

SERMON XXXVIII

THE ACT OF BELIEVING IS NOT OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Tobias Crisp

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {1 Jn.2:1,2}

We have observed already, from the connection of both verses together, {the latter containing an argument in it, to enforce a charge in the former,} that the making known of this discharge from sin, before sin be committed, is so far from opening a gap unto licentiousness, that it is one of the best means to restrain men from it. Then we came to consider the argument, and, in it, the matter and force of it. The argument to prevail with men not to sin, is, "that if any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father."

We have considered what this advocate-ship is, and showed that it is a plea grounded upon justice; and for whose cause it is it is the cause of believers, even when they sin; and not only of present believers, but of the elect, though not yet believers, which yet in time shall believe. We came also to consider how Christ, this advocate, is qualified for this office. His qualifications are intimated in the three titles attributed unto him. 1. He is Christ; that imports a lawful call, and a sufficient furnishing him with skill to plead. 2. He is Jesus, importing the efficacy of his plea; he pleads so that he saves his people from their sins; he carries the cause. 3. Another qualification for this office is imported in the attribute of righteousness; "Jesus Christ the righteous;" and that contains in it the strength of his plea whereby he attains to the salvation of those whose cause he pleads. Concerning this last attribute we have observed, that the righteousness of Christ contains in it the strength of his plea, as advocate, whereby he becomes the propitiation for the sins of his clients; I say, the strength of his plea lies in this, that he is "Jesus Christ the righteous." We have therefore proposed to be considered, how clear the scripture is in this truth, that it is his righteousness that carries the cause of a poor believer when he hath sinned, and gets the discharge for his sin after it is committed; I cannot insist upon the scriptures mentioned, they are very plentiful. We came further to consider, what this righteousness of his is that hath such a strength of plea in it; the resolution of this I distributed into two heads, negative and affirmative.

The righteousness which carries away the cause, and obtains the discharge of a believer's sin, is no righteousness of his own, no not so much as the righteousness of faith, as it is our act of believing. Here we left the last day. I will give you a touch of the impossibility that faith should so plead for the discharge from sin, in its own name or strength, as to carry the cause on the side of this person sinning. It is true, that the apostle speaks of the righteousness of faith, Rom.10:6-10, a righteousness of faith there is, indeed; but that which is here ascribed unto faith, is afterwards appropriated to the word; that is, unto the gospel, which is the righteousness of faith that speaks on this wise; "say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven; that is, to bring Christ down from above; who shall descend into the deep; that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." That is, the word of faith, and so not the righteousness of a man's own act of believing. I cannot dwell upon what I have delivered.

Therefore some things briefly to be considered; even about our believing, as it hath a stroke in discharge from sin, or the pardon of sin. The truth is, beloved, some hand faith hath in this business;

but it is not any righteousness, in the act of believing, that carries any stroke in it. If you will consider it well, you shall easily see, there is no more righteousness in our believing, as we act it, than there is in any other gracious act whatsoever we do; than is in our love of God; nay more, there is as much sin in our act of believing, as in our other acts. There is no man under heaven hath attained unto that height of believing, or strength of faith, but there is still something wanting, some imperfection and sin in it and as there is weakness and imperfection in believing, so it is not possible that this should give forth such a righteousness, as to constitute a person, who is unrighteous in himself, to be righteous before God. That which cannot set itself, complete and righteous before God, can never set another righteous before him. Faith must be first just itself, or else it is not possible it should ever, by the righteousness of its own act, justify another. Beloved, whatever the scriptures speak concerning faith justifying, it must of necessity be understood objectively, or declaratively; either faith is said to be our righteousness, in respect of Christ only, who is believed on; and so it is not the righteousness of his own act of believing, but the righteousness of him that is apprehended by that act, or else you must understand it declaratively, that is, whereas all our righteousness, and discharge from sin, flowing only from Christ alone, is an hidden thing; that which in itself is hid to men becomes evident by believing; and as faith makes the righteousness of Christ evident to the believer, so it is said to justify by its own act, declaratively, and no otherwise. And whereas in Rom.5:1, the apostle saith, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." In chapter 8:33, he saith, "who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." Now, I beseech you, compare these texts together; then tell me, whether the act of believing, except it hath reference to the object, which is Christ, of itself justifies, or how else these two places can be reconciled. It is God that justifieth, and it is faith that justifieth; faith is not God, neither is God faith. If therefore, it be faith, in respect of its own act, that justifieth, it is not God that justifieth us; and, if it be God that justifieth, then it is not faith, in respect of its own act; how will you reconcile it? When therefore the Holy Ghost speaks of faith justifying, it speaks of it as laying hold upon God for our justification; and therefore, though faith here appears as that which lays hold upon the righteousness of God, yet it cannot be said to be that righteousness that justifies us.

But some will say, it is not to be understood as if faith had any innate power of its own, to procure the discharge from sin; but it is to be understood as the instrumental cause, that lays hold upon that justification; and so it goes before the justification of a person, and it is to be understood no otherwise.

I shall desire to keep in the plain path for the clearing up of this truth, and so far as possible may be. I abhor to walk in the clouds, in a truth that so highly concerns the comfort, and establishing the conscience and spirits of men; and therefore, I say, that faith, as it lays hold upon the righteousness of Christ, doth not bring this righteousness of Christ to the soul, but only declares the presence of it in the soul that was there, even before faith. I beseech you, mark me well; I know, beloved, I have many very catching ears about me; I speak it the rather, that there may be the more wariness, because there are frequent misunderstandings of the things I deliver, especially, by those that come to catch. I say again, there is no person under heaven, reconciled unto God, justified by him through the righteousness of Christ, but he is justified and reconciled before he believes. And therefore faith is not the instrument radically to unite Christ and the soul together; but rather is the fruit that follows and flows from Christ, the root, being united before-hand to the persons that believe; so that the efficacy and power of believing, is to be instrumental for the declaration of an act that was done before, only it was hid.

For the clearing this, beloved, consider that expression, Heb.11:1, "faith, {saith the apostle} is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen." Here he doth not give any efficacy to faith, to procure or bring forth a new thing; but he gives to faith only an evidencing power, and that not to evidence any new thing, but to be an evidence of things not seen; that is, of things that were before in being, but were hid, and by faith come to be apparent, and cease to be hid, when the evidence of faith brings them forth to light; for either you must say it is not in being till faith is come, and so it doth more than evidence, even beget, and give being to the very thing, or you must

confess the thing indeed was, but faith makes it evident that before was hid and obscure. Now, though faith be honored with the greatest business of all the gifts of the Spirit of God; yet that Christ may not be robbed of that which is peculiar unto him, and properly his own, that is, to give complete being to our justification, and be given unto faith itself; I say, give me leave to propose to you some particulars, wherein it is as clear as the daylight, that it is impossible for any person to believe, till such time as he be first united unto Christ, and become one with him; and that faith, being but a fruit that flows from our union with Christ, is not that which unites, or that knits Christ and a person together; I shall not need insist upon that place I have often made mention of, Ezek.16:8-10, the time when God fastened his love upon the church, was the time of blood. "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love;" that is, the time of thy blood, that he spake of before, 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. Then washed I thee with water; yea, I throughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil. I clothed thee &c." Here is, first, loving and spreading the skirt over the church before it is washed; not, first washing, and then loving and spreading the skirt over them; but after that comes washing, and thoroughly washing from blood. If any man think that this washing is to be understood of sanctification; consider whether or not there be a thorough washing from blood, as that the person so washed is presently all fair; or, as the prophet speaks, expressly in that chapter, "complete in beauty;" that is, perfect, and that through his comeliness put upon him.

But to go on, consider, I beseech you, beloved, that expression in Isaiah 43:22-24, the Lord there is pleased to declare himself concerning his people, in what a condition they were; "but thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel;" "but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities," saith the Lord. And mark what follows; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {vs.25} Here the people, whose sins God blotted out, are not considered as believing; but as a people that wearied God with their sins, and made him to serve with their transgressions; they are considered as a people that had not so much as an heart to call upon God, but were quite weary of him; and even while he considers them thus, even then, he, for his own sake, blots out their transgressions.

And, in Isaiah 53:6, whereof I spake so largely heretofore, you shall see plainly, there is nothing but sin considered in the person, whose iniquities the Lord laid upon Christ. "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Here is not a consideration of people as believing, as though there must be that, before there can be a discharge from sin; but of people before they believe, even while they are going astray, and turning every one to their own way. But the most notable expression to this purpose is in John 15:4,5, and I desire you to seriously consider the strength of Christ's plea in that place; comparing himself in verse 1, where he saith, "I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman;" but the main thing, to be observed, is this; "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Out of which passage, I shall observe briefly these particulars; wherein, I hope, it will be clear, and plain unto you, that it is impossible that a person should believe, till Christ hath united himself to him. I know, beloved, there is none, or at least, I cannot meet with any yet, that will deny, but that faith is a fruit of the branch that grows upon the vine; that is, one of the fruits of the Spirit, that are wrought by the Spirit of Christ, in those that are his; as in Gal.5:22, where the apostle reckons up the fruits of the Spirit, and he takes up faith for one. If therefore, believing be a fruit that persons bear, by virtue of union to the vine Christ, then, it must needs follow, they must first be in him, and then believe; for, if persons believe before they are united, and their union be by a faith that they act, then the branch must bear this fruit before it be in the vine, before there be union; and, if faith be that which unites, it is present before the union be made; and so the branch bears fruit before it abides in the vine, contrary to Christ's words; for it is affirmed, that it is faith that makes the union, and therefore cannot be a fruit of it.

Beloved, this I would fain know, is faith the gift of Christ, or no? Is it Christ that works faith in those that believe in him, or no? The apostle, Heb.12:2, saith expressly, that Christ is the author of our faith. Is he the author of faith, and yet is that faith the author of our union unto him? Can a father beget a child, and yet this child beget his own father? Doth Christ beget faith in us by virtue of our being united unto him; and shall this faith beget that union of which it was but a fruit? From whence shall persons that believe, before they are united unto Christ, receive this faith of theirs? They are not yet united unto Christ, and therefore it cannot come from him, for we can have nothing of him but by virtue of union; and then it proceeds not from the Spirit of Christ neither, for we partake of that only by virtue of union with him too; from whence should it come then? If you have it not from him, by virtue of union, it is not from the vine that his person is incorporated into already, because there must be union before there can be communion; all communion with Christ, all participating of anything, proceeds from the union persons first have with him; he is the root, and as the branch is incorporated into the body and root, so sap and influence is communicated and flows out into the branch from the root. But this, you will say, is but a paradoxical expression, and parables prove nothing.

I answer, whereas Christ is pleased to apply the parable, his application of it hath as full a proof in itself, as any scripture whatsoever. Now, in this place, Christ makes exact application of it himself, to the purpose we now speak; "as the branch cannot bring forth fruit, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "I am the vine, ye are the branches, &c." Ye cannot bring forth fruit, except ye abide in the vine; and do you abide in it, when you are not united unto Christ? No man can say that. Can you bring forth fruit before you are in the vine? Can you believe before you are in Christ? Beloved, it is as great an absurdity to say that you can, as to say, a branch can bring forth fruit without a root. So that, beloved, you must hold this for an undeniable truth, you cannot bring forth fruit, except you abide in the vine. I can bring many other passages for the further proof of this thing, but this will suffice. Mistake me not, I do not any way aim at any derogation to believing; but my desire is that it might have its proper office, and not encroach upon the office of Christ himself. It is the Lord himself, of his own mere grace, without respect to anything in men, that makes him give his Son Christ unto persons, that he might be the justification of them. In Isa.42:6, you see expressly, Christ is given as a covenant by the Father, before ever men have eyes to see, or faith to behold Christ. "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." The Lord gives Christ for a covenant to the people, to open the blind eyes. He himself, as the covenant, and as given, must open the blind eyes, or else they shall never be opened. We must not have our eyes opened, and then have Christ given to us; but he is first given, and then our eyes are opened. We must not believe that so we may be in covenant with Christ; but we must first be in covenant with Christ, and then believing must follow as the fruit of it. If we have faith before we be united unto Christ, or our eyes be opened before Christ be given to be the covenant, then he is anticipated; for, whereas he comes of purpose to open the blind eyes, and is given for this very thing; this work is done before he comes; and so his coming, and the end of it, are frustrated and in vain. In brief, suppose that our faith acts towards the discharge of our transgressions; then it must follow, it is not only the righteousness of Christ that pleads, by way of advocate-ship, with the Father for it. If thou comest to the Lord, and plead out that for thyself by virtue of thy faith, which his righteousness alone was appointed to do; and dost not wholly cast thyself upon that, as that which will bear thee out in all thy approaches to God; but join thy faith withal in the manner I have spoken, and say, in thy heart, I believe, and in that plead thy discharge; if you put this into your plea for the discharge of sin, Christ is not your sole advocate, but your faith also concurs with him in this office of advocate-ship, and so you make it your Saviour; what can be more dishonorable and more derogatory unto this glorious office of Christ? For, if we must believe before God will justify us; then the simple and only plea of Christ's righteousness is not all-sufficient for God to pardon, or to discharge sin; for, suppose I have not yet believed, the righteousness of Christ it seems hath not strength enough, till my believing come in, and join with that righteousness; but it is only the righteousness of Christ that pleads out the justification of a person, and not the concurrence of our believing. Our believing, I confess, gives comfortable

testimony, that God hath freely justified persons, in and through the alone righteousness of his Son Christ; it conduces to the declaration and manifestation of that which God for Christ's righteousness sake did; by faith we have evidence of this thing, but it is not our believing that works the thing itself.

Consider affirmatively, what this righteousness of his is, that carries the whole strength of the plea, for the discharge of the people of God from their sins which they have committed; I say, it is his righteousness, and his alone. Now, this righteousness is to be considered in the quality, quantity, and nature of it. Concerning the quality and quantity of it in brief; that righteousness that hath the strength of plea, for the discharge of the sins of God's own people, both for quantity and quality, must be so powerful, large and spacious, that it may serve to cover the whole nakedness of the person whom it doth concern. This righteousness of his has so much spaciousness in it that it will serve to cover all; as large as the want is, so far it can cover. See how the Lord taxes the church of Laodicea, Rev.3:17,18, "because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" well, notwithstanding her high conceit of herself, that she was rich, yet she was poor, and naked, and lacked all things; and my counsel is, saith he, that thou buy "of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Here Christ puts the church upon the way, by which she may be secured from that, he charges her with poverty, wretchedness, blindness, and nakedness; the course he puts her upon is to receive of him gold and white raiment; it is white, there is the excellent purity of it; and so large and spacious, that if she should be covered therewith, not a jot of the shame of her nakedness shall appear. In, Rev.19:8. you may see, that this white raiment is nothing but the righteousness of the saints, "and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints;" not the righteousness acted by the saints, but the righteousness of Christ, imputed to them, and that is the pure, clean, and white linen. So in, Ezek.16:8, we find this righteousness expressed, by a skirt spread over a person to cover the shame of his nakedness. "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." The sum is that the righteousness of Christ is such, that there is a complete fulness in it to serve for every purpose, to extend itself to the utmost of every transgression; there is not so large a spreading of sinfulness, but this righteousness spreads itself perfectly over all, that none of it appears. But all the difficulty still lies in what righteousness this is of Christ, that is expressed to be so full, large, and pure? For answer, there are two distinct natures in Christ; he is perfect God, and complete man; and answerably, there are two distinct righteousnesses in Christ; there is the essential righteousness of Christ, inseparable to his Godhead; and there is also the righteousness of his humanity. Now, though it be true, that in respect of the ineffable union of these two natures, both are inseparable to the Person of Christ; yet it is as true, there is no more confounding of them, than there is of the natures in the person; but we must consider as distinctly the one as the other.

Now the question lieth mainly in this, which of them it is, which pleads the discharge of a sinner, whether the righteousness of God, simply as God, or the righteousness of the human nature? I answer, it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ; God simply considered, nor the human nature is Christ; but it is God and man, ineffably united in one, that makes up Christ. Accordingly, I say, as Christ consists of God and man jointly, so the righteousness that becomes the righteousness of Christ's people, is the righteousness of both united, and not of each severally. The simple righteousness of the humanity of Christ alone, is too short and narrow to cover all the filth of all the sins of all the members of Christ; the simple essential righteousness of the Godhead alone, is not communicable to the persons of men; but, it is a righteousness of God-man that carries the strength of plea for the discharge of a sinner, and something from both natures must necessarily concur to the discharge of sin.

Note that the righteousness of the human nature of Christ consists of two things; active and passive obedience; in doing the will of God commanded, and in suffering the will of God imposed upon him; this, I say, is the righteousness of his human nature. God, as he is simply considered, is not capable of either of these righteousnesses; he is not capable of obedience, because there is no

supreme above him, to whom he should yield it, nor of passion, as he is not subject to suffer. Therefore this obedience and suffering are properly the actions and passions of the human nature; yet both concur necessarily toward the discharge of a believer from sin; Christ's active obedience in doing, and his passive obedience in suffering, the will of God.

Compare these things together, as they stand in Romans 5:18,19, and you will perceive, that the obedience, the doing of the will of God, is one branch of righteousness requisite in Christ towards the discharge of persons from their sins. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Here is a comparison, or rather an opposition, set between Adam's offence, and Christ's righteousness; as the one brought judgment, so the other brings justification and life to men; yea, but what is that righteousness, that is there spoken of, you say? The apostle tells you plainly, "for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Observe it well, we are made righteous; how? By the obedience of one; that one is Christ. Well, but what is this obedience? It is an obedience set up in opposition to Adam's disobedience. What was Adam's disobedience? It was the breach of the law. What must Christ's obedience be then, but the fulfilling of the law? So it must be certainly be true, it is directly against the gospel of Christ, to exclude the active obedience of Christ, from power and share to plead out the cause of those that believe; I say, the active obedience of Christ comes in to make the plea for this discharge; and, as the active, so likewise the passive obedience of Christ; the scripture is more full in this, than in the other, because it is the complement of all, the last thing Christ went through for the discharge of the sins of his people, you shall see there is no fruit that illustrates the discharge of a person from sin; hence it is appropriated unto Christ's sufferings. If you speak of reconciliation, which consists of God's acceptance of persons, and his agreeing with them in the death of all controversy, between him and them; for that is reconciliation, when persons, that were at variance, are now made friends, and all things that were objected between them are answered, and no more for one to say against another; I say, if you speak of this reconciliation to God, it is appropriated to the blood of Christ. As, Romans 5:10, "for if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." So that reconciliation is attributed unto the death of Christ; as that was the last act of the Son of God for man. Again, "you, who were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." {Eph.2:13} Here you see the same thing in substance, given unto the blood of Christ, though in other words. Men that were afar off, that God was at controversy with, who were at great distance from him, by the blood of Christ are made nigh again. So likewise, the satisfaction that God takes for the discharge of sin which he hath acknowledged is said to be the travail of the soul of Christ. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." The apostle speaks in general, in his epistle to the Hebrews; without blood there is no remission of sins; Christ entered with his blood once, into the holy of holies; and thereby he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Infinite it were to quote scripture for the illustration of this, that to the sufferings of Christ, which are indeed all summed up in the shedding of his blood, because that was the last, and chief of all blessings are attributed, as reconciliation, adoption, &c.

Again, beloved, though it be most true, that the active and passive obedience of Christ's human nature must concur, to make up a righteousness, yet these together, are not enough, there must be something more. That is strange, will some say; what can there be more required, than the active and passive obedience of Christ, to make up the righteousness of a person? Is not that sufficient? Let me tell you, beloved, what the Holy Ghost speaks of the righteousness whereby we come to be righteous and discharged from sin; he speaks in a higher strain than to appropriate it to the active and passive obedience of Christ's human nature only. In Romans 10:3, when the apostle taxeth the Jews for going about to establish their own righteousness, he taxeth them also with this, that "they did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God." In II Cor.5:21, we read that Christ "was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." I say therefore, beloved, that the righteousness, by which we attain to our discharge from sin, and the pleading out that, is the righteousness of God. The righteousness that gives the full discharge to persons from sin,

must have something that is proper to God himself, added to the human righteousness of Christ, as giving dignity to it; I say, something proper to God, that must concur with the active and passive obedience of Christ, to make up a complete righteousness for the discharge of a sinner. It is a known rule, nothing can give more than it hath itself; the active and passive human obedience of Christ can give no more than it hath in itself. Now, man considered as a sinner, hath need of more than barely the human active and passive obedience of Christ, to make him righteous; the sin that man commits, hath its extent according to the dignity of the person against whom it is committed. You know, beloved, that crimes against magistrates have a deeper tincture in them than ordinary ones; the self-same offence committed against a prince, and against an inferior person, hath its additions of extent and heinousness, according to the person of the prince offended. Now, sin is committed against an infinite majesty, an infinite God, and so hath a more deepness of tincture and filthiness, in proportion to the injury done to such majesty; in that respect, sin indeed becomes an infinite crime; for, still according to the injury done, in respect of the person injured, so is the offence. You know the difference in slanders; for slander a poor man, and, it may be, the action will not bear above ten pounds for it; but slander a rich merchant, whose credit goes far, there men lay an action of a thousand pounds for the slander of such a man, in regard of his degree; he being greater, and his credit of greater value, the offence in taking away his credit is so much the more heinous. Now, by how much God is greater than man, by so much is the heinousness of transgression committed against God, beyond all other transgressions whatsoever. Now beloved, that righteousness that must save a person harmless must have an extent in it that may reach as far as the transgression. Take into your consideration the transgression committed against Divine majesty; take the active and passive obedience of Christ, as it is acted by his human nature only, it is but a created finite thing; it cannot extend to such a height, as to answer in proportion to the offence of the Divine majesty. Beloved, let it not seem strange, that the very Godhead itself must confer something of its own, to the active and passive righteousness of Christ, to make it complete. The Divine nature gives value and virtue to the obedience and sufferings of the human nature; it adds so much, as to raise up that created obedience to an infinite value and height of worth. All that I contend for, is but this very thing; namely, that the divine nature must give worth, and that simply the active and passive obedience of the human nature of Christ is not sufficient of itself, without something of God's own being communicated into it, to discharge a believer from an infinite fault or guilt.

But, what is it that God communicates, {more than this, that he gives value to the human righteousness,} and how he communicates it, is a secret we know not; but this we are sure of, that we are made the righteousness of God in Christ; and that righteousness of God, is the righteousness by which we come to have our discharge from sin. The apostle tells us, Col.2:9,10, "for in him {speaking of Christ} dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him." The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, and we are complete in that; our completeness consists in, and springs from the fulness of the Godhead in Christ, as from its fountain; there is certainly something in it worth our observation, that the Holy Ghost should take notice of a fulness of the Godhead in Christ, before he speaks of a completeness which we have in him. Surely, it imports, that Christ communicates something that is God's own unto us; and yet this will not import any essential thing that is wrought in our persons; as if Christ did substantially change our natures into God's nature, or his unto ours, which were a gross absurdity. But there is a communication of an infinite value and virtue to the active and passive obedience of Christ; for the righteousness that becomes ours, by which we stand complete with God, must have so much value, as I said, as may stand in proportion to the breach of the law of God. Now, if there be but a righteousness of Christ's human nature, consisting in his active conformity to the law, and suffering for the breach of it, and we to stand in this righteousness, this will not make us complete; for, mark, he that is complete, by the righteousness of Christ, it must serve for every purpose whatsoever; if there should be some defect which that, as it is acted by him in his human nature, doth not make up, we could not be complete by it; although that, even as it is human, is absolutely complete in its kind, and without defect. This righteousness of a man consists in a conformity to the will of God revealed, and that in all relations

whatsoever, and in all actions of those relations. Suppose a magistrate, {besides his common duties he is to perform, as he is a man, or a Christian,} he must perform the duties of his public relation, he must do justice in judgment, and the like. Now, suppose that he should be exact in all the common duties, as he is a Christian, and should still fail in the duties of this public relation, he is not completely righteous, because there is a want of a magistrate's righteousness. Now, what is it that makes this man complete in Christ? It must be the filling up that which is empty in him; there must be that found in Christ's righteousness, that may fill up this defect, or there cannot be completeness in him; so likewise, if a father, or a mother fail in the duties of their relation, they must go to Christ for a righteousness to supply this, and all other defects. Now, where will you find it in Christ? Christ never was a father, nor a mother, he never performed these several offices requisite to these several relations; he never brought up children; never was a magistrate. When a father fails in the duties of his relation, where can he find out a righteousness fit for him to make it up in Christ? Now therefore, the Divine Nature either must add some eminency of worth, that must serve in the stead thereof, unto that, which his active and passive obedience, as human, did not particularly effect; or else there cannot be a complete righteousness given by Christ unto him; and therefore, whereas it is objected against the active obedience of Christ; forasmuch, as it doth not serve for us, in regard, it is not every way answerable unto the unrighteousness done by man, therefore there must come a righteousness of faith instead of that. I say, the remedy is worse than the disease, and my ground is this; if Christ's active obedience, through non-performance of some particulars required of us, be not a complete righteousness for every circumstance required; much less faith, wherein, as acted by us, there is both omission of good and commission of evil, which simply is sin; whereas the active obedience of Christ could not be charged with the least sin in any kind; I say, much less can faith fill up this emptiness, being itself sinful; seeing the active obedience of Christ, being free from the least spot of sin, only through non-performance of these several duties of these several relations, and being but a created righteousness, could not fill it up; and therefore, I collect from hence, rather that a supply here, from the dignity of the Godhead, which could not be in the active and passive obedience of Christ; and this shall be in the stead of every particular circumstance, which ought to have been in the perfect accomplishment thereof. So that though we fail in our relations, as of fathers, mothers, and magistrates, and the active obedience of Christ hath not these particulars in it; yet, this is supplied by the eminency of worth of the Person, being God himself; and it cannot possibly be any otherwise supplied, but by the giving such infinite value and virtue to that which Christ did; that though he did not every particular circumstance which is wanting in us, yet notwithstanding, it amounts in value to all particulars which we should have done.

Now, it remaineth that we should only consider wherein the strength of the plea of that righteousness consists; we have considered what that righteousness is; namely, the active and passive obedience of Christ, made of infinite value, by a supply of worth from the dignity of the person superadded thereunto; we should now, I say, have considered wherein the strength of the plea of that righteousness doth consist.

There are but two ways by which persons may be acquitted in judgment, being charged with any crime; either by pleading and proving not guilty, or by pleading and proving full satisfaction made, though there be guilt; either of these are enough to plead out a full discharge.

As for the first way of plea, Christ manages it not, that is, he doth not plead non factum; {it is not my deed;} Christ acknowledges this and that person did commit such and such transgression. It is true, this he doth not deny; but the strength of the plea of Christ consists in the latter, that though the fact be done, yet he, by virtue of this righteousness, pleads out a satisfaction, and by virtue of that, pleads out a full discharge for those that are his members.