

THE DOCTRINE OF  
**JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH,**

OPENED AND APPLIED FROM ROM. III. 24, 25.

WHEREIN WE HAVE MANY WEIGHTY QUESTIONS BRIEFLY  
HANDLED (SOME OF THEM) BY THAT FAITHFUL AND  
EMINENT SERVANT OF CHRIST, MR. W. BRIDGE.

*Never before printed, but now made public for the benefit of weak Christians.*

PRIVATELY PRINTED, A. D. 1705.

---

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.”—Rom. iv. 16.

## TO THE CHRISTIAN READER.

---

WHAT is here presented to public view, was not designed in the least by the Author, as may be seen by its being buried in oblivion all the time of his life, and its being posthumous. No doubt but we are great losers thereby, for had the Author published it, no doubt but it would have come forth with greater advantage.

Nay, the publisher had not the least thoughts, for many years, of making it public, had not importunity, and the great need he sees weak christians stand in of information in this weighty point, prevailed.

And although the whole of what you have here is not Mr. Bridge's, yet you have nothing here but what is agreeable to his manuscript.

And where there is any thing in this treatise that was taken out of any author, and the book whence it was taken not pointed to, it was because the publisher only designed it at first for private use, and afterward could not do it without great trouble.

That the God of all grace would be pleased to bless this small piece to those into whose hands it shall come, is the hearty prayer of him who is thine, in all christian love, to serve. Farewell.

## ON JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

---

*“ Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”—ROM. III. 24, 25.*

THE apostle is here treating of that fundamental article of the christian religion, viz. justification before God by faith in Christ, which is plainly laid down in this place; wherein he clearly opens the doctrine of justification, denying it to be by the works of the law, and affirming it to be by faith in Christ.

Negatively, he shews we are not justified by the works of the law, which he proves by divers arguments.

In that all the world have sinned, and “ are come short of the glory of God.” The gentiles he proves have sinned against the light and law of nature, and so are condemned by that law: Rom. ii. 12, “ For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law.” Here we see, though the gentiles had not the written law of Moses, yet they having the light and law of nature, should be condemned for sinning against the same.

And the Jews who had the written law of Moses, and having broke the same, should be judged by that law: Rom. ii. 12, “ And as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.” So that here is the whole world, both Jews and gentiles, concluded under guilt. Oh, what a solemn condition is poor man by the fall brought into! Rom. iii. 19, “ That every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world become guilty before God,” Being hereby rendered utterly unable to frame any excuse in their own defence, or to find out any righteousness of their own by which they might be justified before the holy God. And this he brings in as the inevitable conclusion of what he had been before discoursing of: verse 20, “ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.”

There can be no justification for poor man, in God's sight, by the works of the law, and the reason is rendered, verse 20, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin." Here we may see, the law is so far from being our justifying righteousness, as that it convinceth us of sin, and concludes us under the guilt of the same.

The apostle proves all men by breaking of the law, "are come short of the glory of God," verse 23. As when persons run in a race, and faint by the way, so missing of the prize; even so hath poor man by the fall, lost the image of God, come short of heaven, and can in no wise reach eternal life by the law's righteousness. Hereon the apostle proceeds to shew how poor man may be justified, and what that righteousness is by which he only can be justified before the tribunal of God. Which

Affirmatively, he declares to be by the righteousness of God. Verse 21, "But now the righteousness of God without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." Verse 22, "Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe, for there is no difference," that is, both Jew and gentile are justified one and the same way; and in the text he comes to lay down more particularly, the true nature of justification in its several causes. As

You have the principal efficient cause, which is God: it is his work or act, chap. viii. 33, "It is God that justifieth." So in the words of my text, "being justified by his grace," that is, by God's grace. The Scripture constantly speaks of justification, as to *us*, in a passive sense; it is not our own, but God's act.

The impulsive or moving cause is here denoted; "freely by his grace," so that there is nothing in any man which might move God to act thus towards him, but it is free grace, from whence the motion first came.

The meritorious cause, namely, the righteousness of Christ, here said to be "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." His blood is the atoning sacrifice for man's sin, upon which account Christ is here called a propitiation.

The formal cause is, remission of sin, and imputation of righteousness; so that in this act of free grace, God remits all sin, and imputes Christ's righteousness to the believing

person : this is implied in the text, and expressly mentioned, chap. iv. 6, " Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," saying, ver. 8, " Blessed is the men to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Here is the non-imputation of sin, and the imputation of righteousness both expressed.

The instrumental cause is faith, here called, " faith in his blood." Faith is the hand whereby we receive Christ's righteousness for the justifying our persons in the sight of a holy God.

The final cause of a sinner's free justification is expressed in the following words, ver. 26, " To declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Here God shews to men and angels how exactly righteous he is in punishing of sin, though not in the person of the sinner, yet in his surety : so that free justification is carried on in such a way as all grace comes down on the sinner, and the glory of all returns to the great God.

Thus the words being opened, I take up this point of doctrine :

That there is much of the free grace of God shines forth in the justification of a sinner, by faith in Christ.

By justification I understand that gracious and just act of God, whereby through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the believer is judicially freed from the guilt of all sin, and accepted as righteous in Christ unto eternal life, to the praise of God's free grace and justice.

Now there is much of the free grace of God shines forth in this way of justification, therefore, says Paul, " being justified freely by his grace." Freely, in opposition to any thing done by man ; so that we have God's free act held forth in this blessed doctrine of justification.

And by his grace, that is, God's free favour, not in any wise deserved by us, but freely extending itself to all those that, through grace, believe in the Lord Christ.

Now, for the clearing of this doctrine, I shall

First, Open it by answering some questions which concern the same.

Secondly, Shew wherein free grace so much shines forth by this doctrine. And

Thirdly, How this doth concern the comfort and practice of all true believers.

As for the questions which concern the doctrine take these :

Whose and what kind of act is this justifying act ?

It is God's act, he doth it, as Rom. viii. 33, "It is God that justifieth." And it is opposed to condemnation, verse 34, "Who is he that condemneth?" Now it being opposed to condemnation, it most plainly appears to be an external act of God, who as supreme judge is here brought in : then we have also the person justified, and that is an elect person, one who is effectually called. ver. 30, "Moreover, whom he did predestinate them he also called, and whom he called them he also justified." Here is also the only ground of the believer's plea brought in, ver. 34, "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." And from hence arises a full discharge, God justifies. Ver. 35, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" So that the Holy Ghost seems here to carry a sinner's justification in a way of judicial process, that so it may most evidently appear that justification is an external act of God, and so done in time ; and not an internal act, which ever was, and always remains in God, but makes no change in a person justified : but God's act in justification, makes a relative change, it changes a person's state.

As, suppose a malefactor be condemned to die, a pardon comes from his prince ; now, of a condemned person he becomes uncondemned, his state is hereby changed. So, justification makes a real change of a person's state, and therefore must needs be an external act of God's free grace and justice, and so done in time. It is an act of free grace as it is devolved on the believer, but it is an act of justice as it is carried with respect to the merit of Christ, and in each respect it appears to be acted in time.

Again, If justification were by an internal act in God, then would the elect be justified from eternity : but that it is not so, will thus appear.

All men naturally are "children of wrath," says Paul, Eph. ii. 3, which could not be, had they come into the world in a justified state ; for a person cannot be in two contrary states

at one and the same time. How a person can be obnoxious to wrath, and yet at the same time be in a justified state; how persons can be under the guilt of sin, and yet at the same time be justified from the same guilt, seems somewhat strange; but thus it must be, if persons were justified from eternity. Sure I am that Paul doth both clearly and fully prove other doctrine. "For we have before proved both Jews and gentiles, that they are all under sin," Rom. iii. 9. Under the guilt of sin, which is directly opposite to a justified state: so that the persons of the elect could in no wise be justified from eternity.

Justification being opposed, as hath been shewn, to condemnation, they can in no wise stand together, but the setting up of the one destroys the other, as John iii. 18, "He that believeth on him, (on Christ) is not condemned; (that is, he is justified,) but he that believeth not, is condemned already." Hence we may see there is nothing more obvious than this, that on a person's believing in Christ, there is a passing from one state to another, from a state of condemnation to a state of justification. Thus we find the same, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life," John v. 24. Here we are to take notice that this life here spoken of comes in a way of believing, and so is to be understood of the life of justification: and here we have a passing from death to life, on a person's believing; here is a passing from a state of condemnation to a state of justification, and that on a person's believing; from whence it doth most evidently appear, that justification, properly so called, is not until persons believe in Christ, for then, and not until then, is their state changed.

That justification is not until believing, will clearly appear from Christ's own words, "Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you," John vi. 53. Here Christ asserts the absolute necessity of the application of a crucified Saviour, without which there can be no life. Now, the eating here intended is plainly meant of believing, "Jesus said, this is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent." ver. 29. And

Christ being here speaking to his followers under the metaphor of eating, he holds forth himself as the only bread of life ; and believing in him is the eating of his flesh here intended in this chapter. " And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger," which the next words shew, is meant of believing, " and he that believes on me shall never thirst," ver. 35. Now the eating here being believing, the life intended by Christ, must be meant of justification ; so that from Christ's own mouth, we have it evidently asserted, that no man is personally justified until believing and so not from eternity.

If persons are justified in a proper sense by faith, then are we not justified from eternity, for we believe in time, not from eternity. And that we are justified by faith, is the doctrine of the gospel, as is apparent from the whole current of God's word : " Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ : even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ," Gal. ii. 16. That the apostle is here speaking of personal justification in the sight of God, is beyond all doubt, to any that shall duly consider the scope of the Holy Ghost in the place ; though some to evade the force of the text, would have no more intended than this : that we might know we are justified. And this opinion makes all faith to be assurance, which would condemn many of the generation of the just. Christ speaks for the comforting of those who were true believers, that knew not their own state, so as to take that comfort that did belong to them. Matt. v. They were poor in spirit, mourning, and wanted comfort ; they were meek, yea, they were hungry and thirsting after righteousness. Under many blessed promises they were, and so assuredly were true believers, yet they wanted assurance of their interest in those promises ; so that their faith, though justifying and saving, was not risen so high as assurance. And if all faith were assurance, then might John have spared himself that labour of writing to those that had eternal life, but did not know they had it, 1 John v. 13. Now, by eternal life, in this place, no doubt but justification is one principal part, if not the main thing intended by the Holy Ghost. Now, this he says they had, and true believers they were, though they did not know it ;

so that their faith was not assurance, though their justification was in a way of believing. The apostle brings in the example of Abraham as a pattern in this work of justification: "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," Rom. iv. 3. And the same way are the gentiles justified: "And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed," Gal. iii. 8. Here are two words in this text, that lie directly against justification before believing: that God *would* justify the heathen; this must needs respect time to come, and cannot properly be said of that which is then past: the other is, "In thee *shall* all nations be blessed," that is, justified; now, how can a *shall be*, be put on a thing already done? Thus, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified," Isa. xlv. 25. That is, in union with Christ, shall the persons of all the elect be not only declared, but justified. Paul also speaks to the same purpose, "For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one man, many shall be made righteous," Rom. v. 19. Here it is remarkable, when the Holy Ghost speaks of Adam's sin, condemning of his posterity, he speaks of it as already past. But when he speaks of Christ's righteousness for the justification of poor sinners, he changes the tenses, and says, "Many shall be made righteous:" as if the Spirit on purpose designed, to prevent our thoughts in running after justification before believing. And thus the Scripture speaks of our personal justification to be wrote in time only.

Again, if the elect were justified from eternity, then should they be righteous from eternity; for when God justifies any person, he clothes him with righteousness, as with a garment. And this is one great thing the church of God hath to glory in, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God," Isa. lxi. 10. Now, what is the ground of all this joy, but this: "For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Here is the true state of those that believe in Christ. But, if we would see the true state and condition persons are in before believing, let us hear what the Holy Ghost saith in this case, "For we have before proved both

Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin," Rom. iii. 9. Now who can suppose that the elect of God are here exempted from this deplorable condition, before they are brought by faith to close with Christ? Nay, Paul here speaks of himself, with the rest of the saints: "What then, are we better than they? no, in no wise." Their state had been better in Paul's account, no doubt, had he thought them to have been in a justified state from eternity; but alas, his thoughts were otherwise, as the next words shew: "As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one," ver. 10. To the same purpose we find him speaking, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. Here the apostle gives us to understand, that, before their calling, they were neither sanctified nor justified in the name of Christ. And surely there is no other name given under heaven, whereby any can be justified, but the name of Christ only. Acts iv. 12. So then, in Paul's judgment, while persons are unbelieving and unrighteous, they are not justified persons, and so not justified from eternity.

But Paul says, "God justifies the ungodly."

In this place the Holy Ghost is setting forth the doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to justification by works: "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," Rom. iv. 4. If persons could fulfil the law's righteousness, then would their justification be a debt due to them, and not a favour graciously bestowed on them. Then he proceeds, "But to him that worketh not," ver. 5, that is, with an intent to seek justification by his works, as the pharisees did, Luke xviii. 11, 12, 14, "but believeth," as the publican, who had recourse to the free grace of God for his only relief, Luke xviii. 13, smiting his breast in a way of self-abhorrence, and saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," his only help was in believing "on him that justifies the ungodly." Let us observe, the ungodly person here spoken of is a believer, and may be said to be ungodly in a comparative sense, if he compare himself, as Paul did, with the holy, pure, spiritual law of God, Rom. vii., and so can in no wise seek justification by the law's righteousness, but must in a way of believing, betake himself to him that justifies

the ungodly, not in, but from their ungodliness, as, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses," Acts xiii. 19.

Again, The persons here justified may be said to be ungodly, because the state of the elect is such, when grace lays hold of them, Ezek. xvi. 6. "Cast out to the loathing of thy person." verse 6. "Polluted in thine own blood, yea, I said to thee, when thou wast in thy blood, live." So that free grace finds persons in their ungodliness, and freely absolves them from the same: so that this text is so far from speaking of any person's justification, whilst wallowing in sin, that it clearly proves justification by faith only.

"But the elect of God were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4. "And loved with an everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3. Therefore could not be under wrath, but must needs be in a justified state, though they knew it not; it was not evidenced to them until believing.

That the elect were chosen in Christ, and loved with a love of benevolence and good will, is very true; God willed them all good from everlasting; and it is also as true, that the same elect and beloved "persons, were dead in sin, and children of wrath, by nature," Eph. ii. "Yea without Christ and God in the world," verse 12. So that notwithstanding God willed them all good, yet, until some temporal external act of God's free grace was put forth, they remained in a state of wrath and alienation from God. So that it is most certain, that God's gracious purpose and good will towards them, did not exempt them from condemnation, until in time it was put in execution. The Father loved Christ, yet he was under wrath, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Indeed, the elect are not under the execution of wrath, that would be no less than damnation to them; but whilst they remain uncalled, they are assuredly under the dispensations of wrath, and are also under a wrathful covenant, as they proceed from the loins of the first Adam, and so remain, until brought to Christ by the grace of the Father, and that their wrathful state changed. So that it is evidently plain, that God's electing love, and present dispensations of

wrath, may well stand together, and then it will follow, that notwithstanding the elect were chosen in Christ before time, and loved with an everlasting love, yet their persons cannot be said to be justified until they believe.

But if the elect were not justified from eternity, (say some) then when they are justified, God is changed, his will is changed.

God is no more changeable in changing the state of the elect in justification, than in changing their natures by regeneration. No, all the change is in the creature, not in God: for, though God did absolutely decree, and that from everlasting, to justify all his, and in the fulness of time he executes the same decree, in justifying of their persons, yet this argues not the least shadow of change in God. If we do but distinguish between the grace of God decreeing and executing of the same decree, this will be most plain, Eph. i. 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." Of which justification is one principal one. And in the 4th verse, he shews from whence these spiritual blessings all come: "According as he hath chosen us in him." So that all saving blessings come down on the saints in time, according to God's ancient decree. Thus, we find him speaking to the same purpose, verse 11. "In whom we also have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated, according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." And thus we find, all those blessings the saints have from time to time, coming down on them, are the fruits of God's electing love to them; and how justification in time should argue in the least any change in God, will not from hence, in any wise, appear.

Christ hath brought into his church an everlasting righteousness, Dan. ix. 24. Therefore his elect must needs be justified thereby, though they see it not until they believe.

That Christ hath brought into his church, a most complete and everlasting righteousness is most true, but it doth not thence follow, that all the elect are from thence immediately justified, for there is more concurs to a sinner's justification than the matter, which is Christ's righteousness. For, notwithstanding Christ's blood be a sovereign balm to heal our wounds, yet it heals them not, if not applied by faith. And

though Christ's flesh be meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, yet they afford no spiritual nourishment to any, if not by faith received. So, though Christ's righteousness be a wedding garment, yet it covers not our nakedness until it be put on by faith; and herein the order of God must be observed, and a concurrence of all causes which he hath appointed, must meet together: The Father justifies as the prime working cause, Christ's righteousness as the material cause, imputation as the form, the Spirit as the applying cause, and faith as the hand or instrument to receive the atonement. So that God the Father justifies, through the Son by the Spirit, who works faith to receive the same. And until these things meet together, our persons are not properly justified, notwithstanding Christ hath wrought out a most complete righteousness.

But the elect are called sheep before they believe, and in God's esteem they are then in a justified state; and his judgment is most just.

They as so called as to the certainty and immutability of God's decree, which cannot be frustrated. And on this account, God calls "things that are not, as though they were," Rom. iv. 17. Yet the text says, "They are things that are not." They are certain, as touching the decree of God, they are not, as touching the accomplishment of the same. Paul was a sheep in the decree of God, when he was wolf-like destroying the sheep of Christ. And surely none will say he was actually a sheep, while he was devouring Christ's flock. Hence we may see that it is most safe to argue from the decree of God, for the certainty of the accomplishment of all things decreed. The event shall be certain and sure; yet from thence to argue that all things are actually accomplished, because certainly decreed, is a dangerous and unsafe way of arguing. So, for any to think the elect are justified, whilst they lie in unbelief, because they are called sheep at that time, this surely is a great mistake.

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," 2 Cor. v. 19. Now, where sin is not imputed, there persons are justified: so that the elect were justified from everlasting.

I answer, Whatsoever God's transactions are in himself, or between the persons in the Holy Trinity, we know not, and

no doubt but they transcend all created capacity ; but if we come to God's holy word, there we may see that Christ, in the fulness of time, took man's nature into union with his divine person, and in that nature did make full and complete atonement to justice for the sins of his people. When he died on the cross, then was the full price of man's redemption laid down : to this it was that all the old testament saints' faith did look, through the sacrifices under that administration. " But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed," Isa. liii. 3. Oh, how did the faith of the old testament saints fix on Christ, their true and full atonement. And is it not to this " Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," that the new testament saints' faith, at all times, looks for reconciliation with their heavenly Father ? So that when we know not how to fathom the transactions which were before time, between the persons in the sacred Trinity, let us come to God's holy word, and therein may we see his established order, for the justifying of our persons, set down by the Holy Ghost : " Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Rom. viii. 30. Here we have the golden chain, as some call it, of man's salvation, with the links of the same set in their proper places. Here is predestination, which was before time ; here is effectual calling and justification in time ; here is glorification after time : and as this chain cannot be broken, neither ought the links of it to be misplaced, but to be kept in their proper places, where the Holy Ghost hath set them ; and if so, then we may evidently see how to time justification. But if any shall object, and say, The order of words is not always to be followed in Scripture ; I readily grant that, but I think none can make any such objection here, if the place be duly weighed and considered by them. And hence it will follow, though reconciliation was decreed from everlasting, and fully and actually made when he died on the cross, yet until the elect are by the Spirit brought to Christ in their effectual calling, their persons are not justified ; for justification flows from union with Christ, " Of him are ye in Christ," 1 Cor. i. 30, that is, of the Father's grace ye are implanted into Christ, and thence

it is that "he is made to us righteousness," for the justifying of our persons. Thus 2 Cor. v. 21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Our sins were imputed to Christ when he died on the cross, and his righteousness is imputed to us when we believe, Rom. iv. 24.

But the elect are said to be reconciled to God whilst enemies, Rom. v. 10.

Redemption wrought out by Christ, is not justification or forgiveness, formally considered but casually, forgiveness being meritoriously procured thereby: for though it may be said the elect are reconciled meritoriously by Christ's blood, before they believe, yet actually they are not until they believe. Forgiveness is a most sure and certain fruit of Christ's death, though this blessed fruit be not ours until we believe: "Then said Jesus unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," John vi. 53. Having spoken somewhat to this place before, I only now bring it, to shew that Christ here holds forth the absolute necessity of the application of his death to our souls, in a way of believing, if we would have any saving benefit thereby. Though this be not spoken of a sacramental eating, as papists would have it to be meant, (for these words were spoken some considerable time before the institution of that ordinance of the Lord's supper,) yet they clearly hold forth the application of Christ crucified, for the justifying of our persons, and that, no doubt, is the main design of Christ in the same.

But if the elect, say some, were not actually and personally justified from eternity, yet they were from the resurrection of Christ: "He was raised for our justification," Rom. iv. 25.

The apostle having stated and proved the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, in the former chapters, comes in chap. iii. 28, to a conclusion in that weighty point: "Therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." And in this ivth chapter, he brings in the example of Abraham for a farther confirmation of the point in hand, and shews that Abraham was justified this same way, through this chapter; and what was written, of his justification, "was not written for his sake alone, but for us, also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him

that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," verses 24, 25. Here the design of the Holy Ghost being to prove justification by faith, that any should endeavour to draw these words of the apostle, to a justification before believing, no where spoken of in the Scripture, seems strange: but what some speak of, a justification from Christ's resurrection of the persons of the elect, though they do not believe, may, with some advantage, be said of the resurrection of the saints' bodies. For Christ rose out of the sepulchre as the public head and representative of all his, yea, as the "first fruits," 1 Cor. xv. 20. Again, The saints are said "to be risen with him," Col. iii. 1. Further, They are said to be set in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 6. And, lastly, many of the bodies of the saints did rise, and came out of their graves after his resurrection, Matt. xxvii. 53. And from hence Hymeneus and Philetus took occasion to preach the resurrection was past, 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. But this their opinion, says Paul, overthrows the faith, verse 18. Now because Christ, as man's Surety, was justified in his resurrection, will it thence follow that the persons of all the elect were then justified? Now this seems to be as dangerous to the souls of men; his justification, as our Surety, was no more our personal and actual justification, than his resurrection our actual resurrection; so that notwithstanding these things, yet justification is an external act, and wrought in time. Thus, as to this question, the objection made against this point have occasioned me to use some prolixity, but I shall be the more brief in what follows:

Whether we are justified by the passive righteousness of Christ only?

I answer, we are not justified by the passive righteousness of Christ only: there are two essential parts in justification, namely, remission of sin, and imputation of righteousness. By Christ's redemption, the guilt of sin is taken away, and by his active obedience, the believing person is made completely righteous, in the sight of God; and although these always go together, yet are they to be distinguished one from the other: for as it is one thing to obey the command, and another to suffer the penalty, even so it is one thing to be freed from hell, by the merit of Christ's death, and another

thing to be entitled to heaven by the merit of his obedience, Rom. viii. 3. Here we have the end and design of the Father's sending of Christ asserted. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." Here is sin made an end of, and put away by the sacrifice of Christ, yet that did not answer all the demands of the holy law of God, but a farther design is asserted, "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in (or for) us," ver. 4. Here we see, the law must be "magnified and made honourable," in and by Christ's undertaking. Thus, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. And doth not the law require to *do* if we would *live*? Now had Christ only suffered the penalty, and not fulfilled the preceptive part of the same, we might thereby have been freed from hell, but could not from thence have had any right and title to an eternal kingdom. See how distinctly the Holy Ghost treats of them, "Much more, being justified by his blood," Rom. v. 9. Here is the full and free remission of all sin: "So, by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," chap. v. 19. And thus it briefly appears, that believers are justified by the whole righteousness of Christ, active and passive.

But doth not somewhat of the saint's own works, or graces, come in as the matter of their justification in the sight of God?

No, not in the least degree: we read in the holy Scripture of two righteousnesses, Christ's and our own. Now, whatsoever is wrought in man, or done by him, is the righteousness of the law: for that requires all inherent holiness. Now, "by the righteousness of the law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight." And holy David deprecates this way of justification: "And enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Ps. cxliii. 2. So the whole of man's righteousness in this work of justification, is to be laid aside, and the righteousness of Christ alone introduced.

But, say some, though none can be justified by the works of the law, yet they may, by the works of the gospel, as Abraham was, James ii.

Works are works, let them come under what denomination they will. "Lord, thou hast wrought all our works in us," Isa. xxvi. 12, that is, they are all the fruits and effects of thy grace working in us, yet they are said to be the church's works, though wrought by the Holy Ghost in them. And what James speaks of Abraham's works, they were wrought by him many years after his person was justified before God, by faith, and they are brought by James to evidence Abraham's faith to be no dead, but a living, working faith, and so he was justified by works; that is, in James's sense, his faith was justified, or evidenced, by his works, to be no dead, but a lively working faith, a justifying faith. To the same purpose speaks Paul, "But faith which worketh by love," Gal. v. 6. So that James is speaking of the profession of faith before men, "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works," chap. v. 18. And on this account it is that Abraham's works, are brought in for his justification, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works," ver. 21, then here was the time when he was so justified, and that is expressed, "When he offered his son Isaac upon the altar," which was about forty years after his person was justified by faith. So that Paul, in Rom. iv, and Gal. iii. is speaking of personal justification before God, and brings Abraham, with all saints, as believing in Christ for justification, which is the main doctrine of the gospel; but James is speaking of justification, evidenced by the fruits of faith in true believers, and so brings in Abraham's works; and shews, "The scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," ver. 23. And thus, this illustrious instance of Abraham's obedience, spoken of by James, did clearly evidence the sincerity of his faith; he believed in God for the justifying of his person, he wrought righteousness, by which his faith was evidenced before men. Now, what Paul speaks of Abraham's personal justification before God, Rom. iv. 1, 2, 3, where he excludes all Abraham's works from having any share in his justification; and what James speaks of his faith, being justified or evidenced by his works, before men, are so far from any contrariety one to another, that they not only well stand together, but cannot be separated: for if I, in Paul's sense, betake myself to the free grace of God in Christ, in a

way of believing, for the justifying of my person before God, then ought I, in James's sense, to be fruitful in good works, that I may shew my justification, and the sincerity of my faith, before men. And this is the way the holy Scripture directs all saints to go in, "Not by works of righteousness, which we have done," Titus iii. 5. And if not by righteous works, we may be be sure that persons are not justified or saved by unrighteous ones, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ," Phil. iii. 7. Here was his pharisaical works all laid aside, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," ver. 8. Here comes in all his righteous works, from the time Christ had made him an apostle, and they are all laid aside in the work of justification, and Christ's righteousness is only exalted, by this blessed apostle. "And be found in him, not having on mine own righteousness, which is of the law, (as all inherent righteousness is,) but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," ver. 9, that is, of God's ordination, and of faith's application. Thus, there is not any thing of man's righteousness, no not in the least, comes into his justification in the sight of God: so that man is not justified by nature or operation, but by grace and free donation.

But in what sense doth faith justify, for we are said to be justified by faith, Rom. v. 1.

I answer, Faith doth not justify as an habitual grace, for so it is part of our sanctification, and we are not justified by an inherent righteousness. Faith, as a quality, is no better than other graces, says Dr. Reynolds on the life of Christ. Or, as another saith, Faith doth not justify, as it is a grace or quality inherent, or as it is part of our inherent righteousness; neither doth faith properly, but the object thereof, which it apprehendeth justifies.—Downham on Justification, p. 103.

Neither doth the act of faith properly justify; for it is not the receiving, but the righteousness received that justifies, or by which we are justified.—Sedgwick on Faith, page 53.

Neither doth faith justify in God's sight, by any inward dignity or worth of its own, as if faith itself were our justifying righteousness; for it is not the excellency of faith, but the excellency of Christ, whom faith apprehends, that justifies.

The ring is not so much worth, because of the matter of it, though excellent in itself, but because of the diamond that is in it. And so it is with faith; it is the diamond, Christ, that faith lays hold on, that makes it so precious: so that it is not the dignity of faith that justifies. Thus, negatively, how faith doth not justify.

Affirmatively, How faith doth justify in the sight of God.

Faith justifies instrumentally, as it is the hand to receive Christ and his righteousness, who is freely tendered in the gospel to poor sinners; or, correlatively, as it hath relation to Christ and his righteousness; or, as it is the eye of the soul that looks to Jesus, Heb. xii. 2, as when Israel was stung in the wilderness, it was not their eye, but the serpent looked on that healed them. Thus Isa. xlv. 52, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else:" that is, there is no other object for sinners to look to for their justification nor salvation, but me only; neither will you find that the Holy Ghost speaks absolutely that faith justifies, but that we are justified by faith; that is, as it hath respect to Christ; for what is faith if it be separated from its object Christ? Neither will true faith own any such thing, but will say as John did, I am not the Christ; I was not crucified for you, I did not fulfil all righteousness for you, but it carries the soul to Christ, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" Here is the work and true nature of justifying faith; see how distinctly the apostle speaks of its work: "Receiving the atonement," Rom. v. 11; and, "Receiving abundance of grace," verse 17. So that faith lives purely on alms, fetching all justifying righteousness from Christ, justifying in a relative sense, and as it hath relation to him only.

Is a believer's justification complete at once; are all his sins, past, present and to come, on his first believing, pardoned?

Justification, as hath already been shewn, changes a person's state; and a believer's state being changed, all his legal condemnation is at that time taken from off his person: union with Christ exempts from the same. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Here is the high privilege of those in Christ asserted, namely, exemption from God's condemnation; and

the Holy Ghost here tells us, "There is therefore now no condemnation," not the least condemnation remains to them "in Christ," but their sins are freely remitted, "for his name's sake, and all that believe are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39. Here is a most complete absolution from all sins, for all those that believe in the Lord Christ. Thus Col. i. 13, "Having forgiven you all trespasses." God doth not, in the justification of his people, forgive some sins only, and leave others standing on the score. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities," Ps. ciii. 3. And not only so, but Christ covers the believer with the robe of righteousness. Isa. lxi. 10. For no sooner doth a man truly believe in Christ, but his righteousness is imputed to him, and in and by that righteousness, he standeth righteous before God, as well at the first as at the last; that righteousness of Christ by which we are justified, whether first or last, being most perfect: therefore the righteousness of justification cannot be increased, neither doth our justification before God admit degrees, either in one and the same person, or yet in divers men.—Downham on Justification, page 7.

But God only forgives the sins that are past? Rom. iii. 25.

I answer, This looks to the sins of the saints, that were committed before Christ's coming in the flesh, and holds forth God's indulgence in pardoning of them, on the account of Christ's engagement, though the price of their redemption was not actually laid down. To the same thing does the Holy Ghost speak, "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament," Heb. ix. 15. Here is that most excellent sacrifice, that looked as high as Adam, being the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, from whence all the old testament saints had both full and free remission of all sin: and this I take to be the true meaning of this scripture. And though sin cannot properly be said to be actually forgiven, before it be committed; yet when the elect are, by the Holy Ghost, united to Christ, their persons are completely justified, and Christ having fulness of pardoning grace in his hands, their justification is continued and maintained by his intercession in heaven. 1 John ii. 1. And thus the saints'

justification is, and continues to be, one constant and complete act of free grace, never to be reversed again.

But doth not this doctrine of the constant continuance of the saints' justification, tend to looseness, and open a gap to licentiousness?

This is an old objection, thrown against the doctrine of the grace of God. When Paul taught, "that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," Rom. v. 20, then comes this "shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" But he rejects any such inference, as unworthy of any answer, chap. vi. 2. "God forbid, how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And how shall those that are justified from all sin, from thence take encouragement to go on in sin? But those persons that make this objection, no doubt, are great strangers to the grace of God themselves. Indeed, were the elect justified whilst in unbelief, there would be some strength in the objection; but their natures being renewed at that moment of time, their state is changed, the objection hath no force in it; "for the grace of God teacheth to deny ungodliness," Titus ii. 11, 12.

But believers sin greatly, after they are in a justified state, and so stand in need of renewed pardon, from time to time.

That believers sin after they are in a justified state, sad experience, as well as God's word, doth daily shew; but the sins of those who are in a justified state, come under another consideration, for their "persons are not under the law, (or legal covenant) Rom. vi. 14. They are in Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. So that as believers have nothing to do with the law, so as to seek justification for their persons, by their obedience to the same; neither can the law, with its condemning power, reach them, so as to bring them into legal condemnation again: so that unless the covenant of grace be made void, the believer's justified state remains, and he is no more under the law for ever.

But may some say, are not believers then under the law, are they lawless?

The law comes under a twofold consideration. As a covenant of works for justification. As a rule of life for conversation.

As a covenant of works for justification. All saints

through grace, are delivered from the same, Rom. vii. 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are dead to the law, by the body of Christ." that is, ye are taken off from all hopes of justification, by your obedience to it; and the "law is now weak through the flesh," chap. viii. 3. that is, as to justification: man cannot keep it, and so can expect no justification by the same; yea, all true believers are, as to justification, dead to the law, Gal. ii. 19. And as true believers seek not to the law, in a way of working, but to Christ in a way of believing, for their justification, so hath Christ delivered them from the malediction of the same, Gal. iii. 12. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law." So that all the dread and terror of the broken covenant is taken away by Christ, for all true believers. Indeed, a Christless person is under the covenant of works, and to such the law is full of dread and terror, the voice of which we may hear, Gal. iii. 10. "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse, for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Sinners had need look after a Christ in time, or they will fall under the law's curse for ever.

The law is to be considered as a rule of life, and so Christ hath for ever established the same, that he may thereby guide all his people in ways of holiness, Prov. vi. 23. "For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light," to guide in ways of true happiness; and in this respect all saints "are under the law to Christ," 1 Cor. ix. 21, and ought to keep close to the same, and to say as holy David, Psalm cxix. 97. "O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day." And thus we see how the saints are under the law, and how not, they are delivered from it as a covenant of works; they are, and will be, eternally under it as a rule of life.

The saints of God being renewed but in part, and having a two-fold image, of the first and second Adam, may they not be under the covenant of grace, so far as renewed, and under the covenant of works, so far as they are unrenewed? Is it not so with believers, strong in the covenant?

That the saints of God, whilst here in this world, are, and will remain, partly flesh and partly Spirit, having a two-fold image, is assuredly true; but this cannot imply a two-fold covenant, in any wise. The image respects the nature of the

believer, but the covenant respects the person, as there are two natures in Christ, and both of them have their distinct properties, yet the sonship of Christ is but one, for that hath relation to his person. So, although believers have flesh and Spirit, yet it is not possible they should, at the same time, be under two contrary covenants, for the covenants respect the person, which is but one; and the change of a person's covenant is a legal act, and done at once, and but once, and God accounts the persons of believers, under the legal covenant, no more for ever, Rom. vii. 4. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ." Here is the believer's freedom from the first covenant asserted, and the way and manner how it is brought about, namely, by union with Christ, "That ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead." Christ being the head of the new covenant, our union with him brings us under the same. And though Paul, in this chapter, complained of the remains of sin, which made him groan, verse 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." Yet this did not, in the least, infringe his covenant state. So, though all true believers are partly flesh, and partly Spirit, yet their covenant relation is neither, nor can be, but one, Rom. vi. 14. "For ye are not under the law, but under grace."

But if the saints are not under the law, or legal covenant, then it should seem from thence, that they need no pardon of sin, and so ought not in their daily prayers to pray for the same: so where there is no law there is no transgression.

Though believers are not under the law, or legal covenant, yet it doth not from thence follow, that they stand in no need of daily pardon. Indeed, they stand not in need of such pardon as unbelievers stand in need of, they are under a legal condemnation, obnoxious to the curse, and stand in need of a change of their state, God being to them a God of terror. But if at any time they are, through grace, brought savingly to believe in Christ, then God, as a God of all grace, freely justifies them, by remitting of their sins, and imputing of Christ's righteousness for their justification, and properly this is Scripture justification, Rom. iv. 6, 8.

But believers standing in relation to God, as children to a tender-hearted Father, this alters the case quite, and shews a

vast difference between the state of the one and of the other, the believer being "justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39, and the unbeliever being "condemned already," John iii. 18. Now though God deal as a Judge with those that continue in their unbelief, yet he deals as a tender-hearted Father with all true believers. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: yea, he remembereth that we are dust," Psalm ciii. 13, 14. Now when the saints sin against a loving Father, then does God come forth with his fatherly corrections: "Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes," Psalm lxxxix. 32. And sometimes in a very sore manner; "Behold thou art wroth, for we have sinned," Isa. lxiv. 5. Indeed the sins of the saints shall not make void God's covenant, therefore the prophet comes in the next words, saying, In those, that is, in thy mercies, is continuance, and we shall be saved; yet they highly provoke a tender-hearted Father by sinning against him; and as often as the saints sin against their heavenly Father, in this their new covenant relation, so oft they stand in need of fatherly forgiveness. Thus with holy David, who had sinned in the matter of Uriah, yet when brought to confess the same, "Nathan said unto David, The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," 2 Sam. xii. 13; for by God's law adulterers ought to be put to death, Lev. xx. 10. Now God remitting this temporal chastisement to David, is said to pardon, or put away his sin: and the church cried out, Lam. iii. 42, "We have transgressed and rebelled, thou hast not pardoned;" that is, their afflictions were not removed. And in this sense God oft lets sin lie on his otherwise justified children for some time unpardoned, and as often as he is pleased to remit these chastisements, so often he may be said to pardon his children; and as long as the saints sin against their God and Father in their new covenant relation, so long shall we need renewed pardon, which will be whilst we are in this world. And this should keep the saints at the throne of grace, daily begging of pardon, confessing of sin, bewailing of corrupt nature, and entreating a farther discovery of their covenant state.

Now in this respect the saints daily need pardon of sin, and a more full discovery of their new covenant relation with God; so that it is not true in every respect, you see, to say

all pardon is at once: but with respect to the justifying of our persons, in a proper sense, justification is but one constant, complete act of grace, admitting of no degrees, nor revocation, but remains firm for ever.

But if God correct his justified children for their sins, doth it not dishonour the cross of Christ?

That God doth correct his saints here for their sins, and not only from them, as some would have it, is most plain from the New, as well as from the Old Testament: "For this cause," namely, the abuse of the Lord's supper, "many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep," 1 Cor. xi. 30. Some, indeed, would have this to be spoken only of hypocrites, that were mingled among the godly, but this seems to me to have no weight in it; for the apostle speaks here of no more than what might befall him, should he do as they had done, as may be seen by the next words. And some think that the word *sleep* argues they were godly, penitent christians, that so died, to let us know, that even good people, who yet may be saved, may bring judgments in this life on themselves, by the profanation of God's name in his ordinances: see the late Annotations on this place. To the same purpose the Holy Ghost speaks: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent," Rev. iii. 19. Now what were they to repent of but their sins? And if so, then this chastisement was for sin, being procured thereby. Thus James v. 15, 16: "And if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." Now this forgiveness was the healing of his body, that is, the removing of a temporal affliction, which God as a loving Father had inflicted. See Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs's Sermon on 1 Sam. iii. 18, pages 89, 90, who calls it a vain conceit to think that God doth not afflict his people for their sins. See his work on Hosea, vol. ii. page 449.

So that though God doth not, as a judge, take vengeance on his justified children for their sins, yet as a loving Father he assuredly corrects them when they go astray. And certainly there can be no good argument drawn from the perfection of Christ's satisfaction, to exempt believers from fatherly corrections here for their going astray. Nay, holy David looks on God's corrective dispensations, as his keeping of covenant with him: "I know, O Lord, thy judgments are

right, (that is, thy corrections,) and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me," Psalm cxix. 75.

The old testament saints lived under a more legal dispensation, and so might be corrected for their sins, but not so now.

I hope they were in the same covenant of grace as we, though not under the same administration, and that Christ did as fully satisfy for their sins as for ours, yet he did afflict Moses, Eli, David, and the rest of his children, then, for their sins, and why not now, if they go astray? And certainly God hath not, by Christ's satisfaction, divested himself of his fatherly authority, but will shew the same if his children go astray, Psalm lxxxix. 30, 31, 32. Thus as to the first branch of the doctrine.

Secondly, I come to shew wherein the free grace of God so much shines forth in a way of a sinner's justification by faith in Christ. And,

The Holy Scriptures run altogether this way: "They which receive abundance of grace," Rom. v. 17. Here is faith, the hand to receive; here is abundance of grace received. So that a believer not only receives grace in his justification, but much grace. Thus Rom. iv. 16: "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace." Here, observe, that to be justified by faith and by grace, is all one in the account of the Holy Ghost. And this way of grace makes the promise sure to all the seed, that is, to the whole election of God: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. i. 7. In the former verse the apostle was speaking of the saints' acceptance in the Beloved, that is, in Christ, the God-man; and in this verse he shews the riches of grace flow down in free forgiveness: "That in ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness to us through Christ Jesus," chap. ii. 7; that is, in all succeeding ages, to the end of the world. Grace, through Christ, might flow down for the free justification of all those that should believe, as, verse 8, "By grace are ye saved, through faith." Now this way of justification drowns all men's excellencies: as when the sun arises there is no need of candle, even so when the Sun of Righteousness arises, as Mal. iv. 2, then doth man's own righteousness disappear, and

is like the morning cloud, and early dew, that soon passeth away, that so free grace may the more illustriously appear in this work of free justification: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," Rom. iii. 5. Here all works are denied, that grace may take place altogether in this work, "that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life," verse 7: as if the apostle had said, that believers, through the free grace of God, having the guilt of their sin removed, and Christ's righteousness imputed, should be made "children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. See late Annotations. And if we look into Isa. xliii. 25, there we find the great God thus speaking, "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." Here God writes an *I* on this work; he looks on it as his prerogative royal to pardon sin, and that not for any worthiness in man, but for his own sake. He will not give the glory of his free grace to any other; nay, poor man has nothing of his own, but must be beholden altogether to free grace: "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both," Luke vii. 42. Here free forgiveness is on the throne, and "reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. v. 21. Oh, then, let all saints say as the prophet, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage; he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy," Micah vii. 18. And thus we find the Holy Scriptures hold forth much grace in a sinner's justification by faith in Christ.

The more low and miserable our state is, when grace finds us, the more it shines in the sinner's advancement. As, suppose a great and mighty prince should take a mean person from a dungeon, as Pharaoh did Joseph, and advance him so high as to make him the second man in his kingdom; this was, and would be great grace in a prince, but what is this to the high advancement God bestows on poor sinners in a way of mere grace? The church says, "God remembered them in their low estate," Psa. cxxxvi. 23. Now, surely grace finds sinners as low as hell, and advanceth them as high as heaven. Mordecai was in a low state when he sat at the king's gate in sackcloth, and a gallows being made to

hang him on, and his people also designed for utter ruin, Esther vi. And then for the king to advance him so high, as to have "the royal apparel brought, which the king useth to wear, with the crown royal," and to have it set on his head, by one of the most noble princes, "who should proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour." This was great favour shewn to Mordecai: but what was this to the grace of God in a sinner's free justification by faith in Christ? In Luke xv., we read of the prodigal, who had spent all and was feeding of swine, but on his return, is embraced in the arms of tender love, and the best robe is brought forth, the righteousness of Christ, to cover the poor sinner's nakedness. Now doth not grace herein shine, in bringing of prodigals from their swinish lusts, and in embracing in the arms of divine love? Saul once said to David, "If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?" But grace finds sinners in their enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7. Enmity in the abstract, separated from all amenity, and this heightens man's misery: yet free grace calls, justifies, and glorifies, ver. 30. And thus we find, "When thou wast cast out, to the loathing of thy person, (here is man's low estate set, then comes free grace, and its language is,) I said to thee, live," Ezek. xvi. Here is free absolution: and what shall we say to Joshua the high priest, Zech. iii. He was in a low estate, "clothed with filthy garments, and Satan (taking the wall of him) standing at his right hand, to resist him." His condition was very low, but then comes free grace in, speaking, "Take away the filthy garments from him, and unto him he said, Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, (here is free pardon of sin) and I will clothe thee with change of raiment," ver. 4. May not this well be understood of imputed righteousness, "And I said, let them set a fair mitre on his head," ver. 5. Here is high advancement from this low estate. And thus, free grace shines, in a sinner's justification, by faith in Christ, for it finds sinners very low, and advanceth them very high.

The more distinguishing any mercy is, the more free grace shines in that mercy. As, suppose two great sinners alike, and one taken to free justification, and the other left to his justly deserved condemnation, doth not free grace shine forth

on that person that is taken? Thus, "For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion, Rom. ix. 15. And from hence he infers, "That it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy:" ver. 16, and what is here spoken of election, is as applicable to justification. God distinguishes person from person, in justification, "Two men went into the temple to pray, the one a pharisee, and the other a publican," Luke xviii. 10. Now, see how free grace laid hold on the publican, and passed by the pharisee, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other," or not the other, ver. 14. Here distinguishing grace did most evidently appear, in the justification of the publican. And was it not free grace that brought Paul from the rest of his companions, and that when he was in the height of rebellion against God? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Acts ix. Was not this the voice of free, distinguishing grace, that Paul heard? So we have his own words for it, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am," 1 Cor. xv. 10. So that there appears to be much of the free grace of God, in the justification of a sinner, by faith in Christ, by the distinguishing of person from person, in the same.

The more considerable any mercy is, and the less consideration it is given upon, the more free grace shines in that mercy. Now justification is a most considerable mercy, and it is bestowed without the least respect to man's worthiness, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him justifieth the ungodly," Rom. iv. 5. Here we may see, though poor man is in a state of ungodliness, when grace lays hold of him, yet notwithstanding here is free justification bestowed, which is a most considerable mercy, and will evidently appear so to be, by such considerations as these.

If I am justified, then I have peace with God, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1. Reconciliation with God being the great and fundamental blessing of the gospel, must needs be a considerable mercy: and all justified persons, their state is a state of friendship: Abraham my friend.

Being justified, all our sinful debts are discharged, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name,

whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins," Acts. x. 43. And here we may see this is the doctrine of all the prophets. And to the same purpose the apostle Paul speaks, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39. Here is a most complete discharge from all guilt, for the believing person; therefore, justification must needs be a considerable mercy.

And then if justified, God will never leave nor forsake us. It is a good saying of one of the ancients: He that justifieth the ungodly, will never forsake the godly. And the Holy Ghost speaks the same thing, "For he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. So that justification is a most considerable mercy.

And if justified, then shall we be assuredly glorified, "And whom he justified, them he also glorified," Rom. viii. 30. So that the next remove the saints shall make, will be to glory in the heavens. Now, these and such like blessings following on our justification by faith, shew that it is a very considerable mercy, and that there is much of free grace shines forth in the same.

Thirdly, I come now to shew, how this doctrine doth concern the comfort and practice of true believers. And,

As touching the comfort of the saints of God, this doctrine of justification, by faith in Christ, is a foundation of divine consolation. After Paul had been speaking of justification by faith, Rom. v. 1, he comes ver. 2., to speak of the saints' rejoicing, "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God," that is in that glory, which God hath graciously promised to all his justified children. Here is present justification and future glory, for the saints to solace themselves in, "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also," ver. 3. This blessed doctrine not only fills the saints' hearts, with respect to future happiness, but makes them rejoice in their tribulations here; nay, in ver. 11: "and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, we not only joy in hopes of heaven hereafter, and in tribulations here, but we joy in God himself, who is our reconciled Father, in Christ. Thus, holy David, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," Psa. xxxiv. 2. When he hath been speaking of this blessed doctrine of free remission, "Blessed is he, whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed

is the man unto the Lord imputeth not iniquity," Psa. xxxii. 1, 2, then he comes in ver. 11, to call the saints to rejoice in the Lord, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye righteous, and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." Whatsoever others do, let the saints of God rejoice in Christ, as holy Paul did, Phil. iii. 3, "For we are of the circumcision, that worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the flesh." As if he had said, let others rejoice in what they will, Christ shall be the true comfort of our souls, we will rejoice in the merit of Christ, in the righteousness of Christ, in the person of Christ, and all that know the doctrine of God's free justification by faith in Christ, in a saving manner, ought to rejoice. This doctrine of free grace is a firm basis of consolation. When the Holy Ghost is speaking of the joyful sound of free grace, Psalm lxxxix. 15, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound;" then he comes to speak of their true consolation: "They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance (verse 16), in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted." Oh, what a sweet life is the life of faith, that leads the soul to the fountain of free grace for consolation here and for salvation hereafter! We find the church full of heavenly consolation in Isa. lxi. 10, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God;" and the ground of this joy was this, "For he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

And thus we see, the doctrine of free justification by faith in Christ, doth much concern the comfort and consolation of the saints of God.

This doctrine of free justification doth much concern the saints' practice, and will thus appear:

Seeing there is so much of free grace shines in this blessed doctrine, then surely it highly concerns us to study the same. Oh, why should we not search more into this doctrine of free justification by faith in Christ. This is the article the church stands or falls by, Rom. xi. 20. "Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith." If this doctrine be kept entire, the church stands; but if this be left, the church falls. When the Jews left this doctrine, they fell. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your

sins." All those persons that do not, by faith, cleave entirely to Christ the only Mediator, for the remission of their sins, and for the justification of their persons, will, no doubt, die in their sins. This doctrine of justification by faith, is the church's Magna Charta, and so greatly concerns all saints to be firmly established in the same. When the church of Rome left this doctrine, she became anti-christian, 2 Thes. ii. 10, "Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." This truth, by which sinners are saved, here spoken of, is beyond all doubt, (to me) justification by faith in Christ, as John xiv. 6. "I am the truth;" that whosoever receives by faith, shall be assuredly saved, and whosoever rejects, through unbelief shall undoubtedly perish, John iii. 36. So that when the church of Rome left this glorious doctrine, then did God give them up, verse 11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, (namely, that lie of justification before God, by a man's own righteousness) verse 12, That they all might be damned, who believe not the truth." that is, the truth of free justification, as before. And were this doctrine received, what would become of the pope's pardons, their indulgences, their purgatory, and the like trash? Now, for a round sum of money, they can, as they say, absolve men in this life, from their sins, and deliver out of purgatory in the life to come. But were this doctrine of free justification understood, all these cursed delusions would soon vanish. So that it highly concerns us to be careful in the study of this blessed doctrine of free justification by faith in Christ. When Peter had made a confession of his faith, Matt. xvi. Christ said to him, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church," that is, on the confession he made; which see, verse 16, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Here is the main doctrine of the gospel in this confession, and by this it is that the church of Christ stands. O then let us all labour to keep close to this most blessed doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, for it highly concerns us so to do.

This doctrine of justification by free grace, concerns the saints' practice, for it is their main defence against the wiles and artifices of Satan, it is their shield and buckler, as Luther calls it, against the temptations of the devil.

Are you tempted to pride, do you think highly of your own righteousness? a right understanding in this blessed doctrine will lay souls humble at the feet of Christ, as it did Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am." A right understanding in this soul-humbling and Christ-exalting doctrine, brought him from the pinnacle of pride, and laid him at Christ's footstool, crying out, "I am less than the least of all saints." When this proud pharisee came to understand the doctrine of free grace, then did he look on himself as one of the chief of sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15, and his only plea was, Christ's coming into the world to save sinners. Here is not a word that tends to the priding of himself in his own righteousness, those vain conceits are now gone, and Christ and free grace now take place and reign in his heart. And so it will be with us, when we come to have the doctrine of free grace to reign in our hearts. Dagon and the ark could not stand together, neither can man's own righteousness and free grace stand, but the setting up of the one throws down the other. So that a right understanding in the doctrine of free justification, will tend much to allay the pride of our spirits. Or,

Are we tempted to covetousness? a right sense of the doctrine of justification, by free grace, will help much to cure our souls of that evil also: "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, Phil. iii. 8. Oh, how was his soul cured when he came to know free grace, and what he speaks of, godliness with contentment being great gain, 1 Tim. vi. 6. Now wherein does the practice of true godliness lie, but in exercising of faith in Christ, which both purifies the heart, Acts xv. 9, and works by love, Gal. v. 6. And in this practice the heart will be brought from the love of the world, and all true gain will be brought to the soul thereby, so that this doctrine doth highly concern the practice of all true believers.

Or, are you tempted to despair, this doctrine of free grace only can relieve you; for says the soul, I hear there is abundance of grace, and this grace infinitely free, for the worst of sinners, and that the Lord Christ saves to the utmost, all that come to the Father by him, Heb. vii. 25; oh, how can I then despair of mercy for my soul? Let my condition be what it will, this doctrine of free justification, will carry the

soul above the temptation of despair, let its sins be never so many or great. So that this doctrine concerns the practice of true believers. If we look into Ephes. ii. 7, the apostle speaks of the grace of God extending itself to great sinners: "That in ages to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus." And if we inquire who those *us*, that are here spoken of, are, we shall find here was Paul, a blasphemer and an injurious person, yet he obtained mercy, and is set forth as an example, that none might despair. "Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting," 1 Tim. i. 16. Here we have a pattern of God's patience and free grace to other sinners, that shall afterward cast themselves into the arms of free grace, as Paul did; so that none that know the doctrine of free grace might despair: nay, though persons have lived long in sin, yet there is hope. When Christ died on the cross, there was one left, that none might presume; there was one saved, that none might despair. So that this doctrine of free justification, if rightly understood, will carry souls above the temptations of despair, and so highly concerns the practice of all true believers.

And seeing there is so much grace in this blessed doctrine of free justification, how should this draw souls to Christ. Here is grace, free grace, much grace, abundance of grace, yea, all grace, for graceless sinners. Oh, souls, what do you mean, that you come not to Christ? Do you not, by this doctrine of free grace, hear a solemn call? "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins," Acts xiii. 34. Now let us look into the next verse, and see what the design of the Holy Ghost is, in making known this grace to poor sinners. "And by him, all that believe are justified from all things," ver. 39. In or upon their believing, free justification terminates on their persons: and what, not come to Christ, when the arms of free love are open to embrace you! Oh, sinners, can you stay from Christ, when the voice of free grace sounds so sweetly in your ears! "I will give to him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely," Rev. xxi. 6. Now what sayest thou, O sinner, wilt thou sell

thy soul for a swinish lust, and despise the grace of Christ? Is there here this day, any swearer, or drunkard, or sabbath-breaker, or any other profane person? I will not say to thee, How camest thou in hither? thou mayest hear that time enough, to the amazement of thy soul, if grace do not speedily change thy heart; but I will say to thee, here is a possibility of thy being saved. If we look into Luke xv., we have a parable of a prodigal, which represents to us a state of profaneness; yet on his return, the father "met him, fell upon his neck and kissed him," embraced him in the arms of free love, the best robe is brought forth and put on him, the fatted calf is killed, and making merry. Now what is all this for, but to illustrate the free grace of God to the worst of sinners? Oh then, if you love your souls, and desire salvation, fall at the foot of free grace, and cry as the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Now the sceptre of free grace is held out to poor sinners; oh, that their hearts were inclined to receive the same: the Lord make them a willing people in the day of his power. And is here any that are only civil persons, or hypocrites? Oh, have a care of resting on your own righteousness, as those did, Rom. x. 3, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." Here both their ignorance and their pride did most evidently appear; they were not for being beholden to Christ for that, which they thought they had of their own. Oh, the cursed pride that is in man's heart, that sinners should think it beneath them to submit themselves to the righteousness of God! But, may the God of all wisdom, shew sinners their great mistake, and bring them, by the workings of his grace, to see a shortness in their own righteousness, and lead them into the knowledge of Christ and his righteousness, that they may see and betake themselves to the way of free grace, for the justifying of their persons here, and the saving of their souls hereafter; and that, while God is in a way of mercy, for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

And to you that are the saints of God, why should you not magnify and praise the grace of God? "In thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall

they be exalted." Shall angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest," for his great grace and love to poor man, and shall we, whom it so nearly concerns, be dumb? Nay, rather let the high praises of God be in their mouth, that they may give glory to him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever.

But I fear I am not justified, for I find much sin remaining in me, and would it be so if I were in a justified state?

The saints of God have the remains of sin in their natures, notwithstanding the guilt is taken off from their persons. As, suppose a person under condemnation, that hath an evil disease cleaving to him; a pardon comes from his prince, and takes off his condemnation, and at the same time a medicine is applied for the cure of his disease, only that must operate gradually. Now, should such an one say, he is not pardoned from his guilt, because his disease is not fully cured? And is not this the case in hand? Pardoning grace takes away the believer's guilt, and at the same moment of time, the Holy Ghost renews and changes his nature. Now, because there is not presently an abolition of all sin, and an infusion of all grace, some trembling hearts fear their guilt remains on their persons, because the remains of sin still cleave to their natures, not so well knowing these are two distinct benefits: as Psalm ciii. 3, "Who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." Here are two distinct benefits, one by God's act of grace in justification, the other wrought by the Holy Spirit in sanctification. Now we must distinguish between sins being in the soul, and sins being imputed to the person. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin," Rom. iv. 8. Holy Paul found the remains of sin in his nature, Rom. vii. 25, which made him cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yet at the same time, he could see the guilt of his sin taken off from his person, and from the persons of all true believers: "There is therefore now no condemnation, to them which are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. Oh, most blessed privilege the saints of God are privileged withal, to be exempted from guilt, though the remains of sin still abide in us.

But how shall I discern that I am a justified person?

If you have been effectually called, by the Spirit of God

working with the word, so as to convince you of sin, the great evil of it, as it is contrary to the holy nature of God, as well as destructive to the souls of men; and to turn you from the same, if you have seen a shortness in your own righteousness, and a fulness in Christ and his righteousness; and, by the work of the Spirit, your soul hath been drawn to Christ, as Jer. xxxi. 3, "With loving-kindness have I drawn thee;" then are you a justified person. "And whom he called, them he also justified," Rom. viii. 30.

If you have been brought by the Spirit's conviction, to renounce your own righteousness in point of justification, as Paul was, Phil. iii., and to rely on Christ's righteousness, by faith, for the justifying of your person before God, then are you justified. "And by him, all that believe, are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 39.

And if you have the same dispositions wrought in your heart, by the Holy Spirit, as those justified persons spoken of in the Scripture had, then are you justified persons.

What dispositions were those?

Look into Ezek. xvi. 62, 63, "And I will establish my covenant with thee, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." This is summarily a promise of grace and glory: then it follows, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth more;" that is, you shall neither justify yourself, nor condemn others, nor quarrel with thy God, but shall take shame to thyself, that grace may be alone exalted. Thus, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean," Ezek. xxxvi. 25; and in ver. 31, "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight." Here is a loathing of ourselves, that is, a self-humbling disposition in the soul, when free grace comes to take place.

And what do you think of that woman, Luke vii.? Was not her heart sweetly disposed, when Christ turned to her, ver. 44, "Seest thou this woman?" Here was faith in Christ, ver. 50. Here were the tears of true repentance; here was great humiliation for sin; here was true love in her heart to Christ. Oh, what sweet dispositions were here wrought in her heart.

And the ground of all this was, the free grace of God shining forth in the remission of her sins. "And when they

had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave both," ver. 42. "Wherefore, I say to thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven," ver. 47. And then comes the fruits of this free forgiveness, "For she loved much." Now if you have the like dispositions wrought in you, then are you a justified person also.

If you can heartily justify the ways, ordinances, and dispensations of Christ, then are you justified by Christ. "Wisdom is justified of her children," Luke vii. 35, because Wisdom's children are first justified by Wisdom. Here, by Wisdom, we are to understand Christ, who by his free grace, justifies his children, and then works dispositions in their hearts to justify him, his ways, ordinances, and righteous dispensations.

THE END.