

SERMON XX

TO LAY OUR SINS ON CHRIST IS THE LORD'S PREROGATIVE ONLY

Tobias Crisp

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid {or, made to meet,} on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6}

I have made entrance formerly in some other place {as some here present peradventure know} upon the words that I have now read unto you. The whole mystery of the Gospel, in the excellency of it, is summed up in them, and in what goes immediately before; even those excellencies, which, though the prophets spake of before, yet it was revealed unto then, "that not unto themselves, but unto us these things were particularly intended," {I Pet.1:12,} concerning this glorious gospel; the whole completeness of the people of God, from the first rise of it to the consummation of it, with all the steps and degrees to it, is comprised in this text. And lest any should boast of himself when he shall partake of the glory of this grace, the Lord is pleased to lay down a caveat in the beginning of it, "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every man to his own way;" this is the best we are, and in this condition the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all; that so all the world may know, even the best of men, that not for their own righteousness, doth the Lord do this to them, or for them.

But I must not dwell upon particulars, which I have formerly delivered upon this subject. I will lead you by the hand, and point out what I have passed through, that so we may make a more orderly progress. Every word in this text hath so much weight in it, that each word contains a great latitude and immenseness in it of the grace of God to us.

1. It is iniquity itself that the Lord hath laid upon Christ; not only our punishment, but our very sin.

2. And that this transaction of our sins to Christ is a real act; our sins so became Christ's that he stood the sinner in our stead, and we discharged.

3. That which remains yet to be considered is another branch, shooting out of this tree of life, for so I may call this text; and that is drawn from the efficient of this great grace of laying our iniquities upon Christ; it is the Lord himself that is the agent; he himself hath done this thing; "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." As Satan hath cast a mist over other glorious branches of the gospel, so he hath endeavored to cast very darkness itself over this truth, namely, "that this is the Lord's own act." It is true, Satan is contented to allow men general and gross notions of it, that our iniquities are disposed of by the Lord; but when there shall be a thorough searching into particulars concerning this truth, then he bestirs himself, {Jn.8:44,} even to raise contradictions against what men, in general will grant. The truth is beloved, it is hardly received of men, and very rare it is, to let the Lord himself be the sole and only agent in laying our iniquity upon Christ; and yet if it were not he alone that did it, all the creatures in the world would break their backs with heaving at iniquity to lay it upon him. And assuredly beloved, let any man take any other course in the world, putting the work of laying iniquity upon any other, but the Lord alone, he shall never effect it, he shall never lay it upon Christ, the point therefore that I shall deliver, is briefly this.

It is the Lord, it is he singly, he exclusively, he only and alone, and none but he that lays iniquity upon Christ.

There is nothing in the world can do this but the Lord. Nay, I will go further; there is nothing in the world moves, persuades, or prevails with him, to lay our iniquity upon Christ; the Lord is so alone the founder, and author, or agent in this work, that he is moved and stirred up only by himself to do it; and nothing in the world moves him to do it but himself.

For the clearing of this truth, give me leave to dive a little into it, and I shall only desire this justice at your hands, that the manifestation and evidence of scripture may carry your judgments without prejudice; I say, for the clearing of it, I shall dive into these particulars.

The Lord is so the sole agent in laying our iniquities upon Christ, that even Christ himself doth not lay them upon himself; nay, I must go yet further, the Lord himself doth so, of and from himself, without regard to any motive whereby he might be persuaded to lay our iniquities upon Christ; that Christ himself is not the first motive to the Lord to do this thing; I say again, Christ is not the mover or persuader of the Lord unto it; but the Lord merely from himself simply, as he is the Lord God, moved and prevailed with himself alone to lay our iniquities upon him. And yet, beloved, this will be no derogation to Christ at all, but will only constitute him in his own true and proper office as he is the Mediator; for according to that office we speak of him here. I say, it is not Christ himself that lays our iniquities upon himself. It is true, Christ doth many admirable things about iniquity being laid upon him; "he takes away the sins of the world; he bears the sins of many; he is made sin for us;" but you shall nowhere find, that Christ laid upon himself the sins of men; for he himself was as careful that his Father should not be robbed of his own glory, as that his people may be saved by his righteousness. All along you shall still find that Christ is so far from making this taking of iniquity his own original act, that he still acknowledges, that bearing it was not only for the pleasure of his Father, but also in subjection unto him, and in obedience to his command. Observe but that expression of Christ himself, in Heb.10:6, and you shall plainly perceive, that Christ doth not lay iniquity upon himself, but according to the charge of his Father, he is contented to take what he layeth upon him; "in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come {in the volume of the book it is written of me,} to do thy will, O God;" "thy law is written in my heart," saith Christ there, "a body hast thou prepared for me," thou hast fitted a body for me, thou hast bored mine "ear through with an aul &c." {Ex.21:6} Out of these expressions I will observe this to you: 1. That the main discourse of Christ here, hath reference to the taking away of the sins of men; for, in the beginning of the chapter, you shall find how the apostle hath distinguished between the weakness of the Jewish rites concerning remission of sins, and the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice for the perfecting of it. In these services there was a remembrance of sin every year; "because it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin." For this cause Christ comes into the world; to what purpose? To do that which those sacrifices could not do, to take away sin perfectly; but by what authority came Christ? Doth he come of his own head? Doth he of himself take the sin upon himself? No, beloved, he doth not; "in the volume of the book {saith Christ} it is written of me," or as it is in the original, "in the head of the book it is written of me;" as if he had said, in thy book it is written, as a chief head or matter; remission of sins is ascribed unto me as a business committed unto me, or passed over to me.

But it may be by way of courtesy, some may say. I answer, mark well the meaning of that place where Christ saith, "thy law is in my heart;" so then it seems this book which contains this business of Christ, about the remission of sins, is a book that runs in the strain of a law upon him, or unto him; so that in the business of bearing the sins of men, Christ was so far from taking it upon himself, to lay their iniquities upon himself, that he acknowledges he was under a law in this thing; nay; secondly, see that it was the Lord's own business that Christ is sent about; for he tells us expressly, that the Lord every way furnishes him to this work, "a body hast thou prepared me," or fitted for me; and all to show that Christ is in a manner passive about the business of taking off iniquity; he doth not take it upon himself, but only bears it, being laid on by the commission, nay the hand of God himself. And therefore in Heb.5:8, the Apostle tells us expressly that though Christ were a Son, yet "learned he obedience;" and in John 10:18, Christ saith, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again," and no man can take it away from me; in which he may seem to be his own mover, and that he doth it of himself to bear the sins of men; yet afterwards he shows plainly, that he speaks this not at all in reference to his Father, but in reference to the creature; no man takes it away from him indeed, but in reference to the Father, he saith, "this commandment have I received from my Father, that I should lay down my life." That no man should take away my life, which is true

indeed, but that I should lay it down; and in John 15:10, our Saviour calls out his disciples upon a service of the Lord from an argument of his own obedience; "as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love;" so if you keep my commandment, ye shall abide in my love. By all which expressions you may perceive, that Christ, as he stands the Mediator and Bearer of the sins of men, stands as one looking still for his commission, when the Lord himself will lay their iniquities on him; he doth not of himself, and of his own accord, lay them on himself; and therefore the Apostle to the Hebrews, saith expressly, "no man taketh this office upon himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was." {Heb.5:4} What office was that? The office of the priesthood to bear the sins of men; and he speaks of Christ himself in this place, that he did not take this upon himself; but waited till the Lord was pleased to lay the load upon him, and then he laid his shoulders under it. It is true, God's laying iniquity upon Christ was not by compulsion; but there was a voluntary agreement; it was the agreement of a son to a father, that keeps his authority and power in this business; Christ is but the Mediator; he comes between as he is chosen the umpire.

But if any shall say, though Christ doth not lay the iniquities of men upon himself, yet surely he moves and persuades the Father to lay them upon him. I answer, this is received for a general truth, that what the Lord doth about the discharge of a believer's sin, he doth all upon the motives Christ put him upon, by that prevalency that he hath with him; but, beloved, you shall find this, that in all Christ's discourse, he very frequently puts off many things from himself, and gives them to his Father; and therefore he saith expressly, that of himself he doth nothing, but as he hears of the Father, so he speaks. {Jn.8:28} It is true, that the Lord hath given to Christ the pre-eminence in all things, as he by whom alone he works all good in the world to the sons of men; but he hath not given Christ this pre-eminence, to be the first mover of him to do that good to men that he doth; the Lord himself is the fountain of his own motives, and is moved simply, and only from himself, to do that good that he doth to the sons of men. And that it may appear plainly to you, that Christ was not the first mover of the Father to dispose of the sins of men upon himself, observe but this one thing. What was the motive that Christ himself should have such a being as he had, to wit, of Mediatorship? Was not Christ himself given unto the world to be the Saviour of men? How could he be a motive to the Father to give him a being to move him, before he himself had a being to move withal? There must therefore be a love boiling in the Father to the sons of men, that must stir him up to give Christ to be their Saviour, or else he could not have come into the world. If therefore the love of God to men was the first mover of himself to give Christ to them, how could he be the mover of the Father, that he should be given to them, since it was the good pleasure of the Father that Christ should be? It is true indeed, Christ is the mover of the Father to execute all the good pleasure of his to the sons of men; but he is not the mover of him first to love them; the thoughts of God were from himself towards men. Now, because that "mercy and truth might meet together, and righteousness and peace might kiss each other," which only Christ could compass, therefore was he sent of God into the world, to make up whatsoever might conduce to the accomplishment of his love. When God first cast his love upon men, and saw their transgressions must be satisfied for, that justice might not be violated, that mercy might not swallow up justice, nor justice might not trample upon, nor devour mercy; therefore there must be satisfaction made, that justice might have its own right; for this cause Christ was sent into the world as a medium, or means, whereby the love that God had formerly set upon the sons of men, might have its free course without interruption.

Peradventure, beloved, this discourse may seem somewhat vain and impertinent, that God himself should be his own mover to lay the iniquities of the sons of men upon the body of Christ; but now by that which follows you shall see, that it is of great concern; for if Christ himself did not lay our iniquities upon himself, and if he did not move the Father primarily to lay them upon him, how much less could we, and anything we could do, attain to that height to lay them upon him? I know that all will be ready to grant, that Christ is greater with the Father than all the things in the world; and if any one thing were able to move him to lay the iniquities of men upon Christ, he were able to do most in this matter; if then Christ himself doth not lay our iniquities upon himself, all that we can do, or are, cannot possibly do it.

There is a great mistake {and I suppose it is out of ignorance, for lack of diving into the bottom of the Gospel} among men, I mean, among tender-hearted godly people, those that are deeply wrought upon; and a conceit it is that is deeply rooted in their spirits, that some performances of their own must lay their iniquities upon Christ. Suppose there be a sin committed, it may be more scandalous than ordinary, which peradventure to sense wounds the spirit; the question now is, what it is that must, or doth, rid such a one of the sting and guilt of this or such like transgressions committed? What discharges the soul of such a sin? Usually it is taught among us, by those who would be accounted the greatest Protestants, and haters of Popery, that the proportion of repentance, tears, sorrow, and fastings, answerable to the latitude and height of such transgressions, is that which gives ease; this takes away the burden, this lays the soul at rest and quiets it; therefore when a soul hath transgressed, if it be tender, most, or almost all the pantings of it, are after extraordinary enlargements in bitterness, heaviness, mourning, melting, and tears; these are accounted they that wash away iniquity; but, beloved, let me tell you, it is impossible that all the righteousness of men though it were more perfect than it can be, should lay one iniquity, or the least circumstance of one, upon Christ. If a man could weep his heart out, if it could melt like wax, dissolve into water, and gush out rivers of tears for sin; all this could not carry away the least dram of the filthiness of sin from such a soul unto Christ, nor unload the soul of any sin to load him with it; therefore they do but deceive themselves that ascribe the unloading and easing of their own spirits, to the greatest enlargements in any performances in the world; Christ himself did not lay iniquity upon himself, much less can the righteousness of any man lay it upon him. Look upon the best of your righteousness, suppose the things mentioned already; suppose a spiritualness in all that righteousness, what can they do towards this, namely, unloading a man's own spirit of his sin, and the loading of Christ with it? Suppose the righteousness you perform were perfect and complete, that God himself could find no fault with it after any sin is committed; make the largest supposition that can be imagined; when all this is done, what can all this conduce to the taking away of sin already committed? Do you not owe all this righteousness to God, as you are under his command? And if you owe it, then the very payment of it is but the payment of his own debt; and how can the payment of this debt discharge for a former debt? Suppose a man oweth two hundred pounds to be paid each at six months, at two payments; if he fails in the payment of the first, and at the second day of payment pays one of the hundred pounds, every penny of it, doth this balance the account? Doth the payment of the last hundred pounds satisfy the whole debt? If he had paid the first and second hundred pounds, he had paid but what was due; can the second payment then be any satisfaction and furthermore to payment of the former debt? No, not at all! In whatever we have sinned, we have failed in the payment of that which was God's due; and when we come to perform any righteousness, that is his due too; if we had not failed in the former, this latter is God's due too, this must have been paid; and when we perform any righteousness after sins committed, suppose it were perfect and complete, this doth but satisfy its own debt, for God requires all this; and if it do but satisfy its own debt, how can it discharge a former?

Besides, beloved, how is it possible any righteousness of man can lay iniquity upon Christ, when besides what we have already said, there is new iniquity contracted against the Lord in all the righteousness that men perform? This is an odd payment of debts, by payment still to run more and more in debt; that our righteousness may acquit us of former transgressions, and yet that itself contracts new transgression to men, making it more than it was before; how can any man in ordinary sense conceive this to be any way of discharge?

But some will say, though our performances do not lay our iniquities upon Christ, yet they prevail with God, and move him with pity towards us, and stir him up to take our iniquities off from us, and lay them upon Christ. God cannot but melt, will some say, to see the tears of his people, the bitterness of their spirits, their crying, their earnestness, and their sorrows; these cannot but prevail with him to have compassion on them.

I know this is the general conceit of too many in the world; but, beloved, let me tell you, there is nothing in all creatures in the world that hath the least prevalency with the Lord, let them do what they can. All our prayers, tears, fastings, mournings, reluctancy and fighting against our corruptions

move God not a jot to lay our sins upon Christ; he is moved only from himself. If they move God, what must they move him to? If he be moved by anything from man, he is moved according to the nature of the thing that is done; if the nature of the thing produce evil effects, God must be moved to do evil to men; if good effects, if there be good in the things, they may move him to good. Now I ask, is there good or evil in anything men do? When they have sinned, they pray, confess, mourn, and fast; is there evil or good in these, looked upon in their own nature? No man can deny, but that there is abundance of iniquity in the best performances a man doth; and that "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." {Hab.1:13} That which must move God to do good, must have a goodness in itself; all the motive therefore, in the Lord is simply himself.

And that it may appear manifestly unto us, that the Lord doth not fetch motives from us, to lay our iniquities upon Christ, you shall find through the whole current of the gospel, he takes a time of laying them upon him, when all the world may see there is no possibility that any creature should move him to do it. Mark well, Rom.9:11-13, "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Before Jacob had done either good or evil, God's love was fastened upon him, to show that evil did not move him to reject, nor good persuade him to love; while Jacob was in the womb God loved him, and what in him did move him to love him? He was conceived and born in sin, as David confesseth of himself. What should move God to love Jacob, and to put away his transgression? That it might be according to the purpose of election, not of him that worketh, but of God that sheweth mercy. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine." {Ezek.6:8} Israel being now in blood, what was in him to persuade God to swear to him, and to enter into covenant with him? By blood, he means the filthiness in the creature, and such that no eye could pity it, when God first set his love upon it. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son;" mark the expression; there was no distance between being enemies and reconciliation; there was reconciliation even while enemies. What motive is there in an enemy, while such, to persuade reconciliation? "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," saith the text. What motive can an ungodly man use to persuade God to lay iniquity upon Christ, I say, considering him as ungodly?

But you will say, this is a way, and a highway, to destroy all performances whatsoever. What, can they do nothing? To what purpose should any man then fall upon any employment? Beloved, I am not ignorant how the apostle Paul himself was slandered, when he preached the free grace of God, simply out of his own bowels, without any motive from the creature, as if he allowed and maintained continuance in sin, and breaking out into all manner of licentiousness, because grace abounded. I believe it hath been a charge upon the ministers of the gospel, ever since his time. Oh, if ministers preach the free-grace of God, and that what he doth, he doth for his own sake, then farewell all obedience and performances; this opens a gap for all manner of idleness! Be not deceived, the Lord hath many special ends, for which he hath set up a course of uprightness of conversation in the world, though there be no stroke in them to move him to show mercy to them that walk thus uprightly; and it is but the ignorance of men to think, that holiness in conversation must presently fall to the ground, if it hath not a prevalency in it with God to do good to men. You know what the apostle saith, Eph.2:8-10, "for by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

A man would think that he contradicted himself; works have nothing to do in man's salvation, nor move God to save; "not of works," saith he; "but of grace;" yet "you are ordained unto good works;" these stand well together. The apostle Paul tells Titus, that men should "study good works, for these are profitable unto men;" a man thus serves his generation, while he walketh in good works, and he doth good to them among whom he lives; he serves not himself in all the good works he doth;

for the Lord Christ hath fully served his turn already; either we must make our performances Christ's, or else we must disclaim them. What pride and arrogance is this! Either men will rule the roast, or else they will not abide in the house! As every man hath his office in a family, so everything in man hath its office; and good works have very necessary offices in the family, but they were never ordained to be saviors, much less to be gods. When Christ was tempted by the Pharisees about tribute, he makes this reply; "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." {Mt.22:21}

Let not the righteousness of men encroach upon God, to take his work upon itself; I tell you, beloved, we know not the evil of these vain imaginations. Should the Lord deal with you according to your own hearts that as your performances could lay your sins upon Christ, and discharge you, so you should be discharged, when would you ever do it? When {alas!} instead of laying old sins upon Christ by new performances, you do but add new sins to the old; all our righteousness is but a renovation of new transgressions; for "all our righteousnesses," he speaks of every particular, "are as filthy rags," and a menstruous cloth. {Is.64:6} Is this the way to ease a man of his sin or to get God to discharge him of it, to throw dirt anew in his face? Is this a way for a traitor to get the king's pardon, to come into his presence, and throw poison in his face again? There is not one righteous action a man performs, but he therein anew throws dirt in the face of God by it; because sin, as the Wise Man saith, "is an abomination to the Lord." Who knows the errors of his life and the multitude of his failings in the best righteousness he doth? Man's righteousness may serve his own turn, but not God's. Though there be failing in our righteousness, it may indeed be profitable to men; but as there is, the eyes of God cannot away with it.

But you will say again, Christ makes our righteousness to be accepted and pleasing by purging away all the filth that is in it; and then it may prevail with God, to lay our iniquities upon him. I answer, it is true, Christ purges away all the filthiness, both of righteousness and unrighteousness in believers; but not that their righteousness may prevail with God to lay iniquity upon him; but that it may be accepted in him, the beloved, as services. He himself was without spot, or the least sin, yet he takes not away iniquity by laying it upon himself; and if our righteousness be made complete, by his taking away the filth of it, and putting his own perfection on it; it is not that our iniquities may be laid upon him by it, but that it may be accepted by way of service.

I should go yet one step higher, and let you know, that as it is the Lord alone that lays iniquity upon Christ, so not only all our performances are unable to do it, but even our faith itself doth not do it; for ye may easily perceive, beloved, what I drive at in all this discourse, namely, to strip the creature stark naked, leave it shiftless, and unable any way to help itself, that all the help that it receives may appear to be of the free grace of God, merely, without its concurrence in it. I say, therefore, it is not the faith of believers that lays their iniquities upon Christ. Suppose thou hast committed many sins, and they are apparent; thou wouldst be rid of them, and hear of them no more; what is the way? Works have not power to do it, you will say; but faith is able to discharge the soul from all transgressions, and lay them upon Christ. But I must tell you, though God hath given many glorious fruits and effects to fruit, and made it instrumental of much excellent and abundant consolation to his people; yet hath he not honored it with this, that it should lay iniquity on Christ, or move God to do it.

This cannot be, you will say, for the apostle Paul saith expressly, "I conclude that a man is justified by faith, and not by the works of the law;" therefore, we are justified by faith, and what is that, but to have sins laid upon Christ, and we discharged of them? I confess, it seems to be a strong place at first, where the apostle speaks of justification by faith that consists in the taking away of sins from men; but give me leave to examine it a little, that faith encroach not upon God, and take that which is his own, and which he hath said he will not give to another. I say, it is not the faith of a believer, though ever so strong and powerful, that lays iniquity upon Christ; I shall give you a touch of it for the present; and to this purpose, it were very needful to consider, what it is for a person to be justified; for upon that depends the knowledge of the very thing "that lays iniquity on Christ." Time will not give me leave to discourse freely upon it; in short, therefore, I will only show what it is to be

justified. I speak of justification before God, and of his own justification of a man; and it must, of necessity, be granted of all men, that know what justification is in common sense, that a person justified before God, is such a one, who, when God himself makes search to try him, whether he be guilty, or not guilty, of a crime, finds none upon him; and upon not finding any, he pronounces him just. Let men say what they will, it is a flat contradiction for God to say, this a just person in mine eyes, and yet I have some transgressions to charge upon him. How can God say he is just, and yet charge him with injustice done? Therefore he must be fully freed from all injustice, or God cannot pronounce him a just person.

You will say, no man under heaven can be justified; for God can charge all with transgression. I answer, God cannot. That his people have transgressed is true; but he finds, in fact, that all their transgressions are already satisfied for by his own Son, though the sins were afterwards committed; yet upon payment made beforehand, he charges not sin upon them, having charged it upon Christ already, and taken the full payment of him for it. There is no person under heaven that God pronounces just, but he therein says, I have not one sin to charge upon him. It is true, I find many crimes committed by him, but also I find that my Son hath discharged them already, and he hath given me good satisfaction for them. Now then, this being the justification of a sinner before God; how is it possible, that faith can discharge a person from all iniquity; that God himself upon strict search, should find none to be charged upon him? How can faith do it? Suppose a person had no transgression for God to find, till he believes, yet this believing brings transgression with it, enough for God to find him guilty; that itself is sinful; "I believe, Lord, help my unbelief;" there is a mixture of unbelief in the faith of all believers; and there are many weaknesses in it; and how can that justify a person, that is not able to justify itself? Though Christ was like to us in all things, "like as we are, yet without sin;" must he himself be free from sin to justify us that he might purchase our redemption, and shall faith justify us that are not free from sin? If faith justified a person, what must justify faith? For that must have something to justify it, being not able to justify itself.

But, you will say, this is but argumentation; the apostle Paul saith "that being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" {Rom.5:1;} and since the Holy Ghost saith, "we are justified by faith," we must not dispute against it. I will answer in brief and desire one thing of you, and that is to consult Beza upon this place; for he renders the words out of the original, "being justified by faith we have peace with God," without any stop from the first to the last. Our translators render the words thus, "being justified by faith," and then put a comma; but as Beza renders them, {who is accounted a most sincere renderer of the original,} he makes no stop; and, if that be true, why may not they be as well rendered thus; "being justified, by faith we have peace with God?" And so ascribe justification to Christ, as a thing done before, and let faith have reference to our peace; being justified by Christ, by faith we come to have peace with God; which stands current with the analogy of faith, and the truth of the gospel. "For it is God that justifieth." {Rom.8:33} Justification is truly and properly the work of God himself and cannot be the work of faith.¹

But, secondly, suppose the words to run as they are commonly rendered; I answer, then are we to distinguish in faith two things; there is the act of believing, and the object on which we believe; and so the words may be understood thus, "being justified" by the righteousness of faith, or by the righteousness of Christ which we believe, "we have peace with God;" and so ascribe our justification to the object of our believing, the righteousness of Christ, and not to the act of believing. The truth is, beloved, the act of believing is a work, and as much ours, as our fear, prayer, and love are; and the apostle should contradict himself when he saith, "we are saved by grace, through faith, not of works," if he mean the act of faith; for he might as well have said, we are not justified by works, but we are justified by them.

Finally, to draw towards a conclusion, I answer thus; you may consider justification in a double sense, and that, according to the opinion of our divines, there is justification in heaven, and in

¹ Faith is never said to justify, nor are we justified by it as an act or work, but by the object of it, Christ, and his righteousness who is sometimes called faith. Gal.3:23,24,25. Gill.

a man's conscience. Justification in heaven is God's act alone; justification in the consciences of men, is the manifestation of that act of God to them, by which a man comes to know, and consequently to rejoice in it; and so you may read the words thus, "being justified by faith;" that is, through faith having the justification of God evidenced and manifested to our spirits, "we have peace with God." And, beloved, you shall find this to be a very solid and genuine interpretation of the words, and agreeable to the Scriptures; for peace and joy are always appropriated to persons believing; as much as to say, the act of justification in heaven, though perfectly done, is yet secret in the breast of God alone, till he gives persons faith, that beholds the grace of God; that brings the glad tidings of justification to the soul, and so it rejoices in it; therefore the apostle prays after this manner, "the Lord fill you with all joy and peace in believing." So that it is true, we have not the comfort; we cannot say particularly to our spirits, God hath justified me, and I rejoice in this, till we believe; because faith is made by the Lord to be the "evidence of things not seen," as in Heb.11:1. And that is the proper work that God hath given to believing, not to affect anything to the good of a man, but only to be the witness of that good to his spirit; and so give light to that which was secret before. So that still it remains, that the laying of iniquity itself, upon Christ, is the Lord's act, and his only; our faith seeth what the Lord hath done; and, when God gives us to believe, faith manifests it to us, and so our souls come to have peace. In sum, therefore, beloved, God lays, Christ bears, and faith sees iniquity laid upon him. God, through Christ, perfect this work in us, that so, faith seeing, "we may have all joy and peace in believing."