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# CONSOLATIONS FROM CHRIST'S IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

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## I. Justification through Imputed Righteousness

The justification of a sinner in the sight of God, upon the account of Christ's righteousness imputed to him, whereby the guilt of sin is removed and the person of the sinner is accepted as righteous with the God of heaven, is that which I shall open to you distinctly in these following branches.

### A. First, That the grace of justification in the sight of God is made up of two parts: forgiveness and acceptation.

There is 1) forgiveness of the offences committed against the Lord; and 2) acceptation of the person offending, pronouncing him a righteous person, and receiving him into favor again, as if he had never offended. This is most clear and evident in the blessed Scriptures.

#### 1. Forgiveness

There is an act of absolution<sup>1</sup> and acquittal from the guilt of sin and freedom from the condemnation deserved by sin.

It may be truly said of the sins of a justified person, that they deserve everlasting destruction. But justification is the freeing of a sinner from the guilt of his iniquity, whereby he was actually bound over to condemnation. As soon as any man doth sin, there is guilt upon him, by which he is bound over to the wrath and curse of God. And this guilt or obligation is inseparable from sin; the sin doth deserve no less than everlasting damnation. Now, forgiveness of sin hath a peculiar respect to the guilt of sin and removal of that. When the Lord forgives a man, He doth discharge him of that obligation by which he was bound over to wrath and condemnation: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (8:33). "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died" (8:34). Beloved, the Lord is a holy and just God. He "reveals his wrath from heaven against all unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18). There is a curse threatened to every transgression of the Law (Gal 3:10). But when God forgives sins, He therein doth interpose,<sup>2</sup> as it were, between the sin and the curse and between the obligation and the condemnation (Rom 6:23).

When the sinner sins, God might say unto him, "Sinner, by your sinning you are now fallen into My hands of justice; and for your sins I may according to My righteous Law condemn and curse you for ever. But such is My free, My rich, My sovereign grace, that for Christ's sake I will spare you and pardon you, and that curse and condemnation which you have deserved shall never fall upon you! Oh, [My heart is] yearning towards you; and therefore I will have mercy, mercy upon you and will deliver your souls from going down into the pit" (Job 33:13, 24, 28, 30).

When the poor sinner is indicted<sup>3</sup> and arraigned<sup>4</sup> at God's bar, and process is made against him, and he [is] found guilty of the violation of God's holy Law and accordingly judged guilty by God, and adjudged to everlasting death, then Mercy steps in and pleads, "I have found a ransom" (Job 33:24). The sinner shall not die, but live! When the Law saith, "Ah, sinner, sinner! Thus and thus hast thou transgressed, all sorts of duties thou hast omitted, and all sorts of sins thou hast committed, and all sorts of mercies thou hast abused, and all sorts of means thou hast neglected, and all sorts of offers thou hast slighted," then God steps in and saith, "Ah, sinner, sinner! What dost thou say, what canst thou say, to this heavy charge? Is it true or false? Wilt thou grant it or deny it? What defense or plea canst thou make for thyself?" Alas! The poor sinner is speechless (Mat 22:12). He was muzzled, that is, he held his peace as though he had a bridle in his mouth. This is the import of the Greek word here used: he hath not one word to say for himself. He can neither deny nor excuse what is charged upon him. "Why now," saith God, "I must and do pronounce thee to be guilty. And as I am a just and righteous God, I cannot but adjudge<sup>5</sup> thee to die eternally. But such is the riches of My mercy, that I will freely justify thee through the righteousness of My Son. I will forgive thy sins and discharge thee of that obligation by which thou wast bound over to wrath and curse and condemnation."

The justified person may triumphantly say, "Who is he that condemneth?" He may read over the most dreadful passages of the Law without being terrified or amazed, as knowing that the curse is removed, and that all his sins that brought him under the curse are pardoned. [They] are in point of condemnation as if they had never been. This is to be justified: to have the sin pardoned and the penalty remitted. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 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 4:5-8). It is observable that what David calleth forgiveness of sin and not imputing of iniquity, St. Paul styles being *justified*.

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<sup>1</sup> **absolution** – setting free; canceling.

<sup>2</sup> **interpose** – to place between; introduce between.

<sup>3</sup> **indicted** – accused; have a charge brought against.

<sup>4</sup> **arraigned** – called upon to answer for oneself on a criminal charge.

<sup>5</sup> **abjudge** – pronounce or decree by judicial sentence.

## 2. Acceptation

As the first part of justification consists in the pardon of sin, so the second part of justification consists in the acceptation of the sinner's person as perfectly righteous in God's sight, pronouncing him such, and dealing with him as such, and by bringing him under the shadow of that divine favor which he had formerly lost by his transgressions.

The pardoned sinner in respect of divine acceptation is "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph 5:26-27). God accepts the pardoned sinner as complete in Him Who is the Head of all principality and power (Col 2:10). Christ makes us comely through His beauty. He gives us white raiment to stand before the Lord. Christ is all in all in regard of divine acceptance: "He hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6).

Thus you see that justification, for the nature of it, lies in the gracious pardon of the sinner's transgressions and in the acceptation of his person as righteous in God's sight. But,

### B. Perfect Righteousness Required

Secondly, in order to the partaking of this grace of the forgiveness of our sins and the acceptation of our persons, we must be able to produce a perfect righteousness before the Lord and to present it unto Him. And the reason is evident from the very nature of God, Who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity" (Hab 1:13). There are four things that God cannot do: 1) He cannot lie; 2) He cannot die; 3) He cannot deny Himself; and 4) He cannot behold iniquity with approbation<sup>6</sup> and delight: "And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" (Jos 24:19). Such is the holiness of God's nature that He cannot behold sin, that He cannot but punish sin wherever He finds it (Psa 5:4-6). God is infinitely, immutably, and inexorably<sup>7</sup> just, as well as incomprehensibly gracious.

Now, in the justification of a sinner God doth act as a God of justice, as well as a God of compassion. God is infinite in all His attributes, in His justice as well as in His mercy: these two cannot interfere. By the breach of the Law the justice of God is wronged; so that although mercy be apt to pardon, yet justice requires satisfaction and calls for vengeance on sinners: "Every transgression must receive just recompense" (Heb 2:2). God will not in any case absolve the guilty (Exo 34:7): till this is done, the hands of mercy are tied that she cannot act. And seeing satisfaction could not be made to an infinite Majesty, but by an equal person and price, the Son of God must become a curse for us by taking our nature and pouring out His soul to the death. By this means justice and mercy are reconciled and kiss each other. Mercy now being set at liberty hath her free course to save poor sinners.

God will have His justice satisfied to the full. Therefore, Christ must bear all the punishment due to our sins, or else God cannot set us free. He cannot go against His own just will. Observe the force of that phrase, "Christ ought to suffer," and, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer" (Luk 24:26; Mat 26:54). "Thus it must be." Why *must*? Because it was 1) so decreed by God; [and] 2) foretold by the prophets. Every particular of Christ's sufferings was foretold by the prophets, even to their very spitting in His face; 3) prefigured in the daily morning and evening sacrifice. This Lamb of God was sacrificed from the beginning of the world. A necessity then there was of our Savior's sufferings.

#### 1. Justice Requires Punishment for Sin

An earthly prince that is just, holds himself bound to inflict punishment impartially upon the malefactor<sup>8</sup> or his surety.<sup>9</sup> It stands upon his honor. He saith, "It must be so. I cannot do otherwise." This is true much more of God, Who is justice itself. God, Who is great in counsel and excellent in working, had store of means at hand whereby to set free and recover lost mankind. Yet He was pleased in His infinite wisdom to pitch upon<sup>10</sup> this way of satisfaction as being most agreeable to His holy nature and most suitable to His high and sovereign ends. And that God doth stand upon full satisfaction and will not forgive one sin without it may be thus made evident:

First, from *the nature of sin, which is that "abominable thing which God hates"* (Jer 44:4). The sinner deserves to die for his sins: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Every sinner is worthy of death: "They which commit such things are worthy of death" (Rom 1:32). Now God is just and righteous; [He] therefore "set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood...to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just" (Rom 3:25, 26).

Sin is of infinite guilt and hath an infinite evil in the nature of it. Therefore, no person in heaven or earth but that person our Lord Jesus, Who is God-man, and Who had an infinite dignity, could either procure the pardon of it or make satisfaction for it. No prayers, no cries, no tears, no humblings, no repentings, no resolutions, no reformations, etc., can stop the course of justice or procure the guilty sinner's pardon. It is Christ alone that can dissolve all obligations to punishment, break all bonds and chains of guilt, and hand a pardon to us through His own blood (Eph 1:7). We are set free by the blood of Christ: "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit" (Zec 9:11). It is by His blood that we are justified and saved from wrath: "Much more being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath by him"

<sup>6</sup> **approbation** – approval.

<sup>7</sup> **inexorably** – not capable of being persuaded or moved by entreaty; inflexibly.

<sup>8</sup> **malefactor** – one guilty of a grossly wicked offence against the law; a criminal.

<sup>9</sup> **surety** – one who has contracted to be responsible for another.

<sup>10</sup> **to pitch upon** – to determine something to be; to settle upon.

(Rom 5:9). Pray tell me what is it to be justified but to be pardoned; and what is it to be saved from wrath but to be delivered from all punishment? and both these depend upon the blood of Christ (Eph 1:13; Col 1:20).

## 2. *Veracity of God Requires Punishment of Sin*

*The veracity of God requires it.* Look, as God cannot but be just, so He cannot but be true. And if He cannot but be true, then He will make good the threatenings that are gone out His mouth: “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen 2:17). Death is a fall that came in by a fall, and without [doubt] every man should die the same day he was born! For “the wages of sin is death”...“He will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:7); “The soul that sinneth, it shall die...the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (Eze 18:20). “He will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom 1:6).

O sirs! God can never so far yield as to abrogate<sup>11</sup> His own Law and quietly to sit down with injury and loss to His own justice. The Law pronounces him cursed that “continues not in all things that are written therein, to do them” (Gal 3:10). Now, though the threatenings of men are frequently vain and frivolous, yet the threatenings of the great God shall certainly take place and have their accomplishment.

Ah, who can look upon the dreadful threatenings that are pointed against sinners all over the Book of God and not tremble and weep! God cannot but in justice punish sinners; neither is it in His choice or freedom whether He will damn the obstinate impenitent sinner or no. Look, as God cannot but love holiness wherever He sees it, so He cannot but loathe and punish wickedness wherever He beholds it. Neither will it stand with the infinite wisdom of God to admit relaxation of the threatenings without satisfaction. God had passed a peremptory<sup>12</sup> doom and made a solemn declaration of it in His word that “he that sinneth, shall die the death.” And He *will* not, He *cannot* break His word.

O sirs! There is no standing before that God that is “a consuming fire,” a just Judge, a holy God, except I have one to “undertake for me” (Heb 12:29), that is “mighty to save” (Isa 63:1); mighty to satisfy divine justice; mighty to pacify divine wrath; mighty to bear the threatenings; and mighty to forgive sin. When God forgives sin, He does it in a way of righteousness (Isa 19:20). “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9). He doth not say He is *merciful*, but *just* to forgive us our sins because they are satisfied for; and God’s justice will not let Him demand the same debt twice, of the surety and of the debtor too. It will never stand with the unspotted justice and righteousness of God to require such debts of us, which Christ by shedding His most precious blood hath discharged for us (Rom 3:25).

Now God’s justice being satisfied for our offences, it cannot but remit those offences to us. As the creditor cannot demand that of the debtor which the surety hath already paid, so neither can God exact the punishment of us which Christ hath suffered...the believing penitent sinner may, in a humble confidence, sue out His pardon, not only at the throne of grace, but at the bar of justice, in these or the like expressions: “Lord, thou hast punished my sins in thy Son, wilt thou punish them in me? Thou hast accepted that suffering of thy Son as the punishment of my sin, therefore thou canst not in justice exact it of me, for this were to punish twice for one offence, which thy justice cannot but abhor.”

Ah sinners! The Lord is infinitely just as well as merciful. And if ever your sins be pardoned, it must be by a mixture of mercy and justice together. It was one of the great ends of the gospel dispensation that God might exalt His justice in the justification of a sinner: “To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness, that he might be, just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). But,

## C. **The Righteousness of Christ**

Thirdly, the only matter of man’s righteousness since the fall of Adam, wherein he can appear with comfort before the justice of God, and consequently whereby alone he can be justified in His sight, is the obedience and suffering of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of the Mediator. There is not any other way imaginable, how the justice of God may be satisfied, and we may have our sins pardoned in a way of justice, but by the righteousness of the Son of God. Therefore, this is His name, “the Lord our Righteousness” (Jer 23:6).

Christ’s righteousness is that garment of wrought gold that we all need to cover all our imperfections and to render us perfectly beautiful and glorious in the sight of God. In this robe of righteousness we are complete, we are without spot or wrinkle, we are without fault before the throne of God. Through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness, we are made righteous in the sight of God. God looking upon us, as invested with the righteousness of His Son, accounts us righteous.

All believers have a righteousness in Christ as full and complete as if they had fulfilled the Law. “Christ being the end of the law for righteousness to believers” (Rom 10:4). [Christ] invests believers with a righteousness every way as complete as the personal obedience of the Law would have invested them withal. When men had violated God’s holy Law, God in justice resolved that His Law should be satisfied before man should be saved.

Now this was done by Christ, Who was the end of the Law. He fulfilled it *actively* and *passively*,<sup>13</sup> and so the injury offered to the Law is recompensed.<sup>14</sup> God had rather that all men should be destroyed, than that His Law should not be satisfied. No

<sup>11</sup> **abrogate** – to abolish; to do away with.

<sup>12</sup> **peremptory** – positively fixed; absolutely determined.

<sup>13</sup> **actively and passively** – by Christ’s *passive* righteousness is meant His sufferings upon the Cross by which He satisfied the claims of justice. By His *active* righteousness is meant His obedience to the Law as a rule of life and conduct.

man can perfectly be justified in the sight of God without a perfect righteousness, every way commensurable<sup>15</sup> to God's holy Law, which is the rule of righteousness. Neither can any person have any choice, spiritual, lively communion with a righteous God, until he be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. All Christ's active and passive obedience was either for Himself or in our stead and behalf. But it was not for Himself, but for us that He suffered and obeyed. Whatsoever Christ did or suffered in the whole course of His life, He did it and suffered it as our Surety and in our steads:<sup>16</sup> for as God would not dispense with the penalty of the Law without satisfaction, so He would not dispense with the commands of the Law without perfect obedience.

Remember, once for all, that the actions and sufferings of Christ make up but one entire and perfect obedience to the whole Law; nor had Christ been a perfect and complete Savior, if He had not performed what the Law required, as well as suffered the penalty which the Law inflicted. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us is a gracious act of God the Father, according to His good will and pleasure, whereby as a judge He accounts believers' sins unto the Surety, as if He had committed the same. And [He accounts] the righteousness of Christ unto the believer, as if he had performed the same, the same obedience that Christ did in His own person. Christ's imputed righteousness is as effectual to the full, for the acceptance of the believing sinner, as if he had yielded such obedience to the Lord himself. Hence His righteousness is called "our righteousness" (Jer 23:6). Now without this righteousness there is no standing before the justice of God. But,

#### D. God's Wisdom in Redemption

Fourthly, as this great design of Christ's redeeming sinners by His blood and sufferings, and by His being made a curse for them, doth sound aloud the glory of divine justice and the glory of God's veracity, so it sounds forth the glory of His wisdom; for hereby He maintains the authority of His righteous Law. When a law is solemnly enacted with a penalty in case of transgression, all those whom it concerns may conclude for certain, that the lawgiver will proceed accordingly. And it is a rule in policy that laws once established and published should be vigorously preserved. If the Lord should have wholly waived the execution of the Law upon sinners or their surety, it might have tended greatly to the weakening of its authority, and the diminishing of the reverence of His sovereignty in the hearts of the sons of men. How often does God use that oath "As I live" for the fulfilling of His threatenings as well as of His promises (Jer 22:24; Eze 5:9-11). The Lord Jehovah is as true, faithful, and constant in His threatenings as in His promises. What He hath threatened shall undoubtedly come to pass; He will be made known by His name Jehovah in the full execution of all His threatenings. The old world found it so, and Jerusalem found it so; yea, the whole nation of the Jews have found it so to this *very* day (see Eze 5:13, 15).

Look, as all the saints in heaven will readily put to their seals<sup>17</sup> that God is true and faithful in all His promises; so all the damned in hell will readily put to their seals that God is faithful in all His threatenings. Men frequently deride the laws and threatenings of great men, when they are not put into execution. It is the execution of laws that is the very life and soul of good laws (Ecc 8:11). Should God pardon sin without exacting the penalty of the Law, how would sinners be hardened and emboldened to say with those men (or rather monsters) in Malachi, "Where is the God of judgment?" (Mal 2:17). Either there is no God or at least not a God of that exact, precise, and impartial judgment as some men say and as others teach. But now when God lets sinners see that He will not pardon sin without exacting the penalty of the Law, either of the sinner or of his Surety, then the sinner cries out, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom 11:33). God stood so much upon the complete satisfaction and accomplishment of His Law that He was willing that Christ should be a sacrifice, that the Law might be satisfied in its penalty, and that Christ in His own Person should fulfill the righteousness of the Law, that it might be satisfied in its commands (Rom 8:3-5). Now in this plenary<sup>18</sup> satisfaction made to the Law, the wisdom of God does gloriously shine. The heart of God was so set upon a full satisfaction to His Law that rather than it should not be done, His own Son must come from heaven and put on flesh and be Himself made under the Law (Gal 4:4-5); He must live a holy life and die a cursed death, and all to satisfy the Law and to keep up the authority of it.

#### E. Full Satisfaction Stands against the Devil

Fifthly, God doth stand upon full satisfaction and will not forgive one sin without it, that He might hereby [prevent] all occasions, which the devil, His arch-enemy, might take to calumniate<sup>19</sup> and traduce<sup>20</sup> Him. For if God did not stand upon full satisfaction, the devil might accuse Him 1) of *inconstancy*<sup>21</sup> and *changeableness*: that having threatened death to transgressors, He did quite forget Himself in waiving<sup>22</sup> the threatening and dispensing wholly with His Law by granting them free remission; yea, 2) of *partiality and respect of persons*: that He should be so easy and forbearing as to let them pass without any punishment at all; having been formerly so severe and rigid against himself, in casting him and His angels down to hell

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<sup>14</sup> **recompensed** – paid back; made up for.

<sup>15</sup> **commensurable** – equal in terms.

<sup>16</sup> **in our steads** – in our places; in other words, a substitute.

<sup>17</sup> **put to their seals** – to express one's assent to; to agree.

<sup>18</sup> **plenary** – complete in all respects.

<sup>19</sup> **calumniate** – to falsely and maliciously accuse of something criminal; to slander.

<sup>20</sup> **traduce** – to falsely defame; to misrepresent.

<sup>21</sup> **inconstancy** – inconsistently; changeable or fickle.

<sup>22</sup> **waiving** – laying aside.

and keeping them in everlasting flames and chains of darkness without the least hope of recovery (2Pe 2:4; Jude 6). Satan might say, "Lord, thou mightest have spared me as well as man." But the Lord can now answer, "Man hath made satisfaction; he hath borne the curse and thereby fully discharged all the demands of the Law. If he had not, I would no more have spared him than thee."

#### **F. God's Goodness and Loving-kindness**

Sixthly, God's standing upon full satisfaction and His not forgiving one sin without it bears a visible character of His goodness and loving-kindness, as well as it sounds out aloud the glory of divine justice. The great and the holy God "whose name is holy" (Isa 57:15) might have rigorously exacted the penalty of the Law on the persons of sinners themselves. But He hath so far dispensed with His own Law as to admit of a Surety by whom the end of the Law (that is, the manifestation of His justice and hatred of sin) might be fulfilled. And yet a considerable part of mankind [will] be preserved from the jaws of the second death, which otherwise [would certainly and] unavoidably have perished to all eternity (Rev 20:6). God seems to speak [thus]: "I may not, I will not suffer this high affront<sup>23</sup> of Adam and his posterity against my 'holy and righteous law' (Rom 7:12, 14), whereby the honor both of My justice and truth is in danger to be trampled underfoot. Yet if I should let out all My wrath upon them, they were never able to stand under it: 'for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made' (Isa 57:16; cf. Psa 78:38). I will therefore let out all My wrath upon their Surety, and He shall bear it for them that they may be delivered." And thus the Lord "in wrath remembers mercy" (Hab 3:2).

#### **G. Christ's Righteousness Must Become Ours**

Seventhly, we can receive no benefit by the righteousness of Christ for justification in the sight of God, nor can we be pardoned and accepted thereupon, until that righteousness become ours. How can we plead this righteousness before God, except we have an interest in [it]? (Isa 45:24-25). How can we rejoice and triumph in this righteousness, if [it] be not made ours? How can we have peace with God and boldness at the throne of grace through this righteousness, except we can lay claim to [it]? How can we conclude that we are happy and blessed upon the account of this righteousness, except it be made over to us? There is none of us that have such an inherent righteousness in ourselves that we dare plead before the bar of God. And though God hath provided such a glorious robe of righteousness for poor sinners, as is the wonder and amazement of angels, yet what would all this avail the poor sinner, if this righteousness be not made over to him?

O sirs! Remember this: Christ's righteousness must be yours, it must be made over to you, or else it will never stand you in stead. "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" (Rom 5:17). Except they receive the righteousness of Christ, it is nothing to them. Christ's righteousness is in itself white raiment, and beautiful and glorious apparel; but it will never cover our nakedness, except it be put on and we are clothed with it. It must be made over to us, or we can never be justified by it: "Who of God is made unto us...righteousness" (1Co 1:30).

If He be not made to us righteousness, we shall never be righteous. Though man hath lost a righteousness to be justified by, yet there is an absolute necessity of having one. God cannot love nor delight in anything but righteousness. God is a holy God, a righteous God, and therefore can only love and take pleasure in those that are righteous, both by a righteousness imputed and a righteousness imparted: "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength" (Isa 45:24). "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (v. 25). "Their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD" (Isa 54:17). "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only" (Psa 71:16). Look, as no man can be made rich by another man's riches, except they are made his; so no man can be made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, except His righteousness be made over to him. Hence He is called, "The Lord our Righteousness" (Jer 23:6); and hence we are said to be "the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21); hence [it is] said "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

#### **H. Christ's Righteousness Is Imputed to Us**

Eighthly and lastly, the way whereby this righteousness of God's providing is conveyed and made over to us, that we may receive the benefit thereof, and be justified thereby, is by way of imputation. The meaning is this: God doth reckon the righteousness of Christ unto His people, as if it were their own. He doth count unto them Christ's sufferings and satisfaction and makes them partakers of the virtue thereof, as if [they] had suffered and satisfied. This is the genuine and proper import of the word *imputation*, when that which is personally done by one is accounted and reckoned to another and laid upon His score, as if He had done it. Thus it is in this very case: we sinned and fell short of the glory of God and became obnoxious to the vindictive justice of God. And the Lord Jesus Christ, by His obedience and death, hath given full content and satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

Now when God doth pardon and accept us hereupon, He doth put it upon our account, He doth reckon or impute it unto us as fully in respect of the benefit thereof, as if we ourselves had performed it in our own persons. And this is the way wherein the Holy Ghost frequently expresseth it: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works...that righteousness might be imputed to them also" (Rom 4:6, 11).

<sup>23</sup> **affront** – open insult or outrage; offense.

Therefore it highly concerns us to mind this Scripture rule: in order to [satisfy] the justice of God, the sins of God's people were imputed and reckoned unto Christ; and in order to [partake of] the benefit of that satisfaction, Christ's righteousness must be imputed and reckoned unto us. The first branch of this rule you have in Isaiah 53:5-6: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," and, "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." And for the other branch of the rule, see Romans 5:19: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "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" (Rom 5:17).

From the comparison between the first and second Adam, it is evident that as Adam's transgression of the Law of God is imputed to all his posterity, and that in respect thereof they are reputed sinners and accursed and liable to eternal death; so also Christ's obedience, whereby He fulfilled the Law, is so imputed to the members of His mystical body, that in regard of God they stand as innocent, justified and accepted to eternal life. Look, as Adam was the common root of all mankind, and his sin is imputed to all his posterity, so Jesus Christ is the common root of all the faithful, and His obedience is imputed to them all. For it [is] ridiculous to say that Adam's sin had more power to *condemn*, than Christ's righteousness hath to *save*. And who but fools in folio<sup>24</sup> will say that God doth not impute Christ's righteousness, as well as Adam's sin?

The Apostle's parallel between the two Adams does clearly evidence that as the guilt of Adam's disobedience is really imputed to us, insomuch that in his sinning we all sin; so the obedience of Christ is as really imputed unto us, insomuch that in His obeying, we obey also. How did Adam's sin become ours? Why, by way of imputation. He transgressed the covenant and did eat the forbidden fruit, and it was justly reckoned unto us. It was personally the sinful act of our first parent, but it is imputed to all of us who come out of his loins. For we were in him not only naturally, as he was the root of mankind, but also legally, as he was the great representative of mankind. In the covenant of works and the transactions thereof, Adam stood in the stead and acted in the behalf, not only of himself, but of all his posterity. Therefore his sin is reckoned unto them. Even so, saith the Apostle, after the same manner, the obedience and righteousness of Christ is made over to many for justification.

I cannot understand the analogy betwixt the two Adams, wherein the Apostle is so clear and full, unless this imputation as here stated be granted. Look, as Christ was made sin for us only by imputation, so we are made righteous only by the imputation of His righteousness to us, as the Scripture everywhere evidences: "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). How was Christ made sin for us? Not sin inherent, for He had no sin in Him. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb 7:26). But by imputation Christ's righteousness is imputed to us in that way wherein our sin was imputed to Him.

Now our sin was imputed to Christ, not only in the bitter effects of it, but He took the guilt of them upon Himself. So then His righteousness or active obedience itself must be [proportionately] imputed to us and not only in the effects thereof. The mediatory righteousness of Christ can no way become the believer's, but as the first Adam's disobedience became his posterity's, who never had the least actual share in his transgression; that is, by an act of imputation from God as a judge. The Lord Jesus having fulfilled the Law as a second Adam, God the Father imputeth it to the believing soul, as if he had done it in his own person. I do not say that God the Father doth account the sinner to have done it, but I say that God the Father doth impute it to the believing sinner, as if he had done it, unto all saving intents and purposes. Hence Christ is called "the Lord our Righteousness" (Jer 23:6).

An awakened soul, that is truly sensible of his own baseness and unrighteousness, would not have this golden sentence, "The Lord our Righteousness," blotted out by a hand of heaven out of the Bible, for as many worlds as there are men in the world. So is that text to a believer, living and dying, a strong cordial, "Christ Jesus is made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness" (1Co 1:30). And pray how is Christ made righteousness to the believer? Not by *infusion*, but *imputation*, [that is] not by putting righteousness *into* him, but by putting a righteousness *upon* him, even His own righteousness, by the imputing His merits, His satisfaction, His obedience unto them, through which they are accepted as righteous unto eternal life (Rom 5:19). Christ's righteousness is His in respect of *inhesion*,<sup>25</sup> but it is ours in respect of imputation. "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification" (Rom 5:18)...I judge that imputed righteousness is the righteousness here meant.

Christ's righteousness is the only pure, clean, white, spotless righteousness. There is no speck or spot to be found upon Christ's righteousness: but "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" as that evangelical prophet speaks (Isa 64:6).

All the sins of all the believers in the world, from the first creation to the last judgment, were laid on Him. How laid on Him but by imputation? Surely there was in Christ no fundamental guilt! No, no; but He was made sin by imputation. He was our Surety, and so our sins were laid on Him in order to punishment. And to prefigure this, all the iniquities of God's people were imputed to their sacrifice, though they were not inherently His own, as we read, "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgres-

<sup>24</sup> **fools in folio** – literally, a volume of the largest size. Therefore, fools of the greatest magnitude.

<sup>25</sup> **inhesion** – abiding as a state of condition; in other words, righteousness is an attribute of Christ.

sions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness” (Lev 16:21-22). And why then should it seem strange that the perfect righteousness of our Sacrifice and Surety, though it be not our own inherently, should be imputed to us by the Lord and made ours?

The language of Jesus Christ to His Father seems to be this: “O holy Father, I have freely and willingly taken all the debts and all the sins of all the believers in the world upon Me. I have undertaken to be their pay-master, to satisfy Thy justice, to pacify Thy wrath, to fulfill thy law. And therefore, lo, here I am, ready to do whatever Thou commandest, and ready to suffer whatsoever thou pleasest. I am willing to be reckoned a sinner, that they may be reckoned righteous. I am willing to be accounted cursed, that they may be forever blessed. I am willing to pay all their debts, that they may be set at liberty. I am willing to lay down my life, that they may escape the second death. I am willing that my soul should be exercised with the most hideous agonies, that their souls may be possessed of heaven’s happinesses” (Psa 40:6-8; Heb 10:4-9; Joh 10:11, 15, 17-18; Rev 20:6). Oh, what wonderful wisdom, grace, and love is here manifested! When we were neither able to satisfy the penalty of the Law or to bring a conformity to it, then Christ should interpose<sup>26</sup> and become both redemption and righteousness for us!

Now, from the imputed righteousness of Christ, a believer may form up this plea: “O blessed God, Thou hast given me to understand that the mediatory righteousness of Christ includes, 1) the habitual holiness of His person, in the absence of all sin and in the rich and plentiful presence of all holy and requisite<sup>27</sup> qualities. 2) The actual holiness of His life and death by obedience. By His active obedience, He perfectly fulfilled the commands of the Law. And by His passive obedience (His voluntary sufferings), He satisfied the penalty and commination<sup>28</sup> of the Law for transgressions. [He offered] perfect satisfaction to divine justice in whatsoever it requires, either in way of punishing for sin or obedience to the Law made by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant. [He is the] common Head representing all those whom the Father hath given to Him and made over unto them that believe in Him. This is that righteousness that is imputed to all believers in their justification, and this imputed righteousness of Thy dear Son and my dear Savior is now my plea before Thy bar of justice.”

Imputed righteousness is the same materially with that which the Law requireth. It is obedience to the Law of God, exactly and punctually<sup>29</sup> performed, to the very utmost iota and tittle thereof. Without the least abatement,<sup>30</sup> Christ hath paid the uttermost farthing.<sup>31</sup> He is the fulfilling of the Law for righteousness, and He hath fulfilled the Law in the human nature, to the intent that it might be fulfilled in the same nature to which it was at first given. And all this He hath expressly done in all their names and on all their behalfs that believe in Him “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:4). It is as if our dear Lord Jesus had said, “O blessed Father, this I suffer, and this I do, to the use and in the stead of all those that have ventured their souls upon Me, that they may have a righteousness which they may truly call their own, and on which they may safely rest, and in which they may for ever glory.” Now it will never stand with the unspotted holiness, justice, and righteousness of God, to reject this righteousness of His Son, or that plea that is bottomed<sup>32</sup> upon it. Oh, the matchless happiness of believers, who have so fair, so full, and so noble a plea to make in the great day of our Lord Jesus!

## II. Nine Choice Consolations of the Righteousness of Christ Imputed to the Believer

But some may say, “*What blessed fruit grows upon this glorious tree of paradise*”—viz.,<sup>33</sup> the righteousness of Jesus Christ that is imputed to all believers? *What strong consolations flow from this fountain?* I answer, there are these nine choice consolations that flow in upon all believers, through the righteousness of Christ imputed to them:

### A. First, let all believers know for their comfort that in this imputed righteousness of Christ there is enough to satisfy the justice of God to the uttermost farthing and to take off all His judicial anger and fury.

The mediatory righteousness of Christ is so perfect, so full, so exact, so complete, and so fully satisfactory to the justice of God that divine justice cries out, “I have enough, and I require no more! I have found a ransom, and I am fully pacified towards you!” (Eze 16:61-63; Heb 10:10-12, 14; Isa 53:4-6). It is certain that Christ was truly and properly a sacrifice for sin. And it is as certain that our sins were the meritorious cause of His sufferings. He did put Himself into poor sinners’ stead; He took their guilt upon Him and did undergo that punishment which they should have undergone. He did die and shed His blood, that He might thereby atone<sup>34</sup> God and expiate<sup>35</sup> sin (Rom 5:6-12). Therefore we may safely and boldly conclude that

<sup>26</sup> **interpose** – to step in on a person’s behalf; to intervene.

<sup>27</sup> **requisite** – required; essential; indispensable.

<sup>28</sup> **combination** – divine vengeance.

<sup>29</sup> **punctually** – accurately in every point and detail.

<sup>30</sup> **abatement** – lowering; reducing.

<sup>31</sup> **farthing** – a coin formerly used in Great Britain worth one fourth of a penny.

<sup>32</sup> **bottomed** – grounded; based.

<sup>33</sup> **viz** – from the Latin *videlicet*; that is; namely.

<sup>34</sup> **atone** – to reconcile or restore to friendly relations; to appease.

<sup>35</sup> **expiate** – to make satisfaction for an offense by which guilt is done away.



Jesus Christ hath satisfied the justice of God to the uttermost so that now the believing sinner may rejoice and triumph in the justice as well as in the mercy of God (Heb 7:25); for doubtless the mediatory righteousness of Christ was infinitely more satisfactory and pleasing to God than all the sins of believers could be displeasing to Him. God took more pleasure and delight in the bruising of His Son, in the humiliation of His Son, and He smelled a sweeter savor in His sacrifice, than all our sins could possibly offend Him or provoke Him (Isa 53:10).

When a believer casts his eyes upon his many thousand sinful commissions and omissions, no wonder [that] he fears and trembles. But then, when he looks upon Christ's satisfaction, he may see himself acquitted and rejoice. For if there be no charge, no accusation against the Lord Jesus, there can be none against the believer (Rom 8:33-37). Christ's expiatory sacrifice hath fully satisfied divine justice. And upon that very ground every believer hath cause to triumph in Christ Jesus, and in that righteousness of His by which he stands justified before the throne of God (2Co 2:14; Rev 14:4-5).

Christ is a person of infinite, transcendent worth and excellency. And it makes highly for His honor to justify believers in the most ample and glorious way imaginable. And what way is that, but by working out for [them], and then investing them with a righteousness adequate to the Law of God, a righteousness that should be every way commensurate<sup>36</sup> to the miserable estate of fallen man and to the holy design of the glorious God. It is the high honor of the second Adam that He hath restored to fallen man a more glorious righteousness than that he lost in the first Adam. And it would be high blasphemy in the eyes of angels and men for any mortal to assert that the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, was less powerful to save than the first Adam was to destroy! The second Adam is "able to save to the uttermost all such as come to God through him" (Heb 7:25). He is able to save to the uttermost obligation of the Law—*preceptive*<sup>37</sup> as well as *penal*<sup>38</sup>—and to bring in perfect righteousness as well as perfect innocency. He is able to save to the uttermost demand of divine justice by that perfect satisfaction that He has given to divine justice. Christ is "mighty to save" (Isa 63:1); and as He is mighty to save, so He loves to save poor sinners in such a way wherein He may most magnify His own might. And therefore He will purchase their pardon with His blood (1Pe 1:18-19) and make reparation<sup>39</sup> to divine justice for all the wrongs and injuries which fallen man had done to his Creator and His royal Law; and bestow upon him a better righteousness than that which Adam lost; and bring him into a more safe, high, honorable, and durable estate than that which Adam fell from when he was in his created perfection.

All the attributes of God do acquiesce<sup>40</sup> in the imputed righteousness of Christ, so that a believer may look upon the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God and rejoice and lay himself down in peace (Psa 4:8). Christ has put His coat, His robe of righteousness, upon every believer (Isa 61:10), upon which account all the judicial anger, wrath, and fury of God towards believers ceaseth. But,

### **B. Secondly, know for your comfort that this imputed, this mediatory righteousness of Christ takes away all your unrighteousness.**

It cancels every bond; it takes away all iniquity and answers for all your sins (Isa 53:5-7; Col 2:12-15). "Lord, here are my sins of omission, and here are my sins of commission";<sup>41</sup> but the righteousness of Christ hath answered for them all. "Here are my sins against the Law, and here are my sins against the Gospel. And here are my sins against the offers of grace, the tenders<sup>42</sup> of grace, the strivings of grace, the bowels of grace"; but the righteousness of Christ hath answered for them all.

O sirs! It would be high blasphemy for any to imagine that there should be more demerit in any sin, yea, in all sin to condemn a believer, than there is merit in Christ's righteousness to absolve him, to justify him (Rom 8:1, 33-35). The righteousness of Christ was shadowed out by the glorious robes and apparel of the high priest (Exo 30). That attire in which the high priest appeared before God, what was it else but a type of Christ's righteousness? The filthy garments of Joshua, who represented the Church, were not only taken off from him, thereby signifying the removal of our sins (Zec 3:4, 5); but also a new, fair garment was put upon him to signify our being clothed with the wedding-garment of Christ's righteousness. If any shall say, "How is it possible that a soul that is defiled with the worst of sins should be whiter than the snow, yea, beautiful and glorious in the eyes of God?" the answer is at hand: to whomsoever the Lord doth give the pardon of his sins, which is the first part of our justification, to them He doth also impute the righteousness of Christ, which is the second part of our justification before God.

Thus David describeth, saith the Apostle, the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works; saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered" (Rom 4:6-7). Now to that man whose sins the Lord forgives, to him He doth impute righteousness also: "Take away the filthy garments from him," saith the Lord of Joshua, "and he said unto him, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with

<sup>36</sup> **commensurate** – of corresponding extent or magnitude; proportionate.

<sup>37</sup> **perceptive** – pertaining to or conveying a command.

<sup>38</sup> **penal** – relating to punishment, as for breaking the law.

<sup>39</sup> **reparation** – the act or process of making amends.

<sup>40</sup> **acquiesce** – to consent or comply passively or without protest.

<sup>41</sup> **sins of omission and commission** – one commits a sin of omission whenever not performing that which is commanded, while one commits a sin of commission whenever doing that which is forbidden, or whenever performing that which is good in and of itself in an evil manner or with an ulterior motive.

<sup>42</sup> **tenders** – formal offers.

change of raiment” (Zec 3:4). And what was that change of raiment? Surely the perfect obedience and righteousness of the Lord Jesus, which God doth impute unto us; in which respect also we are said by justifying faith to put on the Lord Jesus (Rom 13:14); and to be clothed with Him as with a garment (Gal 3:27). And no marvel if, being so appareled, we appear beautiful and glorious in the sight of God: “To her,” that is, Christ’s bride, “was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Rev 19:8). This perfect righteousness of Christ, which the Lord imputeth to us and wherewith as with a garment He clotheth us, is the only righteousness which the saints have to stand before God with. And having that robe of righteousness on, they may stand with great boldness and comfort before the judgment seat of God. But,

**C. Thirdly, know for your comfort that this righteousness of Christ presents us perfectly righteous in the sight of God.**

“He is made to us righteousness” (1Co 1:30). The robe of innocency, like the veil of the temple, is rent asunder. Our righteousness is a ragged righteousness; our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:4). Look, as under rags the naked body is seen, so under the rags of our righteousnesses the body of death is seen. Christ is all in all in regard of righteousness: Christ is “the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe” (Rom 10:4). That is, through Christ we are as righteous as if we had satisfied the Law in our own persons. The end of the Law is to justify and save those which fulfill it. Christ subjected Himself thereto: He perfectly fulfilled it for us, and His perfect righteousness is imputed to us. Christ fulfilled the moral Law, not for Himself, but for us. Therefore Christ doing it for believers, they fulfill the Law in Christ. And so Christ by doing, and they believing in Him that doth it, do fulfill the Law.

Or Christ may be said to be the end of the Law because the end of the Law is perfect righteousness, that a man may be justified thereby, which end we cannot attain of ourselves through the frailty of our flesh. But by Christ we attain it, Who hath fulfilled the Law for us. Christ hath perfectly fulfilled the Decalogue for us and that three ways: 1) in His pure conception; 2) in His godly life; [and] 3) in His holy and obedient sufferings and all for us. For whatsoever the Law required that we should be, do, or suffer, He hath performed in our behalf. We are discharged by Him before God. Christ in respect of the integrity and purity of His nature, being conceived without sin (Mat 1:18); and in respect of His life and actions, being wholly conformed to the absolute righteousness of the Law (Luk 1:35); and in respect of the punishment which He suffered, to make satisfaction unto God’s justice for the breach of the Law (2Co 5:21; Col 1:20)—in these respects Christ is the perfection of the Law and “the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe.”

The infinite wisdom and power of dear Jesus in reconciling the Law and the Gospel in this great mystery of justification is greatly to be magnified. This righteousness presents us in the sight of God as “all fair” (Song 4:7); as “complete” (Col 2:10); as “without spot or wrinkle” (Eph 5:27); as “without fault before the throne of God” (Rev 14:5); as “holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his sight” (Col 1:22). Oh, the happiness and blessedness, the safety and glory, of those precious souls, who in the righteousness of Jesus Christ stand perfectly righteous in the sight of God! But,

**D. Fourthly, know for your comfort that this imputed righteousness of Christ will answer to all the fears, doubts, and objections of your souls.**

How shall I look up to God? The answer is “in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” How shall I have any communion with a holy God in this world? The answer is “in the righteousness of Christ.” How shall I find acceptance with God? The answer is “in the righteousness of Christ.” How shall I die? The answer is “in the righteousness of Christ.” How shall I stand before the judgment seat? The answer is “in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Your sure and only way, under all temptations, fears, conflicts, doubts, and disputes is by faith to remember Christ and the sufferings of Christ as your Mediator and Surety. Say, “O Christ, Thou art my sin, in being made sin for me; and Thou art my curse, being made a curse for me” (2Co 5:21; Gal 3:13); or rather, “I am Thy sin, and Thou art my righteousness; I am Thy curse, and Thou art my blessing; I am Thy death, and Thou art my life; I am the wrath of God to Thee, and Thou art the love of God to me; I am Thy hell, and Thou art my heaven.”

O sirs! If you think of your sins and of God’s wrath; if you think of your guiltiness and of God’s justice, your hearts will faint and fail. They will fear and tremble and sink into despair, if you do not think of Christ, if you do not stay and rest your souls upon the Mediator righteousness of Christ, the imputed righteousness of Christ. The imputed righteousness of Christ answers all cavils<sup>43</sup> and objections though there were millions of them that can be made against the good estate of a believer. This is a precious truth—more worth than a world—that all our sins are pardoned, not only in a way of truth and mercy, but in a way of justice. But,

**E. Fifthly, know for your comfort that the imputed righteousness of Christ is the best title that you have to show for “a kingdom that shakes not, for riches that corrupt not, for an inheritance that fadeth not away, and for an house not made with hands, but one eternal in the heavens” (Heb 12:28; 1Pe 1:3-5; 2Co 5:1-4).**

It is the fairest certificate that you have to show for all that happiness and blessedness that you look for in that other world. The righteousness of Christ is your life, your joy, your comfort, your crown, your confidence, your heaven, your all.

<sup>43</sup> cavils – criticisms for petty reasons; frivolous objections.

Oh, that you were still so wise as to keep a fixed eye and an awakened heart upon the mediatory righteousness of Christ! For that is the righteousness by which you may safely and comfortably live and by which you may happily and quietly die.

Ah, that believers would dwell much upon this: they have a righteousness in Christ that is as full, perfect, and complete, as if they had fulfilled the Law...yea, the righteousness that believers have by Christ is in some respect better than that they should have had by Adam...the first Adam was a mere man; the second Adam is God and man...Adam was a mutable<sup>44</sup> person. He lost his righteousness in one day, say some, and all that glory which his posterity should have possessed, [if he had] stood fast in innocency. But the righteousness of Christ cannot be lost. His righteousness is like Himself, from everlasting to everlasting. When once this white raiment is put upon a believer, it can never fall off; it can never be taken off. This splendid glorious righteousness of Jesus Christ is as really a believer's as if he had wrought it himself (Rev 19:8). A believer is no loser, but a gainer, by Adam's fall. By the loss of Adam's righteousness is brought to light a more glorious and durable righteousness than ever Adam's was. And upon the account of an interest in this righteousness a believer may challenge all the glory of that upper world. But,

**F. Sixthly, Know for your comfort that this imputed righteousness of Christ is the only true basis, bottom, and ground, for a believer to build his happiness upon, his joy and comfort upon, and the true peace and quiet of his conscience upon.**

What though Satan, or thy own heart, or the world condemn thee, yet in this thou mayest rejoice: God justifies thee. You see what a bold challenge Paul makes: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth" (Rom 8:33). And if the judge acquit the prisoner at the bar, he cares not though the jailer or his fellow-prisoners condemn him. So here there are no accusers that a believer needs to fear, seeing that it is God Himself, Who is the Supreme Judge that absolves him as just. God absolves, and therefore it is to no purpose for Satan to accuse us (Rev 12:10); nor for the Law of Moses to accuse us (Joh 5:45); nor for our own consciences to accuse us (Rom 2:25); nor for the world to accuse us. God is the highest Judge, and His tribunal-seat is the supreme judgment seat. Therefore from thence there is no appealing. As amongst men, persons accused or condemned may appeal till they come to the highest court. But if in the highest, they are absolved and discharged, then they are free and safe and well. [Because the believer is] absolved before God's tribunal-seat, there [are] no further accusations to be feared, all appeals from thence being void and of no force. The consideration of which should arm us and comfort us and strengthen us against all terrors of conscience, guilt of sin, accusation of the Law, and cruelty of Satan; inasmuch as these either dare not appear before God to accuse us or charge us; or if they do, it is but lost labor.

Ah! What a strong cordial<sup>45</sup> would this be to all the people of God, if they would but live in the power of this glorious truth! It is God that justifies them, and there lies no accusation in the court of heaven against them!

The great reason why many poor Christians are under so many dejections, despondencies, and perplexities is because they drink no more of this water of life: "It is God that justifieth." Did Christians live more upon this breast, "It is God that justifieth," they would be no more like Pharaoh's lean kine,<sup>46</sup> but would be fat and flourishing (Gen 41:1-3).

The imputed righteousness of Christ is a real, sure, and solid foundation upon which a believer may safely build his peace, joy, and everlasting rest. Yea, it will help him to glory in tribulations and to triumph over all adversities...yea, you may be wonderfully cheered at this, and it is your greatest comfort that you have to deal with this just God, Who hath already received satisfaction for your sins.

Whilst Christians set up a righteousness of their own and build not upon the righteousness of Christ, how unsettled are they! (Rom 10:3) How miserably are they tossed up and down, sometimes fearing and sometimes hoping, sometimes supposing themselves in a good condition, and anon<sup>47</sup> seeing themselves upon the very brink of hell! But now all is quiet and serene with that soul that builds upon the righteousness of Christ. For he being "justified by faith, hath peace with God" (Rom 5:1). Observe that noble description of Christ in Isaiah 32:2: "And a man," that is, the man Christ Jesus, "shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." When a man is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, Who is God-man, it is neither wind nor tempest, it is neither drought nor weariness that can disturb the peace of his soul. For Christ and His righteousness will be a hiding-place, a covert, and rivers of water, and the shadow of a great rock unto him. Being at perfect peace with God, he may well say with the Psalmist, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety" (Psa 4:6-8). The peace and comfort of an awakened sinner can never stand firm and stable, but upon the basis of a positive righteousness.

When a sensible sinner<sup>48</sup> casts his eye upon his own righteousness, holiness, fasting, prayers, tears, humbling, meltings, he can find no place for the sole of his foot to rest firmly upon by reason of the spots, and blots, and blemishes, that cleave both to his graces and duties. He knows that his prayers need pardon, and that his tears need washing in the blood of the

<sup>44</sup> **mutable** – capable or subject to change.

<sup>45</sup> **cordial** – in medicine, a tonic which excites the heart or circulation; therefore, something that comforts, gladdens, or exhilarates the heart.

<sup>46</sup> **kine** – cows.

<sup>47</sup> **anon** – immediately; at once.

<sup>48</sup> **sensible sinner** – a sinner awakened and feeling his wicked condition, recognizing his state before God.

Lamb, and that his very righteousness needs another's righteousness to secure him from condemnation. "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Psa 130:3; 1:5). That is, "stand" in judgment...the best man's life is fuller of sins than the firmament is of stars or the furnace of sparks. Therefore who can stand in judgment and not fall under the weight of Thy just wrath, which burneth as low as hell itself? None can stand. Were the faults of the best man alive but written in his forehead, he was never able to stand in judgment.

When a man comes to the Law for justification, it convinceth him of sin. When he pleads his innocence, that he is not so great a sinner as others are, when he pleads his righteousness, his duties, his good meanings, and his good desires, the Law tells him that they are all weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and found too light (Dan 5:27). The Law tells him that the best of his duties will not save him and that the least of his sins will damn him. The Law tells him that his own righteousnesses are as filthy rags, do but defile him, and that his best services do but witness against him. The Law looks for perfect and personal obedience, and because the sinner cannot come up to it, it pronounceth him accursed (Gal 3:10). And though the sinner sues<sup>49</sup> hard for mercy, yet the Law will show him none, no, though he seeks it carefully with tears (Heb 12:17). But now, when the believing sinner casts his eye upon the righteousness of Christ, he sees that righteousness to be a perfect and exact righteousness, as perfect and exact as that of the Law.

The saints of old have always placed their happiness, peace, and comfort, in their perfect and complete justification, rather than in their imperfect and incomplete sanctification...that text is worthy to be written in letters of gold: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord," saith the sound believer, "my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa 61:10). He hath imputed and given unto me the perfect holiness and obedience of my blessed Savior and made it mine. But,

### **G. Seventhly, then know for your comfort that you have the highest reason in the world to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus.**

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus" (Phi 3:3; Gal 6:14). We rejoice in the Person of Christ, and we rejoice in the righteousness of Christ: "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (2Co 2:14). [God's grace] was ever in Paul's mouth, and ever in Austin's<sup>50</sup> mouth, and should be ever in a Christian's mouth, when his eye is fixed upon the righteousness of Christ. Every believer is in a more blessed and happy estate by means of the righteousness of Christ than Adam was in innocency and that upon a threefold account, which are just and noble grounds for every Christian to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus.

*a) That righteousness which Adam had was uncertain and such as it was possible for him to lose.* Yea, he did lose it (Gen 3), and that in a very short time (Psa 8:5). God gave him power and freedom of will either to hold it or lose it. And we know soon after, upon choice, he proved a bankrupt. But the righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is made more firm and sure to us. Adam sinned away his righteousness, but a believer cannot sin away the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is not possible for the elect of God so to sin as to lose Christ or to strip themselves of that robe of righteousness which Christ hath put upon them (1Jo 3:9; Rom 8:35, 39). The gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against that soul that is interested in Christ, that is clothed with the righteousness of Christ (Mat 16:18). Now what higher ground of joy and triumph in Christ Jesus can there be than this? But,

*b) The righteousness that Adam had was in his own keeping.* The spring and root of it was founded in himself, and that was the cause why he lost it so soon. Adam, like the prodigal son (Luk 15:12-13), had all his portion, his happiness, his holiness, his blessedness, his righteousness, in his own hands, in his own keeping, and so quickly lost stock and block, as some speak.

Oh, but now, that blessed righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is not in our own keeping, but in our Father's keeping. God the Father is the Lord Keeper, not only of our inherent righteousness, but also of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ unto us. "My sheep shall never perish," saith our Savior, "neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (Joh 10:28-29). Though the saints may meet with many shakings and tossings in their various conditions in this world, yet their final perseverance till they come to full possession of eternal life is certain. God is so unchangeable in His purposes of love and so invincible in His power that neither Satan, nor the world, nor their own flesh shall ever be able to separate them from "a crown of righteousness" (2Ti 4:7-8); "a crown of life" (Rev 2:10); "a crown of glory" (1Pe 5:4). The power of God is so far above all created opposition, that it will certainly maintain the saints in a state of grace. Now what a bottom and ground for rejoicing and triumphing in Christ Jesus is here! But,

*c.) [Even if] the righteousness that Adam had in his creation [were] unchangeable, and he could never have lost it; yet, it had been but the righteousness of a man, of a mere creature. And what a poor, low righteousness would that have been, to that high and glorious righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ, which is the righteousness of such a Person as was God as well as man. Yea, that righteousness that we have by Jesus Christ is a higher righteousness and a more excellent, transcendent righteousness than that of the angels. Though the righteousness of the angels be perfect and complete in its kind,*

<sup>49</sup> **sues** – to petition; to seek to obtain.

<sup>50</sup> **Austin** or **Aurelius Augustine** (354-430) – Bishop of Hippo, near Alexandria in Egypt.

yet it is but the righteousness of mere creatures. But the righteousness of the saints in which they stand clothed before the throne of God is the righteousness of that Person which is both God and man.

Now what a well of salvation is here! What three noble grounds and what matchless bottoms are here for a Christian's joy and triumph in Christ Jesus, who hath put so glorious a robe as His own righteousness upon them! Ah, Christians, let not the consolations of God be small in your eyes (Job 15:11). Why take you no more comfort and delight in Christ Jesus? Why rejoice you no more in Him? Not to rejoice in Christ Jesus is a plain breach of that gospel command, "Rejoice in the Lord always" that is, rejoice in Christ, "and again I say, rejoice," saith the Apostle (Phi 4:4). He doubleth the mandate to show the necessity and excellency of the duty.

That joy lasts forever, whose object remains forever. Such an object is our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the joy of the saints should still be exercised upon our Lord Jesus Christ. Shall the worldling rejoice in his barns, the rich man in his bags, the ambitious man in his honors, the voluptuous man in his pleasures, and the wanton in his Delilahs; and shall not a Christian rejoice in Christ Jesus and in that robe of righteousness with which Christ hath covered him? (Isa 61:10)

The joy of that Christian that keeps a fixed eye upon Christ and His righteousness cannot be expressed, it cannot be painted. No man can paint the sweetness of the honeycomb, or the sweetness of a cluster of Canaan, or the fragrance of the rose of Sharon. As the being of things cannot be painted, so the sweetness of things cannot be painted. The joy of the Holy Ghost cannot be painted, nor that joy that arises in a Christian's heart, who keeps up a daily converse with Christ and His righteousness, cannot be painted; it cannot be expressed! Who can look upon the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ and seriously consider that even every vein of that blessed body did bleed to bring him to heaven, and not rejoice in Christ Jesus? Who can look upon the glorious righteousness of Christ imputed to him and not be filled with an exuberancy<sup>51</sup> of spiritual joy in God his Savior? There is not the pardon of the least sin, nor the least degree of grace, nor the least drop of mercy, but cost Christ dear: for He must die, and He must be made a sacrifice, and He must be accursed, that pardon may be thine, and grace thine, and mercy thine! And oh, how should this draw out thy heart to rejoice and triumph in Christ Jesus! But,

#### **H. Eighthly, The imputed righteousness of Christ may serve to comfort, support, and bear up the hearts of the people of God from fainting and sinking under the sense of the weakness and imperfection of their inherent righteousness.**

The church of old has lamentingly<sup>52</sup> said, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness is as filthy rags" (Isa 64:6). When a Christian keeps a serious eye upon the spots, blots, blemishes, infirmities, and follies, that cleave to his inherent righteousness, fears and tremblings arise to the saddening and sinking of his soul. But when he casts a fixed eye upon the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, then his comforts revive and his heart bears up. For though he hath no righteousness of his own by which his soul may stand accepted before God, yet he hath God's righteousness, which infinitely transcends his own. In God's account, [it] goes for his, as if he had exactly fulfilled the righteousness which the Law requires. According to the Apostle, "What shall we say then? the Gentiles which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith" (Rom 9:30).

Faith wraps itself in the righteousness of Christ and so justifieth us. The Gentiles sought righteousness, not in themselves but in Christ, which they apprehended by faith and were by it justified in the sight of God. The Jews, seeking it in themselves, and thinking by the goodness of their own works to attain to the righteousness of the Law, missed of it. Being in no man's power perfectly to fulfill the [Law], only Christ hath exactly fulfilled it for all that by faith close<sup>53</sup> savingly with Him.

O sirs! None can be justified in the sight of God by a righteousness of their own making.

Now remember that this imputed righteousness of Christ procures acceptance for our inherent righteousness. When a sincere Christian casts his eye upon the weaknesses, infirmities, and imperfections that daily attend his best services, he sighs and mourns. But if he looks upward to the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, [it] shall bring forth his infirm, weak, and sinful performances perfect, spotless, and sinless, and approved according to the tenor<sup>54</sup> of the Gospel. They become spiritual sacrifices, [and] he cannot but rejoice (1Pe 2:5). For as there is an imputation of righteousness to the persons of believers, so there is also an imputation to their services and actions...so the imperfect good works that are done by believers are accounted righteousness, or as Calvin speaks, "are accounted for righteousness, they being dipped in the blood of Christ." They are accounted righteous actions; and so sincere Christians shall be judged according to their good works though not saved for them (Rev 11:18; 20:12; Mat 25:34-37).

And it is observable in that famous process of the last judgment (Mat 25:34-37), that the supreme Judge makes mention of the bounty and liberality of the saints, and so bestows the crown of life and the eternal inheritance upon them. Though the Lord's faithful ones have eminent cause to be humbled and afflicted for the many weaknesses that cleaves to their best duties, yet on the other hand, they have wonderful cause to rejoice and triumph that they are made perfect through Jesus

<sup>51</sup> **exuberancy** – unrestrained enthusiasm or joy.

<sup>52</sup> **lamentingly** – expressing grief; deep sorrow; regret.

<sup>53</sup> **close** – to come to terms.

<sup>54</sup> **tenor** – general sense; the course of meaning which continues through something written or spoken.

Christ, and that the Lord looks at them through the righteousness of Christ as fruits of His own Spirit (Heb 13:20, 21; 1Co 6:11). The saints' prayers being perfumed with Christ's odors are highly accepted in heaven (Rev 8:3, 4). Upon this bottom of imputed righteousness believers may have exceeding strong consolation, and good hope through grace, that both their persons and services do find singular acceptation with God as having no spot or blemish at all in them. Surely righteousness imputed must be the top of our happiness and blessedness! But,

**I. Ninthly and lastly, know for your comfort that imputed righteousness will give you the greatest boldness before God's judgment seat.**

There is an absolute and indispensable necessity of a perfect righteousness wherewith to appear before God. The holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of His government, the severity of His Law, and the terror of wrath calls aloud upon the sinner for a complete righteousness without which there is no standing in judgment (Psa 1:5). That righteousness only is able to justify us before God which is perfect, and that hath no defect or blemish in it, such as may abide the trial before His judgment seat, such as may fitly satisfy His justice and make our peace with Him. And consequently, [by this] the Law of God is fulfilled...such a righteousness as He requires, as will stand before Him, and satisfy His justice (Rom 10:3).

This is the crowning comfort to a sensible and understanding soul, that he stands righteous before a judgment seat in that full, exact, perfect, complete, matchless, spotless, peerless, and most acceptable righteousness of Christ imputed to him.

It is a complete and unspotted righteousness, an unblameable righteousness, and unblemished righteousness. And therefore God can neither in justice except nor object to it. In this righteousness the believer lives, in this righteousness the believer dies, and in this righteousness believers shall arise and appear before the judgment seat of Christ to the deep admiration of all the elect angels, to the transcendent terror and horror of all reprobates, and to the matchless joy and triumph of all on Christ's right hand, who shall then shout and sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels" (Isa 61:10).

Oh, how Christ in this great day will be admired and glorified in all His saints (2Th 1:10), when every saint, wrapped up in this fine linen, in this white robe of Christ's righteousness, shall shine more gloriously than ten thousand suns! In the great Day of the Lord, when the saints shall stand before the tribunal of God, clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, they shall then stand, they shall then be pronounced righteous even in the court of divine justice, which sentence will fill their souls with comfort and the souls of sinners with astonishment (Rev 20:12; 12:10).

Suppose we saw the believing sinner holding up his hand at God's bar—the books opened, the accuser of the brethren present, the witnesses ready, and the Judge on the bench thus bespeaking the sinner at the bar (Rom 7:12, 14, 16; Gal 3:10): "O sinner, sinner, thou standest here indicted before Me for many millions of sins of commission and for many millions of sins of omission. Thou hast broken My holy, just, and righteous Laws beyond all human conception or expression, and hereof thou art proved guilty. What hast thou now to say for thyself why thou shouldst not be eternally cast?" Upon this the sinner pleads guilty. But withal he earnestly desires that he may have time and liberty to plead for himself and to offer his reasons why that dreadful sentence "Go, you cursed..." should not be passed upon him (Mat 25:41). The liberty desired being granted by the Judge, the sinner pleads that his Surety, Jesus Christ, hath by His blood and sufferings given full and complete satisfaction to divine justice and that He hath paid down upon the nail the whole debt at once, and that it can never stand with the holiness and unspotted justice of God to demand satisfaction twice (Heb 10:10, 14).

If the Judge shall further object, "Ay, but sinner, sinner, the Law requireth an exact and perfect righteousness in the personal fulfilling of it. Now, sinner, where is thy exact and perfect righteousness? (Gal 3:10). Upon which the believing sinner very readily, cheerfully, humbly, and boldly replies, "My righteousness is upon the bench: 'In the Lord have I righteousness' (Isa 45:24). Christ, my Surety, hath fulfilled the Law on my behalf."

His obeying the Law to the full, His perfect conforming to its commands, His doing, as well as His dying obedience is by grace made over and reckoned to me in order to my justification and salvation. And this is my plea, by which I will stand before the Judge of all the world. Upon this, the sinner's plea is accepted as good in Law, and accordingly he is pronounced righteous and goes away glorying and rejoicing, triumphing and shouting it out, "Righteous, righteous, righteous, righteous!" "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory" (Isa 45:25). And thus you see that there are nine springs of strong consolation that flow into your souls through the imputation of Christ's righteousness unto you.

