that in himself is not a servant or subject because if he is one that cannot act of his own right, he cannot merit anything. He that is a servant and that can do no more than he is bound to do cannot merit. And he that has nothing that is absolutely his own cannot pay any price to redeem another. Upon this account, *Christ is a fit person*, and none but a divine person can be fit. He must be a person of infinite mercy and love, for no other person but such a one would undertake a work so difficult for a creature so unworthy as man. Upon this account also, *Christ is a fit person.*

It was requisite that he should be a person of unchangeable perfect truth and faithfulness. Otherwise, he would not be fit to be depended on by us in so great an affair. *Christ is also a fit person upon this account.*

The wisdom of God in choosing His eternal Son appears, not only in that He is a fit person, but also in that He was the *only* fit Person of all persons, whether created or uncreated. No created person—neither man, nor angel—was fit for this undertaking...It shows a divine wisdom to know that He was a fit person. No other but one of divine wisdom could have known it. None but one of infinite wisdom could have thought of Him to be a redeemer of sinners. For He, as He is God, is one of the Persons offended by sin against Whom man by his sin had rebelled. Who but God infinitely wise could ever have thought of Him to be a redeemer of sinners *against* Whom they had sinned, *to* Whom they were enemies, and *of* Whom they deserved infinitely ill? Who would ever have thought of Him as one that should set his heart upon man and exercise infinite love and pity to him and exhibit infinite wisdom, power, and merit in redeeming him?

2. **WE PROCEED TO CONSIDER THE SUBSTITUTING OF THIS PERSON IN OUR ROOM.** After choosing the person to be our Redeemer, the next step of divine wisdom is to contrive the way that He should perform this work. If God had declared who the person was that should do this work and had gone no further, no creature could have thought which way this person could have performed the work. If God had told them that His *own Son* must be the Redeemer; that He *alone* was a fit person for the work; and that He was a person every way fit and sufficient for it—but had proposed to them to contrive a way how this fit and sufficient Person should proceed—we may well suppose that all created understandings would have been utterly at a loss.

The first thing necessary to be done is that this Son of God should become our Representative and Surety and so be substituted in the sinner's room. But who of created intelligences would have thought of any such thing as the eternal and infinitely beloved Son of God being substituted in the room of sinners? His standing in [the] stead of a sinner, a rebel, an object of the wrath of God? Who would have thought of a person of infinite glory representing sinful worms that had made themselves by sin infinitely provoking and abominable? For if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's room, then his sin must be charged upon *Him*. He will thereby take the guilt of the sinner upon Himself. He must be subject to the same Law that man was, both as to the commands and threatening: but who would have thought of any such thing concerning the Son of God?

3. **BUT WE PROCEED TO CONSIDER THE INCARNATION OF JESUS CHRIST.** The next step of divine wisdom in contriving how Christ should perform the work of redeeming sinners was in determining His Incarnation. Suppose God had revealed His counsels thus far to created understandings that His own Son was the person chosen for this work, that He had substituted Him in the sinner's room and appointed Him to take the sinner's obligations and guilt on Himself—and had revealed no more, but had left the rest to them to find out. It is no way probable that even then they could ever have thought of a way whereby this Person might actually have performed the work of redemption. For if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's stead, then He takes the sinner's obligations on Himself. For instance, He must take the obligation the sinner is under to perform perfect obedience to the divine Law. But it is not probable that any creature could have conceived how that could be possible. How should a Person Who is the eternal

Jehovah become a servant, be under Law, and perform obedience even to the law of man?

Again, if the Son of God be substituted in the sinner's stead, then He comes under the sinner's obligation to suffer the punishment that man's sin had deserved. Who could have thought that to be possible? For how should a divine Person, Who is essentially, unchangeably, and infinitely happy, suffer pain and torment? How should He, Who is the object of God's infinitely dear love, suffer the wrath of His Father? It is not to be supposed that created wisdom ever would have found out a way to get over these difficulties. But divine wisdom hath found out a way, [namely], by the Incarnation of the Son of God. That the Word should be made flesh, that He might be both God and man in one Person: what created understanding could have conceived that such a thing was possible?...

And if God had revealed to them that it *was* possible and even that it should be, but left them to find out *how* it should be, we may well suppose that they would all have been puzzled and confounded to conceive of a way for so uniting a man to the eternal Son of God that they should be but one Person, that One Who is truly a man in all respects should indeed be the very same Son of God that was with God from all eternity. This is a great mystery to us. Hereby, a person that is infinite, omnipotent, and unchangeable is become, in a sense, a finite, a feeble man, a man subject to our sinless infirmities, passions, and calamities! The great God, the *sovereign* of heaven and earth, is thus become a worm of the dust—"But I am a worm, and no man" (Psa 22:6). He that is eternal and self-existent is by this union born of a woman! He Who is the great original Spirit is clothed with flesh and blood like one of us! He Who is independent, self-sufficient, and all-sufficient now is come to stand in need of food and clothing. He becomes poor [and] "hath not where to lay his head" (Mat 8:20), stands in need of the charity of men, and is maintained by it! It is far above us to conceive how it is done! It is a great wonder and mystery to us, but it was no mystery to divine wisdom.

4. THE NEXT THING TO BE CONSIDERED IS THE LIFE OF CHRIST IN THIS WORLD. The wisdom of God appears in the circumstances of His life and in the work and business of His life.

(1) **The circumstances of His life.** If God had revealed that His own Son should be incarnate and should live in this world in the human nature, and it had been left to men to determine what circumstances of life would have been most suitable for Him, human

wisdom would have determined that He should appear in the world in a most magnificent manner with very extraordinary outward ensigns⁴ of honor, authority, and power far above any of the kings of the earth; that here He should reign in great visible pomp and splendor over all nations. Thus, it was that men's wisdom did determine before Christ came. The wise, the great men among the Jews, scribes and Pharisees, who are called "Princes of this world" (1Co 2:6-8), did expect that the Messiah would thus appear. But the wisdom of God chose quite otherwise. It chose that when the Son of God became man, He should begin His life in a stable; for many years dwell obscurely in a family of low degree in the world; and be in low outward circumstances: that He should be poor and not have where to lay His head; that he should be maintained by the charity of some of His disciples; that He should "grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground" (Isa 53:2); that He should not "cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street" (Isa 42:2); that He should come to Zion in a lowly manner "riding on an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass" (Zec 9:9; Mat 21:5); that He should be "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa 53:3).

And now [that] the divine determination in this matter is made known, we may safely conclude that it is far the most suitable and that it would not have been at all suitable for God, when He was manifest in flesh, to appear with earthly pomp, wealth, and grandeur. No! These things are infinitely too mean⁵ and despicable for the Son of God to show as if He affected⁶ or esteemed them. Men, if they had this way proposed to them, would have been ready to condemn it as foolish and very unsuitable for the Son of God. But "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1Co 1:25). God hath brought to nought the wisdom of this world and the princes of this world (1Co 2:6). Christ, by thus appearing in mean and low outward circumstances in the world, has poured contempt upon all worldly wealth and glory and has taught us to despise it. If it becomes mean men to despise them, how much more did it become the Son of God! Christ hereby hath taught us to be lowly in heart. If He Who was infinitely high and great was thus lowly, how lowly should we be who are indeed so vile!

(2) The wisdom of God appears in the work and business of the life of Christ. Particularly, that He should perfectly obey the Law

⁴ **ensigns** – signs; tokens.

⁵ **mean** – inferior.

⁶ **affected** – sought after; desired.

of God under such great temptations: that He should have conflicts with and overcome for us in a way of obedience the powers of earth and hell; that He should be subject to, not only the Moral Law, but the ceremonial also, that heavy yoke of bondage. Christ went through the time of His public ministry in delivering to us divine instructions and doctrines. The wisdom of God appears in giving us such a One to be our Prophet and Teacher Who is a divine Person: Who is Himself the very wisdom and Word of God and was from all eternity in the bosom of the Father. His word is of greater authority and weight than if delivered by the mouth of an ordinary prophet. And how wisely ordered that the same should be our Teacher and Redeemer in order that His relations and offices as Redeemer might the more sweeten and endear His instructions to us. We are ready to give heed to what is said by those who are dear to us. Our love to their persons makes us to delight in their discourse. It is therefore wisely ordered that He Who has done so much to endear Himself to us should be appointed our great Prophet to deliver to us divine doctrines.

5. THE NEXT THING TO BE CONSIDERED IS THE DEATH OF CHRIST. This is a means of salvation for poor sinners that no other but divine wisdom would have pitched upon. When revealed, it was doubtless greatly to the surprise of all the hosts of heaven; and they never will cease to wonder at it. How astonishing is it that a Person Who is blessed forever and is infinitely and essentially happy should endure the greatest sufferings that ever were endured on earth! That a Person Who is the Supreme Lord and Judge of the world should be arraigned⁷ and should stand at the judgment seat of mortal worms, and then be condemned! That a Person Who is the living God and the fountain of life should be put to death! That a Person Who created the world and gives life to all His creatures should be put to death *by His own creatures!* That a Person of infinite majesty and glory—and so the object of the love, praises, and adorations of angels—should be mocked and spit upon by the vilest of men. That a Person, infinitely good and Who is love itself, should suffer the greatest cruelty. That a Person Who is infinitely beloved of the Father should be put to inexpressible anguish under His own Father's wrath. That He Who is King of heaven, Who hath heaven for His throne and the earth for His footstool, should be buried in the prison of the grave. How wonderful⁸ is this! Yet this is the way that God's wisdom hath fixed upon

⁷ **arraigned** – called before a court to answer charges made against Him.

⁸ **wonderful** – full of astonishment.

as the way of sinners' salvation, as neither unsuitable nor dishonorable to Christ.

6. THE LAST THING DONE TO PROCURE SALVATION FOR SINNERS IS CHRIST'S EXALTATION. Divine wisdom saw it needful, or most expedient,⁹ that the same Person Who died upon the cross should sit at His right hand, on His own throne, as supreme Governor of the world, and should have particularly the absolute disposal of all things relating to man's salvation, and should be the Judge of the world. This was needful because it was requisite that the same Person Who purchased salvation should have the bestowing of it. For it is not fit that God should at all transact with the fallen creature in a way of mercy but by a mediator. This is exceedingly for the strengthening of the faith and comfort of the saints: that He Who hath endured so much to purchase salvation for them has all things in heaven and in earth delivered unto Him; that He might bestow eternal life on them for whom He purchased it; and that the same person that loved them so greatly as to shed His precious blood for them was to be their final Judge.

This then was another thing full of wonders: that He Who was man as well as God, [that] He Who was a servant and died like a malefactor¹⁰ should be made the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, angels, and men; the absolute Disposer of eternal life and death; the supreme Judge of all created intelligent beings for eternity; and should have committed to Him all the governing power of God the Father, and that not only as God, but as *God-man*, not exclusive of the human nature.

As it is wonderful that a Person Who is truly divine should be humbled so as to become a servant and to suffer as a malefactor; so it is in like manner wonderful that He Who is God-man, not exclusive of the manhood, should be exalted to the power and honor of the great God of heaven and earth. But such wonders as these has infinite wisdom contrived and accomplished in order to our salvation.

From "The Wisdom of God Displayed in the Way of Salvation" in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, reprinted by the Banner of Truth Trust.



⁹ **expedient** – appropriate to the purpose.

¹⁰ **malefactor** – criminal.

PART 3

JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION MADE PLAIN

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—Romans 3:24

NOW, what is the meaning of justification? Divines will puzzle you, if you ask them. I must try the best I can to make justification plain and simple, even to the comprehension of a child. There is not such a thing as justification to be had on earth for mortal men except in one way. Justification, you know, is a forensic¹ term: it is employed always in a legal sense. A prisoner is brought to the bar of justice to be tried. There is only one way whereby that prisoner can be justified, that is, he must be found not guilty. And if he is found not guilty, then he is justified, that is, he is proved to be a just man. If you find that man guilty, you cannot justify him. The Queen may *pardon* him, but she cannot *justify* him. The deed is not a justifiable one, if he were guilty concerning it; and he cannot be justified because of it. He may be pardoned, but not royalty itself can ever wash that man's character. He is as much a real criminal when he is pardoned as before. There is no means among men of justifying a man of an accusation that is laid against him except by his being proved not guilty. Now, the wonder of wonders is that we are proved guilty; and yet we are justified: the verdict has been brought in against us—*guilty*—and yet notwithstanding, we are justified. Can any earthly tribunal² do that? No, it remained for the ransom of Christ to effect that which is impossible to any tribunal upon earth. We are all guilty. Read the 23rd verse, immediately preceding the text: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” There the verdict of guilty is brought in, and yet we are immediately afterwards said to be justified freely by His grace.

Now, allow me to explain the way whereby God justifies a sinner. I am about to suppose an impossible case. A prisoner has been tried and condemned to death. He is a guilty man; he cannot be

¹ **forensic** – relating to courts of law.

² **tribunal** – the bench on which a judge sits to administer justice.

justified because he is guilty. But now, suppose for a moment that such a thing as this could happen—that some second party could be introduced, who could take all that man's guilt upon himself, who could change places with that man, and, by some mysterious process that of course is impossible with men, *become* that man or take that man's character upon himself. He, the righteous man, putting the rebel in his place and making the rebel a righteous man—we cannot do that in our courts! If I were to go before a judge and he should agree that I should be committed for a year's imprisonment instead of some wretch who was condemned yesterday to a year's imprisonment, I could not take his guilt. I might take his punishment, but not his guilt. Now, what flesh and blood cannot do, Jesus Christ by His redemption *did*. Here I stand—the sinner. I mention myself as the representative of you all. I am condemned to die: God says, “I will condemn that man, I must, I will—I will punish him.” Christ comes in, puts me aside, and stands Himself in my stead. When the plea is demanded, Christ says, “Guilty.” [He] takes my guilt to be His own guilt. When the punishment is to be executed, Christ comes forth. “Punish me,” He says, “I have put My righteousness on that man, and I have taken that man's sins on Me. Father, punish Me, and consider that man to have been Me. Let him reign in heaven; let Me suffer misery. Let Me endure his curse, and let him receive My blessing.”

This marvelous doctrine of the changing of places of Christ with poor sinners is a doctrine of revelation, for it never could have been conceived by nature. Let me, lest I should have made a mistake, explain myself again. The way whereby God saves a sinner is not, as some say, by passing over the penalty. No—the penalty has been all paid. It is the putting of another person in the rebel's place. The rebel must die. God says he must. Christ says, “I will be substitute for the rebel. The rebel shall take my place; I will take his.” God consents to it. No earthly monarch could have power to consent to such a change. But the God of heaven had a right to do as He pleased. In His infinite mercy, He consented to the arrangement. “Son of My love,” said He, “You must stand in the sinner's place; You must suffer what he ought to have suffered; You must be accounted guilty, just as he was accounted guilty. *Then* I will look upon the sinner in another light. I will look at him as if he were Christ; I will accept him as if he were My only-begotten Son, full of grace and truth. I will give him a crown in heaven, and I will take him to my heart for ever and ever.” This is the way we are saved.

Now, let me further go on to explain some of the characteristics of **this justification**. As soon as a repenting sinner is justified, remember, he is justified for all his sins. Here stands a man all guilty. The moment he believes in Christ, his pardon at once he receives, and his sins are no longer his—they are cast into the depths of the sea! They were laid upon the shoulders of Christ, and they are gone. The man stands a guiltless man in the sight of God, accepted in the Beloved. “What!” say you, “do you mean that literally?” Yes, I do. That is the doctrine of justification by faith. Man ceases to be regarded by divine justice as a guilty being; the moment he believes on Christ, his guilt is all taken away. But I am going a step further. The moment the man believes in Christ, he ceases to be guilty in God’s esteem; but what is more, he becomes righteous, he becomes meritorious; for in the moment when Christ takes his sins, he takes Christ’s righteousness, so that when God looks upon the sinner who but an hour ago was dead in sins, He looks upon him with as much love and affection as He ever looked upon His Son. He Himself has said it: “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (Joh 15:9). He loves us as much as His Father loved Him. Can you believe such a doctrine as that? Does it not pass all thought? Well, it is a doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine whereby we must hope to be saved. Can I to any unenlightened person illustrate this thought better? I will give him the parable we have given to us in the prophets—the parable of Joshua the high priest (Zec 3:1-7). Joshua comes in, clothed in filthy garments—those filthy garments representing his sins. Take away the filthy garments—that is *pardon*. Put a miter on his head, clothe him in royal raiment, make him rich and fair—that is *justification*. But where do these garments come from? And where do those rags go? Why, the rags that Joshua had on go to Christ, and the garments put on Joshua are the garments that Christ wore! The sinner and Christ do just what Jonathan and David did: Jonathan put his robes on David; David gave Jonathan his garments (1Sa 18:1-4). So Christ takes our sins, we take Christ’s righteousness, and it is by a glorious substitution and interchange of places that sinners go free and are justified by His grace.

“But,” says one, “no one is justified like that until he dies.” Believe me, he is.

*The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in his crucified God,
His pardon at once he receives,
Redemption in full through His blood.*³

³ Hymn by Joseph Hart (1712-1768).

If that young man over there has really believed in Christ this morning, realizing by a spiritual experience what I have attempted to describe, he is as much justified in God's sight now, as he will be when he stands before the throne. Not the glorified spirits above are more acceptable to God than the poor man below who is once justified by grace. It is a perfect washing, it is perfect pardon, perfect imputation. We are fully, freely, and wholly accepted through Christ our Lord.

Just one more word here, and then I will leave this matter of justification. Those who are once justified are justified *irreversibly*. As soon as a sinner takes Christ's place and Christ takes the sinner's place, there is no fear of a second change. If Christ has once paid the debt, the debt is paid; and it will never be asked for again. If you are pardoned, you are pardoned once forever. God does not give man a free pardon under his own sign-manual,⁴ and then afterwards retract it and punish man: that be far from God so to do. He says, "I have punished Christ! You may go free." And after that, we may "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:2) that "being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 5:1). And now I hear one cry, "That is an extraordinary doctrine!" Well, so some may think; but let me say to you, it is a doctrine professed by *all* Protestant churches, *though they may not preach it*. It is the doctrine of the Church of England, it is the doctrine of Luther, it is the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church: it is professedly the doctrine of *all* Christian churches. If it seems strange in your ears, it is because your *ears* are estranged, not because the doctrine is a strange one. It is the doctrine of Holy Writ that none can condemn whom God justifies and that none can accuse those for whom Christ hath died, for they are totally free from sin (Rom 8:1-4). So that, as one of the prophets has it, God sees no sin in [Judah] or iniquity in Israel (Jer 50:20). In the moment they believe—their sins being imputed to Christ—they cease to be theirs; and Christ's righteousness is imputed to them and accounted theirs, so that they are accepted.

From a sermon delivered on Sabbath Morning, April 5, 1857,
at the Music Hall, Royal Surrey Gardens.



⁴ **sign-manual** – signature, especially of a monarch, at the top of a royal decree.

THE MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION

Charles Hodge (1797-1898)

HOW can a man be just with God? The answer given to this question decides the character of our religion and, if practically adopted, our future destiny. To give a wrong answer is to mistake the way to Heaven. It is to err where error is fatal because it cannot be corrected. If God requires one thing and we present another, how can we be saved? If He has revealed a method in which He can be just and yet justify the sinner, and if we reject that method and insist upon pursuing a different way, how can we hope to be accepted? The answer, therefore, which is given to the above question, should be seriously pondered by all who assume the office of religious teachers and by all who rely upon their instructions. As we are not to be judged by proxy,¹ but every man must answer for himself, so every man should be satisfied for himself what the Bible teaches on this subject. All that religious teachers can do is to endeavor to aid the investigations of those who are anxious to learn the way of life. In doing this, the safest method is to adhere strictly to the instructions of the Scriptures and to exhibit the subject as it is there presented.

It is one of the primary doctrines of the Bible—everywhere either asserted or assumed—that we are under the Law of God. This is true of all classes of men, whether they enjoy a divine revelation or not. Everything that God has revealed as a rule of duty enters into the constitution of the Law that binds those to whom that revelation is given and by which they are to be ultimately judged. Those who have not received any external revelation of the divine will are a law unto themselves. The knowledge of right and wrong, written upon their hearts, is of the nature of a divine law, having its authority and sanction; by it, the heathen are to be judged in the last day.

God has seen fit to annex the promise of life to obedience to His Law. “The man which doeth those things shall live by them” (Rom 10:5) is the language of Scripture on this subject. To the lawyer who admitted that the Law required love to God and man, our Savior said, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Luk 10:28). And to one who asked Him, “What good thing shall I

¹ proxy – by or through a substitute.

do, that I may have eternal life?” He said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mat 19:17). On the other hand, the Law denounces death as the penalty of transgression: “The wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). Such is the uniform declaration of Scripture on this subject.

The obedience that the Law demands is called *righteousness*, and those who render that obedience are called *righteous*. To ascribe righteousness to anyone, or to pronounce him righteous, is the Scriptural meaning of the word “to justify.” The word never means “to make good” in a moral sense, but always “to pronounce just or righteous.” Thus, God says, “I will not justify the wicked” (Exo 23:7). Judges are commanded to justify the righteous and to condemn the wicked (Deu 25:1). Woe is pronounced on those who “justify the wicked for reward” (Isa 5:23). In the New Testament it is said, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Rom 3:20). “It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?” (Rom 8:33-34). There is scarcely a word in the Bible the meaning of which is less open to doubt. There is no passage in the New Testament in which it is used out of its ordinary and obvious sense.

When God justifies a man, He *declares* him righteous. To justify never means “to render one holy.” It is said to be sinful to justify the wicked, but it could never be sinful to render the wicked holy. And as the Law demands righteousness, to impute or ascribe righteousness to anyone is, in Scriptural language, to justify. To make (or constitute) righteous is another equivalent form of expression. Hence, to be righteous before God and to be justified mean the same thing as in the following passage: “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom 2:13). The attentive and especially the anxious reader of the Bible cannot fail to observe that these various expressions—to be righteous in the sight of God, to impute righteousness, to constitute righteous, to justify, and others of similar import—are so interchanged as to explain each other and to make it clear that to justify a man is to ascribe or impute to him righteousness. The great question then is, “How is this righteousness to be obtained?” We have reason to be thankful that the answer that the Bible gives to this question is so perfectly plain.

In the first place, that the righteousness by which we are to be justified before God is not of works is not only asserted, but also proved. The Apostle’s first argument on this point is derived from the consideration that the Law demands a *perfect righteousness*. If

the Law were satisfied by an imperfect obedience, or by a routine of external duties, or by any service that men are competent to render, then indeed justification would be by works. But since it demands perfect obedience, justification by works is, for sinners, *absolutely impossible*. It is thus the Apostle reasons, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10). As the Law pronounces its curse upon every man who continues not to do all that it commands, and as no man can pretend to this perfect obedience, it follows that all who look to the Law for justification must be condemned. To the same effect in a following verse he says, “And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.” That is, the Law is not satisfied by any single grace or imperfect obedience. It knows and can know no other ground of justification than complete compliance with its demands. Hence, in the same chapter Paul says, “For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Gal 3:21). Could the Law pronounce righteous and thus give a title to the promised life to those who had broken its commands, there would have been no necessity of any other provision for the salvation of men; but as the Law cannot thus lower its demands, justification by the Law is *impossible*. The same truth is taught in a different form when it is said, “For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal 2:21). There would have been no necessity for the death of Christ, if it had been possible to satisfy the Law by the imperfect obedience that we can render. Paul therefore warns all those who look to works for justification that they are debtors to do the whole law (Gal 5:3). It knows *no compromise*; it cannot demand less than what is right, and perfect obedience is right. Therefore its only language is as before, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal 3:10); and, “That the man which doeth those things shall live by them” (Rom 10:5). Every man, therefore, who expects justification by works must see to it, not that he is better than other men, or that he is very exact and does many things, or that he fasts twice in the week and gives tithes of all he possesses, but that he is *sinless*.

That the Law of God is thus strict in its demands is a truth that lies at the foundation of all Paul’s reasoning in reference to the method of justification. He proves that the Gentiles have sinned against the law written on their hearts, and that the Jews have broken the Law revealed in their Scriptures; both Jews and Gentiles,

therefore, are under sin; and the whole world is guilty before God (Rom 3:19). Hence, he infers, by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.

There is, however, no force in this reasoning, except on the assumption that the Law demands perfect obedience. How many men, who freely acknowledge that they are sinners, depend upon their works for acceptance with God! They see no inconsistency between the acknowledgment of sin and the expectation of justification by works. The reason is that they proceed upon a very different principle from that adopted by the Apostle: they suppose that the Law may be satisfied by very imperfect obedience. Paul assumes that God demands perfect conformity to His will, that His wrath is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (Rom 1:18). With him, therefore, it is enough that men have sinned to prove that they cannot be justified by works. It is not a question of degrees, more or less, for as to this point there is no difference, since “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).

This doctrine, though so plainly taught in Scripture, men are disposed to think very severe.² They imagine that their good deeds will be compared with their evil deeds and that they will be rewarded or punished as [one outweighs the other]; or that the sins of one part of life may be atoned for by the good works of another; or that they can escape by mere confession and repentance. They could not entertain such expectations if they believed themselves to be under a law. No human law is administered as men seem to hope the Law of God will be. He who steals or murders—though it be but once, though he confesses and repents, though he does any number of acts of charity—is not less a thief or murderer. The Law cannot take [notice] of his repentance and reformation. If he steals or murders, the Law condemns him. Justification by the Law is for him impossible. The Law of God extends to the most secret exercises of the heart (Heb 4:12). It condemns whatever is in its nature evil. If a man violates this perfect rule of right, there is an end of justification by the Law; he has failed to comply with its conditions, and the Law can only condemn him. To justify him would be to say that he had not transgressed.

Men, however, think that they are not to be dealt with on the principles of strict law. Here is their fatal mistake. It is here that they are in most direct conflict with the Scriptures, which proceed upon the uniform assumption of our subjection to the Law. Under

² **severe** – unsparing in the exaction of penalty.

the government of God, strict law is nothing but perfect excellence; it is the steady exercise of moral rectitude.³ Even conscience, when duly enlightened and roused, is as strict as the Law of God. It refuses to be appeased by repentance, reformation, or penance.⁴ It enforces every command and every denunciation of our Supreme Ruler and teaches—as plainly as do the Scriptures themselves—that justification by an imperfect obedience is impossible. As conscience, however, is fallible, no reliance on this subject is placed on her testimony. The appeal is to the Word of God, which clearly teaches that it is impossible [for] a sinner [to be] justified by works because the Law demands perfect obedience.

The Apostle's second argument to show that justification is not by works is the testimony of the Scriptures of the Old Testament. This testimony is urged in various forms. In the *first* place, as the Apostle proceeds upon the principle that the Law demands perfect obedience, all those passages that assert the universal sinfulness of men are so many declarations that they cannot be justified by works. He therefore quotes such passages as the following: "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:10-12 *cf.* Psa 14:3). The Old Testament, by teaching that all men are sinners, does thereby teach, in the Apostle's view, that they can never be accepted before God on the ground of their own righteousness. To say that a man is a sinner is to say that the Law condemns him—and of course, it cannot justify him. As the ancient Scriptures are full of declarations of the sinfulness of men, so they are full of proof that justification is not by works.

But in the *second* place, Paul cites their direct affirmative testimony in support of his doctrine. In the Psalms it is said, "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified" (Psa 143:2). He often quotes this passage, and to the same class belong all those passages that speak of the insufficiency or worthlessness of human righteousness in the sight of God.

In the *third* place, the Apostle refers to those passages that imply the doctrine for which he contends; that is, to those that speak of the acceptance of men with God as a matter of grace, as something that they do not deserve and for which they can urge no claim

³ **rectitude** – morally correct behavior.

⁴ **penance** – self-punishment or humiliation to show sorrow for sin.

founded upon their own merit. It is with this view that he refers to the language of David: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom 4:7-8). The fact that a man is forgiven implies that he is guilty, and the fact that he is guilty implies that his justification cannot rest upon his own character or conduct. It need hardly be remarked that, in this view, the whole Scriptures from the beginning to the end are crowded with condemnations of the doctrine of justification by works. Every penitent confession, every appeal to God's mercy is a renunciation of *all personal merit*, a declaration that the penitent's hope was not founded on anything in himself. Such confessions and appeals are indeed often made by those who still rely upon their good works or inherent righteousness for acceptance with God. This, however, does not invalidate the Apostle's argument. It only shows that such persons have a different view of what is necessary for justification from that entertained by the Apostle. They suppose that the demands of the Law are so low that although they are sinners and need to be forgiven, they can still do what the Law demands. Paul proceeds on the assumption that the Law requires perfect obedience, and therefore every confession of sin or appeal for mercy involves a renunciation of justification by the Law. The Law knows nothing of anything but obedience as the ground of acceptance. If the Scriptures say we are accepted through faith, they thereby say that we are not accepted on the ground of obedience (Gal 2:16).

From *The Way of Life*, (Philadelphia: American Sunday School Union, 1841).



We say that faith justifies not because it merits justification for us by its own worth, but because it is an instrument by which we freely obtain the righteousness of Christ.—*John Calvin*

If [a sinner] ask what he is to believe, you tell him that he is not called to believe that he is *in* Christ, that his sins are pardoned, and [that he is] a justified man; but that he is to believe God's record concerning Christ: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son"; and that all that with the heart believe this report and rest their souls on these glad tidings shall be saved. Thus he is to believe that he may be justified (Gal 2:16).—*Robert Traill*

JUSTIFICATION IS A FORENSIC ACT

Charles Hodge (1797-1898)

BY this, the Reformers intended, in the first place, to deny the Romish doctrine of *subjective*¹ justification. That is, that justification consists in an act of God making the sinner subjectively holy. Romanists confound or unite justification and sanctification. They define justification as “the remission of sin and infusion² of new habits of grace.” By remission of sin, they mean not simply pardon, but the removal of everything of the nature of sin from the soul. Justification, therefore, with them, is purely subjective, consisting in the destruction of sin and the infusion of holiness

In opposition to this doctrine, the Reformers maintained that by justification the Scriptures mean something different from sanctification. That the two gifts, although inseparable, are distinct, and that justification, instead of being an efficient act changing the inward character of the sinner, is a *declarative* act, announcing and determining his relation to the Law and justice of God.

In the second place, the Symbols³ of the Reformation no less explicitly teach that justification is not simply pardon and restoration. It *includes* pardon, but it also includes a declaration that the believer is just or righteous in the sight of the Law. He has a right to plead a righteousness that completely satisfies its demands.

And, therefore, in the third place, affirmatively, those Symbols teach that justification is a judicial or *forensic* act, i.e., an act of God as Judge proceeding according to Law, declaring that the sinner is just, i.e., that the Law no longer condemns him, but acquits and pronounces him to be entitled to eternal life.

Here, as so often in other cases, the ambiguity of words is apt to create embarrassment. The Greek word *dikaios* and the English word *righteous* have two distinct senses. They sometimes express moral character. When we say that God is righteous, we mean that He is right. He is free from any moral imperfection. So when we say that a man is righteous, we generally mean that he is upright

¹ **subjective** – having to do with what takes place inside someone.

² **infusion** – to fill or cause to be filled with something.

³ **Symbols** – confessions; creeds; summaries of the articles of religious belief.

and honest; that he is and does what he ought to be and do. In this sense, the word expresses the relation that a man sustains to the rule of moral conduct. At other times, however, these words express, not moral character, but the relation that a man sustains to justice. In this sense, a man is just with regard to whom justice is satisfied; or, against whom justice has no demands. Pilate said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (Mat 27:24); i. e., of this person who is free from guilt; free from anything that justifies his condemnation to death. "Christ also," says the Apostle, "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust;" the innocent for the guilty (1Pe 3:18; see Rom 2:13). "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19). If, therefore, we take the word *righteous* in the former of the two senses above mentioned, when it expresses *moral character*, it would be a contradiction to say that God pronounces the sinner righteous. This would be equivalent to saying that God pronounces the sinner to be not a sinner, the wicked to be good, the unholy to be holy. But if we take the word in the sense in which the Scriptures so often use it, as expressing relation to justice, then when God pronounces the sinner righteous or just, He simply declares that his guilt is expiated,⁴ that justice is satisfied, that He has the righteousness that justice demands. This is precisely what Paul says, when he says that God "justifieth the ungodly" (Rom 4:5). God does not pronounce the ungodly to be godly; He declares that notwithstanding his personal sinfulness and unworthiness, he is *accepted* as righteous on the *ground of what Christ has done for him*.

PROOF OF THE DOCTRINE JUST STATED: That *to justify* means neither simply to pardon nor to *make inherently righteous* or good is proved,

1. **From the Usage of Scripture:** By the uniform usage of the word *to justify* in Scripture. It is never used in either of those senses, but always to declare or pronounce just. It is unnecessary to cite passages in proof of a usage that is uniform. The few following examples are enough. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall *justify* the righteous, and condemn the wicked" (Deu 25:1). "I will not *justify* the wicked" (Exo 23:7) "Which *justify* the wicked for reward" (Isa 5:23). "He that *justifieth* the wicked" is "abomination to the LORD" (Pro 17:15). "He willing to *justify* himself" (Luk 10:29). "Ye are they which *justify* yourselves before

⁴ **expiated** – satisfaction made for an offense.

men” (Luk 16:15). “Wisdom is *justified* of her children” (Mat 11:19). “A man is not *justified* by the works of the law” (Gal 2:16) “Whosoever of you are *justified* by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (v. 6). Thus, men are said to *justify* God: “Because he *justified* himself, rather than God” (Job 32:2). “That thou mightest be *justified* when thou speakest” (Psa 51:4). “All the people that heard him, and the publicans, *justified* God” (Luk 7:29). The only passage in the New Testament where the word *righteous* [Gk., *dikaioo*] is used in a different sense is Revelation 22:11, “He that is *righteous*, let him be *righteous* still.” Even if the reading in this passage were undoubted, this single case would have no force against the established usage of the word.

The usage of common life as to this word is just as uniform as that of the Bible. The word always expresses a *judgment*, whether of the mind, as when one man justifies another for his conduct, or officially of a judge. If such is the established meaning of the word, it ought to settle all controversy as to the nature of justification. We are bound to take the words of Scripture in their true established sense. And, therefore, when the Bible says, “God justifies the believer,” we are not at liberty to say that it means that He pardons or that He sanctifies him. It means and can mean only that He *pronounces* him just.

2. Justification the Opposite of Condemnation: This is still further evident from the antithesis between *condemnation* and *justification*. Condemnation is not the opposite either of pardon or of reformation. To condemn is to *pronounce guilty* or worthy of punishment. To justify is to *declare not guilty*, or that justice does not demand punishment, or that the person concerned cannot justly be condemned. When, therefore, the Apostle says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1), he declares that they are absolved from guilt; that the penalty of the Law cannot justly be inflicted upon them. “Who,” he asks, “shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died” (8:33-34). Against the elect in Christ, no ground of condemnation can be presented. God pronounces them just, and therefore no one can pronounce them guilty. This passage is certainly decisive against the doctrine of subjective justification in any form. This opposition between condemnation and justification is familiar both in Scripture and in common life. “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me” (Job 9:20). “And wilt thou condemn him that is most just” (Job 34:17). If to condemn does not mean to make wicked, to justify does not mean to make good. And if condemnation is

a judicial [act], so is justification. In condemnation, a judge pronounces sentence on the guilty. In justification, a judge pronounces or declares the person arraigned free from guilt and entitled to be treated as righteous.

3. Argument from Equivalent Forms of Expression: The forms of expression that are used as equivalents of the word “justify” clearly determine the nature of the act. Thus, Paul speaks of “the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Rom 4:6). To impute righteousness is not *to pardon*; neither is it *to sanctify*. It means to justify, *i.e.*, to attribute righteousness. The negative form in which justification is described is equally significant. “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4:7-8). As “to impute sin” never means and cannot mean to *make* wicked; so the negative statement “not to impute sin” cannot mean to sanctify. And as “to impute sin” does mean to lay sin to one’s account and to treat him accordingly; so to justify means to lay righteousness to one’s account and treat him accordingly. “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world...He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already” (Joh 3:17-18).

For “as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom 5:18). It was *judgment*, a judicial sentence, which came on men for the offence of Adam, and it is a judicial sentence (justification, Gk., *dikaiosis*) that comes for the righteousness of Christ, or, as is said in v. 16 of the same chapter, it was a *judgment unto condemnation*, a condemnatory sentence that came for one offence; and a *free gift unto justification*, a sentence of gratuitous justification from many offences. Language cannot be plainer. If a sentence of condemnation is a *judicial* act, then justification is a *judicial* act.

4. Argument from the Statement of the Doctrine: The judicial character of justification is involved in the mode in which the doctrine is presented in the Bible. The Scriptures speak of Law, of its demands, of its penalty, of sinners as arraigned at the bar of God, of the Day of Judgment. The question is “How shall man be just with God?” *The answer to this question determines the whole method of salvation.* The question is not, How a man can become holy? But, how can he become just? How can he satisfy the claims which justice has against him? It is obvious that if there is no such attribute

as *justice* in God, if what we call justice is only benevolence, then [it has no relevance] in this question: man is not required to be just in order to be saved. There are no claims of justice to be satisfied. Repentance is all that need be rendered as the condition of restoration to the favor of God. Or, any didactic⁵ declaration or exhibition of God's [strong disapproval] of sin would open the way for the safe pardon of sinners. Or, if the demands of justice were easily satisfied, if partial, imperfect obedience and fatherly chastisements or self-inflicted penances would suffice to satisfy its claims, then the sinner need not be just with God in order to be saved. But the human soul knows intuitively⁶ that these are refuges of lies. It knows that there *is* such an attribute as justice. It knows that the demands thereof are inexorable⁷ because they are righteous. It knows that it cannot be saved unless it is justified, and it knows that it cannot be declared just unless the demands of justice are fully satisfied. Low views of the evil of sin and of the justice of God lie at the foundation of all false views of this great doctrine.

The Apostle's argument in the Epistle to the Romans: The Apostle begins the discussion of this subject by assuming that the justice of God, His purpose to punish all sin, to demand perfect conformity to His Law, is revealed from heaven, *i.e.*, so revealed that no man, whether Jew or Gentile, can deny it (Rom 1:18). Men, even the most degraded pagans, know the righteous judgment of God that those who sin are worthy of death (1:32). He next proves that all men are sinners and, being sinners, are under condemnation. The whole world is "guilty before God" (3:19). From this he infers, as intuitively certain (because plainly included in the premises), that no flesh living can be justified before God "by the deeds of the law," *i.e.*, on the ground of his own character and conduct. If guilty, he cannot be pronounced *not guilty* or *just*. In Paul's argument, to justify is to pronounce just. *Dikaios* is the opposite of *hupodikos*, that is, *righteous* is the opposite of *guilty*. To pronounce guilty is *to condemn*. To pronounce righteous, *i.e.*, not guilty, is *to justify*. If a man denies the authority of Scripture, it is conceivable that he may deny that justification is a judicial act. But it seems impossible that anyone should deny that it is so represented in the Bible.

The Apostle, having taught that God is just, *i.e.*, that He demands the satisfaction of justice and that men are sinners and can

⁵ **didactic** – morally instructive.

⁶ **intuitively** – perceived by the mind instinctively.

⁷ **inexorable** – not capable of being persuaded.

render no such satisfaction themselves, announces that such a righteousness has been provided and is revealed in the gospel. It is not our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but the righteousness of Christ and, therefore, the righteousness of God, in virtue of which and on the ground of which, God can be just and yet justify the sinner who believes in Christ. As long as the Bible stands this must stand as a simple statement of what Paul teaches as to the method of salvation. Men may dispute what he *means*, but this is surely what he *says*.

5. Argument from the Ground of Justification: The nature of justification is determined by its *ground*. This indeed is an anticipation of another part of the subject, but it is in point here. If the Bible teaches that the ground of justification, the reason why God remits⁸ to us the penalty of the Law and accepts us as righteous in His sight, is something *out of ourselves*, something done *for* us and not what we do or experience, then it of necessity follows that justification is not subjective. It does not consist in the infusion of righteousness or in making the person justified personally holy. If the “formal cause” of our justification is *our* goodness, then we are justified *for what we are*. The Bible, however, teaches that no man living can be justified for what he is. He is *condemned* for what he is and for what he does. He is justified *for what Christ has done for him*.

6. Argument from the Immutability of the Law: The doctrine that justification consists simply in pardon and consequent restoration assumes that the divine Law is imperfect and [capable of change]. In human governments, it is often expedient⁹ and right that men justly condemned to suffer the penalty of the law should be pardoned. Human laws must be general. They cannot take in all the circumstances of each particular case. Their execution would often work hardship or injustice. Human judgments may therefore often be set aside. It is not so with the divine Law. The Law of the Lord is perfect. And being perfect, it cannot be disregarded. It demands nothing that ought not to be demanded. It threatens nothing that ought not to be inflicted. It is in fact its own executioner. Sin is death (Rom 8:6). The justice of God makes punishment as inseparable from sin, as life is from holiness. The penalty of the Law is immutable, and as little capable of being set aside as the precept.¹⁰ Accordingly, the Scriptures everywhere

⁸ **remits** – forgives; cancels guilt.

⁹ **expedient** – suitable to the circumstances.

¹⁰ **precept** – any commandment or order intended as an authoritative rule.

teach that in the justification of the sinner there is no relaxation of the penalty. There is no setting aside or disregarding the demands of the Law. We are delivered from the Law, not by its [cancellation], but by its execution (Gal 2:19). We are freed from the Law by the body of Christ (Rom 7:4). Christ having taken our place bore our sins in His own body on the tree (1Pe 2:24). The handwriting that was against us, He took out of the way, nailing it to His cross (Col 2:14). We are therefore not under the Law, but under grace (Rom 6:14). Such representations are inconsistent with the theory that supposes that the Law may be dispensed with; that the restoration of sinners to the favor and fellowship of God requires no satisfaction to its demands; that the believer is pardoned and restored to fellowship with God, just as a thief or forger is pardoned and restored to his civil rights by the executive in human governments. This is against the Scriptures. God is just in justifying the sinner. He acts according to justice.

It will be seen that everything in this discussion turns on the question, Whether there is such an attribute in God as *justice*? If justice is only “benevolence guided by wisdom,” then there is no justification. What evangelical Christians so regard is only pardon or sanctification. But if God, as the Scriptures and conscience teach, is a just God, as immutable in His justice as in His goodness and truth, then there can be no remission of the penalty of sin except on the ground of expiation,¹¹ and no justification except on the ground of the satisfaction of justice. Therefore justification must be a *judicial* act, and neither simply pardon nor the infusion of righteousness. These doctrines sustain each other. What the Bible teaches of the justice of God proves that justification is a judicial declaration that justice is satisfied. And what the Bible teaches of the nature of justification proves that justice in God is something more than benevolence.

From Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III, Soteriology.



If you get condemnation out of the gospel, *you* put the condemnation into it yourselves! It is not the gospel, but your rejection of it that will condemn you.—*Charles Spurgeon*

¹¹ **expiation** – Expiation has reference to the *guilt* of sin. To expiate is to remove or cover the guilt of sin. (Morton H. Smith, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 382.)

THE IMMEDIATE AND ONLY GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION: THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

James Buchanan (1804-1870)

MANY have admitted that the justification of sinners is connected with the mediatorial work of Christ as its *meritorious* cause; while they have denied that it rests on His righteousness as its *immediate*¹ and *only* ground. They have not ventured to set aside His merits altogether or to say that His redeeming work had no influence in procuring our pardon and acceptance with God. On the contrary, they have professed to do signal homage² to the merits of Christ by acknowledging both their indispensable necessity and their certain efficacy;³ but only as a means of procuring for us those terms of salvation and that measure of grace that render it possible for us to be justified by *our personal obedience*—while they have utterly rejected the idea that His righteousness is or can be imputed to us. Others, again, have admitted a real and important, but *partial* and *imperfect*, imputation of His righteousness and have restricted it to the merits of His passive, as distinguished from that of His active, obedience—thereby leaving our justification to rest partly on His atoning sacrifice and partly on *our personal holiness* in heart and life. It is necessary, therefore, to show that His righteousness—considered as the entire merit of His whole mediatorial work—is not only the meritorious cause, but also the *immediate ground* of our justification; and, for this end, to inquire what that righteousness is by which alone we can be justified; why it is said to be the righteousness of God or the merit of Christ; and how it becomes ours so as to be available for our justification.

PROPOSITION: The righteousness, which is the ground of a sinner's justification, is denoted or described by various terms in Scripture, so that its nature may be determined by simply compar-

¹ **immediate** – without the intervention of another cause; direct.

² **signal homage** – noteworthy or special honor expressed publicly.

³ **efficacy** – power to produce a desired effect; effectiveness.

ing these terms with one another; and then ascertaining⁴ whether there be any righteousness to which they are all equally applicable and in which they all coincide in the fullness of their combined meaning.

That righteousness is called in Scripture “the righteousness of God” (Rom 3:20); “the righteousness of Christ” (2Pe 1:1); the “righteousness of One” (Rom 5:19); “the obedience of One” (Rom 5:18); the “free gift unto justification of life” (Rom 5:18); “the righteousness which is of” or “by” or “through faith” (Rom 9:30); “the righteousness of God without the law” (Rom 3:21); and the righteousness which God imputes without works (Rom 4:6). It will be found that, while these various expressions are descriptive of its different aspects and relations, they are all employed with reference to the *same* righteousness—that there is *one* righteousness in which they all find their common center, as so many distinct rays converging towards the same focus, while each retains its distinctive meaning—and that there is *no other righteousness* to which they can all be applied or in which they can find their adequate explanation.

It is called preeminently and emphatically “the righteousness of God.” By this name, it is distinguished from the righteousness of man and even contrasted with it as a *ground* of justification. It is brought in as a divine righteousness, only when all human righteousness has been shut out. The Apostle first proves that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin”; and then introduces another righteousness altogether, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifest...even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ” (Rom 3:20-21). He contrasts the two great revelations—the revelation of *wrath*, which is by the Law, and the revelation of *righteousness*, which is by the gospel: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men”; but “the gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...for therein is the righteousness of God revealed” (Rom 1:16, 18). And, in his own case, he renounces his own personal righteousness altogether as the ground of his acceptance and hope: “That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi 3:8).

The two righteousnesses are not only distinct, but *different*; and not only different, but *directly opposed* and *mutually exclusive* con-

⁴ **ascertaining** – finding out for certain; making sure.

sidered as grounds of justification, insomuch that he who is justified by the one cannot *possibly* be justified by the other. If the righteousness of man is sufficient, the righteousness of God is superfluous.⁵ If the righteousness of God is necessary, the righteousness of man can have no place. Nor can any conciliation⁶ or compromise be effected between them, so as to admit of their being combined in one complex ground of acceptance. For they represent two methods of justification that are *irreconcilably* opposed—the one by grace, the other by works: “For to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:4). “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” (Rom 11:6).

If we would understand the reason why it is called “the righteousness of God,” we must bear in mind that there was a twofold manifestation of righteousness in the cross of Christ: there was *first* a manifestation of the righteousness of God the Father, in requiring a satisfaction to His justice and inflicting the punishment that was due to sin; and to this the Apostle refers when he says that “God set forth Christ to be a propitiation⁷...to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). There was, *secondly*, a work of righteousness by God the Son—His vicarious⁸ righteousness as the Redeemer of His people, when He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8), and thus became “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom 10:4). But these two—*God’s* righteousness, which was declared, and *Christ’s* righteousness, which was wrought out on the cross—although they may be distinguished, cannot be separated from one another; for they were indissolubly⁹ united in one and the same propitiation. And while the righteousness that is revealed for our justification may be called “the righteousness of God” with some reference to both, it properly consists in *the merit of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and [His] perfect obedience*, for these were offered by Him as our Substitute and Representative.

⁵ **superfluous** – being beyond what is required.

⁶ **conciliation** – reconciliation.

⁷ **propitiation** – appeasing one offended and rendering him favorable.

⁸ **vicarious** – acting in the place of someone else.

⁹ **indissolubly** – permanently.

The same righteousness that is called “the righteousness of God,” is also called “the righteousness of Christ.” We obtain “precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”; or as it might be rendered, “through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:1). “And this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6). He is so called on account of the righteousness that He wrought out by His obedience unto death, for this righteousness is expressly connected with His mediatorial work. “The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable” (Isa 42:21). By His vicarious sufferings and obedience, He fulfilled the Law both in its precept and its penalty and is now said to be “the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” while His righteousness is identified with “the righteousness of God,” to which the unbelieving Jews refused to submit themselves and contrasted with “their own righteousness,” which they went about “to establish,” “as it were by the works of the law” (Rom 10:3-4; 9:32).

PROPOSITION: This righteousness—being the merit of a work and not a mere quality of character—may become ours by being *imputed* to us, but cannot be communicated by being *infused*; and must ever continue to belong primarily and, in one important respect, exclusively to Him by Whom alone that work was accomplished.

This statement consists of three distinct affirmations, which are directed against as many different errors, springing from a prevalent confusion of thought regarding the whole doctrine of imputation.¹⁰ And it may be useful to consider each of them successively in connection with the proofs on which they severally depend.

It is affirmed, *first*, that the righteousness that is the ground of justification, being the merit of a work undertaken and accomplished by Christ on behalf of His people, may become theirs by being imputed to them or reckoned to their account. This statement could scarcely be denied if the merit of His work—done and finished “once for all”—were duly distinguished from an inherent and abiding quality of His personal character, and if that work were really regarded as having been undertaken and accomplished on the behalf of others by One acting as their *Substitute*¹¹ and *Surety*.¹² For

¹⁰ See FGB 191, *Imputed Righteousness*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY

¹¹ See FGB 207, *Substitution*.

the merit of one can never, in any case, become available for the benefit of others, except when it is imputed to them. It cannot, from the very nature of the case, become theirs by infusion.¹³ The merit of one may be reckoned or put down to the account of another; but how can the *merit* of any work be infused as a personal property, as holiness may unquestionably be? But when we affirm that the righteousness of Christ, [i.e.,] the merit of His mediatorial work, may become ours by being imputed to us, we are met with a counter-statement to the effect—not that there was no merit in His work or that His work was not accomplished on behalf of others, which are the only important elements in the case—but that biblical criticism forbids the use of the term “impute,” except when it is applied to personal properties and acts. “There is not in all the Scriptures,” says one, “an instance in which one man’s sin or righteousness is said to be imputed to another...There is not in all the Bible one assertion that Adam’s sin, or Christ’s righteousness, is imputed to us; nor one declaration that any man’s sin is ever imputed by God or man to another man...Having followed [the Hebrew and Greek verbs] through the concordances, I hesitate not to challenge a single example that is fairly of this nature in all the Bible.”¹⁴

These are bold statements and may seem to imply a denial of the doctrine, as well as a criticism of the term by which it has been usually expressed; but we refer at present only to the latter. Every reader of his English Bible *without the aid of critical scholarship* may discover—and it has never been denied, so far as we know, by any competent [theologian]—that the verbs in question are applicable to cases in which that which is imputed to any one was personally his own beforehand—that one man, for instance, who is righteous, is reckoned and treated as righteous; and that another man who is wicked, is reckoned and treated as wicked. But the question is, Whether the same verbs may not be equally applicable to other cases, in which that which is imputed to him was not personally his own and did not previously belong to him, but became his only by its being put down to his account? The debt due and the wrong done by Onesimus to Philemon were not chargeable against Paul personally or previously, but he became chargeable with them

¹² **Surety** – one who enters into a bond to undertake the responsibilities or debt of another.

¹³ **infusion**, i.e., **infused righteousness**: Righteousness that God actually puts into us and that changes us internally. The Roman Catholic Church understands justification to involve such an infusion, which differs from Protestantism’s view that justification is a legal declaration by God. (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1245)

¹⁴ Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Andover: W. F. Draper, 1854).

simply by their being imputed to him: “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account” or “*Impute that to me; I will repay it*” (Phm 1:18-19).

In like manner, He was made “to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” and “bare our sins in his own body on the tree”—not that our sins were chargeable against Him personally or previously, but they became His by imputation on God’s part and voluntary susception¹⁵ on His own (2Co 5:21; 1Pe 2:24). If it be said that the mere word *impute* is not employed in this case, it may be asked whether there be any other that could more accurately express the fact, if it be a fact; and whether the word itself is not used in a parallel case, when God is said “to impute righteousness without works,” as often as He “justifieth the ungodly”? (Rom 4:5-6). Indeed, justification consists partly in the “non-imputation” of sin, which did belong personally to the sinner, and partly in the “imputation” of righteousness, of which he was utterly destitute before. And the meaning of the one may be ascertained from the meaning of the other, while *both* are necessary to express the full meaning of justification. We conclude, therefore, that the righteousness of Christ—being the merit of a work done and finished—may be imputed for the justification of His people, but cannot possibly be infused.

It is affirmed, *secondly*, that the righteousness of Christ, to be available for the benefit of His people, must become theirs by **imputation and not by infusion**. Most of the leading errors on the subject of justification may be traced to obscure or defective views in regard to the nature or import of imputation, and have arisen from supposing either that it consists in the *infusion of moral qualities*, in which case justification is confounded with sanctification; or that, in so far as imputation may be distinguished from such infusion, it is founded, at least, on the moral qualities that thus become inherent, in which case justification has for its immediate ground a *personal* and not a *vicarious*¹⁶ righteousness. The only effectual way of striking at the root of these prevailing and [destructive] errors is by forming distinct and definite conceptions of what is really meant by the general doctrine of imputation, whether in regard to sin or to righteousness. And the likeliest means of doing so seems to be to take the three cases of imputation which have been affirmed by divines to have the express sanction of Scripture—namely 1) that of the guilt of Adam’s first sin to his

¹⁵ **susception** – the act of taking something upon oneself.

¹⁶ **vicarious** – done by one person as a substitute for another.

posterity, 2) that of the guilt of our sins to Christ as our Substitute, and 3) that of His righteousness to us as the immediate ground of our justification—to compare them with one another, to eliminate whatever is peculiar to each of them, and to frame our general idea of imputation by including in it only what is common to them all. For as each of the three is a specific example of the same generic class, we may hope by means of this process of comparison and abstraction¹⁷ to arrive at a correct result and to retain whatever is essential to the nature of imputation, while we exclude only what is peculiar to each of its special exemplifications.¹⁸ It may thus be made manifest that imputation, whether it is of sin or of righteousness, neither consists in the infusion of moral qualities, nor is in all cases necessarily connected with it.

Take the three cases of imputation that have been specified and compare them with one another. We find that in two out of the three a change of moral character is the invariable concomitant¹⁹ or consequent of imputation; for the imputation of *Adam's guilt* to his posterity was connected with their loss of original righteousness and the corruption of their whole nature. And the imputation of *Christ's righteousness* to His people is connected, in like manner, with their renewal and sanctification. But we also find that, in the third case—which is as real and as complete an instance of imputation as either of the other two—the imputation of *our sins* to Christ was not connected with any change in His holy character, or with the infusion of any, even the slightest, taint of moral evil. Whence we infer that imputation, so far from consisting in, is not even invariably *connected* with the infusion of moral qualities.

We find again that in two out of the three cases, representative and personal agency are so clearly distinguished as to make it manifest that the party to whom anything is imputed is not supposed to have had any *active participation* in the doing of it: for our sins were really, and in the full sense of the term, imputed to Christ as our Substitute, yet He had no share in the commission of them. And His righteousness is, in like manner, imputed to us for our justification, yet we had no share with Him in finishing the work that the Father had given Him to do (Joh 5:36). Whence we infer that, in the third case—the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity—it is so far from being necessary to suppose our personal participation in his act, that such a supposition would go far to

¹⁷ **abstraction** – summarizing.

¹⁸ **exemplifications** – illustrating by example.

¹⁹ **concomitant** – conjoined with; accompanying.

destroy the doctrine of imputation altogether, by setting aside the fundamental distinction between the agency of the representative and that of those who were represented by him.

We find again that in all the three cases, imputation, whether of sin or of righteousness, is founded on a federal relation²⁰ subsisting between one and many—for Adam was constituted the head and representative of his race, and Christ the Substitute and Surety of His people. This relation may be fitly described as amounting to a union between them, in virtue of which they are regarded and treated as being, in some respects, one. But this union is not such as to destroy the distinction between their respective personalities or to confound their several acts: for it is still true, that the representative was personally different from those whom he represented, and that his obedience or disobedience was his own act and not theirs, although it is imputed to them.

These few specimens may suffice to illustrate the general doctrine of imputation, and the best way of acquiring a distinct conception of its true meaning. They show that, while the righteousness of Christ, considered as the merit of His mediatorial work, may become ours by being imputed to us, it is not communicated as an inherent habit or quality might be; and that our justification, in so far as it depends on that righteousness, neither consists in the infusion of moral qualities nor rests on these qualities when they have been infused, as its proper ground.

It is affirmed, *thirdly*, that the righteousness of Christ, considered as the merit of His mediatorial work, must ever continue, even when it is imputed to us, to belong primarily and, in one important respect, exclusively to Him by Whom alone that work was accomplished. It is His righteousness in a sense in which it can never be ours: it is His, as having been wrought out by Him; and it is ours, only as it is imputed to us. It is His, as it was the merit of His personal obedience; and it is ours, only as it is derived to us from Him. He claims a special propriety²¹ in it even when He makes it over to His people. The whole merit is His; the gracious imputation of it only is ours.

From *The Doctrine of Justification*, The Banner of Truth Trust,
www.banneroftruth.org.



²⁰ **federal relation** – covenant or representative connection.

²¹ **propriety** – exclusive right of possession; ownership.

THE INSTRUMENT OF JUSTIFICATION

A. W. Pink (1889-1952)

*“Being justified freely by his grace...being now justified by his blood...
being justified by faith.”—Romans 3:24; 5:9; 5:1*

A FULL exposition of the doctrine of justification requires that each of these propositions should be interpreted in their Scriptural sense, and that they be combined together in their true relations as to form one harmonious whole. Unless these three propositions are carefully distinguished, there is sure to be confusion. Unless all the three are steadily borne in mind, we are sure to land in error. Each must be given its due weight, yet none must be understood in such a way as to make its force annul that of the others.

What is the precise place and influence that faith has in the important affairs of justification? What is the exact nature or character of justifying faith? In what particular sense are we to understand this proposition that we are “justified by *faith*”? And what is the connection between that proposition and the postulates¹ that we are “justified by *grace*” and “justified by his *blood*”? These matters call for the utmost care. The nature of justifying faith requires to be closely defined so that its particular agency is correctly viewed, for it is easy to make a mistake here to the prejudice of Christ’s honor and glory, which must not be given to another—no, not to faith itself.

Many would-be teachers have erred at this point, for the common tendency of human nature is to arrogate² to itself the glory that belongs alone to God. While there have been those who rejected the unscriptural notion that we can be justified before God by our own works, yet not a few of these very men virtually make a savior of their own faith. Not only have some spoken of faith as though it were a contribution that God requires the sinner to make toward his own salvation—the last mite that was necessary to make up the price of his redemption; but others (who sneered at theologians and boasted of their superior understanding of the things of

¹ **postulates** – fundamental elements.

² **arrogate** – claim for one’s self without right.

God) have insisted that faith itself is what constitutes us righteous before God, He regarding faith as righteousness.

A deplorable example of [this] is to be found in the comments made upon Romans 4 by Mr. J. N. Darby, the father of the Plymouth Brethren:³ “This was Abraham’s faith. He believed the promise that he should be the father of many nations, because God had spoken, counting on the power of God, thus glorifying Him, without calling in question anything that He had said by looking at circumstances; therefore *this* also was counted to him for righteousness. He glorified God according to what God was. Now this was not written for his sake alone: the same *faith* shall be imputed to us also *for righteousness*” (“Synopsis” vol. 4, p. 133—italics ours). The Christ-dishonoring error contained in those statements will be exposed later on in this [article].

“How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God? Answer: Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it, not as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification; but *only as it is an instrument* by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and His righteousness” (*Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 73*). Though this definition was framed upwards of two hundred and fifty years ago, it is far superior to almost anything found in current literature on the subject. It is more accurate to speak of faith as the “instrument” rather than as the *condition*, for a “condition” is generally used to signify that for the sake whereof a benefit is conferred. Faith is neither the ground nor the substance of our justification, but simply *the hand* that receives the divine gift proffered⁴ to us in the gospel.

What is the precise place and influence that faith has in the important affair of justification? Romanist answer: It justifies us *formally*, not relatively: that is, upon the account of its own intrinsic value. They point out that faith is never alone, but “worketh by love” (Gal 5:6), and therefore its own excellency merits acceptance at God’s hand. But the faith of the best is weak and deficient (Luk 17:5), and so could never satisfy the Law, which requires a *flawless perfection*. If righteousness were given as a reward for faith, its possessor would have cause for boasting, expressly contrary to the

³ **Plymouth Brethren** – community of Christians, established in Plymouth, Devon, England, in 1831. Biblical prophecy and the Second Coming of Christ were emphasized among them. John Nelson Darby soon became a dominant personality in the movement.

⁴ **proffered** – to offer for acceptance.

Apostle in Romans 3:26-27. Moreover, such a method of justification would entirely frustrate the life and death of Christ, making His great sacrifice unnecessary. It is not faith as a spiritual grace that justifies us, but as an instrument—the *hand* that lays hold of Christ.

In connection with justification, faith is *not* to be considered as a virtuous exercise of the heart, nor as a principle of holy obedience: “Because faith, as concerned in our justification, does not regard Christ as King, enacting laws, requiring obedience, and subduing depravity; but as a Substitute,⁵ answering the requirements of the divine Law, and as a Priest expiating sin by His own death on the cross. Hence, in justification we read of ‘precious faith...through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ’ (2Pe 1:1) and of ‘faith in his blood’ (Rom 3:25), and believers are described as ‘receiving the atonement’ and ‘receiving the gift of righteousness’ (Rom 5:11, 17). Therefore it is evident that faith is represented as having an immediate regard to the vicarious work of Christ, and that it is considered not under the notion of exercising virtue or of performing a duty, but of receiving a free gift.”⁶

What is the relation of faith to justification? The Arminian⁷ answer to the question, refined somewhat by the Plymouth Brethren, is that the *act* of believing is imputed to us for righteousness. One error leads to another. Mr. Darby denied that Gentiles were ever under the Law; hence, he denied also that Christ obeyed the Law in His people’s stead, and therefore as Christ’s vicarious obedience is not reckoned to their account, he had to seek elsewhere for their righteousness. This he claimed to find in the Christian’s own faith, insisting that their act of believing is imputed to them “for righteousness.” To give his theory respectability, he clothed it in the language of several expressions found in Romans 4, though he knew quite well that the Greek afforded no foundation whatever for that which he built upon it.

In Romans 4 we read, “His faith is counted *for* righteousness” (v. 5), “faith was reckoned to Abraham *for* righteousness” (v. 9), “it was imputed to him *for* righteousness” (v. 22). Now in each of these verses the Greek preposition is *eis* that *never* means “in the

⁵ See FGB 207, *Substitution*.

⁶ Abraham Booth (1704-1836), “Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners” in *Booth’s Selected Works*, 117.

⁷ **Arminian** – view of Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch theologian, who rejected the Reformers’ view of predestination, teaching instead that predestination was based on God’s foreknowledge of sinners accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will.

stead of,” but always signifies “towards, in order to, with a view to”: it has the uniform force of “unto.” Its exact meaning and force is unequivocally plain in Romans 10:10: “With the heart man believeth *unto* [*eis*] righteousness,” that is, the believing heart reaches out toward and lays hold of Christ Himself. “This passage may help us to understand what justification by faith is; for it shows that righteousness then comes to us, when we embrace God’s goodness offered to us in the gospel. We are then for this reason just, because we believe that God is propitious ⁸ to us in Christ.”⁹

The Holy Spirit has used the Greek prepositions with unerring precision. Never do we find Him employing *eis* in connection with Christ’s satisfaction and sacrifice in our room and stead, but only *anti* or *huper*, which means *in lieu of*.¹⁰ On the other hand, *anti* and *huper* are *never* used in connection with our believing, for faith is *not* accepted by God *in lieu of* perfect obedience. Faith must either be the *ground* of our acceptance with God, or the means or *instrument* of our becoming interested in the true meritorious ground, namely, the righteousness of Christ; it cannot stand in *both* relations to our justification. “Those whom God effectually calleth He also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone: nor by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness, by faith: which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God.” (*Westminster Confession of Faith 11.1*)

That faith itself cannot be the substance or ground of our justification is clear from many considerations. The “righteousness of God [i.e., the satisfaction that Christ rendered to the Law] is revealed to faith” (Rom 1:17) and so cannot be faith itself. Romans 10:10 declares, “With the heart man believeth *unto* righteousness” so that righteousness must be a distinct thing from believing. In Jeremiah 23:6, we read “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” so faith cannot be our righteousness. Let not Christ be dethroned in order to exalt faith: set not the servant above the master. “We acknowledge no righteousness but what the obedience and satisfac-

⁸ **propitious** – ready to forgive sins and bestow blessings.

⁹ John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 393.

¹⁰ **in lieu of** – instead of; in place of.

tion of Christ yields us: His blood, not our faith; His satisfaction, not our believing it, is the matter of justification before God.”¹¹ What alterations are there in our faith! What minglings of unbelief at all times! Is this a foundation to build our justification and hope upon?

Perhaps some will say, “Are not the words of Scripture expressly on Mr. Darby’s side? Does not Romans 4:5 affirm, ‘Faith is counted for righteousness?’” We answer, “Is the *sense* of Scripture on his side?” Suppose I should undertake to prove that David was cleansed from guilt by the “*hyssop*” which grows on the wall: that would sound ridiculous. Yes; nevertheless, I should have the express words of Scripture to support me: “Purge me *with hyssop*, and I shall be clean” (Psa 51:7). Yet clear as those words read, they would not afford me the least countenance imaginable from the *sense* and spirit of God’s Word. Has the *hyssop*—a worthless shrub—any kind of fitness to stand in the stead of the sacrificial blood, and make an atonement for sin? No more fitness has *faith* to stand in the stead of Christ’s perfect obedience, to act as our justifying righteousness, or procure our acceptance with God!

An apology is really due many of our readers, for wasting their time with such puerilities,¹² but we ask them to kindly bear with us. We hope it may please God to use this article to expose one of Darby’s many grievous errors. For “grievous” *this* error most certainly is. His teaching that the Christian’s faith, instead of the vicarious obedience of Christ, is reckoned for righteousness makes God guilty of a downright lie, for it represents Him as giving to faith a *fictitious* value—the believer has no righteousness, so God regards his poor faith as “righteousness.”

“And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6). The one point to be decided here is: was it Abraham’s faith itself that was in God’s account taken for righteousness (horrible idea!), or was it the righteousness of God in Christ that Abraham’s faith prospectively laid hold of? The comments of the Apostle in Romans 4:18-22 settle the point decisively. In these verses, Paul emphasizes the natural impossibilities that stood in the way of God’s promise of a numerous offspring to Abraham being fulfilled (the genital deadness both of his own body and Sarah’s), and on the implicit confidence he had (notwithstanding the difficulties) in the power and faithfulness of God

¹¹ John Flavel (1630-1691), “The Method of Grace” in *The Works of John Flavel*, vol. 2, 119.

¹² **puerilities** – childishnesses; immaturities.

that He *would* perform what He promised. Hence, when the Apostle adds, “Therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (v. 22), that “therefore” can only mean: Because through faith he completely *lost sight of nature and self*, and realized with undoubting assurance the sufficiency of the divine arm, and the certainty of its working.

Abraham’s faith, dear reader, was nothing more and nothing else than *the renunciation of all virtue and strength in himself*, and a hanging in childlike trust upon God for what He was able and willing to do. Far, very far, indeed was his faith from being a mere substitute for a “righteousness” which he lacked. Far, very far was God from accepting his faith in lieu of a perfect obedience to His Law. Rather was Abraham’s faith the acting of a soul that found *its* life, its hope, its all *in the Lord Himself*. And *that* is what justifying faith is: it is “simply the instrument by which Christ and His righteousness are received in order to justification. It is emptiness filled with Christ’s fullness; impotency lying down upon Christ’s strength.”¹³

What is the relation of faith to justification? Antinomians and hyper-Calvinists answer, Merely that of comfort or assurance. Their theory is that the elect were actually justified by God before the foundation of the world, and all that faith does now is to make this *manifest* in their conscience. This error was advocated by such men as W. Gadsby, J. Irons, James Wells, J. C. Philpot. That it originated not with these men is clear from the fact that the Puritans refuted it in their day. “By faith alone we obtain and receive the forgiveness of sins; for notwithstanding any antecedent act of God concerning us, in and for Christ, *we do not actually receive* a complete soul-freeing discharge until we believe.”¹⁴ “It is in vain to say, I am justified by faith only in respect to the court of mine own conscience...And the faith that Paul and the other apostles were justified by, was their believing on Christ that they might be justified (the words in Gal. 2:15-16 are express), and not a believing that they were justified already, and therefore it was not an act of assurance.”¹⁵

How are we justified by faith? Having given a threefold negative answer: not by faith as a joint cause with works (Romanists), not by faith as an act of grace in us (Arminians), not by faith as it re-

¹³ John L. Girardeau (1825-1898), *Calvinism and Evangelical Arminianism*, 418.

¹⁴ John Owen (1616-1683), “The Death of Christ” in *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 10, 470-471.

¹⁵ Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680), “Of the Object and Acts of Justifying Faith” in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. 8, 214, 220.

ceives the Spirit's witness (Antinomians); we now turn to the positive answer. Faith justifies only as an instrument that God has appointed to the apprehension and application of Christ's righteousness. When we say that faith is the "instrument" of our justification, let it be clearly understood that we do not mean faith is the instrument *wherewith* God justifies, but the instrument *whereby* we receive Christ. Christ has merited righteousness for us, and faith in Christ is that which renders it [fitting] in God's sight the purchased blessing be assigned. *Faith unites to Christ*, and being united to Him we are possessed of all that is in Christ, so far as is consistent with our capacity of receiving and God's appointment in giving. Having been made one with Christ in spirit, God now considers us as one with Him in law.

We are justified *by* faith, and not for faith; not because of what faith is, but because of what it *receives*. "It hath no efficacy of itself, but as it is the band of our union with Christ. The whole virtue of cleansing proceeds from Christ the object. We receive the water with our hands, but the cleansing virtue is not in our hands, but in the water, yet the water cannot cleanse us without our receiving it; our receiving it unites the water to us, and is a means whereby we are cleansed. And therefore it is observed that our justification by faith is always expressed in the passive, not in the active; as we are justified by faith, not that faith justifies us. The efficacy is in Christ's blood, the reception of it in our faith."¹⁶

Scripture knows no such thing as a justified unbeliever. There is nothing meritorious about believing, yet it is necessary in order to justification. It is not only the righteousness of Christ *as imputed* that justifies, but also *as received* (Rom 5:11, 17). The righteousness of Christ is not mine until I accept it as the Father's gift. "The believing sinner is 'justified by faith' only *instrumentally*, as he 'lives by eating' only instrumentally. Eating is the particular act by which he receives and appropriates food. Strictly speaking, he lives by bread alone, not by eating, or the act of masticating.¹⁷ And, strictly speaking, the sinner is justified by Christ's sacrifice alone, not by his act of believing in it."¹⁸ In the application of justification, faith is not a builder, but a beholder; not an agent, but an instrument; it has nothing to do, but all to believe; nothing to give, but all to receive.

¹⁶ Stephen Charnock (1628-1680), "A Discourse of the Cleansing Virtue of Christ's Blood" in *The Complete Works of Stephen Charnock*, vol. 3, 522.

¹⁷ **masticating** – chewing.

¹⁸ W. G. T. Shedd (1820-1894), *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 2, 544-545.

God has not selected faith to be the instrument of justification because there is some peculiar virtue in faith, but rather because there is no merit in it: faith is self-emptying—“Therefore it is of faith *that it might be by grace*” (Rom 4:16). A gift is seen to be a gift when nothing is required or accepted of the recipient, but simply that he *receive it*. Whatever other properties faith may possess, it is simply *as receiving Christ* that it justifies. Were we said to be justified by repentance, by love, or by any other spiritual grace, it would convey the idea of something good in us being the *consideration* on which the blessing was bestowed; but justification *by faith* (correctly understood) conveys no such idea.

“For how does true faith justify unless by uniting us to Christ, so that being made one with Him, we may be admitted to a participation in His righteousness?”¹⁹ Justifying faith is a looking away from self, a renouncing of my own righteousness, a laying hold of Christ. Justifying faith consists, first, of a knowledge and belief of the truth revealed in Scripture thereon; second, in an abandonment of all pretense, claim, or confidence in our own righteousness; third, in a trust in and reliance upon the righteousness of Christ, laying hold of the blessing that He purchased for us. It is the heart’s approval and approbation²⁰ of the method of justification proposed in the gospel: by Christ alone, proceeding from the pure grace of God, and excluding all human merits. “*In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*” (Isa 45:24).

None will experimentally appreciate the righteousness of Christ until they have been experimentally stripped by the Spirit. Not until the Lord puts us in the fire and burns off our filthy rags, and makes us stand naked before Him, trembling from head to foot as we view the sword of His justice suspended over our heads, will any truly value “the best robe.” Not until the condemning sentence of the Law has been applied by the Spirit to the conscience does the guilty soul cry, “Lost, lost!” (Rom 7:9-10). Not until there is a personal apprehension of the requirements of God’s Law, a feeling sense of our total inability to perform its righteous demands, and an honest realization that God would be just in banishing us from His presence forever, is the necessity for a precious Christ perceived by the soul.

From *The Doctrine of Justification*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



¹⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III. xvii. 11.

²⁰ **approbation** – warm approval; liking; praise.

NOT FAITH, BUT CHRIST

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

OUR justification is the direct result of our believing the gospel. Our knowledge of our own justification comes from believing God's promise of justification to everyone who believes these glad tidings. For there is not only the divine testimony, but there is the promise annexed¹ to it, assuring eternal life to everyone who receives that testimony. There is first, then, a believed *gospel*, and then there is a believed *promise*. The latter is the "appropriation," as it is called; which, after all, is nothing but the acceptance of the *promise* that is everywhere coupled with the gospel message. The believed gospel *saves*; but it is the believed promise that *assures* us of this salvation.

Yet, after all, *faith* is not our righteousness. It is accounted to us *in order to* righteousness (Rom 4:5), but not *as* righteousness. For in that case it would be a *work* like any other doing of man and as such would be incompatible with the righteousness of the Son of God—the "righteousness which is by faith" (Heb 11:7). Faith connects us with the righteousness and is therefore totally distinct from it. To confound the one with the other is to subvert the whole gospel of the grace of God. Our act of faith must ever be a separate thing from that which we believe.

God reckons the believing man as having done *all righteousness*, though he has not done *any*, and though his faith is not righteousness. In this sense, it is that faith is *counted* to us for, or in order to, righteousness and that we are "justified by faith" Faith does not justify as a work, or as a moral act, or a piece of goodness, nor as a gift of the Spirit, but simply because it is the bond between us and the Substitute—a very slender bond in one sense, but strong as iron in another. The work of Christ *for* us is the object of faith. The Spirit's work *in us* is that which produces this faith: it is out of the former, not of the latter, that our peace and justification come. Without the touch of the rod, the water would not have gushed forth; yet it was the *rock* and not the *rod* that contained the water (Num 20:8-11).

The bringer of the sacrifice into the tabernacle was to lay his hand upon the head of the sheep or the bullock; otherwise, the of-

¹ **annexed** – attached.

fering would not have been accepted for him. But the laying on of his hand was not the same as the victim on which it was laid. The serpent-bitten Israelite was to look at the uplifted serpent of brass in order to be healed (Num 21:8-9). But his looking was not the brazen serpent. We may say it was his looking that healed him, just as the Lord said, “Thy faith hath saved thee” (Luk 18:42). But this is figurative language. It was not his act of looking that healed him, but the *object* to which he looked. So faith is not our righteousness: it merely knits us to the righteous One and makes us partakers of His righteousness. By a natural figure of speech, faith is often magnified into something great; whereas it is really nothing but our consenting to be saved by another. Its supposed magnitude is derived from the greatness of the object that it grasps, the excellence of the righteousness that it accepts. Its preciousness is not its own, but the preciousness of *Him* to whom it links us.

Faith is not our physician. It only brings us *to* the Physician. It is not even our medicine; it only administers the medicine, divinely prepared by Him who “healeth all thy diseases” (Psa 103:3). In all our believing, let us remember God’s word to Israel: “I am the Lord, that healeth thee” (Exo 15:26). Our faith is but our touching Jesus; and what is even this, in reality, but *His touching us?*

Faith is not our savior. It was not faith that was born at Bethlehem and died on Golgotha for us. It was not faith that loved us and gave itself for us; that bore our sins in its own body on the tree; that died and rose again for our sins. Faith is one thing, the Savior is another. Faith is one thing, and the cross is another. Let us not confound them, nor ascribe to a poor, imperfect act of man, that which belongs exclusively to the Son of the Living God.

Faith is not perfection. Yet only by perfection can we be saved, either our own or another’s. That which is imperfect cannot justify, and an imperfect faith could not in any sense be a righteousness. If it is to justify, it must be *perfect*. It must be like “the Lamb without blemish and without spot.” An imperfect faith may connect us with the perfection of another; but it cannot of itself do aught² for us, either in protecting us from wrath or securing the divine acquittal. All faith here is imperfect; and our security is this, that it matters not how poor or weak our faith may be: if it touches the perfect One, all is well. The touch draws out the virtue that is in *Him*, and we are saved. The slightest imperfection in our faith, if faith were our righteousness, would be fatal to every hope. But the

² **aught** – anything.

imperfection of our faith, however great, if faith be but the approximation or contact between us and the fullness of the Substitute, is no hindrance to our participation of His righteousness. God has asked and provided a *perfect* righteousness: He nowhere asks nor expects a perfect faith. An earthenware pitcher can convey water to a traveler's thirsty lips as well as one of gold; nay, a broken vessel, even if there be but "a sherd³ to take water from the pit" (Isa 30:14), will suffice. So a feeble, very feeble faith, will connect us with the righteousness of the Son of God; the faith, perhaps, that can only cry, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24).

Faith is not satisfaction to God. In no sense and in no aspect can faith be said to satisfy God or to satisfy the Law. Yet if it is to be our righteousness, it must satisfy. Being *imperfect*, it cannot satisfy; being human, it cannot satisfy, even though it were perfect. That which satisfies must be capable of bearing our guilt; and that which bears our guilt must be not only perfect, but also divine. We need a sin-bearer, and our faith cannot be a sin-bearer. Faith can expiate no guilt, can accomplish no propitiation, can pay no penalty, can wash away no stain, can provide no righteousness. It brings us to the cross, where there is expiation and propitiation and payment and cleansing and righteousness. But in itself, it has no merit and no virtue.

Faith is not Christ or the cross of Christ. Faith is not the blood, nor the sacrifice. It is not the altar, nor the laver,⁴ nor the mercy seat, nor the incense. It does not work, but accepts a work done ages ago. It does not wash, but leads us to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. It does not create; it merely links us to that new thing which was created when the "everlasting righteousness" was brought in (Dan 9:24).

And as faith goes on, so it continues; always the beggar's outstretched hand, never the rich man's gold; always the cable, never the anchor; the knocker, not the door or the palace or the table; the handmaid, not the mistress; the lattice which lets in the light, not the sun.

Without worthiness in itself, it knits us to the infinite worthiness of Him in Whom the Father delights; and so knitting us, presents us perfect in the perfection of another. Though it is not the foundation laid in Zion, it brings us to that foundation and keeps us there "grounded and settled" (Col 1:23), that we may not

³ **sherd** – a fragment of pottery.

⁴ **laver** – large basin used in the ancient Jewish Temple by a priest for washings before making a sacrificial offering.

be moved away from the hope of the gospel. Though it is not “the gospel,” the “glad tidings,” it receives this good news as God’s eternal [truths] and bids the soul rejoice in them. Though it is not the burnt offering, it stands still and gazes on the ascending flame, which assures us that the wrath that should have consumed the sinner has fallen upon the Substitute.

Though faith is not “the righteousness,” it is the tie between it and us. It realizes our present standing before God in the excellency of His own Son. And it tells us that our eternal standing in the ages to come is in the same excellency and depends on the perpetuity of that righteousness which can never change. For never shall we *put off* that Christ whom we *put on* when we believed (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27). This divine raiment is “to everlasting.” It waxes not old, it cannot be rent, and its beauty fadeth not away.

Nor does faith lead us away from that cross to which at first it led us. Some in our day speak as if we soon got beyond the cross and might leave it behind; that the cross having done all it could do for us when first we came under its shadow, we may quit it and go forward; that to remain always at the cross is to be babes, not men.

But what is the cross? It is not the mere wooden pole or some imitation of it, such as Romanists use. These we may safely leave behind us. We need not pitch our tent upon the literal Golgotha or in Joseph’s garden. But the great truth that the cross embodies we can no more part with than we can part with life eternal. In this sense, to turn our back upon the cross is to turn our back upon Christ crucified—to give up our connection with the Lamb that was slain. The truth is, that all that Christ did and suffered, from the manger to the tomb, forms one glorious whole, no part of which shall ever become needless or obsolete; no part of which we can ever leave without forsaking the whole. I am always at the manger, and yet I know that mere incarnation cannot save; always at Gethsemane, and yet I believe that its agony was not the finished work; always at the cross, with my face toward it and my eye on the crucified One, and yet I am persuaded that the sacrifice there was completed once for all; always looking into the grave, though I rejoice that it is empty and that “He is not here, but is risen”; always resting (with the angel) on the stone that was rolled away, and handling the grave-clothes, and realizing a risen Christ, nay, an ascended and interceding Lord; yet on no pretext whatever leaving any part of my Lord’s life or death behind me, but unceasingly keeping up my connection with Him, as born, living, dying,

buried, and rising again, and drawing out from each part some new blessing every day and hour.

Man, in his natural spirit of self-justifying legalism, has tried to get away from the cross of Christ and its perfection, or to erect another cross instead, or to set up a screen of ornaments between himself and it, or to alter its true meaning into something more congenial⁵ to his tastes, or to transfer the virtue of it to some act or performance or feeling of its own. Thus, the simplicity of the cross is nullified,⁶ and its saving power is denied. For the cross saves completely or not at all. Our faith does not divide the work of salvation between itself and the cross. It is the acknowledgment that the cross alone saves, and that it saves alone. Faith adds *nothing* to the cross or to its healing virtue. It owns the fullness, sufficiency, and suitableness of the work done there and bids the toiling spirit cease from its labors and enter into rest. Faith does not come to Calvary to *do* anything. It comes to see the glorious spectacle of all things done and to accept this completion without a misgiving as to its efficacy. It listens to the “It is finished!” of the Sin-bearer and says, “Amen.” Where faith begins, there labor ends—labor, I mean, “for” life and pardon.

Faith is rest, not toil. It is the giving up all the former weary efforts to do or feel something good in order to [persuade] God to love and pardon; and the calm reception of the truth so long rejected, that God is not waiting for any such inducements, but loves and pardons of His own goodwill and is showing that goodwill to any sinner who will come to Him on such a footing, casting away his own performances or goodnesses, and relying implicitly upon the free love of Him Who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Faith is the acknowledgment of the entire absence of all goodness in us and the recognition of the cross as the substitute for all the want on our part. Faith saves because it owns the complete salvation of another, and not because it contributes *anything* to that salvation. There is no dividing or sharing the work between our own belief and Him in Whom we believe. The whole work is His, not ours, from the first to the last. Faith does not believe in itself, but in the Son of God. Like the beggar, it receives everything, but gives nothing. It consents to be a debtor forever to the free love of God. Its resting-place is the foundation laid in Zion. It rejoices in an-

⁵ **congenial** – agreeable.

⁶ **nullify** – to counteract the force or effectiveness of.

other, not in itself. Its song is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Tit 3:5).

Christ crucified is to be the burden of our preaching and the substance of our belief from first to last. At no time in the saint’s life does *he cease to need the cross*; though at times he may feel that his special need in spiritual perplexity or the exigency⁷ of conflict with evil may be the Incarnation or the agony in the Garden or the resurrection or the hope of the promised advent, to be glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe.

But the question is not, “What truths are we to believe?” but, “What truths are we to believe *for justification*?” That Christ is to come again in glory and in majesty as Judge and King is an article of the Christian faith, the disbelief of which would almost lead us to doubt the Christianity of him who disbelieves it. Yet we are not in any sense justified by the *second* advent of our Lord, but solely by His *first*. We believe in His ascension, yet our justification is not connected with it. So we believe His resurrection, yet we are not justified by faith in it, but by faith in His death—that death which made Him at once our propitiation and our righteousness. “Who...was raised again for our justification” (Rom 4:25) is the clear statement of the Word. The resurrection was the visible pledge of a justification already accomplished. “The power of his resurrection” (Phi 3:10) does not refer to atonement or pardon or reconciliation, but to our being renewed in the spirit of our minds, to our being “begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1Pe 1:3). That which is *internal*, such as our quickening, our strengthening, our renewing, may be connected with resurrection and resurrection power; but that which is *external*, such as God’s pardoning and justifying and accepting, must be connected with the cross alone.

It is *the blood* that justifies (Rom 5:9). It is the blood that pacifies the conscience, purging it from dead works to serve the living God (Heb 9:14). It is *the blood* that emboldens us to enter through the veil into the holiest and go up to the sprinkled mercy seat. It is *the blood* that we are to drink for the quenching of our thirst (Joh 6:55). It is *the blood* by which we have peace with God (Col 1:20). It is *the blood* through which we have redemption (Eph 1:7) and by which we are brought nigh (Eph 2:13), by which we are sanctified (Heb 13:12). It is the *blood* that is the seal of the everlasting covenant (Heb 13:20). It is the *blood* that cleanses (1Jo 1:7), that gives us victory (Rev 12:11), and with which we have communion in the

⁷ **exigency** – urgent requirements; pressing needs.

Supper of the Lord (1Co 10:16). It is the *blood* that is the purchase-money or ransom of the Church of God (Act 20:28).

The blood and the resurrection are very different things; for the blood is *death* and the resurrection is *life*. “Christ in us, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27), is a well-known and blessed truth. But Christ *in* us, [*as*] *our justification*, is a ruinous error leading man away from a crucified Christ—a Christ crucified *for* us. Christ *for* us is one truth; Christ *in* us is quite another. The mingling of these two together or the transposition of them is the nullifying of the one finished work of the Substitute. Let it be granted that Christ in us is the source of holiness and fruitfulness (Joh 15:4); but let it never be overlooked that first of all there be Christ *for* us, as our propitiation, our justification, our righteousness. It is not *incarnation* on the one hand, nor is it *resurrection* on the other, on which we are thus to feed and out of which this life comes forth: it is that which lies between these two—death—the sacrificial death of the Son of God. It is not the personality or the life history of the Christ of God that is the special quickener⁸ and nourishment of our souls, but the *blood shedding*. Not that we are to separate the former from the latter; but still it is on the latter that we are specially to feed and this all the days of our lives.

From *The Everlasting Righteousness*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



If the doctrine of justification is lost, the whole of Christian doctrine is lost... Christ’s victory is a victory over the Law, sin, our flesh, the world, the devil, death, hell, and all evils; and this victory of His He has given to us. Even though these tyrants, our enemies, accuse us and terrify us, they cannot drive us into despair or condemn us. For Christ, whom God the Father raised from the dead, is the Victor over them, and He is our righteousness. Therefore “thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 15:57). Amen.—*Martin Luther*

The beginning of the late work of God in this place was so circumstanced that I could not but look upon it as a remarkable testimony of God’s approbation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone...At that time, while I was greatly reproached for defending [justification] in the pulpit, and just upon my suffering a very open abuse for it, God’s work wonderfully brake forth amongst us, and souls began to flock to Christ, as the Savior in whose righteousness alone they hoped to be justified. So that this was the doctrine on which this work in its beginning was founded, as it evidently was in the whole progress of it.—*Jonathan Edwards*

⁸ **quickener** – one who revives or communicates life.

RECONCILING PAUL AND JAMES

William Pemble (1591-1623)

WE are to give you warning of that stumbling stone that St. James (as it may seem) has laid in our way, lest any should dash his faith upon it and fall, as our adversaries have done, into that error of justification by works. That blessed Apostle, in the second chapter of his epistle, seems not only to give occasion to, but directly to teach this doctrine of justification by works. For in verse 21 and following, he expressly says that Abraham was justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar, and also that Rahab was in like manner justified by works when she entertained the spies. Whence also he sets down a general conclusion that man is justified by works and not by faith alone (Jam 2:24).

Now at first glance, nothing can be spoken more contrary to St. Paul's doctrine in Romans and elsewhere. For speaking of the same example of Abraham, he says (exactly to the contrary) that Abraham was not justified by works, for then he might have boasted (Rom 4:2). And treating generally of man's justification by faith, after a strong dispute he draws forth the conclusion that a man is justified by faith without the works of the Law (Rom 3:28). This conclusion appears contradictory to that of St. James. This harsh discord between these apostles appears to some as impossible to resolve by any qualification; knowing that the Holy Ghost never forgets Himself, some have concluded that if the Spirit of truth spoke by St. Paul, it was doubtless the spirit of error that spoke by the author of this epistle of James.

But this medicine is worse than the disease and is rather violence than skill thus to cut the knot where it cannot be readily untied. A safer and milder course may be held, and some means found out for the resolving of this grand difference, without robbing the Church of so much precious treasure of divine knowledge as is stored up in this epistle. Wherefore both they of the Romish and we of the Reformed Churches, admitting this epistle as canonical,¹ do each search after a fit reconciliation between the apostles.

¹ **canonical** – of or appearing in the biblical canon, i.e., the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament or the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

But they and we are irreconcilable in our various reconciliations of them.

There are two ways whereby [the Reformed] reconcile this seeming difference.

The *first* way is by distinguishing the word *justification*, which may be taken either for the absolution² of a sinner in God's judgment or for the declaration of a man's righteousness before men. This distinction is certain and has its ground in Scripture, which uses the word *justify* in both ways, for the acquitting of us in God's sight and for the manifestation of our innocence before man against accusation or suspicion of fault. They apply this distinction to reconcile the two Apostles thus: Paul speaks of justification in the forum of *God*; James speaks of justification in the forum of *man*. A man is justified by faith without works, says Paul; that is, in *God's* sight a man obtains remission of sins and is reputed to be just only for his faith in Christ, not for his works' sake. A man is justified by works and not by faith only, says James; that is, in *man's* sight we are declared to be just by our good works and not by our faith only, which with other inward and invisible graces is made visible unto man only in the good works that they see us perform. That this application is not unfit to reconcile this difference may be shown by the following analysis.

First, as for Paul, it is agreed on all sides that he speaks of man's justification in God's sight (Rom 3:20).

Second, as for James, we are to show that with just probability he may be understood as referring to the declaration of our justification and righteousness before men. For proof thereof, the text affords us these reasons.

“Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (Jam 2:18). Here the true Christian, speaking to the hypocritical boaster of his faith, requires of him a declaration of his faith and justification thereby by a real proof, not a verbal profession, promising for his part to manifest and prove the truth of his own faith by his good works. Whence it appears that, before man, none can justify the soundness of his faith but by his works thence proceeding.

Abraham is said to be justified **“when he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar” (Jam 2:21).** Now it is manifest that Abraham was justified in God's sight long before, even 25 years earlier (Gen 15:6). Therefore, by that admirable work of his in offering his son

² **absolution** –sentence of a judge declaring an accused person innocent.

he was declared before all the world to be a just man and a true believer. And for this purpose, God tempted³ Abraham in that trial of his faith, that thereby all believers might behold a rare pattern of a lively and justifying faith and see that Abraham was not without good cause called “the father of the faithful.”

It is said that Abraham’s faith “wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect” (Jam 2:22). Even in the judgment of popish expositors, such as Lorinus,⁴ this is to be understood of the manifestation of Abraham’s faith by his works. His faith directed his works; his works manifested the power and perfection of his faith.

It is not, then, without good probability of reason that Calvin and other expositors on our side have given this solution to the problem. This now is the first way of reconciling these two passages. Nevertheless, although this approach may be defended against anything that our adversaries object to the contrary, yet many very learned divines choose rather to tread in another path and more nearly to press the apostles’ steps, whom also in this point I willingly follow.

The second way, then, of reconciling these passages is by distinguishing the word “faith,” which is taken in a double sense. It is first taken for that faith which is true and living (faith that works through love) and is fruitful in all manner of obedience. Second, it is taken for that faith that is false and dead, being only a bare acknowledgment of the truth of all articles of religion accompanied with an outward formality of profession, but yet destitute of sincere obedience.

This distinction of this word “faith” is certain by the Scriptures, as has heretofore been shown in our discussions of that grace. Our men now apply it thus: when Paul affirms that we are justified by faith only, he speaks of that faith that is true and living, working by charity. When James denies that a man is justified by faith only, he disputes against that faith that is false and dead, without power to bring forth any good works. So that the Apostles speak no contradiction because Paul teaches that we are justified by a *true* faith, and James affirms that we are not justified by a *false* faith.

Again, Paul says we are not justified by works; James says we are justified by works. Neither is there any contradiction at all here. For James understands by “works” a working faith, in opposition

³ **tempted** – tested.

⁴ **Lorinus, John** – 1569-1634, Jesuit commentator.

to the idle and dead faith before spoken of, by a metonymy⁵ of the effect. Whence it is plain that these two propositions, that we are not justified by works (which is Paul's) and that we are justified by a working faith (which is James's), sweetly consort together. Paul severs works from our justification, but not from our faith. James joins works to our faith, but not to our justification.

Let me make this a little plainer by a similitude or two. There is a great difference between these two sayings: A man lives by a reasonable soul, and a man lives by reason. The former is true and shows us what qualities and power are essential unto that soul whereby a man lives. But the latter is false, because we do not live by the quality or power of reason, though we live by that soul which has that quality necessarily belonging to it, without which it is no human soul. So also in these propositions: The shoot lives through its authoring life breath; the shoot lives through its growth. Any puny mind can tell that the former is true and the other false. For, although in the vegetative soul whereby plants live, there are necessarily required for its existence those three faculties of nourishment, growth, and procreation, yet it is not the faculty of growing that gives life unto plants, for they live when they are not growing.

In like manner, these two propositions—that we are justified by a working faith and that we are justified by works—differ greatly. The first is true and shows us what qualities are necessarily required unto the existence of that faith, whereby the just shall live, namely that beside the power of believing in the promise there is also a habitual proneness⁶ and resolution unto the doing of all good works joined with it. But the later proposition is false. For although true faith is equally as apt to work in bringing forth universal obedience to God's will as it is apt to believe and trust perfectly in God's promises, yet nevertheless we are not justified by it as it brings forth good works, but as it embraces the promises of the gospel.

Now, then, James affirms that which is true, that we are justified by a working faith; and Paul denies that which is false, that we are justified by works.

From *The Justification of a Sinner*, reprinted by Soli Deo Gloria, a ministry of Reformation Heritage Books, www.heritagebooks.org.

⁵ **metonymy** – figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated, as in the use of *Washington* for the U. S. government.

⁶ **proneness** – tendency; inclination.

ABUSE OF JUSTIFICATION

Robert Traill (1642-1716)

OBJECTION 1: Is there not a great decay amongst professors in real practical godliness? Are we like the old Protestants or the old Puritans? I answer, That the decay and degeneracy is great and heavily to be bewailed. But what is the cause and what will be its cure? Is it because the doctrine of morality, virtue, and good works is not enough preached? This cannot be: for there hath been for many years a public ministry in the nation that make these their constant themes. Yet the land is become as Sodom for all lewdness; and the tree of profaneness is so grown that the sword of the magistrate hath not yet been able to lop off any of its branches. Is it because men have too much faith in Christ? Or too little? Or none at all? Would not faith in Christ increase holiness? Did it not always so? And will it not still do it? Was not the holiness of the first Protestants eminent and shining? The certain spring of this prevailing wickedness in the land, is people's *ignorance* and *unbelief* of the gospel of Christ; and that grows by many prophets that speak lies to them in the name of the Lord.

Objection 2: But do not some abuse the grace of the gospel and turn it into wantonness? *Answer:* Yes; some do, ever did, and still will do so. But it is only the *ill-understood* and *not believed* doctrine of grace that they abuse. The grace itself no man can abuse, for its power *prevents* its abuse. Let us see how Paul, that blessed herald of this grace, dealeth with this objection (Rom 6:1, etc.). What doth he to prevent this abuse? Is it by extenuating what he had said (Rom 5:20) that *grace abounds much more, where sin had abounded*? Is it by mincing grace smaller, that men may not choke upon it or surfeit by it? Is it by mixing something of the Law with it to make it more wholesome? No: but only by plain asserting the power and influence of this grace, wherever it really is. This grace is all treasured up in Christ Jesus, offered to all men in the gospel, poured forth by our Lord in the working of faith, and drunk in by the elect in the exercise of faith. [It] becomes in them a living spring, which *will* and *must* break out and spring up in all holy conversation. He exhorts them to drink in more and more of this grace by faith. And as for such as pretend to grace and live ungodly, the Spirit of God declares they are *void of grace*, which is always fruitful in good works (2Pe 2 & Jude's epistle). The apostle orders the churches to

cast such out (1Co 5; 2Ti 3:5); and to declare to them, as Peter did to a professor, that *they have no part nor portion in this matter, for their heart is not right in the sight of God*; though the doctrine be right that they hypocritically profess.



For if we lose the doctrine of justification, we lose simply everything. Hence the most necessary and important thing is that we teach and repeat this doctrine daily, as Moses says about his Law (Deu 6:7). For it cannot be grasped or held enough or too much. In fact, though we may urge and inculcate it vigorously, no one grasps it perfectly or believes it with all his heart. So frail is our flesh and so disobedient to the Spirit!—*Martin Luther*

The poor wearied sinner can never believe on Jesus Christ until he finds he can do nothing for himself; and in his first believing doth always apply himself to Christ for salvation as a man hopeless and helpless in himself. And by such reasonings with him from the gospel, the Lord will (as He hath often done) convey faith and joy and peace by believing.—*Robert Traill*

We simply interpret justification, as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as if we were righteous; and we say that this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.—*John Calvin*

To justify, therefore, is nothing else than to acquit from the charge of guilt, as if innocence were proved. Hence, when God justifies us through the intercession of Christ, He does not acquit us on a proof of our own innocence, but by an imputation of righteousness, so that though not righteous in ourselves, we are deemed righteous in Christ.—*John Calvin*

Justification then comes to sinners as an act of pure grace, the foundation of it being Christ's righteousness. The practical way of its application is by faith. The sinner believeth God and believeth that Christ is sent of God and takes Christ Jesus to be his only confidence and trust, and by that act he becomes a justified soul.—*Charles Spurgeon*

PEACE THROUGH JUSTIFICATION

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Romans 5:1

LET me show you *the rock* from which justification and peace with God flow. *That rock is Christ.* The true Christian is not justified because of any goodness of his own. His peace is not to be traced up to any work that he has done. It is not purchased by his prayers and regularity, his repentance and his amendment, his morality and his charity. All these are utterly unable to justify him. In themselves, they are defective in many things and need a large forgiveness. And as to justifying him, such a thing is not to be named. Tried by the perfect standard of God’s Law the best of Christians is nothing better than a justified sinner, a pardoned criminal. As to merit, worthiness, desert, or claim upon God’s mercy, he has none. Peace built on any such foundations as these is utterly worthless. The man who rests upon them is miserably deceived.

Never were truer words put on paper than those that Richard Hooker¹ penned on this subject 280 years ago. Let those who would like to know what English clergymen thought in olden times, mark well what he says: “If God would make us an offer thus large, search all the generation of men since the fall of your father Adam, and find *one man*, that hath done any *one action*, which hath past from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all—and for that one man’s one only action, neither man nor angel shall find the torments which are prepared for both—do you think this ransom, to deliver men and angels, would be found among the sons of men?”

The best things we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do *anything* meritorious and worthy to be rewarded—these words I desire entirely to subscribe. I believe that no man can be justified by his works before God in the slightest possible degree. Before man, he may be justified: his works may evidence the reality of his Christianity. Before God, he cannot be justified by anything that he can do: he will be always defective,

¹ **Richard Hooker** (c. 1554-1600) – theologian who created a distinctive Anglican theology, and a master of English prose and legal philosophy.

always imperfect, always shortcoming, always far below the mark, as long as he lives. It is not by works of his own that anyone ever has peace and is a justified man.

But how then is a true Christian justified? What is the secret of that peace and sense of pardon that he enjoys? How can we understand a Holy God dealing with a sinful man as with one innocent, and reckoning him righteous notwithstanding his many sins?

The answer to all these questions is short and simple. The true Christian is counted righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is justified because of the death and atonement of Christ. He has peace because “Christ died for his sins according to the Scriptures.” This key unlocks the mighty mystery. Here the great problem is solved, how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. The life and death of the Lord Jesus explain all. “He is our peace” (1Co 15:3; Eph 2:14).

Christ has *stood in the place* of the true Christian. He has become his Surety and his Substitute. He undertook to bear all that was to be borne, and to do all that was to be done, and what He undertook He performed. Hence, the true Christian is a justified man (Isa 53:6).

Christ has *suffered for sins*, the “just for the unjust.” He has endured our punishment in His own body on the cross. He has allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head. Hence the true Christian is a justified man (1Pe 3:18).

Christ has *paid the debt* the Christian owed by His own blood. He has reckoned for it and discharged it to the uttermost farthing by His own death. God is a just God, and will not require his debts to be paid twice over. Hence the true Christian is a justified man (Act 20:28; 1Pe 1:18-19).

Christ has *obeyed the law* of God perfectly. The devil, the prince of this world, could find no fault in Him. By so fulfilling it, He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in which all His people are clothed in the sight of God. Hence the true Christian is a justified man (Dan 9:24; Rom 10:4).

Christ, in one word, has lived for the true Christian. Christ has died for him. Christ has gone to the grave for him. Christ has risen again for him. Christ has ascended up on high for him, and gone into heaven to intercede for his soul. Christ has done all, paid all, suffered all that was needful for his redemption. Hence arises the true Christian’s justification—hence his peace. In himself there is nothing, but in Christ he has all things that his soul can require (Col 2:3; 3:11).

Who can tell the blessedness of the exchange that takes place between the true Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ's righteousness is placed upon him, and his sins are placed upon Christ. Christ has been reckoned a sinner for his sake, and now he is reckoned innocent for Christ's sake. Christ has been condemned for his sake though there was no fault in Him—and now he is acquitted for Christ's sake, though he is covered with sins, faults, and shortcomings. Here is wisdom indeed! God can now be just and yet pardon the ungodly. Man can feel that he is a sinner, and yet have a good hope of heaven and feel peace within. Who among men could have imagined such a thing? Who ought not to admire it when he hears it? (2Co 5:21).

We read of Jesus, the Son of God, coming down to a world of sinners, who neither cared for Him before He came, nor honored Him when He appeared. We read of Him going down to the prison-house, and submitting to be bound, that we the poor prisoners might be able to go free. We read of Him becoming obedient to death—the death of the cross—that we the unworthy children of Adam might have a door opened to life everlasting. We read of Him being content to bear our sins and carry our transgressions, that we might wear His righteousness, and walk in the light and liberty of the sons of God (Phi 2:8).

This may well be called a “love that passeth knowledge!” In no way could free grace ever have shone so brightly as in the way of *justification by Christ* (Eph 3:19).

This is *the old way* by which alone the children of Adam, who have been justified from the beginning of the world, have found their peace. From Abel downwards, no man or woman has ever had one drop of mercy except through Christ. To Him every altar that was raised before the time of Moses was intended to point. To Him every sacrifice and ordinance of the Jewish Law was meant to direct the children of Israel. Of Him, all the prophets testified. In a word, if you lose sight of justification by Christ, a large part of the Old Testament Scripture will become an unmeaning tangled maze.

This, above all, is the way of justification that exactly meets the wants *and requirements of human nature*. There is a conscience left in man, although he is a fallen being. There is a dim sense of his own need, which in his better moments will make itself heard, and which nothing but Christ can satisfy. So long as his conscience is not hungry, any religious toy will satisfy a man's soul and keep him quiet. But once let his conscience become hungry, and nothing will quiet him but real spiritual food and no food but Christ.

There is something within a man when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*There must be a price paid for my soul or no peace.*” At once, the gospel meets him with Christ. Christ has already paid a ransom for his redemption. Christ has given Himself for him. Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for him (Gal 2:20; 3:13).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*I must have some righteousness or title to heaven or no peace.*” At once, the gospel meets him with Christ. He has brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is the end of the Law for righteousness. His name is called the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. God has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2Co 5:21; Rom 10:4; Jer 23:6).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*There must be punishment and suffering because of my sins, or no peace.*” At once, the gospel meets him with Christ. Christ hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring him to God. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes, we are healed (1Pe 2:24; 3:18).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “*I must have a priest for my soul or no peace.*” At once, the gospel meets him with Christ. Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be the Mediator between Himself and man. He is the ordained Advocate for sinners. He is the accredited Counselor and Physician of sick souls. He is the great High Priest, the Almighty Absolver, the Gracious Confessor of heavy-laden sinners (1Ti 2:5; Heb 8:1).

I know there are thousands of professing Christians who see no peculiar beauty in this doctrine of justification by Christ. Their hearts are buried in the things of the world. Their consciences are palsied,² benumbed, and speechless. But whenever a man’s conscience begins really to feel and speak, he will see something in Christ’s atonement and priestly office that he never saw before. Light does not suit the eye or music the ear, more perfectly than Christ suits the real wants of a sinful soul. Hundreds can testify that the experience of a converted heathen in the island of Raiatea³ in the South Pacific Ocean has been exactly their own. “I saw,” he said,

² **palsied** – trembling or shaking.

³ **Raiatea** – largest island of the Leeward Group, Society Islands, French Polynesia, in the central South Pacific.

“an immense mountain, with precipitous⁴ sides, up which I endeavored to climb, but when I had attained a considerable height, I lost my hold and fell to the bottom. Exhausted with perplexity and fatigue, I went to a distance and sat down to weep, and while weeping, I saw a drop of blood fall upon that mountain, and in a moment it was dissolved.” He was asked to explain what all this meant. “That mountain,” he said, “was my sins, and that drop which fell upon it, was one drop of the precious blood of Jesus, by which the mountain of my guilt was melted away.” [*William’s South Sea Missions*]

This is the one true way of peace—justification by Christ. Beware lest any turn you out of this way and lead you into any of the false doctrines of the Church of Rome. Alas, it is wonderful to see how that unhappy Church has built a house of error hard by the house of truth! Hold fast the truth of God about justification, and be not deceived. Listen not to any thing you may hear about other mediators and helpers to peace. Remember there is no *mediator* but one—Jesus Christ; no *purgatory*⁵ for sinners but one—the blood of Christ; no *sacrifice* for sin but one—the sacrifice once made on the cross; no *works* that can merit anything, but the work of Christ; no *priest* that can truly absolve—but Christ. Stand fast here, and be on your guard. Give not the glory due to Christ to another.

What do you know of Christ? I doubt not you have heard of Him by the hearing of the ear, and repeated His name in the Belief. You are acquainted perhaps with the story of His life and death. But what experimental knowledge have you of Him? What practical use do you make of Him? What dealings and transactions have there been between your soul and Him?

Oh, believe me, there is *no peace with God excepting through Christ!* Peace is His peculiar gift. Peace is that legacy which He alone had power to leave behind Him when He left the world. All other peace beside this is a mockery and a delusion. When hunger can be relieved without food, and thirst quenched without drink, and weariness removed without rest, then, and not until then, will men find peace without Christ.

Now, is this peace your own? Bought by Christ with His own blood, offered by Christ freely to all who are willing to receive it—is this peace your own? Oh, rest not: rest not until you can give a satisfactory answer to my question—HAVE YOU PEACE?

⁴ **precipitous** – extremely steep.

⁵ **purgatory** – the Roman Catholic doctrine of an intermediate state after death in which the souls of persons are purified as they suffer for past sins. The author is telling us that the only place we are “purified” is in the blood of Christ.

Let me show you *the fountain* from which true peace is drawn. *That fountain is justification.* The peace of the true Christian is not a vague, dreamy feeling, without reason and without foundation. He can show cause for it. He builds upon solid ground. He has peace with God *because he is justified.*

Without justification, it is impossible to have real peace. Conscience forbids it. Sin is a mountain between a man and God and must be taken away. The sense of guilt lies heavy on the heart and must be removed. Unpardoned sin will murder peace. The true Christian knows all this well. His peace arises from a consciousness of his sins being forgiven and his guilt being put away. His house is not built on sandy ground. His well is not a broken cistern, which can hold no water. He has peace with God *because he is justified.*

He is justified, and his sins are *forgiven.* However many, and however great, they are cleansed away, pardoned, and wiped out. They are blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. They are sunk into the depths of the sea. They are cast behind God's back. They are searched for and not found. They are remembered no more. Though they may have been like scarlet, they are become white as snow; though they may have been red like crimson, they are as wool. And so he has peace.

He is justified and *counted righteous* in God's sight. The Father sees no spot in him and reckons him innocent. He is clothed in a robe of perfect righteousness and may sit down by the side of angels without feeling ashamed. The holy Law of God, which touches the thoughts and intents of men's hearts, cannot condemn him. The devil, "the accuser of the brethren," can lay nothing to his charge to prevent his full acquittal. And so he has peace.

Is he not naturally a poor, weak, erring, defective *sinner*? He is. None knows that better than he does himself. But notwithstanding this, he is reckoned complete, perfect, and faultless before God, for he is justified.

Is he not naturally a *debtor*? He is. None feels that more deeply than he does himself. He owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing of his own to pay. But his debts are all paid, settled, and crossed out forever, for he is justified.

Is he not naturally liable to the curse of *a broken Law*? He is. None would confess that more readily than he would himself. But the demands of the Law have been fully satisfied, the claims of justice have been met to the last tittle,⁶ and he is justified.

⁶ tittle – the tiniest bit.

Does he not naturally *deserve punishment*? He does. None would acknowledge that more fully than he would himself. But the punishment has been borne. The wrath of God against sin has been made manifest. Yet he has escaped and is justified.

Does anyone who is reading this paper know anything of all this? Are you justified? Do you [believe that you are] pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God? Can you draw near to Him with boldness and say, “Thou art my Father and my Friend, and I am Thy reconciled child”? Oh, believe me; you will never taste true peace until you are *justified*!

Where are your sins? Are they removed and taken away from off your soul? Have they been reckoned for and accounted for in God’s presence? Oh, be very sure these questions are of the most solemn importance! A peace of conscience not built on justification is a perilous dream. From such a peace the Lord deliver you!

Go with me in imagination to some of our great London hospitals. Stand with me there by the bedside of some poor creature in the last stage of an incurable disease. He lies quiet perhaps and makes no struggle. He does not complain of pain perhaps and does not appear to feel it. He sleeps and is still. His eyes are closed. His head reclines on his pillow. He smiles faintly and mutters something. He is dreaming of home and his mother and his youth. His thoughts are far away—but is this health? Oh, no! *No!* It is only the effect of opiates.⁷ Nothing can be done for him. He is dying daily. The only object is to lessen his pain. His quiet is an unnatural quiet. His sleep is an unhealthy sleep. You see in that man’s case a vivid likeness of *peace without justification*. It is a hollow, deceptive, unhealthy thing. Its end is death.

Go with me in imagination to some lunatic asylum. Let us visit some case of incurable delusion. We shall probably find someone who fancies that he is rich and noble, or a king. See how he will take the straw from off the ground, twist it round his head, and call it a crown. Mark how he will pick up stones and gravel and call them diamonds and pearls. Hear how he will laugh, and sing, and appear to be happy in his delusions—but is this happiness? Oh, no! We know it is only the result of ignorant insanity. You see in that man’s case another likeness of *peace built on fancy and not on justification*. It is a senseless, baseless thing. It has neither root nor life.

Settle it in your mind that there can be no peace with God, unless we feel that we are justified. *We must know what is become of our*

⁷ **opiates** – any of various sedative narcotics containing opium.

sins. We must have a reasonable hope that they are forgiven and put away. We must have the witness of our conscience that we are reckoned not guilty before God. Without this, it is vain to talk of peace. We have nothing but the shadow and imitation of it. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa 57:21).

Did you ever hear the sound of the trumpets that are blown before the judges, as they come into a city to open the assizes?⁸ Did you ever reflect how different are the feelings that these trumpets awaken in the minds of different men? The innocent man, who has no cause to be tried, hears them unmoved. They proclaim no terrors to him. He listens and looks on quietly and is not afraid. But often there is some poor wretch, waiting his trial in a silent cell, to whom those trumpets are a knell⁹ of despair. They warn him that the day of trial is at hand. Yet a little time and he will stand at the bar of justice and hear witness after witness telling the story of his misdeeds. Yet a little time and all will be over—the trial, the verdict, and the sentence...There will remain nothing for him but punishment and disgrace. No wonder the prisoner’s heart beats, when he hears that trumpet’s sound!

There is a day fast coming when all who are *not justified* shall despair in like manner. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall scatter to the winds the false peace that now buoys up many a soul. The Day of Judgment shall convince thousands of self-willed people too late, that it needs something more than a few beautiful ideas about “God’s love and mercy” to reconcile a man to his Maker and to deliver his guilty soul from hell. No hope shall stand in that awful day but the hope of the justified man. No peace shall prove solid, substantial, and unbroken, but the peace which is built on *justification*.

Is this peace your own? Rest not, rest not, if you love life, until you know and [believe] that you are a justified man. Think not that this is a mere matter of names and words. Flatter not yourself with the idea that justification is “an abstruse¹⁰ and difficult subject,” and that you may get to heaven well enough without knowing anything about it. Make up your mind to the great truth that there can be no heaven without peace with God, and no peace with God without justification. Then give your soul no rest until you are a JUSTIFIED MAN.

From *Old Paths*, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust,
www.banneroftruth.org.

⁸ **assizes** – one of the periodic court sessions formerly held in each of the counties of England and Wales for the trial of civil or criminal cases.

⁹ **knell** – a signal of disaster or destruction.

¹⁰ **abstruse** – difficult to understand.

PART 4

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS¹

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*This is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD
OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.—Jeremiah 23:6*

MAN by the fall sustained an infinite loss in the matter of righteousness. He suffered the loss of a righteous nature, and then a two-fold loss of legal righteousness in the sight of God. Man sinned; he was therefore no longer innocent of transgression. Man did not keep the command; he therefore was guilty of the sin of omission. In that which he committed and in that which he omitted, his original character for uprightness was completely wrecked. Jesus Christ came to undo the mischief of the fall for His people. So far as their sin concerned their breach of the command, He has removed that by His precious blood. His agony and bloody sweat have forever taken away the consequences of sin from believers, seeing Christ did by His one sacrifice bear the penalty of that sin in His flesh. He, His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree.

Still it is not enough for a man to be pardoned. He, of course, is then in the eye of God without sin. But it was required of man that he should actually keep the command. It was not enough that he did not break it, or that he is regarded through the blood as though he did not break it. He must keep it, he must continue in all things that are written in the book of the Law to do them. How is this necessity supplied? Man must have a righteousness, or God cannot accept him. Man must have a perfect obedience, or else God cannot reward him. Should He give heaven to a soul that has not perfectly kept the Law; that were to give the reward where the service is not done, and that before God would be an act which might impeach His justice. Where, then, is the righteousness with which the pardoned man shall be completely covered, so that God can regard him as having kept the Law, and reward him for so doing? Surely, my brethren, none of you are so besotted² as to think that this righteousness can be wrought out by yourselves.

¹ Available as a booklet from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

² **besotted** – intellectually stupefied, as with liquor; foolish.

Christ in His life was so righteous, that we may say of the life taken as a whole, that it is righteousness itself. Christ is the Law incarnate. Understand me: He lived out the Law of God to the very full, and while you see God's precepts written in fire on Sinai's brow, you see them written in flesh in the person of Christ. He never offended against the commands of the Just One. From His eye there never flashed the fire of unhallowed³ anger. On His lip there did never hang the unjust or licentious word. His heart was never stirred by the breath of sin or the taint of iniquity. In the secret of His reins⁴ no fault was hidden. In His understanding was no defect; in His judgment no error. In His miracles there was no ostentation.⁵ In Him there was indeed no guile. His powers being ruled by His understanding, all of them acted and co-acted to perfection's very self, so that never was there any flaw of omission or stain of commission.

The Law consists in this first: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Deu 6:5; Mat 22:37; Mar 12:30; Luk 10:27). He did so. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. Never man spent himself as He did. Hunger and thirst and nakedness were nothing to Him, nor death itself, if He might so be baptized with the baptism wherewith He must be baptized and drink the cup that His Father had set before Him (Mat 20:22-23; 26:42; Joh 18:11).

The Law consists also in this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev 19:18; Mat 22:39; Mar 12:31). In all He did and in all He suffered He more than fulfilled the precept, for "he saved others; himself he [could not] save" (Mat 27:42). He exhausted the utmost resources of love in the deep devotion and self-sacrifice of loving. He loved man better than His own life. He would sooner be spit upon than that man should be cast into the flames of hell and sooner yield up the ghost in agonies that cannot be described than that the souls His Father gave Him should be cast away. He carried out the Law then, I say, to the very letter. He spelled out its mystic syllables, and verily He magnified it and made it honorable. He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, soul, and mind, and He loved His neighbors as Himself.

The day is coming when men shall acknowledge Him to be Jehovah, and when looking upon all His life while He was incarnate

³ **unhallowed** – unholy; wicked.

⁴ **reins** – seat of the feelings or affections.

⁵ **ostentation** – pretentious display meant to impress others.

here, they shall be compelled to say that His life was righteousness itself. The pith,⁶ however, of the title lies in the little word *our*—“Jehovah *our* righteousness.” This is the grappling iron with which we get a hold on Him; this is the anchor which dives into the bottom of this great deep of His immaculate righteousness. This is the sacred rivet by which our souls are joined to Him. This is the blessed hand with which our soul toucheth Him, and He becometh to us all in all: “Jehovah *our* Righteousness.”

You will now observe that there is a most precious *doctrine* unfolded in this title of our Lord and Savior. I think we may take it thus: When we believe in Christ, by faith we receive our justification.⁷ As the merit of His blood takes away our sin, so the merit of His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. We are considered, as soon as we believe, as though the works of Christ were *our* works. God looks upon us as though that perfect obedience, of which I have just now spoken, had been performed by ourselves. God considers us as though we were Christ—looks upon us as though *His* life had been *our* life—and accepts, blesses, and rewards us as though all that He did had been done by us, His believing people.

I know that Socinus⁸ in his day used to call this an execrable,⁹ detestable, and licentious doctrine: probably it was because he was an execrable, detestable, and licentious man. Many men use their own names when they are applying names to other persons; they are so well acquainted with their own characters, and so suspicious of themselves, that they think it best before another can express the suspicion to attach the very same accusation to someone else. Now, we hold, you know, that this doctrine is not execrable, but most delightful; that it is not abominable, but godlike; that it is not licentious, but holy.

Imputation, so far from being an exceptional case with regard to the righteousness of Christ, lies at the very bottom of the entire teaching of Scripture. How did we fall, my brethren? We fell by the imputation of Adam’s sin to us. Adam was our federal head: he represented us. And when he sinned, we sinned representatively in him; and what he did was imputed to us. You say that you never

⁶ **pith** – the vital or essential part of anything.

⁷ See FGB 187, *Justification*, available from Chapel Library.

⁸ **Faustus Socinus** (1539-1604) – Italian theologian who denied the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity of Christ (making Him a mere man), and the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, as well as numerous other biblical doctrines.

⁹ **execrable** – disgusting; bad beyond description.

agreed to the imputation. Nay, but I would not have you say thus, for as by representation we fell, it is by the representative system that we rise. The angels fell personally and individually, and they never rise. But we fell in another, and we have therefore the power given by divine grace to rise in another. The root of the fall is found in the federal relationship of Adam to his seed; thus we fell by imputation. Is it any wonder that we should rise by imputation? Deny this doctrine, and I ask you: How are men pardoned at all? Are they not pardoned because satisfaction has been offered for sin by Christ? Very well then, but that satisfaction must be imputed to them, or else how is God just in giving to them the results of the death of another unless that death of the other be first of all imputed to them?

When we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to all believing souls, we do not hold forth an exceptional theory, but we expound a grand truth, which is so consistent with the theory of the fall and the plan of pardon, that it must be maintained in order to make the gospel clear...I must give up justification by faith if I give up imputed righteousness. True justification by faith is the surface soil, but then imputed righteousness is the granite rock that lies underneath it. And if you dig down through the great truth of a sinner's being justified by faith in Christ, you must, as I believe, inevitably come to the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ as the basis and foundation on which that simple doctrine rests.

And now let us stop a moment and think over this whole title—"The Lord our righteousness." Brethren, the Law-giver has Himself obeyed the Law. Do you not think that His obedience will be sufficient? Jehovah has Himself become man so that He may do man's work: think you that He has done it imperfectly? Jehovah—He Who girds the angels that excel in strength—has taken upon Him the form of a servant that He may become obedient: think you that His service will be incomplete?

Let the fact that the Savior is Jehovah strengthen your confidence. Be ye bold. Be ye very courageous. Face heaven, earth, and hell with the challenge of the apostle: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" (Rom 8:33). Look back upon your past sins, look upon your present infirmities, and all your future errors, and while you weep the tears of repentance, let no fear of damnation blanch¹⁰ your cheek. You stand before God today robed in

¹⁰ **blanch** – cause to turn white or become pale.

your Savior's garments, "with his spotless vestments on, holy as the Holy One." Not Adam when he walked in Eden's bowers¹¹ was more accepted than you are—not more pleasing to the eye of the all-judging, the sin-hating God than you are if clothed in Jesus' righteousness and sprinkled with His blood. You have a better righteousness than Adam had. He had a human righteousness; your garments are divine. He had a robe complete, it is true; but the earth had woven it. You have a garment as complete, but *heaven* has made it for you to wear. Go up and down in the strength of this great truth and boast exceedingly, and glory in your God. And let this be on the top and summit of your heart and soul: "Jehovah, the Lord our righteousness."

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, June 2, 1861,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



¹¹ **bowers** – covered places in a garden made with boughs of trees twined together.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD RECKONED TO US

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

EVERLASTING righteousness comes to us through believing. We are “justified by faith,” the fruit of which is “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1).

It is of this “everlasting righteousness” that the Apostle Peter speaks when he begins his second epistle thus: “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 1:1).

This righteousness is “reckoned” or “imputed” to all who believe, so that they are treated by God as if it were actually theirs. They are entitled to claim all that which such a righteousness can merit from God as the Judge of righteous claims. It does not become ours gradually or in fragments or drops, but is transferred to us all at once. It is not that so much of it is reckoned to us in proportion to the strength of our faith, or the warmth of our love, or the fervor of our prayers; but the whole of it passes over to us by imputation. We are “accepted in the beloved” (Eph 1:6). We are “complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col 2:10). In its whole quality and quantity it is transferred to us. Its perfection represents us before God; its preciousness, with all that that preciousness can purchase for us, henceforth belongs to us (1Pe 1:7).

The Stone, the chief Corner Stone, elect and precious (1Pe 2:6)—this Stone in all its preciousness—is ours, not only for resting on, not only for acceptance, but for whatever its divine value can purchase for us. Possessed of this preciousness (imputed, but still *ours*), we go into the heavenly market and buy what we need without stint¹ or end. We get everything upon the credit of His name because not only has our unworthiness ceased to be recognized by God in His dealings with us, but our demerit has been supplanted by the merit of One Who is absolutely and divinely perfect. In His name we carry on all our transactions with God, and obtain all that we need by simply using it as our plea. The

¹ **stint** – limitation; restriction.

things that He did not do were laid to His charge, and He was treated as if He had done them all. The things that He did do are put to our account, and we are treated by God as if we had done them all.

This is the scriptural meaning of reckoning or imputing, both in the Old Testament and the New. Let us look at a few of these passages:

“It was *imputed* to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6), i.e., it was so reckoned to [Abraham], that in virtue of it he was treated as being what he was not.

“Are we not *counted* of him strangers?” (Gen 31:15). Are we not treated by him as if we were strangers, not children?

“Neither shall it be *imputed* unto him that offers it” (Lev 7:18). The excellence of the peace offering shall not be counted to him.

“Your heave-offering shall be *reckoned unto you* as though it were the corn of the threshing-floor” (Num 18:27). It shall be accepted by God as if it were the whole harvest, and you shall be treated by Him accordingly.

“Let not my lord *impute* iniquity unto me, neither remember that which your servant did perversely” (2Sa 19:19). Do not deal with me according to my iniquity.

“Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord *imputes* not iniquity” (Psa 32:2), to whom God does not *reckon* his iniquities, but treats him as if they were not (see also Psa 106:31).

“It was *counted* to him for righteousness” (Rom 4:3).

“His faith is *counted* for righteousness” (Rom 4:5), that is, not as the righteousness or as the substitute for it, but as bringing him into righteousness.

“Unto whom God *imputes* righteousness without works” (Rom 4:6).

“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will *not impute* sin” (Rom 4:8).

“That righteousness might be *imputed* to them also” (Rom 4:11).

“To whom it shall be *imputed*, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom 4:24).

“Not *imputing* their trespasses unto them” (2Co 5:19).

“It was *accounted* to him for righteousness” (Gal 3:6).

Thus the idea of reckoning to one what does not belong to him and treating him as if he really possessed all that is reckoned to him comes out very clearly. This is God’s way of lifting man out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, of giving him a standing, a privilege,

and a hope far beyond that which mere pardon gives, and [it is] no less far above that which the first Adam lost. To be righteous according to the righteousness of the first Adam would have been much; but to be righteous according to the righteousness of the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, is unspeakably and inconceivably more.

“It is God that justifieth” (Rom 8:33), and He does so by imputing to us a righteousness that warrants Him as the Judge to justify the unrighteous freely.

It is not simply *because* of this righteousness that Jehovah justifies; but He *legally transfers* it to us so that we can use it, plead it, and appear before God in it, just as if it were wholly our own. Romanists and Socinians² have set themselves strongly against the doctrine of “imputed righteousness.” But there it stands, written clearly and legibly in the divine Word. There it stands, an essential part of the great Bible truth concerning sacrifice, substitution,³ and suretyship.⁴ It is as deeply written in the book of Leviticus as in the epistle to the Romans. It spreads itself over all Scripture and rises gloriously into view in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, where the “obedience unto death” that makes up this righteousness was completed. There He, Who as our Substitute took flesh and was born at Bethlehem, Who as our Substitute passed through earth as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, consummated His substitution and brought in the “everlasting righteousness.”

This is the righteousness of which the apostle spoke when he reasoned that, “as by the *disobedience of one* many were made sinners, so by the *obedience of one* shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19); [and] when he proclaimed his abnegation⁵ of all other righteousnesses: “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi 3:9). This is “the gift of righteousness” regarding which he says: “If by one man’s offence 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” (Rom 5:17). The one man’s offence rests upon all men “to condemnation” (Rom 5:18); so the one Man’s righteousness, as the counteraction⁶ or removal of this condemnation, is available and

² **Socinians** – followers of the sect founded by Faustus Socinus, 16th century Italian theologian, who denied the deity of Christ and denied that the cross brought forgiveness of sins.

³ See FGB 207, *Substitution*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

⁴ **suretyship** – act of one undertaking responsibility for someone else’s debt.

⁵ **abnegation** – formal rejection; denial.

⁶ **counteraction** – defeating by contrary action; neutralizing an action.

efficacious⁷ “unto justification of life.” The imputation of the first Adam’s sin to us, and of the last Adam’s righteousness, are thus placed side by side. The transference of our guilt to the divine Substitute and the transference of that Substitute’s righteousness or perfection to us must stand or fall together.

This righteousness of God was no common righteousness. It was the righteousness of Him Who was both God and man; therefore it was not only the righteousness of God, but in addition to this, it was the righteousness of man. It embodied and exhibited all uncreated and all created perfection. Never had the like been seen or heard of in heaven or on earth before. It was the two-fold perfection of creaturehood and creatorship in one resplendent⁸ center, one glorious Person. The dignity of that Person gave a perfection, a vastness, a length and breadth, a height and depth, to that righteousness which never had been equaled and which never shall be equaled forever. It is the perfection of perfection, the excellency of excellency, the holiness of holiness. It is that in which God preeminently delights. Never had His Law been so kept and honored before. Son of God and Son of Man in one Person, He in this twofold character keeps the Father’s Law, and in keeping it provides a righteousness so large and full that it can be shared with others, transferred to others, imputed to others; and God be glorified (as well as the sinner saved) by the transference and imputation. Never had God been so loved as now, with all divine love and with all human love. Never had God been so served and obeyed, as now He has been by Him Who is “God manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). Never had God found one before who for love to the holy Law was willing to become its victim that it might be honored; who for love to God was willing not only to be made under the Law, but by thus coming under it, to subject himself to death, even the death of the cross; who for love to the fallen creature was willing to take the sinner’s place, bear the sinner’s burden, undergo the sinner’s penalty, to assume the sinner’s curse, die the sinner’s death of shame and anguish, and go down in darkness to the sinner’s grave.

From *The Everlasting Righteousness*, available as a paperback
from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



⁷ **efficacious** – able to produce the intended result.

⁸ **resplendent** – splendid; dazzling in appearance.

OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NOT IN OURSELVES

John Calvin (1509-1564)

LET us first explain the meaning of the expressions, *to be justified in the sight of God, to be justified by faith or by works*. A man is said to be justified in the sight of God when in the judgment of God he is deemed righteous and is accepted on account of his righteousness. For as iniquity is abominable to God, so neither can the sinner find grace in His sight so far as he is and so long as he is regarded as a sinner. Hence, wherever sin is, there also are the wrath and vengeance of God.

He, on the other hand, is justified who is regarded not as a sinner, but as righteous, and as such stands acquitted at the judgment-seat of God, where all sinners are condemned. As an innocent man, when charged before an impartial judge who decides according to his innocence, is said to be justified by the judge, so a man is said to be justified by God when, removed from the catalogue of sinners, he has God as the witness and assessor¹ of his righteousness.

In the same manner, a man will be said to be *justified by works*, if in his life there can be found a purity and holiness which merits an attestation² of righteousness at the throne of God, or if by the perfection of his works he can answer and satisfy the divine justice. On the contrary, a man will be *justified by faith* when, excluded from the righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ and, clothed in it, appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous.

Thus we simply interpret justification as the acceptance with which God receives us into His favor as if we were righteous. And we say that this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

Let us now consider the truth of what was said in the definition—viz.³ that justification by faith is reconciliation with God and that this consists solely in the remission of sins. We must always return to the axiom⁴ that the wrath of God lies upon all men so long as they con-

¹ **assessor** – champion; vindicator; advocate.

² **attestation** – testimony; proof.

³ **viz.** – Latin = *videcilet*: that is to say; namely.

⁴ **axiom** – universally recognized truths; well-established principles.

tinue sinners. This is elegantly expressed by Isaiah in these words: “Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa 59:1-2). We are here told that sin is a separation between God and man; that His countenance is turned away from the sinner; and that it cannot be otherwise, since to have any intercourse with sin is repugnant⁵ to His righteousness.

Hence the apostle shows that man is at enmity with God until he is restored to favor by Christ (Rom 5:8-10). When the Lord, therefore, admits him to union, He is said to justify him, because He can neither receive him into favor nor unite him to Himself without changing his condition from that of a sinner into that of a righteous man. He adds that this is done by remission of sins. For if those whom the Lord has reconciled to Himself are estimated by works, they will still prove to be in reality sinners, while they ought to be pure and free from sin. It is evident therefore, that the only way in which those whom God embraces are made righteous is by having their pollutions wiped away by the remission of sins, so that this justification may be termed in one word: *the remission of sins*.

Both of these become perfectly clear from the words of Paul: “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” He then subjoins⁶ the sum of his embassy:⁷ “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:19-21). He here uses “righteousness” and “reconciliation” indiscriminately, to make us understand that the one includes the other. The mode of obtaining this righteousness he explains to be that our sins are not imputed to us. Wherefore, you cannot henceforth doubt how God justifies us when you hear that He reconciles us to Himself by not imputing our faults.

In the same manner, in the epistle to the Romans, he proves by the testimony of David that righteousness is imputed without works because he declares the man to be blessed “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered,” and “unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity” (Rom 4:6; Psa 32:1-2). There he undoubtedly uses blessedness for righteousness; and as he declares that it consists in forgiveness of sins, there is no reason why we should define it oth-

⁵ **repugnant** – contrary; contradictory.

⁶ **subjoins** – adds at the end of a written statement or discourse.

⁷ **embassy** – mission of being an ambassador or a message-bearing representative.

erwise. Accordingly, Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, sings that the knowledge of salvation consists in the forgiveness of sins (Luk 1:77). The same course was followed by Paul, when in addressing the people of Antioch he gave them a summary of salvation. Luke states that he concluded in this way: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Act 13:38-39). Thus the apostle connects forgiveness of sins with justification in such a way as to show that they are altogether the same; and hence he properly argues that justification, which we owe to the indulgence of God, is gratuitous.⁸

Nor should it seem an unusual mode of expression to say that believers are justified before God not by works, but by gratuitous acceptance, seeing it is frequently used in Scripture and sometimes also by ancient writers. Thus Augustine⁹ says, “Our very righteousness, too, though true in so far as it has respect to the true good, is yet in this life of such a kind that it consists rather in the remission of sins than in the perfecting of virtues.”¹⁰ To this corresponds the well-known sentiment of Bernard:¹¹ “Not to sin is the righteousness of God, but the righteousness of man is the indulgence of God.”¹² He previously asserts that Christ is our righteousness in absolution,¹³ and, therefore, that those only are just who have obtained pardon through mercy.

Hence also it is proved that it is entirely by the intervention of Christ’s righteousness that we obtain justification before God. This is equivalent to saying that man is not just in himself, but that the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation, while he is strictly deserving of punishment. Thus vanishes the absurd dogma that man is justified by faith inasmuch as it brings him under the influence of the Spirit of God by Whom he is rendered righteous. This is so repugnant to the above doctrine that it never can be reconciled with it. There can be no doubt that he who is taught to seek righteousness out of himself does not previously possess it in himself. This is most clearly declared by the apostle, when he says that He Who

⁸ **gratuitous** – freely bestowed; granted without merit.

⁹ **Aurelius Augustine** (354-430) – early Christian theologian and philosopher who served as the bishop of Hippo Regius, North Africa.

¹⁰ Augustine, *City of God* XIX.27.1 (MPL 41.657; tr. NPNF II.419).

¹¹ **Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153) – best known theologian of his day; wrote mystical, theological, devotional works and hymns such as *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*.

¹² Bernard, *Sermons on the Song of Songs* 23.15 (MPL 183.892; tr. S. J. Eales, *Life and Works of St. Bernard IV*, 141).

¹³ **absolution** – remission or forgiveness of sins.

knew no sin was made an expiatory¹⁴ victim for sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2Co 5:21).

You see that our righteousness is not in ourselves, but in Christ; that the only way in which we become possessed of it is by being made partakers with Christ, since with Him we possess all riches. There is nothing repugnant to this in what he elsewhere says: “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). *Here the only fulfillment to which he refers is that which we obtain by imputation.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ communicates His righteousness to us and so, by some wondrous ways in so far as pertains to the justice of God, transfuses its power into us. That this was the apostle’s view is abundantly clear from another sentiment that he had expressed a little before: “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom 5:19). To declare that we are deemed righteous—solely because the obedience of Christ is imputed to us as if it were our own—is just to place our righteousness in the obedience of Christ.

Wherefore, Ambrose¹⁵ appears to me to have most elegantly adverted to¹⁶ the blessing of Jacob as an illustration of this righteousness, when he says that as he who did not merit the birth-right in himself personated¹⁷ his brother, put on his garments which gave forth a most pleasant odor, and thus introduced himself to his father that he might receive a blessing to his own advantage, though under the person of another, so we conceal ourselves under the precious purity of Christ, our first-born Brother, that we may obtain an attestation of righteousness from the presence of God. The words of Ambrose are [these:] “Isaac’s smelling the odor of his garments perhaps means that we are justified not by works but by faith, since carnal infirmity is an impediment to works, but errors of conduct are covered by the brightness of faith, which merits the pardon of faults.”¹⁸ And so indeed it is; for in order to appear in the presence of God for salvation, we must send forth that fragrant odor, having our vices covered and buried by His perfection.

From *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III. xi. 2, 21-23, in the public domain.

¹⁴ **expiatory** – having the quality of making satisfaction for offense.

¹⁵ **Ambrose** (c.340-397) – Bishop of Milan, early church theologian, and foe of Arianism (the heresy that Jesus is a created being); bishop who instructed and baptized Augustine.

¹⁶ **adverted to** – referred to; alluded to.

¹⁷ **personated** – impersonated ; deceptively pretended to be someone else.

¹⁸ Ambrose, *On Jacob and the Happy Life*, II.2.9 (CSEL 32.2.36 f.).

IMPUTATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

BY the righteousness of Christ is meant all He became, did, and suffered to satisfy the demands of divine justice and [to] merit for His people the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life. The righteousness of Christ is commonly represented as including His active and passive obedience. This distinction is, as to the idea, scriptural. The Bible does teach that Christ obeyed the Law in all its precepts, that He endured its penalty, and that this was done in such sense for His people that they are said to have done it. They died in Him. They were crucified with Him. They were delivered from the curse of the Law by His being made a curse for them. He was made under the Law that He might redeem those who were under the Law. We are freed from the Law by the body of Christ. He was made sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He is the end of the Law for righteousness to all them that believe. It is by His obedience that many are made righteous (Rom 5:19). We obeyed in Him according to the teaching of the apostle in Romans 5:12-21 in the same sense in which we sinned in Adam.

The active and passive obedience of Christ, however, are only different phases or aspects of the same thing. He obeyed in suffering. His highest acts of obedience were rendered in the garden and upon the cross. Hence this distinction is not so presented in Scripture as though the obedience of Christ answered one purpose and His sufferings another and a distinct purpose. We are justified by His blood. We are reconciled unto God by His death. We are freed from all the demands of the Law by His body (Rom 7:4), and we are freed from the Law by His being made under it and obeying it in our stead (Gal 4:4-5). Thus, the same effect is ascribed to the death or sufferings of Christ and to His obedience because both are forms or parts of His obedience or righteousness by which we are justified. In other words, the obedience of Christ includes all He did in satisfying the demands of the Law.

The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer for his justification. The word *impute* is familiar and unambiguous.¹ To

¹ **unambiguous** – clear; not open to more than one interpretation.

impute is to ascribe² to, to reckon to, to lay to one's charge. When we say we impute a good or bad motive to a man or that a good or evil action is imputed to him, no one misunderstands our meaning. Philemon had no doubt what Paul meant when he told him to impute to him the debt of Onesimus.³

We use the word *impute* in its simple admitted sense, when we say that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer for his justification.

It seems unnecessary to remark that this does not and cannot mean that the righteousness of Christ is *infused*⁴ into the believer or in any way so imparted to him as to change or constitute his moral character. Imputation never changes the inward, subjective state of the person to whom the imputation is made. When sin is imputed to a man he is not made sinful; when the zeal of Phinehas was imputed to him, he was not made zealous (Psa 106:30-31). When you impute theft to a man, you do not make him a thief. When you impute goodness to a man, you do not make him good. So when righteousness is imputed to the believer, he does not thereby become subjectively righteous. If the righteousness be adequate, and if the imputation be made on adequate grounds and by competent authority, the person to whom the imputation is made has the right to be treated as righteous. And, therefore, in the forensic,⁵ although not in the moral or subjective, sense, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ does make the sinner righteous. That is, it gives him a right to the full pardon of all his sins and a claim in justice to eternal life.

That this is the simple and universally accepted view of the doctrine as held by all Protestants at the Reformation, and by them regarded as the cornerstone of the gospel...has never been disputed by any candid or competent authority. This has continued to be the doctrine of both the great branches of the Protestant Church, so far as they pretend to adhere to their standards.

It may be remarked in passing that according to the Protestant doctrine there is properly no "formal cause" of justification. The righteousness of Christ is the meritorious, but not the formal cause of the sinner's being pronounced righteous. A *formal cause* is that which constitutes the inherent, subjective nature of a person or thing. The formal cause of a man's being good is goodness; of his

² **ascribe** – assign a quality or character to.

³ Philemon 1:18.

⁴ **infused** – poured into; caused to be filled with something.

⁵ **forensic** – pertaining to or connected with courts of law.

being holy, holiness; of his being wicked, wickedness. The formal cause of a rose's being red is redness and of a wall's being white is whiteness. As we are not rendered inherently⁶ righteous by the righteousness of Christ, it is hardly correct to say that His righteousness is the formal cause of our being righteous.

The ground of this justification in the case of the believing sinner is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ.

Dr. Shedd⁷ says, "A second difference between the Anselmic⁸ and the Protestant soteriology⁹ is seen in the formal distinction of Christ's work into His *active* and His *passive* righteousness. By His *passive* righteousness is meant His expiatory sufferings, by which He satisfied the claims of justice, and by His *active* righteousness is meant His obedience to the Law as a rule of life and conduct. It was contended by those who made this distinction that the purpose of Christ as the vicarious¹⁰ Substitute was to meet the *entire* demands of the Law for the sinner. But the Law requires present and perfect obedience, as well as satisfaction for past disobedience. The Law is not completely fulfilled by the endurance of penalty only. It must also be obeyed. Christ both endured the penalty due to man for disobedience and perfectly obeyed the Law for him; so that He was a vicarious Substitute in reference to both the precept and the penalty of the Law. By His *active* obedience He obeyed the Law, and by His *passive* obedience He endured the penalty. In this way His vicarious work is complete"¹¹...

The distinction between the *active* and *passive* obedience of Christ is, in one view, unimportant. As Christ obeyed in suffering, His sufferings were as much a part of His obedience as His observance of the precepts of the Law. The Scriptures do not expressly make this distinction, as they include everything that Christ did for our redemption under the term *righteousness* or *obedience*. The distinction becomes important only when it is denied that His moral obedience is any part of the righteousness for which the believer is justified or that His whole work in making satisfaction consisted in expiation or bearing the penalty of the Law. This

⁶ **inherently** – in essential nature.

⁷ **W. G. T. Shedd** (1820-1894) – American Presbyterian theologian, considered by some the greatest American proponent of grace theology next to Charles Hodge.

⁸ **Anselm of Canterbury** (1033-1109) – medieval theologian, whose theological treatises, prayers, meditations, and letters are considered literary masterpieces; his "satisfaction" view of Christ's atonement has been a great influence down to modern times.

⁹ **soteriology** – study of the doctrine of salvation.

¹⁰ **vicarious** – achieved by one in the place of another; substitutionary.

¹¹ *History of Christian Doctrine*, Vol. II, 341.

is contrary to Scripture and vitiates¹² the doctrine of justification as presented in the Bible.

Proof of the Doctrine

That the Protestant doctrine as above stated is the doctrine of the word of God appears from the following considerations:

1. *The word dikaioo...means "to declare dikaios [righteous]."* No one can be truthfully pronounced *dikaios* to whom *dikaiousune* [righteousness] cannot rightfully be ascribed. The sinner has no righteousness of his own. God, therefore, imputes to him a righteousness that is not his own. The righteousness thus imputed is declared to be the righteousness of God, of Christ, the righteousness which is by faith. This is almost in so many words the declaration of the Bible on the subject. As the question, "What is the method of justification?" is a biblical question, it must be decided exegetically,¹³ and not by arguments drawn from assumed principles of reason. We are not at liberty to say that the righteousness of one man cannot be imputed to another; that this would involve a mistake or absurdity; that God's justice does not demand a righteousness such as the Law prescribes as the condition of justification; that He may pardon and save as a father without any consideration, unless it be that of repentance; that it is inconsistent with His grace that the demands of justice should be met before justification is granted; that this view of justification makes it a sham, a calling a man just when he is not just, etc.—all this amounts to *nothing*. It all pertains to that wisdom which is foolishness with God.

All we have to do is to determine, (1) What is the meaning of the word *to justify* as used in Scripture? (2) On what ground does the Bible affirm that God pronounces the ungodly to be just? If the answer to these questions be what the Church in all ages, and especially the Church of the Reformation has given, then we should rest satisfied. The apostle in express terms says that God imputes righteousness to the sinner (Rom 4:6, 24).

By *righteousness* every one admits is meant "that which makes a man righteous, that which the Law demands." It does not consist in the sinner's own obedience or moral excellence, for it is said to be "without works" (Rom 4:6). And it is declared that no man can be justified on the ground of his own character or conduct. Neither does this righteousness consist in faith, for it is "of faith," "through faith," "by faith." We are never said to be justified on *account* of

¹² **vitiates** – corrupts; perverts so as to lead to false judgments.

¹³ **exegetically** – by scriptural analysis and interpretation.

faith. Neither is it a righteousness or form of moral excellence springing from faith, or of which faith is the source or proximate¹⁴ cause because it is declared to be the *righteousness of God*—a righteousness that is revealed, that is offered, that must be accepted as a gift (Rom 5:17). It is declared to be the *righteousness of Christ*, His obedience (Rom 5:19). It is, therefore, the righteousness of Christ, His perfect obedience in doing and suffering the will of God, which is imputed to the believer and on the ground of which the believer, although in himself ungodly, is pronounced righteous and therefore free from the curse of the Law and entitled to eternal life.

The Apostle's Argument

2. All the points above stated are not only clearly affirmed by the apostle, but *they are also set forth in logical order and elaborately sustained and vindicated in the epistle to the Romans*. The apostle begins with the declaration that the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom 1:16). It is not thus divinely efficacious¹⁵ because of the purity of its moral precepts; nor because it brings immortality to light; nor because it sets before us the perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ; nor because it assures us of the love of God; nor because of the elevating, sanctifying, life-giving influence by which it is attended. There is something preliminary to all this.

The first and indispensable requisite to salvation is that men should be righteous before God. They are under His wrath and curse. Until justice is satisfied, until God is reconciled, there is no possibility of any moral influence being of any avail. Therefore the apostle says that the power of the gospel is due to the fact that “therein is the righteousness of God revealed” (Rom 1:17). This cannot mean “the goodness of God,” for such is not the meaning of the word. It cannot in this connection mean His justice because it is a righteousness which is “of faith”; because the justice of God is revealed from heaven and to all men; because the revelation of justice terrifies and drives away from God; because what is here called the righteousness of God is elsewhere contrasted with our “own righteousness” (Rom 10:3; Phi 3:9); and because it is declared to be the righteousness of Christ, which is explained by His “obedience” (Rom 5:18-19) and elsewhere declared to be “his blood” (3:25; 5:9).

The question, “How shall man be just with God?” had been sounding in the ears of men from the beginning. It never had been answered. Yet it must be answered or there can be no hope of salva-

¹⁴ **proximate** – coming next in a chain of causation.

¹⁵ **efficacious** – producing the intended or desired effect; effective.

tion. It is answered in the gospel, and therefore the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth (Rom 1:16), i.e., to everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free, good or bad, who, instead of going about to establish his own righteousness, submits himself in joyful confidence to the righteousness that his God and Savior Jesus Christ has wrought out for sinners and that is freely [announced] to them in the gospel without money and without price.

This is Paul's theme, which he proceeds to unfold and establish...He begins by asserting, as indisputably true from the revelation of God in the constitution of our nature, that God is just, that He will punish sin, that He cannot pronounce him righteous who is not righteous. He then shows from experience and from Scripture, first as regards the Gentiles, then as regards the Jews, that there is none righteous, no not one; that the whole world is guilty before God. There is therefore no difference, since all have sinned.

Since the righteousness that the Law requires cannot be found in the sinner nor be rendered by him, God has revealed another righteousness, "the righteousness of God" (Rom 3:21), granted to everyone who believes. Men are not justified for what they are or for what they do, but for what Christ has done for them. God has set Him forth as a propitiation for sin in order that He might be just and yet the justifier of them that believe.

The apostle teaches that such has been the method of justification from the beginning. It was witnessed by the Law and the prophets. There had never, since the Fall, been any other way of justification possible for men. As God justified Abraham because he believed in the promise of redemption through the Messiah, so He justifies those now who believe in the fulfillment of that promise (Rom 4:3, 9, 24). It was not Abraham's believing state of mind that was taken for righteousness. It is not faith in the believer now, not faith as a virtue, or as a source of a new life, which renders us righteous. It is faith in a specific promise. Righteousness, says the apostle, is imputed to us, "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead" (Rom 4:24). Or, as he expresses it in Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The promise that Abraham believed is the promise that we believe (Gal 3:14), and the relation of faith to justification in his case is precisely what it is in ours. He and we are justified simply because we trust in the Messiah for our salvation. Hence, as the apostle says, the Scriptures are full of thanksgiving to God for gratu-

itous¹⁶ pardon, for free justification, for the imputation of righteousness to those who have no righteousness of their own.

The Parallel between Adam and Christ

3. Not content with this clear and formal statement of the truth that sinners can be justified only through the imputation of a righteousness not their own; and that the righteousness thus imputed is the righteousness (active and passive, if that distinction be insisted upon) of the Lord Jesus Christ; *he proceeds to illustrate this doctrine by drawing a parallel between Adam and Christ.* The former [Adam], he says, was a type of the latter [Christ]. There is an analogy¹⁷ between our relation to Adam and our relation to Christ. We are so united to Adam that his first transgression was the ground of the sentence of condemnation being passed on all mankind. And on account of that condemnation we derive from him a corrupt nature so that all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation,¹⁸ come into the world in a state of spiritual death. In like manner, we are so united to Christ when we believe that His obedience is the ground on which a sentence of justification passes upon all thus in Him. And in consequence of that sentence they derive from Him a new, holy, divine, and imperishable¹⁹ principle of spiritual life. These truths are expressed in explicit terms. “For the judgment was by one [offence] to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification” (Rom 5:16). “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto 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” (v. 18-19).

These two great truths, namely, the imputation of Adam’s sin and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, have graven themselves on the consciousness of the Church universal. They have been reviled, misrepresented, and denounced by theologians, but they have stood their ground in the faith of God’s people, just as the primary truths of reason have ever retained control over the mass of men in spite of all the speculations of philosophers. It is not meant that the truths just mentioned have always been expressed in the terms just given; but the truths themselves have been and still are held by the people of God, wherever found

¹⁶ **gratuitous** – freely bestowed; costing nothing to the recipient.

¹⁷ **analogy** – similarity in some respects between things that are otherwise not similar.

¹⁸ **generation** – physically begetting children.

¹⁹ **imperishable** – undying; perpetual.

among the Greeks, Latins, or Protestants.

The fact that the race fell in Adam, that the evils that come upon us because of his transgression are penal,²⁰ and that men are born in a state of sin and condemnation are outstanding facts of Scripture and experience...It is implied in every act of saving faith, which includes trust in what Christ has done for us as the ground of our acceptance with God, as opposed to anything done by us or wrought in us.

Such being the real and only foundation of a sinner's hope towards God, it is of the last importance that it should not only be practically held by the people, but that it should also be clearly presented and maintained by the [ministry of the pulpit]. It is not what we do or are, but solely what Christ is and has done that can avail for our justification before the bar of God.

Other Passages Teaching the Same Doctrine

4. *This doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, or, in other words, that His righteousness is the judicial ground of the believer's justification, is not only formally and argumentatively presented as in the passages cited, but it is constantly asserted or implied in the Word of God.* The apostle argues, in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, that every assertion or promise of gratuitous forgiveness of sin to be found in the Scriptures involves this doctrine. He proceeds on the assumption that God is just, that He demands a righteousness of those whom He justifies. If they have no righteousness of their own, one on just grounds must be imputed to them. If, therefore, He forgives sin, it must be that sin is covered, that justice has been satisfied. "Even as David also," he says, "describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom 4:6-8).

In Romans 5:9, we are said to be "justified by his blood." In Romans 3:25, God is said to have set Him forth as a propitiation²¹ for sin, that He might be just in justifying the ungodly. As to justify does not mean to pardon, but judicially to pronounce righteous, this passage distinctly asserts that the work of Christ is the ground on which the sentence of justification is passed. In Romans 10:3-4, he says of the Jews, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the

²⁰ **penal** – related to punishment for breaking the law.

²¹ **propitiation** – appeasement; sacrifice that turns away wrath.

end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” It can hardly be questioned that the word righteousness (*dikaiousune*) must have the same meaning in both members of the first of these verses. If a man’s “own righteousness” is that which would render him righteous, then “the righteousness of God” in this connection must be a justifying righteousness. It is called the righteousness of God because, as said before, He is its author. It is the righteousness of Christ. It is provided, offered, and accepted of God.

Here then are two righteousnesses: the one human, the other divine; the one valueless, the other infinitely meritorious. The folly of the Jews—and of thousands since their day—consists in refusing the latter and trusting to the former. This folly the apostle makes apparent in the fourth verse. The Jews acted under the assumption that the Law as a covenant (that is, as prescribing the conditions of salvation) was still in force, that men were still bound to satisfy its demands by their personal obedience in order to be saved, whereas Christ had made an end of the Law. He had abolished it as a covenant in order that men might be justified by faith. Christ, however, has thus made an end of the Law, not by merely setting it aside, but by satisfying its demands. He delivers us from its curse, not by mere pardon, but by being made a curse for us (Gal 3:13). He redeems us from the Law by being made under it (Gal 4:4-5) and fulfilling all righteousness.

In Philippians 3:8-9, the apostle says, he “suffered the loss of all things” that he might be found in Christ, not having his “own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Here again one’s own righteousness is contrasted with that which is of God. The word must have the same sense in both members. What Paul trusted to was not his own righteousness, not his own subjective goodness, but a righteousness provided for him and received by faith.

The apostle says Christ “of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). In this enumeration,²² sanctification and righteousness are distinguished. The one renders us holy; the other renders us just, i.e., satisfies the demands of justice. As Christ is to us the source of inward spiritual life, so He is the giver of that righteousness which secures our justification...We are accepted, justified, and saved, not for what we are, but for what He has done in our behalf. God “made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). As Christ was

²² enumeration – list.

not made sin in a moral sense; so we are not (in justification) made righteousness in a moral sense. As He was made sin in that He “bare our sins,” so we are made righteousness in that we bear His righteousness. Our sins were the judicial ground of His humiliation under the Law and of all His sufferings; so His righteousness is the judicial ground of our justification. In other words, as our sins were imputed to Him, so His righteousness is imputed to us. If imputation of sin did not render Him morally corrupt, the imputation of righteousness does not make us holy or morally good.

Argument from the General Teachings of the Bible

5. *It is unnecessary to dwell upon particular passages in support of a doctrine which pervades the whole Scriptures.* The question is: “What is the ground of the pardon of sin and of the acceptance of the believer as righteous (in the forensic or judicial sense of the word) in the sight of God?” Is it anything we do, anything experienced by us or wrought in us? Or is it what Christ has done for us? The whole revelation of God concerning the method of salvation shows that it is the latter and not the former.

From their nature, grace and works are antithetical.²³ The one excludes the other. What is of grace is not of works. And by works in Scripture in relation to this subject is meant not individual acts only, but states of mind, anything and everything internal of which moral character can be predicated.²⁴ When, therefore, it is said that salvation is of grace and not of works, it is thereby said that it is not founded upon anything in the believer himself...The gift of His Son for the redemption of man is ever represented as the most wonderful display of unmerited love. That some and not all men are actually saved is expressly declared to be not of works, not on account of anything distinguishing favorably the one class from the other, but a matter of pure grace.

When a sinner is pardoned and restored to the favor of God, this again is declared to be of grace. If of grace, it is not founded upon anything in the sinner himself...The Scriptures not only teach that the plan of salvation is thus gratuitous in its inception, execution, and application, but also insist upon this characteristic of the plan as of vital importance, and even go so far as to teach that unless we consent to be saved by grace, we cannot be saved at all.

From *Systematic Theology*, III, xvii, 4-6, in the public domain.

²³ **antithetical** – diametrically opposed to each other; opposites of each other.

²⁴ **predicated** – affirmed; asserted.

LAW, CURSE, AND CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ebenezer Erskine (1680-1754)

GOD, having made man a rational creature capable of moral government, gave him a law suited to his nature by which he was to govern himself in the duties he owed to God his great Creator. This law was delivered to man in the form of a covenant with a promise of life upon the condition of perfect obedience and a threatening of death in case of disobedience (Gen 2:17). Thus stood matters between God and man in a state of innocence.

Adam and all his posterity in him and with him, having broken the covenant, are become liable to the curse and penalty of it, so that our salvation is become absolutely impossible until justice be satisfied and the honor of the broken law be repaired. The Law and justice of God [admit no refusal] and stand upon a full satisfaction and [compensation], otherwise heaven's gates shall be shut and eternally barred against man and all his posterity. The flaming sword of justice turns every way to keep us from access unto the paradise that is above.

While man in these circumstances was expecting nothing but to fall, an eternal sacrifice unto divine justice, the eternal Son of God, in His infinite love and pity to perishing sinners, steps in as a Mediator¹ and Surety,² offering not only to take our nature but to take our Law-place, to stand in our room and stead, whereby the whole obligation of the Law, both penal and preceptive, did fall upon Him. That is, He became liable and obliged both to fulfill the command and to endure the curse of the Covenant of Works,³ which we had violated.

And here, by the way, it is fit to [alert you to the fact] that it was an act of amazing grace in the Lord Jehovah to admit a Surety in

¹ **Mediator** – go-between; one that intervenes between two hostile parties to bring reconciliation. Christ came as Prophet, Priest, and King between the holy God and sinful man.

² **Surety** – one who assumes the responsibilities or debts of another; Christ our Surety guaranteed a full legal satisfaction for our sin by paying our debt upon Calvary's cross.

³ **Covenant of Works** – God's arrangement with Adam before his fall into sin: he would have privileges as long as he did not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

our room. For had He stood to the rigor and severity of the Law, He would have demanded a personal satisfaction without admitting of the satisfaction of a Surety—in which case, Adam and all his posterity [would] had fallen under the stroke of avenging justice through eternity. But glory to God in the highest, Who not only admitted of a Surety, but provided one and “laid help upon one that is mighty” (Psa 89:19)!

Christ, the eternal Son of God, being in “the fulness of time, made of a woman, and made under the law” as our Surety (Gal 4:4), He actually in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole terms of the Covenant of Works. That is, in a word, He obeyed all the commands of the Law and endured the curse of it, and thereby brought in a complete Law-righteousness, whereby guilty sinners are justified before God.

This righteousness of the Surety is conveyed unto us by imputation. [This] is abundantly plain from many places of Scripture, particularly Romans 4:6, 11-12, 23-24. Now, this imputation of the Surety's righteousness runs principally upon these three things: (1) Upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, wherein the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the Surety of an elect world. Then it was that He gave bond to the Father to pay their debt in the red gold of His blood, saying, “Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire...Lo, I come...I delight to do thy will” (Psa 40:6, 8). (2) It is grounded upon the actual imputation of our sins unto Him: “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). There is a blessed exchange of places between Christ and His people: He takes on our sin and unrighteousness, that we may be clothed with the white robe of His righteousness: “He was made sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). (3) This imputation goes upon the ground of the mystical union between Christ and the believer. When the poor soul is determined in a day of power to embrace the Lord Jesus in the arms of faith, Christ and he in that very moment do coalesce⁴ into one body. He becomes a branch of the noble Vine, a member of that Body whereof Christ is the glorious Head of eminence,⁵ influence, and government. And being thus united to Christ, the long and white robe of the Mediator's righteousness is spread over him, whereby he is not only freed from condemnation, but forever sustained as righteous in the sight of God: “But of him are ye in Christ

⁴ **coalesce** – come together to become one; unite.

⁵ **eminence** – distinguished superiority.

Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Co 1:30).

So perfect is this righteousness that the piercing eye of infinite justice cannot find the least flaw in it: yea, justice is so fully satisfied therewith, that God speaks of the soul who is clothed therewith, as though it were in a state of innocence and perfectly freed from sin.

From "The Believer Exalted in Imputed Righteousness" in *The Whole Works of the Late Ebenezer Erskine*, Vol. I, Free Presbyterian Publications.



This is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," because He is the author of righteousness to His people and is only so. No creature could be the author of it. Unrighteous man cannot be the author of righteousness, and the righteousness of an angel is of no advantage to man. Indeed neither of the other divine persons is the Lord our righteousness; for though They are both Jehovah, the Father and the Spirit, yet not our righteousness. The Father appointed and sent Christ to work it out. He approved and accepted it, when wrought out, and imputes it to His people; but [He] is not the author of it. So the Spirit convinces of the need of it, reveals it, brings it near, works faith to receive it, applies it, and pronounces a person justified by it; but [He] is not the author of it. The Son of God is [the only One], Who is become so by His obedience to the Law and by bearing the penalty of it, and Who, having been delivered for our offences, rose again for our justification. And this righteousness, which He has wrought out to the satisfaction of law and justice, becomes "ours." It being signed for us and wrought out for us, by a free gift of it is given to us—ours through the imputation of it to us by the Father, in virtue of our union to Christ and interest in Him; and through the application of it to us by the Spirit of God, Who puts it upon us, clothes us with it, and enables us to lay hold upon it and claim interest in it; and which may be meant by Christ being called "our righteousness." For the meaning is, not that He should commonly go by this name, but only that He should be that unto us, which it signifies; and that we should by faith, even every true Israelite, every believer, call Him our righteousness, say that we have righteousness in Him, make mention of that continually, and express our desires to be found alone in it. For so the words may be rendered: "and this is the name whereby he shall call him, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." And a sweet name to a sensible sinner it is—to one that has felt the guilt of sin in his conscience, seen his need of a righteousness, and the worth of it.

—John Gill

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY SUBSTITUTION

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889)

THE objections against imputation all resolve themselves into objections against substitution in any form. Vicarious¹ suffering is even more *unreasonable* to some than vicarious obedience, and the arguments used in assailing the former apply with greater force against the latter. Yet human law recognizes both; the “laws of nature” show the existence of both; and the divine Law, as interpreted by the great Lawgiver Himself, acknowledges both. Man is willing to act on the principle of substitution or representation by another in earthly transactions—such as the payment of debt or the performance of duty or the descent of property.² But he is not so willing to admit it or proceed upon it in the great transaction between him and God as to condemnation and righteousness. That to which he objects not in temporal things—giving one man the benefit of another’s doings or another’s sufferings; treating the man who has not paid the debt as if he had done so because another has paid it for him; or recognizing the legal right of a man to large wealth or a vast estate, no part of which he had earned or deserved, but which had come to him as the gift and fruit of another’s lifetime’s toil—he repudiates in spiritual things as unjust and unreasonable.

Men do not object to receive any kind or amount of this world’s goods from another, though they have done nothing to deserve them and everything to make them unworthy of them, but they refuse to accept the favor of God and a standing in righteousness before Him on the ground of what a substitute has done and suffered. In earthly things they are willing to be represented by another, but not in heavenly things. The former is all fair, and just, and legal: the latter is absurd, an insult to their understanding, and a depreciation of their worth! Yet if they prized the heavenly as much as they do the earthly blessing, they would not entertain such scruples³ nor raise such objections as to receiving it from another as the result of his work. If God is willing that Christ should *represent* us, who are we that we should refuse to be represented by Him? If God is willing to deal with us on the footing of Christ’s

¹ **vicarious** – endured by one person substituting for another.

² **descent of property** – passing of property to heirs.

³ **scruples** – hesitations from the difficulties of determining what is right; doubts.

obedience and to reckon that obedience to us as if it had been our own, who are we that we should reject such a method of blessing and call it unjust and impossible? This principle or theory of representation, of one man being treated far beyond his deserts in virtue of his being legally entitled to use the name or claims of another, runs through all earthly transactions. Why should it not in like manner pervade the heavenly?

Rejection of “imputed righteousness” because the words do not actually occur in Scripture is foolish and weak. Such terms as *Christianity*, the *Trinity*, the *Eucharist*, and *plenary inspiration* are not to be found in the Bible. Yet, inasmuch as the thing, object, or truth that these words truly and accurately cover is there, the term is received as substantially accurate and made use of without scruple. Such an objection savors more of little-minded caviling⁴ than of the truth-seeking simplicity of faith.

Refusal to accept the divine “theory” or doctrine of representation in and by another indicates in many cases mere indifference to the blessing to be received; in others, resentment of the way in which that doctrine utterly sets aside all excellency or merit on our part. Men will win the kingdom for themselves; they will deserve eternal life; they will not take forgiveness or righteousness freely from another’s hands or be indebted to a substitute for what they are persuaded they can earn by their personal doings. Because the plan of representation or substitution is distasteful and humbling, they call it absurd and unjust. They refuse a heavenly inheritance on such terms, while perhaps at the very moment they are accepting an earthly estate on terms as totally irrespective of their own labor or goodness.

The Judge must either be the justifier or the condemner: that Judge is Jehovah. It is His office to condemn; it is His office also to justify. He does not condemn by *infusing* sin into the person who appears before Him; so He does not justify by *infusing* righteousness into the sinner whom He acquits. It is as *Judge* that He acquits. But He does not merely acquit or absolve. He goes beyond this. The marvelous way in which He has met the claims of justice so as to enable Him to pronounce a righteous *acquittal* enables Him to replace, either on his own former place of innocence or on a higher, the sinner whom He absolves so freely and so completely. It was by representation or substitution of the just for the unjust that He was enabled to acquit, and it is by the same representation

⁴ **caviling** – finding fault unnecessarily; raising trivial objections.

or substitution that He lifts into a more glorious position the acquitted man.

The representative or substitute being the Son of God and therefore of infinite dignity in His person, the excellency of that which He is and does, when conveyed or reckoned to another, gives that other a claim to be treated far higher than he could otherwise in any circumstances have possessed...that the man who believes in Jesus Christ from the moment that he so believes, not only receives divine absolution from all guilt, but is so made legally possessor of His infinite righteousness, that all to which that righteousness entitles becomes his, and he is henceforth treated by God according to the perfection of the perfect One, as if that perfection had been his own. "As he is, so are we in *this world*" (1Jo 4:17), that is, even now in our state of imperfection, though men of unclean lips, and though dwelling among a people of unclean lips. As it is elsewhere written, "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Not only are we "delivered from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10), not only shall we "not come into condemnation" (Joh 5:24), not only are we "justified from all things" (Act 13:39), but we are "*made the righteousness of God in him*" (2Co 5:21).

The transaction is not one of borrowing. The perfection made over to us is *given*, not *lent*, by God. It becomes ours *in law*, ours for all legal ends, ours as efficaciously as if it had been from first to last our own in very deed.

The transaction is a real one between the sinner and God. [It] carries with it all legal consequences, just as if the sinner had personally discharged his own debts and obtained a judicial *absolvitor*⁵ from all further claims whatever, a receipt in full from Him to Whom the great debt was due.

The transaction is one to which all the parties concerned have consented as being fully satisfied that injury has been done to none; nay, that all have been greatly more benefited by this mode of settlement than by the more direct one of the parties punishable undergoing the punishment in their own persons. When thus not merely no injustice is done to anyone, but when *more than justice* is done to all; when no one is defrauded, but when each gets *far more than his due*; how foolish, how preposterous, to speak of imputation as a violation of law and a subversion of the principles of righteous government!

⁵ **absolvitor** – decision of the court in favor of the defender.

The transaction is not one of indifference to sin or obliterative⁶ of the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness. It is one which, of all that can be imagined, is most fitted to show the evil of evil, the malignity of sin, the divine hatred of all departure from perfection, the regard that God has to His Law, His awful appreciation of justice, and His determination to secure at any cost—even the death of His Son—the righteous foundations of the universe and the sanctities⁷ of His eternal throne.

If the Christ of God in His sorrowful life below be but a specimen of suffering humanity or a model of patient calmness under wrong, not one of these things is manifested or secured. He is but one fragment more of a confused and disordered world where everything has broken loose from its anchorage, and each is dashing against the other in unmanageable chaos without any prospect of a holy or tranquil issue.⁸ He [would then be] an example of the complete triumph of evil over goodness, of wrong over right, of Satan over God—one from whose history we can draw only this terrific conclusion: God has lost the control of His own world; sin has become too great a power for God either to regulate or extirpate;⁹ the utmost that God can do is to produce a rare example of suffering holiness, which He allows the world to tread upon without being able effectually to interfere; righteousness after ages of buffeting and scorn must retire from the field in utter helplessness and permit the unchecked reign of evil.

If the cross be the mere exhibition of self-sacrifice and patient meekness, *then the hope of the world is gone.* We had always thought that there was a potent *purpose* of God at work in connection with the sin-bearing work of the holy Sufferer that, allowing sin for a season to develop itself, was preparing and evolving a power that would utterly overthrow it and sweep earth clean of evil—moral and physical. But if the crucified Christ be the mere self-denying man, we have nothing more at work for the overthrow of evil than has again and again been witnessed when some hero or some martyr rose above the level of his age to protest against evils that he could not eradicate and to bear witness in life and death for truth and righteousness—in vain.

The transaction is, in all its aspects and in its bearings on all parties and interests, strictly and nobly righteous. It provides a righteous

⁶ **obliterative** – wiping out, doing away with, leaving no trace.

⁷ **sanctities** – qualities of holiness.

⁸ **tranquil issue** – calm end or termination.

⁹ **extirpate** – totally destroy; pull up by the roots.

channel through which God's free love may flow down to man. It lays a righteous foundation for the pardon of sin. It secures a righteous welcome for the returning sinner. It makes the justification of the justified even more righteous than his condemnation would have been; while it makes the condemnation of the condemned not only doubly righteous, but at once a vindication and an exhibition of infinite and immutable¹⁰ justice.

There can be no justification without some kind of righteousness, and according to the nature or value of that righteousness will the justification be. [Such] justification will necessarily partake of the value of the righteousness that justifies. If the righteousness be poor and finite, our standing as justified men will be the same. If it be glorious and divine, even such will our standing be. God the justifier, acting according to the excellency of that righteousness and recognizing its claims in behalf of all who consent to be treated according to its value, deals with each believing man—weak as his faith may be—in conformity with the demands of that righteousness. All that it can claim for us, we may ask and *expect*; all that it can claim for us, God will assuredly bestow. He by Whom, in believing, we consent to be represented puts in the claim for us in His name; and the demands of that name are as just as they are irresistible.

Our legal responsibilities as transgressors of the Law are transferred to Him; and His legal claims, as the fulfiller of the Law, pass over to us. It is not a transference of characters nor an exchange of persons that we mean by this, but a transference of liabilities, an exchange of judicial demands. Here is our thorough bankruptcy and God's full discharge. What can Law say to us after this? "It is God that justifieth" (Rom 8:33). We are bankrupts; our assets are nothing. God looks at the case, pities us, and clears everything.

The epithet¹¹ *fictitious*, which some have applied to this representation, need not trouble or alarm us. The question with us is not, "Can we clear up fully the abstract principles that the transaction embodies?" but, "Does it *carry with it legal consequences* by which we are set in a new standing before God and entitled to plead in all our dealings with God, the meritoriousness¹² of an infinitely perfect life, the payment effected in behalf of those who had nothing to pay, by an infinitely perfect death?"

Thus "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 5:21). God's free love has

¹⁰ **immutable** – unchanging.

¹¹ **epithet** – abusive, contemptuous word or phrase.

¹² **meritoriousness** – quality of gaining merit, of earning a reward.

found for itself a righteous channel along which it flows in all its fullness to the ungodly. For while all that the believing man receives, he receives from *grace*, yet it is no less true, all that he receives, he receives from *righteousness*, from the hand of a righteous God acting according to the claims of a righteousness that is absolutely and divinely perfect.

He who refuses to be represented by another before God must represent himself and draw near to God on the strength of what he is in himself or what he has done. How he is likely to fare in such an approach, let his own conscience tell him, if he will not believe the explicit declaration of the Holy Spirit that “through him [Christ] we have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph 2:18); or Christ’s own affirmation concerning this: “I am the way” and “I am the door” (Joh 10:9; 14:6).

As for him who, conscious of unfitness to draw near to God by reason of personal imperfection, is willing to be represented by the Son of God and to substitute a divine claim and merit for a human, let him know that God is willing to receive him with all his imperfection because of the perfection of Another, legally transferred to him by the just God and Judge; that God is presenting to him a righteousness not only sufficient to clear him from all guilt and to pay his penalty to the full, but to exalt him to a new rank and dignity such as he could not possibly acquire by the labors or prayers or goodnesses of ten thousand such lives as his own.

“Christ is all and in all” (Col 3:11). He who knows this knows what fully satisfies and cheers. He who knows this *best* has the deepest and truest peace: he has learned the secret of being always a sinner, yet always righteous; always incomplete, yet always complete; always empty, yet always full; always poor, yet always rich. We would not say of that fullness, “Drink deep or taste not,” for even to taste is to be blest. But yet we say, “Drink deep,” for he who drinks deepest is the happiest as well as the holiest man.

Our *characters* are not transferred to Christ, but our *liabilities* are. And in our acceptance of God’s mode of transference, we make the complete exchange by which we are absolved¹³ from all guilt and enter into a state of “no condemnation.” Sin reckoned to Christ as our Substitute, and righteousness reckoned to us as the acceptors of that Substitute: *this* is deliverance, and peace, and life eternal.

From *The Everlasting Righteousness*, available as
a paperback from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹³ **absolved** – pronounced clear of guilt or blame.

CONSOLATIONS FROM THE IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)

FIRST, let all believers know for their comfort that in this imputed righteousness of Christ there is enough to satisfy the justice of God to the uttermost farthing¹ and to take off all His judicial anger and fury. The mediatory righteousness of Christ is so perfect, so full, so exact, so complete, and so fully satisfactory to the justice of God that divine justice cries out, “I have enough, and I require no more! I have found a ransom, and I am fully pacified towards you!” (Eze 16:61–63; Heb 10:10-12, 14; Isa 53:4-6). It is certain that Christ was truly and properly a sacrifice for sin. And it is as certain that our sins were the meritorious cause of His sufferings. He did put Himself into poor sinners’ stead; He took their guilt upon Him and did undergo that punishment which they should have undergone. He did die and shed His blood, that He might thereby atone² God and expiate³ sin (Rom 5:6-12). Therefore we may safely and boldly conclude that Jesus Christ hath satisfied the justice of God to the uttermost, so that now the believing sinner may rejoice and triumph in the justice as well as in the mercy of God (Heb 7:25); for doubtless the mediatory righteousness of Christ was infinitely more satisfactory and pleasing to God than all the sins of believers could be displeasing to Him. God took more pleasure and delight in the bruising of His Son, in the humiliation of His Son, and He smelled a sweeter savor in His sacrifice, than all our sins could possibly offend Him or provoke Him (Isa 53:10).

When a believer casts his eyes upon his many thousand sinful commissions and omissions, no wonder he fears and trembles. But then, when he looks upon Christ’s satisfaction, he may see himself acquitted and rejoice. For if there be no charge, no accusation against the Lord Jesus, there can be none against the believer (Rom 8:33-37). Christ’s expiatory sacrifice hath fully satisfied divine justice. And upon that very ground every believer hath cause to triumph in Christ Jesus, and in that righteousness of His by

¹ **farthing** – coin formerly used in Great Britain worth one-fourth of a penny.

² **atone** – reconcile or restore to friendly relations; appease.

³ **expiate** – make satisfaction for an offense, doing away with guilt.

which he stands justified before the throne of God (2Co 2:14; Rev 14:4-5).

Christ is a person of infinite, transcendent worth and excellency. And it makes highly for His honor to justify believers in the most ample and glorious way imaginable. And what way is that, but by working out for [them], and then investing them with a righteousness adequate to the Law of God, a righteousness that should be every way commensurate⁴ to the miserable estate of fallen man and to the holy design of the glorious God. It is the high honor of the second Adam that He hath restored to fallen man a more glorious righteousness than that he lost in the first Adam. And it would be high blasphemy in the eyes of angels and men for any mortal to assert that the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, was less powerful to save than the first Adam was to destroy! The second Adam is “able to save to the uttermost all such as come to God through him” (Heb 7:25). He is able to save to the uttermost obligation of the Law—*preceptive*⁵ as well as *penal*⁶—and to bring in perfect righteousness as well as perfect innocency. He is able to save to the uttermost demand of divine justice by that perfect satisfaction that He has given to divine justice. Christ is “mighty to save” (Isa 63:1); and as He is mighty to save, so He loves to save poor sinners in such a way wherein He may most magnify His own might. And therefore He will purchase their pardon with His blood (1Pe 1:18-19) and make reparation⁷ to divine justice for all the wrongs and injuries that fallen man had done to his Creator and His royal Law; and bestow upon him a better righteousness than that which Adam lost; and bring him into a more safe, high, honorable, and durable estate than that which Adam fell from when he was in his created perfection.

All the attributes of God do acquiesce⁸ in the imputed righteousness of Christ, so that a believer may look upon the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God and rejoice and lay himself down in peace (Psa 4:8). Christ has put His coat, His robe of righteousness, upon every believer (Isa 61:10), upon which account all the judicial anger, wrath, and fury of God towards believers ceaseth.

But, secondly, know for your comfort that this imputed, this mediatory righteousness of Christ takes away all your unrighteousness. It cancels every bond; it takes away all iniquity and

⁴ **commensurate** – of corresponding extent or magnitude; proportionate.

⁵ **preceptive** – pertaining to or conveying a command.

⁶ **penal** – pertaining to punishment, as for breaking the law.

⁷ **reparation** – amends; restitution.

⁸ **acquiesce** – consent; comply passively or without protest.

answers for all your sins (Isa 53:5-7; Col 2:12-15). “Lord, here are my sins of omission, and here are my sins of commission”;⁹ but the righteousness of Christ hath answered for them all. “Here are my sins against the Law, and here are my sins against the gospel. And here are my sins against the offers of grace, the tenders¹⁰ of grace, the strivings of grace, the bowels of grace”; but the righteousness of Christ hath answered for them all.

O sirs! It would be high blasphemy for any to imagine that there should be more demerit in any sin, yea, in all sin to condemn a believer, than there is merit in Christ’s righteousness to absolve him, to justify him (Rom 8:1, 33-35). The righteousness of Christ was shadowed out by the glorious robes and apparel of the high priest (Exo 28). That attire in which the high priest appeared before God, what was it else but a type of Christ’s righteousness? The filthy garments of Joshua, who represented the Church, were not only taken off from him, thereby signifying the removal of our sins (Zec 3:4-5); but also a new, fair garment was put upon him to signify our being clothed with the wedding-garment of Christ’s righteousness. If any shall say, “How is it possible that a soul that is defiled with the worst of sins should be whiter than the snow, yea, beautiful and glorious in the eyes of God?” the answer is at hand: to whomsoever the Lord doth give the pardon of his sins, which is the first part of our justification, to them He doth also impute the righteousness of Christ, which is the second part of our justification before God.

Thus David describeth, saith the apostle, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (Rom 4:6-7). Now to that man whose sins the Lord forgives, to him He doth impute righteousness also: “Take away the filthy garments from him,” saith the Lord of Joshua, “and he said unto him, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment” (Zec 3:4). And what was that change of raiment? Surely the perfect obedience and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, which God doth impute unto us; in which respect also we are said by justifying faith to put on the Lord Jesus (Rom 13:14); and to be clothed with Him as with a garment (Gal 3:27). And no marvel if, being so appareled, we appear beautiful and glorious in the sight of God: “To her,” that is,

⁹ **sins of omission and commission** – A sin of omission is a failure to perform that which is commanded; a sin of commission is doing that which is forbidden, or doing something otherwise righteous in an evil manner or with an ulterior motive.

¹⁰ **tenders** – formal offers.

Christ's bride, "was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev 19:8). This perfect righteousness of Christ, which the Lord imputeth to us and wherewith as with a garment He clotheth us, is the only righteousness that the saints have to stand before God with. And having that robe of righteousness on, they may stand with great boldness and comfort before the judgment seat of God.

But, **thirdly, know for your comfort that this righteousness of Christ presents us perfectly righteous in the sight of God.** He is made to us righteousness (1Co 1:30). The robe of innocency, like the veil of the temple, is rent asunder. Our righteousness is a ragged righteousness; our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6). Look, as under rags the naked body is seen, so under the rags of our righteousnesses the body of death is seen. Christ is all in all in regard of righteousness: Christ is "the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe" (Rom 10:4). That is, through Christ we are as righteous as if we had satisfied the Law in our own persons. The end of the Law is to justify and save those who fulfill it. Christ subjected Himself thereto: He perfectly fulfilled it for us, and His perfect righteousness is imputed to us. Christ fulfilled the moral Law, not for Himself, but for us. Therefore, Christ doing it for believers, they fulfill the Law in Christ. And so Christ by doing, and they believing in Him that doth it, do fulfill the Law.

Or Christ may be said to be the end of the Law because the end of the Law is perfect righteousness, that a man may be justified thereby, which end we cannot attain of ourselves through the frailty of our flesh. But by Christ we attain it, Who hath fulfilled the Law for us. Christ hath perfectly fulfilled the Decalogue for us and that three ways: (1) in His pure conception, (2) in His godly life, (3) in His holy and obedient sufferings—and all for us. For whatsoever the Law required that we should be, do, or suffer, He hath performed in our behalf. We are discharged by Him before God. Christ—in respect of the integrity and purity of His nature, being conceived without sin (Mat 1:18); and in respect of His life and actions, being wholly conformed to the absolute righteousness of the Law (Luk 1:35); and in respect of the punishment which He suffered, to make satisfaction unto God's justice for the breach of the Law (2Co 5:21; Col 1:20)—in these respects Christ is the perfection of the Law and "the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe" (Rom 10:4).

The infinite wisdom and power of dear Jesus in reconciling the Law and the gospel in this great mystery of justification is greatly to be magnified. This righteousness presents us in the sight of God as “all fair” (Song 4:7); as “complete” (Col 2:10); as “without spot or wrinkle” (Eph 5:27); as “without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14:5); as “holy, and unblameable, and unreprieveable in his sight” (Col 1:22). Oh, the happiness and blessedness, the safety and glory, of those precious souls who in the righteousness of Jesus Christ stand perfectly righteous in the sight of God!

But, **fourthly, know for your comfort that this imputed righteousness of Christ will answer to all the fears, doubts, and objections of your souls.** How shall I look up to God? The answer is, “In the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” How shall I have any communion with a holy God in this world? The answer is, “In the righteousness of Christ.” How shall I find acceptance with God? The answer is, “In the righteousness of Christ.” How shall I die? The answer is, “In the righteousness of Christ.” How shall I stand before the judgment seat? The answer is “In the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Your sure and only way, under all temptations, fears, conflicts, doubts, and disputes, is by faith to remember Christ and the sufferings of Christ as your Mediator and Surety. Say, “O Christ, Thou art my sin in being made sin for me; and Thou art my curse being made a curse for me” (2Co 5:21; Gal 3:13); or rather, “I am Thy sin, and Thou art my righteousness; I am Thy curse, and Thou art my blessing; I am Thy death, and Thou art my life; I am the wrath of God to Thee, and Thou art the love of God to me; I am Thy hell, and Thou art my heaven.”

O sirs! If you think of your sins and of God’s wrath; if you think of your guiltiness and of God’s justice, your hearts will faint and fail. They will fear and tremble and sink into despair, if you do not think of Christ, if you do not stay and rest your souls upon the Mediator, the righteousness of Christ, the imputed righteousness of Christ. The imputed righteousness of Christ answers all cavils¹¹ and objections though there were millions of them that can be made against the good estate of a believer. This is a precious truth—[of] more worth than a world—that all our sins are pardoned, not only in a way of truth and mercy, but in a way of justice.

But, **fifthly, know for your comfort that the imputed righteousness of Christ is the best title that you have to show for a kingdom that shakes not, for riches that corrupt not, for an inheritance that**

¹¹ **cavils** – criticisms for petty reasons; frivolous objections.

fadeth not away, and for an house not made with hands, but one eternal in the heavens (Heb 12:28; 1Pe 1:3-5; 2Co 5:1-4). It is the fairest certificate that you have to show for all that happiness and blessedness that you look for in that other world. The righteousness of Christ is your life, your joy, your comfort, your crown, your confidence, your heaven, your all. Oh, that you were still so wise as to keep a fixed eye and an awakened heart upon the mediatory righteousness of Christ! For that is the righteousness by which you may safely and comfortably live and by which you may happily and quietly die.

Ah, that believers would dwell much upon this: they have a righteousness in Christ that is as full, perfect, and complete, as if they had fulfilled the Law...Yea, the righteousness that believers have by Christ is in some respect better than that they should have had by Adam...The first Adam was a mere man; the second Adam is God and man...Adam was a mutable¹² person. He lost his righteousness in one day, say some, and all that glory which his posterity should have possessed [if he had] stood fast in innocency. But the righteousness of Christ cannot be lost. His righteousness is like Himself, from everlasting to everlasting. When once this white raiment is put upon a believer, it can never fall off; it can never be taken off. This splendid glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ is as really a believer's as if he had wrought it himself (Rev 19:8). A believer is no loser, but a gainer, by Adam's fall. By the loss of Adam's righteousness is brought to light a more glorious and durable righteousness than ever Adam's was. And upon the account of an interest in this righteousness a believer may challenge all the glory of that upper world.

But, sixthly, know for your comfort that this imputed righteousness of Christ is the only true basis, bottom, and ground, for a believer to build his happiness upon, his joy and comfort upon, and the true peace and quiet of his conscience upon. What though Satan, or thy own heart, or the world condemn thee, yet in this thou mayest rejoice: God justifies thee. You see what a bold challenge Paul makes: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Rom 8:33). And if the judge acquit the prisoner at the bar, he cares not though the jailer or his fellow-prisoners condemn him. So here there are no accusers that a believer needs to fear, seeing that it is God Himself Who is the supreme Judge that absolves him as just. God absolves, and therefore it is to no purpose for Satan to accuse us (Rev 12:10), nor for

¹² mutable – capable of or subject to change.

the Law of Moses to accuse us (Joh 5:45), nor for our own consciences to accuse us (Rom 2:25), nor for the world to accuse us. God is the highest Judge, and His tribunal-seat is the supreme judgment seat. Therefore from thence there is no appealing. As amongst men, persons accused or condemned may appeal till they come to the highest court. But if in the highest they are absolved and discharged, then they are free and safe and well. [Because the believer is] absolved before God's tribunal-seat, there [are] no further accusations to be feared, all appeals from thence being void and of no force. The consideration of which should arm us, comfort us, and strengthen us against all terrors of conscience, guilt of sin, accusation of the Law, and cruelty of Satan—inasmuch as these either dare not appear before God to accuse us or charge us; or, if they do, it is but lost labor.

Ah! What a strong cordial¹³ would this be to all the people of God, if they would but live in the power of this glorious truth! It is God that justifies them, and there lies no accusation in the court of heaven against them!

The great reason why many poor Christians are under so many dejections, despondencies, and perplexities is because they drink no more of this water of life: "It is God that justifieth." Did Christians live more upon this breast, "It is God that justifieth," they would be no more like Pharaoh's lean kine,¹⁴ but would be fat and flourishing (Gen 41:1-3).

The imputed righteousness of Christ is a real, sure, and solid foundation upon which a believer may safely build his peace, joy, and everlasting rest. Yea, it will help him to glory in tribulations and to triumph over all adversities...Yea, you may be wonderfully cheered at this, and it is your greatest comfort that you have to deal with this just God, Who hath already received satisfaction for your sins.

Whilst Christians set up a righteousness of their own and build not upon the righteousness of Christ, how unsettled are they (Rom 10:3)! How miserably are they tossed up and down, sometimes fearing and sometimes hoping, sometimes supposing themselves in a good condition, and anon¹⁵ seeing themselves upon the very brink of hell! But now all is quiet and serene with that soul that builds upon the righteousness of Christ. For he being "justified by

¹³ **cordial** – medicinal tonic which excites the heart or circulation; anything that comforts, gladdens, or exhilarates the heart.

¹⁴ **kine** – cows.

¹⁵ **anon** – suddenly; at once.

faith, hath peace with God” (Rom 5:1). Observe that noble description of Christ in Isaiah 32:2, “And a man,” that is, the man Christ Jesus, “shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” When a man is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, Who is God-man, it is neither wind nor tempest, it is neither drought nor weariness that can disturb the peace of his soul. For Christ and His righteousness will be a hiding-place, a covert, and rivers of water, and the shadow of a great rock unto him. Being at perfect peace with God, he may well say with the Psalmist, “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psa 4:6-8). The peace and comfort of an awakened sinner can never stand firm and stable, but upon the basis of a positive righteousness.

When a sensible sinner¹⁶ casts his eye upon his own righteousness, holiness, fasting, prayers, tears, humbling, meltings, he can find no place for the sole of his foot to rest firmly upon by reason of the spots, blots, and blemishes that cleave both to his graces and duties. He knows that his prayers need pardon, that his tears need washing in the blood of the Lamb, and that his very righteousness needs another’s righteousness to secure him from condemnation. “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psa 130:3; 1:5). That is, “stand” in judgment...The best man’s life is fuller of sins than the firmament is of stars or the furnace of sparks. Therefore who can stand in judgment and not fall under the weight of [God’s] just wrath, which burneth as low as hell itself? None can stand. Were the faults of the best man alive but written in his forehead, he was never able to stand in judgment. When a man comes to the Law for justification, it convinceth him of sin.

When he pleads his innocence, that he is not so great a sinner as others are, when he pleads his righteousness, his duties, his good meanings, and his good desires, the Law tells him that they are all weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and found too light (Dan 5:27). The Law tells him that the best of his duties will not save him and that the least of his sins will damn him. The Law tells him that his own righteousnesses are as filthy rags, do but defile him, and that his best services do but witness against him. The Law looks for perfect and personal obedience, and because the sinner cannot come up to it, it pronounceth him accursed (Gal

¹⁶ **sensible sinner** – a sinner awakened to the reality of his wicked condition, realizing his state before God.

3:10). And though the sinner sues¹⁷ hard for mercy, yet the Law will show him none—no, though he seeks it carefully with tears (Heb 12:17). But now, when the believing sinner casts his eye upon the righteousness of Christ, he sees that righteousness to be a perfect and exact righteousness, as perfect and exact as that of the Law.

The saints of old have always placed their happiness, peace, and comfort in their perfect and complete justification, rather than in their imperfect and incomplete sanctification...That text is worthy to be written in letters of gold: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord,” saith the sound believer, “my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa 61:10). He hath imputed and given unto me the perfect holiness and obedience of my blessed Savior and made it mine.

But, **seventhly, then know for your comfort that you have the highest reason in the world to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus.** “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus” (Phi 3:3; Gal 6:14). We rejoice in the Person of Christ, and we rejoice in the righteousness of Christ: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ” (2Co 2:14). [God’s grace] was ever in Paul’s mouth, and ever in Austin’s¹⁸ mouth, and should be ever in a Christian’s mouth when his eye is fixed upon the righteousness of Christ. Every believer is in a more blessed and happy estate by means of the righteousness of Christ than Adam was in innocency, and that upon a threefold account, which are just and noble grounds for every Christian to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus.

(1.) *That righteousness that Adam had was uncertain and such as it was possible for him to lose.* Yea, he did lose it (Gen 3), and that in a very short time (Psa 8:5). God gave him power and freedom of will either to hold it or lose it. And we know soon after, upon choice, he proved a bankrupt. But the righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is made more firm and sure to us. Adam sinned away his righteousness, but a believer cannot sin away the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is not possible for the elect of God so to sin as to lose Christ or to strip themselves of that robe of righteousness which Christ hath put upon them (1Jo 3:9; Rom 8:35, 39). The gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against that soul that is

¹⁷ **sues** – petitions; seeks to obtain.

¹⁸ **Austin** or **Aurelius Augustine** (354-430) – Bishop of Hippo, early church theologian known by many as the father of orthodox theology; born in Tagaste, North Africa.

interested in Christ, that is clothed with the righteousness of Christ (Mat 16:18). Now, what higher ground of joy and triumph in Christ Jesus can there be than this? But,

(2.) *The righteousness that Adam had was in his own keeping.* The spring and root of it was founded in himself, and that was the cause why he lost it so soon. Adam, like the prodigal son (Luk 15:12-13), had all his portion, his happiness, his holiness, his blessedness, his righteousness, in his own hands, in his own keeping, and so quickly lost stock and block, as some speak.

Oh, but now, that blessed righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is not in our own keeping, but in our Father's keeping. God the Father is the Lord Keeper, not only of our inherent righteousness, but also of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ unto us. "My sheep shall never perish," saith our Savior, "neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (Joh 10:28-29). Though the saints may meet with many shakings and tossings in their various conditions in this world, yet their final perseverance till they come to full possession of eternal life is certain. God is so unchangeable in His purposes of love and so invincible in His power that neither Satan, nor the world, nor their own flesh shall ever be able to separate them from "a crown of righteousness" (2Ti 4:7-8), "a crown of life" (Rev 2:10), "a crown of glory" (1Pe 5:4). The power of God is so far above all created opposition, that it will certainly maintain the saints in a state of grace. Now what a bottom and ground for rejoicing and triumphing in Christ Jesus is here! But,

(3.) *[Even if] the righteousness that Adam had in his creation [were] unchangeable, and he could never have lost it; yet it had been but the righteousness of a man, of a mere creature.* And what a poor, low righteousness would that have been, to that high and glorious righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ, which is the righteousness of such a Person as was God as well as man. Yea, that righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is a higher righteousness and a more excellent, transcendent righteousness than that of the angels. Though the righteousness of the angels be perfect and complete in its kind, yet it is but the righteousness of mere creatures. But the righteousness of the saints in which they stand clothed before the throne of God is the righteousness of that Person which is both God and man.

Now what a well of salvation is here! What three noble grounds and what matchless bottoms are here for a Christian's joy and tri-

umph in Christ Jesus, Who hath put so glorious a robe as His own righteousness upon them! Ah, Christians, let not the consolations of God be small in your eyes (Job 15:11). Why take you no more comfort and delight in Christ Jesus? Why rejoice you no more in Him? Not to rejoice in Christ Jesus is a plain breach of that gospel command, “Rejoice in the Lord always,” that is, rejoice in Christ, “and again I say, rejoice,” saith the apostle (Phi 4:4). He doubleth the mandate to show the necessity and excellency of the duty.

That joy lasts forever, whose object remains forever. Such an object is our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the joy of the saints should still be exercised upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Shall the worldling rejoice in his barns, the rich man in his bags, the ambitious man in his honors, the voluptuous man in his pleasures, and the wanton in his Delilahs; and shall not a Christian rejoice in Christ Jesus and in that robe of righteousness with which Christ hath covered him (Isa 61:10)?

The joy of that Christian who keeps a fixed eye upon Christ and His righteousness cannot be expressed, it cannot be painted. No man can paint the sweetness of the honeycomb, or the sweetness of a cluster of Canaan, or the fragrance of the rose of Sharon. As the being of things cannot be painted, so the sweetness of things cannot be painted. The joy of the Holy Ghost cannot be painted, nor that joy that arises in a Christian’s heart, who keeps up a daily converse with Christ and His righteousness, cannot be painted; it cannot be expressed! Who can look upon the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ and seriously consider that even every vein of that blessed body did bleed to bring him to heaven, and not rejoice in Christ Jesus? Who can look upon the glorious righteousness of Christ imputed to him and not be filled with an exuberancy¹⁹ of spiritual joy in God his Savior? There is not the pardon of the least sin, nor the least degree of grace, nor the least drop of mercy, but cost Christ dear: for He must die, and He must be made a sacrifice, and He must be accursed, that pardon may be thine, and grace thine, and mercy thine! And oh, how should this draw out thy heart to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus!

But, **eighthly, the imputed righteousness of Christ may serve to comfort, support, and bear up the hearts of the people of God from fainting and sinking under the sense of the weakness and imperfection of their inherent righteousness.** The church of old has lamentingly²⁰ said, “We are all as an unclean thing, and all our

¹⁹ **exuberancy** – unrestrained enthusiasm or joy.

²⁰ **lamentingly** – expressing grief, deep sorrow, regret.

righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6). When a Christian keeps a serious eye upon the spots, blots, blemishes, infirmities, and follies that cleave to his inherent righteousness, fears and tremblings arise to the saddening and sinking of his soul. But when he casts a fixed eye upon the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, then his comforts revive and his heart bears up. For though he hath no righteousness of his own by which his soul may stand accepted before God, yet he hath God’s righteousness, which infinitely transcends his own. In God’s account, [it] goes for his, as if he had exactly fulfilled the righteousness which the Law requires. According to the apostle, “What shall we say then? the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith” (Rom 9:30).

Faith wraps itself in the righteousness of Christ and so justifieth us. The Gentiles sought righteousness, not in themselves but in Christ, which they apprehended by faith and were by it justified in the sight of God. The Jews, seeking it in themselves, and thinking by the goodness of their own works to attain to the righteousness of the Law, missed of it. Being in no man’s power perfectly to fulfill the [Law], only Christ hath exactly fulfilled it for all that by faith close²¹ savingly with Him. O sirs! None can be justified in the sight of God by a righteousness of their own making.

Now remember that this imputed righteousness of Christ procures acceptance for our inherent righteousness. When a sincere Christian casts his eye upon the weaknesses, infirmities, and imperfections that daily attend his best services, he sighs and mourns. But if he looks upward to the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, [it] shall bring forth his infirm, weak, and sinful performances perfect, spotless, sinless, and approved according to the tenor²² of the gospel. They become spiritual sacrifices, [and] he cannot but rejoice (1Pe 2:5). For as there is an imputation of righteousness to the persons of believers, so there is also an imputation to their services and actions...so the imperfect good works that are done by believers are accounted righteousness, or as Calvin speaks, “are accounted for righteousness, they being dipped in the blood of Christ.” They are accounted righteous actions; and so sincere Christians shall be judged according to their good works though not saved for them (Rev 11:18; 20:12; Mat 25:34-37).

²¹ **close** – come to terms.

²² **tenor** – general sense; the overall course of meaning.

And it is observable in that famous process of the last judgment (Mat 25:34-37), that the supreme Judge makes mention of the bounty and liberality of the saints, and so bestows the crown of life and the eternal inheritance upon them. Though the Lord's faithful ones have eminent cause to be humbled and afflicted for the many weaknesses that cleave to their best duties, yet on the other hand, they have wonderful cause to rejoice and triumph that they are made perfect through Jesus Christ, and that the Lord looks at them through the righteousness of Christ as fruits of His own Spirit (Heb 13:20-21; 1Co 6:11). The saints' prayers being perfumed with Christ's odors are highly accepted in heaven (Rev 8:3-4). Upon this bottom of imputed righteousness, believers may have exceeding strong consolation and good hope through grace, that both their persons and services do find singular acceptance with God as having no spot or blemish at all in them. Surely righteousness imputed must be the top of our happiness and blessedness!

But, **ninthly and lastly, know for your comfort that imputed righteousness will give you the greatest boldness before God's judgment seat.** There is an absolute and indispensable necessity of a perfect righteousness wherewith to appear before God. The holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of His government, the severity of His Law, and the terror of wrath call aloud upon the sinner for a complete righteousness without which there is no standing in judgment (Psa 1:5). That righteousness only is able to justify us before God which is perfect, and that hath no defect or blemish in it, such as may abide the trial before His judgment seat, such as may fitly satisfy His justice and make our peace with Him. And consequently, [by this] the Law of God is fulfilled...such a righteousness as He requires, as will stand before Him, and satisfy His justice (Rom 10:3).

This is the crowning comfort to a sensible and understanding soul, that he stands righteous before a judgment seat in that full, exact, perfect, complete, matchless, spotless, peerless, and most acceptable righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

It is a complete and unspotted righteousness, an unblameable righteousness, and unblemished righteousness. And therefore God can neither in justice except nor object to it. In this righteousness the believer lives, in this righteousness the believer dies, and in this righteousness believers shall arise and appear before the judgment seat of Christ to the deep admiration of all the elect angels, to the transcendent terror and horror of all reprobates, and to the matchless joy and triumph of all on Christ's right hand, who

shall then shout and sing, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa 61:10).

Oh, how Christ in this great day will be admired and glorified in all His saints (2Th 1:10), when every saint, wrapped up in this fine linen, in this white robe of Christ’s righteousness, shall shine more gloriously than ten thousand suns! In the great Day of the Lord, when the saints shall stand before the tribunal of God, clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, they shall then stand, they shall then be pronounced righteous even in the court of divine justice, which sentence will fill their souls with comfort and the souls of sinners with astonishment (Rev 20:12; 12:10).

Suppose we saw the believing sinner holding up his hand at God’s bar—the books opened, the accuser of the brethren present, the witnesses ready, and the Judge on the bench thus bespeaking the sinner at the bar (Rom 7:12, 14, 16; Gal 3:10): “O sinner, sinner, thou standest here indicted before Me for many millions of sins of commission and for many millions of sins of omission. Thou hast broken My holy, just, and righteous Laws beyond all human conception or expression, and hereof thou art proved guilty. What hast thou now to say for thyself why thou shouldst not be eternally cast?” Upon this the sinner pleads guilty. But withal he earnestly desires that he may have time and liberty to plead for himself and to offer his reasons why that dreadful sentence, “Go, you cursed,” should not be passed upon him (Mat 25:41). The liberty desired being granted by the Judge, the sinner pleads that his Surety, Jesus Christ, hath by His blood and sufferings given full and complete satisfaction to divine justice and that He hath paid down upon the nail the whole debt at once, and that it can never stand with the holiness and unspotted justice of God to demand satisfaction twice (Heb 10:10, 14).

If the Judge shall further object, “Ay, but sinner, sinner, the Law requireth an exact and perfect righteousness in the personal fulfilling of it. Now, sinner, where is thy exact and perfect righteousness? (Gal 3:10). Upon which the believing sinner very readily, cheerfully, humbly, and boldly replies, “My righteousness is upon the bench: ‘In the Lord have I righteousness’ (Isa 45:24). Christ, my Surety, hath fulfilled the Law on my behalf. His obeying the Law to the full, His perfect conforming to its commands, His doing, as well as His dying obedience, is by grace made over

and reckoned to me in order to my justification and salvation. And this is my plea, by which I will stand before the Judge of all the world.”

Upon this, the sinner’s plea is accepted as good in Law, and accordingly he is pronounced righteous and goes away glorying and rejoicing, triumphing and shouting it out, “Righteous, righteous, righteous, righteous!” “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory” (Isa 45:25). And thus you see that there are nine springs of strong consolation that flow into your souls through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness unto you.

From “The Golden Key to Open Hidden Treasures” in *The Works of Thomas Brooks*, Vol. 5, Banner of Truth; Available as a booklet from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



“Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord” (Isa 54:17); for He, of God, “is made unto us...righteousness” (1Co 1:30). The transference is complete and eternal. From the moment that we receive the divine testimony to the righteousness of the Son of God, all the guilt that was on us passes over to Him and all His righteousness passes over to us. God looks on us as possessed of that righteousness and treats us according to its value in His sight. Men may call this a mere “name” or “legal fiction,” but it is such a “name” as secures for us the full favor of the righteous God.—*Horatius Bonar*

IS THE LORD YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*“This is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD
OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”—Jeremiah 23:6*

THE time is short. It is but a little while, and the Lord Jesus shall come in His glory. The judgment shall be set and the books shall be opened. “Before Him shall be gathered all nations...that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (Mat 25:32; 2Co 5:10). The inmost secrets of all hearts shall be revealed; “and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man” will stand together on a level at the bar and will see each other face to face, and one by one will have to give account of themselves to God before the whole world (Rev 6:15). Thus it is written, and therefore it is true and sure to come to pass.

And what does each of you intend to say in that hour? What is the defense you are prepared to set up? What is the answer you propose to give? What is the cause you mean to show why sentence should not be pronounced against you?

Verily, beloved, I do fear that some amongst you do not know. You have not thought about it yet—you have resolved to think about it some day soon; or you are not quite clear about it at present; or you have made out some ingenious, plausible scheme, which will not stand the touchstone of the Bible. Oh, what a fearful case is yours! Life is indeed uncertain; the fairest or the strongest here may [perhaps] be taken next—you cannot make an agreement with death, and yet you cannot tell us what you are resting upon for comfort.

In the great Day there will be no [lack] of witnesses: your thoughts, words, and actions will appear written in the book one after another. Your Judge is a searcher of hearts. And yet, in spite of all these facts, too many of you sleep on as if the Bible were not true; too many of you know not how or why you are to escape God’s wrath and condemnation.

I. First, then, I am to show you, you must have some righteousness. The Bible says plainly, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18). “The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1Co 6:9). “The cursed shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Mat 25:46). “Have on the breastplate of righteousness,” says Paul to the Ephesians (Eph 6:14). And how shall anyone presume to say that he can enter into heaven without it!

But I wish here to expose the folly of all those who talk in a loose and general way about God’s mercy. Men will often say, when urged to think about their salvation, “Indeed I know I am not what I should be; I have broken God’s Law very often; but He is very merciful, and I hope I shall be forgiven.” Now, I am bold to say, beloved, this is an immense delusion, a refuge of lies that will not stand being compared with Scripture; and more than this, it will not last one instant in the fire of trial and affliction.

Have you not ever heard that God is a God of perfect holiness—holy in His character, holy in His laws, holy in His dwelling place? “Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel,” says the book of Leviticus, “and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev 19:2). “He is a holy God,” says Joshua (Jos 24:19). “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Heb 12:14). And the book of Revelation, speaking of heaven, says, “There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth” (Rev 21:27). And will you tell us in the face of all these texts that man, corrupt, impure, defiled—as the best of us most surely is—shall pass the fiery judgment of our God and enter into the heavenly Jerusalem by simply trusting in the mercy of his Maker, without one single rag to cover his iniquities and hide his natural uncleanness? It cannot be: God’s mercy and God’s holiness must needs be reconciled, and you have not done this yet.

And have you never heard that God is a God of perfect justice, Whose laws may not be broken without punishment, Whose commandments must be fulfilled on pain of death? “All his ways are judgment,” says the book of Deuteronomy, “a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deu 32:4). “Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne” says David (Psa 89:14). “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets,” said Jesus, “I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat 5:17-18). I cannot discover any place

that says the Law is now let down and need not be fulfilled; and how, then, can I teach you that it is enough to look to God's mercy? I read of only two ways in the Bible: one is to do the whole Law yourself; the other is to do it by Another. I tell you then, God's mercy and God's justice must be reconciled, and this you have not done yet.

You tell us fairly you are not what you should be, but you say that God is merciful. I answer you this will not stand before the Bible: the wages of sin is death; he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all. God...will have His demands paid in full: your debt must be discharged by yourself or by someone else. Choose which you please, but one thing at least is certain—payment must be made. God is indeed all love: He willeth not the death of any sinner. But however small your iniquities may be, they cannot possibly be put away until the claims of His Law have been satisfied to the uttermost farthing. *By some means then, you must have righteousness, or else it is clear you cannot be saved.*

II. I promised in the second place to show you that we have no righteousness of our own, and therefore by ourselves we cannot be saved. Look at the Law of God and measure its requirements. Does it not ask of every man a perfect, unsinning obedience from first to last, in thought and word and deed, without one single failure in the slightest jot or tittle? And where is the son or daughter of Adam who can say, "All this I have performed"? I would even take the case of the best Christian among ourselves, and ask him if he can name a single day on which he has not sinned in many things. Oh, how much he would tell you of wandering in his prayers, of defilement in his thoughts, of coldness toward God, of want of love, of pride, of evil tempers, of vanity, of worldly-mindedness!

Some tell us that repentance and amendment will enable us to stand in the great Day. But the Bible does not warrant it. No doubt, without them none of you will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but they cannot put away your sins nor endure the severity of God's judgment.

Some say they put their trust in well-spent lives: they never did anybody any harm. They have always done their best, and so they hope they shall be accounted righteous. Beloved, this is miserable trifling. Let them tell us of a single day in which they have not broken that spiritual law laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. What! *Never* thought an unkind thought? *Never* looked an unchaste look? *Never* said an uncharitable thing? *Never* coveted? Or let them tell us of a single hour in which they have not left undone

something it was in their power to do...Is it not clear, then, that they do not read the Scriptures, or neglect their precepts if they do; and so at any rate, they are not doing their best?

Some tell us that they hope sincerity will carry them safe through their trial. They may not perhaps have quite clear views, but still they have always meant well, and so they hope to be accepted. I cannot find there is any place for them in heaven.

Lastly, some tell us that they go through all the forms and ordinances of religion and build their claim to righteousness on that. "Hath not God commanded us," they say, "to honor His Word, His house, His ministers, His sacraments? All this we do, and surely He will accept us." I cannot find it written.

Now, I wish to show you plainly that we have nothing of our own. The doctrine may seem hard and disagreeable, and yet there are few who do not allow it at one important period in their lives, if they never did before. I mean the hour of death. Mark then how anxious almost everyone becomes, whom God permits to keep possession of his senses. The Judgment Day appears then in its true light. Man feels naked and empty. He knows he is about to be asked that awful question, "What hast thou to say, why thou shouldst not perish for this long list of sins?" And if he has not furnished himself with the only answer that can be given, the view before his eyes cannot possibly look anything else than dreary, black, and hopeless. In short, both Scripture and your own experience prove most fully that nothing we can do will stand God's examination.

"But what are we to do?" perhaps you will ask. "You seem to have shut us up without hope. You told us first that we must have some righteousness, and now you have told us further that we have not any of our own. What are we to do? Which way are we to turn? What would you have us say? To whom are we to look?"

III. I promised in the third place to tell you how God can be a just God and yet show mercy and justify the most ungodly. The Lord Jesus Christ has done what we ought to have done and suffered what we ought to have suffered. He has taken our place and become our Substitute both in life and death, and all for the sake of miserable, corrupt, ungrateful beings like ourselves. Oh, is not His name then rightly called, "The Lord our Righteousness"?

Christ was accounted as a sinner, and therefore punished for us; we are accounted as righteous, and therefore glorified in Him. He was accounted as a sinner, and therefore He was condemned; we are accounted as righteous in Him, and therefore justified.

God's Law has been satisfied, and now we may be saved. Sin has been punished, and now sinners may go free. God has shown Himself a just God, and yet He can be the Savior of guilty men.

Beloved, are not these things wonderful? Are not these glad tidings to the laboring and heavy laden? The Lord Himself is our Righteousness...This shall be our defense and plea when earth and its works are burned up, and the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the Chief Shepherd shall appear to judge the sons of men. Who shall lay anything *then* to the charge of those who have laid hold on Christ? Shall anyone presume to say they have not done everything required? "The Lord," we will answer, "is our righteousness."

Now, I have preached to very little purpose, beloved, if you do not this very morning ask yourselves, "Is the Lord *my* righteousness, or is He not?"...I know not that I can put into your heads a more important inquiry; and yet, I sadly fear too many of you will not think I am in earnest, or else you will suppose the question may be useful to your neighbors, but not so very necessary for yourself.

I say this much by way of warning, and I now repeat to every man, woman, and child: "Is the Lord your righteousness, or is He not?" I know that there are here two parties. One would reply, if honest, "I fear He is not"; and the other would answer, "I trust He is." I purpose, therefore, to conclude this sermon by a few words to each of these two classes.

First, then, I shall offer some counsel to those among you who are prepared to say: "The Lord Jesus is, we trust, our righteousness." I say then—and I think it safe to do so—you have made a good profession, but I would have you daily search and see that you are not deceiving yourselves. See that your tongue does not lay claim to more than your heart has received and knows of. See that your life and lips are thoroughly agreed. Show all the world that He in Whom you trust is your example no less than your righteousness, and while you wait for His second appearing, endeavor daily to become more like Him. Study to be holy, even as He Who has called you and washed you in His own blood is holy. Beware that you give the Lord's enemies no occasion to blaspheme. They are watching you much; you cannot be hid. Be always saying to yourself, "What shall I do, and how shall I behave, to show my gratitude to Him Who hath carried my sins and given me His righteousness?" But know ye for a certainty, if the world says, "What do these persons more than others?"; if those who live with

you cannot take knowledge of you that you are much with Jesus; if you have no fruit to show of any sort; if you are not habitually and daily sober, just, holy, temperate, humble, meek, loving, watchful, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, hungering and thirsting after righteousness—if you have none of these things, you are little better than sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, you are ruining your own soul, and in the Day of Judgment you will plead in vain the name of Jesus. The Lord will say, “I know you not; you never really came to Me.”

It only remains now to speak to all among you who cannot say, “The Lord is our righteousness.” Indeed, beloved, I am distressed for your condition. I cannot understand, I never can, what arguments you use to quench the striving of God’s Spirit, to stop the prickings of your own conscience. In truth, I do suspect you never argue, you never reason. You shut your eyes and try to forget your own perishing souls. But know ye not that verse of the Bible which declares, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God” (Psa 9:17)—not ridicule, or insult, but simply all who *forget*. And know ye not the verse, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb 2:3). It does not say abuse, disbelieve, or deny, but simply *neglect*. And this, I fear, is a charge you cannot turn aside.

Oh, think of death: it may be near at hand. Your careless indifference will alter then, but without Christ you will find a sting in that hour which no power of your own will ever remove. *Think of eternity in hell:* no merry companions, no comfortable gossiping, no noisy reveling at night—nothing but unchanging misery, unceasing torment, and unutterable woe. *Think of thy judgment:* your name will be called in turn, and you will stand in the sight of assembled millions—ministers, father, mother, wife, children, relations, all will see you—you will have to give account of your actions, and you know you will be condemned. But who will then pass sentence? Not an angel, not even God the Father; but the Lord Himself! Oh, cutting and heartrending thought! The Lord Jesus, Whose blood and righteousness you now refuse, will pronounce your condemnation.

I know not anything that should prevent your salvation if you are willing...but mark, I will not promise you anything beyond today: “Now is the accepted time” (2Co 6:2). Thus far I can go, but one step further I cannot proceed upon sure ground. If you reject the counsel of God now, I cannot promise even the youngest of you another opportunity...tomorrow death may interfere, or Jesus may

return to judgment; and it would be too late. Go home then, if you value your soul, and turn the words of the text into a prayer, and entreat the Lord to receive you and become your righteousness...Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly into every heart. Amen and Amen.

From "The Lord Our Righteousness" in *The Christian Race*, Charles Nolan Publishers.



Christ *for* us, the obedient in the place of the disobedient, is the first part of our message (see 1Jo 3:16). His assumption of the legal claims, which otherwise would have been made good against us, is the security for our deliverance. That deliverance becomes an actual thing to us immediately upon our consenting to allow Him to undertake our case.

Christ *in* us is the second part of our gospel (see 1Jo 4:13). This second is of mighty moment, yet is not to be confounded with the first. That which is done *for* us is not the same as that which is done *in* us. By the former, we are constituted righteous; by the latter, we are made holy. The one is properly the gospel, in the belief of which we are saved; the other, the carrying out of that gospel in the soul.

Christ *for* us is our justification (2Co 5:21). Christ *in* us, and we in Christ, is our holiness. The former is the external substitution; the latter, the internal energy or operation, taking its rise from the former, yet not to be confounded with it or substituted for it.

Christ the Substitute, giving His life for ours upon the cross, is specially the object of faith. The message concerning this sacrificial work is the gospel, the belief of which brings pardon to the guilty...It is not simply because of this righteousness that Jehovah justifies; but He legally transfers it to us so that we can use it, plead it, and appear before God in it, just as if it were wholly our own...Jehovah is satisfied with Christ's obedience. He is well pleased with His righteousness. And when we, crediting His testimony to that obedience and that righteousness, consent to be treated by Him on the footing of its perfection, then is He satisfied and well-pleased with us. —*Horatius Bonar*

PART 5

REPENTANCE

WHAT IS REPENTANCE?

William S. Plumer (1802-1880)

REPENTANCE belongs exclusively to the religion of sinners. It has no place in the exercises of unfallen creatures. He who has never done a sinful act, nor had a sinful nature, [does not need] forgiveness, conversion, or repentance. Holy angels never repent; they have nothing to repent of. This is so clear that it is needless to argue the matter. But sinners need all these blessings. To them they are indispensable. The wickedness of the human heart makes it necessary.

Under all dispensations,¹ since our first parents were expelled from the Garden of Eden, God has insisted on repentance. Among the patriarchs, Job said, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6). Under the Law, David wrote the 32nd and 51st psalms. John the Baptist cried, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat 3:2). Christ’s account of Himself is that He came to call “sinners to repentance” (Mat 9:13). Just before His ascension, Christ commanded that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47). And the Apostles taught the same doctrine, “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). So that any system of religion among men that should not include repentance would upon its very face be false. Matthew Henry² says, “If the heart of man had continued upright and unstained, divine consolations might have been received without this painful operation preceding; but being sinful, it must first be pained before it can be laid at ease, must labor before it can be at rest. The sore must be searched, or it cannot be cured. The doctrine of repentance is right gospel doctrine. Not only the austere Baptist, who was looked upon as a melancholy, [gloomy] man, but the sweet and gracious Jesus, Whose lips dropped as a honeycomb, preached repentance...” This doctrine will not be amiss while the world stands.

¹ **dispensations** – divinely ordained ages in the outworking of God’s eternal purpose.

² **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) – Welsh Presbyterian minister and bible commentator.

Though repentance is an obvious and oft-commanded duty, yet it cannot be truly and acceptably performed except by the grace of God. It is a gift from heaven. Paul directs Timothy in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, “If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2Ti 2:25). Christ is exalted a Prince and a Savior “to give repentance” (Act 5:31). So when the heathen were brought in, the church glorified God, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Act 11:18). All this is according to the tenor of the Old Testament promises. There God says He will do this work for us and in us. Listen to His gracious words: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Eze 36:26-27)... True repentance is a special mercy from God. *He* gives it. It comes from none other. It is impossible for poor fallen nature so far to recover herself by her own strength as truly to repent. The heart is wedded to its own ways and justifies its own sinful courses with incurable obstinacy³ until divine grace makes the change. No motives to good are strong enough to overcome depravity in the natural heart of man. If ever we attain this grace, it must be through the great love of God to perishing men.

Yet repentance is most reasonable... When called to duties that we are reluctant to perform, we are easily persuaded that they are unreasonably exacted of us. It is therefore always helpful to us to have a command of God binding our consciences in any case. It is truly benevolent [for] God to speak to us so authoritatively in this matter. God “now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Act 17:30). The ground of the command is that all men everywhere are sinners. Our blessed Savior was without sin, and of course, He could not repent. With that solitary exception, since the Fall there has not been found any just person who needed no repentance. And none are more to be pitied than those poor deluded men who see in their hearts and lives nothing to repent of.

But what is true repentance? This is a question of the highest importance. It deserves our closest attention. The following is probably as good a definition as has yet been given. “Repentance unto life is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby out of the sight and sense, not

³ **obstinacy** – stubbornness.

only of the danger, but also of the filthiness and odiousness⁴ of his sins, and upon the apprehension of God's mercy in Christ to such as are penitent,⁵ he so grieves for and hates his sins that he turns from them all to God, purposing and endeavouring constantly to walk with Him in all the ways of new obedience."⁶ That this definition is sound and scriptural will appear more and more clearly the more thoroughly it is examined. True repentance is sorrow for sin, ending in reformation. Mere regret is not repentance; neither is mere outward reformation...He who truly repents is chiefly sorry *for his sins*; he whose repentance is spurious⁷ is chiefly concerned *for their consequences*. The former chiefly regrets that he has *done* evil, the latter that he has *incurred* evil. One sorely laments that he deserves punishment, the other that he must suffer punishment. One approves of the Law that condemns him; the other thinks he is [harshly] treated and that the Law is rigorous. To the sincere penitent, sin appears exceeding sinful. To him who sorrows after a worldly sort, sin in some form appears pleasant. He regrets that it is forbidden. One says it is an evil and bitter thing to sin against God, even if no punishment followed; the other sees little evil in transgression if there were no painful consequences sure to follow. If there were no hell, the one would still wish to be delivered from sin; if there were no retribution, the other would sin with increased greediness. The true penitent is chiefly averse to sin as it is an offence against God. This embraces *all* sins of every description. But it has often been observed that two classes of sins seem to rest with great weight on the conscience of those whose repentance is of a godly sort. These are secret sins and sins of omission. On the other hand, in a spurious repentance, the mind is much inclined to dwell on open sins and on sins of commission.⁸ The true penitent knows the plague of an evil heart and a fruitless life; the spurious penitent is not much troubled about the real state of heart, but grieves that appearances are so much against him.

From *Vital Godliness*, Sprinkle Publications,
www.sprinklepublications.net.



⁴ **odiousness** – worthy of hatred; hatefulness.

⁵ **penitent** – feeling regret for one's sins with serious purpose to correct the wrongdoing.

⁶ Westminster Larger Catechism Q. 76.

⁷ **spurious** – not genuine; false.

⁸ **sins of omission...of commission** – *omission*: not performing what is commanded; *commission*: doing what is forbidden or what is good, but for the wrong reason.

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—Luke 13:3

THE text that heads this page, at first sight, looks stern and severe: “Except ye repent, ye shall all perish.” I can fancy someone saying, “Is this the gospel?” “Are these the glad tidings? Are these the good news of which ministers speak?” “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?” (Joh 6:60).

But from whose lips did these words come? They came from the lips of One Who loves us with a love that passeth knowledge, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They were spoken by One Who so loved us that He left heaven for our sakes; came down to earth for our sakes; lived a poor, humble life for three-and-thirty years on earth for our sakes; went to the cross for us, went to the grave for us, and died for our sins. The words that come from lips like these must surely be words of love.

After all, what greater proof of love can be given than to warn a friend of coming danger? The father who sees his son tottering toward the brink of a precipice, and as he sees him cries out sharply, “Stop, stop!”—does not that father love his son? The tender mother who sees her infant on the point of eating some poisonous berry and cries out sharply, “Stop, stop! *Put it down!*”—does not that mother love that child? It is indifference that lets people alone and allows them to go on every one in his own way. It is love, tender love, which warns and raises the cry of alarm. The cry of “*Fire! Fire!*” at midnight may sometimes startle a man out of his sleep—rudely, harshly, unpleasantly. But who would complain, if that cry was the means of saving his life? The words, “Except ye repent, ye shall all perish,” may seem at first sight stern and severe. But they are words of love, and may be the means of delivering precious souls from hell.

I pass on now to...consider the *necessity* of repentance: *Why is repentance needful?* The text that stands at the head of this paper shows clearly the necessity of repentance. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are distinct, express, and emphatic: “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” All, *all* without exception need repentance toward God. It is not only necessary for thieves,

murderers, drunkards, adulterers, fornicators, and the inmates of prisons and of jails. No. All born of the seed of Adam—all without exception need repentance toward God. The queen upon her throne and the pauper in the workhouse; the rich man in his drawing room, the servant maid in the kitchen; the professor of sciences at the university, the poor ignorant boy who follows the plow—all by nature need repentance. All are born in sin; and all must repent and be converted if they would be saved. All must have their hearts changed about sin. All must repent, as well as believe the gospel. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 18:3). “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

But whence comes the necessity of repentance? Why is such tremendously strong language used about this necessity? What are the reasons...[that] repentance is so needful?

(a) For one thing, without repentance there is no forgiveness of sins. In saying this, I must guard myself against misconstruction. I ask you emphatically not to misunderstand me: *the tears of repentance wash away no sins*. It is bad [theology] to say that they do. That is the office, that the work of the blood of Christ alone. Contrition¹ makes no atonement for transgression. It is wretched theology to say that it does. It can do nothing of the kind. Our best repentance is a poor, imperfect thing and needs repenting over again. Our best contrition has defects enough about it to sink us into hell. “We are counted righteous before God only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings”²—not for our repentance, holiness, almsgiving,³ sacrament receiving, or anything of the kind. All this is perfectly true. Still it is no less true that justified people are always penitent people and that a forgiven sinner will always be a man who mourns over and loathes his sins. God in Christ is willing to receive rebellious man and grant him peace if he only comes to Him in Christ’s name, however wicked he may have been. But God requires, and requires justly, that the rebel shall throw down his arms. The Lord Jesus Christ is ready to pity, pardon, relieve, cleanse, wash, sanctify, and fit for heaven. But the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see a man hate the sins that he wishes to be forgiven. Let some men call this “legality,” if they will. Let some call it “bondage,” if they please. I take my stand on Scripture. The testimony of God’s Word is plain and unmistakable.

¹ **contrition** – sincere sorrow or affliction of mind for wrongdoing.

² The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Article XI, “Of the Justification of Man.”

³ **almsgiving** – charitable giving to the poor.

ble. Justified people are always penitent people. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness of sins.

(b) For another thing, without repentance there is no happiness in the life that now is. There may be high spirits, excitement, laughter, and merriment, so long as health is good and money is in the pocket. But these things are not solid happiness. There is a conscience in all men, and that conscience must be satisfied. So long as conscience feels that sin has not been repented of and forsaken, so long it will not be quiet and will not let a man feel comfortable within...

(c) For another thing, without repentance there can be no [fitness] for heaven in the world that is yet to come. Heaven is a prepared place, and they who go to heaven must be a prepared people. Our hearts must be in tune for the employments of heaven, or else heaven itself would be a miserable abode. Our minds must be in harmony with those of the inhabitants of heaven, or else the society of heaven would soon be intolerable to us...What could you possibly do in heaven if you got there with a heart loving sin? To which of all the saints would you speak? By whose side would you sit down? Surely, the angels of God would make no sweet music to the heart of him who cannot bear saints upon earth and [who] never praised the Lamb for redeeming love! Surely, the company of patriarchs, apostles, and prophets would be no joy to that man who will not read his Bible now and does not care to know what apostles and prophets wrote. Oh, no! *No!* There can be no happiness in heaven, if we get there with an impenitent heart...

I beseech you by the mercies of God to lay to heart the things that I have just been saying and to ponder them well. You live in a world of cheating, imposition,⁴ and deception. Let no man deceive you about the necessity of repentance. Oh, that professing Christians would see, and know, and feel more than they do, the *necessity*, the *absolute* necessity of true repentance towards God! There are many things that are not needful. Riches are not needful. Health is not needful. Fine clothes are not needful. Noble friends are not needful. The favor of the world is not needful. Gifts and learning are not needful. Millions have reached heaven without these things. Thousands are reaching heaven every year without them. But *no one* ever reached heaven without “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21).

Let no man ever persuade you that any religion deserves to be called *the* gospel, in which repentance toward God has not a most

⁴ **imposition** – palming off what is false or unreal.

prominent place. *A* gospel, indeed! That is no gospel in which repentance is not a principal thing. *A* gospel! It is the gospel of man, but not of God. *A* gospel! It comes from earth, but not from heaven. *A* gospel! It is not *the* gospel at all. It is rank *antinomianism*⁵ and nothing else. So long as you hug your sins, and cleave to your sins, and will have your sins, so long you may talk as you please about the gospel, *but your sins are not forgiven*. You may call that legal, if you like. You may say, if you please, you “hope it will be all right at the last—God is merciful—God is love—Christ has died—I hope I shall go to heaven after all.” No! I tell you, it is not all right. It will never be all right...You are trampling underfoot the blood of atonement. You have as yet no part or lot in Christ. So long as you do not repent of sin, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is no gospel to your soul. Christ is a Savior *from* sin, not a Savior for man *in* sin. If a man will have his sins, the day will come when that merciful Savior will say to him, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41).

Let no man ever delude you into supposing that you can be happy in this world without repentance. Oh, no!...The longer you go on without repentance, the more unhappy will that heart of yours be. When old age creeps over you and grey hairs appear upon your head—when you are unable to go where you once went, and take pleasure where you once took pleasure—your wretchedness and misery will break in upon you like an armed man...Write it down in the tablets of your heart—*without repentance, no peace!*

I expect to see many wonders at the last day. I expect to see some at the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ whom I once feared I should see upon the left. I expect to see some at the left hand whom I supposed to be good Christians and expected to see at the right. But there is one thing I am sure I shall not see. I shall not see at the right hand of Jesus Christ one single impenitent man.

From “Repentance” in *Old Paths*, The Banner of Truth Trust,
www.banneroftruth.org.



⁵ **antinomianism** – from the Greek, *anti*, “against,” *nomos*, “law”; literally “against the law”; 1) the belief that God’s moral law is not binding upon believers in any sense, or 2) the belief that a Christian may sin without fear because he is not under law but grace.

SIX INGREDIENTS OF REPENTANCE

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

REPENTANCE is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed. For a further amplification, know that repentance is a spiritual medicine made up of six special ingredients...If any one is left out, it loses its virtue.

INGREDIENT 1: SIGHT OF SIN. The first part of Christ's physic¹ is eye-salve (Act 26:18). It is the great thing noted in the prodigal's repentance: "He came to himself" (Luk 15:17). He saw himself a sinner and nothing but a sinner. Before a man can come to Christ, he must first come to himself. Solomon, in his description of repentance, considers this as the first ingredient: "If they shall bethink themselves" (1Ki 8:47). A man must first recognize and consider what his sin is and know the plague of his heart before he can be duly humbled for it. The first creature² God made was light. So the first thing in a penitent is illumination: "Now ye are light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8). The eye is made both for seeing and weeping. Sin must first be seen before it can be wept for. Hence, I infer that where there is no sight of sin, there can be no repentance. Many who can spy faults in others see none in themselves...Persons are veiled over with ignorance and self-love. Therefore they see not what deformed souls they have. The devil does with them as the falconer with the hawk: he blinds them and carries them hooded to hell...

INGREDIENT 2: SORROW FOR SIN. "I will be sorry for my sin" (Psa 38:18). Ambrose³ calls sorrow the embittering of the soul. The Hebrew word *to be sorrowful* signifies "to have the soul, as it were, crucified." This must be in true repentance: "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn" (Zec 12:10), as if they did feel the nails of the cross sticking in their sides. A woman may as well expect to have a child without pangs as one can have repentance without sorrow. He that can believe without doubting, suspect his faith; he that can repent without sorrowing, suspect his repentance...This sorrow for sin is not superficial: it is

¹ **physic** – spiritual remedy or medicine.

² **creature** – creation.

³ **Ambrose** (339?-397) – 4th century bishop of Milan, Trinitarian theologian, hymn writer.

a holy agony. It is called in Scripture a breaking of the heart: “The sacrifices of God are a broken and a contrite heart” (Psa 51:17); and a rending of the heart: “Rend your heart” (Joe 2:13). The expressions of smiting on the thigh (Jer 31:19), beating on the breast (Luk 18:13), putting on of sackcloth (Isa 22:12), plucking off the hair (Ezr 9:3)—all these are but outward signs of inward sorrow. This sorrow is (1) **To make Christ precious.** O how desirable is a Savior to a troubled soul! Now Christ is Christ indeed, and mercy is mercy indeed. Until the heart is full of compunction,⁴ it is not fit for Christ. How welcome is a surgeon to a man who is bleeding from his wounds! (2) **To drive out sin.** Sin breeds sorrow, and sorrow kills sin...The salt water of tears kills the worm of conscience. (3) **To make way for solid comfort.** “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psa 126:5). The penitent has a wet seedtime, but a delicious harvest. Repentance breaks the abscess of sin, and then the soul is at ease...God’s troubling of the soul for sin is like the angel’s troubling of the pool (Joh 5:4), which made way for healing.

But not all sorrow evidences true repentance...What is this godly sorrowing? There are six qualifications of it:

1. *True godly sorrow is inward.* It is inward in two ways: (1) **It is a sorrow of the heart.** The sorrow of hypocrites lies in their faces: “They disfigure their faces” (Mat 6:16). They make a sour face, but their sorrow goes no further, like the dew that wets the leaf but does not soak to the root. Ahab’s repentance was in outward show. His garments were rent but not his spirit (1Ki 21:27). Godly sorrow goes deep, like a vein that bleeds inwardly. The heart bleeds for sin: “They were pricked in their heart” (Act 2:37). As the heart bears a chief part in sinning, so it must in sorrowing. (2) **It is a sorrow for heart sins,** the first outbreaks and risings of sin. Paul grieved for the law in his members (Rom 7:23). The true mourner weeps for the stirrings of pride and concupiscence.⁵ He grieves for the “root of bitterness” even though it never blossoms into act (Heb 12:15). A wicked man may be troubled for scandalous sins; a real convert laments heart-sins.

2. *Godly sorrow is ingenuous.*⁶ It is sorrow for the *offense* rather than for the punishment. God’s Law has been infringed, His love abused. *This* melts the soul in tears. A man may be sorry, yet not repent. A thief is sorry when he is taken, not because he stole, but because he has to pay the penalty...Godly sorrow, however, is

⁴ **compunction** – stinging of the conscience following sin.

⁵ **concupiscence** – a strong desire, especially sexual lust.

⁶ **ingenuous** – honest; honorably straightforward.

chiefly for the trespass against God, so that even if there were no conscience to smite, no devil to accuse, no hell to punish, yet the soul would still be grieved because of the prejudice done to God...O that I should offend so good a God, that I should grieve my Comforter! *This breaks my heart!*...

3. *Godly sorrow is fiducial.*⁷ It is intermixed with faith...Spiritual sorrow will sink the heart, if the pulley of faith does not raise it. As our sin is ever before us, so God's promise must be ever before us...

4. *Godly sorrow is a great sorrow.* "In that day shall there be a great mourning, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon" (Zec 12:11). Two suns did set that day when Josiah died,⁸ and there was great funeral mourning. To such a height must sorrow for sin be boiled up...

5. *Godly sorrow in some cases is joined with restitution.*⁹ Whoever has wronged others in their estate by unjust, fraudulent dealing ought in conscience to make them recompense. There is an express law for this: "He shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed" (Num 5:7). Thus, Zacchæus made restitution: "If I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luk 19:8).

6. *Godly sorrow is abiding.* It is not a few tears shed in a passion that will serve the turn. Some will fall a-weeping at a sermon, but it is like an April shower: soon over or like a vein opened and presently stopped again. True sorrow must be habitual. O Christian, the disease of your soul is chronic and frequently returns upon you. Therefore, you must be continually physicking yourself¹⁰ by repentance. This is that sorrow which is "after a godly manner."

INGREDIENT 3: CONFESSION OF SIN. Sorrow is such a vehement passion that it will have vent. It vents itself at the eyes by weeping and at the tongue by confession: "The children of Israel stood and confessed their sins" (Neh 9:2)...Gregory Nazianzen¹¹ calls confession "a salve for a wounded soul."

Confession is self-accusing: "Lo, I have sinned" (2Sa 24:17)...And the truth is that by this *self*-accusing, we prevent *Satan's* accusing. In our confessions, we tax ourselves with pride,

⁷ *fiducial* – believing; trustful.

⁸ *two...died* – referring to the natural sunset and the loss of a great king.

⁹ *restitution* – making good or compensating for loss, damage, or injury.

¹⁰ *physicking yourself* – treating yourself with remedies.

¹¹ **Gregory Nazianzen** (329-389) – 4th century Archbishop of Constantinople.

infidelity, passion, so that when Satan, who is called the accuser of the brethren, shall lay these things to our charge, God will say, “They have accused themselves already. Therefore, Satan, thou art nonsuited;¹² thy accusations come too late”...And hear what the Apostle Paul says: “If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged” (1Co 11:31).

But have not wicked men, like Judas and Saul, confessed sin? Yes, but theirs was not a true confession. That confession of sin may be right and genuine, these...qualifications are requisite:

1. *Confession must be voluntary.* It must come as water out of a spring, freely. The confession of the wicked is extorted, like the confession of a man upon a rack. When a spark of God’s wrath flies into their conscience or they are in fear of death, then they will fall to their confessions...But true confession drops from the lips as myrrh from the tree or honey from the comb, freely...

2. *Confession must be with compunction.* The heart must deeply resent¹³ it. A natural man’s confessions run through him as water through a pipe. They do not at all affect him. But true confession leaves heart-wounding impressions on a man. David’s soul was burdened in the confession of his sins: “As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me” (Psa 38:4). It is one thing to confess sin and another thing to feel sin.

3. *Confession must be sincere.* Our hearts must go along with our confessions. The hypocrite confesses sin but loves it, like a thief who confesses to stolen goods, yet loves stealing. How many confess pride and covetousness with their lips, but roll them as honey under their tongue...A good Christian is more honest. His heart keeps pace with his tongue. He is convinced¹⁴ of the sins he confesses and abhors the sins he is convinced of.

4. *In true confession, a man particularizes¹⁵ sin.* A wicked man acknowledges he is a sinner in *general*. He confesses sin by wholesale...A true convert acknowledges his *particular* sins. As it is with a wounded man who comes to the surgeon and shows him all his wounds: “Here I was cut in the head; there I was shot in the arm.” So a mournful sinner confesses the several distempers¹⁶ of his soul...By a diligent inspection into our hearts, we may find some particular sin indulged; point to that sin with a tear.

¹² **nonsuited** – a lawsuit stopped by the judge when the plaintiff has not made his case.

¹³ **resent** – to feel something as a cause of sorrow; to feel deeply and sharply.

¹⁴ **convinced** – awakened in conscience to a state of sin.

¹⁵ **particularizes** – focuses on specific sins.

¹⁶ **distempers** – deranged or disordered conditions; diseases.

5. *A true penitent confesses sin in [its] fountain.* He acknowledges the pollution of his nature. The sin of our nature is not only a privation¹⁷ of good, but an infusion of evil...Our nature is an abyss and seminary of all evil, from whence come those scandals that infest the world. It is this depravity of nature that poisons our holy things. It is this that brings on God's judgments and makes our mercies stick in the birth. Oh, confess sin in the fountain!...

INGREDIENT 4: SHAME FOR SIN. The fourth ingredient in repentance is shame: "That they may be ashamed of their iniquities" (Eze 43:10). Blushing is the color of virtue. When the heart has been made black with sin, grace makes the face red with blushing: "I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face" (Ezr 9:6). The repenting prodigal was so ashamed of his excess that he thought himself not worthy to be called a son any more (Luk 15:21). Repentance causes a holy bashfulness. If Christ's blood were not at the sinner's heart, there would not so much blood come in the face. There are...considerations about sin that may cause shame:

(1) **Every sin makes us guilty, and guilt usually breeds shame.**

(2) **In every sin, there is much unthankfulness; and that is a matter of shame.** To abuse the kindness of so good a God, how may this make us ashamed!...Unthankfulness is a sin so great that God Himself stands amazed at it (Isa 1:2).

(3) **Sin has made us naked, and that may breed shame.** Sin has stripped us of our white linen of holiness. It has made us naked and deformed in God's eye, which may cause blushing...

(4) **Our sins have put Christ to shame and should not we be ashamed?** Did He wear the purple, and shall not our cheeks wear crimson?...

(5) **That which may make us blush is that the sins we commit are far worse than the sins of the heathen.** We act against more light.

(6) **Our sins are worse than the sins of the devils.** The lapsed angels never sinned against Christ's blood. Christ died not for them...Surely if we have out-sinned the devils, it may well put us to the blush.

INGREDIENT 5: HATRED OF SIN. The fifth ingredient in repentance is hatred of sin. The Schoolmen¹⁸ distinguished a two-fold hatred: hatred of abominations and hatred of enmity.

¹⁷ **privation** – lack.

¹⁸ **Schoolmen** – a succession of theologians and writers of the Middle Ages, who taught logic, metaphysics, and theology, such as Thomas Aquinas.

Firstly, there is a hatred or loathing of abominations: “Ye shall loathe yourselves for your iniquities” (Eze 36:31). A true penitent is a sin-loather. If a man loathe that which makes his stomach sick, much more will he loathe that which makes his conscience sick. It is more to loathe sin than to leave it...Christ is never loved until sin be loathed. Heaven is never longed for until sin be loathed...*Secondly, there is a hatred of enmity.* There is no better way to discover life than by motion. The eye moves, the pulse beats. So to discover repentance there is no better sign than by a holy antipathy¹⁹ against sin...Sound repentance begins in the love of God and ends in the hatred of sin.

How may true hatred of sin be known?

1. *When a man’s spirit is set against sin.* The tongue does not only inveigh²⁰ against sin, but the heart abhors it, so that however curiously painted sin appears, we find it odious, as we abhor the picture of one whom we mortally hate, even though it may be well drawn...Let the devil cook and dress sin with pleasure and profit, yet a true penitent with a secret abhorrence of it is disgusted by it and will not meddle with it.

2. *True hatred of sin is universal.* True hatred of sin is universal in two ways: in respect of the faculties and of the object. (1) **Hatred is universal in respect of the faculties**, that is, there is a dislike of sin not only in the judgment, but also in the will and affections. Many a one is convinced that sin is a vile thing and in his judgment has an aversion to it. Yet he tastes sweetness and has a secret complacency in it. Here is a disliking of sin in the judgment and an embracing of it in the affections; whereas in true repentance, the hatred of sin is in all the faculties, not only in the intellectual part, but chiefly in the will: “What I hate, that do I” (Rom 7:15). Paul was not free from sin, yet his will was against it. (2) **Hatred is universal in respect of the object.** He who hates one sin hates all...Hypocrites will hate some sins that mar their credit; but a true convert hates all sins: gainful sins, complexion-sins,²¹ the very stirrings of corruption. Paul hated the motions of sin (Rom 7:23).

3. *True hatred against sin is against sin in all forms.* A holy heart detests sin for its intrinsic pollution.²² Sin leaves a stain upon the soul. A regenerate person abhors sin not only for the curse, but for

¹⁹ **antipathy** – feeling of intense dislike.

²⁰ **inveigh** – complain bitterly.

²¹ **complexion-sins** – sins of one’s natural temperament or constitution; the weaknesses to which one is naturally inclined.

²² **intrinsic pollution** – natural defilement = sin by its nature contaminates.

the contagion. He hates this serpent not only for its sting, but also for its poison. He hates sin not only *for* hell, but *as* hell.

4. ***True hatred is implacable.*** It will never be reconciled to sin any more. Anger may be reconciled, but hatred cannot...

5. ***Where there is a real hatred, we not only oppose sin in ourselves but in others too.*** The church at Ephesus could not bear with those who were evil (Rev 2:2). Paul sharply censured²³ Peter for his dissimulation²⁴ although he was an Apostle. Christ in a holy displeasure whipped the moneychangers out of the temple (Joh 2:15). He would not suffer the temple to be made an exchange. Nehemiah rebuked the nobles for their usury (Neh 5:7) and their Sabbath profanation (Neh 13:17). A sin-hater will not endure wickedness in his family: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house" (Psa 101:7). What a shame it is when magistrates can show height of spirit in their passions, but no heroic spirit in suppressing vice! Those who have no antipathy against sin are strangers to repentance. Sin is in them as poison in a serpent, which, being natural to it, affords delight.

How far are they from repentance who, instead of hating sin, love sin! To the godly, sin is as a thorn in the eye; to the wicked, it is as a crown on the head: "When thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest" (Jer 11:15). Loving of sin is *worse* than committing it. A good man may run into a sinful action unawares, but to love sin is desperate. What is it that makes a swine but loving to tumble in the mire? What is it that makes a devil but loving that which opposes God? To love sin shows that the will is in sin; and the more of the will there is in a sin, the greater the sin...O how many there are that love the forbidden fruit! They love their oaths and adulteries; they love the sin and hate the reproof...So for men to love sin, to hug that which will be their death, to sport with damnation, "madness is in their heart" (Ecc 9:3). It persuades us to show our repentance by a bitter hatred of sin...

INGREDIENT 6: TURNING FROM SIN. The sixth ingredient in repentance is a turning from sin...This turning from sin is called forsaking sin (Isa 55:7), as a man forsakes the company of a thief or sorcerer. It is called putting of sin far away (Job 11:14), as Paul put away the viper and shook it into the fire (Act 28:5). *Dying to sin is the life of repentance.* The very day a Christian turns from sin, he must enjoin himself a perpetual fast. The eye must fast from impure glances. The ear must fast from hearing slanders. The tongue

²³ **censured** – rebuked; expressed strong disapproval.

²⁴ **dissimulation** – hypocrisy.

must fast from oaths. The hands must fast from bribes. The feet must fast from the path of the harlot. And the soul must fast from the love of wickedness. This turning from sin implies a notable change...Turning from sin is so visible that others may discern it. Therefore, it is called a change from darkness to light (Eph 5:8). Paul, after he had seen the heavenly vision, was so turned that all men wondered at the change (Act 9:21). Repentance turned the jailer into a nurse and physician (Act 16:33). He took the Apostles, washed their wounds, and set meat before them. A ship is going eastward; there comes a wind that turns it westward. Likewise, a man was turning hellward before the contrary wind of the Spirit blew, turned his course and caused him to sail heavenward...Such a visible change does repentance make in a person, as if another soul did lodge in the same body.

That the turning from sin be rightly qualified, these few things are requisite:

1. *It must be a turning from sin with the heart.* The heart is the *primum vivens*, the first thing that lives; and it must be the *primum vertens*, the first thing that turns. The heart is that which the devil strives hardest for...In religion the heart is all. If the heart be not turned from sin, it is no better than a lie...God will have the whole heart turned from sin. True repentance must have no reserves or inmates.

2. *It must be a turning from all sin.* "Let the wicked forsake his way" (Isa 55:7). A real penitent turns out of the road of sin. Every sin is abandoned...He that hides one rebel in his house is a traitor to the Crown, and he that indulges one sin is a traitorous hypocrite.

3. *It must be a turning from sin upon a spiritual ground.* A man may restrain the acts of sin, yet not turn from sin in a right manner. Acts of sin may be restrained out of fear or design, but a true penitent turns from sin out of a religious principle, namely, love to God...Three men asking one another what made them leave sin: one says, I think of the joys of heaven; another, I think of the torments of hell; but the third, I think of the love of God, and that makes me forsake it. How shall I offend the God of love?

From *The Doctrine of Repentance*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



REPENTANCE OR FAITH: WHICH COMES FIRST?

John Murray (1898-1975)

WHICH is prior, faith or repentance? It is an unnecessary question, and the insistence that one is prior to the other [is] futile. There is no priority. The faith that is unto salvation is a *penitent* faith and the repentance that is unto life is a *believing* repentance...The interdependence of faith and repentance can be readily seen when we remember that faith is faith in Christ for salvation from sin. But if faith is directed to salvation from sin, there must be hatred of sin and the desire to be saved from it. Such hatred of sin involves repentance, which essentially consists in turning *from* sin *unto* God. Again, if we remember that repentance is turning from sin unto God, the turning to God implies faith in the mercy of God as revealed in Christ. It is impossible to disentangle faith and repentance. Saving faith is permeated with repentance and repentance is permeated with faith. Regeneration becomes vocal in our minds in the exercises of faith and repentance.

Repentance consists essentially in change of heart and mind and will. The change of heart and mind and will principally respects four things: it is a change of mind respecting *God*, respecting *ourselves*, respecting *sin*, and respecting *righteousness*. Apart from regeneration, our thought of God, of ourselves, of sin, and of righteousness is radically perverted. Regeneration changes our hearts and minds. It radically renews them. Hence, there is a radical change in our thinking and feeling. Old things have passed away and all things have become new. It is very important to observe that the faith that is unto salvation is the faith that is accompanied by that change of thought and attitude. Too frequently in evangelical circles, and particularly in popular evangelism, the momentousness of the change that faith signalizes is not understood or appreciated. There are two fallacies. The one is to put faith out of the context that alone gives it significance. The other is to think of faith in terms simply of decision and rather cheap decision at that. These fallacies are closely related and condition each other. The emphasis upon repentance and upon the deep-seated change of thought and feeling that it involves is precisely what is

necessary to correct this impoverished and soul-destroying conception of faith. The nature of repentance serves to accentuate the urgency of the issues at stake in the demand of the gospel, the cleavage with sin that the acceptance of the gospel entails, and the totally new outlook that the faith of the gospel imparts.

Repentance we must not think of as consisting merely in a change of mind in general. It is very particular and concrete. And since it is a change of mind with reference to sin, it is a change of mind with reference to particular sins, sins in all the particularity and individuality that belong to our sins. It is very easy for us to speak of sin, to be very denunciatory¹ respecting sin, and denunciatory respecting the particular sins of *other* people, and yet not be penitent regarding our own particular sins. The test of repentance is the genuineness and resoluteness of our repentance in respect of our *own* sins, sins characterized by the aggravations that are peculiar to our own selves. Repentance, in the case of the Thessalonians, manifested itself in the fact that they turned from idols to serve the living God. It was their idolatry that peculiarly evidenced their alienation from God, and it was repentance regarding that which proved the genuineness of their faith and of their hope (1Th 1:9-10).

The gospel is not only that by grace are we saved through faith, but it is also the gospel of repentance. When Jesus, after His resurrection, opened the understanding of the disciples that they might understand the Scriptures, He said unto them, “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved² Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations” (Luk 24:46-47). When Peter preached to the multitude on the occasion of Pentecost, they were constrained to say, “Men and brethren what shall we do?” Peter replied, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins” (Act 2:37-38). Later on, in like manner, Peter interpreted the exaltation of Christ as exaltation in the capacity of “Prince and Saviour to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins” (Act 5:31). Could anything certify more clearly that the gospel is the gospel of repentance than the fact that Jesus’ heavenly ministry as Savior is one of dispensing repentance unto the forgiveness of sins? Hence, Paul, when he gave an account of his own ministry to the elders from Ephesus, said that he testified “both to the Jews and also to

¹ **denunciatory** – publicly accusative or condemning.

² **behoved** – was necessary for.

the Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus” (Act 20:21). And the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews indicates that “repentance from dead works” is one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ (Heb 6:1). It could not be otherwise. The new life in Christ Jesus means that the bands that bind us to the dominion of sin are broken. The believer is dead to sin by the body of Christ, the old man has been crucified that the body of sin might be destroyed, and henceforth he does not serve sin (Rom 6:2, 6). This breach with the past registers itself in his consciousness in turning from sin unto God “with full purpose of, and endeavor after new obedience”...

Repentance is that which describes the response of turning from sin unto God. This is its specific character just as the specific character of faith is to receive and rest upon Christ alone for salvation. Repentance reminds us that if the faith we profess is a faith that allows us to walk in the ways of this present evil world, in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, in the fellowship of the works of darkness, *then our faith is but mockery and deception*. True faith is suffused³ with penitence. And just as faith is not only a momentary act but an abiding attitude of trust and confidence directed to the Savior, so repentance results in constant contrition. The broken spirit and the contrite heart are abiding marks of the believing soul...Christ’s blood is the laver⁴ of initial cleansing, but it is also the fountain to which the believer must continuously repair. It is at the cross of Christ that repentance has its beginning; it is at the cross of Christ that it must continue to pour out its heart in the tears of confession and contrition.

From *Redemption: Accomplished and Applied*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, www.eerdmans.com, 800 253-7521. Used by permission.



How many are there in our day, since the gospel is grown so common, that catch up a notion of good things and from that notion make a profession of the name of Christ, get into churches, and obtain the title of a brother, a saint, a member of a gospel congregation, that have clean escaped repentance.—*John Bunyan*

³ **suffused** – spread throughout.

⁴ **laver** – basin or vessel used for washing.

CHRIST COMMANDED REPENTANCE

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

Repent ye, and believe the gospel.—Mark 1:15

OUR Lord Jesus Christ commences His ministry by announcing its leading commands. He cometh up from the wilderness newly anointed, like the bridegroom from his chamber. His love notes are *repentance* and *faith*. He cometh forth fully prepared for His office, having been in the desert, “tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15)...Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Messiah speaketh in the greatness of His strength. He crieth unto the sons of men, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Let us give our ears to these words, which, like their Author, are full of grace and truth. Before us, we have the sum and substance of Jesus Christ’s whole teaching, the Alpha and Omega of His entire ministry. Coming from the lips of such a One, at such a time, with such peculiar power, let us give the most earnest heed. May God help us to obey them from our inmost hearts.

I shall commence by remarking that the gospel that Christ preached was very plainly a command: “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Our Lord does condescend to reason. Often His ministry graciously acted out the old text, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isa 1:18). He does persuade men by telling and forcible arguments, which should lead them to seek the salvation of their souls. He does [call] men, and oh, how lovingly He woos them to be wise. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). He does entreat men: He condescendeth to become, as it were, a beggar to His own sinful creatures, beseeching them to come to Him. Indeed, He maketh this to be the duty of His ministers, “as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2Co 5:20). Yet, remember: though He condescendeth to reason, to persuade, to [call], and to beseech, still His gospel hath in it all the dignity and force of a command. If we would preach it in these days as Christ did, we must proclaim it as a command from God—attended with a divine sanction and not to be neglected, save at the infinite peril of the soul...“Repent ye” is as much a

command of God as “Thou shalt not steal” (Exo 20:15). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” has as fully a divine authority as “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength” (Luk 10:27).

Think not, O men, that the gospel is a thing left to your option to choose it or not! Dream not, O sinners, that ye may despise the Word from heaven and incur no guilt! Think not that ye may neglect it and no ill consequences shall follow! It is just this neglect and despising of yours that shall fill up the measure of your iniquity. It is this concerning which we cry aloud, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!” (Heb 2:3). *God commands you to repent!* The same God before Whom Sinai was moved and was altogether on a smoke—that same God Who proclaimed the Law with sound of trumpet, with lightnings and thunders, speaketh to us more gently, but still as divinely, through His only begotten Son, when He saith to us, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel”...

To all the nations of the earth, then, let us sound forth this decree from God. O men, Jehovah that made you, He Who gives you the breath of your nostrils, He against Whom you have offended, commands you this day to repent and believe the gospel...

I know some brethren will not like this, but that I cannot help. The slave of systems I will never be, for the Lord has loosed this iron bondage from my neck. Now I am the joyful servant of the truth that maketh free. Offend or please, as God shall help me, I will preach every truth as I learn it from the Word. I know if there be anything written in the Bible at all, it is written as with a sunbeam: *God in Christ commandeth men to repent and believe the gospel.* It is one of the saddest proofs of man’s utter depravity that he will not obey this command, but that he will despise Christ and so make his doom worse than the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah...

While the gospel is a command, it is a two-fold command explaining itself. “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” I know some very excellent brethren—would God there were more like them in zeal and love—who, in their zeal to preach up simple faith in Christ, have felt a little difficulty about the matter of repentance. I have known some of them who have tried to get over the difficulty by softening down the apparent hardness of the word *repentance* by expounding it according to its more usual Greek equivalent, a word that occurs in the original of my text and signifies “to change one’s mind.” Apparently, they interpret repentance to be a somewhat slighter thing than we usually conceive it to be, a *mere* change of mind, in fact. Now, allow me to suggest to those dear brethren

that the Holy Ghost never preaches repentance as a trifle.¹ The change of mind or understanding of which the gospel speaks is a very deep and solemn work and must not on any account be depreciated.

Moreover, there is another word that is also used in the original Greek for repentance, not so often, I admit. Still, it is used. [It] signifies “an after-care,” a word that has in it something more of sorrow and anxiety than that which signifies changing one’s mind. There must be sorrow for sin and hatred of it in true repentance, or else I have read my Bible to little purpose...To repent *does* mean a change of mind. But it is a *thorough* change of the understanding and all that is in the mind, so that it includes an illumination—an illumination of the Holy Spirit. I think it includes a discovery of iniquity and a hatred of it, without which there can hardly be a genuine repentance. We must not, I think, undervalue repentance. It is a blessed grace of God the Holy Spirit, and it is *absolutely necessary* unto salvation.

The command explains itself. *We will take, first of all, repentance.* It is quite certain that whatever the repentance here mentioned may be, it is a repentance perfectly consistent with faith. Therefore, we get the explanation of what repentance must be, from its being connected with the next command: “believe the gospel”...Do remember that no repentance is worth the having that is not perfectly consistent with faith in Christ. An old saint on his sickbed once used this remarkable expression: “Lord, sink me low as hell in repentance; but”—and here is the beauty of it—“lift me high as heaven in faith.” Now, the repentance that sinks a man low as hell is of no use except there is the faith also that lifts him as high as heaven! The two are perfectly consistent, the one with the other. A man may loathe and detest himself; and all the while, he may know that Christ is able to save and *has* saved him. In fact, this is how true Christians live. They repent as bitterly for sin as if they knew they should be damned for it; but they rejoice as much in Christ as if sin were nothing at all.

Oh, how blessed it is to know where these two lines meet, the stripping of repentance and the clothing of faith! The repentance that ejects sin as an evil tenant and the faith that admits Christ to be the sole Master of the heart; the repentance that purges the soul from dead works and the faith that fills the soul with living works; the repentance that pulls down and the faith that builds up; the repentance that scatters stones and the faith that puts stones to-

¹ **trifle** – something of little value.

gether; the repentance that ordains a time to weep and the faith that gives a time to dance—these two things together make up the work of grace within whereby men’s souls are saved. Be it then laid down as a great truth, most plainly written in our text, that the repentance we ought to preach is one connected with faith. Thus, we may preach repentance and faith together without any difficulty whatever...

This brings me to the second half of the command, which is, “Believe the gospel.” Faith means trust in Christ. Now, I must again remark that some have preached this trust in Christ so well and so fully that I can but admire their faithfulness and bless God for them. Yet there is a difficulty and a danger. It may be that in preaching simple trust in Christ as being the way of salvation, they may omit to remind the sinner that no faith can be genuine but such as is perfectly consistent with repentance for past sin. My text seems to me to put it thus: No repentance is true but that which consorts with faith; no faith is true but that which is linked with a hearty and sincere repentance on account of past sin. So then, dear friends, those people who have a faith that allows them to think lightly of past sin have the faith of devils, not the faith of God’s elect...Such men as have a faith that allows them to live carelessly in the present, who say, “Well, I am saved by a simple faith,” and then sit on the ale-bench with the drunkard, or stand at the bar with the spirit-drinker, or go into worldly company and enjoy the carnal pleasures and the lusts of the flesh—such men are liars. They have not the faith that will save the soul. They have a deceitful hypocrisy; they have not the faith that will bring them to heaven.

And then, there be some other people who have a faith that leads them to no hatred of sin. They do not look upon sin in others with any kind of shame. It is true they would not do as others do, but then they can laugh at what others commit. They take pleasure in the vices of others, laugh at their profane jests, and smile at their loose speeches. They do not flee from sin as from a serpent, nor detest it as the murderer of their best friend. No, they dally² with it. They make excuses for it. They commit in private what in public they condemn. They call grave offenses slight faults and little defalcations.³ In business, they wink at departures from uprightness and consider them to be mere matters of trade, the fact being that they have a faith that will sit down arm-in-arm with sin and

² **dally** – play or toy with; flirt.

³ **defalcations** – shortcomings; failures.

eat and drink at the same table with unrighteousness. Oh! If any of you have such a faith as this, I pray God to turn it out bag and baggage. It is of no good to you! The sooner you are cleaned out of it, the better for you; for when this sandy foundation shall all be washed away, perhaps you may then begin to build upon the Rock (Mat 7:24-27).

My dear friends, I would be very faithful with your souls and would lay the lancet⁴ at each man's heart. What is your repentance? Have you a repentance that leads you to look out of self to Christ and to Christ only? On the other hand, have you that faith which leads you to true repentance? To hate the very thought of sin? So that the dearest idol you have known, whatever it may be, you desire to tear from its throne that you may worship Christ and Christ only? Be assured of this: nothing short of this will be of any use to you at the last. A repentance and a faith of any other sort may do to please you now, as children are pleased with fancies. But when you get on a deathbed and see the reality of things, you will be compelled to say that they are a falsehood and a refuge of lies. You will find that you have been daubed with untempered⁵ mortar (Eze 15:10-11), that you have said, "Peace, peace," to yourselves, when there was no peace (Jer 6:14). Again, I say, in the words of Christ, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." Trust Christ to save you, lament that you need to be saved, and mourn because this need of yours has put the Savior to open shame, to frightful sufferings, and to a terrible death.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, July 13, 1862,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



The need for repentance is another fundamental postulate of the Christian faith, and it is also one of the truths that people most resent. Teaching about repentance utterly infuriates people today, as it did these rulers in Jerusalem.

There is no difference whatsoever in this respect between the first and the twentieth centuries. The fact that the message of repentance is regarded as a very great insult is further proof of that fatal self-righteousness that is always the greatest hindrance to acceptance of the gospel message.

—D. M. Lloyd-Jones

⁴ **lancet** – surgical knife with a pointed double-edged blade.

⁵ **daubed...untempered** – coated with whitewash.

SIN, SINNERS, AND REPENTANCE

John Gill (1697-1771)

THE OBJECT OF REPENTANCE IS *SIN*. Hence, [it is] called “repentance from dead works” (Heb 6:1), which sins be. From [this] the blood of Christ purges the conscience of a penitent sinner and speaks peace and pardon to it (Heb 9:14). And,

(1) **First, not only grosser sins, but also sins of a lesser size are to be repented of.** There is a difference in sins. Some are greater, others lesser (Joh 19:11). Both are to be repented of. Sins against the first and second tables of the Law, sins more immediately against God, and sins against men—some against men are more heinous¹ and enormous than others, as well as those against God, [such as] worshipping devils and idols of gold and silver, etc., but murders, sorceries, fornications, and thefts...And not only those, but also sins of a *lesser* kind are to be repented of: even sinful thoughts, for “the thought of foolishness is sin” (Pro 24:9)...The unrighteous man is to repent of and forsake his thoughts, as well as the wicked man his ways, and turn to the Lord. Not only unclean, proud, malicious, envious, and revengeful thoughts are to be repented of, but even thoughts of seeking for justification² before God by a man’s own righteousness, which may be intended in the text referred to (Isa 55:7).

(2) **Secondly, not only *public*, but *private* sins are to be repented of.** Some sins are committed in a very public manner, in the face of the sun, and are known to all. Others are more secret. A truly sensible sinner³...heartily repents of them, even sins known to none but God and his own soul. This is a proof of the genuineness of his repentance.

(3) **Thirdly, there are sins of both omission and commission, which are to be repented of.** When a man omits those duties of religion that ought to be done or commits those sins that ought to be avoided by him; or [if he] omits the weightier matters of religion and only attends to lesser ones, when he ought to have done the one and not to have left the other undone (Mat 23:23); and as God

¹ **heinous** – extremely wicked.

² **justification** – Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone. (*Spurgeon’s Catechism Q. 32*)

³ **sensible** – awakened; aware intellectually or emotionally; conscious.

forgives *both* (Isa 43:22-25), [then] both sorts of sins are to be repented of. A sense of pardoning grace will engage the sensible sinner to it.

(4) **Fourthly, there are sins that are committed in the most solemn, serious, religious, and holy performances of God's people, which are to be repented of.** There is not a just man that does good and sinneth not in that good he does. There is not only an imperfection, but an impurity in the best righteousness of the saints of their own working out and [are] therefore called "filthy rags" (Isa 64:6)...

(5) **Fifthly, the daily sins of life are to be repented of.** No man lives without sin. It is daily committed by the best of men. In many things, we all offend, even in all things. As we have need to pray and are directed to pray daily for the forgiveness of sin, so we are to repent of it daily...It is continually to be exercised by believers, since they are continually sinning against God in thought, word, and deed.

(6) **Sixthly, not only actual sins and transgressions in thought, word, and deed are to be repented of, but original⁴ and indwelling sin.** Thus, David, when he fell into some grievous sins and was brought to a true sense *of* and a sincere repentance *for* them, not only made a confession of them in the penitential psalm he wrote on that occasion, but he was led to take notice of, acknowledge, and mourn over the original corruption of his nature. From [this] all his sinful actions flowed: "Behold I was shapen in iniquity" (Psa 51:5)...Now when a sensible⁵ sinner confesses, laments, and mourns over the original corruption of his nature and the sin that dwells in him, it is a clear case his repentance is genuine and sincere...

SECONDLY, THE SUBJECTS OF REPENTANCE ARE *SINNERS* AND ONLY SUCH. Adam, in a state of innocence, was not a subject of repentance. Having not sinned, he had no sin to repent of. Such, who fancy themselves to be perfectly righteous and without sin in their own apprehensions, stand in no need of repentance. Therefore, Christ says, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mat 9:13; Luk 15:7). Now,

⁴ **original sin** – The sinfulness of that estate wherein man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the [lack] of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called Original Sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. (*Spurgeon's Catechism Q. 17*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

⁵ **sensible** – awakened; aware intellectually or emotionally; conscious.

(1) **All men are sinners, all descending from Adam by ordinary generation.** All his posterity being seminally⁶ *in* him and represented *by* him when he sinned, sinned in him. They have both his sin imputed to them and a corrupt nature derived from him. [Thus, they] are transgressors from the womb and are all guilty of actual sins and transgressions. So *all* stand in need of repentance, even such who trust in themselves that they are righteous and despise others as less holy than themselves. [These] think they need no repentance, yet they do. And not only they, but such who are in the best sense righteous need daily repentance, since they are continually sinning in all they do.

(2) **Men of all nations, Jews and Gentiles, are the subjects of repentance.** *All* are under sin, under the power of it, involved in the guilt of it, and liable to punishment for it. God has commanded “all men everywhere to repent” (Act 17:30)! During the time of John the Baptist and of our Lord’s being on earth, the doctrine of repentance was only preached to the Jews. But after the resurrection of Christ, He gave His Apostles an instruction and order “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47). In consequence of [this], the Apostles first exhorted the Jews and then the Gentiles to repent. And particularly, the Apostle Paul “testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God,” as well as “faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21).

(3) **Men are only subjects of repentance in the present life.** When this life is ended, the gospel dispensation is over, and Christ is come a second time, the door of repentance as well as of faith will be shut. There will be no place found for it, no opportunity, no means of it, nor any subjects capable of it. As for the saints in heaven, they need it not, being entirely without sin. As for the wicked in hell, they are in utter despair and not capable of repentance unto life...though there is weeping and wailing there, yet no repentance. Hence, the rich man in hell was so [anxious] to have Lazarus sent to his brethren living, hoping that by means of one that came to them from the dead to warn them of the place of torment, they would repent (Luk 16:19-31). [He knew] they never would, if not in the present life, before they came into the place where he was. Therefore, repentance is not to be procrastinated.⁷

From *A Complete Body of Doctrinal Divinity Deduced from Sacred Scripture*,
The Baptist Standard Bearer, www.standardbearer.org.

⁶ **seminally** – in seed form, i.e., all people came by natural reproduction from Adam.

⁷ **procrastinated** – postponed; needlessly delayed.

THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

TO help the exercised¹ reader identify true repentance, consider the fruits that demonstrate godly repentance.

1. A real hatred of sin as sin, not merely its consequences. A hatred not only of this or that sin, but of all sin, and particularly of the root itself: *self-will*. “Thus saith the Lord God, Repent, and turn from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations” (Eze 14:6). He, who hates not sin, loves it. God’s demand is, “Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed” (Eze 20:43). One who has really repented can truthfully say, “I hate every false way” (Psa 119:104). He, who once thought a course of holy living was a gloomy thing, has another judgment now. He, who once regarded a course of self-pleasing as attractive, now detests it and has purposed to forsake all sin forever. This is the change of *mind* that God requires.

2. A deep sorrow for sin. The non-saving repentance of so many is principally a distress occasioned by forebodings of divine wrath; but evangelical repentance produces a deep grief from a sense of having offended so infinitely excellent and glorious a Being as God. The one is the effect of fear, the other of love. The one is only for a brief season; the other is the habitual practice for life. Many a man is filled with regret and remorse over a misspent life, yet has no poignant sorrow of heart for his ingratitude and rebellion against God. But a regenerated soul is cut to the quick for having disregarded and opposed his great Benefactor and rightful Sovereign. This is the change of *heart* that God requires: “Ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner...for godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation” (2Co 7:9-10). Such a sorrow is produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit and has God for its object. It is a grief for having despised such a God, rebelled against His authority, and been indifferent to His glory. It is this that causes us to “weep bitterly” (Mat 26:75). He who has not grieved over sin takes pleasure therein. God requires us to “afflict” our souls (Lev 16:29). His call is, “Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord

¹ exercised – alarmed.

your God: for he is gracious and merciful” (Joel 2:12-13). Only that sorrow for sin is genuine that causes us to crucify “the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).

3. A confessing of sin. “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Pro 28:13). It is “second nature” to the sinner to deny his sins, directly or indirectly, to minimize or make excuses for them. It was thus with Adam and Eve at the beginning. But when the Holy Spirit works in any soul, his sins are brought to light; and he, in turn, acknowledges them to God. There is no relief for the stricken heart until he does so: “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer” (Psa 32:3-4). The frank and brokenhearted owning of our sins is imperative if peace of conscience is to be maintained. This is the change of *attitude* that God requires.

4. An actual turning from sin. “Surely there is no one here so stupefied with the laudanum² of hellish indifference as to imagine that he can revel in his lusts and afterward wear the white robes of the redeemed in Paradise. If you imagine you can be partakers of the blood of Christ, and yet drink the cup of Belial; if you imagine you can be members of Satan and members of Christ at the same time, ye have less sense than one would give you credit for. No, you know that right hands must be cut off and right eyes plucked out—that the most darling sins must be renounced—if you would enter the kingdom of God” (from Spurgeon on Luke 13:24).

Three Greek words are used in the New Testament that present different phases of repentance. First, *metanoeo*, which means “a change of mind” (Mat 3:2; Mar 1:15, etc.). Second, *metanolomai*, which means “a change of heart” (Mat 21:29, 32; Heb 7:21). Third, *metanoia*, which means “a change of course or life” (Mat 3:8; 9:13; Act 20:21). The three must go together for a genuine repentance. Many experience a change of mind: they are instructed and know better, but they continue to defy God. Some are even exercised in heart or conscience, yet they continue in sin. Some amend their ways, yet not from love to God and hatred of sin. Some are informed in mind and uneasy in heart, who never reform their lives. The three must go together.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Pro 28:13). He who does not, fully in his heart’s desire and increasingly so in his life, turn from his wicked ways has not repented. If I really hate sin and

² **laudanum** – solution of opium and alcohol, formerly used for pain relief.

sorrow over it, shall I not abandon it? Note carefully the “wherein in time *past*” of Ephesians 2:2 and “*were* sometimes” of Titus 3:3! “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him” (Isa 55:7). This is the change of *course* that God requires.

5. Accompanied by restitution where this is necessary and possible. No repentance can be true that is not accompanied by a complete amendment of life. The prayer of a genuinely penitent soul is, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa 51:10). And where one really desires to be right with God, he does so with his fellowmen too. One who, in his past life, has wronged another, and now makes no determined effort to do everything in his power to right that wrong, certainly has not repented! John G. Paton³ tells of how after a certain servant was converted, the first thing he did was to restore unto his master all the articles that he had stolen from him!

6. These fruits are permanent. Because true repentance is preceded by a realization of the loveliness and excellency of the divine character and an apprehension of the exceeding sinfulness of sin for having treated with contempt so infinitely glorious a Being, contrition for and hatred of all evil is abiding. As we grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, of our indebtedness and obligations to Him, our repentance deepens, we judge ourselves more thoroughly, and take a lower and lower place before Him. The more the heart pants after a closer walk with God, the more will it put away everything that hinders this.

7. Yet repentance is never perfect in this life. Our faith is never so complete that we get to the place where the heart is no more harassed with doubtings. And our repentance is never so pure that it is altogether free from hardness of heart. Repentance is a life-long act. We need to pray daily for a deeper repentance.

In view of all that has been said, we trust it is now abundantly clear to every impartial reader that those preachers who repudiate repentance are, to poor lost souls, “physicians of no value.” They who leave out repentance are preaching “another gospel” (Gal 1:6) than Christ (Mar 1:15; 6:12) and His Apostles (Act 17:30; 20:21) proclaimed. Repentance is an evangelical duty, though it is not to be rested in, for it contributes nothing unto salvation. Those who have never repented are yet in the snare of the devil (2Ti 2:25-26)

³ **John G. Paton** (1824-1907) – Scottish missionary to the cannibals of the New Hebrides.

and are treasuring up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:4-5).

“If, therefore, sinners would take the wisest course to be the better for the use of the means of grace, they must try to fall in with God’s design and with the Spirit’s influences, and labor to see and feel their sinful, guilty, undone state. For this end they must forsake vain company, drop their inordinate worldly pursuits, abandon everything which tends to keep them secure in sin and quench the motions of the Spirit; and for this end must they read, meditate, and pray; comparing themselves with God’s holy Law, trying to view themselves in the same light that God does, and pass the same judgment upon themselves; so that they may be in a way to approve of the Law and admire the grace of the gospel; to judge themselves and humbly apply to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ for all things, and return through Him to God.”⁴

A summary of what has been before us may be helpful to some:

1. Repentance is an evangelical duty, and no preacher is entitled to be regarded as a servant of Christ’s if he be silent thereon (Luk 24:47).
2. Repentance is required by God in this dispensation (Act 17:30) as in all preceding ones.
3. Repentance is in nowise meritorious; yet without it, the gospel cannot be savingly believed (Mat 21:32; Mar 1:15).
4. Repentance is a Spirit-given realization of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and a taking sides with God against myself.
5. Repentance presupposes a hearty approval of God’s Law and a full consent to its righteous requirements, which are all summed up in “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...”
6. Repentance is accompanied by a genuine hatred of and sorrow for sin.
7. Repentance is evidenced by a forsaking of sin.
8. Repentance is known by its permanency: there must be a continual turning away from sin and grieving over each fall thereinto.
9. Repentance, while permanent, is never complete or perfect in this life.
10. Repentance is to be sought as a gift of Christ (Act 5:31).

From *Repentance: What Saith the Scriptures?*,
available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



⁴ **Joseph Bellamy**, *True Religion Delineated* (Boston, Mass.: Henry P. Russell, 1750), 390; Bellamy (1719-1790) was an American Congregationalist pastor, author, and theologian.

EXAMINING OUR REPENTANCE

Thomas Watson (c. 1620-1686)

IF any shall say they have repented, let me desire them to try themselves seriously by those seven...effects of repentance which the Apostle lays down in 2 Corinthians 7:11.

1. **Carefulness:** The Greek word signifies a solicitous diligence or careful shunning [of] all temptations to sin. The true penitent flies from sin as Moses did from the serpent (Exo 4:3).

2. **Clearing of ourselves:** The Greek word is *apology*. The sense is this: though we have much care, yet through strength of temptation we may slip into sin. Now in this case, the repenting soul will not let sin lie festering in his conscience, but judges himself for his sin. He pours out tears before the Lord. He begs mercy in the name of Christ and never leaves until he has gotten his pardon. Here he is cleared of guilt in his conscience and is able to make an apology for himself against Satan.

3. **Indignation:** He that repents of sin, his spirit rises against it, as one's blood rises at the sight of him whom he mortally hates. Indignation is a being fretted¹ at the heart with sin. The penitent is vexed with himself. David calls himself a fool and a beast (Psa 73:22). God is never better pleased with us than when we fall out with ourselves for sin.

4. **Fear:** A tender heart is ever a trembling heart. The penitent has felt sin's bitterness. This hornet has stung him and now, having hopes that God is reconciled, he is afraid to come near sin any more. The repenting soul is full of fear. He is afraid to lose God's favor, which is better than life. He is afraid he should, for want² of diligence, come short of salvation. He is afraid lest, after his heart has been soft, the waters of repentance should freeze and he should harden in sin again. "Happy is the man that feareth alway" (Pro 28:14)...A repenting person fears and sins not; a graceless person sins and fears not.

5. **Vehement desire:** As sour sauce sharpens the appetite, so the bitter herbs of repentance sharpen desire. But what does the penitent desire? He desires more power against sin and to be released from it. It is true, he has got loose from Satan; but he goes as a

¹ **fretted** – distressed.

² **want** – lack.

prisoner that has broken out of prison with a fetter on his leg. He cannot walk with that freedom and swiftness in the ways of God. He desires therefore to have the fetters of sin taken off. He would be freed from corruption. He cries out with Paul, “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24). In short, he desires to be with Christ, as everything desires to be in its center.

6. Zeal: Desire and zeal are fitly put together to show that true desire puts forth itself in zealous endeavor. How the penitent does bestir³ himself in the business of salvation! How he does take the kingdom of heaven by force (Mat 11:12)! Zeal quickens the pursuit after glory. Zeal, encountering difficulty, is emboldened by opposition and tramples upon danger. Zeal makes a repenting soul persist in godly sorrow against all discouragements and oppositions whatsoever. Zeal carries a man above himself for God’s glory. Paul, *before* conversion, was mad against the saints (Act 26:11). *After* conversion, he was judged mad for Christ’s sake: “Paul, thou art beside thyself” (Act 26:24). But it was *zeal*, not frenzy. Zeal animates spirit and duty. It causes fervency in religion, which is as fire to the sacrifice (Rom 12:11). As fear is a bridle to sin, so zeal is a spur to duty.

7. Revenge: A true penitent pursues his sins with a holy malice. He seeks the death of them as Samson was avenged on the Philistines for his two eyes (Jdg 16:28). He uses his sins as the Jews used Christ. He gives them gall and vinegar to drink. He crucifies his lusts (Gal 5:24). A true child of God seeks to be revenged most of those sins that have dishonored God most...David did by sin defile his bed; afterwards by repentance he watered his bed with tears. Israel had sinned by idolatry, and afterwards they did offer disgrace to their idols: “Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver” (Isa 30:22)...The Israelite women who had been dressing themselves by the hour and had abused their looking glasses to pride, afterwards by way of revenge as well as zeal, offered their looking glasses to the use and service of God’s tabernacle (Exo 38:8). So those conjurers who used curious arts or magic...when once they repented, brought their books and, by way of revenge, burned them (Act 19:19).

These are the blessed fruits and products of repentance. If we can find these in our souls, we have arrived at that repentance which is never to be repented of (2Co 7:10).

From *The Doctrine of Repentance*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

³ **bestir** – stir up; put into vigorous action.

THE GREATEST MOTIVE TO REPENTANCE

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.—Zechariah 12:10

THE HOLY TENDERNESS THAT MAKES MEN MOURN FOR SIN ARISES OUT OF A DIVINE OPERATION. It is not in fallen man to renew his own heart. Can the adamant¹ turn itself to wax or the granite soften itself to clay? Only He that stretcheth out the heavens and layeth the foundation of the earth can form and reform the spirit of man within him. The power to make the rock of our nature flow with rivers of repentance is not in the rock itself. The power lies in the omnipotent Spirit of God...When He deals with the human mind by His secret and mysterious operations, He fills it with new life, perception, and emotion. “God maketh my heart soft,” said Job (Job 23:16a); and in the best sense, this is true. The Holy Spirit makes us like wax, and we become impressible to His sacred seal...But now I come to the core and center of our subject.

TENDERNESS OF HEART AND MOURNING FOR SIN IS ACTUALLY WROUGHT BY A FAITH-LOOK AT THE PIERCED SON OF GOD. True sorrow for sin comes not without the Spirit of God. But even the Spirit of God Himself does not work it except by leading us to look to Jesus the crucified. There is no true mourning for sin until the eye has seen Christ...O soul, when thou comest to look where all eyes should look, even to Him Who was pierced, then thine eye begins to weep for that for which all eyes should weep—the sin that slew thy Savior! There is no saving repentance except within sight of the cross...Evangelical repentance is acceptable repentance and that only. The essence of evangelical repentance is that it looks to Him Whom it pierced by its sin...Mark you, wherever the Holy Spirit does really come, it always leads the soul to look to Christ. Never yet did a man receive the Spirit of God unto salvation, unless he received it to the bringing of him to look to Christ and mourn for sin.

¹ **adamant** – a stone once believed to be impenetrable in its hardness.

Faith and repentance are born together, live together, and thrive together. Let no man put asunder what God hath joined together! No man can repent of sin without believing in Jesus nor believe in Jesus without repenting of sin. Look then lovingly to Him that bled upon the cross for thee, for in that look thou shalt find pardon and receive softening. How wonderful that all our evils should be remedied by that one sole prescription, “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa 45:22). Yet none will look until the Spirit of God inclines them so to do. He works on none to their salvation unless they yield to His influences and turn their eyes to Jesus...

The look that blesses us so as to produce tenderness of heart is a look to Jesus as the pierced One. On this, I want to dwell for a season. It is not looking to Jesus as God only that affects the heart, but looking to this same Lord and God as crucified for us. We see the Lord pierced, and then the piercing of our own heart begins. When the Lord reveals Jesus to us, we begin to have our sins revealed...

Come, dear souls, let us go together to the cross for a little while and note Who it was that there received the spear thrust of the Roman soldier. Look at His side, and mark that fearful gash that has broached² His heart and set the double flood in motion. The centurion said, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Mat 27:54). He, Who by nature is God over all, “without [whom] was not any thing made that was made” (Joh 1:3), took upon Himself our nature and became a man like ourselves, save that He was without taint of sin. Being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phi 2:8). It is *He* that died! He Who only hath immortality condescended to die! He was all glory and power, yet He died! He was all tenderness and grace, yet He died! Infinite goodness was hanged upon a tree! Boundless bounty was pierced with a spear! This tragedy exceeds all others! However dark man’s ingratitude may seem in other cases, *it is blackest here!* However horrible his spite against virtue, *that spite is cruelest here!* Here hell has outdone all its former villainies, crying, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him” (Mat 21:38).

God dwelt among us, and man would have none of Him. So far as man could pierce his God and slay his God, he went about to commit the hideous crime. Man slew the Lord Christ and pierced Him with a spear! [In this, he] showed what he would do with the Eternal *Himself*, if he could come at Him. Man is, at heart, a dei-

² broached – pierced.

cide.³ He would be glad if there were no God. He says in his heart, “No God” (Psa 14:1). If his hand could go as far as his heart, God would not exist another hour. This it is which invests the piercing of our Lord with such intensity of sin: *it meant the piercing of God.*

But why? Why and wherefore is the good God thus persecuted? By the lovingkindness of the Lord Jesus, by the glory of His person, and by the perfection of His character, I beseech you—*be amazed and ashamed that He should be pierced!* This is no common death! This murder is no ordinary crime. O man, He that was pierced with the spear was thy God! On the cross, behold thy Maker, thy Benefactor, thy best Friend!

Look steadily at the pierced One, and note the suffering that is covered by the word pierced. Our Lord suffered greatly and grievously. I cannot in one discourse rehearse the story of His sorrows—the griefs of His life of poverty and persecution; the griefs of Gethsemane and the bloody sweat; the griefs of His desertion, denial, and betrayal; the griefs of Pilate’s hall; the scourging, the spitting, and the mockery; the griefs of the cross with its dishonor and agony...Our Lord was made a curse for us. The penalty for sin, or that which was equivalent thereto, He endured: “His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isa 53:5).

Brethren, the sufferings of Jesus ought to melt our hearts! I mourn this morning that I do not mourn as I should. I accuse myself of that hardness of heart that I condemn, since I can tell you this story without breaking down. My Lord’s griefs are untellable. Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto *His* sorrow! Here we lean over a dread abyss and look down into fathomless gulfs...If you will steadfastly consider Jesus pierced for our sins and all that is meant thereby, your hearts must relent. Sooner or later, the cross will bring out all the feeling of which you are capable and give you capacity for more. When the Holy Spirit puts the cross into the heart, the heart is dissolved in tenderness...The hardness of the heart dies when we see Jesus die in woe so great.

It behoves⁴ us further to note who it was that pierced Him: “They shall look on me whom they have pierced.” The “they,” in each case, relates to the same persons. *We* slew the Savior, even we, who look to Him and live...In the Savior’s case, *sin* was the cause of His death. Transgression pierced Him. But whose transgression? Whose? It was not His own, for He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His lips.

³ **deicide** – God-killer.

⁴ **behoves** – is appropriate for.

Pilate said, “I find no fault in this man” (Luk 23:4). Brethren, the Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself. *Our* sins slew the Savior. He suffered because there was no other way of vindicating the justice of God and allowing us to escape. The sword, which else had smitten us, was awakened against the Lord’s Shepherd, against the Man that was Jehovah’s Fellow (Zec 13:7)...If *this* does not break and melt our hearts, let us note why He came into a position in which He could be pierced by our sins. It was love, *mighty love*, nothing else *but* love that led Him to the cross. No other charge can ever be laid at His door but this: He was “found guilty of excess of love.”⁵ He put Himself in the way of piercing because He was resolved to save us...Shall we *hear* of this, *think* of this, *consider* this, and remain unmoved? Are we worse than brutes? Has all that is human quitted our humanity? If God the Holy Ghost is now at work, a sight of Christ will surely melt our heart of stone...

Let me also say to you, beloved, that the more you look at Jesus crucified, the more you will mourn for sin. Growing thought will bring growing tenderness. I would have you look much at the pierced One, that you may hate sin much. Books that set forth the passion of our Lord and hymns that sing of His cross have ever been most dear to saintly minds because of their holy influence upon the heart and conscience. Live at Calvary, beloved, for there you will live at your best. Live at Calvary, and love at Calvary, until live and love become the same thing. I would say, look to the pierced One until your own heart is pierced. An old divine saith, “Look at the cross until all that is on the cross is in your heart.” He further says, “Look at Jesus until He looks at you.” Steadily view His suffering person until He seems to turn His head and look at you, as He did at Peter when he went out and wept bitterly (Luk 22:61-62). See Jesus until you see yourself: mourn for Him until you mourn for your sin...He suffered in the room, place, and stead of guilty men. This is the gospel. Whatever others may preach, “We preach Christ crucified” (1Co 1:23). We will ever bear the cross in the forefront. The substitution of Christ for the sinner is the essence of the gospel. We do not keep back the doctrine of the Second Advent; but, first and foremost, we preach the pierced One—this it is that shall lead to evangelical repentance, when the Spirit of grace is poured out.

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, September 18, 1887,
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



⁵ From the hymn “Jesus Crucified” by Frederick W. Faber (1814-1863).

REPENTANCE AND UNIVERSAL JUDGMENT

Samuel Davies (1723-1761)

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.—Acts 17:30-31

IN the dark times of ignorance that preceded the publication of the gospel, God seemed to wink or connive¹ at the idolatry and various forms of wickedness that had overspread the world. That is, He seemed to overlook or take no notice of them, so as either to punish them or to give the nations explicit calls to repentance. Now, says St. Paul, the case is altered. Now the gospel is published through the world, and God therefore will no longer seem to connive at the wickedness and impenitence of mankind, but publishes His great mandate to a rebel world explicitly and loudly, commanding all men everywhere to repent (Act 17:30). He now gives them particular motives and encouragements to this duty.

One motive of the greatest weight, which was never so clearly or extensively published before, is the doctrine of the universal judgment. Surely, the prospect of a judgment must be a strong motive to sinners to repent: this, if anything, will rouse them from their thoughtless security and bring them to repentance.

God has given assurance to all men, that is, to all that hear the gospel, that He has appointed a day for this great purpose, and that Jesus Christ [the] God-man is to preside in person in this majestic solemnity...The resurrection of Christ gives assurance of this in several respects. It is a specimen² and a pledge of a general resurrection, that grand preparative for the judgment. It is also an authentic attestation of our Lord's claims and an incontestable proof of His divine mission...

¹ **connive** – to shut one's eyes to a thing that one dislikes.

² **specimen** – a pattern or model.

Let us now enter upon the majestic scene. But, alas, what images shall I use to represent it? Nothing that we have seen, nothing that we have heard, nothing that has ever happened on the stage of time can furnish us with proper illustrations. All is low and groveling, all is faint and obscene that ever the sun shone upon when compared with the grand phenomena of that day. We are so accustomed to low and little objects that it is impossible we should ever raise our thoughts to a suitable pitch of elevation. Ere long,³ we shall be amazed spectators of these majestic wonders, and our eyes and our ears will be our instructors. But now, it is necessary we should have such ideas of them as may affect our hearts and prepare us for them. Let us therefore present to our view those representations that divine revelation, our only guide in this case, gives us...

As to the person of the Judge, the psalmist tells you, God is Judge Himself. Yet Christ tells us, the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, and that He hath given Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of man. It is, therefore, Christ Jesus, [the] God-man, as I observed, Who shall sustain this high character. For reasons already alleged, it is most fit it should be devolved⁴ upon Him. Being God and man, all the advantages of divinity and humanity center in Him and render Him more fit for this office than if He were God only or man only. This is the august⁵ Judge before Whom we must stand. The prospect may inspire us with reverence, joy, and terror.

As to the manner of His appearance, it will be such as becomes the dignity of His person and office. He will shine in all the untreated⁶ glories of the Godhead and in all the gentler glories of a perfect man. His attendants will add a dignity to the grand appearance, and the sympathy of nature will increase the solemnity and terror of the day. Let His own word describe Him: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Mat 25:31). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2Th 1:7-8). *This* is the Judge before Whom we must stand...

³ **ere long** – before long.

⁴ **devolved** – passed on; delegated.

⁵ **august** – majestic; inspiring awe; solemnly grand.

⁶ **untreated** – unstained.

Now the Judge is come, the judgment seat is erected, the dead are raised. What follows? Why, the universal convention⁷ of all the sons of men before the judgment seat. What an august convocation,⁸ what a vast assembly is this! All the sons of men meet in one vast assembly. Adam beholds the long line of his posterity, and they behold their common father...In that prodigious⁹ assembly, my brethren, you and I must mingle. We shall not be lost in the crowd nor escape the notice of our Judge: His eye will be as particularly fixed on every one as though there were but one before Him.

Now the Judge is seated. Anxious millions stand before Him, waiting for their doom. As yet, there is no separation made between them...But *see!* At the order of the Judge, the crowd is all in motion. They part: they sort together according to their character and divide to the right and left (Mat 25:31-33)...O! What strange¹⁰ separations are now made! What multitudes that once ranked among the saints and were highly esteemed for their piety by others—as well as themselves—are now banished from among them and placed with the trembling criminals upon the *left* hand! And how many poor, honest-hearted, desponding souls, whose foreboding fears had often placed them there, now find themselves to their agreeable surprise stationed on the *right* hand of their Judge, Who smiles upon them! *What connections are now broken!* What hearts torn asunder! What intimate companions, what dear relations, parted forever! Neighbor from neighbor, masters from servants, friend from friend, parents from children, husband from wife...

For who are those miserable multitudes on the left hand? There, through the medium of revelation, I see the drunkard, the swearer, the whoremonger, the liar, the defrauder, and the various classes of profane, profligate¹¹ sinners. There I see the families that call not upon the name of the Lord, and whole nations that forget Him. And, O! What *vast* multitudes, what millions of millions of millions do all these make!

But who are those glorious immortals on the right hand? They are those who now mourn over their sins, resist, and forsake them. They are those who have surrendered themselves entirely to God through Jesus Christ, who have heartily complied with the method of salvation revealed in the gospel; who have been formed new creatures by the almighty power of God; who make it the most ear-

⁷ **convention** – summoning, as before a judge.

⁸ **convocation** – assembly gathered in response to a summons.

⁹ **prodigious** – extraordinarily large; vast.

¹⁰ **strange** – surprising.

¹¹ **profligate** – given over to sensual pleasure.

nest, persevering endeavor of their lives to work out their own salvation and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in the world...

Now the trial begins. God judges the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. All the works of all the sons of men will then be tried (1Co 3:11-15)...What strange discoveries will *this* trial make! What noble dispositions that never shone in full beauty to mortal eyes; what pious and noble actions concealed under the veil of modesty; what affectionate aspirations, what devout exercises of heart that lay open only to the eyes of Omniscience, are now brought to full light and receive the approbation¹² of the supreme Judge before the assembled universe!

But, on the other hand, what works of shame and darkness; what hidden things of dishonesty; what dire secrets of treachery, hypocrisy, lewdness, and various forms of wickedness, artfully and industriously concealed from human sight; what horrid exploits of sin now burst to light in all their hellish colors to the confusion of the guilty and the astonishment and horror of the universe! Sure, the history of mankind must then appear like the annals of hell or the biography of devils! There the mark of dissimulation¹³ will be torn off. Clouded characters will clear up, and men as well as things will appear in their true light. May not the prospect of such a discovery fill some of you with horror? For many of your actions, and especially of your hearts, will not bear the light. How would it confound you, if they were now all published, even in the small circle of your acquaintance? *How then can you bear to have them all fully exposed before God, angels, and men?*

We are now come to the grand crisis, upon which the eternal states of all mankind turn. I mean the passing [of] the great decisive sentence. Heaven and earth are all silence and attention while the Judge, with smiles in His face and a voice sweeter than heavenly music, turns to the glorious company on His right hand and pours all the joys of heaven into their souls in that transporting sentence of which He has graciously left us a copy. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat 25:34). Every word is full of emphasis, full of heaven, and exactly agreeable to the desires of those to whom it is addressed. They desired, longed, and languished to be near their Lord. Now their Lord invites them, "Come near Me, and dwell with Me forever." There was nothing they desired so much as the blessing of God, nothing they feared so much as His

¹² **approbation** – official approval.

¹³ **dissimulation** – concealing of what really is; hypocrisy.

curse. Now their fears are entirely removed, and their designs fully accomplished; for the supreme Judge pronounces them *blessed* of His Father. They were all poor in spirit, most of them poor in this world, and all sensible of their unworthiness. How agreeably then are they surprised to hear themselves...invited to inherit a kingdom, as princes of the blood-royal born to thrones and crowns!...

But *hark!* Another sentence breaks from the mouth of the angry Judge like vengeful thunder. Nature gives a deep tremendous groan! The heavens lower¹⁴ and gather blackness, the earth trembles, and guilty millions sink with horror at the sound! And see, He Whose words are works, Whose fist produced worlds out of nothing; He who could remand¹⁵ ten thousand worlds into nothing at a frown; He Whose thunder quelled¹⁶ the insurrection of rebel angels in heaven and hurled them headlong down, down, down to the dungeon of hell; *see*, He turns to the guilty crowd on His left hand. His countenance discovers the righteous indignation that glows in His breast. His countenance bespeaks Him inexorable,¹⁷ that there is now no room for prayer and tears. Now the sweet, mild, mediatorial hour is past, and nothing appears but the majesty and terror of the Judge. Horror and darkness frown upon His brow, and vindictive lightnings flash from His eyes. Now—*O! Who can bear the sound?*—He speaks, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat 25:41). *O!* The cutting emphasis of every word! Depart! Depart from Me! From *Me*, the Author of all good, the fountain of all happiness. Depart with all My heavy, all-consuming curse upon you. Depart into fire, into everlasting fire, prepared, furnished with fuel, and blown up into rage, prepared for the devil and his angels...

Now the grand period has arrived in which the final everlasting states of mankind are unchangeably settled. From this all-important era, their happiness or misery runs on in one uniform, uninterrupted tenor: no change, no gradation, but from glory to glory in the scale of perfection or from gulf to gulf in hell. This is the day in which all the schemes of Providence, carried on for thousands of years, terminate.

Time was, but is no more! Now all the sons of men enter upon a duration¹⁸ not to be measured by the revolutions of the sun nor by days, months, and years. Now eternity dawns, a day that shall nev-

¹⁴ **lower** – look dark and threatening.

¹⁵ **remand** – send back.

¹⁶ **quelled** – overcame.

¹⁷ **inexorable** – unaffected by pleas.

¹⁸ **duration** – period of time during which something continues.

er see an evening. This terrible illustrious morning is solemnized with the execution of the sentence. No sooner is it passed than immediately the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. See the astonished thunderstruck multitude on the left hand, with sullen horror, grief, and despair in their looks, crying and wringing their hands, and glancing a wishful eye towards that heaven which they lost! Now an eternal farewell to earth and all its enjoyments! Farewell to the cheerful light of heaven! Farewell to *hope*, that sweet relief of affliction!

Heaven frowns [on] them from above, the horrors of hell spread far and wide around them, and conscience within preys upon their hearts. *Conscience!* O thou abused, exasperated power that now sleepest in so many breasts—what severe, ample revenge wilt thou then take upon those that now dare to do thee violence! O, the dire reflections that memory will then suggest! The remembrance of mercies abused! Of a Savior slighted! Of means and opportunities of salvation neglected and lost! This remembrance will sting the heart like a scorpion. But, O eternity! *Eternity!* With what horror will thy name circulate through the vaults of hell! Eternity in misery! No end to pain, no hope of an end! O this is the hell of hell! This is the parent of despair! *Despair*—the direst ingredient of misery, the most tormenting passion that devils feel.

But let us view a more delightful and illustrious scene. See the bright and triumphant army marching up to their eternal home, under the conduct of the Captain of their salvation, where they shall ever be with the Lord, as happy as their nature in its highest improvement is capable of being made. With what shouts of joy and triumph do they ascend! With what sublime hallelujahs do they crown their Deliverer!...

And now when the inhabitants of our world, for whose sake it was formed, are all removed to other regions, it also meets its fate. It is fit [that] so guilty a globe, that has been the stage of sin for so many thousands of years, which even supported the cross on which its Maker expired, should be made a monument of the divine displeasure...And *see!* The universal blaze begins! The heavens pass away with a great noise! The elements melt with fervent heat! The earth and the works that are therein are burnt up! Now stars rush from their orbits, comets glare, the earth trembles with convulsions. The Alps, the Andes, and all the lofty peaks of long-extended ridges of mountains burst out into so many burning Etnas,¹⁹ or thunder, and lightning, and smoke, and flame, and

¹⁹ **Etnas** – a reference to Mount Etna, a volcano in eastern Sicily.

quake like Sinai, when God descended upon it to publish its fiery Law! Rocks melt and run down in torrents of flame; rivers, lakes, and oceans boil and evaporate. Sheets of fire and pillars of smoke, outrageous and insufferable thunders and lightnings burst, bellow, blaze, and involve the atmosphere from pole to pole...*The whole globe is now dissolved into a shapeless ocean of liquid fire!* Where now shall we find the places where cities stood, where armies fought, where mountains stretched their ridges and reared their heads on high? Alas! They are all lost and have left no trace behind them where they once stood. Where art thou, O my country? Sunk with the rest as a drop into the burning ocean...

We must all appear before the Judgment Seat and receive our sentence according to the deeds done in the body. If so, what are we doing that we are not more diligently preparing?...What do the sinners among you now think of repentance? *Repentance is the grand preparative for this awful day.* The Apostle, as I observed, mentions the final judgment in my text as a powerful motive to repentance. And what will criminals think of repentance when they see the Judge ascend the throne? Come, sinners, look forward, and see the flaming tribunal erected, your crimes exposed, your doom pronounced, and your hell began. See a whole world demolished and ravaged by boundless conflagration²⁰ for *your* sins!

With these objects before you, I call you to repent!... God, the great God Whom heaven and earth obey, commands you to repent. Whatever be your characters, whether rich or poor, old or young, white or black, wherever you sit or stand, this command reaches *you*. God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. You are *this day* firmly bound to this duty by His authority. Dare you disobey with the prospect of all the awful solemnities of judgment before you in so near a view?...Repent at the command of God because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man Whom He hath ordained—of [this], He hath given you all full assurance in that He hath raised Him from the dead (Act 17:31).

From “The Universal Judgment” in *Sermons on Important Subjects*,
Vol. 2, T. S. Arden, in the public domain.



²⁰ **conflagration** – great destructive fire; inferno.

HEAVEN'S JOY AND REPENTANCE

Edward Payson (1783-1827)

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.—Luke 15:10

WHY do the inhabitants of heaven rejoice over repenting sinners?...God does not rejoice in the repentance of sinners because it can add anything to His essential happiness or glory. He is already infinitely glorious and happy, and so would continue, though all the men on earth and all the angels in heaven should madly rush into hell...**Why then does God rejoice when we repent?**

He rejoices because His eternal purposes of grace and His engagements to His Son are then fulfilled. We learn from the Scriptures that all who repent were chosen by Him in Christ Jesus before the world began and given to Him as His people in the covenant of redemption...

God rejoices when sinners repent because bringing them to repentance is His own work. It is a consequence of the gift of His Son and is effected by the power of His Spirit. The Scriptures inform us that He rejoices in all His works. With reason does He rejoice in them, for they are all *very* good. But if He rejoices in His other works, much more may He rejoice in this, since it is of all His works the greatest, the most glorious, and the most worthy of Himself. In this work, the image of Satan is effaced¹ and the image of God restored to an immortal soul. In this work, a child of wrath is transformed into an heir of glory. In this work, a smoking brand is plucked from eternal fires and planted among the stars in the firmament of heaven, there to shine with increasing luster forever and ever! And is not this a work worthy of God, a work in which God may...rejoice?

God rejoices in the repentance of sinners because it affords Him an opportunity to exercise mercy and show His love to Christ by pardoning them for His sake. Christ is His beloved Son in Whom He is ever well pleased. He loves Him with an infinite love as He loves Himself: [it is] a love that is as inconceivable by us as His creative power and eternal duration. He loves [Christ] not only on

¹ effaced – wiped out; destroyed.

account of the near relation and inseparable union that subsists between them, but for the perfect holiness and excellence of His character, especially for the infinite benevolence that He displayed in undertaking and accomplishing the great work of man's redemption. As it is the nature of love to manifest itself in acts of kindness toward the beloved object, God cannot but wish to display His love for Christ and to show all intelligent beings how perfectly He is pleased with His character and conduct as Mediator² ...

God rejoices when sinners repent because it gratifies Him to see them escape from the tyranny and from the consequences of sin. God is light—perfect holiness. God is love—pure benevolence. His holiness and His benevolence both prompt Him to rejoice when sinners escape from sin. Sin is that abominable thing that He hates. He hates it as an *evil* or malignant and as a *bitter* or destructive thing. It is indeed both. It is the plague, the leprosy, the death of intelligent creatures. It infects and poisons all their faculties. [It] plunges them into the lowest depths of guilt and wretchedness and pollutes them with a stain that all the waters of the ocean cannot wash away, that all the fires of hell cannot remove, from which nothing can cleanse them but *the blood of Christ*.

Such is the malignity of its nature that could it gain admittance into the celestial regions, it would instantly transform angels to devils and turn heaven into hell...Already has sin transformed angels to devils. Already has it converted this world from a paradise to a prison...It has brought death into the world and all our woe...Even now it stalks through our subjugated³ world with gigantic strides, spreading ruin and wretchedness around in ten thousand forms. Strife and discord, war and bloodshed, famine and pestilence, pain and sickness follow in its train...

Would we see these evils consummated and learn the full extent of that wretchedness that sin tends to produce, we must follow it into the eternal world. [We must] descend into those regions where peace [and] hope never come. There by the light of revelation, behold sin tyrannizing over its wretched victims with uncontrollable

² **Mediator** – It pleased God in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus His only begotten Son, according to the Covenant made between them both, to be the Mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest and King; Head and Saviour of His Church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom He did from all eternity give a people to be His seed, and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. (The 1677/89 London Baptist Confession of Faith 8.1)

³ **subjugated** – enslaved.

fury, fanning the inextinguishable fire and sharpening the tooth of the immortal worm. *See* angels and archangels, thrones and dominions, principalities and powers stripped of all their primeval⁴ glory and beauty, bound in eternal chains and burning with rage and malice against that Being in Whose presence they once rejoiced and Whose praises they once sang. *See* multitudes of the human race in unutterable agonies of anguish and despair, cursing the Gift, the Giver, and Prolonger of their existence, vainly wishing for annihilation to put a period to their miseries. Follow them through the long, long ages of eternity and see them sinking deeper and deeper in the bottomless abyss of ruin, perpetually blaspheming God because of their plagues, and receiving the punishment of these blasphemies in continual additions to their wretchedness. Such are the wages of sin. Such the inevitable doom of the finally impenitent.

From these depths of anguish and despair, look up to the mansions of the blessed and see to what a height of glory and felicity the grace of God will raise every sinner that repenteth. *See* those who are thus favored in unutterable ecstasies of joy, love, and praise, contemplating God face to face, reflecting His perfect image, shining with a splendor like that of their glorious Redeemer. [*See* them] filled with all the fullness of Deity and bathing in those rivers of pleasure that flow forever at God's right hand...View this, and then say whether infinite holiness and benevolence may not with propriety rejoice over *every* sinner that by repentance escapes the miseries and secures the felicity here so imperfectly described!

Why does the Son of God rejoice over every sinner that repenteth?...If it be asked why Christ rejoices over repenting sinners, we reply, because He has given them spiritual life and nourishment, because He has redeemed them with His own precious blood from eternal wretchedness and despair. In the joy arising from other sources, He participates with His Father and the Holy Spirit. But this is a cause of joy almost peculiar to Himself. It was long since predicted respecting Him, that He should see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isa 53:11). In other words, that He should see the effects of His sufferings in the repentance and salvation of sinners and consider this as a sufficient recompense for all the toils and sorrows through which He was called to pass! This prediction is daily fulfilling. Our Immanuel sees the fruit of the travail of His soul in *every* sinner that repenteth and rejoices that His agonies were not endured in vain...

⁴ **primeval** – original.

Who can conceive of the emotions with which the Son of David must contemplate an immortal soul drawn to His feet by the cords of love, whom He has rescued from the roaring lion at such an infinite expense? If we love, prize, and rejoice in any object in proportion to the labor, pain, and expense that it has cost us to obtain it, how greatly must Christ love, prize, and rejoice in *every* penitent sinner! His love and joy must be unutterable, inconceivable, infinite...And permit me to add, if He thus rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, what must be His joy when all His people are collected out of every tongue and kindred and nation and people and presented spotless before His Father's throne?...How great must that joy, that happiness be, which satisfies the benevolence of Christ!

Why do the angels rejoice over every sinner that repenteth? They rejoice when sinners repent because God is glorified and His perfections are displayed in giving them repentance and remission of sins. The perfections of God are to be seen only in His works. His moral perfections are to be seen only or at least principally in His works of grace. There is more of God, more of His essential glory displayed in bringing one sinner to repentance and forgiving His sins for the sake of Christ, than in all the wonders of creation...In this work, creatures may see, if I may so express it, the very heart of God.

From this work, angels themselves have probably learned more of God's moral character than they had ever been able to learn before. They knew before that God was wise and powerful, for they had seen Him create a world. They knew that He was good, for He had made them perfectly holy and happy. They knew that He was just, for they had seen Him cast down their own rebellious brethren from heaven to hell for their sins. But until they saw Him give repentance and remission of sins through Christ, they did not know that He was merciful. They did not know that He could pardon a sinner.

And O! What an hour was that in heaven, when this great truth was first made known, when the first penitent was pardoned! Then a new song was put into the mouths of angels, and while with unutterable emotions of wonder, love, and praise, they began to sing it, their voices swelled to a higher pitch, and they experienced joys unfelt before! O how did the joyful sounds, "His mercy endureth forever," spread from choir to choir, echo through the high arches of heaven, and thrill through every enraptured angelic breast! And

how did they cry with one voice, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luk 2:14)!

Nor is the mercy of God the only perfection displayed in this work. There is more power and wisdom displayed in bringing a sinner to repentance than in creating a world! Therefore, as the sons of God sang together and shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth, so with still greater reason do they rejoice at beholding the wonders of the *new* creation in the souls of men! They delight to watch the beginnings of spiritual life in those who had long been dead in sin: to see light and order breaking in upon the natural darkness and confusion of the mind, to see the image of Satan disappearing, and to trace the first lineaments⁵ of the image of God in the soul. With inexpressible satisfaction do they see the heart of stone transformed to flesh, notice the first penitential tears that flow from the sinner's eyes, and listen to the imperfectly formed petitions, the infant cries of the young child of grace. With the utmost readiness do they descend from their blissful abode to minister to the newborn heir of salvation and surround him in joyful throngs, celebrating his birthday with songs of praise. “Behold,” they cry, “another trophy of sovereign, all conquering grace!” Behold another captive delivered by the Son of David from the bondage of sin, another lamb of His flock rescued from the paw of the lion and the jaws of the bear! *See* the principalities and powers of darkness foiled. *See* the strong man armed cast out. *See* the kingdom of Jesus extending. *See* the image of our God multiplied. *See* another voice tuned to join in the hallelujahs of the heavenly choirs. *This*, O our Creator, is Thy work. Glory to God in the highest! *This*, O adorable Immanuel, is the effect of Thy sufferings. Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessing and honor and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb forever!...

O then, be persuaded, my friends...be persuaded to give joy to God, to His Son, and to the blessed angels, to make this day a festival in heaven by repenting.

From “Joy in Heaven over Repenting Sinners” in *The Complete Works of Edward Payson*, Vol. 3, Sprinkle Publications, www.sprinklepublications.net.



Repentance is a turning from sin unto God, through Jesus Christ; and faith is the acceptance of Christ in order to our return to God. So that whoever believes repents, and whoever repents believes.—*Charles Hodge*

⁵ **lineaments** – definitive or characteristic features.

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Scottish Presbyterian minister whose poems, hymns, and religious tracts were widely popular during the 19th century. His three series of *Hymns of Faith and Hope* (1857-1866) introduced hymns that are still sung throughout the English-speaking world, such as “*I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*,” “*I Was a Wandering Sheep*,” and “*I Lay My Sins on Jesus*.” Born in Edinburgh, Scotland.
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The father of Reformed and Presbyterian theology. During the course of his nearly 25 year ministry in Geneva, Calvin lectured and preached an average of five sermons a week in addition to writing a commentary on nearly every book of the Bible, as well as numerous treatises on theological topics. His correspondence fills eleven volumes. Born in Noyon, Picardie, France.
- Samuel Davies** (1723-1761)..... 255
Presbyterian minister; fourth president of Princeton and preacher during the Great Awakening; born near Summit Ridge, Delaware, USA.
- Jonathan Edwards** (1703-1758) 44, 98
American Congregational preacher. Regarded as America's greatest evangelical theologian and well-known for his preaching in the Great Awakening along with George Whitefield. Author of *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, and numerous other titles. Born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony.
- Ebenezer Erskine** (1680-1754) 186
Evangelical divine and founder of the Secession Church of Scotland and popular preacher. Born in Dryburgh (Scottish Borders).
- John Gill** (1697-1771) 242
English Baptist minister, theologian, and biblical scholar; born in Kettering, Northamptonshire, England.
- Charles Hodge** (1797-1898)..... 111, 117, 176
The most influential American Presbyterian theologian of the nineteenth century. Taught theology at Princeton Seminary. Best known for his three volume *Systematic Theology*. Born in Philadelphia, PA.
- Thomas Manton** (1620-1677)..... 18, 37
Nonconformist Puritan preacher. Graduated from Oxford and preached until forbidden by the Act of Uniformity of 1662. From 1662 to 1670 he preached in his own house, but was finally arrested and imprisoned for six months. Subsequently became preacher for London merchants in Pinner's Hall. James Ussher called him "one of the best preachers in England." Appointed as one of three clerks at the Westminster Assembly. Born in Lawrence-Lydiat, county of Somerset, England.

- John Murray** (1898-1975) 234
 Reformed theologian; studied at Princeton Theological Seminary under J. Gresham Machen and Geerhardus Vos. Taught at Princeton Seminary, then helped to found Westminster Theological Seminary, where he taught systematic theology from 1930 to 1966; an early trustee of The Banner of Truth. Besides the material in the four-volume *Collected Writings*, his primary published works are a commentary on Romans, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, *Principles of Conduct*, *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*, *Baptism*, and *Divorce*. Born in Badbea, near Bonar Bridge, Sutherland county, Scotland.
- John Owen** (1616-1683)..... 93
 Called “The Prince of the Puritans” and committed to the congregational way of church government. He was a chaplain in the army of Oliver Cromwell and vice-chancellor of Oxford University, but most of his life he served as a minister in congregational churches. His written works span forty years and run to twenty-four volumes representing among the best resources for theology in the English language. Born to Puritan parents in the Oxfordshire village of Stadhampton.
- J. I. Packer** (*see note, page 17*) 11
 Anglican theologian. Born in Gloucestershire, England.
- Edward Payson** (1783-1827) 262
 American Congregational preacher; his sermons were reprinted in three volumes. Born in Rindge, New Hampshire, USA.
- William Pemble** (1591-1623)..... 147
 Puritan, educated Magdalen College, Oxford, where he graduated in 1614, having been tutored by the Puritan Richard Capel. He worked at his studies and preaching so hard that it damaged his health, and he died of a fever in 1623. Born in Egerton, Kent.
- Arthur W. Pink** (1886-1952) 64, 76, 132, 245
 Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, excellent exegete and voluminous author of *Studies in the Scriptures*, and many books including his well-known *The Sovereignty of God* and *The Attributes of God*. Born in Nottingham, England, immigrated to the USA, studied briefly at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, served pastorates in the USA and Australia, and later returned to his homeland in 1934.
- William S. Plumer** (1802-1880) 219
 American Presbyterian minister; author of numerous Christ-centered books; born in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, USA.

- J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900)..... 22, 33, 153, 210, 222
 Bishop of the Anglican Church in Liverpool. Revered author of *Holiness, Knots Untied, Old Paths, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, and others. Born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England.
- Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834-1892) 27, 42, 47, 57, 68, 107, 163, 237, 251
 Influential English Baptist. Known as the “Prince of Preachers.” He Preached regularly to more than 6,000 at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. The collected sermons of Spurgeon during his ministry fill 63 volumes. The sermons’ 20–25 million words are equivalent to the 27 volumes of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and stand as the largest set of books by a single author in the history of Christianity. Born at Kelvedon, Essex, England.
- Robert Traill** (1642-1716)..... 151
 Presbyterian. Educated at Edinburgh, Scotland. Ended his days as a faithful minister in London. Born in Elie, Fifeshire, Scotland.
- Thomas Watson** (c. 1620-1686) 226, 249
 Nonconformist Puritan preacher and prolific author of *A Body of Divinity, The Lord’s Prayer, The Ten Commandments, Heaven Taken by Storm*, and numerous others. Actual place and date of birth unknown; most likely born in Yorkshire, England.
- Octavius Winslow** (1808-1878)..... 85
 Baptist, and later Anglican, minister. He was a descendant of one of the Pilgrim Fathers, born in London, England, and raised in New York. He was ordained as a pastor in 1833 and held pastorates in New York and England, where he became one of the most valued ministers of the nineteenth century, serving in Leamington Spa, Bath, and Brighton. In 1861 he spoke at the opening of Spurgeon’s Tabernacle in London. A prolific author of more than 40 books, his devotional writings exhibit his Reformed, experiential convictions and distinctive, warm, ardent style. He is the author of *Help Heavenward, No Condemnation, Personal Declension*, and *The Work of the Holy Spirit*.

THE STORY OF THE PURITANS

“Almost no one reads their writings now.”¹ So wrote William Haller in his 1957 book, *The Rise of Puritanism*. His comment was true then, but it is not true now. Since 1957 there has taken place a Reformed theological renewal that has its roots in Puritan books.² In addition to the extensive publishing achievement of *Banner of Truth* and *Soli Deo Gloria* publishers, there are many other publishing houses in the business of reworking and publishing the Puritans: *Reformation Heritage Books*, *Evangelical Press*, *Still Waters Revival Books*, *Solid Ground Christian Books*, *Grace Publications*, *Sprinkle Publications*, *Pilgrim Publications*, and *Northampton Press*, to name a few. Included in the republication of Puritan writings is the translation of Puritan expositions in other languages. For instance, Jeremiah Burroughs’ *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment* has recently been published in Albanian, Arabic, French, Indonesian, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, and Spanish.³

The need for a popular historical background into which we can readily set the Puritan authors is one of the reasons for this presentation. I would urge newcomers to the Puritans to memorize the names and dates of the monarchs for the 16th and 17th centuries. The time grid is essential. Each monarch put his or her own peculiar stamp on that part of the story. Compared to the monarchy today, the kings and queens of that era seemed to wield supreme authority. In fact their powers were ill-defined. He/she had no standing army, was often short of money, and had to govern bearing in mind the goodwill of the land-owning classes who were the natural leaders in society.

In his *A Short History of the English People*, J. R. Green declared, “No greater moral change ever passed over a nation than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign

¹ This article is abstracted from *The Story of the Puritans*, booklet available from Chapel Library. The full work by Hulse, *An Introduction to the Puritans*, is a 220 page quality hardback available from Evangelical Press and in Christian bookstores.

² Robert Oliver, “The Recovery of the Reformed Faith in Twentieth Century England,” Evangelical Library Lecture for 1997. See also *The Theological Renewal 1950-2000, Reformation Today*, 162.

³ Burroughs’ classic is abridged and simplified with the title *Learning to Be Happy*, published by Grace Publications and distributed by Evangelical Press. An abridgment using Burroughs’ original words is available from Chapel Library.

of Elizabeth to the meeting of the Long Parliament (1640-1660). England became the people of a book, and that book the Bible.”⁴

This may sound exaggerated, but we can be sure that what Green meant is that the Puritans eventually came to wield a spiritual influence well beyond their proportion, for they always formed a minority. It will help to see the story in perspective by recalling that the population of England in 1500 was about two million and in 1600 approximately four million. As for religion, in spite of enforced church attendance, it is doubtful whether more than a quarter of the population of England during that period could be said to have any religion at all.⁵ It is interesting to observe that the population of England is now about 48 million and has 13,000 parishes with 10,000 clergy, 8,000 of whom are paid. This general observation needs to be remembered not only for the whole time that we will be viewing, but even more so today when those who profess and practice the Christian Faith constitute probably less than ten percent. Ralph Josselin in his Essex parish did not celebrate communion for nine years, and when he did in 1651, only 34 qualified! Josselin spoke of three categories of parishioners—first, those who seldom hear preaching; second, those who are “sleepy hearers;” and third, “our society,” a small group of the godly.⁶

Nominalism has always characterized the great majority of Anglicans. It was so then as it is now. By about 1600 the number of Puritan ministers had increased to about ten percent, that is about 800 of the 8,000 Church of England clergy. By 1660 this proportion had increased to about twenty-five percent. And between 1660 and 1662, about 2,000 were forced out of the National Church.⁷

Before the Reformation the English Church was Roman Catholic. In character it was “a collection of practices, habits and attitudes rather than an intellectually coherent body of doctrine.”⁸ The Protestantization of England was essentially gradual, taking place slowly throughout Elizabeth’s reign, “here a little and there a little,” and very much in piecemeal fashion. From about 1600 growth accelerated. At the time of Henry VIII’s breach with Rome, England was officially completely Roman Catholic. In 1642 it is estimated that not more than two percent was Catholic, but ten

⁴ J. R. Green, 1878 and 1909, 460.

⁵ M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism*, Chicago Press, 1939, 380.

⁶ John Spurr, *English Puritanism 1603-1689*, Macmillan, 1998, 37 & 41.

⁷ Commended reading on the Great Ejection is Daniel Neal, *History of the Puritans*, Vol. 3.

⁸ Kenneth Hylson-Smith, *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II*, Vol. 1, 1558-1688, 240, citing Loades, *The Mid-Tudor Crisis*, 161.

percent of the peerage was still so. Throughout this period, England was a sacral society. Everyone was required to conform to the Church of England. This resulted in *recusants*, who refused to attend the Church of England services, either for Puritan reasons or out of loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church. From 1570 to 1791 this was punishable by a fine and involved many civil disabilities. Recusants tended to lie low and keep out of trouble. It was during the period 1640 to 1660 that Christian denominations surfaced: Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers (all these together representing only about five percent of the population).⁹ The Toleration Act of 1689 marked the end of the Church of England's claim to be *the* single all-inclusive Church of the English people, although it remained the Church established by law.

In 1568 there were “many congregations of the Anabaptists in London, who called themselves ‘Puritans’ or ‘the unspotted lambs of the Lord’”¹⁰ It has been widely accepted that the word “Puritan” first came into use in connection with these groups.¹¹ It was during the Elizabethan period (1558-1603) that the Puritans grew increasingly as a distinct brotherhood of pastors who emphasized the great centralities of Christianity: faithfulness to Scripture, expository preaching, pastoral care, personal holiness, and practical godliness applied to every area of life. The word “Puritan” began to be used to refer to these people who were scrupulous about their way of life. “The godly,” or those who were not nominal, were dubbed Puritans.¹² Those who cared about the gospel (gospellers) and who sought to propagate the gospel were Puritans. As the Scriptures warn, the godly can expect to bear reproach for their holy way of life. The godly of that time were derided as killjoys and nick-named “Puritans.”

A new meaning developed and this came about through the Arminian/Calvinist controversy.¹³ Those ministers in England who subscribed to the doctrines of grace were called Puritans. When submitting a list of names for preferment (promotion), the dogmatic Arminian Archbishop William Laud placed a “P” beside the

⁹ Michael Watts, *The Dissenters - From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Oxford, 1985. Watts provides a detailed analysis of statistics.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 20, citing J. Stowe, *Three Fifteenth Century Chronicles*, ed. J. Gardiner (Camden Society), 1880, new series, xxviii. 143.

¹¹ Hylson-Smith, *op.cit.*, 61.

¹² Patrick Collinson, *Godly People - Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism*, Hambledon Press, 1983, 1.

¹³ For a more complete explanation of this controversy, see *The Doctrines of Grace in the Gospel of John, Truth and Error, Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility, or Introductory Essay to the Death of Death*, each reprinted by and available from Chapel Library.

Puritans thus warning against their convictions, and an “O” beside others for orthodox, as Laud interpreted that term, conveying the meaning that they were acceptable.

The word “Puritan” has been used much as a term of derision. But it is no more so today. In the twenty-first century, churches everywhere increasingly recognize the high value of the Puritan’s writings, a rich spiritual legacy to the church for all time from men who knew God, studied the Scriptures, and sought to apply them whole-heartedly to all of life.

—*Erroll Hulse; Editor, Reformation Today; Leeds, England*

The English Monarchs from 1491 to 1689

The Tudor line

HENRY VIII (1491-1547) *Key: Divorced, Beheaded, Died, Survived*

Div	first wife	Catherine of Aragon, who bore Mary, later to become queen
B	second wife	Anne Boleyn, in 1533 bore Elizabeth, later to become queen
D	third wife	Jane Seymour, who bore Edward, later to become king
Div	fourth wife	Anne of Cleves, marriage supposedly not consummated
B	fifth wife	Catherine Howard
S	sixth wife	Catherine Parr

EDWARD VI (1537-1553) died aged only 16. During his reign England moved politically in the direction of Protestantism.

MARY (1553-1558) nicknamed ‘Bloody Mary’ because of her cruelty. She ordered about 270 burned at the stake for their faith. Mary married Roman Catholic Philip, son of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, in 1554.

ELIZABETH (1558-1603) principal events:

- 1559 The Elizabethan Settlement
- 1570 Elizabeth excommunicated by the Pope of Rome
- 1588 Attack by the Spanish Armada

The Stuart line

JAMES I (1603-1625) principal events:

- 1604 The Hampton Court Conference
- 1611 Publication of the King James Version (Authorised Version)
- 1618 The Synod of Dort rejects Arminianism
- 1624 Richard Montagu’s anti-Calvinist treatise points to the rise of Arminianism

CHARLES I (1603-1640) principal events:

- 1629 For eleven years Charles rules without Parliament
- 1637 Imposition of new Prayer Book provokes riots in Edinburgh
- 1640-1660 Rule by Parliament
- 1642 Civil War
- 1643-1647 The Westminster Assembly
- 1645 Archbishop William Laud executed
- 1649 Charles I executed
- 1658 Death of Oliver Cromwell

CHARLES II (1660-1685)

- 1662 The Act of Uniformity and the Great Ejection of Puritan pastors

THEMES AND HISTORY OF THE Free Grace Broadcaster

Themes of Available Issues

The *Free Grace Broadcaster* is a quarterly digest of classic Christian sermons and articles, each issue focusing on a different theme. The *Broadcaster* is useful for personal study, discipleship, family worship, and sermon preparation. These 48 page booklets are available in print and by download from www.chapellibrary.org.

- Abortion (#220)
- Apostasy (#205)
- Aspects of Repentance (#156)
- Assurance and Perseverance (#179)
- Atonement, The (#227)
- Babies (#224)
- Backsliding (#197)
- Biblical Parenthood (#204, also in Spanish)
- Blood of Christ, The (#155)
- Christ the Mediator (#183)
- Christ upon the Cross (#226)
- Church Discipline (#222)
- Comfort in Affliction (#217)
- Communion/Union with Christ (#164)
- Contentment (#213)
- Conversion (#195, also in Spanish)
- Covetousness (#167)
- Day of Judgment (#210)
- Death Is Coming: Flee from the Wrath of God (#180)
- Deity of Christ, The (#230)
- Duties of Sons & Daughters (#208, also in Spanish)
- Evangelism (#151)
- Evil Tongue, The (#152)
- Faith (#157)
- Faithfulness of God, The (#169, also in Spanish)
- Family Worship (#188)
- Fatherhood (#228)
- Fear of God, The (#182)
- Forgiveness (#184)
- Glory of Christ, The (#162)
- God of All Comfort, The (#194)
- God's Eternal Purpose (#236)
- God's Decrees (#237)
- God's Warnings (#178)
- Godly Home, The (#170, also in Spanish)
- Godly Manhood (#192)
- Good Works (#199)
- Gospel, The (#198, also in Spanish)
- Heaven (#181)
- Hell (#211)
- Holy Spirit, The (#154)
- Hope (#186)
- Hypocrisy (#193)
- Idolatry (#189)
- Imputed Righteousness (#191, also in Spanish)

Incarnation (#234)	Sanctification (#215)
Justification (#187, also in Spanish)	Satan and His Deception (#161)
Lord's Day, The (#233)	Scripture, The (#150)
Love (#159)	Secret Sins (#209)
Love Not the World (#163)	Self-denial (#218)
Love of the Spirit, The (#173)	Sin of Unbelief (#174)
Loving One Another (#206)	Substitution (#207, also in Spanish)
Majesty of God, The (#171, also in Spanish)	Suffering (#158)
Marriage (#200, also in Spanish)	Temptation (#160)
Modest Apparel (#216)	Thankfulness (#190)
Mortification (#201)	Thoughts for Young People (#212)
Motherhood (#229)	Trinity, The (#165)
New Birth, The (#202)	Triune God, The (#231)
Obedience (#232)	Union with Christ (#214)
Persecution (#185)	Uniqueness of the God-Man (#172)
Person of Christ, The (#219)	Virtuous Womanhood (#196)
Pride and Humility (#168)	Vital Prayer (#221)
Repentance (#203, also in Spanish)	Work of Christ, The (#225)
Resurrected Savior, The (#175)	Worship (#177)
Resurrection (#235)	
Revival (#223)	

History

Pastor W. F. Bell of Canton, Georgia, began the *Free Grace Broadcaster* in September of 1970. The first 49 issues were published six times per year under the title *The Word of Truth*. Then, in November of 1975, issue 50 carried the name *Free Grace Broadcaster* with the significant subtitle (from the Baptist preacher Samuel Medley, 1738-1799):

“Our Purpose: To humble the pride of man, to exalt the grace of God in salvation, and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”

Every edition since has been devoted to fulfilling this purpose. These early issues included articles from the pens of Pastors Bell, Glen Berry, Ferrell Griswold, Henry Mahan, Conrad Murrell, and also J. C. Philpot, A. W. Pink, J. C. Ryle, and C. H. Spurgeon.

In May 1988 with issue 125, Pastor Bell asked Mt. Zion Bible Church's pastor, L.R. Shelton, Jr., to assume the editing, printing, and distribution of the *FGB* because his mailing list had grown to more than 3,000 subscribers. These subscribers were combined

with that of Chapel Library, and by faith Pastor Shelton printed 10,000 copies of issue 125! By 1991, 15,000 copies were printed. By God's grace, the 200th issue had a print run of 27,000, including 16,500 subscribers in North America, 2,000 sent in bulk to churches, 3,000 for the Free Quarterly Offer and follow-up requests during the quarter, 1,000 for our stock, 1,000 sent to other ministries who share complimentary copies with their constituents, and 3,500 sent to 13 international distributors who maintain subscriptions in their own countries.

The *FGB* became a quarterly in January of 1989 with issue 127. Pastor Shelton loved the old writers; he cut his teeth on Lloyd-Jones, Pink, and Spurgeon. When the Lord's people donated for a new printing press, by January 1990 the *FGB* listed 18 available Spurgeon sermon booklets (they now number 95). Today, the Chapel Library catalog is filled with tracts and booklets that first appeared as articles in the *FGB* during this era. January 1993 issue 143 came with a new title font, which has remained to this day. Significantly, with issue 150 in November 1994, the *FGB* included **articles all related to one theme**. This increased its value immensely because God's people could now feast on the best of what older writers had to say on one relevant topic!

Working behind the scenes, Mike Snyder ably assisted Pastor Shelton Jr. in the editing for many years. Pastor Jeff Pollard became the third primary editor of the *FGB* when he moved to Pensacola in August 2002 from Providence Baptist Church of Ball, Louisiana. He and Pastor Shelton co-edited two issues before Pastor Shelton passed away in January 2003. Since then, Pastor Pollard has sought to make each issue a more **extensive presentation** of the facets of the theme at hand: what it is, what it means, and how it affects the lives of the saints. We believe this increases its value still further because it has now become a more in-depth tool for discipleship, training, and sermon preparation, in addition to its role in encouraging the saints in discipleship and personal devotions. As such, it is proving very significant in the training of native pastors worldwide.

The *FGB Spanish Edition* first appeared in 2009 with the addition of international distributors in Mexico and Spain.

Chapel Library makes issues since #150 available for **download worldwide** without charge. And in North America, these also may be ordered in print from the Literature Catalog.

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Sending Christ-centered messages from prior centuries worldwide

Chapel Library sends Christ-centered messages from prior centuries worldwide. It operates under the authority of *Mount Zion Bible Church*, a small, evangelical, Bible-teaching, independent church in Pensacola, Florida. The authors have stood the test of time and therefore are not subject to contemporary trends. These include *Spurgeon* (Baptist), *Bonar* (Presbyterian), *Ryle* (Anglican), *Bunyan* (Independent), *Pink*, the *Puritans*, and many others. The focus is the grace of God through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

The printing ministry began in 1978. The Prison Ministry started mailing free Bibles to inmates in 1984. Chapel Library was added by God's grace in 1987, the *Free Grace Broadcaster* in 1988, the Bible Institute in 1995, the website in 1996, and the International Distributors in 2004.

In North America, we send materials to individuals in moderate quantities postage paid and free of charge. We also send large quantities without charge to prisons, missions, and overseas pastors. Larger quantities to churches and others are available at our costs. We are a faith ministry, depending upon the Lord to meet all our needs. We never ask for donations, share our mailing list, or send promotional mailings.

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1. **Printing:** Distributing tracts, booklets, and paperbacks printed in our own facilities.
2. **Tape Ministry:** Audio tapes from our library of over 6,000 messages and books on tape.
3. **Prison Ministry:** Serving inmates and chaplains throughout North America.
4. **Bible Institute:** More than 50 study courses utilizing proven authors of the past.
5. **Two magazines:** *Free Grace Broadcaster* sent quarterly without charge in North America; *Studies in the Scriptures* available by email subscription in digital format with printed copies available upon request.
6. **Missions:** Sending Christ-centered materials from prior centuries to pastors and missionaries worldwide without charge.
7. **Internet Ministry & John Bunyan Archive:** Downloadable sermons, literature, MP3 audio, & Bunyan's complete works.

There are more than 850 titles in all. In addition, more than 120 titles have been translated into **Spanish**. Several other languages are also available, including Portuguese and Russian.

Sample Titles

(*t* – tract, *b* – booklet, *p* – paperback, ^s – Spanish also available)

<i>All of Grace</i>	- Charles H. Spurgeon	<i>p</i>
<i>Appointment You Will Keep, An</i>	- Joel Beeke	<i>t</i>
<i>Are You Born Again?</i> ^s	- J.C. Ryle	<i>t</i>
<i>Atonement, The</i>	- John Murray	<i>b</i>
<i>Attributes of God</i>	- A.W. Pink	<i>p</i>
<i>Biblical Repentance</i> ^s	- L.R. Shelton, Jr.	<i>b</i>
<i>Biblical View of Self-esteem</i>	- Jay Adams	<i>b</i>
<i>Blood of Jesus, The</i>	- William Reid	<i>b</i>
<i>Bondage of the Will, The</i>	- Martin Luther	<i>b</i>
<i>Calvin on Self-Denial</i>	- John Calvin	<i>b</i>
<i>Canons of Dort</i>	---	<i>b</i>
<i>Catechism with Proofs, A</i>	- Charles H. Spurgeon	<i>b</i>
<i>Charity and Its Fruits</i>	- Jonathan Edwards	<i>b</i>
<i>Church Discipline</i>	- John Owen	<i>b</i>
<i>Christ's Sympathies to Weary Pilgrims</i>	- Octavius Winslow	<i>b</i>
<i>Christian Behavior</i>	- John Bunyan	<i>b</i>
<i>Christian's Warfare, The</i>	- Robert McCheyne	<i>t</i>
<i>Compel Them to Come In</i>	- Charles H. Spurgeon	<i>b</i>
<i>Deny Yourself</i> (biographies)	- Steve Gallagher	<i>b</i>
<i>Divine Guidance</i>	- B.A. Ramsbottom	<i>b</i>
<i>Divine Sovereignty & Human Responsibility</i>	- J.I. Packer	<i>b</i>
<i>Duties of Parents, The</i>	- J.C. Ryle	<i>b</i>
<i>Earnest Warning against Lukewarmness</i>	- C.H. Spurgeon	<i>b</i>
<i>Effective Prayer</i>	- Charles H. Spurgeon	<i>b</i>
<i>Evolution or Creation?</i>	---	<i>b</i>
<i>Fleeing Out of Sodom</i>	- Jonathan Edwards	<i>b</i>
<i>From Tradition to Truth</i> ^s	- Richard Bennett	<i>b</i>
<i>God's Indisputable Sovereignty</i>	---	<i>b</i>
<i>God's Way of Peace</i>	- Horatius Bonar	<i>p</i>
<i>God's Way of Holiness</i>	- Horatius Bonar	<i>p</i>
<i>Greasy the Robber</i> ^s	- Lukesh	<i>b</i>
<i>Heaven, A World of Love</i>	- Jonathan Edwards	<i>b</i>
<i>Holiness</i>	- Joel Beeke	<i>b</i>
<i>Holiness, Part 1</i>	- J.C. Ryle	<i>p</i>
<i>Honey Out of the Rock</i> ^s	- Thomas Willcox	<i>b</i>
<i>Hour with George Mueller, An</i>	---	<i>b</i>
<i>How to Die to Selfishness</i>	- G.D. Watson	<i>b</i>
<i>Imminent Danger to Our Nation</i>	- John Newton	<i>b</i>
<i>Is Christ Your Lord?</i> ^s	- A.W. Pink	<i>t</i>

<i>Is the Bible Reliable?</i>	- John Piper	<i>b</i>
<i>Just God, A</i> ^s	- Charles H. Spurgeon	<i>t</i>
<i>Justification, the Law, the Righteousness of Christ</i>	- Hodge	<i>b</i>
<i>Letter to a Friend re. Lordship Salvation</i>	- John Piper	<i>b</i>
<i>Letters of Samuel Rutherford</i>	- Samuel Rutherford	<i>b</i>
<i>Lord Our Righteousness, The</i>	- George Whitefield	<i>b</i>
<i>Luther's Conversion</i>	- Horatius Bonar	<i>t</i>
<i>Man's Will – Free Yet Bound</i>	- Walter Chantry	<i>b</i>
<i>Minister's Self-Watch, The</i>	- Charles H. Spurgeon	<i>b</i>
<i>Mirage Shall Become a Pool, The</i>	- D.M. Lloyd-Jones	<i>b</i>
<i>Mute Christian under the Smarting Rod</i>	- Thomas Brooks	<i>b</i>
<i>Only Savior, The</i>	- Erroll Hulse	<i>b</i>
<i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> (condensed)	- John Bunyan	<i>b</i>
<i>Pilgrim's Progress in Pictures</i> ^s (condensed)	- John Bunyan	<i>b</i>
<i>Postmodernism</i>	- Erroll Hulse	<i>b</i>
<i>Prayer of Jabez, The</i>	- Charles H. Spurgeon	<i>b</i>
<i>Proverbs</i>	- Charles Bridges	<i>b</i>
<i>Pure in Heart, The</i>	- Thomas Watson	<i>b</i>
<i>Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment</i>	- Jeremiah Burroughs	<i>b</i>
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