

CHAPTER 6

MEN ARE JUSTIFIED ONLY BY THE PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST

AND that thou mayest yet be helped in this matter, I shall now come to speak to the second conclusion.

The second position is, THAT MEN CAN BE JUSTIFIED FROM THE CURSE BEFORE GOD WHILE SINNERS IN THEMSELVES BY NO OTHER RIGHTEOUSNESS THAN THAT LONG AGO PERFORMED BY, AND REMAINING WITH, THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

For the better prosecuting of this position, I shall observe two things —

1. That the righteousness by which we stand just before God from the curse was performed by the person of Christ.
2. That this righteousness is inherent only in him. As to the first of these, I shall be but brief.

Now, that the righteousness that justifieth us was performed long ago by the person of Christ, besides what hath already been said, is further manifest thus —

1. He is said to have purged our sins by himself —

“When he had by himself purged our sins,
he sat down on the right hand of God,” ^{<300>}Hebrews 1:2, 3.

I have shewed that in Christ, for the accomplishing of righteousness, there was both doing and suffering; doing, to fulfill all the commands of the law; suffering, to answer its penalty for sin. This second is that which in this to the Hebrews is in special intended by the apostle, where he saith, he hath “purged our sins,” ^{<304>}Hebrews 9:14; that is, by his precious blood; for it is that alone can purge our sins, either out of the sight of God or out of the sight of the soul. Now this was done by himself, saith the apostle; that is,

in or by his personal doings and sufferings. And hence it is that when God had rejected the offerings of the law, he said,

“Lo, I come. A body hast thou prepared me,
to do thy will, O God,” ^{<3808>}Hebrews 10:5-8.

Now by this will of God, saith the Scripture, we are sanctified. By what will? Why, by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ; for that was God’s will, that thereby we might be a habitation for him; as he saith again —

“Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood,
suffered without the gate,” ^{<3812>}Hebrews 13:12.

2. As it is said, he hath purged our sins by *himself*, so it was by himself *at once* — “For by one offering hath he perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” Now by this word “at once,” or by “one offering,” is cut off all those imaginary sufferings of Christ which foolish men conceive of; as, that he in all ages hath suffered, or suffereth for sin in us. No; he did this work but once: “Not that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now *once* in the end of the world,” in the time of Pilate, “hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” ^{<3825>}Hebrews 9:25, 26. Mark how to the purpose the Holy Ghost expresseth it: he hath suffered but *once*; and that *once, now; now once; now* he is God and man in one person; *now* he hath taken the body that was prepared of God; *now once* in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; by the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ *once* for all.

3. It further appears, in that by his resurrection from the dead, the mercies of God are made sure to the soul, God declaring by that, as was said before, how well pleased he is by the undertaking of his Son for the salvation of the world:

“And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give thee the sure mercies of David,” ^{<4134>}Acts 13:34.

For Christ being clothed with man’s flesh, and undertaking for man’s sins, did then confirm all sure to us by his resurrection from the dead. So that

by the rising of that man again, mercy and grace are made sure to him that hath believed on Jesus. Wherefore, from these things, together with what hath been discovered about his addressing himself to the work, I conclude “That men can be justified from the curse before God while sinners in themselves by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by the person of Christ.” Now the conclusion is true, from all show of contradiction; for the Holy Ghost saith, he hath done it; hath done it by himself, and that by the will of God, at once, even then when he took the prepared body upon him — “By the will of God we are sanctified, through the offering up of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

This being so, the second position is also manifest — namely, that the righteousness by which we stand just from the curse before God is only inherent in Jesus Christ. For if he hath undertaken to bring in a justifying righteousness, and that by works and merits of his own, then that righteousness must of necessity be inherent in him alone, and ours only by imputation; and hence it is called, in that fifth to the Romans, the gift, the “gift of righteousness;” because neither wrought nor obtained by works of ours, but bestowed upon us, as a garment already prepared, by the mercy of God in Christ, ^{<4567}Romans 5:17; ^{<29110}Isaiah 11:10.

There are four things that confirm this for a truth —

First, This righteousness is said to be the righteousness of *one*, not of many; I mean of *one* properly and personally, as his own particular personal righteousness. The gift of grace, which is the gift of righteousness, it is

“by *one* man, Jesus Christ. Much more they that receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by *one* Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of *one* the free gift came upon all men to 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,”

^{<4565}Romans 5:15-19.

Mark, the righteousness of *one*, the obedience of *one*; the righteousness of *one* man, of one man, Jesus. Wherefore, the righteousness that justifieth a

sinner, it is personally and inherently the righteousness of that person only who by works and acts of obedience did complete it, even the obedience of one, of one man, Jesus Christ; and so ours only by imputation. It is improper to say, Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit was personally and inherently an act of mine. It was personally his, and imputatively mine; personally his, because he did it; imputatively mine, because I was then in him. Indeed, the effects of his personal eating is found in my person — to wit, defilement and pravity; the effects also of the imputation of Christ's personal righteousness are truly found in those that are in him by electing love and unfeigned faith, even holy and heavenly dispositions: but a personal act is one thing, and the effects of that another. The act may be done by, and be only inherent in one; the imputation of the merit of the act, as also the effects of the same, may be in a manner universal, extending itself unto the most, or all. This the case of Adam and Christ doth manifest — the sin of one is imputed to his posterity; the righteousness of the other is reckoned the righteousness of those that are his.

Secondly, The righteousness by which we stand just before God from the curse is called

“The righteousness of the Lord — the righteousness of God — the righteousness of Jesus Christ,” etc., ^{<1086>}Philippians 3:6-8;

and that by way of opposition to the righteousness of God's own holy law — “That I might be found in him, not having on my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Now by this opposition, as by what was said before, the truth is made exceeding clear; for by these words, “not having my own righteousness,” is not only excluded what qualifications we suppose to be in us, but the righteousness through which we stand just in the sight of God by them is limited and confined to a person absolutely distinct. Distinct, I say, as to his person and performances, who here is called God and Jesus Christ; as he saith also in the prophet Isaiah, “In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,” ^{<2425>}Isaiah 45:25; ^{<2547>}Isaiah 54:17.

In the Lord, not in the law; in the Lord, not in themselves. “And their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord”: of me, not of themselves; of me, not

of the law. And again; “Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Now, as I have already said, all this is to be understood of the righteousness that was fulfilled by acts and works of obedience, which the person of the Son of God accomplished in the days of his flesh in the world; by that man, I say, “The Lord our righteousness,” ^{<2216>}Jeremiah 23:6. Christ indeed is naturally and essentially righteousness; but as he is simply such, so he justifieth no man; for then he need not to bear our sins in his flesh, and become obedient in all points of the law for us; but the righteousness by which we stand just before God is a righteousness consisting of works and deeds, of the doings and sufferings of such a person who also is essentially righteousness. And hence, as before I have hinted, we are said to be justified by the obedience and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the doings and sufferings of the Son of God. And hence again it is that he first is called King of righteousness; that is, a King of righteousness as God-man, which of necessity supposeth his personal performances; and after that, “King of peace,” ^{<3000>}Hebrews 7:1-3; for what he is naturally and eternally in his Godhead he is not to us, but himself; but what he is actively and by works, he is not to himself, but to us; so, then, he is neither King of righteousness nor of peace to us, as he is only the Eternal Son of the Father, without his being considered as our priest and undertaker — “He hath obtained,” by works of righteousness, “eternal redemption for us,” ^{<3002>}Hebrews 9:12. So, then, the righteousness by which we stand just before God is a righteousness inherent (only) in Christ, because a righteousness performed by him alone.

Now that righteousness by which we stand just before God must be a righteousness consisting of personal performances; the reason is, because persons had sinned, this the nature of justice requireth, that

“since by man came death, by man should come also the
resurrection from the dead,” ^{<4351>}1 Corinthians 15:21.

The angels, therefore, for this very reason, abide under the chains of everlasting darkness, because he “took not hold on them,” ^{<3016>}Hebrews 2:16, 17; that is, by fulfilling righteousness for them in their nature: that is a blessed word, *to you* — “To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord,” ^{<4011>}Luke 2:11; *to you*, not to angels; *to you* is born a Savior.

Thirdly, It is yet further evident that the righteousness by which we stand just before God from the curse is a righteousness inherent, not in us, but Christ; because it is a righteousness inherent, not in us, but Christ; because it is a righteousness besides, and without the law itself. Now take away the law, and you take away the rule of righteousness. Again; take away the rule, and the act as to us must cease:

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets,” ~~ROM~~ Romans 3:21.

So, then, by such a righteousness we are justified as is not within the power of the law to command of us.

Question: But what law is that which hath not power to command our obedience in the point of our justification with God?

Answer: The moral law, or that called the ten commandments. Therefore we are neither commanded to love God, or our neighbor, as the means or part of our justifying righteousness; nay, he that shall attempt to do these things to be delivered from the curse thereby, by the scripture is holden accursed of God: “As many as are of the works,” or duties, “of the law, are under the curse,” etc., ~~ROM~~ Galatians 3:10. Because we are justified not by that of the law, but by the righteousness of God without the law; that is, without its commanding of us, without our obedience to it:

“Freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood,” ~~ROM~~ Romans 3:24, 25.

This is the righteousness of God without the law; that is, without any of our obedience to the law. Wherefore the righteousness by which we stand just in the sight of God cannot be inherent in us, but in Christ the King thereof.

Fourthly, This is further made apparent by the capacity that God will consider that soul in to whom he imputeth justifying righteousness; and that is, “as one that worketh not,” as one that stands “ungodly in the judgment of the law,” ~~ROM~~ Romans 4:4, 5. But this I have handled before, and therefore shall pass it here.

Fifthly, to conclude: If any works of ours could justify us before God, they would be works after faith received; but it is evident that these do not; therefore the righteousness that justifies us from the curse before God is a righteousness inherent only in Christ.

That works after faith do not justify us from the curse in the sight of God is evident —

1. Because no works of the saints can be justified by the moral law, considering it as the law of works for life, ^{<RB>}Galatians 3:10. For this must stand a truth for ever — Whatsoever justifieth us must be justified by the moral law, for that is it that pronounceth the curse; unless, then, that curse be taken away by the work, the work cannot justify us before God, ^{<RB>}Romans 3:21. But the curse cannot be taken away but by a righteousness that is first approved of by that law that so curseth; for if that shall yet complain for want of a full satisfaction, the penalty remaineth. This is evident to reason, and confirmed by the authority of God's word, as hath been already proved; because the law, once broken, pronounceth death, expecteth death, and executeth the same on him that will stand to the judgment of the law; but no work of a believer is capable of answering this demand of the law; therefore none of his works can justify him before God; for the law, that notwithstanding complaineth.

2. No works of faith can justify us from the curse before God, because of the want of perfection that is in the greatest faith in us. Now if faith be not perfect, the work cannot be perfect; I mean, with that perfection as to please Divine justice. Consider the person, one that hath to do with God immediately by himself. Now, that faith is not capable of this kind of perfection it is evident, because when men here know most, they know but in part, ^{<RB>}1 Corinthians 8:2; ^{<RB>}1 Corinthians 13:12. Now he that knows but in part, can do but in part; and he that doth but in part, hath a part wanting in the judgment of the justice of God. So, then, when thou hast done all thou canst, thou hast done but part of thy duty, and so art short of justification from the curse by what thou hast done.

3. Besides, it looks too like a monster that the works of faith should justify us before God; because then faith is turned, as it were, with its neck behind it. Faith, in its own nature and natural course, respecteth the mercy of God through the Mediator Jesus Christ, and, as such, its virtue

and excellency is to expect justification by grace through him; but by this doctrine faith is turned round about, and now makes a life out of what itself hath done: but methinks faith should be as noble as its fruits, that being the first, and they but the fruits of that.

Besides, seeing the work is only good because it floweth from faith, for faith purifieth the heart (^{<4839>}Acts 15:9), therefore faith is it that justifies all its works. If, then, we be justified by either, it is by faith, and not by his works; unless we will say there is more virtue in the less than in the greater. Now what is faith but a believing, a trusting, or relying act of the soul? What, then, must it rely upon or trust in? Not in itself, that is without scripture; not in its works, they are inferior to itself; besides, this is the way to make even the works of faith the mediator between God and the soul, and so by them thrust Christ out of doors; therefore it must trust in Christ; and if so, then no man can be justified from the curse before God by the works that flow from faith.

4. To put all out of doubt; the saint, when he hath done what he can to bring forth good works by faith, yet he dares not shew these works before God but as they pass through the Mediator Christ, but as they are washed in the blood of the Lamb. And therefore Peter saith, those sacrifices of ours that are truly spiritual are only then accepted of God (^{<6125>}1 Peter 2:5) when offered up by Jesus Christ. And therefore it is said again, that the prayers of the saints, which are the fruits of faith, come up before the throne of God through the angel's hand (^{<6126>}Revelation 8:3, 4), that is, through the hand of Christ, through his golden censer, perfumed with his incense, made acceptable by his intercession.

It is said in the book of the Revelation that it is granted to the bride, the Lamb's wife, that she should be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; which white linen is the righteousness of saints." This fine linen, in my judgment, is the works of godly men, their works that sprang from faith. But how came they clean? How came they white? Not simply because they were the works of faith. But mark,

"They washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and therefore they stand before the throne of God,"
^{<6174>}Revelation 7:14, 15.

Yea, therefore it is that their good works stand there too.

I conclude, then, “our persons are justified while we are sinners in ourselves.” Our works, even the works of faith, are no otherwise accepted but as they come through Jesus Christ, even through his intercession and blood. So, then, Christ doth justify both our person and works, not by way of approbation, as we stand in ourselves or works before God, but by presenting of us to his Father by himself, washing what we are and have from guilt in his blood, and clothing us with his own performances. This is the cause of our acceptance with God, and that our works are not cast forth of his presence.