

# Justification by Faith Alone<sup>[1]</sup>

by

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The doctrine of justification by grace alone (*sola gratia*), through faith alone (*sola fide*), by Christ alone (*solus Christus*) was at the very heart of the Reformation. Martin Luther called it the article by which the church stands or falls. Calvin referred to it as “the main hinge on which religion turns,” and “the sum of all piety.”<sup>[2]</sup> The Roman Catholic Church, at the Council of Trent (1546-1563), recognized the doctrine of justification as the central doctrine at issue between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In the words of John Gerstner, “this doctrine is the core of the gospel; it is indispensable.”<sup>[3]</sup> The Protestant church stood upon this major tenet of Christianity, whereas Roman Catholicism fell away by rejecting it.

Basically, there are five prominent, different, and conflicting views regarding this doctrine: liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, antinomianism, Roman Catholicism, and biblical evangelicalism.<sup>[4]</sup>

**First**, The first view, liberalism, denies the need of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation; whereas the remaining four views claim that a profession of faith in Christ as Savior is necessary. The liberal may have faith in a number of things, especially himself, but he does not believe that there is need of Christ as Savior. As J. Gresham Machen pointed out in his book *Christianity and Liberalism*,<sup>[5]</sup> liberalism is a works righteousness religion; whatever salvation is necessary, it can be earned by one’s own efforts. Liberalism is a form of Pelagianism, and it should not be considered to be Christian in the biblical sense of the word.

**Second**, there is neo-orthodoxy, which is sometimes referred to as the “theology of paradox.”<sup>[6]</sup> Neo-orthodoxy is a theological movement which denounces both liberalism and orthodoxy, and attempts to bridge the gap between the two. It is a failed attempt. Here there is an alleged need for faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, but there is a great deal of ambiguity as to who Christ is. Is He truly God, and a member of the Trinity? There is no definitive answer within the neo-orthodox camp. So we must ask, in whom then are we putting our faith? It seems that we are left with a logical paradox, both with our faith and the object of our faith. Further, in neo-orthodoxy “saving” faith is not necessarily followed by good works. A person can genuinely profess

faith in Jesus Christ without his life being changed to the point where he is truly walking in accordance with the commandments of Jesus Christ. This is another gospel altogether. Neo-orthodoxy is not Christianity.[7]

**Third**, antinomianism, which is predominantly found in Dispensationalism (although it is by no means restricted to it), avers that justification is by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Antinomians also stress the “*fiducial*” nature of saving faith in Jesus Christ as He is revealed in Scripture. Some explanation is in order:[8] First, not all faith is justifying faith. There are several kinds of faith spoken of in Scripture, only one of which is genuine faith. Historical faith is one kind of non-justifying faith. All that is involved here is an historical assent to the truth claims of the gospel. Even the demons have this kind of faith (James 2:19). Scripture also speaks of a temporary faith, which is non-justifying. This kind of faith does not endure. Temporary faith comes and goes, and it leaves in times of persecution (Matthew 13:20-21). Then there is miraculous faith, which believes in or even performs signs and miracles (1 Corinthians 13:2). Paul tells us that even the Antichrist can perform such “lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:9). This too is a non-justifying faith. Second, orthodox Christianity maintains that justifying faith involves three elements: knowledge (*notitia*), assent (*assensus*), and trust (*fiducia*). It is not enough to know the truth about Jesus Christ; nor is it sufficient to merely assent to the gospel message (as in historical faith), as essential as these are. Saving faith is that which also wholeheartedly acquiesces to the Christ revealed in Scripture. Biblical conversion involves a whole-souled commitment. Justifying faith is a faith that makes a *fiducial* response to the gospel promises. It is a faith that endures (Matthew 10:22), and puts no trust in signs and wonders (John 6:26-29). It is a faith that produces spiritual fruit, “some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some a hundred” (Mark 4:20). In general, this is taught, and correctly so, by antinomians.

Where is the error in this system of thought? It is in the defective view of the necessity of good works. A denial of the necessity of good works in the process of sanctification following justification, is a denial of genuine saving faith, for “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). This is not to say that antinomians are opposed to good works; many of them are zealous for good works. But when the antinomian school asserts that there can be justification by faith without “necessary” good works, it vitiates the doctrine of

justification by faith, for a non-working faith is not saving faith. Antinomianism, then, is another gospel.

**Fourth**, is Roman Catholicism. First, whereas in biblical Christianity, as stated in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q. 33), “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,” in the Roman view justification is infused into the believer who thereby becomes righteous.<sup>[9]</sup> The believer, then, may lose his state of justification by falling away from the faith. This is a false view of justification.

And second, in Romanism one is justified by faith plus works.<sup>[10]</sup> The faith required in Roman Catholic dogma is more intellectualistic than *fiducial*, and what is worse, meritorious good works are said to complete faith; the works are prior to justification, rather than following after justification. Works become foundational for justification; they are not “necessary” good works, they are meritorious good works. The believing sinner is able to achieve his own justification; he earns his salvation. This, of course, is a fatally erroneous teaching.

**Fifth** is evangelical Christianity, which teaches that justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The evangelical view is admirably expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith (11:1-2):

*Those whom God effectually calls, He also freely justifies: not by infusing righteousness into them [as in Roman Catholicism], 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.*

Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.

It is clear that when the Westminster divines speak of justification by faith

alone, they are not saying that faith is in any sense meritorious. Faith is that which unites one to Christ who alone saves. Faith means trusting in Christ who alone justifies. Justification is by God's grace (*sola gratia*), through faith (*sola fide*). As stated by the Confession (11:2), faith "is the alone instrument of justification," not the cause of it.

Further, justification is forensic; it is a legal act. Justification is imputed, not infused (as in Roman Catholicism). As Paul teaches in 2 Corinthians 5:21, it is an alien righteousness which justifies; it is Christ's righteousness: "For He [God the Father] made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him [Christ]." The guilty sinner is "declared" righteous, in Christ, by God. And notice is also made that the evangelical position teaches, as per 2 Corinthians 5:21, that there is a double imputation which occurs in justification. Christ's righteousness is imputed to the elect, while at the same time, their sins are imputed to Him. It is not enough that the elect sinner be forgiven (his sins taken away), he must also be declared righteous as the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. Again to cite the Shorter Catechism (Q. 33), in justification, not only does God "pardon all our sins," but He also "accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

Evangelicalism also teaches that a genuine saving faith involves a fiducial response to Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, "as He is offered to us in the gospel."<sup>[11]</sup> As explained by the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q. 72):

*Justifying faith is a saving grace, wrought in the heart of a sinner by the Spirit and Word of God, whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only assents to the truth of the promise of the gospel, but receives and rests upon Christ and His righteousness, therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of His person righteous in the sight of God for salvation.*

And as taught in the Confession (11:2), evangelicalism maintains that although justification is by grace alone through faith alone, a justifying faith is "not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other

saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.” That is, saving faith will yield good works: “The root of the righteous yields fruit” (Proverbs 12:12). Justifying faith is not faith plus works (as in Roman Catholicism), nor is it faith without works (as in antinomianism); it is faith that works. The works, however, are not works of merit, but of necessity. Saving faith will “necessarily” produce good works, because justification and sanctification are inseparable. The Genevan Reformer, John Calvin, stressed the importance of both justification and sanctification (which involves “necessary” good works). According to Calvin, justification and sanctification are inseparably related; sanctification necessarily flows from justification:

*Christ justifies no one whom He does not sanctify at the same time .... Thus it is clear how true it is that we are justified not without works yet not through works, since our sharing in Christ, which justifies us, sanctification is just as much included as righteousness ... the Lord freely justifies His own in order that He may at the same time restore them to true righteousness by sanctification of His Spirit.*<sup>[12]</sup>

And further stressing the necessity of good works, he commented:

*But although works tend in no way to the cause of justification, yet when the elect sons of God were justified freely by faith, at the same time their works are esteemed righteous by the same gratuitous liberality. Thus, it still remains true, that faith without works justifies, although this needs prudence and a sound interpretation; for this proposition, that faith without works justifies is true and yet false, according to the different senses which it bears. The proposition that faith without works justifies by itself is false, because faith without is void.*<sup>[13]</sup>

### **Jonathan Edwards on Justification by Faith Alone**

No one ever set forth a more biblical explanation of this doctrine than did Jonathan Edwards, in his sermon on Romans 4:5: “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,” titled “*Justification by Faith Alone*.” Soli Deo Gloria has published this sermon,<sup>[14]</sup> which was originally preached as a series of sermons in 1734, and was used by God to trigger the Awakening of 1734-1735. In this book, Edwards’ sermon is arranged in six chapters, wherein, after introducing the doctrine, he studies the meaning of the doctrine, the

proof of the doctrine, the relationship between obedience and saving faith, various objections to the doctrine, and the importance of this doctrine. It is the intent of this article to study the New England divine's doctrine of sola fide by using this book, while at the same time buttressing our study by some of his other works.

As we will see, the New England Puritan's work is in accord with the Reformational teaching set forth in the Westminster Standards, comprised of the Westminster Confession of Faith (his "favorite creed"<sup>[15]</sup>), and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Edwards subscribed to the theology of these Standards;<sup>[16]</sup> they were his "dogmatic heritage," which he adhered to,<sup>[17]</sup> the "existing foundations" from which he worked.<sup>[18]</sup>

As noted by Samuel Logan, when Edwards began this sermon, there were two major problems that faced him and his congregation: Arminianism and Antinomianism,<sup>[19]</sup> the same problems which face the church of the early 21st century. First, Arminianism denounces all of the "five points" of Calvinism: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.<sup>[20]</sup> But Arminianism also asserts that one's good works precede justification, thereby making them meritorious. This is the same error we see in Roman Catholicism.

This being so, Edwards and the Puritans in general, considered Arminianism, properly understood, as "another gospel."<sup>[21]</sup> C. C. Goen referred to "the Arminian threat" as "a subtle form of salvation by works."<sup>[22]</sup> Arminianism was considered to be a form of Neonomianism, where faith is seen "as a new kind of obedience, and the gospel as a new kind of law." And the "grace sufficient for salvation is viewed as conditional on the human performance of faith." Herein the gospel it turned into law, and faith is turned into obedience.<sup>[23]</sup>

Early in his life, Edwards had written his Master's thesis at Yale on the subject of justification, titled "*A Sinner is not Justified in the Sight of God Except Through the Righteousness of Christ Obtained by Faith*," wherein he argued against the Arminian or Neonomian scheme of "justification by sincere obedience."<sup>[24]</sup> Later in his life he continued to see the danger of the Arminian view of justification. In this errant theology, he wrote, "men's salvation is attributed wholly and entirely to men," and "none at all of the praise of it is due to God ..... By them [the Arminians], salvation is so far from God that it is God that gives opportunity to obtain salvation, it is God

who gives the offer and makes the promises; but the obtaining the thing promised is of men.”<sup>[25]</sup> It is “another gospel,” which is “pernicious and fatal” (146, 154). Therefore, commented Logan, “Edwards’s remarks on the doctrine of justification by faith alone must be understood, in at least one sense, as his response to a genuine Arminian challenge.”<sup>[26]</sup>

Second, the sermon under study must be understood in light of the challenge of antinomianism. As noted, to deny the “necessity” of good works is just as much another gospel is asserting the meritorious nature of works. This is precisely the view explained by the Westminster Confession of Faith (11:2): Saving faith “is never alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but works by love.” Commenting on the necessity of good works, Gordon Clark wrote: “Faith is the root and works are the fruit. We cannot be saved without them [good works].”<sup>[27]</sup>

Edwards was of the same opinion. In a sermon on Genesis 6:22, he preached: “Men cannot be saved for any works of theirs, and yet they are not saved without works.”<sup>[28]</sup> Wrote Logan: “The matter of the necessity and visible relationship between justification and sanctification remained critical for Edwards” throughout his ministry.<sup>[29]</sup> John Gerstner claimed that “of the twelve hundred plus sermons that Edwards wrote, I estimate that sanctification was the central and most emphasized theme.”<sup>[30]</sup> In fact, so thorough and penetrating is the New England theologian’s exposition and analysis of this aspect of soteriology, that some scholars, such as Thomas Schafer, have suggested that Edwards confutes and conflates justification and sanctification.<sup>[31]</sup> But this is not the case at all. As Conrad Cherry pointed out, “it is indeed true that Edwards makes faith and justification by faith dependent on a type of sanctification,” but the “sanctification upon which the act of faith (through which one is justified) is dependent, is the gift of God’s Spirit which resides within man as the principle of his act.”<sup>[32]</sup> Morimoto agreed: Edwards was “in agreement with the standard understanding of the Reformed *ordo salutis* [order of salvation]. While recognizing the essential continuity, Edwards distinguishes sanctification from regeneration and places it after justification.”<sup>[33]</sup>

Jonathan Edwards, in contradistinction to the Antinomianism of his day, and in full agreement with Calvin and the Westminster divines before him, boldly

stood for the biblical doctrine of the inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification, both of which are dependent on the grace of God, in Christ. Whereas in justification, Christ's righteousness is imputed, in sanctification it is infused.<sup>[34]</sup> As taught in the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q. 77), "although sanctification be inseparably joined with justification, yet they differ, in that God in justification imputes the righteousness of Christ, in sanctification, He infuses grace, and enables to the exercise thereof." Said Edwards:

*There is a two-fold righteousness that the saints have: an imputed righteousness, and it is this only that avails anything to justification; and an inherent righteousness, that is, that holiness and grace which is in the hearts and lives of the saints. This is Christ's righteousness as well as imputed: imputed righteousness is Christ's righteousness accepted for them, inherent holiness is Christ's righteousness communicated to them.*<sup>[35]</sup>

This inseparable relationship of justification and sanctification is very evident in his sermon series on Romans 4:5.

In chapter 1, "*The Introduction to the Doctrine*" (1-4), Edwards begins by clearly teaching that "justification respects a man as ungodly." God, "in the act of justification, has no regard for anything in the person justified, such as godliness or any goodness in him, but that immediately before this act God sees him only as an ungodly creature." He goes on to preach that Romans 4:5 makes it abundantly clear "that gospel grace consists in the reward being given without works," and this means that, "not only works of the ceremonial law are excluded in this business of justification, but works of morality and godliness" as well. "It is evident," said the New England divine, "that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any righteousness in himself," and that "God, in His sovereign grace," is pleased to "impute" or "reckon" or "count" the righteousness of another (Christ) to the sinner. And this is done by means of faith alone in Jesus Christ. The main doctrine is thereby set forth: "We are justified only by faith in Christ, not by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own" (1-4). Elect sinners, then, are saved by an alien righteousness being imputed to them: "The imputation of Christ's righteousness" (62). "God accepts them [elect sinners] for the sake of the worthiness and amiableness of Christ, and the infinite love that God has to



Him.”<sup>[36]</sup>

As we will see later in this sermon, when Edwards spoke of justification by faith alone, he did not mean that one’s faith is in any sense meritorious. On the contrary, faith unites to Christ who is the only Savior. “God does not give those who believe a union with or an interest in the Savior as a reward for faith, but only because faith is the soul’s active uniting with Christ” (17). Edwards explicitly denies that there is any “merit of congruity, or indeed any moral congruity at all” involved in saving faith (19), as is taught in Roman Catholicism. Neither faith nor repentance justify “as a work, for the nature of the one [repentance] is to renounce works, and the nature of the other [faith] is to depend on the work of another,” i.e., Christ. Rather, “faith is the condition of salvation because it trusts in Christ and ascribes salvation to Him.”<sup>[37]</sup> Faith means trusting Christ alone who justifies. The ground of justification is Christ’s vicarious righteousness and sacrifice. Ultimately salvation is by works, but it is by Christ’s works, not those of the elect sinner: “We must indeed be saved on account of works – but not our own. It is on account of the works which Christ has done for us.”<sup>[38]</sup> Edwards’ eye, wrote Carl Bogue, “is clearly on the central biblical truth that Christ fulfilled the condition of our righteousness and hence our justification.”<sup>[39]</sup>

And clearly for Edwards, saving faith is one that involves trust (*fiducia*). Saving faith, he wrote, “is the whole soul’s active agreeing, according, and symphonizing with this truth [of the gospel].” It is an “adhering to the truth, and acquiescing in it.”<sup>[40]</sup> It is an “embracing the promises of God, and fiducial relying on them, through Christ for salvation.”<sup>[41]</sup> “There is a difference,” preached Edwards, in a sermon on Matthew 16:17, “between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense [taste] of its sweetness.” The same is true regarding saving faith: There is “a true sense of the divine and superlative excellency of God and Jesus Christ, and of the work of redemption, and the ways and works of God.” There is “a true sense of the divine excellency of the things of God’s Word [which] does more directly and immediately convince us of their truth.” When one has this “sense,” he acquiesces to the “light of the glorious gospel of Christ.”<sup>[42]</sup> Carl Bogue, therefore, rightly concluded: “Jonathan Edwards reflects the essence of the Scriptures when he attributes salvation to the absolute, sovereign grace of God. The Reformation cry of *sola gratia* and *sola fide* reverberates throughout his writings.”<sup>[43]</sup>

As is evident, for the New England divine, union with Christ is the central issue involved in soteriology. “By virtue of the believer’s union with Christ, he does really possess all things.”<sup>[44]</sup> “For union with Christ, or a being in Christ, is the foundation of all communion with Him.”<sup>[45]</sup> And it is the absolute sovereignty of God which brings about this union.

In a sermon on Galatians 3:16, Edwards preached that the union of the elect with Christ is established in God’s eternal election, but it is applied when the elect sinner trusts in Christ: They are “given to Christ from eternity,” but they are “not actually in Christ until they have believed in Him.”<sup>[46]</sup> The same thought is expressed in the Romans 4:5 sermon, wherein Edwards preached about a supra-temporal covenant “between the Father and the Son,”<sup>[47]</sup> in which the plan of redemption of elect sinners in Christ “was virtually done in the sight of God.” Yet, it is not until these elect sinners “believe” that they “are admitted to partake with Christ in His justification” (71-72).

This is the teaching we find in the Westminster Confession of Faith (3:5-6):

*Those of mankind that are predestined unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, has chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory .... As God has appointed the elect unto glory, so has He by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by His Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by His power through faith unto salvation.*

So Edwards is very much in line here with the teaching of Reformed theology, as expressed in the Confession, he just stresses this union more than most.<sup>[48]</sup> According to Edwards, “God the Father makes no covenant and enters into no treaty with fallen man distinctly by themselves. He will transact with them in such a friendly way no other way than by and in [union with] Christ Jesus as members and as it were parts of Him.”<sup>[49]</sup> And in the sermon on Romans 4:5, he preached:

This relation or union to Christ whereby Christians are said to be “in Christ” ... is the ground of their right to His benefits .... God does not give those who believe a union with or an interest in the Savior as a reward for faith, but

only because faith is the soul's active uniting with Christ, or is itself the very act of union on their part. God sees it as fitting that, in order for a union to be established between two intelligent active beings or persons, so that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both, that each should receive the other, as actively joining themselves one to another. God, in requiring this in order for us to be united to Christ as one of His people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of acting and choosing, and hence sees it fit that they should be looked upon as one in law. What is real in the union between Christ and His people is the foundation of what is legal; that is, it is something really in them and between them, uniting them. That is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the Judge (17-18).

The salvation of the elect (both Old and New Testaments<sup>[50]</sup>), and everything that they possess, has to do with their relationship with Christ. He is their federal head, and they are in union with Him.

In chapter 2, Edwards discusses "*The Meaning of the Doctrine*" of justification (5-22). He asks the question, "what is meant in Scripture by being justified?" and then goes on to answer that a person is said to be justified when he is approved by God, not only as being "free from the guilt of sin" (negative righteousness), but also as "having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles him to the reward of life" (positive righteousness). In other words, it is not enough for a person to be forgiven his sins to be justified, he also must be declared righteous (i.e., double imputation) (5-6).

When God created man (Adam), He entered into a covenant of works with him. As taught by the Westminster Confession of Faith (7:2): "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him [as the federal head of the entire human race] to his posterity, upon perfect and personal obedience." Or in Edwards own words, "perfect obedience is the condition of the first covenant [of works]."<sup>[51]</sup> If Adam, as the federal head of the entire human race, "had finished his course of perfect obedience, he would have been justified," i.e., declared righteous (6). Positive righteousness would have been imputed to him, and to those he represented – the entirety of humanity. As Edwards explained it elsewhere: "If Adam, our first surety, had fulfilled the covenant

[of works] made with him, which was made with him as a public head for himself and his posterity, then his posterity...would all have had a title to eternal life; by virtue of the promises made to Adam, their surety, all would have had a title by virtue of that one covenant.”<sup>[52]</sup>

Adam, however, broke the covenant with God and fell in sin; thus, he and all of his posterity fell from the state of original righteousness. The guilt of Adam’s sin was imputed to himself, and it was also imputed to all of his descendants, because they participated in Adam’s transgression by their own consent. It is due, taught Edwards, to the “constituted oneness or identity of Adam and his posterity in this affair,” that all mankind (with the sole exception of Christ) is guilty before a holy God.<sup>[53]</sup> “The first depravity of heart [Adam’s], and the imputation of that sin, are both the consequences of that established union” of Adam and His posterity. The “root and branches” are considered as one, “according to God’s wise constitution.”<sup>[54]</sup> Fallen man is now “without any goodness or excellency in himself, but with a total and universal hatefulness.” He is “altogether, yea infinitely, vile and hateful.” Men are “infinitely sinful and abominable creatures in God’s sight,” with an “infinite guilt,” and all of their “righteousness is nothing, and ten thousand times nothing” (61, 151). Or said another way, mankind is in a moral state of “total depravity,” unable to do anything that pleases God. Man is in desperate need of a Savior.

In His mercy, God entered into another covenant with the elect immediately subsequent to the Fall, i.e., the covenant of grace. As stated by the Westminster Confession (7:3), in this covenant God “freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they might be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.” In Edwards’ words:

*The first covenant [of works] failed of bringing men to the glory of God, through man’s instability, whereby he failed of perseverance .... But God had made a second covenant [of grace] in mercy to fallen man, that in the way of this covenant he might be brought to the glory of God, which he failed to do under the other .... Therefore God introduces another better covenant, committed not to his [Adam’s] strength, but to the strength of one that is mighty and stable [Christ],*

*and therefore is a sure and everlasting covenant .... The first was only to make way for the second.*<sup>[55]</sup>

This being the case, Christ too, as the second and final Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45-47), had to obey the law of God perfectly, fulfilling the covenant of works, both for Himself and for His elect people. Then, and only then, would He be “justified” (declared righteous), and the elect would also be secured in His victory. Thus, Christ, having lived a perfectly obedient life, when “He had been put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18), then He who was manifest in the flesh was justified in the Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16).” And when Christ was raised from the dead, He was justified, not only “as a private person, but [also] as the surety and representative of all who would believe in Him. So that He was raised again not only for His own justification, but also for ours, according to the apostle in Romans 4:25” (7).

Jonathan Edwards, then, clearly maintained that justification is a forensic or legal act, wherein the elect sinner is declared righteous by an alien righteousness, i.e., the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to the believer. “Justification,” he preached, “is manifestly a forensic term, as the word is used in Scripture, and a judicial thing, or the act of a judge” (67). In defense of the Edwardsian doctrine of justification, Robert Jenson wrote:

Edwards knows that the language of “justification” is juridical language in Paul’s use and in the use of the Reformation, and he adheres to the rules of the metaphor. So also the justice given by God’s justification is strictly “imputed” justice, in the purest style of ... Calvinistic teaching: God chooses to reckon Christ’s righteousness to the sinner, and so the sinner is judged righteous.<sup>[56]</sup>

Edwards, along with a number of Reformed theologians, including the Westminster divines and John Calvin, taught that the covenant of grace is conditional.<sup>[57]</sup> That is, there are non-meritorious obligations placed upon the recipients of divine revelation. As noted in the Westminster Confession of Faith (7:3), God “freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him that they may be saved.” And in the words of the Larger Catechism (Q. 32), God “freely provides and offers to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by Him; and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in Him.” Man must respond to the call of the gospel; he is obligated to do so. Fallen man, however, in his state of total depravity, is

incapable of so responding. Therefore, as the Catechism goes on to say, God “promises and gives His Holy Spirit to all His elect, to work in them that faith, with all other saving graces.”

John Calvin also taught that the covenant of grace is conditional. All covenants are two-sided. God gives commands as well as promises. The latter are pledged by the sovereign God; the former are to be obeyed by His vassals. Covenant breakers will be cut off from God’s covenant community (the church), whereas covenant keepers will receive divine blessings.<sup>[58]</sup> At the same time, said the Reformer, we must recognize that while the covenant of grace is conditional, even to the elect, God is the one who supplies their need so that they are able to keep the covenant.<sup>[59]</sup>

This is the Edwardsian view:

*In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, or yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and yet we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what He produces, viz. our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active.*

In the Scriptures the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to the text, “God works in you both to will and to do” [Philippians 2:13].<sup>[60]</sup>

In God’s covenantal dealings with mankind, faith and other graces (such as obedience and perseverance) are “conditions” of salvation. But they are non-meritorious “conditions,” because they all come as a gift of God. In a sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:29-31, Edwards preached that “it is God that gives us faith whereby we close with Christ.”<sup>[61]</sup> And elsewhere he wrote:

We must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and accept of Him as offered in the gospel for a Savior. But, as we cannot do this of ourselves, Christ has purchased this also for the elect. He has purchased, that they shall have faith given them; whereby they shall be [actively] united to Christ, and so have a [pleadable] title to His benefits.<sup>[62]</sup>

Here Edwards differentiated his teaching from that of Arminianism, wherein such “conditions” are in some degree meritorious. Arminianism is a form of neonomianism, wherein faith is a kind of good work, and the gospel is a new kind of law. Hence, he strongly opposed “the Arminian scheme of justification by our own virtue.”<sup>[63]</sup>

Moreover, all of the conditions are only so in the sense that “without which it shall not be, and that with which it shall be.”<sup>[64]</sup> “In one sense,” taught Edwards, “Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and [entire] salvation; in still another sense faith is the condition of justification; in another sense other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too.” Indeed, “there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, with which justification shall be, and without which it will not be, and which are found to be put in Scripture in conditional propositions with justification and sanctification, in multitudes of places” (9).

But again, the New England divine stressed that faith and every grace that the believer has is a gift of God. It is due to the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that the saints are enabled to persevere to the end and be saved. The grace of perseverance is so “contained in the first act of faith” that it cannot possibly fail (90). By God’s grace, saving faith unites the believer with Christ in a “natural fitness” whereby the elect sinner is assured of his ultimate salvation (18-19). As necessary, then, as these other graces are in Edwards doctrine of justification by faith alone (and they are absolutely necessary), they are nevertheless gracious gifts of God, and therefore non-meritorious, non-causal, non-justifying; they are in no sense instrumental in justification. Said Edwards: “that which makes our obedience the matter of our justification ... [is] contrary to the gospel doctrine of justification.”<sup>[65]</sup> Thus, the Puritan divine clearly distinguished between non-causal conditions of justification, and the cause of justification. And there can be no question that he “affirms that the grace of God is the only cause of justification.”<sup>[66]</sup>

Edwards acknowledged that although there are a number of non-causal conditions of salvation, the conditionality of faith is unique, because it does what the other conditions can never do: it is “the instrument by which we receive Christ” (11). At this point, the Puritan divine has a minor difference with the language of the Westminster Confession (11:2), which teaches that “faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone

instrument of justification.” Edwards argued:

*Yet it must be acknowledged that this is an obscure way of speaking, and there must certainly be some impropriety in calling faith an instrument wherewith we receive or accept justification; for the very persons who thus explain the matter speak of faith as being the reception or acceptance itself. And if this is so, how can it be the instrument of reception or acceptance? Certainly there is a difference between the act and the instrument. Besides, by their own descriptions of faith, Christ, the Mediator by whom and by whose righteousness we are justified, is more directly the object of this acceptance and justification, which is the benefit arising therefrom more indirectly. And therefore, if faith is an instrument, it is more properly the instrument by which we receive Christ than the instrument by which we receive justification (10-11).*

As John Gerstner stated, however, “there seems to be no great difference here between Edwards and the Reformed tradition.”<sup>[67]</sup>

In the remainder of chapter 2, Edwards continues to focus on the unique condition of faith and the importance of the doctrine of the believer’s union with Christ, pointing out that this union whereby Christians are said to be “in Christ,” is “the ground of their right to His benefits.” There is “a legal union between Christ and true Christians,” wherein the merits of Christ and His perfect righteousness “belong” to the believer. Justifying faith, then, “is that by which the soul, which before was separated and alienated from Christ, unites itself to Him.” Moreover, “God does not give those who believe a union with or an interest in the Savior as a reward for faith, but only because faith is the “soul’s active uniting with Christ” (13-17).

Somewhat distinct in the Puritan sage’s doctrine of the union that believers have with Christ is his view of “fitness” or “suitableness.” In fact, it is fair to say that the concept of fitness and harmony pervade his thought. From Genesis to Revelation we see that there is one overarching plan of God, wherein all of His providential dealings in His created universe “fit” together in perfect “harmony,” and Christ is central to all.<sup>[68]</sup>

Here in the doctrine of justification, Edwards taught that there are two types of fitness: moral and natural. A person is morally fit when his own holiness or excellency would commend him to God. In this sense, only Christ is morally



fit. “There is nothing in man,” he wrote, “regarding a moral fitness for a state of salvation, or a being in Christ. The moral fitness or suitableness to any good or happiness is alone in Christ.”<sup>[69]</sup>

Natural fitness, on the other hand, is that fitness which exists when a person is united to Christ through faith. In the eyes of God it is “fitting” that salvation and union with Christ belong together. “God looks on it as fitting (by a natural fitness) that he whose heart sincerely unites itself to Christ as his Savior should be looked upon as united to that Savior, and so to have an interest in Him, and not from any moral fitness between the excellence of such a qualification as faith and such a glorious blessedness as having an interest in Christ .... God’s making such a constitution is a testimony of His love of order” (18-20).

In chapter 3, “*The Proof of the Doctrine*” (23-86), Edwards reiterates his earlier teaching by stating that “such is our case, and the state of things, that neither faith, nor any other qualifications or action or course of actions, does or can render it suitable that a person should have an interest in the Savior, and so a title to His benefits, on account of any excellence therein, or in any other way than as something in him may unite him to the Savior” (23).

All sin is infinitely great because it is committed against an infinitely holy God. The sinner is infinitely guilty, thereby rendering him worthy of infinite punishment. Man’s only hope is “the love, honor, and obedience of Christ towards God [which] have infinite value because of the excellence and dignity of the [divine] person in whom these qualifications were inherent” (25). “The positive righteousness of Christ, or that price by which He earned merit,” through His perfect obedience to the entirety of the law of God, “was of equal [infinite] value with that by which He provided satisfaction; for indeed it was the same price.” Moreover, Christ’s “sufferings were looked upon as of infinite value, and equivalent to the eternal sufferings of a finite creature” (82). Herein the Son of God merited salvation in behalf of His elect people. God must save man; man cannot save himself.

Fallen man, taught the Puritan Sage, is still living under the covenant of works (James 2:10; Galatians 3:10). Like Adam he is duty bound to perform perfect obedience; yet he is incapable of doing so. It is essential that someone of infinite worth before God fulfill the covenant of works for Himself, and for those who will be saved. And that someone is Jesus Christ, the Son of

God.

Part of the opposition to the orthodox view expressed by Jonathan Edwards was an early form of the 20th and 21st century “*New Perspective on Paul*” movement (NPP), championed by men such as J. D. G. Dunn, E. P. Sanders, and N. T. Wright.<sup>[70]</sup> These 18th century false teachers (along with the latter day NPP advocates) maintained that when Paul spoke against works of the law (Romans 3:28; Galatians 3:10; Ephesians 2:8-9), he meant “only works of the ceremonial law, or those observances that were particular to the Mosaic administration” (35). Edwards defended the Reformational and Puritan teaching that Paul’s polemic against the works righteousness of the Pharisees has to do with the whole of the law of God: moral as well as ceremonial: “The apostle [Paul],” he wrote, “does not mean only works of the ceremonial law, when he excludes works of the law in justification, but also the moral law, and all works of obedience, virtue, and righteousness whatsoever” (38), and he marshals a series of eleven arguments against this errant teaching (38-58).<sup>[71]</sup>

**First**, there are times when Paul speaks of the “works of the law,” but there other occasions where he uses the more general term “works” (Romans 4:6; 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9), thereby indicating that it is works in general that deserve a reward that the apostle is opposing in his conflict with the Pharisees.

**Second**, in Romans 3:9-20, the apostle quotes from a number of Old Testament verses, asserting that both Jews and Greeks are guilty of breaches of the moral law; he concludes that “therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His [God’s] sight.” Here it is not the ceremonial law, but the moral law which is “the deeds of the law [by which] no flesh will be justified.”

**Third**, in Romans 2:12, Paul writes “for as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.” That it is the moral law which the apostle speaks of is evident from verses 14-15, where he goes on to say “for when Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law which show the work of the law written in their hearts.” It is the moral law, not the ceremonial law, that is written in the hearts of all men; the moral law is that which the Gentiles have “by nature.” Further, later in the same chapter Paul condemns the Jew who would consider himself to be “an instructor of

the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law” (verse 20), while at the same time he commits adultery, idolatry, and sacrilege (verses 21-23), all of which are violations of the moral law.

**Fourth**, in Romans 3:20, in his condemnation of works righteousness, Paul says that “by the law is the knowledge of sin.” And the law by which a person comes to the knowledge of sin is the moral law, not the ceremonial law. He affirms this in Romans 7:7, where he rehearses events in his own life saying “I had not known sin, but by the law,” and then goes on to say “for I had not known lust, except the law had said, ‘you shall not covet.’” The forbidding of coveting mentioned here is a clear reference to the tenth commandment of the moral law.

**Fifth**, in Romans 4:13-16, the apostle writes that “the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.” This is another clear reference to the moral law, for in the seventh chapter of Romans, Paul tells us that it is the moral law that “brings about wrath”; “But sin, that it might appear sin,” he states, “was producing death in me through what is good [i.e., the moral law], so that sin through the [tenth] commandment might become exceedingly sinful” (7:13).

**Sixth**, in Romans 3:26-28 (and elsewhere) when Paul says that man cannot be justified by works of the law, he is ruling out all of man’s virtue, goodness, or excellence. The Jews of that day were boasting, not only of their adherence to the ceremonial law, but of their moral righteousness as well. This is evident in Luke 18, where the Pharisee that Jesus speaks of is maintaining his moral uprightness with regard to his keeping of the moral law. He thanks God that he is not an extortioner and an adulterer, and he boasts about his tithing and fasting, all of which have to do with the moral law of God (verses 11-12).

**Seventh**, in Galatians 3:10, where the apostle says: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse,” and then goes on to quote Deuteronomy 27:26, “for it is written ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,’” it is obvious that he is speaking of the works of the law with reference to the whole law, not just the ceremonial law. In verse 13 of the same chapter, he writes: “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us,” and again cites a passage from Deuteronomy (21:23) to make his point: “for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.’” This is

another reference to the whole law, not just the ceremonial law.

**Eighth**, in passages such as Romans 9:31-32; 10:3; and Luke 18:9, we read of persons trusting in their own righteousness for their salvation. Even if this were merely a reference to the ceremonial law (which it is not), it would still be a form of legalism which is condemned by Scripture. No matter what the righteousness of one's own doing refers to, it is forbidden by Paul in Titus 3:5 ("Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His [God's] mercy He saved us"), and comes under the condemnation of God.

**Ninth**, in Titus 3:3-7, when the apostle says that we cannot be justified "by works of righteousness which we have done," it is clear that he does not mean only works of the ceremonial law, because he lists some of these "works" in verse 3: "various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another," which are violations of the moral law. Then too, when Paul mentions "works of righteousness which we have done," he shows that it is all of man's works that are excluded, not just works of the ceremonial law. Further, the works of the ceremonial law were never intended to be done as works of righteousness (even under the Old Covenant administration), they were only falsely supposed to be so by the Jews. And now under the New Covenant era, when the ceremonial law has been abrogated by the cross work of Christ, there cannot possibly be any righteousness in them at all. No, says the apostle, one is not justified by any goodness or righteousness of his own, but only "according to His [God's] mercy ... and by His grace" is anyone justified (verses 5, 7).

**Tenth**, when the apostle condemns any form of works righteousness, he must refer to one's sincere obedience, because perfect obedience is not possible since the Fall of man. But a sincere obedience would necessitate an obedience to any kind of law, moral as well as ceremonial. And it is clear that the Old Testament saints were not justified by any works of the ceremonial law, when Paul writes: "Even David describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin'" (Romans 4:4-6). Justification by any kind of works is denied by David in the 32nd Psalm.

**Eleventh**, in Romans 10:5-6, Paul contrasts two ways of justification: one by works of the law and the other by faith in Christ: "For Moses writes about the

righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.' But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way ..." The way of righteousness by the law, "the man who does these things shall live by them" cannot possibly only refer to the ceremonial law, because the ceremonial law was never given that a man "shall live by them." This was true only of the moral law, which was given as a way of life for God's people.

Having done away with any idea that the works of the law that Paul speaks of have to do with the ceremonial law, Edwards goes on to show the impossibility of justification by any form of "sincere obedience," while at the same time, honoring and exalting the perfect righteousness of Christ (58-86). "To suppose that we are justified by our own sincere obedience, or anything of our own virtue or goodness, derogates from gospel grace...For it is the declared design of God in the gospel to exalt the freedom and riches of His grace, in that method of justifying sinners" (58). To contend, as do the Arminians, that one's sincere obedience plays a role in justification, derogates from God's glory, because in the biblical plan of justification, God's grace is freely given in the person and work of Christ. Any role that sincere obedience would play in justification would detract from the graciousness of God. Such teaching also denies that Christ's perfect obedience is necessary for one to stand in the presence of a holy God; therefore, it derogates the role of Christ as Mediator. "Imperfect righteousness cannot answer the law of God we are under .... Every law requires perfect obedience to itself, and every rule whatsoever requires perfect conformity to itself" (69).

As noted in chapter 2, Edwards, along with the Westminster divines and Reformed orthodoxy in general, contended that double imputation occurred in the cross work of Jesus Christ. In what is sometimes referred to as His "passive obedience," not only did Christ atone for the sins of His elect people in His sacrificial death, but in His "active obedience," He first lived a perfectly obedient life, fulfilling the covenant of works in behalf of the elect (116). It is not enough that the elect be forgiven of their sins; they must also have a positive righteousness imputed to them. Then they may be declared righteous.

Christ, by His suffering the penalty [for sin], and so making atonement for us [the elect], only removes the guilt of our sins, and so sets us in the same state

in which Adam was in the first moment of creation; and it is no more fitting that we should obtain eternal life only on that account than Adam should have the reward of eternal life, or a confirmed and unalterable state of happiness, in the first moments of his existence without any obedience at all. Adam was not to have the reward merely on account of his being innocent; if so, he would have had it fixed upon him as soon as he was created, for he was as innocent then as he could be. But he was to have the reward on account of his activeness in obedience – not on account merely of his not having done ill, but on account of his doing well .... So on the same account we do not have eternal life merely because we are devoid of guilt, which we are by the atonement of Christ, but because of Christ’s activeness in obedience and doing well. Christ is our second federal head, and is called the second Adam...because He acted that part for us which the first Adam should have done (65).<sup>[72]</sup>

It is due to both the active and passive obedience of Christ that the believer can be declared righteous in the sight of God (74-77). Through faith, “believers, as soon as they believe are admitted to partake with Christ in His justification.” They are “legally one” in union with Christ (71, 68).

In chapter 4, “*The Place of Obedience*” (87-97), Edwards goes to some length to show that the “evangelical obedience” of the believer does not contribute anything to his justification. The believer’s “good works” are non-meritorious. They are “expressions of [saving] faith” (87, 97). Whereas justification takes place “by the first act of faith,” the “perseverance” of the saints is a continuance of the same saving faith; it is inseparably “connected with justification.” As Jesus taught in John 15, just as the branch must abide in the vine in order to receive its life-giving sap, so also the believer must abide in Christ to receive continual spiritual nourishment from Him (88-89).

So although the sinner is actually and finally justified on the first acts of faith, yet the perseverance of faith even then comes into consideration as one thing on which the fitness of acceptance to life depends. God, in the act of justification which is passed on a sinner’s first believing, has respect to the perseverance, as being virtually contained in that first act of faith .... God has respect to the believer’s continuance in faith, and he is justified by that, as though it already were, because by divine establishment it shall follow; and being by divine constitution connected with that first faith, as much as if it

were a property in it, it is then considered as such, and so justification is not suspended .... And that it is so, that God in the act of final justification which He passes at the sinner's conversion has respect to perseverance in faith and future acts of faith, as being virtually implied in the first act, is further manifest by this: that in a sinner's justification, at his conversion, there is virtually contained forgiveness as to eternal and deserved punishment not only of all past sins, but also of all future infirmities and acts of sin that the sinner shall be guilty of. And this is because that first justification is decisive and final. And yet pardon, in the order of nature, properly follows the crime, and also follows those acts of repentance and faith that respect the crime pardoned, as is manifest from both reason [i.e., it is rational] and Scripture (89-90).

In other words, as Jesus taught in Matthew 10:22 ("he who endures to the end will be saved"), even though the perseverance of the saint is a condition of salvation, a genuine Christian will surely persevere because God will preserve him to the end so that his salvation will be certain. When the elect sinner first believes, with a saving faith, God justifies him, and this guarantees that he will endure to the end. The saint is duty bound to persevere, but by God's grace he will most certainly do so. It is fit and orderly in God's purpose for it to be this way. Edwards' view here is similar to that of the Westminster Confession of Faith (17:1-2):

*They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally, nor finally, fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved .... This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof.*

According to the Puritan sage, every act of repentance, faith, and obedience is a faithful act which flows from and is contained in the first act of faith wherein the believing sinner was justified. When Jesus Christ enjoins believers to pray for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 6:12), which are

prayers of those whose sins have already been forgiven in their justification, He is doing so because the later acts of repentance flow from the first act of faith and repentance. This is perhaps most evident in the life of Abraham. The patriarch was justified in Genesis 12 when he forsook his own country in obedience to God's commandment (Hebrews 11:8). But in Genesis 15:6, we read that when Abraham believed God regarding the promise that he would have his own son, "Abraham believed in the LORD, and He [God] accounted it to him as righteousness." According to the apostle Paul in Romans 4 and Galatians 3, this was another act of the same justifying faith that Abraham exhibited in Genesis 12. The act of faith in Genesis 15, even though it was long after the patriarch's first act of faith, was an act of faith which flowed from that first act. This is precisely what the apostle Paul teaches in Romans 1:17 ("For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'"): "That God in justification has respect not only to the first act of faith, but also to future persevering acts" as well (96-97).

According to Jonathan Edwards, "persevering in holiness of life is implied in justifying faith," because a genuine "justifying faith" is necessarily a "persevering faith." Because God is a holy God, who delights in holiness and hates sin, "therefore He would appoint no way of justification but such as tended to promote holiness."<sup>[73]</sup> It is not unusual, then, to contend that "perseverance in faith is thus necessary to salvation not merely as a *sine qua non*, or as an universal concomitant of it, but by reason of such an influence and dependence." This being so, "a truly Christian walk and the acts of an evangelical, childlike, believing obedience are concerned in the affair of our justification, and seem to be sometimes so spoken of in Scripture, that is, as an expression of a persevering faith in the Son of God, the only Savior." But we must understand that "the obedience of a Christian, so far as it is truly evangelical and performed with the Spirit of the Son sent forth into the heart, has all relation to Christ, the Mediator, and is but an expression of the soul's union with Christ" in saving faith. And "every such act of obedience ... is only a new, effective act of reception of Christ, and adherence to the glorious Savior" (95-96).

In chapter 5, we come to "*Objections Answered*," wherein the New England divine deals with six particular objections which may be raised regarding his doctrine of justification by faith alone (98-144).



**Objection 1** concerns itself with the numerous passages of Scripture, such as Romans 2:7 (“To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life”), wherein justification is said to hinge on faithfulness to the covenant promises of God. Edwards’ response is that there is an inextricable relationship between saving faith and evangelical obedience. Perseverance is a condition of salvation, which in no way undermines justification by faith alone. Every act of obedience is included in the believer’s first act of faith in justification. It is “fit” that good works evidence saving faith, while at the same time, they do not merit justification.

**Objection 2** states that if one’s own obedience is necessary to prepare him for heaven, then it would appear that this obedience is what recommends him to heaven. But this is not the case, says Edwards. The fact that justified sinners are duty-bound to perform good works in order that they may partake of heavenly bliss, does not mean that God accepts these sinners as righteous because of the good works. Necessary good works are not meritorious good works.

**Objection 3** maintains that some Scripture passages, such as Matthew 10:42 (“And whoever gives one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward”), expressly speak of eternal blessings being bestowed as rewards for the good deeds of the saints. First, argues Edwards, receiving a reward for one’s good deeds is a different thing than being justified for such good deeds, because it is a result of one’s justification that he is able to receive eternal rewards. The acceptableness of good works as a reward in this case, is not antecedent to justification, but follows it. God accepts the good deeds and rewards them because the recipient is already in a justified state in union with Jesus Christ. The spiritual loveliness of elect sinners is only due to their relationship with the Son of God; apart from this, even their best duties are defiled in sin. So, although it is true that the saints are rewarded for their good works, it is for Christ’s sake alone that this is so. As Edwards explained elsewhere:

*That the holiness and good works of the saints are rewardable is what is merited and purchased by the righteousness of Christ. His righteousness not only purchased the holiness itself but also purchased that it should be rewardable. It is from Christ’s righteousness that their holiness derives its value that it has in the eyes of God.*<sup>[74]</sup>

Calvin expressed the same view as follows:

*Believers are, after their call, approved of God also in respect of works .... For the Lord cannot fail to love and embrace the good things that He works in them through His Spirit. But we must always remember that God “accepts” believers by reason of works only because He is their source and graciously, by way of adding to His liberality, deigns also to show “acceptance” toward the good works He has Himself bestowed.*<sup>[75]</sup>

But Edwards has more to say on this. We have already seen that the Christian has the righteousness of Christ imputed to him in justification; he also has an inherent, imparted, or infused righteousness unto sanctification. And both of these are as a result of his union with Christ. This being so, the inherent righteousness of the believer is seen as lovely in the eyes of God, even though only as a secondary or derivative loveliness.

Therefore, the good works of the believer are rewardable as God sees them “in Christ.” In fact, the redeemed sinner “in Christ” is decidedly more lovely due to his union with Christ than he would even be if he were free from sin on his own. God, then, will reward the paltry works of the believer, “in Christ,” with a reward even more glorious than He would have rewarded Adam’s obedience if he had persevered in holiness. And the reward will be due to the fact that God looks upon the believer’s good works as done “in Christ.” God “looks on these glorious benefits as a meet testimony of His regard for the value which their persons have in His sight. But He sets this value upon their persons purely for Christ’s sake. They are such jewels, and have such preciousness in His eyes, only because they are beheld in Christ” (113).

Further, the reward bestowed upon the believer for his good works in this secondary or derivative sense, will be in different respects, amounts, and ways. Christ purchased perfect blessedness for each and everyone of the elect. At the same time, however, He purchased various degrees of perfect blessedness for them. In this sense, the saints are to be seen “as so many vessels of different sizes, cast into a sea of happiness, where every vessel is full; this Christ purchased for all. But after all, it is left to God’s sovereign pleasure to determine the largeness of the vessel.” And God will give “higher degrees of glory as reward for higher degrees of holiness and good works

because it pleases Him; and yet all the happiness of each saint is indeed the fruit of the purchase of Christ's obedience" (116-117).

**Objection 4** has to do with those passages that seem to teach that a person is granted a right to eternal life because of his "moral" rather than a "natural" fitness. Matthew 10:37-39 are adduced as such an example: "He who loves father or mother more than Me [Christ] is not worthy of Me. And He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And He who does not take up His cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." But, maintains Edwards, these words do not imply that if a man loves Christ above family members he would be considered as worthy. They only imply that if a man does not so love Christ he will be considered as unworthy of Christ's kingdom. A person who believes in Christ is not rewarded for his moral fitness, but those who profess faith in Christ with a spurious profession are thrust out of His kingdom for the moral unfitness of their disbelief. Salvation is promised to saving faith in the promise of the gospel, but damnation is threatened to those who do not so believe (John 3:18-19). The words spoken by Christ in Matthew 10:37-39, are not intended to show the worthiness of loving Christ above one's family; rather, they are designed to make the hearers aware of their unworthiness when they make a profession of faith in Christ as their Lord and Savior, and yet think less of Him than they do their own family.

**Objection 5** asks the question, "If justification is by faith alone, why is repentance spoken of in Scripture as a condition of salvation?" The problem here, avers Edwards, is that such objectors are separating faith and repentance, making them into two distinct conditions. We must distinguish between faith and repentance, but we must never separate them. Jesus makes this very clear in Mark 1:15, where we read: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." So does Paul in Acts 19:4: "Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.'" Saving faith and repentance go together, and both are necessary for conversion. "There is something in faith, or closing with Christ, that respects sin, and that is evangelical repentance. That repentance which in Scripture is called 'repentance for the remission of sins' is that very principle or operation of the mind itself called faith, so far as it is conversant about sin" (124).

In actuality, the Greek word used in the New Testament for repentance is *metanoia*, which means “a change of mind.” Genuine repentance involves a change of mind regarding one’s spiritual state; the penitent sinner turns away from his sin, confessing it to God, and then turns to Christ for his salvation. As Paul preached to Agrippa: “Therefore, king Agrippa ... I declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent [and] turn to God” (Acts 26:19-20). In repentance, “our minds must be changed so that we may believe, and so may be justified” (124).

In Scripture, repentance is spoken of as pardon from sin, and is in this sense not distinct from “conversion” itself. This is evident in a number of New Testament passages: Matthew 9:13; Luke 13:3; 15:7, 10; 16:30; Acts 11:18; 17:30, and 2 Peter 3:9. It is “plain that in these and other places, ‘repentance’ means ‘conversion’” (123).

Finally, there is **Objection 6**, which has to do with James 2:14-26. Here it is alleged that James is teaching justification by faith plus works: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? .... You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (verses 21, 24). But if this were so, said the Puritan Sage, then the Bible would contradict itself (which is impossible), because Paul teaches that justification is by faith alone, without works of the law (Romans 3:28). And there “is no one doctrine in the whole Bible more fully asserted, explained, and urged than the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any of our own righteousness” (136).

How then do we reconcile James and Paul? The answer is found in the fact that James and Paul are using the word “justification” in different senses. Paul uses the term with regard to “declared” justification, and James uses it with regard to “manifestative” or “demonstrative” justification. When James uses the word justification “it is that works are here spoken of as justifying as evidence” of saving faith. “It is by works that our case appears to be good; but by faith our case not only appears to be good, but becomes good, because thereby we are united to Christ” (137). This is evidenced in James 2:18, where the apostle writes: “Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” A similar concept is found in Proverbs 20:11: “Even a child is known by his deeds, by whether what he does is pure

and right.”

However, if someone denies that James and Paul are using the word justification in different senses, the two apostolic teachings can still be reconciled. James 2:26 asserts that “faith without works is dead.” So if there are no works, then there is no saving faith, because a justifying faith is a faith that will necessarily perform good works. In this sense, preached Edwards:

Man’s salvation is not only indissolubly connected with obedience, and damnation with the want of it, in those who have opportunity for it, but depends upon it in many respects. It is the way to salvation, and the necessary preparation for it; eternal blessings are bestowed in reward for it, and our justification in our own consciences and at the day of judgment depends on it as the proper evidence of our acceptable state, and that even in accepting us as entitled to life in our justification . . . God has respect to this obedience as that on which the fitness of such an act of justification depends, so that our salvation as truly depends upon it as if we were justified for the moral excellence of it. And besides all this, the degree of our happiness to all eternity is suspended on and determined by the degree of our obedience. So this gospel-scheme of justification is as far from encouraging licentiousness, and contains as much to encourage and excite to strict and universal obedience, and the utmost possible eminence of holiness, as any scheme that can be devised, and, indeed, unspeakably more (144).

But, as noted, these good works, which are essential, are works of “necessity,” not works of “merit.” They are non-causative, non-justifying works.

Furthermore, all good works, to be considered good works in the biblical sense of the term, must be done with the purpose in mind of glorifying God. As John Piper explained, with Edwards, God is “absolutely indispensable in the definition of true virtue.” If God is not “at the center of all moral considerations,” then there is “no virtue.” “Edwards could not conceive of calling any act truly virtuous that did not have in it a supreme regard to God.”<sup>[76]</sup> Michael McClymond concurred: “Edwards insisted that genuine morality requires genuine religion [i.e., Christianity], and that the love of humanity is specious apart from the love of God.”<sup>[77]</sup>

A “truly virtuous mind,” wrote Edwards, “being as it were under the sovereign dominion of love to God, does above all things seek the glory of

God, and makes this his supreme, governing, and ultimate end” in all that he does. Even the good works done in love that a Christian exercises toward his fellow man, are done out of a love which is focused on glorifying God. “From love to God springs love to man, as says the apostle (1 John 5:1).” No “affection whatsoever to any creature, or any system of created beings, which is not dependent on, or subordinate to a propensity or union of heart to God, the Supreme and Infinite Being, can be of the nature of true virtue.” If there could be a “cause determining a person to benevolence towards the whole world of mankind, or even all created sensible natures throughout the whole universe, exclusive of ... love to God ... it cannot be of the nature of true virtue.”<sup>[78]</sup>

Edwards’ view on the relationship between saving faith and good works is the same as is taught by the Westminster Confession of Faith (16:2; 14:2): “These good works, done in obedience to God’s commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith,” which are done to “glorify God.” A converted person is one who, not only “believes to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word [of God],” but he is also one who is found “yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come.”

God calls us, said the New England divine, to a “universal obedience,” i.e., an obedience that seeks to keep God’s commandments in every area of life, not just some parts of it. Such obedience “is the proper evidence of our acceptable state” with God. Those who are unwilling “to live universally in obedience to God’s commands, it is not best that they should ... treat themselves as if they were godly.”<sup>[79]</sup>

The need for the converted man to continue to “press into the kingdom” of God was a constant focus of the Puritan divine. In a sermon on Galatians 5:6, he preached:

*There is no room left for anyone to say that they have faith which justifies and that they need take no care about works and so to give themselves the liberty in sinning because they are not under the law but under grace; for though it is only faith that justifies yet there is no faith that justifies but a working faith; so that it is impossible for any person should be saved without works as if they were justified upon the account of their works. It is as impossible that men should be saved*

*without an evangelical, and sincere obedience under the second covenant [or grace] as it was that they should be saved without a perfect obedience under the first covenant [of works] [albeit for a different reason].*<sup>[80]</sup>

And in a sermon on Philippians 3:17, Edwards used the apostle Paul as the prime example of this kind of “pressing”:

*The apostle [Paul] did not only thus earnestly seek salvation before his conversion and hope, but afterwards [as well]. What he says in the third [chapter] of Philippians of his suffering the loss of all things, that he might be found in Christ, and its being the one thing that he did to seek salvation; and also what he says of his so running as not uncertainly, but as resolving to win the prize of salvation, and keeping under his body that he might not be a castaway; was so long after his conversion and after he had received hope of his good estate.*

*If being already converted excuses a man from seeking salvation any more, or makes it reasonable that he should leave off his earnest care and labor for it, certainly the apostle might have been excused, when he had not only already attained true grace, but such eminent degrees of it. To see one of the most eminent saints that ever lived, if not the most eminent of all, so exceedingly engaged in seeking his own salvation – it ought for ever to put to shame those that are a thousand degrees below him, and are but mere infants to him, if they have any grace at all; that yet excuse themselves from using any violence after the kingdom of heaven now, because they have attained already, easing themselves of the burden of going on earnestly to seek salvation with this, that they have got through the work, they have got hope.*

*The apostle, as eminent as he was, did not say within himself, “I am converted, and so am sure of salvation. Christ has promised it to me; what need I care any further about obtaining salvation? Yea, I am not only converted, but I have obtained great degrees of grace.”...The apostle knew that though he was converted, yet there remained a great work that he must do, in order to his [final] salvation. There was a narrow way to eternal glory, that he must pass through and never could come to the crown of glory any other way. He knew that it was absolutely necessary for him earnestly to seek salvation still; he knew*

*that there was no going to heaven in a lazy way.*

*And therefore he did not seek salvation the less earnestly, for his having hope, yea, and assurance, but a great deal more. We nowhere read so much of his earnestness and violence for the kingdom of heaven before he was converted as we do afterwards ....*

*Most certainly if the apostle was in the right way of acting, we in this place are generally in the wrong. For nothing is more apparent than that it is not thus with the generality of professors but that it is a common thing after they think they are safe, to be abundantly less diligent and earnest in religion than before.<sup>[81]</sup>*

Chapter 6, “*The Importance of the Doctrine*” (145-154) concludes the sermon on Romans 4:5. There are many in the church, said Edwards, who do not seem to think that the controversy over the doctrine of *sola fide* is of great importance. Scripture, however, “treats this doctrine as a doctrine of very great importance” (146). In this final chapter, Edwards points out that since the Fall, all men are in need of a Savior. He agreed with the Westminster Confession of Faith (1:1) that:

*Although the light of nature and the works of creation and providence do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times, and in divers manners, to reveal Himself, and to declare that His will unto His church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing: which makes the Holy Scripture to be most necessary.*

In Edwards own words:

*This is the main thing for which fallen men stood in need of divine revelation, to teach us how we who have sinned may come to be again accepted of God, or, which is the same thing, how the sinner may be justified. Something beyond the light of nature is necessary for salvation chiefly on this account. Mere natural reason afforded no means by which we could come to the knowledge of this, it depending*



*on the sovereign pleasure of the Being whom we had offended by sin. This seems to be the great drift of that revelation which God has given, and of all the mysteries it reveals, all those great doctrines that are peculiarly doctrines of revelation, and above the light of nature. It seems to have been very much on this account that it was necessary that the doctrine of the Trinity itself should be revealed to us, that by a discovery of the concern of the several divine persons in the great affair of our salvation we might better understand and see how all our dependence in this affair is on God, and our sufficiency all in Him and not in ourselves .... What is the gospel but the glad tidings of a new way of acceptance with God unto life, a way wherein sinners may come to be free from the guilt of sin and obtain a title to eternal life? And if, when this way is revealed, it is rejected, and another man's devising is put in its place, without doubt it must be an error of great importance, and the apostle [Paul] might well say it was "another gospel" (149-150).*

How important is this doctrine? It is a doctrine dealing with matters of eternal consequence. The Arminian doctrine of justification, wherein man's good works precede (rather than following) justification, according to Paul (Galatians 1:6-9), is another gospel; it is a fatal teaching. The view espoused by the Puritan Sage is a gospel of grace, leading to everlasting life. The Arminian view is a legal gospel, which is no gospel at all, and it leads to everlasting death.

All Christians, then, "should strive after an increase of knowledge, and none should content themselves without some clear and distinct understanding in this point. But we should believe in general, according to the clear and abundant revelations of God's Word, that it is none of our own excellence, virtue, or righteousness that is the ground of our being received from a state of condemnation into a state of acceptance in God's sight, but only Jesus Christ and His righteousness and worthiness received by faith. This I think to be of great importance (145).

**Soli Deo Gloria**

## FOOTNOTES:

- [1] This article was first published in *The New Southern Presbyterian Review*, edited by Wayne Rogers (Spring 2005).
- [2] Robert L. Reymond, *The Reformation's Conflict With Rome: Why It Must Continue* (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2001), 18-19.
- [3] John H. Gerstner, "A Primer on Justification," *Primitive Theology: The Collected Primers of John H. Gerstner*, collected and edited by Don Kistler (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), 263.
- [4] Gerstner, "A Primer on Justification," 264-290. The present author follows Dr. Gerstner's analysis of the five views cited.
- [5] J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923, 1985).
- [6] R. V. Schnucker, "Neo-orthodoxy," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 754-756, 827.
- [7] For more on this deviant theology, see Gordon H. Clark, *Karl Barth's Theological Method* (The Trinity Foundation, 1997).
- [8] See Richard E. Bacon, *Justifying Faith: What is Faith* (Dallas: Blue Banner Ministries, n.d.), 9-18
- [9] Philip Schaff, editor, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), II:112; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), paragraphs 1989-1995.
- [10] Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, II:112, 115.
- [11] *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (Q. 86).
- [12] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), III:16:1; III:3:19.
- [13] John Calvin, *Commentaries*, Volumes I-XXII (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), Commentary on Ezekiel 18:14-17.
- [14] Jonathan Edwards, *Justification by Faith Alone*, edited by Don Kistler (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 2000). The pagination found in the body of this article is from this book.

- [15] John H. Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Powhatan, Virginia: Berea Publications; Orlando: Ligonier Ministries, 1991-1993), I:160.
- [16] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1834, 1984), I:cxxi. Edwards own words were: “As to my subscribing to the substance of the Westminster Confession, there would be no difficulty.”
- [17] Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 51.
- [18] Ian H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 468.
- [19] Samuel T. Logan, Jr., “*The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 46 (1984), 26-30.
- [20] See Kenneth G. Talbot and W. Gary Crampton, *Calvinism, Hyper-Calvinism, and Arminianism* (Draper, Virginia: The Apologetics Group, 2006); David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1971); and Curt Daniel, *Biblical Calvinism* (Springfield, Illinois: Reformed Bible Church, n.d.).
- [21] See, for example, John Owen, *A Display of Arminianism* (Edmonton, Canada: Still Water Revival Books, 1989).
- [22] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 4, edited by C. C. Goen, *The Great Awakening* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1972), 4, 10.
- [23] Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 187, 202.
- [24] Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 71n; Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 21, edited by Sang Hyun Lee, *Writings in the Trinity, Grace, and Faith* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003), 62.
- [25] Edwards, Works, 21:279.

- [26] Logan, “*The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*,” 27.
- [27] Gordon H. Clark, *What Do Presbyterians Believe?* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1956, 1965), 163.
- [28] Jonathan Edwards, *Pressing Into the Kingdom*, edited by Don Kistler (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1998), 225.
- [29] Logan, “*The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*,” 29.
- [30] Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, III:224.
- [31] Thomas Schafer, “*Jonathan Edwards and Justification by Faith*,” *Church History*, XX (December 1951), 55-67.
- [32] Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 41.
- [33] Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic View of Salvation*, 132.
- [34] Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote that the classical Protestant view of the inseparable relationship between justification and sanctification is that in justification God “declares them [justified sinners] to be just. That is imputed righteousness. But in sanctification, we are discussing imparted righteousness” (*God the Holy Spirit* [Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1997], 195).
- [35] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 14, edited by Kenneth P. Minkema, *Sermons and Discourses: 1723-1729* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 340-341.
- [36] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 13, edited by Thomas A. Schafer, The “*Miscellanies*,” a-500 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), Miscellany 483.
- [37] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 18, edited by Ava Chamberlain, The “*Miscellanies*,” 501-832 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), Miscellany 620.
- [38] Edwards, *Pressing Into the Kingdom*, 226.
- [39] Carl W. Bogue, *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace* (Cherry Hill, New Jersey: Mack Publishing Company, 1975), 90.
- [40] Edwards, *Works*, II:580.

[41] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 15, edited by Stephen J. Stein, *Notes on Scripture* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998), 242.

[42] Edwards, *Works*, II:12-17.

[43] Bogue, *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace*, 209.

[44] Cited in Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, III:222.

[45] Edwards, *Works*, II:564.

[46] Cited in Bogue, *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace*, 246.

[47] This supra-temporal covenant is usually referred to as the “covenant of redemption.” This is also Edwards’ terminology (*Works*, II:950).

[48] In *Miscellany* ff., Edwards wrote that “by virtue of the believer’s union with Christ, he does really possess all things .... I mean that God three in one, all that He is, and all that He has, and all that He does, all that He has made or done ... are as much the Christian’s as the money in his pocket, the clothes he wears, or the house he dwells in, or the victuals he eats; yea, more properly his, more advantageously ... it is all his.”

[49] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 20, edited by Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The “Miscellanies,”* 833-1152 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2002), *Miscellany* 1091.

[50] According to Jonathan Edwards, Old Testament elect sinners were saved by believing in Christ just as their New Testament counterparts. These Old Testament saints understood that the “Angel of the Lord,” the second Person of the Trinity, was their divine Mediator, and it was He who would take away their sins; Edwards, *Works*, 21:372ff.

[51] Edwards, *Miscellany* 786.

[52] Edwards, *Miscellany* 1091.

[53] Edwards, *Works*, I:220.

[54] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 3, edited by Clyde A. Holbrook, *Original Sin* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1970), 291, 294.

[55] Edwards, *Works*, II:599.

[56] Robert W. Jenson, *America's Theologian* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 58.

[57] John Murray aptly commented that although there has always been a dispute over the idea of “conditional covenant” in Calvinistic circles, “no theologian within the Reformed camp took the position that, in the saving provisions of which the covenant of grace is the administration, the thought of condition is to be completely eliminated .... None held that the covenant relation obtained or that its grace could be enjoyed apart from those responses on the part of the person in covenant fellowship with God.” Murray went on to say that the condition of the covenant must always be understood in an “instrumental” sense, never in a meritorious “causal” sense; (John Murray, *Collected Writings of John Murray* [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982], IV:229-230, 233).

[58] Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* 17:19.

[59] John Calvin, *Sermons on Deuteronomy* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), Sermon on Deuteronomy 7:11-15; 27:11-15. For more on Calvin and his doctrine of the covenant, see Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001).

[60] Edwards, *Works*, II:557.

[61] Jonathan Edwards, sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:29-31, *To All the Saints of God*, edited by Don Kistler (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 2003), 96-117.

[62] Cited in Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 95.

[63] Edwards, *Works* 18:13.

[64] Edwards, *Miscellany* 315.

[65] Edwards, *Miscellany* 474.

[66] Logan, “*The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*,” 33.

[67] John H. Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist* (Morgan, Pennsylvania: Soli Deo Gloria, 1995), 142.

[68] See Jonathan Edwards, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 9, edited by John F. Wilson, *A History of the Work of Redemption* (New Haven,

Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989). See also Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal*, 94ff.; and Logan, “The Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Jonathan Edwards,” 48-52.

[69] Edwards, *Miscellany* 647.

[70] See J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London, S.P.C.K., 1990); E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); and N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1997).

[71] Edwards arguments on this subject will be rehearsed in some detail due to the negative influence that the false teaching of the NPP is having on the early 21st century church.

[72] Edwards declared that, although Christ was not under the precise law that was given to Adam, in that God did not forbid Him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in actuality, “the positive precepts which Christ was to obey” were greater than those which Adam was under in that, not only did Christ have to obey the entirety of God’s commandments, but He also had to “lay down His life, which was the principal act of obedience, and which, above all others, is concerned in our justification” (78-79).

[73] Edwards, *Works*, 21:360, 365.

[74] Edwards, *Miscellany* 671.

[75] Calvin, *Institutes* III:17:5.

[76] John Piper, *God’s Passion For His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1998), 109.

[77] Michael J. McClymond, *Encounters With God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 52.

[78] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 8, edited by Paul Ramsey, *Ethical Writings* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1989), 559, 142, 556-557, 603.

[79] Edwards, *Miscellanies* 790, 462.

[80] Cited in Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, III:225-226.

[[81](#)] Cited in Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards: Evangelist*, 83-84.