

Wilson Thompson

In Defense of a Legal Relationship as the Foundation of Justification and Imputation

We live in an age of apostasy, and are surrounded by circumstances, factions, and speculations, which must call into exercise all the latent powers of the soul of every one who wishes to defend the Truth, expose error, and feed the flock of Christ with a sound knowledge of divine things. In my examination of all the parties which now distract the religious world, {yes, the religious world, for the world has its own natural religion,} they all have one great point of agreement, on which they are all united; and that is, that Christ died in some sense for all of Adam's race indiscriminately; or, in other words, that the atonement made by Christ was equally for all men, if they will only embrace it on proffered or conditional terms. Now, my brother, you know that the Scriptures never taught, and the true church of Christ never believed this theory. Therefore there is, after all the long catalogue of sects and parties that so distract the world of the ungodly and persecute the church, but one great cardinal principle with them all, and that is redemption for all men. All natural men build upon this in one way or another, and only differ as they reason and infer differently from the same position. The Scriptures contain the word of the Truth of the Gospel, or the word of faith which we preach. This every child that is born of God believes, and is therefore a "believer." I find but two general classes of people in the Scriptures: the believer is one; call these the saints, the brethren, or whatever they are called, yet these are the believers. On the other hand, call them sinners, the world, anti-Christ, or whatever they may be called, these are unbelievers; that is, they are infidels. The whole community therefore makes no more than the believer and the infidel. Whatever may be our zeal, our profession, our morality, the outward show or inward excitement of religious fervor and apparent benevolence, and display of piety and knowledge, still if we are not the believer we are the infidel; there is no medium or middle state betwixt the two. There is but one God or Mammon to be served and worshiped; there is but Christ or Belial to trust in. There is but he that believeth, and the infidel. All men love and cleave to one or the other of these, and hate and despise the other. They cannot approve and serve both at the same time. I hold that it is self-evident that on all points of reveal truth, the divine testimony never conflicts with itself; therefore in all cases where any point of revealed Truth is fully and fairly established by Scripture, there can be no other part of Scripture, when rightly understood and applied, that will contradict it. To admit such a confliction in the Scriptures, is to establish infidelity; for if the Scriptures contradict themselves, and establish conflicting points then their harmony is destroyed, their Truth impugned, and infidelity established. On any point, therefore, where I have one text, correctly understood and applied to prove it, I have all the texts in the sacred volume to corroborate and sustain it. But if I have not all to sustain my position, but find some to contradict it, I must re-examine my first position; for I must have all the Scriptures or I have none. The church of Christ, as taught by Christ and His prophets and apostles and by the Spirit of Truth, have uniformly believed and defended the doctrine of special atonement, and the redemption and eternal salvation of all God's children, and of them only. On this point their faith has been constantly assailed by all the multiform host of infidels belonging to the religious world. My position in the examination of

this issue is this: Without a legal relation, oneness or union, there can be no legal imputation either of sin or of righteousness. Without such an imputation there can be no legal redemption, and without such legal redemption there can be no legal justification, and without such a justification there can be no eternal salvation from sin and from the curse of the law. To these points let us very briefly attend, and show, as we pass, the entire universal atonement system, and all the arguments relied on to sustain it, have a natural tendency to establish infidelity, and therefore cannot be of God. 1. Without a legal relationship, oneness or union, such as constitutes Christ and His people one in law, there can be no justice in the imputation of our sins to Him; or His righteousness to us. But such a relation and union does exist. Christ is the Husband of the church and she is His bride, or married wife. He has betrothed her to Himself as a chaste virgin from eternity. As all legal contracts of the lawful wife are legally imputed to her husband and He is held, legally bound to cancel them, and His receipt of payment is her indemnity from all such debts. This imputation is legal by virtue of the legal union or oneness of the conjugal relation, but in the absence of such relation as constituted them one in law, such an imputation is tyrannical, oppressive, unjust, and a violation of all law, human or divine; therefore no debts but those of the lawful bride of Christ can be legally imputed to Him, and it follows, of course, that no sins but those of the bride, can be, in law, or justice charged to Christ. Hence, a universal atonement, or to deny the real existence of such a union, is to accuse God of injustice, violate the death of Christ and make it of none effect, and therefore has a natural tendency to infidelity. Nor will a purposed or prospective union or oneness make it any better. It is not because a marriage is foreknown or purposed by one or both the parties that the imputation is legal and just, but because such a oneness is lawfully consummated previously to the imputation, and before any demand can be legally made on the man to pay the woman's debts. So also with the Shepherd and His flock; none but the lawful owner of the sheep can be legally held bound to atone for their trespasses; nor can his purpose to become the owner afterwards, nor his foreknowledge that these sheep will be his own sheep at some future time, make the demand on him just and legal; they must be his sheep, his own sheep by a lawful title, before he can be legally called on to atone for their trespass, for to impute their trespass to him, without the relationship of owner and property, lawfully established, the imputation and demand would be unlawful, unjust, oppressive and dishonorable in man, and it must be highly offensive to so charge the Almighty with injustice and cruelty to His own beloved Son. Hence again we see that the notion of an atonement for one more than Christ's flock is unjust, a violation of law and legal righteousness, and has a natural tendency to establish infidelity. Christ is the Life, the Head, the Surety and the Savior of His body, the church, and, individually, they are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, therefore the imputation of all their penal offences are legally imputed to Him as their proper and legal Head and Life. But to demand and execute the Head and Life of the church for an imputation of capital offences committed by those who never stood in any such relation to Him, as members to their Life and Head, would be an outrage on all law and justice, and strongly tending to establish infidelity. From this hasty glance, a legal oneness appears indispensable to a legal imputation of our sins considered either as debts or contracted, trespass committed, or capital offences involving the Head and Life of the offender, and that a denial of such an eternal union as will make the imputation legal and just, tends directly to charge God with injustice, vaccinates the atonement itself, and establish infidelity inevitably. Therefore it cannot be the doctrine of

Christ. Hence the doctrine of indiscriminate atonement is infidelity disguised. 2. Without a legal relation and imputation there can be no legal redemption: this follows of course, for redemption from under the law, from its penalty and curse, is the legal effect of a law-fulfilling and law-satisfying transaction. The legal oneness of Christ and His bride, His flock, His body and His members, shows, as we have seen, that the imputation of all our offenses was perfectly legal; therefore redemption by His blood, or by means of His death for the redemption of their transgressions that were under the law, {committed under the law,} was a law-fulfilling transaction, by which He has already obtained for us eternal redemption. All being legal and law-fulfilling, in Him we have redemption through His blood. Christ's blood and death could not so redeem us if it were not legal or law-fulfilling, and in the absence of such union as we have been contemplating no such legality appears; but the greatest violation of law and justice. Again, we see that the legitimate tendency of the doctrine of universal atonement, or indiscriminate redemption, is to establish infidelity; it cannot therefore be a Christian doctrine. 3. Without such a legal redemption as we have been contemplating there can be no legal justification. "It is God that justifies," and He justifies freely, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. But if no legal relation existed no legal imputation of our sins to Christ could be made, and of course, the demand on Christ to suffer and endure the penalty was an unjust infringement of law, order, mercy, and true benevolence; and God will never justify an ungodly sinner on account of an act of cruel injustice inflicted on His unoffending and innocent Son. To deny the oneness, or eternal union of Christ and His people, in a legal sense, is to deny the legality or righteousness of the imputation of our sins to Him, and the illegality of His death would follow of course, and redemption by His death would be vitiated, and justification could not be just, nor show justice in the Justifier. Approach this subject without a legal relation existing one must deny the oneness, and infidelity is the unavoidable result of the doctrine of an indefinite or universal atonement. 4. With such a legal justification from sin, and from the curse of the law, eternal salvation is predicated upon a legal righteousness, lawfully imputed to the sinner, which so fully absolves him from all condemnation in the stern eye of the law, his sins being so covered by a full equivalent that no stain can be found upon him. "The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," and so being freely justified from all things, we are saved from wrath through Him. This agrees with the experience of every new born child of God. His comfort and hope of salvation is built upon the obedience of Christ in His behalf; but if the obedience and death of Christ was alike for all Adam's natural race, indiscriminately, no assurance whatever that He died for me can give me one gleam of hope or comfort while I have no evidence that every one of Adam's numerous progeny will be saved; for if one for whom Christ died is finally lost, I may be that one! And if His death has proved ineffectual in one case, it may in all cases, and so all Christian hope and comfort be forever blasted, and infidelity sustained. But we have not so learned Christ, if so be that we have been taught of God. Having thus briefly glanced at a few things under the four general propositions, I shall leave it for you and all the brethren and sisters to improve upon. From my little reading, and what I have been taught by tradition, or otherwise, I find no example of universal atonement being attempted either by the heathen in their offerings to their gods, the Moslems, Jews, or Christians. The old patriarchs offered for themselves and their tribes only, and never for all men! This practice continued from the days of Cain and Abel until the giving of the law and the authorized priesthood. Under that priesthood relation and imputation were fully set forth. The priests was the patriarch, father or head of his tribe, for

whom alone he offered, until the law had organized the twelve tribes into one nation; one tribe was then chosen in the relation of a brother to the other eleven tribes {Levi,} and the law recognized that relation in the priest to all the consolidated tribes, as a type of the Gospel Church under the priesthood of Christ. And here again is the doctrine of legal relationship and imputation of all the sins of all the tribes of Israel to the victim, by the confession of the priest who bear the names of the twelve tribes, and no more, upon his breastplate. All the offerings made by these priests were specific and limited to the twelve tribes of Israel, and to them exclusively. This system of types, God ordained; but if Christ died for all of Adam's race, and without such a legal relation as we have contemplated, then all the types were lost, and perpetual disagreement and paradox exists between the divinely authorized system of types and the offering of Christ that the former cannot be the type of the latter, and such irreconcilable contradiction exist as to forbid the application of the types to their Antitype, and the harmony of the old and new volumes of inspiration would be distorted, and infidelity established as the unavoidable result. Wilson Thompson {Signs of the Times, 1856}

Free Justification, by the Blood and Righteousness of Christ

Justification is one of the most important points of doctrine in the whole system of the Christian theology. It embraces in it the four following considerations: First: The Judge who justifieth. Secondly: The character of those who are justified. Thirdly: The principles upon which the Judge proceeds in justifying. Fourthly: The evidences by which we are brought to know our justification. To these four general propositions I shall call the attention of the reader in the following discourse. First: The Judge who justifieth. "It is God that justifieth." Rom.8:33, 3:30, Isa.50:8,9. In all these places God is spoken of as the Supreme Judge in the court of heaven; deciding on the case of his people, and pronouncing their justification. The word justify, or justification, is a forensic term, and is used in judicial affairs in a court of justice. It does not mean an inward cleansing, but a legal, that is, a just and lawful proceeding of a judge, adjudging one to life. Justification is the opposite of condemnation, and I perfectly agree with Dr. Gill, when he says, "The word justify is never used in a physical sense for producing any real internal change in men, but in a forensic sense, and stands opposed, not to a state of impurity and unholiness, but to a state of condemnation; it is a law term, and used of judicial affairs, transacted in a court of judicature; see Deut.25:1, Prov.17:15, Isa.5:22, Matt.12:37, where justification stands opposed to condemnation; and this is the sense of the word whenever it is used in the doctrine under consideration; so in Job 9:2,3, and 25:4; so by David; Psalms 143:2, and in Paul's epistles, where the doctrine of justification is treated of, respect is had to courts of judicature, and to a judicial process in them; men are represented as sinners, charged with sin, and pronounced guilty before God, and subject to condemnation and death; when, according to this evangelic doctrine, they are justified by the obedience and blood of Christ, cleared of all charges, acquitted and absolved, and freed from condemnation and death, and adjudged to eternal life; see Rom.3:9,19 & 5:16,18,19 & 8:1,33,34, Gal.2:16,17, Tit.3:7." Evangelic justification is not the work of the Spirit of God on the heart of the sinner, implanting life in, and quickening the soul, but the work of God as a judge on a throne of justice, deciding on, and adjudging one to life, according to law and justice. It is not the infusing of righteousness, nor a purging out of the inward evils of the heart, but the pronouncing of one's justification with reference to the charge preferred against him. I wish the reader to

understand distinctly that Justification is an external act of God as a judge, acting in a court of justice, on the case of the sinner, and not the internal work of the Spirit on the heart. Thus God as the supreme judge of heaven and earth, acting upon the principles of justice, according to his most holy law, justifieth "the ungodly;" not because they have been renewed by the Spirit, nor because they have been washed with water by the word, nor because they have repented and believed the gospel, nor because of any other evangelical obedience of theirs, or inward work of the Spirit, but because of the obedience and blood of Christ, as saith the apostle, Rom.8:33,34, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." As God, who is the judge of all the earth will do right, and is just while he justifieth the ungodly, and these ungodly ones are justified as the elect of God, and because of the death of Christ, and so complete, that the apostle could challenge all opposers to lay anything to their charge, and declare, Acts 13:39, that they "are justified from all things." We shall consider, Secondly: The character of those who are justified. We have seen already that they are the ungodly and God's elect; and that God as the judge justifies the elect, so that none can lay anything to their charge, and yet they are called ungodly. The character of God's elect is set forth in scripture in two points of light; 1st, as they are in themselves, and in relation to Adam, their earthly head and progenitor, and 2nd, as they are in the sight of God as his elect, in Christ their spiritual head, in whom they were chosen, and by whom they were represented. In the first of these views they are spoken of as being condemned to death, and every charge may be justly preferred against them that can be brought against any other sinner; but in the last view they are spoken of as being justified and absolved from every charge, and adjudged to life. In the first Adam there is no discrimination of elect and non-elect, but all his natural posterity without exception are considered in a condemned state, under guilt and the sentence of death, by virtue of the offence of the first Adam, who acted for all his then unborn race; but in Christ the second Adam, all his elect seed are considered in a justified state, by virtue of the obedience of Christ, who acted for his unborn elect spiritual seed. These two Adams are spoken of as the only two men who represented mankind; and Paul runs these as parallel in order to show both the condemnation of the world and the justification of the elect; see Romans, the 5th chapter. In relation to Adam, the whole human family is condemned to death, and the sentence is gone forth, "Thou shalt surely die." "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." By this original sin, condemnation unto death came upon all mankind; see Rom.5:13, "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." This offence armed death with power, and commissioned it to reign over the whole posterity of Adam, according to Rom. 5:17, "By one man's offence death reigned by one." So we see from plain scripture language; that by the offence of Adam sin commenced its reign; and reigns unto death, agreeably to Rom. 5:21. We judge of the magnitude of a crime by the penalty which the law under which it is committed annexes to it. Death is the greatest possible penalty; the basest and most aggravated crime can be punished with no greater punishment. We are all exposed to death as the penalty annexed to the offence of Adam; our first earthly head and progenitor; therefore we judge this to be a crime of the greatest atrocity. By this one offence the whole race of Adam have become condemned under the reign of sin, and the sentence of death, and are now naturally and mentally opposite to all good, and inclined to

all evil. All men, therefore, without any distinction of elect or non-elect, as they stand related to Adam in his offence, are children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death, and stand as condemned criminals, under the just sentence of the just law of a holy God, who will by no means clear the guilty. In this state of guilt and condemnation the whole human family lies, indisposed towards God, unreconciled to his law, opposed to his gospel, and disaffected to his government, enslaved to their own discordant passions, they hate the light, and love darkness; and choose the way to death, and under the influence of an infernal infatuation; are rendered inflexible to every power but that which is irresistible. I shall make no distinction here between the moral and physical powers of man, for the physical actions of men are under the dictation and government of the moral disposition; and until the latter be rectified by the Spirit of God, the former will always be averse to real good. In this fallen condemned state where sin has placed us, it is impossible that we should ever be justified by our own good works. If all our powers, both moral and physical, were restored to their best state before the fall, we could never obtain justification by the exercise of them, for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified. We are condemned already, judgment has come upon all men unto condemnation, and when condemnation unto death has past upon an offender, for a crime which he has previously committed, no works which he may afterwards perform will ever clear him from the former sentence of condemnation, which still stands in full force against the criminal. We are already condemned, condemned to death by a just and holy law, for a capital offence, and future acts of obedience will never justify us, be they performed ever so promptly; nay, if our whole nature were renewed, and made as pure as Adam's was before the fall, and we were to live clear of all sin, to the age of Methuselah, we should yet be condemned; for when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants, we have done no more than our duty, and being previously condemned to death, this sentence would still stand against us. Before a law is transgressed, it can only require obedience of those who are under it, but after it is transgressed, and its sentence of condemnation unto death has passed upon the transgressor, nothing less than the penalty will satisfy it. The natural obligations which men were under before the fall to love and serve God, to obey and worship him, &c., are in no sense relaxed by his indisposition to perform them, but men manifest the moral turpitude of their hearts by a habitual course of unreasonable rebellion against God. They love to walk in gaudy show, with impious lips, a deceitful tongue, feet that are swift to shed blood, an inexorable heart, that is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things, and no fear of God before their eyes. This is a faint representation of fallen men; eternity before, hell yawning with hideous and gloomy voracity, to receive him at his arrival, while satanic influence impels the willing captive down the dreadful dreary way that leads to the dark domain of eternal despair and remediless woe. Should angels stand aghast, and weep in tears of blood, should all the cattle of a thousand hills pour forth their blood, should rivers fill their channels with costly oil, and infants yield their lives in sacrifice for sin; all these could never revoke the sentence of the law. Man has sinned, and man must die! If wit and reason fail, angelic sympathy and blood of lambs and bullocks with all the works of men can never weigh one groat in the scale of our justification. I cry, O propitious heaven, is there no gracious volume in thy salubrious clime to grant one ray of hope to fallen man? This is the character of those whom God justifies, when they are considered as they are in their fallen state, and in relation to the first Adam; and in this relation they are condemned, and no work or sacrifice that either we or Adam can perform, will ever remove the curse or

make us just with God. If we are not in a relation to the second Adam, justification is impossible, for we have neither power or merit to justify ourselves, and as I observed above, God's elect have two distinct standings, one in the first Adam, by which they with the rest of the world have fallen under condemnation unto death, and can never be justified by any work or sacrifice in the power of Adam or themselves; and another in Christ the second Adam, in and by whom alone justification is possible to any of the fallen race. This we shall further illustrate, while we consider, Thirdly: The principles upon which the Judge proceeds in justifying. We have showed above, that justification is a law term, and is always used in scripture in a forensic sense, not for an inward cleansing, nor in opposition to a state of defilement, but for the act of a judge in the court of justice, and in opposition to a state of condemnation. The law and justice is the rule by which the judge proceeds, either to condemn, or justify the accused. If the prosecution be brought legally against the offender, and the crime alleged be sufficiently proven, it becomes the duty of the judge to pronounce the sentence of condemnation and death upon the accused, and to appoint the time of execution, but if the proof should go to clear the accused, it becomes the duty of the judge to pronounce the justification of the accused. The law will not allow the judge to clear the guilty, on account of his repentance, reformation, tears, fair promises, or any change that may be effected in the man accused after the commission of an offence. Now considering God as a judge in the court of heaven, man the accused, his guilt proven before the judge by ten thousand witnesses arising from the heart, and demonstrating it to be deceitful and desperately wicked above all things; full of murder, revenge, enmity, hatred, and every evil work; and the law says, "Thou shalt surely die." God will not justify these rebels, unless it can be done in the strict administration of justice; for David says, Psal.9:8, "He shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness." See Gen.18:25, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Exod.34:7, "He will by no means clear the guilty." Deut.7:10, "He will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face." Deut.32:4, "He is the Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." From all these passages and many others, we are taught, that as a judge God will administer strict justice; therefore in relation to the first Adam, and in ourselves considered, we shall never be justified, and if the judge proceeds with us in this relation, we are in a hopeless situation, for in this relation "judgment has come upon all men to condemnation." The scriptures present to us the blood and righteousness of Christ as our only justification; and this righteousness is declared, that God as judge might be just in the justifying of the sinner. See Rom.3:26,27,28. As condemnation has come upon all men, by virtue of their federal relation to the first Adam, so justification can only come upon any of the human race by a federal relation with Christ the second Adam; and so justification is always taught in relation to Christ, and unless we are related to him as our righteousness, we shall never be justified; for that is all the righteousness which the law will ever be satisfied with, and God will never justify a sinner in any other way than in relation to Christ, and that relation must be such that God as a just and equitable judge, in the ministration of justice, can act upon, and the law can recognize, so as to justify the sinner by the righteousness of Christ, as if it were a righteousness which the sinner had of himself. See Rom.5:18,19, "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." The law is satisfied, God justifies and is just in so doing, and none can condemn the soul which is in Jesus Christ; and so Paul says, Rom.8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in

Christ Jesus;" and this being in Christ Jesus, is according to election, as the 33rd verse shows, where the apostle speaks of the same people, to whom there is no condemnation, and asks in a way of defiance, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" In Christ they stand, as the elect of God, in a relation to him as their righteousness. I Cor.1:30, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness;" and so it is said, I Cor.6:11, "Ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus." II Cor.5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." From the above scriptures with many others, it is positively declared, that the elect are in Christ, and being in him by the choice of God, they are made the righteousness of God in him; he is the end of the law for righteousness to them, and so they are justified in his name. Justification is not an act of the creature; nor does it depend on the knowledge of the creature, but it is the act of the judge, and bears date from the time the judge decides on the case. God decided on the case of all his elect before all worlds, and chose them in Christ, and in his decision gave them every spiritual blessing in him, before the foundation of the world; and therefore, their sins were laid on Christ, Isaiah 53:6, and God will not impute their sins to them, and these are they of whom David said, [Psal.32:1,2,] "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." Compare with Rom.4:7,8; II Cor.5:19; John 1:47. God will not impute sin to his elect, because he has laid their iniquities upon Christ, and so they are blessed, for he bears their iniquities, and they are clothed with his righteousness, according to Isaiah 61:10, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with a robe of righteousness." Jeremiah saw into this, and said of Christ, Jer.23:6, "This is the name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Our iniquities being laid on Christ, and not on us, he must bear them, and so it devolved on him "to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." According to Dan.9:21, and Isa.54:17, "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." In agreement with the above texts, we read in Num.23:21, "He [God] hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." Now from the scriptures above cited, with the whole Bible, it is plainly taught that God did lay the iniquities of his people on Christ, and therefore will not impute sin to his people, nor did he ever behold iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel, but has decided as judge in the court of heaven, that their iniquities shall lay upon Christ, and be executed on him, and not on them, and therefore, "by his stripes we are healed," for "he was [according to this decision] delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, according to Rom.4:35. Now I have always thought that when the judge officially decided on the case of any man or number of men, and decided on their justification or condemnation, that the date of such decision is the date of the thing decided on. If so, when the reader will tell me, the date of God's decision on the case of Christ's suffering, and his church's justification thereby; I will set the same date to their justification; for justification is the act of the judge, in thus deciding on their case; and this he did, when he laid our iniquities on Christ, and determined never to impute sin to his people; and therefore Christ was sentenced to death, and regarded [by virtue of this sentence] as a lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and that for the elect, and all this decided on by the judge, and recorded in the record of heaven's court; see Rev.13:8, 17:8, and also Heb.10:7,9, Psalm 40:6,7,8, from which we see that the sentence had gone forth against Christ, and this

sentence was written in God's book or heaven's record, and that record not only contained the sentence against Christ, but the names of those in whose behalf he was sentenced to be slain; and so to them it was the book of life, because justification unto life was therein adjudged or recorded to them, but sacrifice and death was written against Christ, because our sins were adjudged to him, and he sentenced to death for them, and the very hour appointed for his execution, as he says, John 12:23, 17:1, "The hour is come," and the malice of men and devils could not take him any sooner; see John 7:30, 44, "No man laid hands on him, for his hour was not yet come;" but when the appointed hour for him to suffer was come, he says, John 12:27, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify thy name." This was the hour which God had set for the execution of Christ when he was sentenced to death for the iniquities of his people, which God had laid upon him, and therefore would not impute sin to them, nor behold iniquity or perverseness in them, but recorded their names in the book of life, and that from the foundation of the world. And so Paul says, Rom.8:1, "There is therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus;" for his righteousness is declared [see Rom.3:26] that God might be just in the justification of the sinner, therefore, Paul believed that justification had come upon all God's elect in the past tense, as he says, Rom.5:18,19, and so he speaks chap.3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." Now if justification be a forensic term, and if it is used in a judicial sense, and is to be understood of the act of a judge adjudging one to life, and God be understood as the judge, then ever since he adjudged the elect to life, by virtue of their sins being laid on Christ, and not imputed to them, they have been justified; for the judge has acted and decided on their case, and placed their names in the book of life. The apostle breaks forth into an ecstasy in viewing this exhilarating truth, and says, Eph.1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [or things] in Christ." Justification is a spiritual blessing, and if we were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, we were blessed with this among other blessings, and these blessings were not in consequence of our faith and repentance, but according to election before all worlds, as the next verse says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world;" and the consequent effect of these blessings being according to this early choice is, "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;" and if our being holy and without blame before God, is according, not to our faith, but to our election before the foundation of the world; so our justification must be; for if I be holy and without blame before God the judge, I am in a justified state, because holy and without blame before him in love. The love of God, or his grace, which chose his people in Christ before the world, and blessed them with all spiritual blessings, gave them such a relation to him, and standing in him, that when God views them in Christ, according to this choice and these blessings, they are holy and without blame before him, and so they are "justified freely by his grace." God viewed them without blame before him, [verse 5,] "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." According to the good pleasure of his will, he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and according to the same good pleasure of his will he laid our iniquities on Christ, and consequently will not impute sin to his people, but gives them all spiritual blessings, and having laid their iniquities on Christ, he has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel; but they are holy and without blame before

him in his love. Now as all this is in Christ in whom they were chosen, blessed with all spiritual blessings, and regarded as being holy and without blame, so it is in him that God views them when he pronounces their justification; and as God had chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, and gave them all spiritual blessings in him according to that choice, so that in him considered they were holy, and without blame before God; and all this was in Christ, and before they had any knowledge of it, or sensible participation in it, they were secured to the sensible enjoyment of it by the grace of predestination, or the preordination of God, and all this was by Jesus Christ; see verses 5, 6, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Here in the grace of election we are chosen in Christ, and accordingly blessed with all spiritual blessings, [and justification is one] and to secure us to the sensible enjoyment of these blessings, God has predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, and according to this glorious grace, and in it he hath made us accepted in the beloved; that is, in the electing and predestinating grace of God, we are accepted in Christ, and in him considered, we are holy and without blame before God in love, and all this to the praise of the glory of his electing and predestinating grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. God the judge views us holy and without blame before him, on account of our iniquities being laid on Christ and not on us, and so we being in him by election, we are blessed with eternal redemption, and our sins being laid on him, they are forgiven to us, or not imputed to us; see verse 2, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." O what rich grace this is, all spiritual blessings are made ours by it, and in it God hath abounded in all spiritual blessings to his chosen people; see verse 8, "Wherein he hath abounded toward us, in all wisdom and prudence." Every revelation of grace made to us is only a blessed consequence of this rich electing and predestinating grace, according to verses 9,10,11,12. "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him; in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ." Some of my brethren understand all this to be only a decree to justify, that is, they think God has determined that he will at some future time, justify the elect, but that they are always condemned until they are renewed by the Spirit, and brought to act faith on Christ, and then by their faith, as an act of reliance on him, the judge acts in their justification, and justifies them because they have believed in Christ. This is what I oppose, for if God proceeds to justify the sinner because he believes in Christ, it is faith as an acts of ours, and not the blood and righteousness of Christ which is the cause of our justification; but the scripture everywhere teaches us, that as a judge God justifies us, because Christ died for us, or because our sins were laid on him, and not because we believed it. Faith is an evidence of justification, and not the cause of it. If a judge should determine or decree beforehand to justify any man who should be brought before him, would not this predetermination disqualify such a judge to act on such a case? But if justification be an eminent act of God, passing upon the whole body of the elect in Christ, and by virtue of this act the sentence of death was passed upon Christ, and he regarded as slain for us, so we

being made accepted in the beloved, are looked at by the judge as being holy and without blame before him. The pardon of sin is very different from justification; the former is forgiving the guilty but the latter is declaring one guiltless according to law. {*Pardon of sin respects us as sinners in our fallen state, and was obtained for us by Christ before he rose from the dead; we are sinners, and forgiveness or non-imputation views us such, and to us as guilty in ourselves, and self-condemned, the grace of pardon or non-imputation is revealed to us by the Spirit, when we are brought to experience an application of the blood of Christ. Justification passes upon the elect by virtue of their sins being laid on Christ, and not on them; and so they are justified as if they were innocent, and had never sinned; but pardon is a grace bestowed on them as sinners in themselves, and God freely forgives them through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. We are justified because we are holy and without blame before God; but as sinners before God we are pardoned and forgiven, through the interposition of Christ, and so while we rejoice that God will not impute sin to us, yet we are humbled under the sense of our being great sinners, to whom much is forgiven.} We can only be justified by the judge; because we are without blame before him; and we can only appear without blame before him in the beloved; in whom we were chosen before the foundation of the world; and being thus chosen in him, our case was decided on, and our names were written in the book of life, according to Rev.17:8, "The beast that thou sawest, was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder [whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world] when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." These names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, and therefore they were justified to life or else their names would not have been written in the book of life; and he who wrote their names in the book, did it because Christ was sentenced to death for them, in agreement with Rev.13:8, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast] whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Here the book of life, in which the names of God's people were written from the foundation of the world, is called the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; from which we are taught, that our names were written in the book of life, at the same time that God decided on our case, and sentenced Christ to death, and us to life by him; and so our names were written in the book of life, and he was condemned to the slaughter at the same time, according to Psalm 40:7, "Then said I, lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me." The speaker in this text is Christ, according to Heb.10:7,8,9,10, where the same words are expressed and explained. Both David and Paul speak of God's book, where the offering of the body of Christ was written, and as both of these writers refer to such a book, and the book of life being the book of the Lamb slain, in which his death was recorded; David and Paul no doubt referred to this book when they quote the words of the above texts from the book where these things were written of him. Nor were the names of the believers alone, all that were written in this book of life, but all the mystical body of Christ, whether born or unborn, were written in this book from the foundation of the world; see Psa.139:16, "Thine eyes did see my substance, [or body] yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." And these whose names were written in the book of life, are they who shall finally be saved, according to Rev.20:12,13,14,15, "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." Now from all the above scriptures, the following facts are deducible

and unquestionable. 1st. We [the elect] were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. 2nd. God made them accepted in the beloved, and gave them all spiritual blessings in him [justification among the rest] according to his choice. 3rd. Those who were thus chosen in Christ were his sheep, and when they went astray, their iniquities were laid on him, and not on them, and God as the supreme judge pronounced the sentence of death on him, and recorded it in his book, and adjudged them to life, and recorded their names in the book of life from the foundation of the world. 4th. The judge having thus decided the case, and all the sins of his elect being laid on Christ, he will never impute sin to the elect, nor behold iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel, but they stand holy and without blame before him. 5th. In consequence of this irrevocable decision, the hour is set for Christ to be executed; and the elect are predestinated to life. 6th. As our sins were laid on Christ and not on us, so he was executed for them, and not us; and so we are justified by his blood from all things. Hitherto I have been speaking of justification as an official act of God as judge; sitting on the case of his elect, and deciding on their justification, and the death of Christ in their stead, and as I have fully proved from the positive declarations of scripture, that God did lay their iniquities on Christ, and declared them to be holy and without blame before him in love, and so their names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, and he adjudged to the slaughter from the same time, and the hour set for his execution, according to the determined counsel [or decision] and foreknowledge of God. It only now remains for me to show the justice of God as a judge in thus deciding the case, since Christ was innocent, and we were guilty; and yet he was condemned and we justified in the decision of the judge. Election gave us a standing in Christ, and a relation to him which will fully justify all the ways of God to man; and we have above proved from scripture, that God did choose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, and of course they were in relation to him, ever since they were chosen in him; and he is their head, and they are his members, and this doctrine is taught in the following manner: Rom.12:4,5, "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." I Cor.10:17, "For we, being many, are one bread, and one body." I Cor.12:20, "But now are they many members, yet but one body." Verse 12, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." Eph.1:22, 23, "Who gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." These many members that make but one body, are the members spoken of in the 139th Psalm, 16th verse; and these many members make the church or mystical body of Christ, and these are they whose iniquities were laid on Christ, and for whom he was slain, by which they were redeemed or purchased; see I Cor.6:19,20, "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Chap.7:23. "Ye are bought with a price." Gal.1:4. "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God, and our Father." See chap.2:20, Eph.5, from verse 22 to the close. Rom.6:7-11, all of which prove beyond a doubt the existence of an union between Christ and his church. This union or relation existed before we believe, nay before Christ died, for he loved the church, and gave himself for it, Eph.5:25,26,27; not that he might have it, but that he might present it a glorious church. Now as the law will justify a judge in passing the sentence on the head, for the offence of the members of the body, so Christ the head of the church was sentenced for the offence of his offending

members, and in this the justice of God appears in laying our sins on Christ. This union or relation is illustrated in scripture by the union subsisting between the husband and wife. The church is called the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev.21:9, chap.19:7, and Christ is often called [in relation to his church] a bridegroom; and the apostle treats the subject in the following manner. I Cor.11:3, "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman, is the man; and the head of Christ is God." Eph.5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife; even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body." "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh; this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and his church." Now the union between the husband and wife is such, that the husband must satisfy the debts contracted by the wife; for the law demands it of him by virtue of the relation above demonstrated; so Christ must pay the contract of the church, which is his wife, and so God is just in laying her iniquities to him, and not to her, for he is her living husband. This relation is illustrated by the prophet, and by Christ himself, by the figure of the shepherd and the sheep, which are in a relation to each other, so that the shepherd, if he be the owner of the sheep, must be accountable for any damage done by the sheep. Christ shows that he is not only the shepherd but the real owner of the sheep, John 10:11,14,15; and many of his sheep were then in unbelief, see verse 16; and he will pay for all their trespasses, even if it costs him his life. This is what the prophet says, Isa.53:6, "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." The sheep is the property of the shepherd, and he must in law answer for them. If I be the proper owner of a flock of sheep, and they should unlawfully break in and kill your orchard, would you bring suit against the sheep, and bring them as transgressors into court; or would you not rather bring suit against me, as the shepherd and owner of the offending sheep; and I must pay the damage, be it great or small; so Christ being the shepherd and owner of the sheep, is proceeded against in a legal way, and the Lord as a judge, lays the iniquity of the sheep to the shepherd, and assesses the damage to be the death of the shepherd; and so the sword must slumber, until the shepherd comes to the hour set for his execution, and then awake and smite the shepherd, who had been sentenced for the sheep, according to Zech.13:7, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones." So Christ says, "I lay down my life for the sheep." As he was prosecuted and executed as the shepherd of his sheep, and suffered for and under the iniquities of his sheep, so he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers, is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Isa.53:7. As Christ was the shepherd, so the sheep were God's elect people; see verse 8, "For the transgressions of my people was he stricken," or was the stroke upon him. Various are the figures employed in the scriptures to illustrate this gracious union; such as the vine and branches, a king and subjects, &c. Time would fail me to enter largely into this glorious grace, but from the scriptures already adduced on the relation between Christ and his people, the bond of which is love, this one point is established, that Christ and his church are in such a relation as to show how God is just in laying their iniquities to him, and justifying them by virtue of his blood. We have hitherto showed that the elect of God and church of Christ have two distinct standings, one in Adam, and one in Christ; that in Adam they are condemned to death, and so must remain; but in Christ they are holy and without blame before God. And so Adam

was a figure of him that was to come; and these are the two heads. Condemnation came by the first, and justification came by the second. We feel under condemnation by the offence of the first, but we enjoy justification by the obedience of the second. The fifth chapter of Romans shows these two Adams acting for their respective seeds, with these different effects, on their seeds; by the one came condemnation unto death, on all his seed, but by the other came justification unto life and all his seed, &c. Now as we have showed the principles upon which God as a judge proceeded to pass the sentence of death on Christ, and acquit the church, and so he must die and they must live thereby; so he came to the very hour appointed, and suffered and died for our sins; according to the scriptures he bare our sins in his own body on the tree; according to the sentence of the judge, he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. As I have proved above, by positive scripture, that God will not impute sin to his people, having laid them on Christ, and that he is consequently regarded in the decision of God as a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and their names written from the same period in the book of life. So when he was actually slain they were actually justified, for by the obedience of one man the free gift has come upon all men [that is, the elect of all nations] unto justification of life. Just in the very same sense that the church was chosen in Christ before the world was, they were viewed in him without blame, and as his elect, he will behold no spot in them; this I sometimes call a virtual justification, and the enemies of the doctrine call it eternal justification, and then commence a war with the name, and make a wonderful ado about the name. Well the truth will have its enemies, and they may give it all the hard names they please. I will not pretend to justify the term, eternal justification, but the doctrine which is generally buffeted under that name I esteem as a most precious truth, big with comfort to my poor soul, which I think could never be saved without it. As God had decided on the justification of the elect by the death of Christ, so our justification is often ascribed to his blood; it is said Rom.3:24, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." So we see that we are justified by the grace of God as a judge, and that grace flows to us through the redemption that is in Christ; that is, when God freely adjudged us to life, and wrote our names in the book of life, he acted on the case, viewing us in relation to Christ, and through the redemption that is in him, he is just in the decision of our justification; as it is said, verse 26, "To declare I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;" that is to say, the righteousness of Christ, or his standing related to his church, as the end of the law for righteousness to her, God is just as a judge in justifying the church by the satisfaction made, or rendered to it by her head and husband. Now we plainly see, that the sentence of death due to our offences, was executed on Christ according to God's determined purpose, and we are consequently justified thereby, in a way of justice. Christ bare the sins of many, and when he died for us, and suffered for our sins as a public head, acting and dying as the representative of many, his death is regarded as the death of all for whom he died, and this is what we read, II Cor.5:14,15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." As our sins were laid on Christ and we were in him by election, so he came to die in our stead, and when he died for us, it was the same in the eye of the law as if all his members had then died, and so Paul said, Gal.2:20, "I am crucified with Christ;" and Rom.6:8, "Now if we be dead with Christ," &c., chap.7:4, "Ye are become dead to the law

by the body of Christ." From all of which it is plain that when Christ died for us, we were regarded as dead, or his death was looked upon as if it were the death of all he represented; for he died, not as a private individual; but as the public head and representative of all his members, and so when he, though but one; died for them all; the love of Christ constrains us to judge that they were all dead by him. So when he rose from the dead he rose for our justification, and as he died in relation to the elect, so he rose in relation to them, and so it is said of him. Rom.4:25, "Who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." We being thus interested in his resurrection as our representative, we are spoken of as rising with him; see Isa.26:19, "Thy dead men shall live together with my dead body shall they arise." Hos.6:2, "After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." The sentence of God had gone forth against Christ, as in Isa.53:11, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities," and according to this sentence it devolved on Christ to make an end of sin, according to Dan.9:24, and so there was a must needs be, for Christ to suffer and rise again; in proof of this, see Acts 17:2,3, "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead." Luke 24:26,46, from which it appears plain, that Christ was under the strongest obligation to die for his church; yet he suffered freely and willingly; he was under obligation as the sentence of death had passed upon him, as the head, husband, and shepherd of his people, but he willingly and voluntarily stood in this relation, and so while he loved the church and freely gave himself for it, the law demanded his life, and he must suffer. So while his willingness to suffer for us, shows his grace and love to us, it is the obligation he is under to suffer that shows the justice of his suffering; and so both grace and justice shines with equal lustre in our free justification; and so we are justified by grace as a free gift, for it is said, Rom.5:16, "The free gift is of many offences unto justification;" yet though justification is a free gift, it comes to us through and by the blood of Christ, which he shed to satisfy the sentence of the law, which was justly executed on him, as the head of the church; see verse 9. Now I have said above, that when Christ actually suffered for our sins, we were actually justified, and this is true, according to Rom.5:18, "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." The sentence of condemnation and death actually came upon all Adam's unborn seed, when he offended, and so they are heirs to corruption, condemnation and death, and as they are born by a natural birth, they begin to feel the weight of this sentence, and mortality. So when Christ the second Adam, fulfilled the law, put away our sins, finished transgression, and brought in everlasting righteousness, all his unborn spiritual seed were actually justified, because the sentence of God was actually executed on him in our stead, and all our sins were put away by the sacrifice of himself; and the law was satisfied to the full; and so he was raised for our justification, and we were justified by his blood; so justification is not a consequence of faith, as an act of the creature, but a consequence of the death of Christ, or in other words, justification is the decision of a judge, adjudging one to life. God adjudged us to life, because all our sins were imputed to Christ, and on this account he never did view iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel, and will not impute sin to his elect, but all their iniquities being laid on Christ, the sentence of death due to their offences was executed upon him, and the justification due to his righteousness was given to them; and now the gospel reveals this righteousness to

faith, and faith is an evidence to the soul, of his free justification. This brings me to speak, Fourthly: Of the evidences by which we are brought to know our justification. The prisoner in the dungeon can only know that he is justified by the judge in court by some messenger, who may be sent to him, with the tidings of it; and however long he may disbelieve the message, it cannot make it untrue, because the fact does not depend for its truth upon the prisoner's faith, but is a truth before he believes it, as certainly as afterwards, and his faith adds nothing to the truth of the fact, but only to his comfort in the enjoyment of a knowledge of the fact. So Justification is a fact before faith, and faith adds nothing to it, but only believes the fact as it is declared to it in the gospel. Rom.1:17, "For therein [in the gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." This righteousness is our justification, faith is the eye to which it is revealed, and the gospel brings it to view; thus the gospel is called the word of faith, Rom.10:8; and faith cometh by hearing this word; see verse 17, "So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The gospel is sent to men as sinners, lying in the ruins of the first Adam, lost and condemned under the sentence of death; and proclaims and reveals the righteousness of Christ, as the justification of the ungodly; but no eye but that of faith can see it, and on this account many are ignorant of the righteousness of God, and are going about to establish their own righteousness, and because faith is the eye to which this righteousness is revealed, it is called the righteousness of faith, Rom.10:6, and this righteousness is manifested, and the law and prophets attest it to be faultless; and warrants the faith of the sinner to trust in it. Rom.3:31,22, "Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference." This righteousness is of God, and we see it by faith, according to Phil.3:9, where Paul desires above all things, "to be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Now this righteousness alone is our justification; and it is revealed or manifested to faith, well proved by the law and the prophets; therefore faith may safely venture on it. A word on faith; faith is a fruit of the Spirit, Gal.5:22, and so the spirit is called the spirit of faith, because we have no true faith, without it; see II Cor.4:13, "We having the same spirit of faith," &c. This faith is peculiar to God's elect, Tit.1:1, because the gospel by which faith cometh and which is the word of faith, and which reveals the righteousness of God to faith, comes with power and the spirit, only to the elect, although the word be preached to all. See I Thes.1:4,5, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God; for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Christ taught the same where he said, "Ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep, as I said unto you, my sheep hear my voice," &c. The faith of God's elect has Christ and his righteousness for its object, and so its object is our justifying righteousness, and so faith as to its object, is our justification; for in this sense Christ is called faith, see Gal.3:23,25, and so faith is declared to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, Heb.11:1, the substance, as to its object, and an evidence to the soul of its interest in that object; and when the apostle would show that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ, which is revealed to faith, and is the righteousness on which faith builds; and by which the sinner is justified, and this is faith's substance, and of which it bears evidence for the comfort of the soul; showing this free justification by the obedience of Christ, without the works of the law, he speaks of our being justified, not for faith, but by

faith, by faith really as to its object, CHRIST, and manifestively, as to its evidence of our interest in that object. Justification is a grace, and faith never secured it, or made it ours; but by Christ we have access into this grace, and faith is the eye by which we see our standing in this grace; and from the evidence of faith we see our standing in Justification, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God; see Rom.5:2, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace [the grace of justification] wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." So we see that by Christ we stand in the grace of justification, and by faith in him we see our standing in this grace, and so we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Justification by faith is taught in opposition to the notion of justification by works, not because our faith as an act of ours justifies us, but because faith receives or views our justification complete in Christ without our works; and so the apostle argues in Acts 13:39, "By him [Christ] all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." By Christ alone are we justified, and faith is the Spirit's evidence to the soul of his interest in this grace; and it is said, Rom.4:3, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Gal.3:6, James 2:23, Rom.4:5,6,7,8, all of which prove that it was the substance or object of faith that justified Abraham, and not barely the act of Abraham's faith, for the fact which he believed was not dependant on an act of his faith; but his faith believed the fact, and received such evidence of its truth, as to fill Abraham with an unshaken confidence in God, that what he had promised he was able to perform; and so he gave glory to God. The same thing is declared, Rom.4:23, and chapter 5:1, where Christ is spoken of as he "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." This verse ends the fourth chapter, and shows that Christ being delivered for our offences, had made full satisfaction for us, and so was raised again for our justification, and so justification is complete; then in the 5th chapter, 1st verse, he infers from this fact, that we may have peace, even the peace which a knowledge of our free justification will afford, by believing in the fact above settled, and says, "Therefore being justified, by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I have changed the comma in the last quotation, because the sense of the passage required it, and some other versions place it as I have, but whether it be changed or not, the meaning is the same, when we take the two verses together, for the last is an inference drawn from the other, and both together show, that we were justified when Christ was raised from the dead, and faith in this truth affords us peace with God, and that peace we enjoy through our Lord Jesus Christ, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification; and faith is an evidence of it to the soul. This is the sense in which the scriptures speak of justification by faith, and all goes to prove that we are not justified by an act of faith in the creature, but by the righteousness of Christ, and this is the righteousness which faith sees, and leads the soul to trust in; and this is what the poet sings, "Faith pleads no merit of its own, But looks for all in Christ." And so "faith receives a righteousness that makes the sinner just." We see that faith is a fruit of the Spirit, and its office is to lead the soul to Christ, and as an eye to view the righteousness of Christ revealed to it in the gospel, and as a hand to take hold on that righteousness, and build the soul on it, as a sure foundation, and cause it to rejoice in God through Christ, and say, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, and so we see that justification is of the grace of God through the blood and righteousness of Christ, and faith is the Spirit's evidence of it to and for the comfort of the soul; and this is according to the experience of every truly

regenerated man or woman, and I shall now show something of the way in which the experience of the people of God agrees with the doctrine of this discourse. I have showed that the elect of God have two standings, one in Christ, in relation to whom they are without blame before God; and another in Adam, in relation to whom, and in themselves considered, they are condemned to death. Now men do not feel their condemnation properly until they are quickened by the Spirit; but as soon as they are made alive they begin to feel and see, and so faith is one of the first fruits of the Spirit; it views the excellency of the divine character, and the beauty of holiness, and begins to pant for the living God. Although the awakened sinner now has faith; its eye is not directed to Christ, but he now sees the glory and justice of God, and the purity of the law, and by the law he has a knowledge of sin; and so he begins to abhor himself and repent; he looks at himself in his fallen state, in relation to the first Adam, and sees that he is a condemned criminal; he reads the law, it sentences him to death and condemnation, and as he is wedded to a covenant of works, and sees not his relation to Christ, he begins to try to reform and keep the law, and work for life; and however long he may work under this legal persuasion, he finds but a poor reward, and at length he finds that all his plans are thwarted, and he is like the woman in the gospel that had spent all she had with physicians, and had got nothing better, but rather grew worse. Now the quickened sinner sees what he is in himself, and in relation to the first Adam, and that in this relation he is condemned to death, and can never be justified by any work or sacrifice in his power; all his hopes of obtaining salvation by the deeds of the law, gives up the ghost, for sin now appears exceedingly sinful, and it takes an occasion by the commandment to slay the sinner, who is ready to say, the commandment is holy, just and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin. Sin works by that which is good, and the sinner dies to all hope of ever being justified by any works of his own, and as if cut off from every other refuge, he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." His expectation being cut off from everything else, he looks to God only, and falls as a pensioner on his mercy and grace, filled with the deepest sense of his condemnation, and the impossibility of being justified by the works of the law. This is his state as he stands in himself, and in relation to the first Adam, and this he clearly sees; but here the gospel reveals to faith the righteousness of God, and by faith the soul views his justification complete in the blood and righteousness of Christ; not that his faith hath justified him, but by faith he sees that which was a truth before he saw it; and his soul seems to melt like wax into the depth of humility, and yet he rejoices, he is amazed at the matchless grace of God, is almost ready to wonder he never saw this before; the fulness of Christ engages his confidence, and the sentiments of the soul is, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength, he has become my salvation." Now all this comfort flows from the evidence which faith bears to the soul, of its interest in and relation to Christ the second Adam; and from this view of his relation to Christ, in his death and resurrection, he builds his only hope for salvation in Christ, and this building is what is called the faith of reliance; and so it is written, "The just shall live by faith." To live by faith is to live relying on Christ, looking to Christ, and trusting in his righteousness, faithfulness, and truth. Faith as an act, has nothing in it to comfort the soul, but it brings all its comforts from its object, and so faith, though one of the first fruits which the Spirit produces in the soul, can afford no comfort to the soul until its eye is directed to Christ, and his blood and righteousness, which the gospel reveals to it, nor even then will it afford comfort to the soul, unless it views the relation in which the soul stands to that righteousness; for we may have strong faith in Christ, as one able to save, and yet have no

comfortable assurance that he will save me; as the man in the gospel had a strong faith in the ability of Christ, and said, "If thou wilt thou canst make me clean," but when faith views him, "The Lord our righteousness," the soul can rejoice, and say, "In the Lord have I righteousness." Christian reader, is it not according to thy own experience? The awakened sinner has faith in God, and in Christ as being righteous, but sees not his own relation to that righteousness, and therefore he is not comforted, but hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and although the promise is positive, "He shall be comforted," yet the soul cannot see how this can be; but when by faith the soul receives an evidence that it is related to Christ as its righteousness, it is then that it is filled and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and puts no confidence in the flesh; and so says Paul, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Wilson Thompson {Triumphs of Truth; or the Scripture a Sure Guide to Zion's Pilgrims, 1825}