

OF JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS iii. 24.—*Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*

THE first of those benefits which the called do partake of is justification, which is the great relative change made upon them, bringing them out of the state of condemnation, wherein they are born, and live till they come to Christ. In the text we have,

1. The persons justified, sinners, viz. believing in Christ. It is the justification of a sinner that the apostle speaks of, as is implied in the connection, ver. 23, 24. 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: *being justified freely by his grace*; but believing, ver. 26.—the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.'

2. The party justifying, God the judge of all, his grace. It is God's act to justify a sinner.

3. The manner and moving cause, *freely by his grace*. It is done freely, without any thing of ours done by us to procure or merit it; and it flows from God's grace or free favour to undeserving and ill deserving creatures.

4. The material and meritorious cause, *the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. He has paid the price and ransom whereby the sinner is set free.

The text affords this great and important doctrinal note, viz.

Doctr. 'The justification of a sinner before God is of free grace, through the satisfaction of Christ.'

In discoursing from this subject I shall shew,

I. What it is to justify a sinner, in general, in the scriptural sense.

II. What are the parts of justification.

III. The cause of our justification.

IV. Apply the subject.

1. I shall shew what it is to justify a sinner, in general, in the scripture-sense. Justification and sanctification are indeed inseparable. In vain do they pretend to be justified who are not sanctified; and in vain do they fear they are not justified, who are sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, 1 Cor. vi. 11. But yet they are distinct benefits, not to be confounded, nor taken for one and the same.

Justification is not the making of a person just and righteous, by infusing grace or holiness unto him. But it is a discharging him from guilt, and declaring or pronouncing him righteous. So it is a law-term taken from courts of judicature, wherein a person is ac-

cused, tried, and after trial absolved. Thus the scripture opposeth it to accusation and condemnation, Rom. viii. 33, 34. 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,' Deut. xxv. 1. 'They shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.' And so it is declared to be a sin to justify the wicked, Prov. xvii. 15. not to make them righteous, but to pronounce them righteous. Hence it follows, that,

1. Justification is not a real change of the sinner's nature, but a relative change of his state. The change of the sinner's nature, from sin to holiness, is inseparably annexed to it: but it is only the bringing him out of the state of condemnation, and setting him beyond the reach of the law, as a righteous person, which is an unspeakable benefit.

2. Justification is an act done and passed in an instant in the court of heaven, as soon as the sinner believes in Christ; and not a work carried on by degrees. For if a sinner be not perfectly justified, he is not justified at all. If a man were accused of ten capital crimes, if one of them be fixed upon him, he is condemned, and must die. And hence also, though one may be more sanctified than another, yet no believer is in the sight of God more justified than another, since the state of justification is not capable of degrees.

II. I proceed to shew what are the parts of justification.

These are two, the pardoning of sin, and the accepting of the sinner's person as righteous. This double benefit is conferred on the sinner in justification. That we may the more clearly take up this matter, we must view the process of a sinner's justification. And here,

First, God himself sits Judge in this process, Psal. ix. 4. 'Thou sittest in the throne judging right.' He gave the law; and as he is the Lawgiver, so he is the Judge of all the earth. Men may justify themselves, Luke x. 29. and others may justify them: but what does it avail, if God do not justify them? for only he has the authority and power to do it, Rom. viii. 33. 'It is God that justifieth.' Many a man looking overly into his own state and case, passes a very favourable sentence on himself, and his way may be so blameless before the world, that others must judge him a righteous man too; but the judgment of God comes after, and reverses all. And he only can justify authoritatively and irreversibly. For,

1. He only is the Lawgiver, and he only has power to save or to destroy, and therefore the judgment must be left to him, Jam. iv. 12. The case concerns his honour and law, and must be tried at his

tribunal; and whoever takes it in hand, he will call it to his own bar.

2. To him the debt is owing, and therefore he only can give the discharge. Against him the crime is committed, and he only can pardon it. Accept us as righteous who will, if he do it not, who gave the law of righteousness, it is nothing, Mark ii. 7.

Secondly, The sinner is cited to answer before God's judgment-seat, by the messengers of God, the ministers of the gospel, Mal. iii. 1. Every sermon an unconverted sinner hears, is a summons put into his hand to answer for his living in a state and course of sin. He is told he has broken God's law, and he must go to God and see what he will answer, and what course he will take with his debt. But, alas! for the most part sinners are so secure, that they sit the summons, slight it, and will not appear.

But that is not all. Some keep themselves out of the messenger's way; either they will not come at all, or very seldom to the public assemblies where the summons is given, Heb. x. 25. But the leaving of the summons there will hold in law before him that sends them, and the dust of the messenger's feet will be sufficient witness to the execution, Matt. x. 14. Some never read the summons, they never once seriously consider or apply to themselves the word preached. They hear it as if they heard it not, it never sinks into their hearts. Others tear the summons in pieces; their hearts, like Ahab in the case of Micaiah, rise against the word and the bearer of it, and they hate both, as speaking no good of them. Some affront the messengers, and sometimes lay violent hands on them, Matth. xxii. 6. And thus some sit the summons all their days, and never appear till death bring them under his black rod, before the tribunal in another world, where there is no access to justification or pardon. But God suffers none of his elect to do so always.

Thirdly, The Lord the Judge sends out other messengers, and they apprehend the sinner, lay hands on him to carry him, whether he will or not, before the judgment-seat, and oblige him to abide his trial. And these are two, the Spirit of bondage, and an awakened conscience, John xvi. 8, 9. Prov. xx. 27. These will catch the man, and hunt him till they find him out, when they have got their order, Jer. ii. 27. They apprehended Paul when going to Damascens, and left him not till he appeared, and submitted himself.

But it is not always so. Some that are apprehended get out of the messenger's hands, and make their escape unhappily. When they are caught, they are unruly prisoners, they struggle and wrestle, and strive against the Spirit, and their own consciences, Acts vii. 51. they go no farther with them than they are dragged

They get the mastery at length over their conscience, break its bonds, and stifle its convictions, and so grieve and quench the Spirit, that they get away to their own ruin; like Cain, Saul, Felix, &c. But none of God's elect ever get away altogether.

Fourthly, Then the elect soul is infallibly sisted at length before the judgment-seat. The Spirit of bondage and the awakened conscience apprehend him afresh, and bring their prisoner in chains of guilt unto the bar trembling, and he can escape the trial no longer, before a holy God, Acts xvi. 29, 30. Then what fear, sorrow and anxiety, seize the prisoner's soul, while he sees a just Judge on the throne, a strict and severe law laid before him, and he has a guilty conscience within! And he must undergo a trial for his life, not the life of the body only, but of soul and body for evermore. These things may seem idle tales to some; but if ye have not experienced the reality of them, ye shall do it, or dreadful shall the judgment after death be to you.

Fifthly, Then the indictment, or criminal libel, is read in the ears of the trembling sinner before the Judge, and that by the law, which manages the accusation so as the pannel shall stand speechless, Rom. iii. 10—19. Every one of the ten commands accuse him of innumerable evils and transgressions. His omissions and commissions are laid in broadband before him; his sins of heart, lip and life, and the sin of his nature, are all charged upon him, and that with their several aggravations. And sentence is demanded against the pannel, according to justice, and agreeable to the law, Gal. iii. 10. 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.'

Sixthly, Then the sinner must plead guilty or not, to the indictment. Indeed, if he were innocent, he might plead not guilty, deny the libel, and thereupon he would be justified. But, alas! this plea is not for us poor sinners. For, (1.) It is utterly false, Rom. iii. 10. Eccl. vii. 20. Jam. iii. 2. And, (2.) Falsehood can never bear out before God's judgment-seat. There is no want of evidence to prove all. Conscience within is as a thousand witnesses, and will testify against the sinner. The Judge is omniscient, and there is no concealing of our crimes from him. Therefore this plea will not do, Rom. iii. 20. The sinner then must needs plead guilty, confess the libel, and every article of it, acknowledge the debt, and every article of it, though he is utterly unable to pay, Rom. iii. 19.

Seventhly, The sinner being convicted by his own confession as guilty, is put to it to plead, What he has to say why the sentence of death eternal should not pass against him, according to law and justice, and why he should not be hauled from the judgment-seat to

execution. Here, what shall he plead at this awful period of time, where his state for eternity is just upon the turning point? Shall he plead mercy for mere mercy's sake, casting himself down at the Judge's feet? Justice interposes betwixt mercy and the sinner, and pleads that the Judge of all the earth must do right, that he cannot prostitute his honour for the safety of rebels, but must magnify the law, and make it honourable. The truth of God interposes, and says, the word is already gone out of the Judge's mouth, and must be accomplished, That without shedding of blood there is no remission. Whither shall the sinner turn now? Can the saints help? No; they cannot spare any of their oil. Can angels do nothing? No; their united stock would not be sufficient to clear the debt. The sinner then must die the death, and sink under his own burden, if help come not from another quarter. So,

Eighthly, The formerly despised Mediator, the great Advocate at this court, who takes the desperate causes of sinners in hand, and expedites them, offers himself now, in this extremity, to the sinner, with his perfect righteousness, and all his salvation. The sinner embraces him with heart and good-will, enters into the covenant, by faith lays hold on him, renounces all other claims, and betakes himself to his alone merits and suretyship. Now is the sinner united to Christ, and by virtue of that union has communion with him, particularly in his righteousness, and so stands before God in the white raiment of the Mediator's righteousness. Now has the sinner a plea that will infallibly bring him off.

He pleads, he is guilty indeed; yet he must not die, for Christ has died for him. The debt was a just debt; but the Cautioner has paid it, and therefore he craves up his discharge. The law's demands were just; but they are all answered already, both as to doing and suffering. The soul is now married to Christ; and therefore, if the law or justice want any thing, they must seek it of the Husband, and not of her, seeing the soul is thereby put under covert. Therefore the convicted believing sinner gets in under the covert of the Mediator's blood, which stands open in that court; and there stands and pleads against all that law or justice can demand, that he must not die, but be graciously acquitted.

Lastly, Hereupon God the great Judge sustaining the plea passes the sentence of justification on the sinner, according to the everlasting agreement that passed betwixt the Father and the Son, Isa. liii. 11. The pannel gets the white stone and new name, and so is for ever set beyond the reach of condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. This is excellently described by Elihu, Job xxxiii. 22, 23, 24. 'Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers. If

there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.' This great benefit consists of two parts, as I observed before.

FIRST, The pardon of sin, Acts xiii. 38, 39. 'Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' The sinner having this act of grace passed in his favour, is fully indemnified as to all crimes committed by him against the honour and law of the King of heaven, so as they shall never be charged upon him any more. Here I shall shew,

1. What pardon is.
2. The properties of it.
3. Its many sweet names, that discover the nature of it.

First, I shall shew what pardon is. It is not the taking away the nature of sin, pardoned sin is still sin; God justifies the sinner, but will never justify his sin. Nor is it the removing of the intrinsic demerit of sin; it still deserves condemnation, though it shall never actually condemn the sinner, Rom. viii. 1. Nor is it a simple delay of the punishment, a reprieve is no pardon.

There are four things to be considered in sin. (1.) The reigning power of it, which is broken in regeneration and sanctification, Rom. vi. 14. (2.) The blot and stain, which is taken away in the gradual advances of sanctification, 1 Cor. vi. 11. (3.) The indwelling power, which is removed in glorification, Heb. xii. 23. (4.) The guilt, which is taken away in pardon.

Guilt is an obligation to punishment. The guilt of an unjustified sinner is an obligation lying upon his head, to bear the wrath and eternal vengeance of God, to satisfy justice for the breaking of his law. It is a bond binding him to go to the prison of hell, and lie there till he hath paid the utmost farthing of his debt of sin, 2 Thess. i. 9. It arises from the sanction of the law, Gen. ii. 17. So that the sinner, like Shimei, having broke his confinement, is a man of death.

Pardon is the taking away of this guilt, this dreadful obligation. While the criminal stands bound with the cords of guilt for execution, a pardoning God says, 'Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom, Job xxxiii. 24. Pardon cuts the knot, whereby guilt ties sin and wrath together, cancels the bond obliging the sinner to pay his debt, reverses the sentence of condemnation, and puts him out of the law's reach.

Secondly, I am to shew the properties of this pardon.—These are chiefly three. It is,

1. Full: Micah vii. 19. ‘Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.’ Col. ii. 13.—‘Having forgiven you all trespasses.’ All the man’s sins are pardoned together. God gives no half-pardons; it suits not either the riches of his grace, nor the sinner’s necessity. For one leak will sink the ship, and so will one unpardoned sin damn the soul. Great and small sins, sins against the gospel and the law, the most and least heinous, in the happy hour of pardon, sink down all together into the sea of the Redeemer’s blood, Jer. l. 20. And every sin is fully pardoned.

As to the question, Whether all sins, past, present, and to come, are pardoned together and at once in justification? As to sins past and present, there is no difficulty, they are all at once pardoned. As to sins to come, a justified person, being in Christ, can never more incur the guilt of eternal wrath, but only the guilt of fatherly chastisements, so that the pardon before described needs never be renewed. And the only pardon a justified person has to seek is that of the guilt of fatherly anger with the intimation of the other pardon. For if a justified person could ever again be liable actually to the eternal wrath of God for his sin, then either he must fall from his union with Christ, which is indissoluble, or he may be in Christ, and yet under condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. Besides, a person once in Christ is no more under the dominion of the law, and therefore cannot be under its curse, Rom. vi. 14. and vii. 4*.

2. Free: So says the text, *Being justified freely*, Col. ii. 13. It is free to us, though to Christ it was the price of blood. What have we to give for a pardon? Could we weep as many tears as the sea has drops, afflict ourselves as many years as the world has stood minutes, it would not buy a pardon, since it is not infinite, Psal. xlv. 8. Our best duties are but rags, and cannot cover the menstruous rags, and would but cover one unclean thing with another; the sins of our unrighteousness with the sins of our righteousness. The sinner never pays for it, nor can pay for it, Isa. xliii. 24, 25.

3. Unalterable and irrevocable. Temporal mercies are lent, but pardon is given; it is a grace-gift, (Rom. xi. 29.), that God never repents of bestowing. When God writes a sinner’s pardon, who ever quarrel it, conscience, Satan, &c. God says, What I have written, I have written. Come after what will, it must stand for ever. No following misdemeanors can take it off, Jer. xxxi. 34. ‘I

* See the author’s *Miscellaneous Questions*, quest. 2.

will forget their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.' Isa. liv. 9.—'I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee, &c. A child of God may lose the sense of his pardon, but the pardon itself is written in the Mediator's blood, and so is one of those same mercies mentioned, Isa. lv. 3.

Thirdly, Farther to shew the nature of pardon of sin, it has many sweet names, discovering its nature. And,

1. It is a blotting out of sin: 'I, even I,' says Jehovah, 'am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake,' Isa. xliii. 25. This is an allusion to a creditor, who, when he discharges a debt, scores it out of his count-book. Sin is a debt, the worst of debts. We cannot pay it, we cannot escape the hands of our creditor. And, alas! we are ready to deny our debt, will not come to count and reckoning, as long as we can get it shifted. So the debt stands in God's book. But the sinner being apprehended, as said is, he is brought to count and reckoning. God produces the large account. The sinner's heart falls at the sight; he falls down, confesses his debt, and his inability to pay, flies to the great Cautioner, saying, 'Undertake for me,'—Psal. cxix. 122; and Christ says, All thy wants be upon me. Then God takes the pen, dips it in the Mediator's blood, and cross-scores all the sinner's account, Acts iii. 19. Col. ii. 14.

2. A not imputing of sin, Psal. xxxii. 2, 'Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.' This is a metaphor from merchants, who, when a rich friend undertakes for one of their poor debtors, charge their accounts no more upon him; they will seek him no more for it. God took Christ's single bond for the debt of all that would put themselves in Christ's poor roll by faith. So as soon as a sinner comes to Christ by faith, and gives in his name as a broken man unable to pay his debt, accepting of Christ as Cautioner, God imputes sin no more to that man. What accounts have been taken on by the sinner, he leaves the Son to clear with his Father. This is sustained in the court of heaven: the Creditor and the Cautioner take the matter between them, and the debt is charged no more on the sinner.

3. A taking of the burden of sin from off the sinner, Psal. xxxii. 1. Hos. xiv. 2. Sin is a heavy burden, a burden increasing every day, to the unpardoned sinner. It sunk down the angels from their first habitation, and is a weight that they and the damned in hell are wrestling under at this day, but unable to get it off. The unawakened sinner finds it not; but when the conscience is awakened, it burdens the sinner all over; it is a burden on his head, on his spirit, on his back. In the day of pardon, the sinner falls

down under his burden, looks to Christ the great Burden-bearer, and God comes and takes his burden off his back, and bids him stand upright. And none else can do it, Numb. xiv. 17, 18, 19.

4. A washing of the sinner, 1 Cor. vi. 11. 'But ye are washed.' They that have unpardoned guilt on them, they have not only a heavy, but a foul, filthy burden on them.—And they must be washed and thoroughly washed, for it sticks closely to the soul, Psal. li. 2. 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' Hence the Lord offers, Isa. i. 18. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' In the day of pardon, the Lord sprinkles the sinner with the Mediator's blood, and he is made clean, yea dips him in that fountain, Zech. xiii. 1; and he is purged and purified from all sin, 1 John i. 7.

5. A dismissing or remission of sin, Matth. vi. 12. Rom. iii. 25. God does not only take it away, but sends it away. The sinner's guilt is laid over on Christ, as the scape-goat who bears it away never to return on the sinner. Sin is a strong tie, whereby the sinner is bound down to the pit, so as he cannot lift up his head to the Lord with true confidence. Pardon brings a relaxation to the sinner, cutting asunder these cords of death. It is a sending sin, away from the sinner, back to the devil from whence it came.

6. The dispelling of a thick cloud, Isa. xliv. 22. Sin is a cloud rising from below: a watery cloud, a black cloud, a thick cloud: which once drowned the whole world, except those in the ark. It hangs night and day over the head of the unpardoned sinner, go where he will. He cannot see the face of God through it; it veils his mercy, wraps him up in blackness of darkness, that he can have no communion with heaven. But pardon, like the shining sun, breaks through the cloud, and dissolves it; and like a mighty wind, there is a breathing from the throne of grace, that rends the cloud and scatters it, be it never so thick; so that all the sinner's guilt as a cloud vanishes away, and appears no more. Thus the soul is restored to the light of God's countenance, and may look up with confidence and joy, Job xxxiii. 24, 26.

7. A casting of sin behind the Lord's back, Isa. xxxviii. 17. David says, 'his sin was ever before him,' Psal. li. 4. before him as the accuser stood before the accused face to face. Praying for pardon, he prays God would hide his face from it, Psal. li. 9. A pardoning God will not look on the sin of the sinner that is in Christ, Numb. xxiii. 21. 'He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.' The Lord sitting on a throne of grace,

to which the believer carries his process from the throne of strict justice, when Satan gives in his bill or libel against the believer, takes it and casts it away behind his back, as not to look on it, nor charge him with it.

8. A casting it into the depths of the sea, Mic. vii. 19.—O the fulness of that expression! He will not cast them into a brook or river, what falls in there may be got up again perhaps; but into the sea, where we reckon a thing dead that falls. But there are some shallow places in the sea; he will cast them into the depths of the sea, these devouring depths. But what if they sink not? he will cast them in with force and power, that they shall go to the ground, and sink as lead in the ocean of the blood of Christ.

9. A covering of sin, Psal. xxxii. 1. This is an allusion to what the Lord commanded the Israelites in their camp in the wilderness, Deut. xxiii. 14. It is the same word in the Hebrew. It is a covering of it so as to hide it, that it shall not appear. Sin is the worst of pollutions, but a pardon spreads a cover over it, that it shall not appear any more. God condemned sin in the flesh of Christ, Rom. viii. 3. and therefore, as soon as the soul takes hold of Christ, the word of pardon goes out of the King's mouth, and sin, like the face of Haman, in such a case, is covered never to see the light any more.

10. *Lastly*, Which crowns all, a not remembering of sin, Jer. xxxi. 34. What can be said more to shew the fulness of pardon? Many forgive, but they will never forget the offences done them: but our God, when he pardons, not only forgives, but as it were forgets the injury done to his glory by the sinner. It is true, God's perfections cannot admit a proper forgetting; but the believer's sins are forgotten in law; there is an irreversible act of oblivion passed upon them all in the court of heaven; and God will not only not exact the punishment of them, but will treat believers as kindly as if they had never offended him. Looking on them through Christ, he beholds them without spot.

Behold the way to be secured against sin's finding you out in wrath. O unspeakable benefit! Well may we sing and say with David, Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.'

SECONDLY, The acceptation of the person as righteous in the sight of God. God justifying a sinner does not only pardon his sin, but accepts and accounts his person righteous in his sight, 2 Cor. v. 21. 'He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Rom. iv.

6. 'Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.' Chap. v. 19. 'By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' This is the import of justifying, namely, a declaring, accepting, or accounting one righteous, as one who being pursued before a court, gets his absolution, and is declared an honest man in the point wherewith he was charged. There is a twofold acceptation in point of righteousness here to be carefully distinguished.

1. An acceptation of a man's works as righteous. 2. Of his person. All righteousness is a conformity to a law. Whatsoever comes up to what the law demands, is righteous; and what doth not is unrighteous. God hath given unto man a law, viz. the moral law, which is the eternal rule of righteousness, that never changes. So all righteousness in the sight of God is a conformity unto that law. And there is no conformity to the law, but what is so in all points. So that righteousness is a perfect conformity to the ten commands in full obedience. Now, there is,

1. An acceptation of a man's works as righteous, Gal. iii. 12. 'The man that doth them shall live in them.' He that doth his works in a full conformity to the law, his works shall be accepted as righteous. But where is the man that can so do? The man Christ did so, and his works were accepted as righteous. But since God's judgment is according to truth, and he cannot account things to be what really they are not; and it is evident that even a believer's works are not righteous in the eye of the law; God neither doth nor can, in the justifying of a sinner, accept and account his works as righteous. So that this acceptation has no place in our justification. And though some of a believer's works, namely, his good works, are accepted of God, Dent. xxxiii. 11. Isa. lvi. 7. yet that is not in point of justification, but of sanctification; not as righteous, but as sincere tokens of their love to God, as the father accepts the work of his child, though it be not quite right, 2 Cor. viii. 12.

2. An acceptation of a man's person as righteous, Eph. i. 6.—'Hath made us accepted in the Beloved.' This may be done without any eye to a work done by the man himself. If a man were processed for a debt he really took on, and which he never paid in his own person, yet if he can produce the discharge of the debt given to one that paid it for him, he will be absolved and the law will declare him to be owing nothing to the pursuer. Thus his person is accepted as righteous; and thus the believer is accepted as a righteous person in justification, though his works are not.

To be accepted as righteous, then, is to be accounted conformable to the law, a person of whom the law has what it requires, and of

whom it has no more to demand. Its demands are extremely high ; universal, perfect, and uninterrupted obedience. But the believer, when he is justified, is accepted, as one in respect of whom the debt is paid to the uttermost farthing, Rom. iii. ult. and x. 4. Col. ii. 10. This is an unspeakable benefit ; for thereby,

(1.) The bar in the way of abounding mercy is taken away, so that the rivers of compassion may flow towards the believer, Rom. v. 1. &c. Job xxxiii. 24, &c. Many look confidently for the mercy of God, that will be disappointed ; the unsatisfied law will draw a bar between them, and lock up saving mercy under the bars of God's justice and truth, which cannot be broken. But the believer being accepted as righteous, the law's mouth is stopt, justice and truth have nothing to object against mercy's flowing to them.

(2.) The person is by this means adjudged to eternal life, even agreeably to the constitution of the law, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. Acts xxvi. 18. Life was promised in the first covenant upon the fulfilling of the law. Now, the law having all it can demand of the believer, it is very agreeable thereto, that he be adjudged to everlasting life. Thus what sets salvation far from unbelievers, contributes to the believer's security. As if two men had been bound severally in one tack, and both desire to go away at a certain time, the conditions are fulfilled for the one, but not for the other. The tack that secures the one's liberty, will hold the other fast ; till the conditions be fulfilled, he cannot go. So all men were bound in the covenant of works to yield perfect obedience ; but having failed, Christ substituted himself in the room of those chosen from among them to everlasting life, and gave complete obedience to the law in their name and place ; on that account they are accepted and adjudged to eternal life, and that agreeably to the law, which has got all its demands of them in their Surety. But the rest being still under the law, must perish.

(3.) The accusations of Satan and the clamours of an evil conscience are hereby to be stilled. See how the apostle triumphs over and bids a defiance to all the believer's accusers, Rom. viii. 33, 34. ' Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? It is God that justifieth : who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right-hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.' God's sentence of justification may be opposed to the condemnation that one may be laid under from devils and men. He that has the discharge of the debt in his pocket, needs not fear what any can say or do unto him on account of the debt.

(4.) *Lastly*, He needs not seek acceptance of his person with God

by his works, for he has it already another way. This is the way hypocrites take for acceptance, that will not come to Christ. But, alas! they do not consider that they are labouring in vain; it is impossible to get it that way, Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32. 'What shall we say then? That the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.' It is one of the main differences betwixt the two covenants. In the first, man's works were to be accepted, and then his person; but in the second, first his person is accepted, and then his works. In the first, God dealt with man as a master with his servant, who pleases him just as he works his work; in the second, as a father with his child, who pleases his father as he is his own child, and so his work is taken off his hand, such as it is. So they that seek acceptance with God by their works, go quite contrary to the nature of the covenant of grace, and hold on the way of the covenant of works, in which one will never thrive now. But the believer is not required to seek acceptance with God in this fruitless way. So far of the parts of justification.

III. The next general head is to shew the cause of our justification, namely, the meritorious, or procuring or material cause of it. When we consider what the justification of a sinner is, well may we with wonder cry out, How can these things be! How can a guilty sinner be pardoned by a just and jealous God! an unrighteous one accepted as righteous, by an infinitely perfect judge! We see in the world, among men, such a thing brought to pass by several means.

1. By the powerfulness of the guilty party, that the judge dare not but let them go free. Some men are so unhappy for themselves and others as to be too strong for laws, as David complains of Joab and Abishai, saying, 'These men the sons Zeruiah be too hard for me,' 2 Sam. iii. ult. and their begging a pardon is in effect the commanding of it. But what is worm-man before the omnipotency of God! where is he that is able to make head against him, that in his favour he should 'pervert judgment?' Job xxxiv. 12, &c.

2. By the weakness of the judge's understanding, that he cannot fix guilt on the guilty. Sometimes the crime is so hiddenly committed, that man cannot say, this is the guilty man. Sometimes, when the judge is convinced of the party's guilt, yet he can by no means legally fix it on him, and so there is necessity to pass him.

But God is omniscient, and can never be at a loss to discover the guilty person, nor want evidence to fix it upon him, Psalm cxxxix. 7. 1 Sam. ii. 3.

3. By bribes. These blind the eyes of the wise and pervert judgment. But what can we give to God, who have nothing but what is his? Job xli. 11. His infinite fulness and all-sufficiency sets him beyond all possibility of affecting him thus, Job xxxvi. 19. And if we would essay to affect him with our goodness, repentance, or reformation, behold he is beyond these too, Job xxxv. 7. 'If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?'

4. *Lastly*, By feud or favour prevailing over respect to justice. But with God there is no respect of persons. All are alike to him. And he neither despises any, so as not to regard what they do, which sometimes make some guilty ones get free, Job xxxvi. 5. And there is no preposterous pity with him in prejudice of justice, as there is in some men of a too soft disposition, to execute justice, Psal. xi. 6, 7.

From all which it follows, that there is some just ground upon which a sinner believing is justified before God. And we must inquire what that is,

FIRST, Negatively. It is not upon any worth or merit in the sinner himself. The text rejects that, *Being justified freely by his grace*. We neither are nor can be justified by our inherent righteousness, or good works. For,

1. Scripture expressly teaches, that we are not nor can be justified by our own works, but by faith, which leads us to the righteousness of another, Rom. iii. 20, 28. (compare Psal. cxliii. 2.) Gal. ii. 16. All works are excluded without distinction or limitation, and faith and works are opposed; the latter being inconsistent with gospel-grace, Rom. xi. 6.

2. The way of a sinner's justification laid down in the gospel excludes boasting, Rom. iii. 27. But justification by works excludes it not, *ibid.* but leaves ground for it, Rom. iv. 2. It is the design of the gospel to exclude it, Eph. ii. 9. So that that way is opposite to the design of the gospel.

3. *Lastly*, All our good works are imperfect, Isa. lxiv. 6. and they are mixed with many sinful works, Jam. iii. 2. So that they can never make a righteousness which is truly and properly so in the eye of the law. And therefore to declare a man righteous on the account of them, would be to declare besides the truth. But 'we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth,' Rom. ii. 2. It must be a perfect righteousness on which a person can be justified

before a holy, just God. For the relaxation of the gospel is not, that an imperfect righteousness is accepted instead of a perfect one, Rom. iii. ult. This perfect righteousness can never be patched up of our imperfect pieces of obedience.

Nay, suppose we could perfectly obey the law from the moment of our conversion, yea, of our birth, all is due for itself. How could that satisfy for the sin we were born with, or our sins before conversion? Repentance and tears cannot satisfy. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. And if once the law get down the sinner to be satisfied of him, how shall he get up again?

And neither can they contribute so much as in part to justify us. For, (1.) At that rate the grace of God should be so far excluded, and some room left for boasting. (2.) The cleanest of our own robes would effectually ruin us, if not washed in the Lamb's blood. And (3.) Christ's righteousness is perfect, and not dealt by shreds.

SECONDLY, Positively. The righteousness of Christ is the procuring cause of our justification. In handling of this, I shall shew,

1. What Christ's righteousness is.
2. That we are justified by Christ's righteousness.
3. What way a sinner can be justified by a righteousness not wrought by himself, but by Christ.
4. How the justifying of a sinner thus consists with the honour of God's justice, and of his law.
5. How it consists with free grace.

First, I shall shew what Christ's righteousness is. There is a twofold righteousness of Christ. (1.) His essential righteousness, which he had from eternity as God. This was common to all the three persons, and natural; and therefore cannot be that righteousness of Christ whereby sinners are justified. (2.) His Mediatorial righteousness, peculiar to him as the Father's servant, and the Mediator betwixt God and man. This is it. And that was his conformity to the law, in the perfect obedience he gave it, when he put his neck under the yoke of the law for an elect world, to satisfy it, in all that it had to demand of them.

1. He obeyed the commands of it, Phil. ii. 18. All the ten commands in their utmost extent had their due from him, in both tables. He was born holy, without sin; he lived without blemish, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners; and was ever doing good. His obedience was universal; as to all the commands, he kept them; perfect as to every command, in the degrees of it required by the law; constant and perpetual, without the least interruption; and voluntary and unconstrained, in respect of the principle of heartiness and willingness in it. Thus he did, as became him, fulfil all righteousness, Matth. iii. 15.

2. He suffered the penalty of the law, which had been broken, Phil. ii. 8. The elect's debt was charged upon him completely, and he answered for it. Then 'he restored that which he took not away,' Psal. lxxix. 4. Death was the penalty, Gen. ii. 17. And death in its various shapes seized on him. The forerunners of it met him at his first entrance into the world, when he was born in a very low condition, and was forced to be carried into Egypt, to save him from Herod's bloody hands. They hung about him all the days of his life, so that he was a man of sorrows, though not of sin. At length death advanced against him with all its joint forces together: and heaven, earth, and hell, all set on him together, till they brought him to the dust of death; and then he was carried death's prisoner to the grave, where he lay till it was declared the debt was paid, and the law had no more to demand.

Thus he conformed himself to the law, and satisfied it in all points. And this was his righteousness, and that very righteousness upon which every believing sinner is justified, as a debtor is absolved from the creditor's libel of debt, seeing the debt is paid by a cautioner.

Secondly, I shall shew that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ.

1. This is the plain doctrine of the scriptures of the Old Testament, where he is called 'our righteousness,' Jer. xxiii. 6. See Isa. xlv. 24, 25. The apostle, 1 Cor. i. 30. tells us, that he is 'made righteousness to us,' not by affecting our righteousness, as he is our sanctification, for then justification and sanctification should be one and the same; but by imputation. And 2 Cor. v. 21. 'We are made the righteousness of God in him.' This was the only righteousness Paul desired to shelter himself under, Phil. iii. 9. In a word, he is the second Adam, Rom. v. 18, 19. 'Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

2. Our justification is the justification of the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5; which cannot be therefore by our own righteousness, but the righteousness of another, even of a Redeemer, according to that, Rom. v. 9. 'Much more being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;' our sins being imputed to him, and his righteousness to us, Gal. iii. 13. 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.'

3. *Lastly*, There is nothing else we can lay claim to, which can

satisfy the law. And it must needs be satisfied ere the sinner can be justified. For the law must be magnified and made honourable. Hence the scripture does so much notice, that by this way the law is established, which otherwise would be undermined, Rom. iii. 31. its righteousness fulfilled, Rom. viii. 4. and hath its end for perfection, chap. x. 4.

Thirdly, I proceed to shew, what way a sinner can be justified by a righteousness not wrought by himself, but by Christ. This will be clear, if ye consider these four concurring grounds.

1. Christ's suretyship which he voluntarily took on himself, Heb. vii. 22. What Christ did and suffered, he did and suffered as a public person, for an elect world, not as a private person for himself. They took on the debt, he paid it for them; what the law or justice had to demand of him, he undertook to clear for their behoof. Thus a foundation is laid for justification by his righteousness.

2. The gospel-offer wherein Christ and all his salvation and benefits are freely offered to all such as will receive the same. There he is offered in a suitableness to the needs of sinners, Rev. iii. 18. And, amongst other things, Christ with his righteousness, is offered to the unrighteous; as with his sanctifying Spirit to the unholy. Thus his righteousness is in a fair way to become theirs, as a free gift, to be theirs to whom it is offered.

3. The faith of the elect, whereby Christ's righteousness becomes actually theirs, Gal. ii. 16. 'Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.' For it is the very nature of faith to receive the free gift of righteousness, and by our receiving it upon the offer, it becomes ours. But there is no way to receive Christ's righteousness, but with himself; for God gives not Christ's benefits apart from himself, but with himself, which is the way of the covenant. And hence we may see three things:

(1.) That it is by faith only Christ's righteousness becomes ours, and that we have an actual interest in it, and are put in possession of it, Phil. iii. 9.—'The righteousness which is by faith.' Whatever foundation may be laid for it in the decree of God's election, and in Christ's satisfaction in our stead, yet it is not but by faith that we are possessed of it, or can plead it before the Lord. For as Adam's sin cannot hurt us till we have a being in him naturally; so Christ's righteousness cannot profit us till we be in him by faith.

(2.) How Christ's righteousness becomes ours by faith. Faith

unites us to Christ in the way of the spiritual marriage-covenant, Eph. ii. 17. Being united to him, we have a communion with him in all the benefits of his purchase, and so in his righteousness, which is one of the chief of them. He himself is ours by faith; and so all that is his is ours for our good. This union being most real, the communion is so too. And hence we are said to be ‘crucified with him,’ Gal. ii. 20; ‘buried with him,’ Rom. vi. 4; yea, ‘raised with him,’ Eph. ii. 6.

(3.) How we are justified by faith. Not that faith is our righteousness; for our righteousness is not our faith, but we get it by faith, Phil. iii. 9. We are justified by it instrumentally, as we say one is enriched by a marriage, when by it he gets what makes him rich. So that faith is that whereby the soul is married to Christ; and being married to him, has communion with him in his righteousness, which justifies the person before God.

4. God’s imputation, whereby he reckons Christ’s righteousness to be the believer’s in law: as the judge sustains the husband’s payment for the wife’s, and so absolves her from any action the pursuer can have against her for the debt, Rom. iv. 6. This imputation or reckoning of the judge is according to the truth of the thing, Christ’s righteousness being really the believer’s righteousness antecedently to the imputation, namely, by faith. So that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to the believer, because it is really his; and it is not therefore really his, because it is imputed to him.

Fourthly, I come now to shew how the justifying of a sinner thus consists with the honour of God’s justice, and of his law. Very well does it so consist; for God’s justice and law have more honour by Christ’s obedience and death, than they could have had by the obedience or death of the justified party.

1. What are all the creatures together in comparison of the Son of God, in point of greatness and excellency? Did David’s men say of him, who was but a creature of their own kind, ‘Thou art worth ten thousand of us?’ 2 Sam. xviii. 3. so may not we say of him, who was the Father’s fellow, ‘Thou art worth ten thousand worlds of us?’ When a king puts his own Son, and heir to the crown, to death, for transgressing the laws, his justice is more conspicuous, and the law more honoured, than by the execution of a thousand ordinary malefactors. So that we may say, that God’s justice, and respect to his law, appeared more in mount Calvary, than it does in hell; for in the one was God, in the other were creatures groaning out for a broken law.

2. Suppose the company of the justified had, for the honour of the law and justice, been all sent to hell together; yet they would ever

have been but satisfying, they never could have come up to the full satisfaction, so as there might be no more to demand of them. For infinite justice can never be completely satisfied by a finite creature; and therefore hell-torments are eternal. But here, by Jesus Christ, justice gets the least and last farthing paid down? and the law has till it can demand no more, John xix. 30.

3. *Lastly*, By Christ's obedience and death, law and justice are honoured both actively and passively. Now, if Adam had stood and been justified by his works, they had been only glorified actively. If the now justified had been damned for their sin, and suffered for it for ever, they had been only glorified passively; but now, by this way of the Mediator's suretyship, they are glorified both ways. He has obeyed the law's commands to the least. He has suffered the wrath and curse of God to the utmost, which the creature could never have done; and borne it with that patience, submission, and resignation, and is quite beyond the reach of a mere creature, Isa. liii. 7.

So the believer's justification is on the surest grounds. The justice of God and his law consent to it, as that which is more for their honour than the ruin of the sinner.

Fifthly, I come now to shew how the justification of a sinner by the righteousness of Christ consists with free grace. If our justification be thus purchased by the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ, how is it of free grace? I answer, Very well. For,

1. God accepted of a surety, when he might have held by the sinner himself, and insisted that the soul that sinned might die, Rom. v. 8. What was it but free grace that moved him, when the neck of all the elect was upon the block, to allow it to rise up without receiving the fatal blow, and accepting of a Surety in their room? Could any man oblige the Judge to this? God did this freely.

2. God himself provided the Surety, John iii. 16. When Isaac lay bound on the altar, God provided the ram for the burnt-offering. What could man have done to get a cautioner when he broke, in the first covenant? Among all the beasts of the field there could not be found an atoning sacrifice, Ps. xl. 6. All the angels in heaven could not have afforded a cautioner. But free grace set infinite wisdom on work to find out one, which pitched on the Son of God, Psal. lxxxix. 19. So the Father gives his own Son, and the Son takes on man's nature, and pays the debt. What is there here but riches of grace to the justified sinner? So it is God's own righteousness, Phil. iii. 9. freely given to us. The which if it had not, as the tree fell, it behoved to have lain for ever.

3. *Lastly*, God demands nothing of us for it. It is a rich pur-

chase, a dear purchase, the price of blood: but the righteousness and the justification are given to us most freely through faith. That is, we Have it, for Take and have. And the very hand wherewith we receive it, namely faith, is the free gift of God unto us, Eph. ii. 8. So that most evident it is, that we are justified freely by his grace.

I come now to make some practical improvement of this important subject.

USE I. Of information. From what is said, learn,

1. That they are poor fools who have slight thoughts of sin and guilt. How many think very little of unpardoned guilt? There is a band lying on their head, obliging them to bear God's wrath for their sin; yet they rest in peace. They are lying under a sentence of condemnation, and know not how soon they may be led out to execution; yet they are at ease. They are drawing on more guilt daily without fear, and so making their bonds stronger. O, Sirs! look here and see the evil of sin, the dreadful nature of guilt. Nothing less could take sin away, and break asunder these bands, than the death of our Redeemer. Behold it in this glass, and be afraid of it.

2. How ill does it set us to have cheap thoughts of pardon! Num. xiv. 17, 19. 'God forgive me,' is a common word in some people's mouths, set off with a laugh. Most people fancy it is an easy thing to get a pardon. They know God is full of mercy, Christ of bowels, no more ado but to make a confession, pray to God to forgive them, and all is well; as if they might live like lions, and then leap like lambs out of Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom. But if ever ye get a pardon, ye will change your mind, and find it has cost Christ dear; it is written in his blood, and will cost you broken bones ere ye obtain it.

3. Faith is absolutely necessary, Rom. v. 1. There is no justification without faith, and no access to heaven for the unjustified. While you continue in a state of unbelief, guilt girds you about as cords of death. And till ye believe and come to Christ, none of them all will be loosed, but they will weigh you down to destruction. O then come to Christ, and believe, accept of the Cautioner in the covenant. Without union with him, ye can have no share in his righteousness, and without faith no union with Christ.

4. No sin is so great, but one may be justified from it, if he will come to Christ, and close with him, 2 Cor. v. 21. It is Christ's righteousness upon which a sinner is justified, and that is an everlasting righteousness, a righteousness of infinite value; and no sin

is so great but it will swallow it up. There is none so broad but this white raiment will cover it. No guilt so strong but this will break it.

5. Most miserable will their case be, that shall be left to feel their own weight, Psal. xciv. ult. He 'shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.' Many see not their need of Christ and his righteousness now: but when that falls on them for their own sin, that fell on him for the sins of those he bare, they will find their punishment like Cain's greater than what they can bear. What the Cautioner was put to in paying the debt of sin, may fright every one with the thoughts of their answering for their own.

6. *Lastly*, Happy is the case of the justified, Psal. xxxii. 1. They are secured as to their state, no more under wrath, Rom. viii. 1. Their eternal salvation is sure, and can never fail, Rom. viii. 30. They have got over the gulph of condemnation, and shall never fall therein. Whom God justifies now, he will not condemn hereafter.

USE II. Of trial. By what is said, ye may try your state, whether ye be justified or not. And ye have reason to put this matter to trial accurately and exactly. For,

1. One thing is sure, that every man is once under a sentence of condemnation, Eph. ii. 3. Gal. iii. 10. Now, what course have ye taken to get from under this? and if ye have been aiming at it, have ye carried your point, or not? No man is carried out of the state of condemnation in a morning dream; most men abide in the condemned state they were born in. O try it, whether ye be brought out of it or not.

2. As your state is in this life in point of justification, so it will be determined at death and the last day, Eccl. ix. 10. This life is the time of trial; in the other, the judgment will pass upon men according to what they have been in this world. Now the door of mercy stands open for pardons; but death being once come, there is no more access to a pardon. As the tree falls, it must lie.

3. Men are very apt to mistake their state in this matter. Many draw a pardon to themselves, that God will not set his seal to, and all it serves for is to blind their own eyes, Isa. xliv. 20. The foolish virgins dreamed very confidently of peace with God; but they met with a sad disappointment. They called themselves the friends of the Bridegroom, but he shut the door on them as on his enemies.

4. *Lastly*, A mistake in this point is very dangerous. It makes

people let the time of obtaining a pardon slip, as fancying they have it already. The foolish virgins might have got oil to their lamps, if they had seen the want of it, ere it was out of time. And thus it brings a ruining surprise, while people sleeping to death, in their dreams of peace, are awakened by the noise of war that God will have with them for ever and ever, without any more possibility of truce. Now, ye may try it by the following things.

1. Have ye been apprehended, sisted before God the Judge, and brought to a reckoning of your sins? No man gets out his absolution before the Lord, till he appear and answer to his libel. This is necessary to make the sinner flee to Christ; for this end the law was given, and for this end it is brought into the conscience, Gal. iii. 24. That state of sin which the soul never was made truly sensible of, does without doubt continue. They that never saw themselves in a state of condemnation are to this day under it. To what end should one have looked for healing to the brazen serpent, that were not stung with the fiery serpents? If the law has not had this effect on you to let you see your sin, and stopped your mouth before the Lord, ye are not come to Christ for justification. But if ye have seen your sin and state of condemnation by nature, and so have fled for mercy to Jesus Christ, then ye may conclude ye are justified.

2. I would ask you, Have ye been carried freely out of yourselves to Jesus Christ for righteousness, renouncing all other confidences in whole and in part, Phil. iii. 7, 8? There are many who, being convinced of sin, fall down and beg pardon, and hope for it upon their prayers, repentance, and reformation: but they never consider how the law shall be answered by a perfect righteousness. But the justified person sees, that there is no pardon to be got, without a righteousness that will satisfy the law, and that no work of his can do that; therefore he lays hold on Christ for his righteousness, and pleads that for pardon. They unite with the Mediator by faith, and so he spreads his skirt over them. They get in under the covert of the Mediator's blood, and place their confidence there, believing that it is of sufficiency to shield them from wrath, and trusting upon his righteousness for that end, Phil. iii. 3. They continue not in mere suspense, James i. 6, 7. but so wrestle against doubting, as to cast their anchor, and lay their weight for eternity, upon the righteousness of Christ.

3. The dominion and reigning power of sin is broken in the justified, Rom. vi. 14. Where the condemning power of sin, is removed, its reigning power is also taken away. If the condemned man get his remission, he is taken out of his irons, his prison, and the jailor's

power; and so the pardoned sinner is no more taken captive by Satan at his will, 2 Tim. ii. ult. Will the liar lie on, the swearer swear on, the drunkard drink on, the formalist still hold on with his mere form of godliness, and hope that God has pardoned him? No; let no man deceive himself. Those chains of reigning lusts that are still rattling about thee, declare thee to be yet a condemned man, Rom. viii. 1, 2. Doubt ye not but if ye were justified, ye would be washed? 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. To pretend to the pardon of sin which thou art still living and going on in, is practical blasphemy, as if Christ were the minister of sin; it is a turning the grace of God into licentiousness, which will bring a heavy vengeance at length. But if the reigning power of sin, be broken in thee, thou art a justified man; it is a sign thou art healing, when the strength of the disease of sin is abating.

4. Habitual tenderness of conscience with respect to sin, temptations, and appearance of evil, is a good sign of a justified state, Acts xxiv. 16. Burnt bairns dread the fire; and the man who has brought himself under a sentence of death, if he escape it may be thought, he will beware of falling into the snare again, Isa. xxxviii. 17. compare ver. 15. Justified persons may fall into acts of untenderness many a time; but habitual untenderness is a black mark, when people habitually and ordinarily take to themselves a sinful latitude in their thoughts, words, or actions. It is a sad sign that sin has never been made very bitter to them, when they can so easily go into it. It is easy to pretend to tenderness in opinions, and with respect to church-differences; but would to God there appeared more tenderness among us in matters of morality, that there were more sobriety among us, that people who have money to spare, would give it to the poor, and not lay it out in a way that God has so often visibly blasted, or spend it on their lusts; that men would not by their presence or otherwise encourage penny-weddings (condemned both by the law of the land and the church,) these nurseries of profaneness, which have so often among us left a stink behind them in the nostrils of truly tender persons, and before a holy God. I would recommend to you the apostle's general rule, Phil. iv. 8. 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.'

5. *Lastly*, The fruits of faith in a holy life. We are justified by faith without works; but that faith that justifies is always followed with good works, Acts xv. 9. If the curse be taken away, under

which the soul remains barren, it will become fruitful in the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22, 23. Our faith justifies our persons as it receives Christ with his righteousness; but our faith must be justified by our works, i. e. it must be by our good works evidenced to be true faith. Therefore the apostle James disputes against that faith that is without works, shewing it to be no true justifying faith, James ii. 17, 18. There is a difference betwixt justification and sanctification, but they are inseparable companions. And no man can evidence his justification without the fruits of holiness. Examine yourselves by these things, what state ye are in before God.

USE III. Of exhortation. This I shall address both to sinners and saints.

First, To sinners yet in the state of sin and wrath. Here is good news of pardon and acceptance with God for you. I would exhort you to be concerned to get out of the state of wrath and condemnation; and while God is sitting on a throne of grace, do not slip the opportunity, but sue out your absolution from before the Lord in his own way. Take no rest till ye be justified before God through Christ. To make way for this exhortation, I will lay before you the following motives.

Mot. 1. While you are out of a justified state, a sentence of condemnation stands against thee in the court of heaven, and thou knowest not how soon it may be executed, Gal. iii. 10. John iii. 18. and ult. If thou wert under a sentence of death by the laws of men, wouldst thou not bestir thyself for a pardon, if there were any hope? But, poor soul, thou art under a sentence of eternal death; and yet thou livest at ease. God's law has condemned thee as a malefactor, his truth confirms the sentence, and justice craves execution. All things are ready for it. Psal. vii. 12, 13. When thou liest down, thou hast no security that it shall not be executed ere thou arise; and when thou goest out, thou hast no security that it shall not be executed ere thou come in. Only long-suffering procures thee a reprieve one day after another, to see if thou wilt sue out a pardon. But as secure as thou art the sword of justice hangs over thy head by the hair of long-tired patience; and if that break, thou art a dead man.

Mot. 2. A pardon and acceptance with God is not so easily obtained as people generally think. God gives pardon freely, yet none come by it lightly. They that get it, get it so as they are taught to prize the mercy, Mic. vii. 18. They that know not the evil of sin nor the holy just nature of God, and that were never pressed with the sense of unpardoned guilt, think it a very easy thing to get a pardon, as if there were no more but to ask and receive. But I would have you to consider,

(1.) The justifying and pardoning of a sinner is one of the greatest works of God. It is a greater work than to make a world. God had no more ado but to say, in the creation, 'Let there be light, &c. and there was.' But when sinners were to be absolved, justice stands up for satisfaction. The truth of God for the honour of a broken law, wisdom is set a work to find out a way how pardoning mercy may get a vent; and for that cause the Son of God pays down the price of blood to buy the absolution. If God could have absolved the sinner from guilt and punishment by a bare word, how would he have passed by that easy way, and fetched a compass by the blood of his own Son? John iii. 16. And after all it is a work of power to be exercised according to the greatness of mercy, Numb. xiv. 17, 19.

(2.) Sin is the greatest of evils, no wonder it be hard to take it away. It is of all things most contrary to the holy nature of God. Hab. i. 13. When thou goest on in thy sin, thou art engaged against all the attributes of God. It is a daring of his justice, an invading of his sovereignty, a defying of his power, an abusing of his patience, and a despising of his love, mercy, and goodness. It contradicts his will; thereby the potsherd's strive against their Maker, and lusts are set up against his holy law. It robs him of the glory due to him from his creatures, and turns to his dishonour. When God had perfected the frame of the world, and made man and all the creatures for his glory, sin entering marred the whole frame, and made the workmanship of his own hands dishonour him. O! is it not a great work then to get a pardon, and all these injuries buried in forgetfulness with a holy jealous God!

(3.) God's elect have endured sad breakings of heart from the time they are made sensible of sin, till they have got their absolution from it, Acts ii. 37. They have known the terror of the Lord, to the breaking of their bones, ere they could get a glimpse of his reconciled countenance. Think ye as light of pardon as ye will, if ever the Lord come to give you a spiritual medicine to cause you sweat out the poison of sin, it will make you sick at the heart, if it bring you not to the last gasp, Isa. xxxiii. ult.

(4.) *Lastly*, If ever ye get a pardon, there will be an awful solemnity at the giving of it, Psal. lxxxix. 14. and it will be a very strong faith that will not receive it with a trembling hand, Hos. xi. 10. compare chap. iii. ult. 'They shall fear the Lord,' Heb. 'fear to the Lord.' For God gives no pardons but what are written in the blood of a Redeemer, sufficiently testifying his detestation of the crime; none are got but through the wounds of a Redeemer. So that the very throne of grace stands on justice fully satisfied; and thou shalt

be made to say when thou gettest the pardon, as Jacob did of the place where he had slept all night, 'How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven,' Gen. xxviii. 17.

Therefore look on it as a matter of the greatest weight, that will not be slightly managed, and to purpose too.

Mot. 3. Consider the dreadful disadvantages that attend an unjustified state. While ye are unjustified,

1. Ye can have no access to God, nor communion with him, Rom. iii. 3. Unpardoned guilt is a partition-wall betwixt God and you, Isa. lix. 2. It stands as the angel with the flaming sword to guard the tree of life, that ye can have no access to it. It is true, ye may attend public ordinances, and go about private and secret duties; but they are all lost, as to communion with God, in the great gulph of an unpardoned state. Ye cannot have a comfortable word out of his mouth, nor a smile of his face.

2. Ye can have no peace with God, Rom. v. 1. What Jehu said to Joram, God says to every unjustified sinner pretending peace with him, 'What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts, are so many?' 2 Kings ix. 22. It is sin that makes God an enemy to the work of his own hands; and while it is not forgiven, there can be no reconciliation. How can they think they can have peace with God whom his law condemns? What peace ye have in your consciences, arises from stupidity and presumption; it is stolen, and is none of God's allowance, Isa. lvii. ult. Neither could ye command it, or retain it, if ye saw your case.

3. Ye can have no fruits of holiness. The conscience must be purged, ere one can serve God acceptably, Heb. ix. 44. or do any work good in God's sight, 1 Tim. i. 5. Justification and sanctification are inseparable, and a justified state goes before a holy life; 'for to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,' Rom. iv. 5. While a man is unpardoned, the curse lies on him; and it is a blasting withering curse, like that on the fig-tree, that no fruit of holiness can grow where it comes. For it stops the communication of sanctifying influences; and the earth shall sooner bring forth its fruits while the influences of the heavens are restrained, than a soul shall do any good work without the influences of Christ's Spirit, John xv. 5.

4. All you do is turned to sin by this means, Psal. xiv. 1. A soul unjustified, is as a tainted vessel that turns every liquor that is put into it. Hence your very civil actions are turned to sin, Prov. xxi. 4. natural actions, Zech. vii. 6. yea, and your religious actions too,

Prov. xv. 1. Isa. lxvi. 3. For as the purest liquor put into a vessel for base uses is loathed, so are the best performances of an unpardoned sinner, by a holy God. For whatever they be as to the matter of them, they are selfish and hateful as to the principle end, and manner.

5. *Lastly*, Hence your accounts are running on every day and moment to the avenging justice of God, Rom. ii. 5. Thou art still deeper and deeper in that fearful debt; the cords of thy guilt are growing stronger and stronger. Thy crimes and grounds of condemnation are multiplied more and more; and though it is only dying for all, yet the more thy guilt is increased, the more will be thy punishment. It is true, that every one is sinning daily; but a justified person's debts are not charged upon him for eternal wrath, but temporary chastisements; so that theirs is but an account of pennies, while thine is that of talents.

Mot. 4. Consider the unspeakable advantages of a pardoned justified state. He that is in that state, is a happy man, whatever his case be otherwise in the world, Psal. xxii. 1.—He may meet with many crosses in a present world, but the white stone given him of God will make him happy for all that, Hab. iii. 17. One may be rich, yet reprobate; his portion fat, but his soul lean; applauded on the earth, but damned in hell. These things come from God's hand; and the crown of worldly felicity set on with his bare hand, he will kick off with his foot at length. But a pardon comes from his heart, as an eternal love token, Rom. xi. 29. O! let the happiness of a justified state engage you to seek after it. Get into the state of pardon; and,

1. Ye shall have peace with God, Rom. v. 1. Sin is the only controversy betwixt God and a soul; when that is removed, the parties are reconciled, and meet together in peace. God justifying the sinner, lays by the legal enmity he bare to him, while he lived in a state of sin. He pursues him no more with wrath or curse. The heavens that are now black above your heads shall clear up, and ye shall enjoy a pleasant sunshine, if the cloud of guilt were dispelled. O, Sirs! do ye not value peace with God? If ye do, then seek to be in this state.

2. It will bring you other peace besides. Peace of conscience follows upon a justified state. Unpardoned guilt makes a foul and condemning conscience, which gnaws a man like a worm. But when one gets his conscience sprinkled with the Redeemer's blood, and his sin pardoned, the conscience is cleansed, Heb. ix. 14. And then it is turned to a good conscience, which sings sweetly in a man's bosom, 2 Cor. i. 12. Yea, ye shall have peace with the crea-

tures, that are at war with the unpardoned sinner, Job v. 23. Having thus gained the favour of the Master of the great family, the servants shall all turn to be your friends.

3. Ye shall have access to God with confidence and holy boldness, Eph. iii. 12. 1 John iii. 21. God shall no more sit on a tribunal of strict justice to you, with the flaming sword before him; but on a throne of grace, with a rainbow round about it, Rev. iv. 3. And ye may come to him with all your wants, complaints, &c. as unto a friend, yea, a Father in Christ, confidently expecting all good things from him, Job xxxiii. 24, 26. For being justified, ye have a satisfaction to plead, upon which he can deny you no good thing; ye are cloathed with a righteousness that makes you spotless, and are under a covert, where love and favour shine continually.

4. Ye shall be delivered from the dominion of sin, Rom. vi. 14. and be made to bring forth the fruits of holiness, Col. ii. 13. As soon as ever the remission is passed the seals, so soon the orders are given to deliver the prisoner, to beat off his chains, and open the prison-door, and set him at liberty. The apostle tells us, that 'the strength of sin is the law,' 1 Cor. xv. 56. namely, the law condemning and cursing the sinner; so that the sinner being under the curse, sin reigns in him with a full sway, as the thorns and briars in the cursed ground. But the law's curse and condemning power being removed in justification, sin loses its strength. And the blessing coming in its room, the soul is made fruitful in holiness. Hence faith's sanctifying virtue is so much insisted on in the word, Acts xv. 9.

5. It will take the venom out of your crosses, and the strongest afflictions ye meet with, 1 Cor. xv. 55. The venom of afflictions is the curse in a cross; but pardon takes out that. A bee-sting your troubles may have after that, but the serpent's sting shall no more be found in them. A pardoned state sanctifies crosses to a man; and a sanctified cross is better than an unsanctified comfort. A loss with God's favour, is more than an enjoyment with God's wrath.

6. It will sweeten your mercies with an additional sweetness, and make a small mercy more valuable than the greatest earthly comfort an unpardoned sinner can have, Psal. xxxvii. 16. Who would not chuse to live at peace in a cottage, on coarse fare, than to be in the case of one under a sentence of death, liberally fed in a castle till the execution-day? A mercy without a pardon will go a short way; the man may cry, 'There is death in the pot,' Mal. ii. 2. But a pardon puts a blessing in a mercy, purifies and refines it, putting a stamp of God's good will on it, Gen. xxxiii. 11.

7. It will make all things work together for your good, Rom. viii. 28. God's wrath and anger against a person mars all to him. It makes every thing work for his ruin: the unpardoned man's crosses are curses, and his good things as well as his evil things work against him, Prov. i. 32. But by the Lord's favour all things shall work through grace to bring the believer to glory. God is for him, who then can be against him? Whether the wind blow on his face, or on his back, it shall forward him to the happy harbour.

8. It is the way to live comfortably, Isa. xl. 1, 2. None in all the world have so good a reason to live comfortably as the justified person. He that gets the white stone of the Lord's absolution, if he can but look on it, his soul may rejoice within him. If all things in the world were going wrong, he has that to comfort him, that God is his friend. However little he may have in hand, he has all the heavenly inheritance in hope. The uncomfortable life the pardoned sinner has, arises from want of consideration; but the more clearly he sees his matters, he will have the more comfort.

9. *Lastly*, It is the way to die safely and comfortably too. The pardoned sinner may triumph over death and the grave, Rom. viii. 38, 39. 1 Cor. xv. 55. When death comes to him, he has his discharge, it cannot harm him. As for the tribunal, he cannot be condemned there, for he is already justified. He shall swim safe through these dark waters, for the weight of guilt is removed, he cannot sink in them.

Mot. 5. A pardon is in your offer. There is none of us all under the sentence of condemnation, but may get it reversed, if we will come to Christ, and sue out an absolution in the Lord's own way, Isa. lv. 7. He is a just God we have to do with, but there is a way how pardoning mercy may reach us in a full consistency with justice. The white flag of peace does yet hang out, and the market of free grace stands open. There is an act of grace and full indemnity through Jesus Christ proclaimed in the gospel. Come in, sinners, and take the benefit of it. Why will ye stand out, and despise the King of Heaven's free pardon?

Object. My sins are so great, that I can have no hope of pardon, whatever others may. *Ans.* Neither the greatness nor the multitude of your sins, nor your backsliding into them again and again, put you beyond the reach of pardon. For observe, I pray you, the foundation of pardon is Christ's righteousness, and that is the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 3. Now, your sins are the sins of a creature; and shall not the righteousness of God be able to remove the unrighteousness of the creature? And it is to all, and upon all that believe, Rom. iii. 22. and remember, as the one abounds, the other superabounds, Rom. v. 20.

God is pleased to heap words of grace one upon another to put tempted sinners in hopes of pardon, Joel ii. 13. 'Rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil,' Isa. i. 18. 'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'—Chap. lv. 7. 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' And he has set up many instances of pardoning mercy, that none may despair of finding mercy that will come to him in his own way. Adam, the leading sinner in the world, was pardoned. Manasseh, who gave up himself to the most gross sins of devilry, murder, &c. yet received a pardon. Paul, who was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, obtained mercy. And the very Jews that murdered the Lord of glory, were pardoned through his blood.

These instances of mercy are indeed abused to the encouraging of sinners to go on in their sin: but they were never designed for that; and it is a dreadful sign, when the very gospel-news of pardon become a trap and a snare. But God designed them for thy encouragement, O trembling sinner, that would fain come to God through Christ for pardon, if thou durst; and by these he bids thee welcome, Eph. ii. 7. Come forward, then, and sue for thy pardon.

Mot. 6. The time of pardoning grace will not last, Isa. lv. 6. 'Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.' The day will come when God will not be intreated, when abused patience will break forth into fury, Luke xiii. 24, 25. 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are.' Beware lest ye sit your day of grace, and it come to that, ye find no place for repentance, though ye should seek it carefully with tears. Remember those that were bidden to the supper, and shifted, and were excluded, Luke xiv. 24. Delay no more. A moment's delay may be an eternal loss.

Lastly, I beseech you remember, that your eternal state depends on your being justified now or not. If ye be justified now, ye shall be saved eternally; if not, ye are lost for ever. And how dreadful

will the condemnation of those be, who by slighting an offered pardon trample on the blood of Christ, which was shed for the remission of sins!

I shall conclude this use of exhortation with a few directions.

1. Labour to get your hearts wrought up to a deep concern for a pardoned state. And for this cause, believe your miserable state by nature, that ye are once condemned. Take a view of the holy, righteous law, and your innumerable transgressions of it, besides your sinful nature. Look to the flaming justice of God? behold it in the case of the damned, in the case of Christ suffering, and see what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

2. Go to God in Christ, and confess your sins, and condemn yourselves. Lay them out before God with shame and confusion of face, with their several aggravations. Make a full and free confession, insisting most on those sins that have been most dishonouring to God in you. Acknowledge yourselves justly condemned by the law, and God to be righteous, if he should put the sentence into execution.

Lastly, Solemnly and sincerely accept of Christ in the covenant of grace held forth in the gospel. Receive him with his righteousness, and enter under the covert of his blood. And lay all your guilt over on him, believing his ability and willingness to remove it. And accepting of Christ for justification and sanctification, ye shall be accepted and pardoned.

Exhort. 2. To justified persons. This privilege calls you to several duties.

1. Love the Lord, and love him much, for much is forgiven you. This may be oil to that holy flame, and therefore love will continue in heaven for ever.

2. Be of a forgiving disposition, Eph. iv. ult. 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.' The same Saviour that brought in remission of sins, binds us to love our enemies. And the bitter revengeful spirit against those we think have wronged us, is a sad sign that our own sin is unforgiven of God, Matt. vi. 12. 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' They who have found what a dreadful weight sin unpardoned is, and have at length got it removed, will thereby be helped to forgive.

3. Walk humbly. Ye are justified, but it is by the righteousness of another. Ye are pardoned, but it was procured to you by the satisfaction of a Saviour. Your debt is paid, your discharge is got up; but thanks to free grace, not to you, for it.

4. Bear your troubles and crosses in a world patiently.—Your

life that was forfeited by sin is safe by grace; therefore take thankfully any troubles you meet with. For why should a living man complain, especially one that deserved to die, and yet is adjudged to life?

5. *Lastly*, Walk tenderly. God pardoning a sinner, dismisseth him as Christ did the penitent adulteress, John xii. 11. 'Go, and sin no more.' Let not your broken bones be forgotten, but walk softly all your years. And if ye be pardoned, shew it by your holy and tender walk.

ADOPTION.

2 COR. VI. 18.—*And I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

THESE words do hold forth the singular privilege of those that obey the call of the gospel, ver. 17.—'Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.' That call is not a call to separate from a church, but from those that are out of the church, ver. 14. 'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?' not only from outward visible communion with idolaters, but to separate from the unconverted to inward invisible communion with the family of God, ver. 18. In a word, it is a call to come out of the world lying in wickedness, and to join the heavenly society.

There are but two families in the world, and to one of the two every man and woman belongs. One is Satan's family, the other God's. And these are the two terms of effectual calling. (1.) The term from which sinners are called by the gospel; that is Satan's family, which they are born in, Psal. xlv. 10. And it is made up of all the unconverted world, and fallen angels. These have a dreadful communion among themselves under one head, the devil. That is the family of unbelievers, unrighteousness, and Belial. And to come out of this the gospel calls you, ver. 17. 'Wherefore come out from among them, &c. (2.) The term to which; that is God's family, made up of saints, holy angels, and Christ as the Elder Brother having dominion over the family; he their head, and the head of Christ is God, 1 Cor. xi. 3. That is the family of believers, righteousness, and Christ. And to this the gospel calls you to come.

Thus the text proposes a great privilege of those that are effectually