

## The Reign of Grace

### Chapter 6

By [Abraham Booth](#)

THE doctrine of justification makes a very distinguished figure in that religion which is from above, and is a capital article of that *faith which was once delivered to the saints*. Far from being a merely speculative point, it spreads its influence through the whole body of divinity, runs through all Christian experience, and operates in every part of practical godliness. Such is its grand importance, that a mistake about it has a malignant efficacy, and is attended with a long train of dangerous consequences. Nor can this appear strange, when it is considered, that this doctrine of justification is no other than the way of a *sinner's acceptance with God*. Being of such peculiar moment, it is inseparably connected with many other evangelical truths, the harmony and beauty of which we cannot behold, while this is misunderstood. Till this appears in its glory, they will be involved in darkness. It is, if any thing may be so called, a *fundamental* article; and certainly requires our most serious consideration.\*

\*Let it be carefully observed by the reader, that though I here treat upon justification as distinct from pardon, yet I am fully persuaded that they are blessings which cannot be separated. For he who is also pardoned is justified, and he who is justified is also pardoned. It is readily allowed that there is, in various respects, a great resemblance between the two blessings. They are both gifts of grace; both vouchsafed to the same person, at the same time; and both are communicated through the mediation of Christ. Notwithstanding which agreement, the *signification* of the terms, and the *nature* of the blessings intended by them are so far different as to lay a sufficient foundation for distinguishing between the one and the other. I would just hint at a few things in confirmation of this. When a Parson is pardoned, he is considered as a *transgressor*; but when he is justified, he is considered as *righteous*. A criminal when pardoned, is freed from *obligation to suffer death* for his crimes; but he that is justified is declared *worthy of life*, as an innocent person. *Wisdom* is said to be justified; *Christ* is said to be justified; nay, *God* himself is said to be justified. Matt. xi. 19. 1 Tim. iii. 16. Luke vii. 29. Rom. iii. 4. But neither God, nor Christ, nor Wisdom, is ever said to be Pardoned; nor indeed is it possible, in any sense, that they should be forgiven. Though we may, therefore, with the Scripture affirm that they are *justified*, we cannot without absurdity, or blasphemy, say they are *pardoned*. This one consideration, I humbly conceive, is an irrefragable proof, that there is a real, an important difference between justification and pardon. To which I may add, Paul treats upon them as distinct blessings, in Acts 13:38, 39.

*How shall sinful man be just with God?* is a question of the most interesting nature to every child of Adam. A question which, notwithstanding its infinite importance, could never have been resolved by all the reason of men, nor by all the penetration of angels, if the Lord of heaven and earth had not exercised and manifested reigning grace, toward his disobedient and rebellious creatures. But, with the Bible in his hand, and the gospel in view, the mere infant in religious knowledge and in Christian experience is at no loss for an answer; for *the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein*. Nay, such is the pleasure of God, that he frequently reveals this truth in its glory, to those who are esteemed fools by the haughty sons of science, that no flesh might have the least ground of boasting.

*Justification* is a forensic term, and signifies *the declaring, or the pronouncing a person righteous according to law*. Justification is not the *making* a person righteous, by a real, inherent change from sin to holiness, in which the nature of sanctification consists; but it is the act of a judge, *pronouncing the partly acquitted from all judicial charges*. That the blessing of which we speak does not consist in a real change from sin to holiness, will further appear from considering, *that justification is diametrically opposite to condemnation*. Now the sentence of condemnation is never supposed to make the person criminal on whom it is pronounced. There is no infusion of evil qualities into the culprit's mind; nor is he made guilty, either in the eye of the public, or in his own estimation. But being arraigned as a criminal, and proved guilty of a capital offence, according to the tenor of that law by which he is tried, he is esteemed worthy of death, and condemned accordingly. So, in justification; the subject of it is pronounced righteous in the eye of the law, is deemed worthy to live, and his right to life is declared. Hence that justification of which the Scripture speaks, and is now the subject of our inquiry, is called the *justification of life*. (Rom. 5:18) That the words *justify, justified, and justification* are used by the sacred writers in a forensic sense, and as opposed to the words *condemn, condemned, and condemnation*, is manifest to every attentive reader.\*

\* To this purpose the following texts, instead of many more, may be consulted. Exod. 23:7. Deut. 25:2. I Kings 8:31, .32. Job 13:18; and 27:5. Prov. 17:15. Matt. 11:19, and 12:37. Luke vii. 29. Rom. 2:13; and 3:4; and 8:30. 33, 34.

Justification, in a theological sense, is either *legal* or *evangelical*. If any person could be found that has never broken the divine law, he might be justified by it, in a manner strictly legal. But in this way none of the human race can be justified, or stand acquitted before God *For all have sinned; there is none righteous, no, not one*. The whole world, having transgressed, are guilty before the eternal Judge, and under the sentence of death by his righteous law. On this ground, every offender is excluded from all hope, and abandoned to utter destruction. For as an obedience absolutely perfect is the only righteousness which the law can accept, so punishment inconceivable, or death eternal, is the least penalty it will inflict, on

those that fall under its curse. That justification, therefore, about which the Scriptures principally treat, and which reaches the case of a sinner, is not by a personal, but an imputed righteousness; a *righteousness without the law*. (Rom. 3:21) provided by grace and revealed in the gospel: for which reason, that obedience by which a sinner is justified, and his justification itself, are called *evangelical*. In this affair, there is the most wonderful display of Divine justice, and of boundless grace. *Of Divine justice*, if we regard the meritorious cause and ground on which the justifier proceeds, in absolving the condemned sinner, and in pronouncing him righteous. *Of boundless grace*, if we consider the state and character of those persons to whom the blessing is granted.

Justification may be further distinguished, as being either at the bar of God, and in the court of conscience, or in the sight of the world, and before our fellow-creatures. The former is by mere grace, through faith, and the latter is by works. It is the former of these I shall now consider, which may be thus defined; *Justification is a judicial, but gracious act of God, by which a sinner is absolved from the guilt of sin, is freed from condemnation, and has a right to eternal life adjudged, merely for the sake of our Lord's obedience, which is imputed to him, and received by faith.*

To justify, is evidently a divine prerogative. *It is God that justifieth*. That Sovereign Being against whom we have so greatly offended, whose law we have broken by ten thousand acts of rebellion against him, has, in the way of his own appointment, the sole right of acquitting the guilty, and of pronouncing them righteous. Jehovah, whose judgment is always according to truth, is the Justifier of all that believe in Jesus. Here grace reigns. For the infinitely wise God appoints the way; the righteous and merciful God provides the means, and (let the sacred name be repeatedly mentioned with profound reverence) the God of all grace imputes the righteousness and pronounces the sinner acquitted, in perfect agreement with the demands of his violated law, and the rights of his offended justice.

What is here, as well as in several passages of Scripture, affirmed concerning God, considered essentially, is, in some places of the infallible word, more particularly appropriated personally to the Father. It is manifest, however, that all the three divine Persons are concerned in this grand affair, and each performs a distinct part in this particular, as also in the whole economy of salvation. The eternal Father is represented as appointing the way, and as giving his own Son to perform the conditions of our acceptance before him. The Divine Son, as engaging to sustain the curse, and make the atonement, to fulfil the terms, and provide the righteousness by which we are justified. And the Holy Spirit, as revealing to sinners the perfection, suitableness, and freeness of the Saviour's work; enabling them to receive it, as exhibited in the gospel of sovereign grace, and testifying to their consciences complete justification by it in the court of heaven. Thus the triune God justifies. And may we not ask, in the triumphant language of Paul, *Who shall condemn?* If Jehovah pronounce the sinner

acquitted, who, in earth or hell, shall reverse the sentence? If the Most High entirely justify, who shall bring in a second charge? There is no higher court to which any appeal can be made. There is no superior tribunal at which a complaint can be lodged, against any of those happy souls whose invaluable privilege it is to be justified by the eternal God. When he acquits in judgment, he absolves from all guilt, he accepts as completely righteous; otherwise, a person, immediately after he is justified, must be supposed to stand in need of a further justification, which is highly absurd. This divine sentence shall never be made void, by any unworthiness of him on whom it is passed, nor by the accusations of Satan: but shall stand, firmer than the everlasting hills; unshaken as the throne of God. This sentence (let my reader dwell on the ravishing truth, let his very soul feast on the precious doctrine) this sentence, being *the justification of life*, is pregnant with all the blessings of the everlasting covenant; with all the felicity of the world of glory.

Superlatively great, glorious, and divine, is the blessing of justification. Most ardently to be sought, most thankfully to be enjoyed. Can any one, conscious of possessing it, cease to exult in God his Justifier, who, by being so, is also the God of his praise? Or, who that is convinced of his guilty, condemned condition, can cease to pray and most earnestly to long for it? O, sinner! are you insensible to the worth of this blessing, and supinely negligent about it? Be assured, then, that you are in your sins, and under condemnation. The justification of which we treat is far from you. And what, if you should never be justified? What, if your affronted Sovereign should swear in his wrath, that he will never forgive, never accept you; but that you shall die under the curse already passed upon you? In such a cast, though awful beyond conception, what could you have to object? You have trampled his authority under your feet, and cherished a spirit of the most malignant enmity against him. Your conscience testifies, that you have neither obeyed his law, nor loved his gospel; that you have had little concern whether he was pleased or offended, so that you could but gratify your impetuous lusts, and obtain your sordid purposes. You have, it may be, never considered the death of the Son of God as worthy of your serious notice; though it is the greatest and most wonderful event that ever took place in the universe, and the only thing that can save you from final condemnation. Remember, thoughtless reader! that you have a cause to be tried at the bar of God, and before Jehovah your Judge, which involves your all. An eternal hell to be suffered, or an eternal heaven to be enjoyed, will be the awful or the glorious consequence of being cast or acquitted in judgment. Can you rest, then, can you take any comfort, while entirely ignorant whether the Judge immortal will absolve or condemn you? Consider the ground on which you stand, and the reason of that hope which is in you. A mistake about the way of acceptance with God will be attended with the utmost danger; such danger that, where it is final, inevitable and eternal ruin must be the consequence. May the God of grace and the Father of lights awaken the sleepy consciences of the inconsiderate, into an earnest solicitude about it! and may he direct the steps of such as are anxiously inquiring, *How shall a man be just with God?*

The persons to whom the wonderful favour is granted, are *sinners and ungodly*. For thus runs the Divine declaration, *To him that worketh is the reward of justification, and of eternal life as connected with it, not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth whom, the righteous, the holy! the eminently pious! Nay, verily, but the UNGODLY; his faith, or that in which he believes, is counted unto him for righteousness*. From this remarkable text we learn, that the subjects of justification, considered in themselves, are not only destitute of a perfect righteousness, but have performed no good works at all. Nor are they only described as having performed no good works, but also as being entirely destitute of every heavenly quality and righteous disposition. They are denominated and considered as ungodly when the blessing is bestowed upon them. The mere sinner, the ungodly person, he *that worketh not*, is the subject on whom grace is magnified; toward whom grace reigns in justification. Thus it is written in those sacred canons of our faith and practice which are unalterable.

Before I dismiss this important passage, I will present my reader with the thoughts of Dr. Owen upon it. "To say, he who *worketh not*, is justified through believing, is to say, that his works, whatever they be, have no influence in his justification; nor hath God, in justifying him, any respect unto them. Wherefore he *alone* who worketh not, is the subject of justification, the person to be justified. That is, God considereth no man's works, no man's duties of obedience, in his justification; seeing we are justified *freely, by his grace*. And when God affirmeth expressly, that he justifieth him *who worketh not*, and that *freely, by his grace*, I cannot understand what place our works, or duties of obedience, can have in our justification. For why should we trouble ourselves to invent of what consideration they may be, in our justification before God, when he himself affirms that they are of none at all? Neither are the words capable of any evading interpretation. He that worketh not, is he that worketh not, let men say what they please and distinguish as long as they will. And it is a boldness not to be justified, for any to rise up in opposition to such express divine testimonies; however they may be harnessed with philosophical notions and arguings, which are but the thorns and briars which the word of God will pass through and consume. But the apostle further adds, in the description of the subject of justification, that God *justifieth the ungodly*. This is that expression which hath stirred up so much wrath among many, and on the account whereof some seem to be much displeased with the apostle himself. If any other person dare but say, that God *justifieth the ungodly*, he is presently reflected on as one that, by his doctrine, would overthrow the necessity of godliness, holiness, obedience, or good works. For what need can there be of any of them, if God justifieth the *ungodly*? Howbeit this is a periphrasis of God, that he is he *who justifieth the ungodly*. This is his prerogative and property: as such he will be believed and worshiped, which adds weight and emphasis unto the expression. And we must not forego this testimony of the Holy Ghost, let men be as angry as they please.

But the difference is about the meaning of the words. If so, it may be allowed without mutual offence, though we should mistake their proper sense. Only it must be granted, that God *justifieth the ungodly*. That is, say some, those who *formerly were* ungodly; not such who *continue* ungodly when they are justified. And this is most true. All that are justified, were before ungodly; and all that are justified, are at the same instant made godly. But the question is, whether they are godly or ungodly, *antecedently*, in any moment of time, unto their justification? If they are considered as godly, and are so indeed, then the apostle's words are not true, that God justifieth the ungodly; for the contradictory proposition is true, God justifieth none but the godly. Wherefore, although in and with the justification of a sinner he is made godly; (for he is endowed with that faith which purifieth the heart, and is a vital principle of all obedience, and the conscience is purged from dead works by the blood of Christ,) yet antecedently unto his justification, he is ungodly and considered as ungodly; as one that *worketh not*; as one whose duties and obedience contribute nothing to his justification. As he worketh not, all works are excluded from being the cause; and, as he is ungodly, from being the condition of his justification! (On justification, Chapter 8)

That the mere sinner is the subject of justification, appears from hence. The Spirit of God speaking in the Scripture repeatedly declares, that we are justified by grace. But grace, as already observed, stands in direct opposition to works; all works and worthiness of every kind and of every degree. Whoever therefore is justified by grace, is considered as absolutely unworthy, in that very instant when the glorious blessing is vouchsafed to him. This momentous truth is yet more strongly expressed in the following emphatical words: *Being justified freely by his grace*. (Rom 3:24) *Freely by grace*. If these words do not prove that justification is entirely free, without the least regard to any supposed holy qualities in the sinner, or any good works performed by him, antecedent to his being possessed of the unspeakable favour; I think it is impossible to express any such thing. The most fruitful invention would be at a loss to contrive a form of words better adapted to express the communication of any benefit in a way of mere favour. This text informs us that, in regard to God, justification is an act of pure, unmixed grace; exclusive of all good works, and absolutely independent on any such thing as human worthiness: and, in respect of us, that it is entirely *without cause*; for so the adverb in the original signifies. The word *freely*, does not so immediately respect, either the blessing itself, or the giver, as it does the state and character of the persons to whom the inestimable blessing is granted. It denotes that there is no cause in them, why they should be thus treated by a righteous God. In this sense the original word is used and translated in the following passage: *They hated me without a cause*. (John 15:25. Ps. 35:19. Ps. lxxix. 4 Spetuag.) Was the holy Jesus hated, by the malevolent Jews, without the least cause in himself, certainly: to assert the contrary would be a contradiction of the sacred text, and blasphemy against the Son of God. The person, therefore, that is justified freely by grace, is accepted *without any cause* in himself. Nothing in him, or about him,

is considered by the sovereign Dispenser of every favour, when he bestows the blessing, as preparing or qualifying for it.

Hence it appears, that if we regarded the persons who are justified, and their state, prior to the enjoyment of this immensely glorious privilege; Divine grace appears and reigns in all its glory: there being no conditions, or prerequisites, no terms to be fulfilled, or good qualities to be obtained, either with or without the Divine assistance, in order to a full discharge before the eternal Judge.

Justification is a blessing of pure grace, as well as transcendently excellent. So the true believer esteems it, and as such rejoices in it. In this, as in every other part of his salvation, he is willing to be nothing, less than nothing; that grace may reign, that grace may be all in all.

The various facts and testimonies produced from sacred writ, when treating about the freeness of pardon, equally prove the point under consideration: and might, with many others, be adduced and pleaded on this occasion. For he that is pardoned is justified; and he that is justified is pardoned, as before observed. Consequently, if our pardon be free, our justification cannot be conditional. But, to avoid prolixity, I shall not further enlarge in proof of the glorious truth; only would just observe, that so great a blessing, yet absolutely free; so Divine a favour, yet not suspended on any condition to be performed by the sinner, discovers astonishing grace. This must silence the fears and raise the hopes of the guilty, the accursed, the self-condemned. And may their hopes be raised by such a consideration; and also by beholding the glory of that infinite Being, whose honour and sovereign prerogative it is, to be inviolably just, yet the *Justifier of the ungodly*.

Having considered the antecedent state of the person whom God justifies, and the freeness with which the important blessing is bestowed upon him; the way appointed in the eternal counsels and revealed in the everlasting gospel, in which the condemned criminal may be honourably acquitted before the Divine tribunal, and accepted as righteous, now demands our attentive regard. Here we behold immaculate holiness and strict justice harmonizing with tenderest mercy and freest favour. Nor can it be otherwise. The Judge of all the earth must do right He can acquit none without a complete righteousness. For to justify a person, and judicially to pronounce him righteous, are the same thing. Justification is evidently a forensic term, and the thing intended by it a judicial act So that were a person to be justified without a righteousness, the judgment would not be according to truth; it would be a false and unrighteous sentence.

That righteousness by which we are justified must be perfect; must be equal to the demands of that law, according to which the sovereign Judge proceeds in our justification. Every judge, it is evident, must have some rule by which to proceed in his judicial capacity. This rule is the law. To talk of passing judgment, without having any regard to law, is absurd, and involves a contradiction. For, to judge, is nothing else but to determine whether the object of judgment be according to

rule. A judge first considers what is fact, and then, comparing the fact with the rule of action, he pronounces it right or wrong, and approves or condemns the performer of it. An imperfect obedience, therefore, before a judge, is not righteousness: For, in this case, righteousness is no other than a complete conformity to that law which is the rule of our conduct. To accept of any obedience short of the rule, instead of that which perfectly answers it, is to act, not in the capacity of a righteous judge, but under the character of an absolute sovereign. So Jehovah himself declares, that he *will by no means clear the guilty* in judgment; that he *will not at all acquit the wicked*; and, consequently, that he will justify none without a perfect righteousness. That obedience, therefore, which is available for this grandest of all purposes, must answer the demands of Divine law. It must be such as will vindicate the honour of eternal justice, and of inviolable truth, in declaring the subject of justification completely righteous. Yes, reader, it must be such as you may venture to plead, without the least imputation of arrogance, at the throne of grace and the bar of judgment; such to which you may warrantably ascribe your happiness in the heavenly world, and in which you may glory to all eternity.

Many persons talk of, I know not what, *conditions* of justification; some supposing one thing, and some another, to be the condition of it. But hence it appears, that the only condition of our acceptance with God, is a *perfect righteousness*. This the law requires; nor does the gospel substitute another. For as the Divine law can have no more, so it will admit of no less. Those persons, therefore, who think of any thing short of complete obedience being sufficient, let their call the supposed condition by what name they please, may do well to consider, how they can free themselves from the charge of Antinomianism. For the gospel does not, in any degree, make void the law. So far from it, that the voice of the gospel and the death of Christ demonstrate Jehovah to be absolutely inflexible, as to all that his holy law requires or forbids. The way in which sinners are justified, does not in the least infringe on its rights. For, considered as moral, it is unalterable and eternal. Perfect obedience was demanded by it of man, while in a state of innocence, as the condition of life. Perfect obedience it still requires of man, though in a state of apostasy. And perfect obedience it must have, either at our own, or a surety's hand, or we must fall eternally under its curse.

Where then shall we find, or how shall we obtain a justifying righteousness? Shall we flee to the law for relief? Shall we apply, with diligence and zeal, to the performance of duty, in order to attain the desired end? Such a procedure, though it might flatter our pride, would betray our ignorance, disappoint our hopes, and issue in eternal ruin. The apostle of the Gentiles, when professedly handling the doctrine of justification, positively affirms and strongly proves, that there is no acceptance with God *by the works of the law*. Now, the works of the law, are those duties of piety and of humanity which the law requires. Nor can any acceptable obedience be performed, which is not required by that law which demands perfect love to God, and perfect love to man. So that when the infallible teacher excludes the works of the law from having any concern in our



justification, he entirely rejects all our works, all our duties of every kind. But let us hear his words and consider their import.

*By the deeds of the law, by our own obedience to it, however sincere, shall no flesh be justified, accepted of God, and pronounced righteous in his sight.* The reason is evident; *for by the law is the knowledge of sin, as an opposition to the Divine revealed will, and as deserving an everlasting curse.*" But if so, it is absolutely impossible that we should be justified by it; for a law which proves us guilty, is far from pronouncing us righteous in the eye of the lawgiver. *The law entered, was promulgated at Sinai, that the offence might abound, that the abundance of our iniquities might be manifested, and their exceeding sinfulness appear.* (Rom. 5:20) *The law worketh wrath.* It reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. It fastens a charge of guilt on the criminal, and works a sense of deserved wrath in his conscience. Far from justifying any offender, it denounces utter destruction against him, and unsheaths the sword of vengeance. (Rom. 4:15) *As many as are of the works of the law; who do their best endeavours to keep it, and are looking for justification by it; are what? In a promising way to obtain acceptance with God, and to be rewarded with life eternal, quite the reverse. They are under a dreadful curse. For it is written by the pen of infallibility, and is awfully expressive of Jehovah's unchangeable purpose: CURSED IS EVERY ONE, without any respect of persons, without any regard to please, That CONTINUETH NOT IN ALL THINGS which are written in the book of the law to do them.* (James 2:10) From this alarming text we learn that there never was, nor can be any acceptance with God, without a perfect obedience an obedience, perfect in its principle, complete in all its parts, anti without the least interruption in thought, word and deed. For he who *fails in one point*, breaks the law, is guilty before God, and exposed to ruin. (Gal. 3:10)

The apostle argues in proof of his point, from the opposition there is between living *by faith*, and living *by the works of the law*. These are his words; *That no man, however excellent his moral character, however righteous in his own esteem, is justified by his own obedience to the law in the sight of God, it is evident: For the just, the truly righteous and justified person, shall live by faith. And, that he does not obtain the character, or enjoy the blessedness connected with it, in virtue of his own obedience, appears from hence; the law is not of faith; it makes no mention of a Redeemer, or of believing in him. But, its uniform language is, the man that doeth them; that punctually performs the duties enjoined, and entirely avoids the things prohibited; he, and he only, shall live in them; shall find acceptance and enjoy peace.* (Gal. 3:11, 12)

The inspired penman, ever jealous of his Master's honour, ever concerned for the glory of Divine grace, argues from an absurdity; an absurdity, obvious to the meanest capacity, and shocking to every mind that has the least esteem for the Lord Redeemer. *If righteousness come by the law, if men either were or could be justified by their own duties and endeavours, then it would inevitably follow that*

*Christ is dead in vain; all his obedience and all his sufferings were useless things; there was no occasion for them. (Gal. 2:21) Again; If they which are of the law be heirs; if they who rely on their own legal performances be accepted of God, and entitled to the heavenly inheritance; faith in a dying Redeemer is made entirely void, and the promise of life by him is made of none effect. (Rom. 4:14).*

Nor are the works of the law, which Paul so expressly and repeatedly excludes from having any concern in our justification, to be understood only of an obedience to those *positive* institutions of Jehovah, which, being of a temporary kind, were abrogated by the death of Christ. His design was to set aside all our obedience to every law; all our works and duties of every kind. That this was his intention, appears from the following considerations. The apostle excludes *all works* in general. *God imputeth righteousness without works - By grace ye are saved - not of works. If by grace, then it is no more of works. Not by works of righteousness which we have done. Who hath saved us - not according to our works.* He does not only say, that we are not justified by the works of the law; but also, that we are not justified by *works*, performances, duties, obedience, in general, what rule soever may be their object, or however they may be denominated. He does not give the least hint, as if he meant only to exclude the works of some particular law, or duties of some particular kind, in contradiction to others. And when the Spirit of God declares, without limiting the phrase to any particular kind of duties, that we are not justified *by works*; what authority have we to restrain the sense to this or that sort of works, to the exclusion of others? For as all duties performed in obedience to a law are *works*, whether the law be considered as moral or ceremonial, old or new; so all works, whatever they be, are here excluded without any exception.

That law which the apostle designs, stands in direct opposition to the grace of the gospel, and the promise of life; to faith in Christ, and the righteousness of faith. *The promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath; for where there is no law, there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed. (Rom. 4:13-16)* Now it is the moral, and not the ceremonial law, that stands opposed to grace, and the promise; to faith, and the righteousness of faith. For the ceremonial law, exhibiting in various ways the grace of God, the promised Messiah, and life by him, as the great objects of faith and hope under the ancient Jewish economy; cannot be stated and considered in this contrasted view, without a manifest impropriety. But the moral law is *not of faith*; it contains no revelation of grace: it exhibits no foundation of trust, no object of hope for sinners; nor does it make the least promise to them, but all the reverse. Besides, the law here intended, *worketh wrath*. By a transgression of it, wrath is incurred; and by a conviction of the evil of such disobedience, a sense of deserved wrath possesses the conscience. Which, though perfectly applicable to the moral law, and to mankind in general as breakers of it; yet cannot be affirmed

of the ceremonial institutions, neither in regard to Jews nor Gentiles. Because, as to the former, those rites were long since abrogated; and, as to the latter, they never were under any obligation to observe them.

The important reasons assigned by the sacred disputant, why we cannot be justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus, make it evident, that he intended to exclude, not only all ceremonial performances, but also all our moral obedience. Having asserted, that there is no justification by the deeds of the law, he adds, *For by the law is the knowledge of sin.* (Rom. 3:20) Now the apostle informs us from his own experience, that the knowledge of sin comes by that law which forbids all irregular desires, and every unsanctified affection. *I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* Hence it is plain to a demonstration, that all the duties of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, are entirely excluded from all concern in our justification: and, that the law which convinces of sin, is spiritual; reaches the thoughts and intents of the heart, saying, *Thou shalt not covet.* Whether it be the moral, or the ceremonial law, that is here intended, the reader, I presume, will be at no loss to determine. Another reason assigned, is, *Lest any man should boast.* For thus it is written; *By grace ye are saved - not of works, lest any man should boast. To declare at this time his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting, then? it is excluded. By what law - of works? Nay; but by the law of faith.* Whence the apostle infers the following conclusion: *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* (Rom. 7:7) Now, of what are men ready to boast, in a religious view, but of their supposed moral goodness? Of what, except the integrity of their hearts, and the regularity of their lives; their sincere intentions, and their pious performances? These, therefore, we may justly infer, are entirely excluded. For if no works be excepted but those of a ceremonial kind, and if our moral obedience be any way concerned in procuring acceptance with God, how is boasting excluded? Does not the performance of moral precepts afford as fair a ground for boasting, as a submission to ceremonial rites? And were not the ancient Pharisees guilty in both respects? (Luke 18:11)

Nor is *faith* itself our righteousness, or that for the sake of which we are justified. For though believers are said to be justified by faith, yet not *for* faith. That faith is not our righteousness, is evident from the following considerations. No man's faith is perfect; and if it were, it would not be equal to the demands of the Divine law. It could not, therefore, without an error in judgment, be accounted a complete righteousness. But the judgment of God, as before proved, is according to truth, and according to the rights of his law. That obedience by which a sinner is justified, is called *the righteousness* or *faith; righteousness BY faith;* and is represented as revealed *TO faith:* (Rom. 3:22) consequently, it cannot be faith itself. Faith, in the business of justification, stands opposed to all works. *To him that worketh not, BUT believeth.* Now, if it were our justifying righteousness, to consider it in such a light would be highly improper. For, in such a connexion, it falls under the consideration of a *work, a condition,* on the performance of which

our acceptance with God is manifestly suspended. If faith itself be that on account of which we are accepted, then some believers are justified by a more, and some by a less perfect righteousness, in exact proportion to the strength or weakness of their faith. *He was strong in faith - O ye of little faith.* Consequently, either more of justice and less of grace must appear in the justification of some, than in that of others; or else it must be concluded, that some are more fully justified than others; each of which is absurd. That which is *the end of the law*, is our righteousness; which, certainly, is not faith, but the obedience of our exalted Substitute. *Christ is the end of the law, FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, to every one that believeth.* That righteousness by which many are justified, is the obedience of *One*. The believer, therefore, is not justified for the sake of his own faith; for then there must be as many distinct righteousnesses, as there are justified persons. Were faith itself our justifying righteousness, we might, without either pride or folly, depend upon it, plead it before God, and rejoice in it. For whatever the Most High is pleased to accept as our justifying righteousness, may be pleaded before him as such. Whatever may be so pleaded, must be esteemed a proper ground of our confidence - may be used as an argument in prayer at the throne of grace, and as the foundation of our expecting final happiness: and whatever is the ground of our confidence, must be the source of our spiritual joy. So that, according to this hypothesis, not Christ, but faith, is the capital thing; the object to which we must look. The glorious Redeemer and his undertaking are only considered as auxiliaries in the affair of justification; while faith is the grand requisite, as it renders Immanuel's work effectual, and crowns the whole. To understand those words, *Faith was imputed to him for righteousness*, in the Arminian sense, is to contradict the whole scope and design of the apostle's argumentation, when treating about the justification of sinners. For his main design is to prove, that the eternal Sovereign justifies *freely; without any cause* in the creature. But, according to this hypothesis, *faith* is the condition; is the cause; is that on account of which we are accepted as righteous. For it is considered under the formal notion of righteousness. Hence it appears, that it is not faith itself, but its glorious *Object*, which Paul intends, when 'he speaks of the being imputed for righteousness.

But is not that law, which man was originally under, which requires an absolutely perfect obedience, and denounces a curse on the least offender, abrogated by the mediation of Jesus Christ? And is not a new, remedial, milder law, introduced in its place; one that is more happily adapted to the infirmities of a fallen creature, requiring only a *sincere* obedience, as the condition of acceptance before the sovereign Judge? No: for, not to take notice that such a scheme represents the gospel as *making void the law*; not to mention many other things which might be urged; the sentiment supposes that the old, the eternal law of God, was either too strict in its precepts, or too severe in its penal sanction; and that its requisitions never were, nor ever will be performed, either by ourselves or by our Surety. An imagination this, which deserves the utmost abhorrence; as, in one view, it denies perfection to that law which is *holy, and just, and good*; and as, in another, it highly reflects on the wisdom, or equity, or goodness of the supreme

Legislator for enacting a law, the repeal of which was so necessary in order to accomplish the designs of his grace. Besides, the scheme is absurd. For it supposes that the law which man is now under requires only an *imperfect* obedience. But an imperfect righteousness cannot answer its demands, whether it be denominated old or new. For every law requires perfect obedience to its own precepts and prohibitions. Under whatever law we are, it must be the standard of duty and the rule of our obedience; and every rule requires, and cannot but require, a complete conformity to itself. That law which forbids every irregularity in our tempers and conduct, whatever name it may bear, is the rule of our duty, the law which is now in force; otherwise, such irregularity would not be sin; such a deviation from perfect rectitude would be no fault. That which is not prohibited, that which is the breach of no law, cannot be sin; *for sin is a transgression of the law*. If then we are forbidden to commit sin, it must be by a law that is now in force; and if every sin be a breach of it, nothing short of perfect obedience can be required by it. Consequently, nothing can be accepted as righteousness by our eternal Judge, but an obedience in all respects complete; a perfect obedience, either performed by us or imputed to us?\*

\* To obviate objections and to enforce my argument, I will introduce a paragraph or two from a late excellent writer; who, when touching upon this subject, observes: "They," the Arminians, "strenuously maintain, that it would be unjust in God to require any thing of us beyond our present power and ability to perform; and also hold, that we are now unable to perform perfect obedience, and that Christ died to satisfy for the imperfections of our obedience, and has made way that our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of perfect; wherein they seem insensibly to run themselves into the grossest inconsistency. For they hold, 'That God in mercy to mankind, has abolished that rigorous constitution, or law, that they were under originally; and, instead of it, has introduced a more mild constitution, and put us under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect, sincere obedience, in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent circumstances since the fall.' Now, how can these things be made consistent? I would ask, What *law* these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law that we were ever under, then they are not sins. And if they be not sins, what need of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? But if they are sins, and the breach of some law, what law is it? They cannot be a breach of their new law; for (according to their principles) that requires no other than imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections: and, therefore, to have obedience attended with imperfections is no breach of it; for it is as much as it requires. And they cannot be a breach of their *old* law; for that, they say, is entirely abolished, and we never were under it. They say, it would not be just in God to require of us perfect obedience, because it would not be just to require more than we can perform, or to punish us for failing of it. And, therefore, by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. What need, therefore, of Christ's dying to satisfy for them. What need of his suffering, to satisfy for that which is no fault, and, in its own nature, deserves no suffering? What need of Christ's dying to purchase that our imperfect obedience should be

accepted, when, according to their scheme, it would be unjust in itself that any other obedience than *imperfect* should be required. What need of Christ's dying to make way for God's accepting such an obedience, as it would be unjust in him not to accept? Is there any need of Christ's dying to prevail with God not to do unrighteously?

If it be said, *That Christ died to satisfy that old law for us, that so we might not be under it, but that there might be room for our being under a milder law;* Still I would inquire, What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law, which, by their principles, it would be in itself unjust that we should be under, whether Christ had died or no; because, in our present state, we are not able to keep it?

So the Arminians are inconsistent with themselves, not only in what they say of the need of Christ's *satisfaction*, to atone for those imperfections which we cannot avoid; but also in what they say of the grace of God granted to enable men to perform the sincere obedience of the new law. They grant, *that by reason of original sin, we are utterly disabled for the performance of the condition without new grace from God.* But they affirm, *that he gives such grace to all, by which the performance of the condition is truly possible: and that upon this ground he may and doth most justly require it.* If they intend to speak properly, by grace they must mean that *assistance* which is of grace, or of free favour and kindness. But yet they speak of it, as very *unreasonable, unjust, and cruel*, for God to require *that*, as the condition of pardon, that is become impossible by original sin. If it be so, what *grace* is there in giving assistance and ability to perform the condition of pardon: Or why is that called by the name of grace that is an absolute *debt*, which God is bound to bestow, and which it would be unjust and cruel in him to withhold; seeing he requires that, as the condition of pardon, which we cannot perform without it?

See that masterly work entitled. "A careful and strict inquiry into the modern prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will, which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency," part iii. sect. iii. by Mr. Jonathan EDWARDS.

Nor are we accepted of God on account of any holiness wrought in us by the Holy Spirit; or of any good works performed by us through the assistance of Divine grace after regeneration. For, however attained or performed, if it be ours by way of inherency, it comes under the denomination of *our own righteousness*. But all our own righteousness is extremely imperfect, and is therefore entirely excluded. This appears from hence. All righteousness consists, either in habit, or in act; either in principle, or in practice. Now if our external obedience to the commands of God be not *our own righteousness*, there is no such thing; and so the phrase, as used in the sacred writings, must be entirely destitute of all propriety. As to the principle of all obedience, what is it but the love of God? This is purity of heart, this is true holiness. And though this heavenly affection be not

natural to man, but a fruit of the Spirit, yet it is included under the general idea of *our own righteousness*; for there is no such thing as righteousness, or moral goodness, where God is not the object of supreme affection; where our Maker is not sincerely loved. A rational creature who does not love the infinitely amiable Jehovah, far from having any thing that may be called *righteousness*, is actuated by the temper, and bears the very image of Satan: For where Divine love has no place in the heart, the dispositions of the mind are entirely sinful, and the whole conduct a direct opposition to the revealed will of God. Consequently, if nothing be worthy the name of righteousness, where the love of God has no influence; and if all our own obedience be excluded, in the article of justification; all that holiness, and all those duties which follow regeneration, and are performed by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, must be totally set aside, as to that important affair. According to those words: *By grace ye are saved - not of works*. What works? those to which they *were created in Christ Jesus, and in which God ordained that they should walk*. (Eph. 2:8-10) Hence the apostle very evidently distinguishes between that righteousness by which he was justified, in which also he desired to be *found*, and all his own righteous deeds. *And be found in Him not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*. (Phil. 3:9) Nor can any man, with the least shadow of reason, suppose, that the apostle ever imagined himself to have attained that holiness, or to have performed those good works included under the general phrase, *his own righteousness*, without the Divine assistance.

To assert that our own righteousness is the condition of justification, is to confound the two opposite covenants of works and grace. What was the covenant of works? Was it not a constitution which required personal obedience, as the condition of life, and promised acceptance with God on the performance of that condition? This was the tenor of it, and in this its distinguishing nature consisted. Whatever covenant therefore proceeds on the same terms, whether expressed or implied, is, however it may be varied in other respects, a covenant of works. As in the renewal of the first promise concerning the Messiah, in which the essence of the covenant of grace was contained; though the Sovereign Dispenser of all good was pleased to vary his language, and to exhibit his mercy in different views, under the Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian dispensation; yet, in substance, it was always the same: so, whatever variations we may suppose to have taken place, respecting the covenant of works, while its grand characteristic, **DO THIS AND LIVE**, is retained, it is nevertheless the same covenant.

To set the point in a clearer light, be it observed; that our first parents before the fall were under the covenant of works: and, supposing the condition of it had been performed, they would have had a right to life, and would have enjoyed the promised blessing. Now, though the enjoyment of life was suspended on the performance of perfect obedience, yet that was easier to them in their primitive state, than the least supposed condition would be to us in our fallen, corrupted

state. And, how great soever the disparity was, between the obedience prescribed and the blessing promised; yet, had the condition been performed, and life enjoyed in consequence of it, the happy state would have been possessed, not as a gift of grace, but as a *reward of pactional debt*. (Rom. 4:4) Nor would it have been of grace at all, in that sense in which the sacred writers use the term, when treating about the justification of sinners.

But supposing the condition of that covenant had been performed by our first father, and that life had been enjoyed by him as the reward of his own obedience; how, or by what means, could he have performed it? By that power and rectitude with which his nature was endued. But who gave him that power and rectitude? Who endued him with holy qualities, and flitted him for such obedience? Who maintained those moral abilities, and preserved him in existence itself? The answer is obvious. It is plain, however, that his being furnished with sufficient capacities, and having them preserved by the Lord his Maker, would not have prevented the reward from being by works. Life would still have been by the legal covenant; and entirely opposite, therefore, to that way of justification, which is revealed in the gospel.

Yet further to evince the truth and confirm the argument, it may be observed, that the covenant of works itself did not require, even from innocent Adam, the performance of its condition by a power independent on Divine assistance. Nor could it, consistent with the nature of a dependent being, as man in his best estate, and every mere creature, must necessarily be. For conservation is as much owing to a Divine power, as creation itself. Those holy qualities, therefore, with which man was at first endued, could no otherwise be maintained, than by a continual divine influence from his Creator and Preserver. For if Divine agency be necessary to a continuance in mere existence, it must certainly be allowed necessary to a holy and happy existence; such as our original parents would undoubtedly have enjoyed, had they continued in a state of innocence. If then we talk of terms and conditions respecting the covenant of grace, the question is not whether they be great or small, hard or easy. But whether, properly speaking, there be any condition at all, to be performed by the sinner, in order to obtain acceptance with God? And whether a supposition of any such thing does not annihilate the radical difference between the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace?\*

\* If the covenant of grace be duly considered, it will appear, that the execution of it, and the final happiness of the covenantees, do not depend on the proper exercise of the human will, or on any condition to be performed by man: that covenant having all its virtue and benign efficacy from the authority, love, and faithfulness of God himself This glorious constitution consists of *absolute promises*. Eph. 2:12. Jer. 31: 31-34. Heb. 8:10-12. Nor is there any thing like a *condition*, which is not contained in the promises themselves. Those persons, therefore, must act a very injudicious part, who endeavour to explain the nature of this divine covenant, by considering the properties of those compacts which



are common among men. For in so doing they entirely obscure the glory of sovereign grace, and leave the awakened sinner destitute of all hope. See Dr. Owen's *Theologianena*, 1. iii. c. i. WITSII (Econ. Foed I. iii. c. i. 8-13. *Acta Synod. Dordrech.* Part. iii. p. 312. HOORNBEKII *Summa Controvers.* 1. x. p. 805.

If then the subject of justification be, in himself, ungodly; if the Supreme Governor of the world neither will nor can justify any without a perfect righteousness; and if such a righteousness cannot possibly be found in our own performances, nor in faith itself, nor in any of the graces or fruits of the Holy Spirit; it is absolutely necessary that righteousness, wrought out by a substitute, should be imputed to us, or placed to our account. Where then, where, but in *the finished work of JESUS CHRIST*, shall we find this vicarious righteousness? Yes, the spotless obedience, the bitter sufferings, and the accursed death of our heavenly Surety, constitute that very righteousness by which sinners are justified before God. That amazing work which the incarnate Son completed when he expired on the cross, is the grand requisite for our justification before the heavenly tribunal. To this, and to/his only, the eternal Sovereign has respect, when he pronounces the sinner just, and acquits him in judgment. Hence we are said to be *made righteous by the obedience of Christ*, and to be *justified by his blood*. This blood being shed, and that obedience being performed by our Divine Substitute, on the sinner's behalf and in his nature, are placed to his account as fully and as much to his advantage, as if he had in his own person underwent the sufferings and performed the obedience. The sufferings of the Holy Jesus, those dreadful sufferings of the Son of God and the Lord of glory, considered in connexion with this consummate obedience to the perceptive part of the law, which, for the superexcellency of it, is called **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD** - these, including all that the righteous but broken law requires, being accepted by the Judge and imputed to sinners, are the united cause and the only ground of their full discharge. This - let me indulge the pleasing idea, and repeat the precious truth - this, without any addition, of any sort whatever, is that work for the sake of which the wretched sinner is pronounced just and adjudged to life, by Him who is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. By this obedience the law is honoured, and eternal justice completely satisfied. Jehovah declares himself well pleased with it, and treats as his children all those that are found in it.

That we are not justified by a personal, but by an imputed righteousness, appears from the Scripture with superior evidence. There the doctrine is taught in the plainest terms; there the important truth is set in the strongest light. It was in this way that Jehovah justified the Father of the faithful; to the consideration of which notable example of Divine grace and free acceptance Paul referred his Jewish brethren for their conviction, and for the instruction of all who should at any time inquire after the methods of grace. Abraham was the renowned progenitor of the Israelitish nation; and he was honoured with that exalted character, **THE FRIEND OF GOD**. His resignation and faith, his obedience and piety, stand on everlasting record. Few, among all the saints, ever manifested so

cheerful a submission to the Divine will, or so unreserved a confidence in the Divine promise. No sooner did the true God signify his will to Abraham, that he should leave his native country and his father's house, than he *obeyed; and went out, not knowing whither he went.* (Gen. 12:1. Heb. 11:8) No sooner did the Great Possessor of heaven and earth intimate his sovereign pleasure, that he should sacrifice his only son, his Isaac, whom he loved, than he readily submitted; though the heavenly mandate was quite unprecedented, and the thought of performing it enough, one would think, to astonish and confound him. Yet these acts of obedience, though highly pleasing to God, and such as will be had in everlasting remembrance, were neither the cause, nor the condition, of his justification. They, indeed, afforded the noblest testimony that his faith was genuine, and his piety real; and, in that sense, he was *justified*, or declared righteous, *by his works.* (James 2:21-25) But they were far from being placed to his account in the article of Divine acceptance. For if Abraham was justified by his own *works*, though amazingly great, and in one instance quite unparalleled; *he hath whereof to glory*, in comparison with others, who come far short of that elevated pitch of obedience to which he arrived. But though he might, on that supposition, have gloried before his fellow-creatures, yet *not before God.* For *what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed the promise of God, concerning the Messiah and the work to be accomplished by him, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.* Nor was the method of Divine proceeding, in the justification of this illustrious patriarch, any way singular. In this respect he had no exclusive privilege. For it is added, *Now it was not written, in the ancient Scriptures, for his sake alone, that it, the work of a dying and rising Redeemer, was imputed to him; but for us also, whether Jews or Gentiles, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. For they which be of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.* (Rom. 4:2, 3. 22-24. Gal. 3:6-9) Now if a person of such victorious faith, exalted piety, and amazing obedience as he was, did not obtain acceptance with God on account of his own duties, but by an imputed righteousness; who shall pretend to an interest in the heavenly blessing, in virtue of his own sincere endeavours, or pious performances - performances not fit to be named, in comparison with those that adorned the conduct and character of JEHOVAH'S FRIEND.

The apostle hath shown in what way the Father of the chosen tribes was justified before the King immortal; and having intimated, that the patriarch was considered as an *ungodly* person, as one who had *no good works*, when the Lord imputed righteousness to him, in order to his final acceptance; to illustrate and confirm the momentous truth, he presents his reader with a description that David gives of the truly blessed man. And how does the royal psalmist describe him? To what does he attribute his acceptance with God? To an inherent, or to an imputed righteousness? Does he represent him as attaining the happy state, and as enjoying, the precious privilege, in consequence of performing sincere obedience, and of keeping the law to the best of his power! No such thing. His words are, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* The blessed

man is here described as one who is, in himself, a polluted creature, and a guilty criminal. As one who, before grace made the difference, was on a level with the rest of mankind; equally unworthy, and equally wretched: and the sacred penman informs us, that all his blessedness arises from an imputed righteousness. For what else can be intended by those remarkable words, with which he introduces the evangelical declaration! *Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man - what man? Why, he to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works.* (Rom. 4:5-8) The righteousness here intended, cannot be understood of a person's own obedience; because it is expressly said to be *without works*. His own virtues and duties, however excellent, contribute nothing toward it. No; it is perfect in itself, and entirely detached from every thing which he either has done, or can do. The phraseology of rite inspired writer is very remarkable. He does not only speak of blessedness, as the result of an imputed righteousness; but he describes the obedience, which is thus applied to the sinner, as being *without works*. This he does, more strongly to assert the truth he defends, and more effectually to secure the honour of grace. *Righteousness imputed: righteousness without the law: righteousness without works.* Such was the language of Paul; such was the doctrine that he preached; and such was the faith of the primitive church. Now, alas, the phrases are cashiered as obsolete, and are become offensive; so offensive that their frequent use is considered by the generality of those who call themselves Christians, as a certain indication of an enthusiastic turn of mind. And as the language is disapproved by multitudes in the present age; so the sentiment expressed by it is discarded with contempt, as offering an insult to common sense. But, however much the doctrine of imputed righteousness may be despised as absurd, or abhorred as licentious, by any of our modern professors, it is evident that the great apostle considered it as intimately connected with the happiness of mankind, and esteemed the blessing as the only solid basis of all our hope, and of all our comfort.

Having seen what Paul says concerning the justification of Abraham, and the application he makes of that description which David gives of the blessed man; let us now consider what was the foundation of his own hope of eternal felicity, and on what righteousness he relied. Of these particulars the infallible teacher informs us in the following passage: *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency, of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in Him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* In this context the apostle relates his own experience. In these words he declares what was the frame of his mind, and what were his views with regard to the doctrine of justification. Here he presents himself as a guide and a pattern to all that inquire the way to happiness.

Let us attend to his words, and a little more particularly consider their import. *Yea, doubtless;* I affirm it with the utmost confidence, *and* am determined to abide by it; that I *count all things;* my birth-privileges, and pharisaical zeal; my

submission to ceremonial rites, and performance of moral duties; these, all these I esteem *but loss*. Nor do I only reject all my duties before conversion; but also whatever I now have, and all that I now perform, I count of no worth in the grand article of Divine acceptance. These, though highly ornamental, useful, and excellent, when standing in their proper places and referred to suitable ends, are little, are nothing, are *loss* itself, compared with *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord*. Yea, such is the love that I have for my Saviour, and such the dependence I place on his righteousness, that for his sake *I have cheerfully suffered the loss of all things* which once I so highly valued. *And I do with the greatest deliberation again declare, in the presence of Him who searches the heart, that I count them vile as the offals which are thrown to the dogs, and loathsome as dung which is cast out of sight.* Such is the worth of my own performances, and such my estimate of them, if set in competition with the work of Jesus, or presuming to stand in the place of his righteousness. Now, therefore, it is my chief desire and supreme concern *that I may win Christ*, who is able to supply every want, and to render me completely happy. That when the Judge ascends the throne, at the last tremendous audit, when all nations shall appear before Him, and when none but the perfectly righteous are able to stand, I may be *found in Him* the Beloved, as the Lord my righteousness. Then impartial justice must entirely acquit, and immaculate holiness completely approve. Would you know more particularly what I mean by being *found in Him*? It is, my *not having*, not depending upon, or so much as once mentioning *mine own righteousness, which is of the law*; the holy qualities I now possess, and the righteous deeds I have performed in obedience to the law, as a rule of conduct, and by the influence of grace, as the principle of spiritual life; - *But*, being adorned with, and relying upon that righteousness which is through the faith of Christ; which was finished by him, is revealed in the gospel, and received by faith. Even that obedience which, being performed by the incarnate Son, is dignified with every excellence, and bears that exalted character, *The righteousness of God by faith*.

On this instructive and very important passage I would further observe, that the manifest design of the sacred penman is to show, what that is in which a sinner may safely confide, and what is a warrantable ground of rejoicing. He intimates, that there can be no confidence toward God, no acceptance with him, and consequently no cause of spiritual joy, without a righteousness: for condemnation and wrath must be our portion, if we appear in our sins before the righteous Judge. He further suggests, that there is a twofold righteousness. The one he calls *our own*, and informs us it *is of the law*. The other, he describes as *through the faith of Christ*; and this he characterizes, *the righteousness of God*. These, he signifies, are entirely distinct, and far from having a united influence in procuring our justification: so far from it, that they are opposite and absolutely inconsistent, as to any such purpose. In reference therefore to acceptance with the Most High, he who embraces the one, must reject the other; and on the one or the other all mankind depend. He also informs us, with all the fervour of holy zeal, and in the most emphatical manner, which of these obtained his regard and supported his

hope; was the ground of his confidence and the source of his joy. How much soever the Judaizing teachers, of whom he speaks in the beginning of the chapter, might *confide in the flesh*, or depend on their own duties, he was determined to adopt a very different method, and to seek for acceptance in a contrary way. Having warned them of their danger, and guarded the Philippians against their destructive mistakes, he declares that the righteousness which he esteemed sufficient was not *his own*; was not *of the law*; but a gift of grace, and *through the faith of Christ*. Even that obedience which our Lord performed in the capacity of a surety; which is *without works, and without the law*; was the object of his dependence, and in that only he glorified. But as to all that is included under the phrase, *his own righteousness*, when he considered the purity of the Divine law, the majesty of the eternal Judge, and that he must soon stand before him, he accounted it of no avail. Under such a consideration, he rejected it with disdain, and poured the utmost contempt upon it, calling it *loss* and *dung*. Such was the experience, and such was the hope of that wonderful man, whose apostolic gifts and Christian graces, whose ministerial usefulness and exemplary conduct, rendered him an eminent blessing to the world, and an honour to the great Redeemer's cause.

Many are the arguments which might be adduced from the unerring word, in proof of this capital doctrine and comfortable truth; but I shall only present my reader with the few that follow. It has been before proved, that the subject of justification is an *ungodly* person. His pardon and acceptance, therefore, cannot be the result of his own obedience: and it is equally clear, that as ungodly he cannot be justified. He must stand right in the eye of the law, and unreprouable before his Judge, before he can be acquitted in judgment. It must, consequently, be by the righteousness of another. But, what, or whose, righteousness can it be? Not the obedience of our fellow-mortals who are already justified; that would be to adopt the exploded doctrine of superogation. Not the sanctity of angels; because they never became responsible for us. Not the essential rectitude of the Divine nature; for that is absolutely incommunicable. It must therefore be the righteousness of *Christ*; or his complete conformity to the holy law, as a voluntary substitute for the ungodly. Now, in what way can his obedience be applied to us, except by *imputation*? This argument, I am persuaded, will remain conclusive till it be proved, either that the subject of justification is not in himself ungodly; or that the Judge of all the earth can justify without a righteousness. The former is expressly contrary to the Divine testimony, and the latter involves a palpable contradiction.

Paul, when treating about our awful ruin by sin, and our wonderful recovery by grace, and when professedly handling this capital doctrine, informs us, that Adam was *a type of Him that was to come*, even of the Lord Messiah. He forms a striking comparison between the first and the second Adam; between the disobedience of the one, and the obedience of the other, together with the effects of each. He represents Adam as a public person, as constituted the federal head of all his posterity; and Christ, as the representative of all the chosen seed. The

first offence of the former, he signifies, was imputed to all his natural offspring; the complete obedience of the latter, is imputed to all his spiritual seed. By the imputation of that offence, all mankind were *made sinners*; came under a charge of guilt, and the awful sentence of condemnation to eternal death: by the imputation of this obedience, all that believe are made righteous; are acquitted from every legal charge, and adjudged to eternal life. And as it was *one offence*, of *one man*, that brought death and misery on all the human race: so it is by *one righteousness*, of *one man*, even of the Lord from heaven and Jehovah's Fellow, that spiritual life and eternal happiness are introduced. According to that saying, *As by one offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so, by one righteousness, the free gift came, upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.* (Rom. 5:18, 19) That the *one offence*, and the *disobedience of one*, are to be understood of Adam's actual transgression of the Divine law, none can dispute. By his first iniquitous act and bold offence many were *made sinners*, before they were guilty of actual transgression; so made sinners as to be, on principles of justice, liable to condemnation and death. Nor is it conceivable how this could be, except by imputation; for which imputation, their natural relation to Adam, and his federal relation to them, were a sufficient foundation. It is equally evident, that the *one righteousness* and the *obedience of One*, are the complete performance of Divine precepts by our Lord Jesus Christ, his actual conformity to the holy law. This the antithesis in the text requires; this the scope of the apostle's reasoning demands. By this consummate obedience *many are made righteous*. By this *one* most excellent *righteousness*, all that believe are justified and entitled to immortal glory, without any good works of their own, and before they have performed any acceptable duty. Now, in whatever way the first offence of our original parent was made ours to condemnation; in the same way is the righteousness of his glorious Antitype made ours to justification. If that was by imputation, so is this.

The momentous truth for which I am pleading, is emphatically taught in the following nervous passage. *He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.* Hence it is plain, that as Christ the surety was made sin, so are we made righteousness; in the very same way that our sins were made his, does his obedience become ours. How, then, and in what sense, was the Holy One of God made sin? By being *punished* for it? No; for he was made that sin which he *knew not*; but he knew by painful experience what it was to be punished. Besides, he could not have been punished for sin, if he had not stood guilty in the eye of the law; for punishment always supposes *guilt*, either personal or imputed. A person may suffer, but he cannot be *punished* without a previous charge of guilt; without being considered as the breaker of some law; for punishment is no other than the evil of suffering, inflicted for the evil of sinning. Was he made sin by becoming a *sacrifice* for it? That he was an expiatory sacrifice, is readily granted, is the Christian's glory: but that this is the sense of the phrase may be justly questioned. For, to omit other considerations, it is plain from the text, that he was made that *sin* which stands

opposed to *righteousness*; which cannot be affirmed of an expiatory sacrifice. Nor could he have been offered as an atoning victim, without having sin transferred to him prior to his being offered. So that He was in some way or other made sin before he shed his blood and made expiation. Was he then made sin by *inhesion*, or by *transfusion*? Was it communicated to him, so as to *reside* in him? The idea is absurd, the fact was impossible, and the very thought is blasphemy. It remains, therefore, that if he was made sin, that sin which is opposed to righteousness, it must be by *imputation*. (Non per tropum est explicandum, sed entas sumendum est, prout oppositio manstrat. WALTH. Vide CALOVUM in loc.) This was the way in which our adorable Sponsor came under a charge of guilt. Hence it follows, by necessary consequence, according to the rule of opposition, except we would entirely destroy the apostle's beautiful antithesis, and the whole force of his argument, that those who are truly righteous, are made so by *imputation*, and by imputation only. For as it is impossible that any person, perfectly innocent, should be made sin, but by having the sins of others placed to his account, or charged upon him in a judicial way; so those that are in themselves guilty, cannot be made righteous in another, and by his obedience, without having it imputed to them. And as the blessed Jesus is said to be made sin, so we are said to be made righteousness. Strongly implying, that it was not by any criminal conduct of His that he became sin; so it is not by any pious activity of ours that we become righteous. As it was not on account of any evil qualities infused, that he was treated by Divine justice as an offender; so it is not in virtue of any holiness wrought in us, that we are accepted and treated as righteous. And as that sin, for which the condescending Jesus was condemned and punished, was not found in him, but charged upon him; so that righteousness by which we are justified and entitled to happiness, is not inherent in us, but imputed to us.

The objections also with which the apostle meets, and the way in which he refutes them, when handling the doctrine of justification, strongly imply that his design was entirely to exclude all the works of every law, and all duties of every kind: consequently, that our acceptance with God is a blessing of pure grace, and only by an imputed righteousness. 'File objections plainly suppose, that the method of justification, as clearly stated and fully explained by Paul, is not only injurious to the interests of holiness, but subversive of all morality. His doctrine was charged with *making void the Divine commands* - with encouraging those by whom it was adopted, to *continue in sin, because they were not under the law* - to multiply transgressions *that grace might abound* - and to do all manner of evil, *that good might come*. (Rom. 3:8-31, and 4:1, 15) Now if Paul had taught, or given the least intimation that righteous deeds, or holy dispositions, were any way necessary to a sinner's justification; if, in reference to that affair, he had not in the fullest sense renounced all human obedience, and directed sinners to place their whole dependence on the work and worthiness of Christ alone; it is highly improbable that the apostolic gospel would have been charged with such horrid consequences. For on that supposition, the enemies of sacred truth would not have had the least plausible pretence for traducing his doctrine as licentious.

But supposing any, through stupid ignorance or violent prejudice, to have so far mistaken his meaning as to imagine, that he entirely rejected all holy desires and pious endeavours without exception, as constituting no part of that righteousness for the sake of which a sinner is justified; when at the same time he only excluded a *supurious* kind of holiness, and works of a particular sort: we may reasonably conclude that, in his replies to those reproachful charges against his ministerial character, and against that gospel which was dearer to him than his very life, he would not have failed to point out the egregious mistake on which the objector proceeded, by distinguishing the works he did admit, from those which he renounced.

Had he rejected only the works of the ceremonial law, or such duties as are performed prior to regeneration, and without the aids of grace, while he maintained the necessity of evangelical obedience; it would have been easy, natural, and necessary for him, when refuting the blasphemous accusations, to have drawn the line of distinction, in order to prevent future mistakes. But not the least vestige of any such distinction appears, in his answers to the several hateful charges. He does not so much as hint that the objector was under a mistake in supposing, that he entirely excluded all the duties and works of men without any difference.

When he puts the objection, *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?* he answers by a strong negation, expressing the utmost abhorrence of any such thought; *God forbid!* Then he argues from an absurdity; *How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* By which he signifies, that those who are the subjects of grace and believe in Jesus Christ, being dead to sin, cannot walk in the ways of ungodliness. For, so to do, would be absolutely inconsistent with their new state, and with that principle of spiritual life which they have received. But he gives not the least intimation of the necessity of holiness, or of obedience in order to gain the favour of God, or to procure acceptance before him. If my reader should suppose that his views of justification are the same which Paul had, and yet is persuaded that some holiness, or moral goodness of his own, is necessary to obtain pardon, or to procure acceptance, I would advise him to consider, whether, if his sentiments were charged with being licentious, he would not immediately think of a different reply - one better adapted to answer his purpose, than any of those which the apostle made in a similar case. And whether he would not be ready to vindicate his creed by observing, That as he had no expectation of being, accepted before the eternal Sovereign without a *personal* obedience, to charge him with *making void the law*, or with saying, *let us do evil that good may come*, could proceed from nothing less than the most palpable mistake, or the greatest malevolence. Such persons, however, as maintain the necessity of good works, in order to justification before God, are in little danger of being charged by ignorant people with holding licentious principles; which is a strong presumptive argument, that the doctrines which they espouse are not the same that Paul preached, and which the primitive saints



professed. For, that their character and sentiments were so aspersed, is clear beyond a doubt: nor does it appear that natural men are any more capable of discerning spiritual things, or any more friendly toward the genuine gospel now, than they were in the apostolic times.

That righteousness by which we are justified is a *free gift*, as appears by the following words, *The gift of righteousness*; conformably to which, the apostle represents believers, not as performing, but as *receiving* it. (Rom. 5:17) The gospel of sovereign grace, proclaiming the sufficiency, suitableness, and freeness of it, is thence denominated *the word of righteousness - the ministration of righteousness*; (Heb. 5:13. II Cor. 3:9) and one of the glorious characters which our Divine Sponsor bears, is, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. In perfect correspondence with which, He is said to be *made unto us righteousness; and it is affirmed of believers, that they are made the righteousness of God in Him*. (I Cor. 1:30. II Cor. 5:21) Hence it is that they are declared, by the Spirit of infallibility, to be *justified in Him - accepted in Him - complete in Him - and saved in Him*. (Isa. 65:25. Eph. 1:6. Col. 2:10. Isa. 65:17) Such is the divinely appointed method of justification; and such the provision which grace has made, for the final acceptance of guilty, ungodly, and wretched creatures.

The grand design of the gospel is to *reveal this righteousness of God*, and to display the riches of that grace which provided and freely bestows the wonderful gift. The gospel informs us that, in regard to justification, what is required of the transgressor, both as to doing and suffering, was performed by our adorable Substitute. This perfect obedience, therefore, being revealed in the word of truth for the justification of sinners, it is the business of true faith, not to come in as a condition, not to assert its own importance, and to share the glory with our Saviour's righteousness, but to *receive* it as absolutely sufficient to justify the most ungodly sinner, and as entirely free for his use. For what is evangelical faith, but *the receiving of Christ and his righteousness*? (Isa. 65:22. John 1:12. Col. 2:16. Rom. 1:17, and 5:17) Or, in other words, *a dependence on Jesus only for eternal salvation*. A dependence upon Him, is all-sufficient to save the most guilty; as every way suitable to supply the wants of the most needy, and as absolutely free for the vilest of sinners. The Divine Redeemer, and his finished work being the object of faith, (Agreeable to those remarkable and instructive words, II Pet. 1:1. "To them that have obtained by lot equally precious faith with us, IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.") and the report of the gospel its warrant and ground, *to believe*, is to trust entirely and without reserve, on the faithful word which God has spoken, and on the perfect work which Christ has wrought. Such is the faith of God's elect: and the comfortable evidences of its truth and reality, are the love of God, and holy obedience; peace of conscience, and hope of glory. These, to a greater or less degree, are its proper effects and genuine fruits.

Happy, thrice happy they that are interested in this Divine righteousness, and have received the atonement! All such are pronounced righteous by the eternal

Judge. There is nothing to be laid to their charge. They are acquitted with honour to all the perfections of Deity, and everlastingly free from condemnation. Their sins, though ever so numerous or ever so hateful, being purged away by atoning blood, and their souls being vested with that most excellent robe, the Redeemer's righteousness, they are *without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing*. They are *presented*, by their great Representative, *in the body of his flesh, through death, holy, unblameable, and unreprouable* in the sight of Omniscience. They are fair as the purest wool; whiter than the virgin snow. Yes - let believers exult in the thought! - the work and worthiness of the Lord Redeemer give them acceptance with infinite Majesty, and dignity before the angels of light. These afford consolation on earth, and procure estimation in heaven. Through these they shall stand with courage at the bar of judgment, and make their appearance with honour among the inhabitants of glory. Let the legalist boast of his good works, his devout services, and strict holiness; the man that is taught of God esteems them all, if set in competition with Christ, or presuming to stand in the place of his righteousness, sordid as dross, and vile as the dung, lighter than vanity, and worse than nothing. Were he endued with all the shining virtues that ever adorned the lives and characters of the most excellent saints; did he possess the exemplary meekness of Moses, and the amazing patience of Job, the ever-active zeal of Paul, and that love which glowed in the bosom of John, he would not, he durst not, advance the least claim to justification and eternal life on that footing. No, blessed Jesus! it is in thy righteousness only that he dares to confide; it is only in thy obedience he presumes to glory. This obedience is an immovable basis for the anxious mind to rest upon by faith. This is a sure foundation to support the believer's hope of glory, even when he views the righteous law in its full extent and unabated purity. This foundation of confidence will support the soul in the view of death, and when on the confines of an eternal world. Nor will it fail (such is its high perfection and sovereign efficacy) in the near prospect of the awful judgment. Here then grace reigns, in freely bestowing this righteousness, and in our complete justification by it.

As it is the imputed righteousness of Christ, and that only, by which any of the children of men can be justified, let us look to it, rely on it, and glory in it. For it is dignified with every honourable character, and free for our use. Cheering thought! This way of justification is completely fitted to pull down the pride of the self-righteous professor, who considers himself as standing on more respectable terms with his Maker, than his ungodly neighbour. Nor is it less happily adapted to raise the drooping spirits of the trembling sinner; of him who has nothing to plead why sentence of condemnation, already pronounced upon him, should not be executed in all its rigour. If, indeed, we were not allowed to look to this unequalled obedience, till conscious of having some righteousness of our own, we might then be discouraged; despair would be rational, and damnation certain. But, thanks be to God for the unparalleled favour! this righteousness, and justification by it, are free, perfectly free for the worst of sinners. For the works of every law, in every sense, as performed by man, are entirely excluded from having any concern in our acceptance with God.\*

Dr. Owen, having quoted Rom. iii. 23, and iv. 5, and xi. 6. Gal. ii. 16. Eph. ii. 8, 9, and Tit. iii. 5, adds,

I am persuaded that no prejudiced person, whose mind is not prepossessed with notions and distinctions, whereof not the least tittle is offered unto them from the texts mentioned, nor elsewhere, can but judge, that the law in every sense of it, and all sorts of works whatever, that at any time, or by any means, sinners or unbelievers do or can perform are, not in this or that sense, but every way and in all senses excluded from our justification before God. And if it be so, it is the righteousness of Christ alone which we must betake ourselves unto, or this matter must cease forever. — Doct. of Justification, chap, xiv.

Since, therefore, it is in Christ alone, as our head, representative, and surety, that we are or can be justified, he alone should have the glory. He is infinitely worthy to have the unrivalled honour. Let the sinner, then, the ungodly wretch, trust in the obedience of the dying Jesus, as being absolutely sufficient to justify him, without any good works or duties, without any good habits or qualities, however performed or acquired; and eternal Truth has declared for his encouragement, that he shall not be disappointed.

Here, sinner, self-ruined and self-condemned; even you that are tempted to execrate the day of your birth, on account of your multiplied provocations and utter unworthiness; here is a complete righteousness revealed for your full relief and immediate comfort. In this righteousness you may read the Divine character; JUST, YET THE JUSTIFIER OF THE UNGODLY. True it is, if nothing but equity had appeared in Jehovah's name, nothing but misery could have been expected by the guilty. But when we behold the idea of a compassionate Saviour, connected with that of a righteous Judge; such a character, though supremely venerable, is greatly inviting. For it speaks deliverance, and administers consolation. Yes, disconsolate soul, though you have no righteousness, nor any recommendation, yet the wisdom of God has appointed a way, and the infinite riches of sovereign grace have provided effectual means for your full discharge before the great tribunal, and for attaining that honour and joy, which are commensurate to your utmost wishes, which exceed your highest conceptions, and shall render you happy to all eternity. Is my reader oppressed with guilt, and harassed with tumultuous fears of deserved ruin! wearied with *going about to establish his own righteousness*, and sensible that he is possessed of no worth, nor any thing that might be a probable mean of recommending him to the Redeemer? Remember, distressed fellow mortal, that no such recommendation is needful. Nothing is required at your hand for any such purpose. "Come, and take *freely*," is the language, of Jesus. He has all that you want, however impoverished; and he gives all with the most liberal hand. *Grace reigns* and let that be your encouragement when thinking about acceptance with Christ, and of your justification in him before the Almighty.

If my reader, notwithstanding all that has been said, should yet think it prudent and safe to depend on his own obedience, let me remind him before I dismiss the subject, of the absolute purity and infinite holiness, the transcendent majesty and awful glories of that GOD with whom he has to do, and before whom he must soon appear. Consider, presumptuous mortal! that with your supreme Judge is terrible majesty. That *He is of purer eyes than to look upon evil, and cannot behold iniquity, will by no means clear the guilty, and is a consuming fire.* His righteous judgment is, *that those who commit sin are worthy of death;* and, therefore, his law denounces an awful curse on every offender. Remember that he, whose divine prerogative it is to justify, is a *jealous God;* jealous of his honour, as a righteous governor, and determined to support the rights of his throne. So terrible his indignation, that, when once his wrath is kindled, it will consume every refuge of lies, *and burn to the lowest hell.* So awfully majestic is Jehovah, that before him the everlasting *mountains quake, the pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof.* As his condescending smile irradiates the countenances of angels, and crowns them with unutterable bliss; so his righteous frown is nothing less than absolute destruction. So flaming his purity, and so dazzling his glory, that he *looketh to the moon and it shineth not, and the stars are not pure in his sight.* In his presence the seraphim, those most exalted of mere creatures, veil *their faces and cover their feet,* in token of profound humiliation; while they cry in loud responsive strains, *HOLY! HOLY! HOLY!* is the LORD OF HOSTS! *How, then,* to use the language of Bildad in Job, *how, then, can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean,* before his Maker, *that is born of woman?* When he whose eyes are as a flame of fire, whose peculiar province it is to search the human heart, and to explore its latent evils; when he shall sift your conduct, and mark your offences, *laying judgment to the line and righteousness to the plummet,* you will not be able to *answer him one of a thousand:* and to what refuge will you then flee? Trusting in your own duties, you slight the great atonement, you despise the revealed righteousness, and Christ shall profit you nothing. You may talk in lofty strains about man's moral excellence, and the dignity of human nature, the worth of personal obedience, and the efficacy of penitential tears: you may declaim upon the necessity of good works, and reject with disdain the doctrine of imputed righteousness, while your conscience is unimpressed with a sight of the Divine purity, and with a sense of the Divine presence: but when you come to consider yourself as before the Most HIGH, and that the important question is, *How shall I be just before the Most HOLY?* - when you form your ideas of the God of heaven, not from the character you have drawn of him in your own imagination, but agreeably to that which is given in the inspired volume; then your pretensions to personal worthiness must subside, and your mouth must be stopped. Or, if not entirely silent, you must exclaim with the men of Bethshemesh, when Jehovah's hand was heavy upon them; *Who is able to stand before this Holy Lord God?* Then, if the atonement be not presented for your immediate relief, you will be ready to add, *Who shall dwell with devouring fire, who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?*

The Holy Spirit, speaking in the Scripture, directs us to conceive of justification as *before God* and in *his sight*. Intimating, that, when final acceptance is the subject of our inquiry, we should look upon ourselves as in the immediate presence of Him who will soon ascend the *great white throne*, to pass the irreversible sentence; that we should consider on what ground we shall be able to stand, when *heaven and earth shall flee away from the face of our Eternal Judge, and no place shall, be found for them*. Yes, reader, if you would not deceive yourself in a matter of the last importance; if you would come to a satisfactory persuasion, in what righteousness you may venture to trust, you should consider yourself as at the bar of God, and as having a cause depending which is pregnant with your everlasting fate; a cause which must inevitably issue, either in your eternal happiness, or infinite misery. You should anticipate, in your own meditations, that great decisive day, and then ask your own conscience, "On what shall I then depend, or what shall I dare to plead when my astonished eyes behold my Judge?" Because it would be superlative folly for you to rely on any obedience now, or to dispute for it as necessary to justification, of which your own conscience cannot approve as a plea that will then be admitted as valid.

Consider the ingenuous acknowledgments and deep confessions, which the greatest saints and holiest men that ever lived have made of their impurity and sinfulness, when their acceptance with that sublime Being, who is *glorious in holiness*, came under consideration. Job was an eminent saint: he had not his equal on earth, according to the testimony of God himself. Conscious of his integrity, he avowed it before men, and vindicated his exemplary conduct against the accusations of censorious friends. But when the Almighty addressed him, and when he considers himself as standing before the Divine tribunal, he says not a word about his inherent rectitude, or his pious performances. Then, in language of the deepest self-abasement, he exclaims, *Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*. Yea, he declares, *If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me. If I say I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, in my own apprehensions, yet, before Him that is infinitely holy, I would be so far from pleading my own extraordinary attainments, that I would not know my soul; nay, I would despise my life, with all its most shining accomplishments. For if I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet shalt Thou, O righteous and eternal Judge, plunge me in the ditch; manifest me, notwithstanding all my endeavours to obtain purity and find acceptance, to be a polluted creature and a guilty criminal. So abominably filthy and highly criminal, that my own clothes, were they sensible of my pollution and guilt, would abhor me. For He, to whom I am accountable, is not a man as I am, but a being of such discernment, that the minutest faults cannot escape his notice; and so perfectly holy, that the least spot of defilement is infinitely abhorrent in his sight. It is therefore absolutely impossible that I should answer him, plead my cause and gain acceptance, on the foundation of my own obedience; or that we should, on any such footing, come together in judgment, without inevitable ruin to my person and all my immortal interests.* (Job 60:5; 52:6; 9:20, 21, 30-32) David, the man after God's own heart, made it his earnest

request that God would *not enter into judgment with him* according to the tenor of his own obedience: being well aware 'that neither he nor any man living could be justified in that way. To rebuke the pride of self-righteous confidence, with emotions of holy reverence and sacred awe, he asks, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities; O Lord, who shall stand, who can be acquitted?* (Ps. cxlii. 2; cxxx. 3) Isaiah also, though an eminent prophet, and a distinguished servant of God, when he beheld Jehovah's glory, and heard the seraphim proclaim his holiness, loudly exclaimed, *Wo is me! for I am undone! because I am a man of unclean lips.* Nor was his consternation removed, of his conscience relieved, till pardon through the atonement was applied to him. (Isa. 4:2-7)

Now, is it prudent, or can it be safe, to trust in your own imperfect duties, when persons of such eminent character and exalted piety made these acknowledgments, and had such views of themselves and of their own attainments? If *their* personal obedience would not bear the Divine scrutiny, what a wretched figure must *yours* make before the heart-searching God? If Jehovah *charge his angels with folly*, and if the heavens be not pure in his sight; what then is man, who drinketh iniquity like water, that he should presume to *be clean, or the son of man, that he should pretend to be righteous?* For, between human obedience and angelic holiness, there is no more comparison than between a clod of the field and a star in the firmament. *Vain man would be wise, though he is born like a wild ass's colt:* proud man would be righteous, though loathsome with sin and obnoxious to ruin. But, however highly the self-sufficient may think of their own obedience, the sinner, whose conscience is pressed with a sense of guilt, and every real Christian will deprecate appearing in their own righteousness, before the final judge. Yea, the man who is taught of God will ardently cry, "Fall upon me, ye rocks! cover me, ye mountains! yea, rather let me lose my existence than appear before the Most Holy in the filthy rags of my own duties; or in any righteousness but that which is perfect, in any obedience but that which is divine."

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