



The Benefits of
CHRIST

A Modern English Abridgment

DON BENEDETTO (D. 1544)

THE BENEFITS OF CHRIST

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THE BENEFITS OF CHRIST

1. Of Original Sin and the Misery of Man

The Holy Scripture says that God created man in His own likeness (Gen 1:26-27), making man's body free of suffering or pain, and his soul righteous, true, godly, merciful, and holy. But man, being overcome with a desire for knowledge of good and evil, ate of the fruit that God had forbidden him. As a result, he lost that image and likeness of God and became like unto beasts and the devil that had deceived him (Gen 3). Therefore, his body became subject unto a thousand evils and infirmities, not only being like the most brute beasts, but also inferior to them, and his soul became unrighteous, deceitful, cruel, ungodly, and the enemy of God. If our first parents had obeyed God, they would have left us an inheritance of righteousness and holiness. But now, because they were disobedient to Him, they have left us an inheritance of unrighteousness, ungodliness, and hatred towards God, making it impossible by our own strength to love God and conform ourselves unto His will. We have become terrible enemies of Him Who is a righteous Judge and will punish our faults; we can trust no more in His mercy. In short, through the sin of Adam, our nature is wholly corrupt; a nature that was superior to all creatures has now become subject to all, yea the bondservant of the devil, sin, and death (Rom 3:10-18). This nature is condemned to the pains of hell, having lost the right judgment or discernment of all things, calling good evil and evil good, counting false things true and true things false (Isa 5:20). In considering this, the prophet David says that every man is a liar, and that there is not one that does good (Psa 53:1-3); thus, the devil reigns peaceably as one strongly armed in his own palace, which is this world where he has become prince and governor.

There is no tongue that can express the thousandth part of our miseries, for though we were made by God as with His own hands, we have lost that image of God and have become like the devil: we are made naturally the same thing with him, both willing all that he wills and refusing all that displeases him. Thus, as we are given as prey to such a wicked spirit, there is no sin too great but that every one of us is ready to do it—unless we are kept by the grace of God. This lack of righteousness, this inclination and readiness to all unrighteousness and ungodliness is called original sin; we bring this with us from our mother's womb, being born children of wrath. Original sin began with our first parents and is the occasion and wellhead of all the sins and iniquities that we commit. In order to return to man's initial innocence whereby we could recover the likeness of God, it is necessary that first we know our miseries. For example, a man seeks a physician only when he knows that he is sick. Without this knowledge, he does not learn of the excellence of the physician, or the bounden¹ goodwill that should exist towards him, or if this sickness is dangerously life-threatening. Likewise, no man seeks Christ, the only healer of his soul, unless he knows his soul is sick. He cannot know the excellence of Christ, or the bounden

¹ bounden – morally obligated.

goodwill that he ought to bear towards Him, unless he knows his grievous sins and the deadly infection received from our first parents.

2. The Purpose of the Law

The Law was given of God that we might first know our sin, and then, distrusting to be justified by our own works, that we might run unto the mercy of God and the righteousness of faith.

Therefore, from God's infinite goodness and mercy came His only-begotten Son to deliver the miserable children of Adam. But as it was needful to make them know their own misery, God chose Abraham through whose seed He promised to bless all the generations of the earth (Gen 12:2-3); Abraham's descendents would become God's peculiar² and chosen people (Deu 14:2). After God delivered these descendents from the bondage of Pharaoh and brought them out of Egypt, He gave His servant Moses the Law, which forbade concupiscence³ or lusts and commanded that they should love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their power (Deu 6:5; Mar 12:30). This is still true these many generations later, as all *our* hope should be put in God: we should be ready to depart from our own lives for our good God's sake, to suffer all torments in our bodies, to deprive ourselves of all our goods, dignities, and honors, to honor God by choosing rather to die than to commit anything that would displease Him (Heb 11). These things should be done with all joyfulness and promptness of heart.

The Law commands further that we love our neighbor as ourselves—meaning our enemies as well as our friends—so that we are ready 1) to do to all men that which we should want to be done to us, and 2) to be glad for all things that belong to others the same as we are for that which belongs to us. Looking at this holy Law, a man sees immediately his own likeness as in a mirror—his inability to obey the commandment of God; he sees his failure to give due honor and love unto his Maker. So the *first office* of the Law is simply this: it makes sin to be known. This is affirmed by the Apostle Paul: “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Rom 7:7). The *second office* of the Law is that it makes sin to increase: we, being separated from obedience to God and made servants of the devil, full of vicious affections and appetites, cannot tolerate that God forbids concupiscence or lusts; thus, the more they are forbidden, the more they increase. In the verse just mentioned, Paul testifies that above measure he became a sinner; sin was dead, but once the Law came, sin rose up and grew. The *third office* is that the Law openly declares the wrath and justice of God, which threaten death and everlasting pain to them that do not fully keep His Law. Paul writes in Galatians 3:10, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Therefore, the Apostle says that the Law is the administration of death and brings about wrath (Rom 4:15).

These three offices being established by the Law, it must be noted that there is a *fourth office*, which is the response of man to the first three: man becomes desperate because he wants to sat-

² **peculiar** – special; *one's own*, as in God's own special people.

³ **concupiscence** – the desire for worldly things; sexual appetite.

isfy the Law but knows that he cannot. And since he cannot, he is angry with God; he wishes that there were no God at all because he fears to be sharply chastened and punished by Him. The wisdom of the flesh is the enemy of God; wherefore it is not subject to the Law of God, nor can be (Rom 8:7). The *fifth office* of the Law and its proper, excellent, and necessary end and effect is that it causes a man—out of necessity—to go unto Christ. When the Hebrews were at Mt. Sinai and very much afraid, they said to Moses, “Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it” (Deu 5:27). The Lord answered, “I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken” (Deu 5:28; 18:17). They were praised only for this: they pleaded for a mediator between them and God; Moses was the mediator who typified Jesus Christ, Who would be the Mediator and Advocate between God and man. Therefore, God said unto Moses, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him (Deu 18:18-19).

3. Our Salvation Depends upon Christ

The forgiveness of our sins, our justification, and all our salvation depend on Christ.

Our Lord God has sent that great Prophet whom He promised—His only-begotten Son—to accomplish these things: He would deliver us from the curse of the Law and reconcile us unto God; He would enable our will to do good works; and He would restore to us that likeness of God which had been lost by the sin of our first parents. Since we know that under heaven there is no other name besides the name of Jesus Christ whereby we may be saved (Act 4:10; 12), let us therefore run into His arms Who calls, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28). In this life, what consolation or joyfulness of heart may be compared to the joy and comfort of one who has been oppressed with the intolerable weight of his sins, and then hears the Son of God say that He will ease and deliver him of so great a burden? It is important that we know from whence our sickness and misery come, for no man tastes or truly discerns that which is good unless first he knows that which is evil. Therefore Christ says, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Joh 7:37). The Lord’s words could be understood in this way: except a man know himself a sinner and thirst for righteousness, he cannot taste how sweet our Jesus Christ is, nor how pleasant it is to think and speak of Him and to follow His most holy life. Knowing our sickness, then, by the offices of the Law, we behold our merciful Healer and Savior to Whom John the Baptist points saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29).

The Apostle Paul writes, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1Co 15:22). Let us not believe that the sin of Adam, which we have inherited, is of greater efficacy than the righteousness of Christ, which we have inherited through faith. It is possible for a man to regret having no influence over his conception in sin through the iniquity of his parents and his birth into the world where death reigns over all men. But now, all lamentation is taken

away, for in the same manner—without our influence—the righteousness of Christ has conquered death, bringing eternal life unto us. Paul explains: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. 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 men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 5:12-21).

This repeats the truth that the Law was given so that sin might be known; but the righteousness of Christ that justifies us before God has greater efficacy than sin. Therefore, since Christ is more powerful than Adam, the righteousness of Christ is more efficacious than the sin of Adam. If the sin of Adam were sufficient to make us sinners, or children of wrath before any sin was actually committed by us, how much more sufficient is the righteousness of Christ to make us righteous—children of grace without any of our good works. As Augustine affirmed, works cannot be good unless a person is made good and righteous by faith. A man is greatly mistaken if he despairs of the mercy of God through believing that He is not able to forgive every sin; God has already chastened all sin in His only-begotten Son and has given a general pardon to all that believe the Gospel. This most happy news, which in Christ’s stead the Apostles published throughout the world, calls a man to be reconciled unto God: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21).

Isaiah, setting forth so well the passion of Jesus Christ and the cause of it, foresees this great benefit of the mercy of God: “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his

mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isa 53:1-7).

The ingratitude and abomination is immeasurably great if we, professing to be Christians, try to justify ourselves and to obtain forgiveness of sins by our own works—all the while knowing that the Son of God has taken upon Himself all our sins and has cancelled them with His precious blood as He allowed Himself to be chastened for us on the cross. It would be the same as saying that the merits, the righteousness, and the blood of Christ were not sufficient without our foolish righteousness, which is spotted with the love of ourselves, respect to rewards, and a thousand other vanities. For this we ought to humbly ask God’s pardon, not His reward. We are guilty of not remembering the Apostle’s threatening of the Galatians, who being beguiled by false preachers did not believe that justification by faith was sufficient of itself. They pretended that they would be justified still by the Law, to whom Paul said, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith” (Gal 5:4-5).

So, if seeking after righteousness and forgiveness of sins through keeping the Law—which the Lord gave at Mt. Sinai with great glory and open miracles—results in losing Christ and His grace, what shall we say of them that endeavor to justify themselves before God with their *own* law and observations? Let those persons consider the following comparison and then give their judgment.

Since God will not give the honor and glory of man’s justification to His own Law, will He then give it to the laws and constitutions of men? This honor He gives singularly to Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son: He alone with the sacrifice of His passion has made satisfaction for all our sins—past, present, and future—as is written in chapters 7, 9, and 10 in the book of Hebrews, and stated in chapters 1 and 2 of the Apostle John’s first epistle. As we by faith apply this satisfaction of Christ to our souls, we obtain forgiveness of sins, and by His righteousness we become good and righteous before God. Thus Paul writes in the third chapter of his epistle to the Philippians: “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phi 3:6-9).

O words most notable!—every Christian should engrave these in his heart, beseeching God to make him taste them perfectly. Notice how Paul shows clearly that whoever truly knows Christ judges the works of the Law as loss, for they draw a man away from trusting in Christ and cause him to trust in himself. To this Paul adds that he judged all things dung that he might win Christ and be found in Him. In other words, whoever trusts in works and tries to be justified by them neither wins Christ nor is in Him. The whole mystery of faith resides in this truth. Wanting to affirm it boldly, Paul denied all outward justification, all righteousness grounded in observing the Law. His trust was only and assuredly in the righteousness that God gives to them who believe by faith that He has chastened all their sins in Christ, “who of God is made unto us

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30). Therefore, “According as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1Co 1:31).

It is true that there are some evil-minded authorities of Scripture who seem to dispute this doctrine by attributing justification and forgiveness of sins to works and charity (or love). Those who praise such authorities demonstrate that they do not understand justification and forgiveness of sins. Dearly beloved brethren, let us not follow the foolish opinion of the bewitched Galatians, but seek after the verity⁴ that the Apostle Paul teaches. Let us give all the praise for our justification to the mercy of God and the merits of His Son, Who with His blood has delivered us from the dominion or danger of the Law, the tyranny of sin and death, and has conducted us into the kingdom of God by giving to us eternal felicity.⁵ Christ has delivered us from the dominion of the Law because He has given us His Spirit Who shows us all truth. He has made perfect satisfaction for the requirements of the Law and has given this same satisfaction to all the members of His body: all true Christians may safely come to the judgment seat of God, clothed with the righteousness of Christ; they have been delivered by Him from the curse of the Law, which no longer can accuse or condemn, stir up affections and appetites, or augment sin. Therefore Paul says of Christ, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, [he] took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Col 2:14). Along with His deliverance from the dominion of the Law, Christ delivered us from the tyranny of sin and death, which no longer can hold us in oppression because Christ conquered death by His resurrection. He was the first to be victorious over death, and He has given this same victory to all that are members of His body: “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col 1:18).

On this ground, we may say with the prophet Hosea (Hos 13:14) and with the Apostle Paul, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Co 15:55-57). He is that most blessed seed Who has trodden down the head of the most venomous serpent, the devil. Therefore, all those who believe in Christ, putting all their hope and confidence in His mercy, are victorious with Christ over sin, death, the devil, and hell. This is that blessed seed of Abraham through Whom God promised to bless all nations.

Every man ought to have trodden down that horrible serpent in order to have delivered himself from the curse; but that undertaking was so great that the force or power of the whole world gathered together was not sufficient to bear it. Thus our God, being the Father of all mercy, was moved with compassion for our miseries and gave us His only-begotten Son, Who has delivered us from the venom of the serpent, becoming our blessing and justification. Let us embrace, beloved brethren, the righteousness of Jesus Christ; let us make it ours through faith. Let us have a sure confidence that we are righteous by the merits of Christ—not by our own works. Let us live with quiet conscience towards God and with assured trust that the righteousness of Christ annihilates all our unrighteousness, making us righteous and holy in the sight of

⁴ **verity** – a statement, principle, or belief that is true, especially enduring truth.

⁵ **felicity** – intense happiness; bliss.

God. Those, who through faith are made one body in His Son, God no longer views as children of Adam, but as His children, and makes them heirs of all His riches with His own legitimate Son (Rom 8:14-17).

4. The Effects of Lively Faith

The effects of lively faith and the unity or agreement of the soul with Christ

This holy and lively faith produces a wonderful result: whoever believes that Christ has taken upon Himself that person's sins becomes like Christ, overcoming sin, death, the devil, and hell. This is why the true Church—made up of every faithful believer—is the wife of Christ, and Christ is her Husband. We know that in marriage two become one flesh, and the goods of each become common to the other: the dowry of the wife belongs to her husband, and in like manner, the house and all the riches of the husband belong to his wife. And so should it be, according to Scripture, if they are one flesh. Likewise, God has married His dearly-beloved Son to the faithful soul who has nothing of her own but sin. The Son of God, nevertheless, has not disdained to take her for His well-beloved spouse with her own dowry of sin. By uniting and knitting together that which is wrought in this most holy matrimony, what pertains to the one also belongs to the other. Thus, Christ takes the dowry of His dearly-beloved spouse into His power to do with it what pleases Him. And what does this dowry contain? It includes the transgression of the Law, the wrath of God against her, the forwardness and boldness of the devil against her, the prison of hell, and all her other evils. It pleases Christ to cast it all upon the altar of His cross, making it of no effect (Col 2:13-14).

Then God, seeing His Son all covered with the sin of His spouse, scourged Him, and killed Him upon a wooden cross. Yet because He was His dearly-beloved and obedient Son, He raised Him from death to life, gave unto Him all power in heaven and on earth, and set Him on His right hand. The spouse cannot help but say with the heartiest rejoicing, "The realms and empires of my well-beloved Husband are mine; I am queen and empress of heaven and earth. My Husband's riches are my riches: His holiness, His innocence, His righteousness, His Godhead, with all His virtue and power. Therefore I am holy, innocent, righteous, and godly; there is no spot in me—I am fair and well favored because my dearly-beloved Husband is not spotted, but fair and well favored. Since He is altogether mine, all that is His is mine; because He is holy and pure, I also am become holy and pure." Beginning, then, with His innocent nativity, He has sanctified the filthy nativity of His spouse who was conceived in sin. The innocent childhood and youth of the Husband have justified the life of the childhood, youth, and imperfect working of His beloved wife. The love and union that the soul of a true Christian has with Christ, the Husband, are so great that the work of each is common to the other. When it is said that Christ fasted, prayed, was heard by His Father, raised the dead, delivered men from evil spirits, healed the sick, died, rose again, and ascended to heaven, so is it said of the Christian. The works of Christ are the works of the Christian—he has done them all through Christ. On the other side, all the good works that a Christian does are the works of Christ because He accepts them as His own. Of course, the works of a Christian are imperfect, but the virtue of Christ makes them perfect. The Christian, then, should be joyful, content, and fearless, knowing that his imperfect

works are acceptable before God for His Son's sake, Whom He continually beholds. O how great is the bountifulness of God; how much there is that binds the Christian to God! There is no human love that is comparable to the love of Christ, the dearly-beloved Spouse of every Christian's soul.

Scripture speaks of the extent and purpose of the sacrificial love that Christ had for His bride: "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phi 2:8). "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:26-27). And how much did God love His true and lawful daughter? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Joh 3:16-18).

A person might ask these questions: How is the union of this godly matrimony made? How is the Christian's soul coupled with Christ, the Husband? What certainty may I have that my soul is united with Christ and made His wife? How may I assuredly glory in His riches as the wife does in her husband's riches? The thinking could be as follows: It is easy for me to believe that others receive this honor and glory, but I cannot persuade myself that I am one to whom God has given such great grace—for I know my own misery and imperfection. Beloved brother or sister, I answer that your certainty consists in true and lively faith, as the Apostle Peter says: "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Act 15:9). This faith consists in giving credence to the Gospel—the good news—that is published throughout the world: God has used the rigor of His righteousness against Christ, chastening in Him all our sins. Whoever receives this good news and believes it assuredly has true faith. The inestimable privileges granted to one with true faith are the remission of sins, reconciliation with God, transformation from a child of wrath to a child of grace, recovery of the image of God, entry into the kingdom of God, and residence for the Holy Spirit. Through this faith, one's soul is married to Christ, God's only begotten Son, which is the work and gift of God. "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 at the last day" (Joh 6:40). Also, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Joh 3:14-15).

And to Martha: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (Joh 11:25-26). He said to the multitude of Jews: "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (Joh 12:46). The Apostle John wrote: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1Jo 4:9-10). To that end, God made Christ partaker of our flesh and blood: "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise 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” (Heb 2:14-15).

Having the testimony of Scripture upon these promises, and knowing that there are many other references as well, we have no reason to doubt the truth of them. Since the Scripture speaks generally, no man ought to doubt that what is said applies to him specifically. Perhaps the whole mystery of faith would be better understood with aid from the following illustration. A good and holy king caused a proclamation to be made that all who have rebelled against him at any time should return safely into his realm. Why? Due to the merits of one of their relatives, the king has pardoned them all. Truly, none of these rebels ought to doubt that he has obtained pardon and forgiveness for his rebellion; instead, there ought to be a sure trust and a return to his house to live under the shadow and defense of that holy king. If the rebel does not return, he should bear the pains and—because of his incredulity⁶—die a banished man in the displeasure of his king. This “holy king” is the Lord of heaven and earth Who, through the obedience and merits of Christ, our Kinsman, has pardoned all our rebellion and has caused a proclamation to be made throughout the whole world that speaks of a safe return to His kingdom. Whoever then trusts this promise and returns to the kingdom of God—from which we were cast forth by the offence of our first parents—is governed most happily by the Spirit of God. On the other hand, he, who does not trust this proclamation and, therefore, does not enjoy this general pardon (but through mistrust remains in exile and banishment under the tyranny of the devil) will live and die in extreme misery; for he does so in the displeasure of the King of heaven and earth. And this is deserved: we cannot offend God more than to make Him a liar and a deceiver. This is what we do when we do not trust His promise.

O how grievous is this sin of unbelief, which deprives and spoils God of His glory and perfection. It also brings the hurt of everlasting damnation and continual vexation of mind that in this life the miserable conscience feels. In contrast, he that approaches God with an unfeigned⁷ heart and strong faith, trusting in His promises without any manner of doubting, believing assuredly that all God has promised he shall obtain—that man gives glory unto God. He lives in continual peace and joyfulness of conscience, always praising and thanking God, Who has chosen him to the glory of everlasting life. He has a pledge most sure and certain, namely, the Son of the same God for his most dearly-beloved Spouse, Whose blood has made his heart joyful. This holy faith engenders a lively hope and an assured trust or belief in the mercy of God towards us; this faith lives and works in the heart, and by it we put our whole trust in God, committing unto Him the entire care and charge of us. Being sure of the benevolence and mercy of God towards us, we are not afraid of the devil, or his ministers, or death itself. Once this steadfast and comfortable belief in the mercy of God is brought into the heart, it is strengthened, directed towards God with sweet affections, and filled with ardent love. The author of Hebrews exhorts us to go boldly with faith to the throne of grace (Heb 4:16), and he comforts us not to cast away our faith and confidence, which has great reward (Heb 10:35). This holy faith and trust originate in our hearts because of the Holy Spirit, Who takes up residence there when we believe and is never void of the love of God. By this lively efficacy or strength, we are stirred to do good works with such an inclination or readiness that we are willing to do and suffer all

⁶ **incredulity** – unbelief.

⁷ **unfeigned** – genuine.

things—be they ever so intolerable—for the love and glory of God, our most kind Father. He has made us rich in His abundant grace or favor; He has made us His dear children where once we were His enemies.

This true faith is no sooner given from God to man but that he is immediately stirred with a strong zeal and desire to do good works; as a very good tree, he wants to bring forth pleasant fruits to the Lord and to his neighbor. This is an inevitable result, just as it is certain that a bundle of kindled sticks will produce light. It must always be remembered, however, that good works follow true faith and have no part in making a man righteous before God. It is this faith without which it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6); it is this faith by which all the saints of the Old and New Testaments are saved. The Apostle Paul wrote much about this truth that is illustrated in the following passages. Romans 4:3: “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” In Romans 3:19-28, Paul explains why we are to believe that man is justified by faith without the works of the Law. Romans 11:5-6: “Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” And to the Galatians: “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them” (Gal 3:11-12). “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal 2:16). “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal 2:21).

Finally, in writing to the Romans, Paul compares the righteousness of the Law with the righteousness of faith: “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Rom 10:3-11). Paul plainly shows that faith without any help of works makes a man righteous.

Paul was not alone in writing a defense of the doctrine of justification by faith. There were a number of church fathers who defended this truth in many writings. A primary example is Augustine, who wrote, among many other titles, *Book of Faith and Works*, *Of the Spirit and the Letter*, *Eighty-three Questions* (written to Bonifacius, the Bishop of Rome), and *Tract on the Thirty-first Psalm*. Origen defended this doctrine in his *Fourth Book upon the Epistle to the Romans*, affirming that the Apostle Paul would have faith alone be sufficient to justify sinners; only by be-

lieving, states Origen, does a man become righteous—even when he has done no works. The well-known proof text for this is Luke 23:40-43: the thief on the cross was justified without the works of the Law, for the Lord neither sought what works he had done before nor required that he should work anything after he had believed. It is notable that the Lord justified the thief by his confession only, taking him as His companion when He entered into Paradise. Similarly in the Gospel of Luke, there is the wonderful story of the woman who, kneeling at the feet of Jesus, heard Him say, “Thy sins are forgiven... Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace” (Luk 7:48, 50).

To this Origen adds: “In many places of the Scripture it is seen that the Lord spake in such manner that He shewed that faith is the occasion of the health and salvation of him that believeth. Then the man is justified by faith, to the which the works of the law help nothing; and on the contrary part, where the faith is not which justified him that believeth, although a man have the works that the law commandeth, nevertheless because they be not builded upon the foundation of faith, although in outward appearance they appear never so good, they nevertheless cannot justify him that doth them, he wanting⁸ faith, which is the mark of them that are justified of God. And who is he that may glory in his own righteousness, hearing God say by the prophet that all our righteousness is like the clothes stained with the flowers of a woman? Then to glory in the faith of the cross of Jesus Christ is the true glorying.”

Let us look at the writings of several other saints of God. Basil, in his homily *Of Humility*, expressly willed that the Christian account himself righteous only by faith in Christ. His words are these: “The apostle saith, he that glorieth, let him [glory] in the Lord, saying that Christ was made by God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and therefore as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (1Co 1:30-31). Therefore the perfect and entire glorying is in God, when a man doth not enhance himself by his own righteousness, but knoweth that he lacketh the true righteousness, and that by the only faith in Christ he is justified. Paul also glorieth in not esteeming his own righteousness, and in seeking by faith in Christ the righteousness that cometh from God.” Hilarius, in commenting on Matthew 9:2-8, wrote: “The scribes were troubled because that sin should be remitted of man, for they esteemed Jesus Christ only as man, and that he had remitted that which the law could not remit, and therefore faith only justified.” In expounding the words of Paul in Romans 4:5-6, Ambrose wrote as follows: “Saint Paul saith, that to him that believeth in Christ, that is to say, to the Gentile, is his faith imputed for righteousness, even as it was to Abraham? In what manner then did the Jews think to be justified by the works of the Law after the justification of Abraham, when Abraham was not justified by the works of the Law, but only by faith? Then the Law is not necessary, since the wicked man only by faith is justified before God, according to the purpose of the mercy of God.” Thus, as Ambrose has stated, God has determined that the health and salvation of the unrighteous are found not in keeping the Law but in seeking faith from the mercy of God. The Apostle Paul verified that he spoke after the example of David in Romans 4:6-8: “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 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.” David understood that those

⁸ wanting – lacking.

whom God has determined are blessed, for without weariness and without observations, they are made righteous before God by faith alone.

Ambrose, in expounding the first chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, states very plainly that whoever believes in Christ is justified without works and without any of his merits, receiving by faith alone the remission of sins. He also affirms the same in a letter to Irenaeus with these words: "Let no man glory or boast of his works, for no man is justified by his own works; but he that is righteous hath his righteousness by gift; for he is justified by Christ. Then faith is the thing that delivereth us through the blood of Christ; for he is blessed to whom sin is remitted and pardon given." Bernard, in the seventy-seventh sermon on *Cantica Salomonis*, confirms the same: our merits have no part in our justification; it should be attributed wholly to mercy, which freely makes us just and delivers us from the servitude or bondage of sin. He continues, "Christ espouseth the soul and uniteth it with him by faith, not mingling therewith any merits of our works."

Let me close this discussion with an example given by Ambrose in his book, *Of Jacob and of the Blessed Life*. He describes how Jacob, not being the firstborn son, dressed in his brother's clothes which had a strong, distinctive smell. Jacob then presented himself to his father in the likeness of Esau, his brother, in order to receive the benefit of the father's blessing. Similarly, it is necessary that we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ by faith, and that we are hidden under the precious purity of our eldest Brother if we will be received as righteous in the sight of God.

It is true, indeed, that if we come into the presence of God without being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall be judged unrighteous and worthy of all punishment. On the other hand, if God sees us clothed with the righteousness of Christ, He will surely accept us as just, holy, and worthy of eternal life.

Great is the foolishness of those who pretend to gain righteousness by keeping the commandments of God, which can be summarized and understood in two commandments: love God with all your heart, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself (Mat 22:36-40). Who, then, would be so arrogant or presumptuous and mad to believe that he truly keeps these two commandments? Does he not see that the Law of God requires from man a perfect love, whereby all imperfection is condemned? Thus, every man should consider his own works that to some degree appear good to him, and he shall find that his works are a transgression of the holy Law: they are unclean and imperfect works. Consider the following Scriptures. Psalm 143:2: "And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Proverbs 20:9: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Job 15:14-16: "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" 1 John 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Matthew 6:12: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

These verses demonstrate the foolishness of those that make merchandise of their works, presuming with those works to have power to save not only themselves, but others also. It is as though the Lord had not said, "...when ye shall have done all those things which are command-

ed you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luk 17:10). Even if we keep the Law of God perfectly, we may judge and call ourselves unprofitable servants. Now, since all men are very far from perfectly fulfilling the Law, how can any man dare to glory that he has put together so great a heap of merits to the just measure that he has any merit to give to others?

Let the arrogant sinner consider this: though he does some works that the eyes of this world call praiseworthy, when he attempts to justify himself in the sight of God, he must see that all works coming from a corrupt and unclean heart are likewise corrupt and unclean. Consequently, such works cannot be acceptable to God nor have power to justify. First and foremost, the heart must be purified before works can please God; that purifying comes by faith (Act 15:9). Thus, we may not say that by his works the unrighteous man—a sinner—becomes just, good, and acceptable to God. We must say that faith in Jesus Christ purifies our hearts from all sin, making us good, just, and acceptable to God, and consequently causes that our works—although they are always imperfect and weak—do nevertheless please His majesty. For when by faith we have become the children of God, He then considers our works as our most merciful Father would, and not as a strict judge. He has compassion on our frailty, and considers us as members of His first-begotten Son, Whose righteousness and perfection cover our uncleanness and imperfection. When our unrighteousness and impurity are covered by the purity and innocence of Christ, they are not imputed to us nor come under the judgment of God.

Therefore, the works proceeding from true faith, though they are impure and imperfect, shall be greatly praised and commended by Christ in the universal judgment for they shall be the fruit and testimony of our faith. By loving the brethren of Christ, we will have shown that we have been faithful and are truly His brethren. We will be brought into the perfect possession of the everlasting kingdom, which God our heavenly Father prepared for us from the beginning of the world. Through no merit of our own, but through His mercy, God has chosen and called us to the grace of the Gospel and has justified us that we may glory forever with His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord—our justification and righteousness. They will be excluded who will not confess and acknowledge that His mercy is sufficient to make a man just and acceptable to God, Who through His fatherly kindness offers and gives to us Christ with His righteousness. This is done without any merit of our works, for what work of man could ever deserve such a great reward and treasure as Christ? This treasure is given only by the grace, favor, and mercy of God; it is received through faith, which produces fruit that comes from the forgiveness of our sins.

Thus, when the Apostle Paul and the early church fathers say it is faith only that justifies—not works (Gal 2:16)—they are saying it is by faith alone that we have possession of the general pardon. This includes the following precious gifts: Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17a); He has overcome the terror of our conscience (1Ti 3:9); He has satisfied the justice of God for our sins by appeasing and quenching the wrath of God against us (Rom 3:20-26), thereby saving us from the fire of hell into which our natural corruption would throw us headlong; and He has vanquished and destroyed the devil with his power and tyranny (Heb 2:14). All the works that might be done by all men together could never accomplish such things!

This glory and this power are reserved only for the Son of God, the blessed Redeemer Jesus Christ, Who is above all the powers of heaven and earth and hell. With all His merit, He gives Himself to those who despair of themselves, putting all their hope of salvation in Him and His merit. Therefore, let no man be deceived when he hears the view of some false professors who have a carnal or fleshly understanding of all things. They profess that true faith consists of believing the story of Jesus Christ much like they believe the histories of Caesar and Alexander. This produces belief in a historical faith, which is founded on man's written accounts and is somewhat imprinted on the mind by a certain use or custom. It is similar to the faith of the Turks, who by the same means believe in the fables of the Koran. This so-called "faith" is an imagination of man that does not renew his heart, or warm him with godly love, or engender any works of new life. Thus, in opposition to Scripture and the writings of church fathers, they say that faith alone does not justify—indeed that works are necessary. To this I answer that a historical faith—which is also very vain with its emphasis on works—not only does not justify, but also casts a man headlong into hell; it is like those who have no oil in their lamps (Mat 25:1-13), meaning they have no true faith in their hearts.

Faith that justifies is a work of God in us by which our old man is crucified (Rom 6:6), and we, being altogether transformed into Christ, become new creatures and dearly-beloved sons of God (2Co 5:17; 1Jo 3:1). This godly faith is such that it grafts us into the death and resurrection of Christ, and consequently mortifies the flesh with its affections and lusts. By the efficacy of faith, we know that we are dead with Christ, and do therefore determine with ourselves, with the world, and with fellow believers to mortify worldly members—the sinful affections of the mind and the appetites or lusts of the flesh. Knowing that we are raised with Christ, we diligently endeavor to lead a spiritual and holy life like we shall live in heaven after our resurrection (Rom 6). This most holy faith causes us to enjoy the general pardon that the Gospel publishes; yea, it leads us into the kingdom of God, makes peace in our conscience, and maintains in it a perpetual and holy joyfulness and mirth. This same faith unites us with God, causes Christ to dwell in our hearts, and clothes our soul with Him. Consequently, His Holy Spirit moves us to those things to which He moved Christ when He lived among men: humility, meekness, obedience to God, charity, and other perfections by which we recover the image of God.

To this inspired faith, Christ attributes blessedness which cannot stand without good works and holiness. Is it possible for a Christian to be unholy if by faith Christ has become his sanctification? So by faith, we become just and holy. Christians, who have the Spirit of Christ to govern them, are not slothful to do good works because the Spirit of Christ is the spirit of love; love cannot be idle from doing good works. In truth, a man must first know that by faith he is justified through the merits and righteousness of Christ before he can do good works. Only then does he work solely for the love and glory of God and of Christ, as opposed to either working out of self-love or attempting to earn his justification. Thus, the true Christian—one who counts himself righteous through the righteousness of Christ—does not ask if good works are commanded; he is so moved and stirred by the strength of God's love towards him that he readily offers himself for Christian works, always working well.

If a person does not have these marvelous effects which true faith produces in a Christian, let him know that he does not yet have the true Christian faith. Let him make instant prayer to God and say, "Lord, help my unbelief" (Mar 9:24). If he hears that faith alone justifies, let him

not deceive himself by saying, “Why should I weary myself in doing good works? Faith suffices to send me to Paradise.” Let him mark that the devils also believe and tremble (Jam 2:19). Do you really think you will go with them *into Paradise* through this false reasoning? Please realize you are in great error: you think that you have faith that justifies, but you have it not; you say, “I am rich...and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). I urge you to buy of God gold refined in the fire, that is to say, true faith refined through good works, so that you become rich and clothed with white clothes, which is the innocence of Christ; then the shamefulfulness of your nakedness—the filthiness of your sins—will not appear (Rev 3:18).

Faith that justifies is like a flame of fire. The flame produces light, but it is the burning flame alone that disintegrates the wood with no help from the light. Likewise, faith produces good works, but only burning faith extinguishes sins with no help from works. Nevertheless, this faith must have good works: when we see a flame of fire that does not emit light, we know it is painted and vain; similarly, when we do not see the light of good works in a man, it is an indication that he does not have the true, inspired faith which God gives to His elect to justify and glorify them. Assuredly James, the brother of the Lord, understood this when he said, “Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (Jam 2:18). His meaning was simply that he who attends to the ambition and pleasures of the world, regardless of how much he says he believes, he believes not—for his life does not show the effects of faith. The evidence of true, justifying faith can be illustrated by the life of the Lord Jesus. While He was on this earth as wholly Man—though without sin—He wrought wonderful things: healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, walked on the water, and raised the dead. These miraculous works demonstrated that Christ was wholly God. In other words, the miracles were evidence of Who He was—the God-man; the miracles were the outworking of the divine nature within Him. In the same way, living faith, which is God’s gift in the soul of a Christian, is evidenced by good works that the Christian does not become weary of doing. The works do not make someone a Christian—they do not make someone acceptable before God—but rather they demonstrate the nature within him. Faith working by love is the cause of the Christian’s good works.

In John 17, Christ prays to the Father concerning His union with the souls of those who believe in Him through faith. He prays for His apostles and then for those who will believe in Him by their preaching: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (Joh 17:20-23). O glory to be marveled at—that a Christian’s faith enables him to possess such things, which the angels desire to look into (1Pe 1:12).

These arguments show plainly the difference between us who believe a man is justified by faith alone, and others who believe justification comes by faith plus works. We agree that the necessity or establishment of works is clear: faith that justifies will produce good works; those that are justified by faith are the doers of works that truly may be called good. But here we disagree: we say that faith without works justifies, and the reason for this is simple. It is by faith that

we clothe ourselves with Christ, making His righteousness and holiness ours. Therefore, we cannot be so unthankful, blind, and wicked as to believe that the righteousness of Christ is not sufficient without our works to make us acceptable and righteous in the sight of God. As it says in Hebrews 9: 13-14, “For if the blood of bulls and of 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, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

A Christian should judge which of these two views is true, holy, and worthy to be preached and taught: 1) faith that illustrates the benefit of Christ while abating the pride of man, which exalts man’s works against the glory of Christ, or 2) faith that is not alone in justification, but also requires good works that stir the pride of man. Good works are acceptable to God, and He will graciously reward them in Paradise. But, as Augustine said, only those who are justified by faith alone produce good works—for if the tree is not good, it cannot bear good fruit (Mat 7:17-18).

Moreover, those who are justified by faith, knowing they are righteous through the righteousness of God carried out by Christ, do not use their good works as merchandise by pretending to use them to buy their justification from God. Being inflamed with the love of God and desirous to glorify Christ, Who has justified them and given to them all His merit and riches, they seek with all their hearts to do the will of God and fight manfully against loving themselves, the world, and the devil. When they fall through the frailty of the flesh, they rise again and are even more desirous to do good works—being more enamored and in love with God. This is because they know that their sins are not imputed unto them by Him: they are incorporated into one body with Christ, Who has made satisfaction for all the members of His body on a wooden cross, continually making intercession to His eternal Father for them. Because of the Father’s love for His only Son, the members of Christ’s body are always seen with a most pleasant countenance; they are governed and defended as God’s dearly-beloved children who will be given an everlasting inheritance, making them like the glorious image of Christ.

These truths of God’s lovingkindness move true Christians to do good works, for as children of God they have become partakers of the divine nature. Through the Holy Spirit Who dwells in them, they are stirred up to live as children of such a great Lord, and they are ashamed not to live in accordance with their heavenly nobility. Therefore, they wholly apply their minds to follow their eldest Brother, Jesus Christ, living in great humility and meekness, seeking in all things the glory of God, giving their lives for the brethren, doing good to their enemies, rejoicing in slanders and in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. They say with Zacharias, “... that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luk 1:74-75).

They say with the Apostle Paul, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:11-13).

Conversely, the person that does not have these thoughts, desires, and affections, but is given to the flesh and the world, he does not yet have the faith that justifies. This means he does

not have the Spirit of Christ, is not a member of the body of Christ, and, therefore, is not a Christian. Let man's wisdom cease to speak against the righteousness of holy faith, and let us give all the glory of our justification to the merits of Christ with Whom we clothe ourselves through faith.

5. Clothed with Christ

How the Christian man clothes himself with Christ

When a man is going to present himself to a great lord, he will wear a beautiful and costly garment. Likewise, when a Christian comes before God, the Lord of all, he is clothed with all the perfections of Christ covering him so completely that it is as if he had merited and obtained them all himself. By exercising faith without doubt, Christians possess Christ and all that is His as surely as a person possesses his own garment. In other words, being clothed with Christ is believing assuredly that Christ is ours, and that by this heavenly garment we are dearly beloved and accepted in the presence of God, a most kind Father, Who has given to us these riches in Christ. God gives us the righteousness of Christ in such manner that it is lawful for us to glory in it. And if God has given us Christ, then He has given us all things with Him.

This being true, the Christian may confidently say, "I am the son of God, Christ is my Brother, I am as a lord of heaven and earth, of hell, of death, and of the Law; therefore, the Law cannot accuse nor say evil of me since the righteousness of Christ is mine." This may properly be called a great mystery, containing both marvelous and unheard things of Almighty God—things which apart from God's grace cannot enter into the heart of man. As He promised by the mouth of Ezekiel, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Eze 36:26).

Another consideration of what it means to be clothed with Christ is found in the words of the Apostle Peter: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1Pe 2:21). Considering the inestimable greatness of the gift that God has given to us, a Christian's lifestyle should be patterned after the life of Christ, where all of life is ruled by the example of Christ—thoughts, words, and works—because he is inflamed with the most fervent desire to be like Christ. The former, sinful lifestyle is to be abandoned as the Christian is now clothed with the righteousness of Christ and is conforming himself to be like Christ. As the Apostle Paul says, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom 13:12-14).

Thus, the true Christian says within himself, "Since Christ, having no need of me, has rescued me with His own blood and became poor to make me rich, likewise will I give my goods and my life for the benefit and health of my neighbor. As I am clothed with Christ through the love He has shown unto me, I want my neighbor-in-Christ to be clothed with my love and my

goods for Christ's sake." Therefore, no one should say "I love Christ" unless there is love for the brethren of Christ; if we don't love our neighbor for whom Christ shed His precious blood, then we can't say truly that we love Christ. We are also called to follow Christ's example of humility and meekness: we are to flee strife and contention in both word and deed. Just as Christ suffered shame and persecution from the world for the glory of God, so ought we to do joyfully (2Ti 3:12).

When He was on the Cross, Christ prayed for His enemies; thus, we ought to pray for our enemies. For when we are clothed with Christ—having His riches as our own and being washed clean from sin—we are to glorify God through following Christ's example (Luk 23:33-34). The life of Christ was a perpetual cross: it was full of tribulation, shame, and persecutions. If we seek to conform our lives unto His, then we also must bear this cross. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mat 16:24). What is the primary purpose of this cross? The Lord God will use it to mortify the affections of the mind and the appetites and lusts of the flesh, so that we may apprehend in ourselves this union with Christ, and so that our faith, refined as gold in the furnace of adversity, will shine to His praise.

In the words of our Lord: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, 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. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Mat 25:34-40). We are to have the same care and regard for the true members of Christ's body—of which He is the head (Eph 5:23)—as we have for our own bodies. This is love, which springs up from unfeigned faith wherewith God inspires His elect (1Ti 1:5).

God also desires that through our infirmities we will show forth His mighty power, which is seen by the world when tribulations and persecutions turn our weakness into strength. The Apostle Paul speaks to this: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body" (2Co 4:7-10).

Seeing, then, that Christ and His dear apostles have glorified God with their tribulations, let us also embrace them joyfully, saying with Paul, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal 6:14). Let us work and behave ourselves in such a way that the world may see and know the marvelous effects God works in them that sincerely embrace the grace of the Gospel. Let men of the world see the tranquility and quietness of mind that true Christians manifest when confronted with loss of goods, the death of their children, slanders, infirmities of the

body, and persecutions. Let unbelievers see how Christians honor God in spirit and truth, thankfully taking from God's hand all that happens to them, counting as good, just, and holy all that He does, and in all prosperity and adversity, praising and thanking Him as a good and merciful Father. They acknowledge that it is a great gift of God to suffer for the Gospel and to follow Christ before all things: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom 5:3-5). Paul has written that patience works experience because God has promised to help those in tribulations who trust in Him (Heb 4:16).

We experience this when our own strength fails, yet nevertheless we stand strong and constant as we are held up by the hand of God. Through patience, we have the experience of the Lord bringing the help that He has promised in our time of need through which our hope is established. Having learned by experience that the Lord's help is certain and constant, it would be a manifestation of ingratitude if we do not continue to look for it. It is enough to know that when true Christians encounter tribulations, if they bear them willingly while clothed with the image and likeness of Christ crucified, then afterward they will be clothed with the image of Christ glorified. Though the afflictions of Christ abound in us now, even so, our consolation and comfort shall also abound through Christ: if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign together with Him (2Ti 2:12).

6. Remedies against Unbelief

Certain remedies should be used against unbelief.

The devil and man's wisdom continuously work to rob us of this most holy faith by which we believe that in Christ all our sins are chastened, and that through His precious blood, we are reconciled and made one with God. It is needful, therefore, that the Christian always have his armor ready to defend himself from this evil temptation, which goes about to deprive the soul of its life. Among these armors, we judge *prayer*, often use of *holy communion*, the remembrance of *baptism*, and a right understanding of *predestination* to be most mighty.

Remedy against Unbelief: Prayer

In our prayers, let us say with the father of the lunatic, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mar 9:24), and let us say with the apostles to the Lord, "Increase our faith" (Luk 17:5). If we want a continual desire to reign in us that increases faith, hope, and love, then let us pray as the Apostle Paul ordained (1Th 5:17)—for prayer is, in essence, a fervent desire founded and fixed in God.

Remedy against Unbelief: Baptism

With the remembrance of baptism we shall assure ourselves to be at peace with God, for in baptism we clothe ourselves with Christ, as the Apostle Paul affirmed (Rom 6:3-4); consequently, we are made partakers of His righteousness and all His goods. Under this most precious garment, the sins that our frail nature does commit are covered and are not imputed to us by God; as the Apostle wrote to the church at Rome, “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, 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” (Rom 4:6-8).

But let the Christian beware: these words do not give license to sin. This doctrine does not pertain to them who are honored with the name of “Christian,” who with words confess Christ, but with works deny Him. It pertains to true Christians who fight daily with the flesh, the world, and the devil; they fall every day and are constrained to say continuously, “Forgive us our debts” (Mat 6:12). We speak to these saints to comfort and hold them up that they might not fall into desperation, thinking the blood of Christ did not cleanse them from *all* sin—as though He were not the Advocate and propitiation⁹ for *all* His members. Thus, when we doubt the remission of our sins, and our conscience is troubled, let us—being clothed with faith—run straightway to the precious blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for us on the altar of the Cross.

Remedy against Unbelief: the Lord's Supper

Christ instituted the celebration of the Lord's Supper so that we would often remember His death, and in so doing be reminded of our reconciliation and atonement with God. Jesus Christ made His testament at the last meal with His disciples: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mat 26:26-28). We know that nothing can be added to a man's testament once it is established, and as the author of Hebrews says, “For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” (Heb 9:16-17). The testament of Christ, then, in which He promised the remission of sins, was confirmed with His precious blood and His own death. Again quoting from Hebrews: “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). Therefore, by the death of Christ we are certain that the testament is valid, whereby all our iniquities are remitted, and we are made inheritors of eternal life.

The Apostle Paul gives a strong, sober warning against participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. He warns, “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and

⁹ **propitiation** – appeasement; a sin offering that turns away wrath.

drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1Co 11:27-29).

When the Christian struggles with doubt over obtaining the remission of *his* sins through the work of Christ—which would make him unable to withstand the devil with his temptations, or answer the accusation of his conscience, leading him to fear that hell should swallow him and that death, through the wrath of God, should overcome and slay him eternally—he must look for assurance in the right place. If he looks to his works, he doubtless will find himself a condemned sinner; his conscience will never be quiet if he believes forgiveness of sins is based on his works. But if he looks to the promises and covenant of God, Who has promised the remission of sins through the blood of Christ, then there is firm assurance that needed grace has been given and has been obtained. This is as certain as the fact that He Who made this covenant cannot lie (Ti 1:2; Heb 6:18). Has not Christ given His innocent body into the hands of sinners for my sins? Has not Christ shed His blood to cleanse all my iniquities? Then I can say with the psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God" (Psa 42:11).

The love of God towards His chosen is so great that He willed His only-begotten Son should die in order to deliver them from eternal death. In this great exchange, the Son took upon Himself the poverty of sinners that He might give them His riches. He took their weakness and gave them His strength. He became mortal that they might become immortal; He descended to earth that they might ascend to heaven; He became the Son of man like unto them that they might become the children of God with Him. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom 8:33-34).

Therefore, my soul, do not mourn or sigh. "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psa 103:1-4, 8-13). This is most mercifully and wonderfully seen in the Lord giving us His only-begotten Son.

With faith and thanksgiving for God's great gift, we ought to receive the sacrament¹⁰ of the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. Augustine called this sacrament "a bond of charity and a mystery of unity." He said that anyone who received the sacrament—the mystery of unity—but did not keep the bond of peace, was receiving a witness against himself instead of a blessing for his soul's health. The Lord ordained this sacrament to inflame us to peace, agreement, and brotherly love.

¹⁰ **sacrament** – an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual grace.

Taking part in the communion celebration is also a reminder of all believers being made one body in Christ. This means that one member of Christ's body cannot offend, slander, or despise another member without doing the same to Jesus Christ. If believers have discord with each other, they have discord with Christ. Likewise, if we love Christ, we also love our brethren.

It should be obvious how much care and regard we give to our physical bodies; the same attention ought to be shown to those who are members of our spiritual body. When one part of the physical body experiences pain, the entire body suffers. Similarly, if a member of the spiritual body experiences evil, the entire body should be moved to compassion. Thus, the body of Christ should desire and diligently endeavor to be one mind, one heart, and one tongue—having unity in thought, word, and deed.

Remedy against Unbelief: Predestination

Thus far we have looked at prayer, the remembrance of baptism, and the practice of taking communion regularly as remedies against unbelief. Another very good remedy is a right understanding of our predestination¹¹ or election to eternal life, founded and grounded in God's Word; with this we may slay our enemies. The Lord said, "...rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luk 10:20). There is no greater joyfulness of heart in this present life, or greater comfort for the Christian who is afflicted, tempted, or fallen in sin, than the remembrance of the doctrine of God's election—for the names of God's elect are written in the Book of Life (Phi 4:3; Rev 3:5). There are no words to express adequately the comfort this faith brings to the heart of a believer, for he knows that however much he may fall in sin, God, his heavenly Father Who has predestined him to eternal life, will never let him go. In the words of the Apostle Paul, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

The knowledge of predestination makes the true Christian remain joyful in spirit, increase in desire to do good works, intensify his love for God, and find the world and sin to be his enemies. Could a person know that through His mercy God had predestined him to be His son and not respond with great love towards God? Could one know that he had been chosen by God to become a citizen of heaven and not judge all the pleasures, honors, and riches of the world as disgusting mire?

Those who are armed with the knowledge of their predestination do not fear death, sin, the devil, or hell. They pray in spirit and truth; they receive all things—whether prosperous or adverse—from the hands of God their Father with praise and thanksgiving, for they know He does all things well. Through eyes of love for God, they recognize His fatherly love towards them; they know nothing of the wrath of God. Tribulations are received as favors or good gifts of God, and they cry with Paul, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Rom 8:35-37).

¹¹ **predestination** – "The theological doctrine...that from eternity God has foreordained all things which come to pass..." (Boettner). Quoted from *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Alan Cairns, 1982, p.110.

But perhaps a reader, who readily agrees with the responses of those who know their names are written down in heaven, struggles with uncertainty over whether *his* name is recorded in this heavenly list. The struggle is born out of his weakness for sin that daily overcomes him. He looks at the diverse tribulations vexing his life and believes the wrath of God is punishing him.

To answer these doubts of a dearly beloved brother, I would say of a certainty that these are the temptations of the devil: by all manner of ways, he seeks to ruin our faith and the sure trust that springs from faith, a trust that, in turn, makes us sure of the favor of Almighty God towards us. The devil knows that a true Christian must believe the Word of God, which promises the remission of *all* sins and God's peace to all those who receive His grace and favor that is offered in the Gospel. With sure reliance on the promises of God, one must be fully persuaded that God is his merciful and loving Father, while looking for the inheritance of the celestial kingdom. Otherwise, that man does not believe rightly, and his unbelief makes him utterly unworthy of the grace of God. The author of Hebrews exhorts us: "For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb 3:4-6). "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Heb 10:35).

Therefore, let us earnestly apply ourselves and endeavor to do the will of God as good children. Let us beware of sin as much as we possibly can, and if we sin through our frailty, let us not believe that we are vessels of wrath, or that we are utterly forsaken of the Holy Spirit. We still have our Advocate before God the Father, Jesus Christ, Who is our righteousness and the sacrifice for our sins. Let us remember, Christian, this sentence of Augustine: no holy or righteous man is without sin, yet nevertheless he does not cease to remain righteous and holy; he has a mind and desire to be holy and righteous. So, if we are afflicted and troubled, let us not believe that God sends us tribulations because He is our enemy, but rather because He is our most merciful Father. "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb 12:6).

Forasmuch, then, as we have received the grace of the Gospel by which man is made God's son, we ought not to doubt the grace and goodwill of Almighty God towards us. In fact, if the Word of God and the imitation of Christ's life delight us, we ought to think and believe assuredly that we are the children of God and the temple of the Holy Spirit. These things cannot be done by the working of man's wisdom; they are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in us by faith and seals these godly promises to our hearts. As the Apostle Paul says, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:13-14). Notice how he shows that the hearts of the faithful are marked by the Holy Spirit as with a seal. The term "holy Spirit of promise" is used because He assures believers of the promise of the Gospel—the good news that through belief in Christ, Who bore the sins of His elect on the Cross, their sins are paid for and they are given eternal life. To the Romans Paul wrote, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry,

Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:14-17a). Observe that in these verses there is no mention of "spiritual revelation," but rather of the witness of the Holy Spirit to all the children of God. Thus, if the Holy Spirit assures us that we are the children of God, why should we doubt predestination? Paul continues: "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:30-31).

If I know clearly that these things are true, I have no reason to doubt my predestination. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1Co 2:12). What marvel it is, then, if we know that from the beginning God has given us eternal life!

Some argue that it is arrogance for a man to glory and rejoice in the belief that he has the Spirit of Christ. Such men speak as though a Christian might glory in having the Spirit of God by his own merits, but not by God's mere mercy. Simply to express confidence in being a Christian is seen as arrogance, while at the same time allowance is made that a man might be a Christian even though he does not have the Spirit of Christ. How is it possible to separate faith from the Holy Spirit when faith is the proper work of the Holy Spirit? Paul commanded the Corinthians: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2Co 13:5). It is a great blindness to accuse such Christians of arrogance who rejoice and glory in the presence of the Holy Spirit, for without the Holy Spirit there is no true Christianity at all. In the words of Christ, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (Joh 14:16-17).

Perchance someone might say—based on quotations from Solomon and the Apostle Paul—that a Christian must have a special revelation in order to know that he is in the favor of God, or, in other words, that he is predestined. Briefly, we will look at how the words of these two biblical authorities should not be interpreted in this manner.

First, the words of Solomon: "For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath" (Ecc 9:1-2). By reading the entire discourse of Solomon, it is clear that his meaning is as follows: if a man attempts to judge whether he is loved or hated by God based on outward things that happen to him in this life, he labors in vain. This is true because the same things happen both to the righteous and to the unrighteous, to him that sacrifices and to him that does not, to the good and to the sinner. Thus, the conclusion is that God is not always showing His love to whom worldly prosperity is given, or always showing hatred towards the one whom He afflicts.

Does this mean, then, that a man cannot be certain of the grace of God, since it cannot always be perceived in the various things that happen in this life? Earlier in the text, Solomon proclaims that the difference between the soul of a man and the soul of a beast cannot be discerned from outward happenings because both die. Does this outward occurrence of death in both cases mean that what we had understood about the immortality of man's soul is founded only on guesswork? But more words on this subject are unnecessary, for the answer is clear and known to man through study of the Holy Bible.

Here are the words of the Apostle Paul that are used to suggest his uncertainty regarding God's favor: "For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord" (1Co 4:4). Putting the verse in context, Paul is speaking of his stewardship of the Gospel: he doesn't know of any wrong he has committed in this duty; but he does not know if he has done all that is required of a faithful steward in order to earn the praise of righteousness from God, his Master. In like manner, a just and discreet steward of a household should not justify himself by declaring that in every way, and at all times, he has performed his duty and the will of his master. He leaves this to his master's judgment. By considering the context of the verse under consideration, it is clear that this is the sense of Paul's words. It must be remembered that though Paul knew of no sin in regard to his stewardship, he was not counting this as righteousness before God, for Paul did not count righteousness as coming by works but by faith. There was absolute refusal of any righteousness from works; Paul proclaimed only the righteousness that God gives for Christ's sake.

Paul was a man who was most certain of his justification; here are a few of the many reasons he gives in Scripture for such confidence. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2Ti 4:7-8). "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:35-39). "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phi 1:23). These words could come only from a man with complete assurance that he was righteous before God—he had God's favor—all because of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul sharply reproved those that measured righteousness by works.

Fear and Predestination

Some may believe that the verses in Scripture exhorting men to fear are contrary to a certainty of predestination. But it must be carefully understood what these exhortations mean and what they do not mean.

First, reflect upon the fact that the Holy Spirit, Who is given to Christians at conversion, bears witness to their spirits that God has called and elected them—all through His mercy, for they have no merit of their own. If they have been made sons and daughters through God's mer-

cy, this same mercy will maintain their placement in His family. Thus, the meaning of teaching a Christian “to fear” represents the call to a childlike fear: as good children, there would be maintained a vigilance against anything unseemly or ungodly that would grieve the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Such fear is needful because of the corruption and wickedness of the human nature. A Christian should always be attentive and watching, never trusting in himself, because in the flesh dwell appetites and affections of deception, pride, ambition, covetousness, and sensuality. Against these things, the true Christian is exhorted to fear, so that study and diligence might be given to following after the footsteps of Christ.

With this in mind, it is easy to see that the Christian would never be exhorted to fear the judgment and wrath of God, which will bring condemnation. Christians, who have already tasted how sweet the Lord is, would never be instructed to look upon God with fear of punishment, but rather with fear of succumbing to the snare of ungodliness unless there is exercised great and constant diligence.

Holding firmly to this, a Christian should never doubt the remission of sins nor the favor and grace of God towards him. It has been said that God’s will is for us to believe without doubt, for, indeed, justification through faith alone is not obtained if that very faith is doubtful. In other words, a man does not obtain the remission of his sins if he continues to doubt the same. James instructs: “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord” (Jam 1:6-7). It must also be said that it does not suffice to believe in the general remission of sins; it is needful for one to believe particularly that *his* iniquities are forgiven by Christ. The cause or reason is apparent: since God has promised justification by Christ’s merits, if you do not believe that you are made righteous by them, then you make God a liar, and consequently make yourself most unworthy of His grace and liberality.

In his writings on this subject, Augustine addressed how the Christian should abandon the foolish opinion that deprives him of godly certainty and assurance. “Murmur as much as thou wilt then, foolish cogitation or thought, saying, ‘What art thou? And how great is this thy glory and rejoicing? With what merits hopest thou to obtain it?’ I answer thee boldly, ‘I know in whom I have believed. O know that He, through His great love, hath made me His son. I know that He is true in His promise, able to give that He promiseth, and can do what He will. The multitude of my sins cannot make me fear if I think on the death of the Lord. All my hope is in His death. His death is my merits, my refuge, my health, life, and resurrection. My merit is the mercy of the Lord. I am not poor in merits whiles the Lord lacketh not mercy. And if the merits of the Lord be many, I am abundantly rich in merits. How much the more He is able to save, so much the more am I sure to be saved.’” In another place, in prayer to God, Augustine writes that he might indeed have despaired for his great sins and for his infinite negligence if the Word had not become incarnate. He adds, “All my hope and all the certainty of my belief is put in His precious blood, which was shed for us and for our salvation. In Him I rest, in Him believing I desire to come to thee, O Father; not having mine own righteousness, but that which cometh by Thy Son, Christ Jesus.” In these two places, Augustine shows clearly that a Christian ought not

to fear, but to be assured of his justification, grounding it not upon his own works, but on the precious blood of Christ that cleanses us of all our sins and makes our peace with God.

Perhaps you will say that you firmly believe in remission of sins and that God is true. However, doubt persists that you are not worthy of so great a gift. The answer to this doubt is that if God had granted the remission of your sins because of your worthiness, it would be a reward, not a free gift of grace. God accepts you as righteous by imputing the merits of Christ to you rather than your own sin; this imputation becomes yours through faith. Personal acceptance and belief in this truth—without doubt—gives glory to God by confessing that He is merciful and true. Through this faith and confession, one becomes righteous and holy in the sight of God by being a partaker of the righteousness and holiness of Jesus Christ.

Arguments against Predestination Answered

Those who falsely profess to be Christians, along with others who are reprobates, have put forth a two-fold argument concerning the doctrine of predestination; both sides are inherently harmful to their souls. They say as follows: 1) If I am predestined, then I will be saved, so there is no need to do any good works; or 2) if I am among those who are reprobates and castaways, then good works are of no help to me, so why should I do them?

In answer to these devilish arguments, it first will be noted that such thinking procures and increases the wrath of God against those who adopt such views. God has revealed to true Christians the knowledge of predestination to make them fervent—not cold—in their love for Him, ready—not slow—to do good works. In response to the two-sided argument mentioned above, here is the position of the true Christian to each. First, he believes without doubt that he is predestined or chosen unto eternal life, that the election of God has granted salvation to him. It shows the mercy of God alone and has nothing to do with a man's merits (works). Secondly, in following the example of Christ, he gives himself completely to the pursuit of good works that he might manifest his position in Christ (Eph 2:10; Ti 2:14). If someone says that the doctrine of predestination gives reason to abstain from doing good works, then it is clear that such a man is working from a premise of love for self rather than love for God. In such cases, his works might appear good and holy in the sight of other men, but in the sight of God they are abominable and nonexistent. "But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart" (1Sa 16:7).

It could be said, then, that the doctrine of predestination helps, rather than hurts, those falsely professing to be Christians, for it reveals their hypocrisy which must be exposed from under the cloak of outward works before healing can occur. Think about this: these people say if they are chosen of God—predestined—then there is no need to weary themselves through good works in order to receive salvation, for it will happen anyway. But they are not consistent in applying this mindset in other areas of life. For example, when they are sick do they say, "I will have neither physician nor medicine, for that which God has determined for me cannot fail"? Why do they eat? Why do they drink? Why do they do with much diligence the things convenient for the sustenance of the body, i.e., till the soil, plant crops, gather the harvest, etc.? Why don't they just say, "All our effort and diligence is unnecessary because what God has determined regarding our life and death will come to pass"? If the providence of God does not make

them negligent or idle in things that pertain to the body, why would it do so in those things that apply to the spirit, which by comparison is far more important? We know from the authority of Scripture that man's salvation is predestined by God; but at the same time, Scripture teaches in many places that man is to seek after God and His righteousness. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Mat 7:7-8). The Apostle Paul states, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom 10:9-10). One more example from many in Scripture is from the author of Hebrews: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb 11:6).

Conclusion

In conclusion, let us repeat the principal intent of this discourse: to magnify and praise the marvelous, great benefit that a Christian receives from the death of Jesus Christ, and to show that man is justified by faith without works. God accepts and sees as righteous all those that truly believe Christ Jesus has made satisfaction for their sins. Just as light cannot be separated from the flame which alone burns, so good works cannot be separated from faith that alone justifies. This most holy doctrine, which exalts Christ Jesus and makes low the pride of man, has been and always shall be opposed by those who have legalistic minds. But happy is he who does as the Apostle Paul, wanting no other righteousness than that which comes by Jesus Christ. Being clothed in Christ's righteousness, one may appear most safely before God the Father, and receive from Him the blessing and inheritance of heaven with His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom be glory forever. Amen.

