

Like perplexities often occurring in the church's case : 2 Chron. xxii. 12, 'O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee;' and Esther iii. 14, when the writing was signed and sent abroad by all posts for the destruction and extermination of the Jews, the city Shushan was perplexed.

[5.] Though we cannot absolutely determine of the success as to particular events, yet this giveth good hope and confidence towards God.

1st. As to particular events, no absolute certainty; for (1.) God permiteth not all that you desire, or think that ye want in bodily things. (2.) Many things are necessary to serve the order and harmony of his providence in the communities and societies wherein we live; and God may deliver his people in such a way, and by such means as they never dreamt of; as Paul's going to Rome; therefore, for the way, his wisdom must be the judge, not our partial conceits. (3.) As to temporal events. We must pray with submission: 1 John v. 14, 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.' It is not always necessary for us that we should have love and respect from men, and never be tried and exercised with want, or pain, or suffering.

2dly. This giveth good hope. (1.) Because it is for Christ's sake that he fulfilleth all promises to us, and so giveth us deliverance in any strait or present exigence. (2.) Because we are heard in what we ask for God's glory and our own good; so our prayers are accepted. (1st.) God's glory. But he must choose the means; the end is granted; the prayer is not lost, but rewarded as an act of our sincerity. (2dly.) For our good, that is the chiefest good: Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' The great promise is eternal salvation, all things else subordinated to it. If you beg ease for the flesh, merely for its own sake, or worldly prosperity to please the flesh, you bespeak your own denial; Christ puts no such dress in his golden censer.

Use 3. Is to persuade you to get an actual interest in Christ, by receiving him when God offereth him, and is willing to give him to you, John i. 12. Faith is a broken-hearted and thankful acceptance of Christ, and a giving up ourselves to him by an entire and unbounded resignation, 2 Chron. xxx. 8. Yield up yourselves to the Lord, to be sanctified and governed by him.

SERMON XLIII.

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth.—Rom. viii. 33.

WE have done with the general triumph of believers, and considered what supported them against the fear of evil and the fear of death—viz., the hope of good. Now the apostle descendeth to particulars; and

the first ground of a believer's trouble is sin, the guilt of which raiseth many doubts and fears within us, all which are removed by justification. Now justification is opposite to two things, accusation and condemnation: the one maketh way for the other; for those that are justly accused are also condemned. As it is opposite to accusation, so to justify is the part of an advocate; as to condemnation, so to justify is the part of a judge. A believer is upon good terms in both respects; there are no accusers before God that we need to be afraid of, and they may with comfort appear before the bar of their judge. If we are impleaded, we may stand in the judgment; as to accusation here, and as to condemnation hereafter, accusation may seem to infringe our present comforts, condemnation make void our future hopes. But things present and to come are both ours.

The apostle beginneth with the accusation in this verse, and speaketh of condemnation in the text—*Who shall lay anything, &c.*

In which words observe—

1. A question, or bold challenge of faith—*Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?*

2. The reply, or answer, *It is God that justifieth.* The question or interrogation intimateth the matter of our trouble, something that may be laid to our charge; the answer, the ground of our support and comfort, which is God's free justification by Christ. In the challenge, or question, first, what is denied, having anything laid to our charge; secondly, the persons concerned, God's elect. Both must be explained.

First, The question implieth a denial, not simple and absolute, but in some respects; not as if no accuser, for the devil accuseth us: Rev. xii. 10, he is called 'The accuser of the brethren, who accuseth us before God day and night.' And the world accuseth us: it accused Jeremiah, Jer. xxxvii. 13, as a revolter to the Chaldeans; Amos vii. 10, as a mover of sedition; Paul as a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition, and, in general, all christians: 2 Cor. vi. 8, 'As deceivers and yet true.' Our own consciences accuse us: Rom. ii. 15; 1 John iii. 20, 'For if our hearts condemn us;' and David, Ps. xxv. 7, saith, 'Remember not the sins of my youth.' Nor is it to be understood as if there were no ground for the accusation. The devil is *κατήγορος*, not a whisperer or a slanderer, but an impleader in a court of justice, before the tribunal of God, *ἀντίδικος*, that is, an adversary in law, one that joineth with us in plea of law; he may slander us, as he did Job, that he was a mercenary man, though perfect and upright, Job i. 8, 11. But too often there is too much ground for the accusation. The world accuseth us, but we often give them too great occasion: 2 Cor. xi. 12, 'That I may cut off occasion from them that desire occasion.' Our hearts accuse us for committing and omitting many things contrary to the law of God: James iii. 2, 'In many things we offend all;' so that it is not an absolute denial of a legal accusation. How then can the apostle say, 'Who shall lay anything to our charge?' I answer, it is to be interpreted as to the success; they cannot prevail in the plea; if they charge, God will discharge. The devil is often a slanderer, the world railleth, conscience may give a wrong judgment; but when the accusation cannot be wholly denied, yet there is a remedy for the penitent believer: it is in vain to accuse those whom God upon just

reasons acquitteth. God is not in danger to be mistaken by false accusation, or to do us an injustice; but when our real guilt is before our face, and the malice of Satan will seek thereupon to procure our condemnation, yet there are just reasons to be presented before him to procure our pardon.

2. The persons—‘God’s elect,’ who in justification are considered, not as elect, but as effectually called; for the order is set down, ver. 30, ‘Whom he did predestinate, them he called; and whom he called, them he justified.’ Those whom God hath chosen before the foundation of the world, and now truly believing in Christ, these are justified, for otherwise they are condemned already, John iii. 18; children of wrath as well as others, Eph. ii. 3; for we must consider the elect as to the purpose of his grace, or the sentence of his law; for till the elect are effectually called and justified they are children of wrath as well as others.

Secondly, The reply and answer—‘It is God that justifieth.’ This implieth two things: (1.) his finding out a way to acquit them, according to the terms of the gospel, as when all men were *ὑπόδικοι Θεῷ*, obnoxious to God’s vengeance; but now a clear and sure way of pardon: Rom. iii. 19–22, ‘Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin; but the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe.’ There is mercy for all penitent believers, to accept and bless them.

(2.) He doth actually acquit all those that submit to these terms: Eph. i. 6, ‘Who hath accepted us in the beloved, to the praise of his glorious grace.’ The covenant setteth down the terms, and by performing them we are capable of this benefit of absolution.

Doct. That no charge or accusation will take effect, to prejudice the acceptation of them whom God justifieth.

1. What is justification? It consisteth in two things—first, in the pardon of all our sins; secondly, in the acceptation of us as righteous in Christ.

[1.] The first is necessary, for God doth not vindicate us as innocent, but pardoneth us as guilty; those that are impleaded before his tribunal are all sinners, and sinners are not vindicated, but pardoned; and the apostle describeth justification by the pardon of sin: Rom. iv. 6, 7, ‘As David describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered.’ God, in justifying his people against the imputations of the world, doth bring forth their righteousness as the noon-day; but in justifying them against the accusations brought before his own tribunal, doth not vindicate our innocency, but show his own mercy in a free discharge of all our sins. This is sometimes set forth in scripture by the blotting out of all our transgressions; as Isa. xliii. 25, ‘I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own name’s sake, and will remember thy sins

no more;’ as we are no more charged with what is cancelled or blotted out of a debt-book; so Isa. xxxviii. 17, ‘Thou hast cast my sins behind thy back,’ as men cast behind them such things as they list not to look on; and Micah vii. 19, ‘Thou wilt cast our sins into the depth of the sea.’ As that which is cast into the sea is lost, forgotten, and cannot be recovered; so sin shall not be brought into the judgment against the pardoned sinner.

[2.] In accepting us as righteous in Christ, who died for our sins to reconcile us unto God; and therefore sometimes he is said to be ‘made righteousness to us,’ 1 Cor. i. 30, and we are said to be ‘made the righteousness of God in him,’ 2 Cor. v. 21; that is, we have the effect of his sufferings, as if we had suffered in person; for they were undergone in our stead, and for our sakes, and the fruit of it given to us by God himself.

2. How many ways doth God justify? Four ways especially—(1.) By way of constitution; (2.) estimation; (3.) sentence; and (4.) execution.

[1.] Constitutively, by his gospel-grant, or the new covenant in the blood of Christ. The covenant of grace is God’s pardoning act and instrument by which we know whom, and upon what terms, God will pardon and justify—namely, all such as repent and believe the gospel. We are constituted just and righteous, and exempted from the curse and penalties of the law. We may know the true way of justification by its opposition to the false or pretended way: 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 those things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.’ The Jews expected to be justified by the law of Moses, but we are justified by the law of Christ; that is, this constituteth our right. And herein justification and sanctification differ,—God sanctifieth by his Spirit, but justifieth by the sentence of his word, or promise of the gospel. Our right immediately results thence, as by an act of indemnity we are freed from all the penalties which otherwise we might incur, without any further act of the magistrate. We are constituted righteous by his deed of gift in the gospel, but made holy by his Spirit; but if any quarrel at this term, and say that God by the new covenant doth declare who are justifiable, but doth not justify, I answer further, we are justified—

[2.] By way of estimation, whereby God doth determine our right, accept or deem and account them righteous who fulfil the terms of the gospel, and actually convey to them the fruits of Christ’s death. This is spoken of, 1 Cor. vi. 11, ‘And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified;’ once vile sinners, now washed, sanctified, and justified. As soon as they believe they are put into a state of acceptance, *ὁ δικαίων*, that is, justifying; he continueth to justify them unto the death, and he keeps them in that estate wherein they have exemption from the punishment of sin, and a right to eternal life.

[3.] By way of sentence. This is in part done here, when God interpreteth our righteousness and sincerity: Job xxxiii. 23, 24, ‘If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand,

to show 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;' and doth by the Spirit of adoption assure us more and more of the pardon of our sins; but more solemnly at the last day, when the judge doth, sitting upon the throne, pronounce and declare us righteous before all the world, and as those who are accepted unto life: Acts iii. 10, 'That your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' Then the sentence is solemnly pronounced by the judge sitting on the throne; and we are justified before God, men, and angels. There are two parts of judgment—to condemn, and to absolve or justify: Mat. xii. 36, 37, 'But I say unto you, that for every idle word that a man shall speak, he shall give account thereof at the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;' then every man's doom shall be pronounced.

[4.] By way of execution, when the sentence is executed. This is in part done here, as God taketh off the penalties and fruits of sin, either in the way of his internal or external government, and giveth us many blessings as the pledge of his love; and above all, the gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby he sanctifieth us more thoroughly, and worketh in us that which is pleasing in his sight. This he giveth as the God of peace, as reconciled to us in Christ: Heb. xiii. 20, 21, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ;' 1 Thes. v. 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; faithful is he that calleth you, who will do it;' but more fully at the last day, when we enter into everlasting glory, and the wicked are turned into hell with the devil and his angels: Mat. xxv. 46, 'And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.' Then is the full and final execution, a perfect freedom from all misery, and a possession of all happiness.

3. How it can stand with the wisdom, justice, and holiness of God, to justify a sinner. It is a great crime to take the unrighteous to be righteous; and to pronounce the wicked justified seemeth to be against the word of God: Prov. xxiv. 24, 'He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous, him shall the people curse, nations shall abhor him;' Prov. xvii. 15, 'He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination unto the Lord. Now what is an abomination unto the Lord is surely contrary to his nature: Exod. xxxiv. 7, 'He will by no means clear the guilty.'

Ans. There is no abating the force of these objections, if there were not good ground for God's absolution, or sentence of justification. I shall mention three:—Christ's ransom, the covenant of grace, and our faith or conversion to God.

1. Christ's ransom maketh it reconcilable with God's justice, and the honour of his law and government. Job xxxiii. 24, 'Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down into the

pit; I have found a ransom;’ Rom. iii. 25, ‘Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.’ There is full satisfaction given to God’s wronged justice.

2. His covenant reconcileth it with his wisdom. God is not mistaken in judging us righteous when we are not; for we are constituted righteous, and then deemed and pronounced so; made righteous, as the apostle speaketh, Rom. v. 19. Our right is founded in Christ’s obedience, but resulteth from the promise. The constitution is by covenant. God doth first put us into a state of favour and reconciliation, and then treateth and dealeth with us as such; constituteth us righteous by his covenant, and then in his judgment accepteth us as righteous. He will not acquit them in judgment whom his covenant doth not first pardon.

3. Effectual calling, or the conversion of man, reconcileth it with his holiness; for a sinner, as a sinner, is not justified, but a penitent believer. It is true, it is said, ‘God justifieth the ungodly,’ Rom. iv. 5; those that were once so, but not those that continue so. Certainly he sanctifieth before he justifieth: Acts xxvi. 18, ‘To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me;’ and in many other places. No man is freed from the guilt of sin, which rendereth us obnoxious to God’s wrath, who is not freed from the filth of sin, which tainteth our faculties; for Christ is made to us both ‘righteousness and sanctification,’ 1 Cor. i. 30. By losing God’s image, we lost his favour; and in the order wherein we lost it, we recover it. God regenerateth that he may pardon and justify, and restoreth first our holiness, and then our happiness. It is not consistent with God’s holiness to give us pardon, and let us alone in our sins. A man would not put a toad in his bosom. But more fully to give you a prospect into this matter, let us take notice of the several things which are mentioned in scripture as belonging to our justification, as, for instance, sometimes we are said to be justified by grace, as Rom. iii. 24, ‘Being justified freely by his grace;’ sometimes by the blood of Christ, as Rom. v. 9, ‘Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him;’ sometimes by faith, as Rom. v. 1, ‘Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;’ sometimes by works: James ii. 24, ‘Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.’ All these things concur to our justification, and do not contradict, but imply one another. The first moving cause of all is grace; the meritorious cause is Christ’s blood; the means of applying, or the condition on our part upon which we are capable at first of receiving so great a privilege, is faith; and the means of continuing in our justified estate is by good works, or new obedience. I say, our first actual pardon, justification, and right to life, is given upon condition of our first faith and repentance; but this estate is continued to us both by faith, Rom. i. 17, and new obedience; these fairly accord. The grace of God will do nothing without the intervention of Christ’s merits; and Christ’s merits doth not profit us till it be applied by faith; and sound believers will live in a course of new obedience. Let us consider them severally—

[1.] The first moving cause that inclined God to show us mercy in our undone and lost estate was merely his grace. God might have left us obnoxious to the curse without any offer of peace, as he did the fallen angels; but such was his grace, that he thought of the way of our recovery, how we might be redeemed, renewed, and justified; surely all this is of grace: Titus iii. 5-7, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.' The rise of all is the love and good-will of God.

[2.] We are justified by the blood of Christ. Blood is not exclusive of the other parts of his obedience, but doth imply them rather, as the consummate act thereof: Phil. ii. 7, 'He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' It is by the merit of his sacrifice and obedience, God took this course to exalt the glory of his justice, as well as his grace; and in the mystery of our salvation there is such a temperament of both, that they shine with an equal glory.

[3.] We are justified by faith: Acts xiii. 39, 'And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.' Certainly none are justified in a state of impenitency and unbelief; it is not enough to look to the first moving cause, the grace of God, or the impetration of it by the blood of Christ, but how it is applied to ourselves, and what right we have; for the righteousness of Christ is none of ours, till we do repent and believe. Let us see how our title doth arise: When we thankfully, seriously, and broken-heartedly accept Christ as our Lord and Saviour, then we are found in him, not having our own righteousness.

[4.] We are justified by works, and not by faith only, by which are meant the fruits of sanctification. For true faith and true holiness will show itself by good works; faith giveth us the first right, but works continue it, for otherwise a course of sin would put us into a state of damnation again; therefore at the last judgment these are considered: Rev. xx. 12, 'And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works;' Mat. xxv. 35, 36, 'For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.' Faith is our consent, but obedience verifieth it, or is our performance of what we consented unto, the one as covenant-making, the other as covenant-keeping; we are admitted by covenant-making, but continued in our privileges by covenant-keeping: Ps. xxv. 10, 'All the paths of the Lord are mercy, and truth, unto such as keep his covenant.'

But yet a little more must be said to reconcile the two apostles. Paul saith, 'A man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law,' Rom. iii. 28; and James saith, chap. ii. 24, 'Ye see then how by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.' There is a twofold charge commenced against us; as sinners and breakers of the law, as hypocrites and unsound believers. To the first we have nothing but the merits of Christ to plead; to the second, a fruitful obedience; or else,

Paul, in the opposition between works and faith, meaneth by works legal observances, by faith true christianity. The Jews boasted of their legal observances, to the rejection of the faith of Christ. And James by faith, a dead faith; and by works, christian duties, or acts of obedience to God; not external observances of the law of man.

4. Why no charge or accusation can lie against them whom God justifieth.

[1.] Because God is the supreme law-giver, to appoint the terms and conditions upon which we shall be justified; and when he hath stated them, and declared his will, who shall reverse it or revoke it? Heb. vi. 17, 18, 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' No cause of revocation can be imagined in God or out of God. Within God: not want of wisdom, for nothing can fall out but what he foresaw at first: Ps. cx. 4, 'The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent;' not inconstancy of will, 'for he is not as man, that he should repent,' 1 Sam. xv. 29. Nor can his will be frustrated through any defect of power, for he is almighty. Nothing without God: neither devils, nor angels, nor men, have power to null and frustrate the force of his constitutions. The new covenant is his resolved will and purpose, not to be altered. Surely in making it, God determineth of his own, and not another's right. It is in his power to absolve or condemn, upon what terms he pleaseth. Therefore if out of his sovereign will he hath put our justification in such a course, who can reverse it?

[2.] Because the promise of justification is built upon Christ's everlasting merit and satisfaction, and therefore it will hold good for ever: Heb. x. 14, 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' Christ procured these promises for us, and that by his death; therefore everlastingly they hold good: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him, Amen,' and called the everlasting covenant. It is even become the interest of God to justify us, that he may not lose the glory of his grace, and the merit and oblation of Christ: Isa. liii. 11, 'By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.' He that hath borne our sins, all this cost would be in vain if he should not pardon and justify. There is such a value in the death and obedience of Christ, that the scripture puts a *πολλῶ μᾶλλον* upon it, comparing it with the influence of Adam, as a common root: Rom. v. 17, 18, 'For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ: therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life;' and with the legal sacrifices: Heb. ix. 13, 'For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ?' &c. There is the same reason in both; besides institution and appointment, there is an intrinsic value.

[3.] Because it is conveyed by the solemnity of a covenant. Now

God by his covenant hath made it our right; his justice is engaged: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;' 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge shall give me at that day.' By solemn promise you convey a right to another in the thing promised; so doth God.

[4.] When we believe, God, as the supreme judge, actually determineth our right, so that a believer is *rectus in curia*, hath his *quietus est*: Rom. iv. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' And then, who can lay anything to our charge, to reverse God's grant?

[5.] The Lord, as the sovereign disposer of man's felicity, doth many times uncontrollably give us the comfort of it in our own consciences: Job xxxiv. 29, 'When he giveth quietness, who can trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only.' None can obstruct the peace which he giveth. God's dispensations, whether for good or evil, are effectual and irresistible. You may depend on the good he undertaketh to do; though this peace be assaulted, yet it will stand. God's manifesting, or hiding his face, is enough to make a creature happy or miserable.

Use 1. Is information. To show us—

1. The misery of wicked men. They are not justified by God; and therefore the charge of God's broken law lieth heavy upon them, and the weight of it will sink them to the nethermost hell. It may be the world may flatter and applaud them, and they may absolve and acquit themselves at an easier rate; but 'there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,' Isa. lvii. 20. It is not our security, delighting ourselves to sing lullabies to our own souls; for we are never upon sure terms till God justifieth us. Many absolve themselves upon easy terms, either because they sit still, and cry God mercy, or upon the account of their superficial righteousness, as the pharisees justified themselves. No, we must judge ourselves, but it is God must justify us; till we have our discharge from him, we are never safe; therefore it concerneth us to consider upon what terms we stand. Are we troubled in mind? or at peace? If troubled in mind, take God's remedy. If we be at peace, whence cometh it? Is it warranted by the covenant of God? That granteth no pardon, no justification, but to those that repent and believe.

2. The happiness of the godly. It is in vain to accuse those whom God acquitteth; you need not fear an accuser, not because innocent, but because justified. Though the world revileth you, the devil would stir up legal fears, revive your old bondage. When your hearts condemn you for many defects, you must stick to this, God justifieth. For the reproaches of the world, you need not be troubled at them; when they accuse you falsely of pride, hypocrisy, covetousness, you may say as Job: chap. xvi. 19, 'My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high.' He that is the judge of all men is a witness and observer of their ways, and will acquit those whose hearts are upright with him from the censures of the world. God will not ask their vote and suffrage. When Satan would revive our bondage by the thoughts of

death, and the consequences of it, consider wherefore did Christ come into the world, and die for sinners, but to free us from those tormenting fears? Heb. ii. 14, 15, 'Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' But when our hearts condemn us, especially for some wounding sin, the case is otherwise. God by conscience writeth bitter things against you, Job xiii. 26. We must not smother our sin, nor deny our guiltiness, but appeal from court to court: Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark our iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' and Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' If it be from the general view of sin, or the remembrance of some special sin, sue out your pardon in Christ; your justification is not nullified; you are still under a pardoning covenant, and the actual pardon on repentance is granted to you.

Use 2. Is to press us to get into this blessed condition, that you may say, It is God that justifieth. Consider the weight of the case; it concerneth damnation or salvation, whether you are under the curse, or heirs of promise. And all this is depending before God. To justify is God's act; but man must fulfil the condition. Well then, let us suppose a judiciary process; there will be such at the last day certainly—'For we must all stand before the tribunal seat of Christ,' Rom. xiv. 10. Our cause lieth before God now, and our qualification must be tried and judged now, in order to our reconciliation with God, as hereafter in order to our everlasting fruition of him in glory. Well then, the judge is God: Gen. xviii. 23; and Ps. xciv. 2, 'Lift up thyself, O thou judge of the earth!' The judge accepteth the godly while they are in the body: 2 Cor. v. 9, 'That whether we are present or absent, we may be accepted with him;' but 'he is angry with the wicked every day,' Ps. vii. 11. The witnesses are Satan and conscience; the plea in traverse is about our guiltiness, according to a double rule, the law of works or grace. If according to the law of works, alas! none of us can stand in the judgment. There we plead, not innocent, but guilty; Christ could say, John viii. 46, 'Which of you convinceth me of sin?' but here it is otherwise: Rom. iii. 19, 'All the world is become guilty before God.' Here is no denial, no extenuation, all are become corrupt; 'none doth good, no, not one.' Now Christ was made sin, and underwent the curse for us. To the second, the law of grace, there must be, first a hearty acceptance of an offered Saviour, and a consent, both of subjection and dependence. Secondly, sincere obedience: Rom. viii. 1, 'They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' He liveth as one turned from the world and the flesh to God. The more sensible we are of our own vileness, the more we see the necessity of a redeemer.
