

Justification by Faith Alone

by Jonathan Edwards

Justification by faith alone is the doctrine of the Bible, and it is the only means by which we can be saved.

Scripture: Romans 3:28, Romans 4:5, Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:11, Ephesians 2:8

Topics: "Justification By Faith", "Salvation Theology"

Description

Jonathan Edwards preaches about the doctrine of justification by faith alone, emphasizing that we are justified solely by faith in Christ, without any reliance on our own goodness or works. He explains that justification involves being approved by God as free from the guilt of sin and having the righteousness that entitles us to eternal life. Edwards argues that our faith in Christ unites us with Him, making it fitting in God's sight for us to have an interest in Christ's merits. He refutes the idea of conditional justification based on our works, highlighting that our inherent unworthiness and guilt prevent any acceptance of our virtue until we are actually justified in Christ.

Transcript

Justification By Faith Alone

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Romans 4:5

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Subject: We are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of goodness of our own.

THE following things may be noted in this verse:

1. That justification respects a man as ungodly. This is evident by these words -- that justifieth the ungodly, which cannot imply less than that God, in the act of justification, has no regard to anything in the person justified, as godliness or any goodness in him, but that immediately before this act, God beholds him only as an ungodly creature, so that godliness in the person to be justified is not so antecedent to his justification as to be the ground of it. When it is said that God justifies the ungodly, it is as absurd to suppose that our godliness, taken as some goodness in us, is the ground of our justification, as when it is said that Christ gave sight to the blind to suppose that sight was prior to, and the ground of, that act of

mercy in Christ. Or as, if it should be said that such an one by his bounty has made a poor man rich, to suppose that it was the wealth of this poor man that was the ground of this bounty towards him, and was the price by which it was procured.

2. It appears, that by him that worketh not, in this verse, is not meant one who merely does not conform to the ceremonial law, because he that worketh not, and the ungodly, are evidently synonymous expressions, or what signify the same, as appears by the manner of their connection. If not, to what purpose is the latter expression, the ungodly, brought in? The context gives no other occasion for it, but to show that by the grace of the gospel, God in justification has no regard to any godliness of ours. The foregoing verse is, "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." In that verse, it is evident that gospel grace consists in the reward being given without works, and in this verse, which immediately follows it, and in sense is connected with it, gospel grace consists in a man's being justified as ungodly. By which it is most plain, that by him that worketh not, and him that is ungodly, are meant the same thing, and that therefore not only works of the ceremonial law are excluded in this business of justification, but works of morality and godliness.

It is evident in the words, that by the faith here spoken of, by which we are justified, is not meant the same thing as a course of obedience or righteousness, since the expression by which this faith is here denoted, is believing on him that justifies the ungodly. -- They that oppose the Solifidians, as they call them, greatly insist on it, that we should take the words of Scripture concerning this doctrine in their most natural and obvious meaning, and how do they cry out, of our clouding this doctrine with obscure metaphors, and unintelligible figures of speech? But is this to interpret Scripture according to its most obvious meaning, when the Scripture speaks of our believing on him that justifies the ungodly, or the breakers of his law, to say that the meaning of it is performing a course of obedience to his law, and avoiding the breaches of it? Believing on God as a justifier, certainly is a different thing from submitting to God as a lawgiver, especially believing on him as a justifier of the ungodly, or rebels against the lawgiver.

4. It is evident that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any righteousness in himself, by that expression, it is counted, or imputed to him for righteousness. -- The phrase, as the apostle uses it here and in the context, manifestly imports that God of his sovereign grace is pleased in his dealings with the sinner, so to regard one that has no righteousness, that the consequence shall be the same as if he had. This however may be from the respect it bears to something that is indeed righteous. It is plain that this is the force of the expression in the preceding verses. In the last verse but one, it is manifest, the apostle lays the stress of his argument for the free grace of God -- from that text of the Old Testament about Abraham -- on the word counted or imputed. This is the thing that he supposed God to show his grace in, viz. in his counting something for righteousness, in his consequential dealings with Abraham, that was no righteousness in itself. And in the next verse, which immediately precedes the text, "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt," the word there translated reckoned, is the same that in the other verses is rendered imputed and counted, and it is as much as if the apostle had said, "As to him that works, there is no need of any gracious reckoning or counting it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it were a righteousness. For if he has works, he has that which is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs." This is further evident by the words that follow, Rom. 4:6, "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." What can here be meant by imputing righteousness without works, but imputing righteousness to him that has none of his own? Verse 7, 8, "Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute

sin." How are these words of David to the apostle's purpose? Or how do they prove any such thing, as that righteousness is imputed without works, unless it be because the word imputed is used, and the subject of the imputation is mentioned as a sinner, and consequently destitute of a moral righteousness? For David says no such thing, as that he is forgiven without the works of the ceremonial law. There is no hint of the ceremonial law, or reference to it, in the words. I will therefore venture to infer this doctrine from the words, for the subject of my present discourse, viz.

That we are justified only by faith in Christ, and not by any manner of virtue or goodness of our own.

Such an assertion as this, I am sensible, many would be ready to call absurd, as betraying a great deal of ignorance, and containing much inconsistency, but I desire everyone's patience till I have done.

In handling this doctrine, I would:

I. Explain the meaning of it, and show how I would be understood by such an assertion.

II. Proceed to the consideration of the evidence of the truth of it.

III. Show how evangelical obedience is concerned in this affair.

IV. Answer objections.

V. Consider the importance of the doctrine.

I. I would explain the meaning of the doctrine, or show in what sense I assert it, and would endeavor to evince the truth of it, which may be done in answer to these two inquiries, viz. 1. What is meant by being justified? 2. What is meant when it is said, that this is "by faith alone, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own?"

First, I would show what justification is, or what I suppose is meant in Scripture by being justified.

A person is to be justified, when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles to the reward of life. That we should take the word in such a sense, and understand it as the judge's accepting a person as having both a negative and positive righteousness belonging to him, and looking on him therefore as not only free from any obligation to punishment, but also as just and righteous and so entitled to a positive reward, is not only most agreeable to the etymology and natural import of the word, which signifies to pass one for righteous in judgment, but also manifestly agreeable to the force of the word as used in Scripture.

Some suppose that nothing more is intended in Scripture by justification, than barely the remission of sins. If so, it is very strange, if we consider the nature of the case. For it is most evident, and none will deny, that it is with respect to the rule or law of God we are under, that we are said in Scripture to be either justified or condemned. Now what is it to justify a person as the subject of a law or rule, but to judge him as standing right with respect to that rule?

To justify a person in a particular case, is to approve of him as standing right, as subject to the law in that case, and to justify in general is to pass him in judgment, as standing right in a state correspondent to the law or rule in general. But certainly, in order to a person's being looked on as standing right with respect to the rule in general, or in a state corresponding with the law of God, more is needful than not having the guilt of sin. For whatever that law is, whether a new or an old one, doubtless something positive is needed

in order to its being answered.

We are no more justified by the voice of the law, or of him that judges according to it, by a mere pardon of sin, than Adam, our first surety, was justified by the law, at the first point of his existence, before he had fulfilled the obedience of the law, or had so much as any trial whether he would fulfill it or no. If Adam had finished his course of perfect obedience, he would have been justified, and certainly his justification would have implied something more than what is merely negative.

He would have been approved of, as having fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and accordingly would have been adjudged to the reward of it. So Christ, our second surety (in whose justification all whose surety he is, are virtually justified), was not justified till he had done the work the Father had appointed him, and kept the Father's commandments through all trials, and then in his resurrection he was justified. When he had been put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, 1 Pet. 3:18, then he that was manifest in the flesh was justified in the Spirit, 1 Tim. 3:16.

But God, when he justified him in raising him from the dead, did not only release him from his humiliation for sin, and acquit him from any further suffering or abasement for it, but admitted him to that eternal and immortal life, and to the beginning of that exaltation that was the reward of what he had done. And indeed the justification of a believer is no other than his being admitted to communion in the justification of this head and surety of all believers: for as Christ suffered the punishment of sin, not as a private person, but as our surety.

So when after this suffering he was raised from the dead, he was therein justified, not as a private person, but as the surety and representative of all that should believe in him. So that he was raised again not only for his own, but also for our justification, according to the apostle, Rom. 4:25, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification." And therefore it is that the apostle says, as he does in Rom. 8:34, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."

But that a believer's justification implies not only remission of sins, or acquittal from the wrath due to it, but also an admittance to a title to that glory which is the reward of righteousness, is more directly taught in the Scriptures, particularly in Rom. 5:1, 2, where the apostle mentions both these as joint benefits implied in justification: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." So remission of sin, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, are mentioned together as what are jointly obtained by faith in Christ, Acts 26:18, "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me." Both these are without doubt implied in that passing from death to life, which Christ speaks of as the fruit of faith, and which he opposes to condemnation, John 5:24, "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 unto life."

I proceed now,

Secondly, to show what is meant when it is said, that this justification is by faith only, and not by any virtue or goodness of our own.

This inquiry may be subdivided into two, viz.

1. How it is by faith.
2. How it is by faith alone, without any manner of goodness of ours.

1. How justification is by faith. -- Here the great difficulty has been about the import and force of the particle by, or what is that influence that faith has in the affair of justification that is expressed in Scripture by being justified by faith.

Here, if I may humbly express what seems evident to me, though faith be indeed the condition of justification so as nothing else is, yet this matter is not clearly and sufficiently explained by saying that faith is the condition of justification, and that because the word seems ambiguous, both in common use, and also as used in divinity. In one sense, Christ alone performs the condition of our justification and salvation. In another sense, faith is the condition of justification, and in another sense, other qualifications and acts are conditions of salvation and justification too.

There seems to be a great deal of ambiguity in such expressions as are commonly used (which yet we are forced to use), such as condition of salvation, what is required in order to salvation or justification, the terms of the covenant, and the like, and I believe they are understood in very different senses by different persons. And besides, as the word condition is very often understood in the common use of language, faith is not the only thing in us that is the condition of justification.

For by the word condition, as it is very often (and perhaps most commonly) used, we mean anything that may have the place of a condition in a conditional proposition, and as such is truly connected with the consequent, especially if the proposition holds both in the affirmative and negative, as the condition is either affirmed or denied. If it be that with which, or which being supposed, a thing shall be, and without which, or it being denied, a thing shall not be, we in such a case call it a condition of that thing.

But in this sense faith is not the only condition of salvation and justification. For there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, with which justification shall be, and without which, it will not be, and therefore are found to be put in Scripture in conditional propositions with justification and salvation, in multitudes of places. Such are love to God, and love to our brethren, forgiving men their trespasses, and many other good qualifications and acts. And there are many other things besides faith, which are directly proposed to us, to be pursued or performed by us, in order to eternal life, which if they are done, or obtained, we shall have eternal life, and if not done, or not obtained, we shall surely perish.

And if faith was the only condition of justification in this sense, I do not apprehend that to say faith was the condition of justification, would express the sense of that phrase of Scripture, of being justified by faith. There is a difference between being justified by a thing, and that thing universally, necessarily, and inseparably attending justification: for so do a great many things that we are not said to be justified by. It is not the inseparable connection with justification that the Holy Ghost would signify (or that is naturally signified) by such a phrase, but some particular influence that faith has in the affair, or some certain dependence that effect has on its influence.

Some, aware of this, have supposed that the influence or dependence might well be expressed by faith's being the instrument of our justification, which has been misunderstood, and injuriously represented, and ridiculed by those that have denied the doctrine of justification by faith alone, as though they had supposed faith was used as an instrument in the hand of God, whereby he performed and brought to pass that act of his, viz. approving and justifying the believer. Whereas it was not intended that faith was the instrument wherewith God justifies, but the instrument wherewith we receive justification: not the instrument wherewith the justifier acts in justifying, but wherewith the receiver of justification acts in accepting justification. But yet, it must be owned, this is an obscure way of speaking, and there must

certainly be some impropriety in calling it an instrument wherewith we receive or accept justification. For the very persons who thus explain the matter, speak of faith as being the reception or acceptance itself, and if so, how can it be the instrument of reception or acceptance? Certainly there is a difference between the act and the instrument. Besides, by their own descriptions of faith, Christ, the mediator, by whom and his righteousness by which we are justified, is more directly the object of this acceptance and justification, which is the benefit arising therefrom more indirectly. Therefore, if faith be an instrument, it is more properly the instrument by which we receive Christ, than the instrument by which we receive justification.

But I humbly conceive we have been ready to look too far to find out what that influence of faith in our justification is, or what is that dependence of this effect on faith, signified by the expression of being justified by faith, overlooking that which is most obviously pointed forth in the expression, viz. that (there being a mediator that has purchased justification) faith in this mediator is that which renders it a meet and suitable thing, in the sight of God, that the believer, rather than others, should have this purchased benefit assigned to him. There is this benefit purchased, which God sees it to be a more meet and suitable thing that it should be assigned to some rather than others, because he sees them differently qualified: that qualification wherein the meetness to this benefit, as the case stands, consists, is that in us by which we are justified. If Christ had not come into the world and died, etc. to purchase justification, no qualification whatever in us could render it a meet or fit thing that we should be justified. But the case being as it now stands, viz. that Christ has actually purchased justification by his own blood for infinitely unworthy creatures, there may be certain qualifications found in some persons, which, either from the relation it bears to the mediator and his merits, or on some other account, is the thing that in the sight of God renders it a meet and condecient thing, that they should have an interest in this purchased benefit, and of which if any are destitute, it renders it an unfit and unsuitable thing that they should have it. The wisdom of God in his constitutions doubtless appears much in the fitness and beauty of them, so that those things are established to be done that are fit to be done, and that these things are connected in his constitution that are agreeable one to another. -- So God justifies a believer according to his revealed constitution, without doubt, because he sees something in this qualification that, as the case stands, renders it a fit thing that such should be justified: whether it be because faith is the instrument, or as it were the hand, by which he that has purchased justification is apprehended and accepted, or because it is the acceptance itself, or whatever else. To be justified, is to be approved of God as a proper subject of pardon, with a right to eternal life. Therefore, when it is said that we are justified by faith, what else can be understood by it, than that faith is that by which we are rendered approvable, fitly so, and indeed, as the case stands, proper subjects of this benefit?

This is something different from faith being the condition of justification, though inseparably connected with justification. So are many other things besides faith, and yet nothing in us but faith renders it meet that we should have justification assigned to us: as I shall presently show in answer to the next inquiry, viz.

2. How this is said to be by faith alone, without any manner of virtue or goodness of our own. This may seem to some to be attended with two difficulties, viz. how this can be said to be by faith alone, without any virtue or goodness of ours, when faith itself is a virtue, and one part of our goodness, and is not only some manner of goodness of ours, but is a very excellent qualification, and one chief part of the inherent holiness of a Christian? And if it be a part of our inherent goodness or excellency (whether it be this part or any other) that renders it a condecient or congruous thing that we should have this benefit of Christ assigned to us, what is this less than what they mean who talk of a merit of congruity? And moreover, if this part of our Christian holiness qualifies us, in the sight of God, for this benefit of Christ, and renders it a

fit or meet thing, in his sight, that we should have it, why not other parts of holiness, and conformity to God, which are also very excellent, and have as much of the image of Christ in them, and are no less lovely in God's eyes, qualify us as much, and have as much influence to render us meet, in God's sight, for such a benefit as this? Therefore I answer,

When it is said, that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our own, what is meant is that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications or acts in us whatsoever, that God judges it meet that this benefit of Christ should be ours. It is not, in any wise, on account of any excellency or value that there is in faith, that it appears in the sight of God a meet thing, that he who believes should have this benefit of Christ assigned to him, but purely from the relation faith has to the person in whom this benefit is to be had, or as it unites to that mediator, in and by whom we are justified. Here, for the greater clearness, I would particularly explain myself under several propositions,

(1.) It is certain that there is some union or relation that the people of Christ stand in to him, that is expressed in Scripture, from time to time, by being in Christ, and is represented frequently by those metaphors of being members of Christ, or being united to him as members to the head, and branches to the stock, and is compared to a marriage union between husband and wife. I do not now pretend to determine of what sort this union is. Nor is it necessary to my present purpose to enter into any manner of disputes about it. If any are disgusted at the word union, as obscure and unintelligible, the word relation equally serves my purpose. I do not now desire to determine any more about it, than all, of all sorts, will readily allow, viz. that there is a peculiar relation between true Christians and Christ, which there is not between him and others, and which is signified by those metaphorical expressions in Scripture, of being in Christ, being members of Christ, etc.

(2.) This relation or union to Christ, whereby Christians are said to be in Christ (whatever it be), is the ground of their right to his benefits. This needs no proof: the reason of the thing, at first blush, demonstrates it. It is exceeding evident also by Scripture, 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." 1 Cor. 1:30, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us -- righteousness." First we must be in him, and then he will be made righteousness or justification to us. Eph. 1:6, "Who hath made us accepted in the beloved." Our being in him is the ground of our being accepted. So it is in those unions to which the Holy Ghost has thought fit to compare this. The union of the members of the body with the head, is the ground of their partaking of the life of the head. It is the union of the branches to the stock, which is the ground of their partaking of the sap and life of the stock. It is the relation of the wife to the husband, that is the ground of her joint interest in his estate: they are looked upon, in several respects, as one in law. So there is a legal union between Christ and true Christians, so that (as all except Socinians allow) one, in some respects, is accepted for the other by the supreme Judge.

(3.) And thus it is that faith is the qualification in any person that renders it meet in the sight of God that he should be looked upon as having Christ's satisfaction and righteousness belonging to him, viz. because it is that in him which, on his part, makes up this union between him and Christ. By what has been just now observed, it is a person's being, according to scripture phrase, in Christ, that is the ground of having his satisfaction and merits belonging to him, and a right to the benefits procured thereby. The reason of it is plain: it is easy to see how our having Christ's merits and benefits belonging to us, follows from our having (if I may so speak) Christ himself belonging to us, or our being united to him. And if so, it must also be easy to see how, or in what manner, that in a person, which on his part makes up the union between his soul and Christ, should be the things on the account of which God looks on it as meet that he should have

Christ's merits belonging to him. It is a very different thing for God to assign to a particular person a right to Christ's merits and benefits from regard to a qualification in him in this respect, from his doing it for him out of respect to the value or loveliness of that qualification, or as a reward of its excellency.

As there is nobody but what will allow that there is a peculiar relation between Christ and his true disciples, by which they are in some sense in Scripture said to be one. So I suppose there is nobody but what will allow, that there may be something that the true Christian does on his part, whereby he is active in coming into this relation or union: some uniting act, or that which is done towards this union or relation (or whatever any please to call it) on the Christian's part. Now faith I suppose to be this act.

I do not now pretend to define justifying faith, or to determine precisely how much is contained in it, but only to determine thus much concerning it, viz. That it is that by which the soul, which before was separate and alienated from Christ, unites itself to him, or ceases to be any longer in that state of alienation, and comes into that forementioned union or relation to him, or, to use the scripture phrase, it is that by which the soul comes to Christ, and receives him. This is evident by the Scriptures using these very expressions to signify faith. John 6:35-39, "He that cometh to me, shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me, shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not. All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Verse 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up the last day." -- John 5:38-40, "Whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. Search the Scriptures, for -- they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." Verse 43, 44, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another?" -- John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." If it be said that these are obscure figures of speech, which however they might be well understood of old among those who commonly used such metaphors, are with difficulty understood now. I allow, that the expressions of receiving Christ and coming to Christ, are metaphorical expressions. If I should allow them to be obscure metaphors, yet this much at least is certainly plain in them, viz. that faith is that by which those who before were separated, and at a distance from Christ (that is to say, were not so related and united to him as his people are), cease to be any longer at such a distance, and come into that relation and nearness, unless they are so unintelligible, that nothing at all can be understood by them.

God does not give those that believe a union with or an interest in the Savior as a reward for faith, but only because faith is the soul's active uniting with Christ, or is itself the very act of union, on their part. God sees it fit, that in order to a union being established between two intelligent active beings or persons, so as that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both, that each should receive the other, as actively joining themselves one to another. God, in requiring this in order to an union with Christ as one of his people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act and choice, and hence sees it fit that they only who are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one in law. What is real in the union between Christ and his people, is the foundation of what is legal: that is, it is something really in them, and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the judge. And if there be any act or qualification in believers of that uniting nature, that it is meet on that account the judge should look upon them and accept them as one, no wonder that upon the account of the same act or qualification, he should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one for the other, as if these were their own satisfaction and merits. This necessarily follows, or

rather is implied.

And thus it is that faith justifies, or gives an interest in Christ's satisfaction and merits, and a right to the benefits procured thereby, viz. as it thus makes Christ and the believer one in the acceptance of the supreme Judge. It is by faith that we have a title to eternal life, because it is by faith that we have the Son of God, by whom life is. The apostle John in these words, 1 John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life," seems evidently to have respect to those words of Christ, of which he gives an account in his gospel, chap. 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life." And where the Scripture speaks of faith as the soul's receiving or coming to Christ, it also speaks of this receiving, coming to, or joining with Christ, as the ground of an interest in his benefits. To as many as received him, "to them gave he power" to become the sons of God. Ye will not come unto me, "that ye might have life." And there is a wide difference between its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs who believe, because an interest in that satisfaction and merit is a fit reward of faith -- or a suitable testimony of God's respect to the amiableness and excellency of that grace -- and its being suitable that Christ's satisfaction and merits should be theirs, because Christ and they are so united, that in the eyes of the Judge they may be looked upon and taken as one.

Although, on account of faith in the believer, it is in the sight of God fit and congruous, both that he who believes should be looked upon as in Christ, and also as having an interest in his merits, in the way that has been now explained. Yet it appears that this is very wide from a merit of congruity, or indeed any moral congruity at all to either. There is a twofold fitness to a state. I know not how to give them distinguishing names, otherwise than by calling the one a moral, and the other a natural fitness.

A person has a moral fitness for a state, when his moral excellency commends him to it, or when his being put into such a good state is but a suitable testimony of regard to the moral excellency, or value, or amiableness of any of his qualifications or acts. A person has a natural fitness for a state, when it appears meet and condecant that he should be in such a state or circumstances, only from the natural concord or agreeableness there is between such qualifications and such circumstances: not because the qualifications are lovely or unlovely, but only because the qualifications and the circumstances are like one another, or do in their nature suit and agree or unite one to another.

And it is on this latter account only that God looks on it fit by a natural fitness, that he whose heart sincerely unites itself to Christ as his Savior, should be looked upon as united to that Savior, and so having an interest in him, and not from any moral fitness there is between the excellency of such a qualification as faith, and such a glorious blessedness as the having an interest in Christ. God's bestowing Christ and his benefits on a soul in consequence of faith, out of regard only to the natural concord there is between such a qualification of a soul, and such a union with Christ, and interest in him, makes the case very widely different from what it would be, if he bestowed this from regard to any moral suitability.

For, in the former case, it is only from God's love of order that he bestows these things on the account of faith: in the latter, God does it out of love to the grace of faith itself. -- God will neither look on Christ's merits as ours, nor adjudge his benefits to us, till we be in Christ. Nor will he look upon us as being in him, without an active union of our hearts and souls to him, because he is a wise being, and delights in order and not in confusion, and that things should be together or asunder according to their nature.

His making such a constitution is a testimony of his love of order. Whereas if it were out of regard to any moral fitness or suitability between faith and such blessedness, it would be a testimony of his love to

the act or qualification itself. The one supposes this divine constitution to be a manifestation of God's regard to the beauty of the act of faith. The other only supposes it to be a manifestation of his regard to the beauty of that order that there is in uniting those things that have a natural agreement and congruity, and union of the one with the other.

Indeed a moral suitableness or fitness to a state includes a natural. For, if there be a moral suitableness that a person should be in such a state, there is also a natural suitableness, but such a natural suitableness, as I have described, by no means necessarily includes a moral.

This is plainly what our divines intend when they say, that faith does not justify as a work, or a righteousness, viz. that it does not justify as a part of our moral goodness or excellency, or that it does not justify as man was to have been justified by the covenant of works, which was, to have a title to eternal life given him of God, in testimony of his pleasedness with his works, or his regard to the inherent excellency and beauty of his obedience. And this is certainly what the apostle Paul means, when he so much insists upon it, that we are not justified by works, viz. that we are not justified by them as good works, or by any goodness, value, or excellency of our works. For the proof of this I shall at present mention but one thing, and that is, the apostle from time to time speaking of our not being justified by works, as the thing that excludes all boasting, Eph. 2:9, Rom. 3:27, and chap. 4:2. Now which way do works give occasion for boasting, but as good? What do men use to boast of, but of something they suppose good or excellent? And on what account do they boast of anything, but for the supposed excellency that is in it?

From these things we may learn in what manner faith is the only condition of justification and salvation. For though it be not the only condition, so as alone truly to have the place of a condition in a hypothetical proposition, in which justification and salvation are the consequent. Yet it is the condition of justification in a manner peculiar to it, and so that nothing else has a parallel influence with it, because faith includes the whole act of union to Christ as a Savior. The entire active uniting of the soul, or the whole of what is called coming to Christ, and receiving of him, is called faith in Scripture. However other things may be no less excellent than faith, yet it is not the nature of any other graces or virtues directly to close with Christ as a mediator, any further than they enter into the constitution of justifying faith, and do belong to its nature.

Thus I have explained my meaning, in asserting it as a doctrine of the gospel, that we are justified by faith only, without any manner of goodness of our own.

I now proceed,

II. To the proof of it, which I shall endeavor to produce in the following arguments.

First, such is our case, and the state of things, that neither faith, nor any other qualifications, or act or course of acts, does or can render it suitable that a person should have an interest in the Savior, and so a title to his benefits, on account of an excellency therein, or any other way, than as something in him may unite him to the Savior. It is not suitable that God should give fallen man an interest in Christ and his merits, as a testimony of his respect to anything whatsoever as a loveliness in him, and that because it is not meet, till a sinner is actually justified, than anything in him should be accepted of God, as any excellency or amiableness of his person. Or that God, by any act, should in any manner or degree testify any pleasedness with him, or favor towards him, on the account of anything inherent in him, and that for two reasons:

1. The nature of things will not admit of it. And this appears from the infinite guilt that the sinner till justified is under, which arises from the infinite evil or heinousness of sin. But because this is what some deny, I would therefore first establish that point, and show that sin is a thing that is indeed properly of infinite heinousness, and then show the consequence that it cannot be suitable, till the sinner is actually justified, that God should by any act testify pleasedness with or acceptance of any excellency or amiableness of his person.

That the evil and demerit of sin is infinitely great, is most demonstrably evident, because what the evil or iniquity of sin consists in, is the violating of an obligation, or doing what we should not do. Therefore by how much the greater the obligation is that is violated, by so much the greater is the iniquity of the violation. But certainly our obligation to love or honor any being is great in proportion to the greatness or excellency of that being, or his worthiness to be loved and honored. We are under greater obligations to love a more lovely being than a less lovely. If a being be infinitely excellent and lovely, our obligations to love him are therein infinitely great. The matter is so plain, it seems needless to say much about it.

Some have argued exceeding strangely against the infinite evil of sin, from its being committed against an infinite object, that then it may as well be argued, that there is also an infinite value or worthiness in holiness and love to God, because that also has an infinite object. Whereas the argument, from parity of reason, will carry it in the reverse. The sin of the creature against God is ill-deserving in proportion to the distance there is between God and the creature. The greatness of the object, and the meanness of the subject, aggravates it. But it is the reverse with regard to the worthiness of the respect of the creature of God. It is worthless (and not worthy) in proportion to the meanness of the subject. So much the greater the distance between God and the creature, so much the less is the creature's respect worthy of God's notice or regard. The unworthiness of sin or opposition to God rises and is great in proportion to the dignity of the object and inferiority of the subject. But on the contrary, the value of respect rises in proportion to the value of the subject, and that for this plain reason, viz. that the evil of disrespect is in proportion to the obligation that lies upon the subject to the object, which obligation is most evidently increased by the excellency and superiority of the object. But on the contrary, the worthiness of respect to a being is in proportion to the obligation that lies on him who is the object (or rather the reason he has), to regard the subject, which certainly is in proportion to the subject's value or excellency. Sin or disrespect is evil or heinous in proportion to the degree of what it denies in the object, and as it were takes from it, viz. its excellency and worthiness of respect. On the contrary, respect is valuable in proportion to the value of what is given to the object in that respect, which undoubtedly (other things being equal) is great in proportion to the subject's value, or worthiness of regard, because the subject in giving his respect, can give no more than himself. So far as he gives his respect, he gives himself to the object, and therefore his gift is of greater or lesser value in proportion to the value of himself.

Hence (by the way) the love, honor, and obedience of Christ towards God, has infinite value, from the excellency and dignity of the person in whom these qualifications were inherent. The reason why we needed a person of infinite dignity to obey for us, was because of our infinite comparative meanness, who had disobeyed, whereby our disobedience was infinitely aggravated. We needed one, the worthiness of whose obedience might be answerable to the unworthiness of our disobedience, and therefore needed one who was as great and worthy as we were unworthy.

Another objection (that perhaps may be thought hardly worth mentioning) is, that to suppose sin to be infinitely heinous, is to make all sins equally heinous: for how can any sin be more than infinitely heinous? But all that can be argued hence is, that no sin can be greater with respect to that aggravation, the

worthiness of the object against whom it is committed. One sin cannot be more aggravated than another in that respect, because the aggravation of every sin is infinite, but that does not hinder that some sins may be more heinous than others in other respects: as if we should suppose a cylinder infinitely long, cannot be greater in that respect, viz. with respect to the length of it. But yet it may be doubled and trebled, and make a thousand-fold more, by the increase of other dimensions. Of sins that are all infinitely heinous, some may be more heinous than others, as well as of divers punishments that are all infinitely dreadful calamities, or all of them infinitely exceeding all finite calamities, so that there is no finite calamity, however great, but what is infinitely less dreadful, or more eligible than any of them. Yet some of them may be a thousand times more dreadful than others. A punishment may be infinitely dreadful by reason of the infinite duration of it, and therefore cannot be greater with respect to that aggravation of it, viz. its length of continuance, but yet may be vastly more terrible on other accounts.

Having thus, as I imagine, made it clear that all sin is infinitely heinous, and consequently that the sinner, before he is justified, is under infinite guilt in God's sight, it now remains that I show the consequence, or how it follows from hence, that it is not suitable that God should give the sinner an interest in Christ's merits, and so a title to his benefits, from regard to any qualification, or act, or course of acts in him, on the account of any excellency or goodness whatsoever therein, but only as uniting to Christ; or (which fully implies it) that it is not suitable that God, by any act, should, in any manner or degree, testify any acceptance of, or pleasedness with anything, as any virtue, or excellency, or any part of loveliness, or valuableness in his person, until he is actually already interested in Christ's merits.

From the premises it follows, that before the sinner is already interested in Christ, and justified, it is impossible God should have any acceptance of, or pleasedness with the person of the sinner, as in any degree lovely in his sight, or indeed less the object of his displeasure and wrath. For, by the supposition, the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in the sight of God, for guilt is not removed but by pardon. But to suppose the sinner already pardoned, is to suppose him already justified, which is contrary to the supposition.

But if the sinner still remains infinitely guilty in God's sight, that is the same thing as still to be beheld of God as infinitely the object of his displeasure and wrath, or infinitely hateful in his eyes. If so, where is any room for anything in him, to be accepted as some valuableness or acceptability of him in God's sight, or for any act of favor of any kind towards him, or any gift whatsoever to him, in testimony of God's respect to and acceptance of something of him lovely and pleasing?

If we should suppose that a sinner could have faith, or some other grace in his heart, and yet remain separate from Christ, and that he is not looked upon as being in Christ, or having any relation to him, it would not be meet that such true grace should be accepted of God as any loveliness of his person in the sight of God. If it should be accepted as the loveliness of the person, that would be to accept the person as in some degree lovely to God. But this cannot be consistent with his still remaining under infinite guilt, or infinite unworthiness in God's sight, which that goodness has no worthiness to balance. -- While God beholds the man as separate from Christ, he must behold him as he is in himself, and so his goodness cannot be beheld by God, but as taken with his guilt and hatefulness, and as put in the scales with it.

So his goodness is nothing, because there is a finite on the balance against an infinite whose proportion to it is nothing. In such a case, if the man be looked on as he is in himself, the excess of the weight in one scale above another, must be looked upon as the quality of the man. These contraries being beheld together, one takes from another, as one number is subtracted from another, and the man must be looked

upon in God's sight according to the remainder. For here, by the supposition, all acts of grace or favor, in not imputing the guilt as it is, are excluded, because that supposes a degree of pardon, and that supposes justification, which is contrary to what is supposed, viz. that the sinner is not already justified.

Therefore things must be taken strictly as they are, and so the man is still infinitely unworthy and hateful in God's sight, as he was before, without diminution, because his goodness bears no proportion to his unworthiness, and therefore when taken together is nothing.

Hence may be more clearly seen the force of that expression in the text, of believing on him that justifieth the ungodly. For though there is indeed something in man that is really and spiritually good, prior to justification, yet there is nothing that is accepted as any godliness or excellency of the person, till after justification. Goodness or loveliness of the person in the acceptance of God, in any degree, is not to be considered as prior but posterior in the order and method of God's proceeding in this affair. Though a respect to the natural suitableness between such a qualification, and such a state, does go before justification, yet the acceptance even of faith as any goodness or loveliness of the believer, follows justification. The goodness is on the forementioned account justly looked upon as nothing, until the man is justified: And therefore the man is respected in justification, as in himself altogether hateful. Thus the nature of things will not admit of a man having an interest given him in the merits or benefits of a Savior, on the account of anything as a righteousness, or a virtue, or excellency in him.

2. A divine constitution antecedent to that which establishes justification by a Savior (and indeed to any need of a Savior), stands in the way of it, viz. that original constitution or law which man was put under, by which constitution or law the sinner is condemned, because he is a violator of that law, and stands condemned, till he has actually an interest in the Savior, through whom he is set at liberty from that condemnation. But to suppose that God gives a man an interest in Christ in reward for his righteousness or virtue, is inconsistent with his still remaining under condemnation till he has an interest in Christ, because it supposes, that the sinner's virtue is accepted, and he accepted for it, before he has an interest in Christ, inasmuch as an interest in Christ is given as a reward of his virtue. But the virtue must first be accepted, before it is rewarded, and the man must first be accepted for his virtue before he is rewarded for it with so great and glorious a reward. For the very notion of a reward, is some good bestowed in testimony of respect to and acceptance of virtue in the person rewarded. It does not consist with the honor of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth, to accept of anything from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed. And then, such acceptance is inconsistent with, and contradictory to such remaining condemnation, for the law condemns him that violates it, to be totally rejected and cast off by God. But how can a man continue under this condemnation, i. e. continue utterly rejected and cast off by God, and yet his righteousness or virtue be accepted, and he himself accepted on the account of it, so as to have so glorious a reward as an interest in Christ bestowed as a testimony of that acceptance?

I know that the answer will be that we now are not subject to that constitution which mankind were at first put under, but that God, in mercy to mankind, has abolished that rigorous constitution, and put us under a new law, and introduced a more mild constitution, and that the constitution or law itself not remaining, there is no need of supposing that the condemnation of it remains, to stand in the way of the acceptance of our virtue. And indeed there is no other way of avoiding this difficulty.

The condemnation of the law must stand in force against a man, till he is actually interested in the Savior who has satisfied and answered the law, so as effectually to prevent any acceptance of his virtue, either

before, or in order to such an interest, unless the law or constitution itself be abolished. But the scheme of those modern divines by whom this is maintained, seems to contain a great deal of absurdity and self-contradiction. They hold that the old law given to Adam, which requires perfect obedience, is entirely repealed, and that instead of it we are put under a new law, which requires no more than imperfect sincere obedience, in compliance with our poor, infirm, impotent circumstances since the fall, whereby we are unable to perform that perfect obedience that was required by the first law.

For they strenuously maintain, that it would be unjust in God to require anything of us that is beyond our present power and ability to perform, and yet they hold, that Christ died to satisfy for the imperfections of our obedience, that so our imperfect obedience might be accepted instead of perfect. Now, how can these things hang together? I would ask what law these imperfections of our obedience are a breach of? If they are a breach of no law, then they are not sins, and if they be not sins, what need of Christ's dying to satisfy for them?

But if they are sins, and so the breach of some law, what law is it? They cannot be a breach of their new law, for that requires no other than imperfect obedience, or obedience with imperfections. They cannot be a breach of the old law, for that they say is entirely abolished, and we never were under it, and we cannot break a law that we never were under. They say it would not be just in God to exact of us perfect obedience, because it would not be just in God to require more of us than we can perform in our present state, and to punish us for failing of it.

Therefore by their own scheme, the imperfections of our obedience do not deserve to be punished. What need therefore of Christ's dying to satisfy for them? What need of Christ's suffering to satisfy for that which is no fault, and in its own nature deserves no suffering? What need of Christ's dying to purchase that our imperfect obedience should be accepted, when according to their scheme it would be unjust in itself that any other obedience than imperfect should be required?

What need of Christ's dying to make way for God's accepting such an obedience, as it would in itself be unjust in him not to accept? Is there any need of Christ's dying to persuade God not to do unjustly? If it be said that Christ died to satisfy that law for us, that so we might not be under that law, but might be delivered from it, that so there might be room for us to be under a more mild law, still I would inquire, What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that (according to their scheme) it would in itself be unjust that we should be under, because in our present state we are not able to keep it? What need of Christ's dying that we might not be under a law that it would be unjust that we should be under, whether Christ died or no?

Thus far I have argued principally from reason, and the nature of things: -- I proceed now to the

Second argument, which is that this is a doctrine which the Holy Scriptures, the revelation that God has given us of his mind and will -- by which alone we can never come to know how those who have offended God can come to be accepted of him, and justified in his sight -- is exceeding full. The apostle Paul is abundant in teaching, that "we are justified by faith alone, without the works of the law." (Rom. 3:28; 4:5; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:8; 3:11; 3:24) There is no one doctrine that he insists so much upon, and that he handles with so much distinctness, explaining, giving reasons and answering objections.

Here it is not denied by any, that the apostle does assert that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law, because the words are express. But only it is said that we take his words wrong, and understand that by them that never entered into his heart, in that when he excludes the works of the law, we

understand him of the whole law of God, or the rule which he has given to mankind to walk by: whereas all that he intends is the ceremonial law.

Some that oppose this doctrine indeed say that the apostle sometimes means that it is by faith, i.e. a hearty embracing the gospel in its first act only, or without any preceding holy life, that persons are admitted into a justified state. But say they, it is by a persevering obedience that they are continued in a justified state, and it is by this that they are finally justified. But this is the same thing as to say, that a man on his first embracing the gospel is conditionally justified and pardoned. To pardon sin is to free the sinner from the punishment of it, or from that eternal misery that is due it. Therefore if a person is pardoned, or freed from this misery, on his first embracing the gospel, and yet not finally freed, but his actual freedom still depends on some condition yet to be performed, it is inconceivable how he can be pardoned otherwise than conditionally: that is, he is not properly actually pardoned, and freed from punishment, but only he has God's promise that he shall be pardoned on future conditions. God promises him, that now, if he perseveres in obedience, he shall be finally pardoned or actually freed from hell, which is to make just nothing at all of the apostle's great doctrine of justification by faith alone. Such a conditional pardon is no pardon or justification at all any more than all mankind have, whether they embrace the gospel or no. For they all have a promise of final justification on conditions of future sincere obedience, as much as he that embraces the gospel. But not to dispute about this, we will suppose that there may be something or other at the sinner's first embracing the gospel, that may properly be called justification or pardon, and yet that final justification, or real freedom from the punishment of sin, is still suspended on conditions hitherto unfulfilled. Yet they who hold that sinners are thus justified on embracing the gospel, suppose that they are justified by this, no otherwise than as it is a leading act of obedience, or at least as virtue and moral goodness in them, and therefore would be excluded by the apostle as much as any other virtue or obedience, if it be allowed that he means the moral law, when he excludes works of the law. And therefore, if that point be yielded, that the apostle means the moral, and not only the ceremonial, law, their whole scheme falls to the ground.

And because the issue of the whole argument from those texts in St. Paul's epistles depends on the determination of this point, I would be particular in the discussion of it.

Some of our opponents in this doctrine of justification, when they deny that by the law the apostle means the moral law or the whole rule of life which God has given to mankind, seem to choose to express themselves thus: that the apostle only intends the Mosaic dispensation. But this comes to just the same thing as if they said that the apostle only means to exclude the works of the ceremonial law. For when they say that it is intended only that we are not justified by the works of the Mosaic dispensation, if they mean anything by it, it must be, that we are not justified by attending and observing what is Mosaic in that dispensation, or by what was peculiar to it, and wherein it differed from the Christian dispensation, which is the same as that which is ceremonial and positive, and not moral, in that administration. So that this is what I have to disprove, viz. that the apostle, when he speaks of works of the law in this affair, means only works of the ceremonial law, or those observances that were peculiar to the Mosaic administration.

And here it must be noted, that nobody controverts it with them, whether the works of the ceremonial law be not included, or whether the apostle does not particularly argue against justification by circumcision, and other ceremonial observances. But all in question is whether when he denies justification by works of the law, he is to be understood only of the ceremonial law, or whether the moral law be not also implied and intended. And therefore those arguments which are brought to prove that the apostle meant the ceremonial law, are nothing to the purpose, unless they prove that the apostle meant those only.

What is much insisted on is that it was the judaizing Christians being so fond of circumcision and other ceremonies of the law, and depending so much on them, which was the very occasion of the apostle's writing as he does against justification by the works of the law. But supposing it were so, that their trusting in works of the ceremonial law were the sole occasion of the apostle's writing (which yet there is no reason to allow, as may appear afterwards), if their trusting in a particular work, as a work of righteousness, was all that gave occasion to the apostle to write, how does it follow, that therefore the apostle did not upon that occasion write against trusting in all works of righteousness whatsoever? Where is the absurdity of supposing that the apostle might take occasion, from his observing some to trust in a certain work as trusting in any works of righteousness at all, and that it was a very proper occasion too? Yea, it would have been unavoidable for the apostle to have argued against trusting in a particular work, in the quality of a work of righteousness, which quality was general, but he must therein argue against trusting in works of righteousness in general. Supposing it had been some other particular sort of works that was the occasion of the apostle's writing, as for instance, works of charity, and the apostle should hence take occasion to write to them not to trust in their works, could the apostle by that be understood of no other works besides works of charity? Would it have been absurd to understand him as writing against trusting in any work at all, because it was their trusting to a particular work that gave occasion to his writing?

Another thing alleged, as an evidence that the apostle means the ceremonial law -- when he says, we cannot be justified by the works of the law -- is that he uses this argument to prove it, viz. that the law he speaks of was given so long after the covenant with Abraham, in Gal. 3:17, "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul." But, say they, it was only the Mosaic administration, and not the covenant of works, that was given so long after. But the apostle's argument seems manifestly to be mistaken by them. The apostle does not speak of a law that began to exist four hundred and thirty years after. If he did, there would be some force in their objection, but he has respect to a certain solemn transaction, well known among the Jews by the phrase "the giving of the law," which was at Mount Sinai (Exo. 19, 20) consisting especially in God's giving the ten commandments (which is the moral law) with a terrible voice, which law he afterwards gave in tables of stone. This transaction the Jews in the apostle's time misinterpreted. They looked upon it as God's establishing that law as a rule of justification. Against this conceit of theirs the apostle brings this invincible argument, viz. that God would never go about to disannul his covenant with Abraham, which was plainly a covenant of grace, by a transaction with his posterity, that was so long after it, and was plainly built upon it. He would not overthrow a covenant of grace that he had long before established with Abraham, for him and his seed (which is often mentioned as the ground of God's making them his people), by now establishing a covenant of works with them at Mount Sinai, as the Jews and judaizing Christians supposed.

But that the apostle does not mean only works of the ceremonial law, when he excludes works of the law in justification, but also of the moral law, and all works of obedience, virtue, and righteousness whatsoever, may appear by the following things.

1. The apostle does not only say that we are not justified by the works of the law, but that we are not justified by works, using a general term, as in our text, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth," etc.; and in the 6th verse, "God imputeth righteousness without works;" and Rom. 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." So, Eph. 2:8, 9, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, -- not of works;" by which, there is no reason in the world to understand the apostle of any other than works

in general, as correlates of a reward, or good works, or works of virtue and righteousness. When the apostle says, we are justified or saved not by works, without any such term annexed, as the law, or any other addition to limit the expression, what warrant have any to confine it to works of a particular law or institution, excluding others? Are not observances of other divine laws works, as well as of that? It seems to be allowed by the divines in the Arminian scheme, in their interpretation of several of those texts where the apostle only mentions works, without any addition, that he means our own good works in general. But then, they say, he only means to exclude any proper merit in those works. But to say the apostle means one thing when he says, we are not justified by works, and another when he says, we are not justified by the works of the law, when we find the expressions mixed and used in the same discourse, and when the apostle is evidently upon the same argument, is very unreasonable. It is to dodge and fly from Scripture, rather than open and yield ours

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