

Law & Grace Distinctions in Christ

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"Cluster of Canaan's Grapes," 1649.

What Christ hath borne for saints, they shall never bear themselves: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith; but, the man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." {Gal.3:10-13} "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." {Gal.3:28,29} The general scope of the Apostle in these verses, I humbly conceive to be this; namely, to empty the creature of all hopes or possibility ever to attain a happy and blessed condition in itself out of Christ; in which work he strips the soul of all external privileges and duties in points of Justification, and then makes Jesus Christ to be all in all to every redeemed soul. The former part of this tenth verse is a positive conclusion that whoever is under the works of the Law for life, is also under the curse of the Law for death; that is, he which chooses to be approved and justified in the sight of God by the works of his own hands and heart must also be condemned before God in the failings and imperfections of those works. The latter part of this verse is a full proof to the position laid down in the former part of it; that if all things in the book of the Law be done and fulfilled, then the curse of the Law attends and seizes upon every soul as would live by the works of the Law. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen." {Deut.27:26} That soul which would fetch life from the works of the Law must perform all, or he loses all that he hath done, and his soul, along with his dying duties. The observations which I have received from hence are these.

Observation#1. That God hath not made a separation of the works of the Law from the curse of the Law to that soul which would live by them. And if God hath not, man cannot; this is that state of bondage spoken of in Galatians 4:9,23,30,31. Those who are children of the freewoman, are such as whom Christ hath made free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." {Jn.8:36} And those are children of the bondwoman that are obliged to anything that is holy in their own strength without Christ. There is no soul free from these bonds but those which are bound up in the arms and cords of Christ's love; and this is the redemption which Christ made of his elect body, when he was in the flesh, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, to the adoption of sons. {Gal.4:4,5} Christ was made under the curse of the Law, {Gal.3:13,} for the curse and the work of the Law was not separated to Christ when he came to satisfy Divine Justice, no more is it to any soul. In the 11th verse is a second position of the Apostle, which is also a confirmation of the former. The position is this; that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God; and the demonstration of this truth followeth in the end of the same verse, and in the 12th verse, which shows; first, that God never intended life by the Law. {Gal.3:21} If there had been a Law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. This is plain, for it was never God's design and

purpose that Righteousness should be by the Law, because he hath not given such a Law out of Christ, which is able to give life. "For by Grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." {Eph.2:8} All Salvation is entirely of Grace, wholly out of ourselves. God had another end in giving the Law, than that the soul of his people should work life from it; and this end is fuller of glory to his own Grace, and of safety to our souls; namely, that sin might become exceeding sinful, and Grace to be exceeding riches of Grace. The Apostle tells us that he had not known sin but by the Law, and had there been no Law, there had been no transgression; and if no transgression had been, nor any sin known, then the glory of Free Grace had not been lifted up as it is now in Christ. If the Law had not discovered sin, the soul had never known the want, nor the worth of a crucified Saviour, who is the great gift of the Free Grace of God, and a perfect Eternal Redeemer of a poor lost soul. Secondly, as God never intended life to fallen man by the works of the Law, so man can never gain life by the works of the Law. {Lev.18:5} There must be a perfect performance of all the statutes and judgments of the Lord, by every soul that means to live in them and have life from them. It is not a tittle less than keeping the whole Law which can advantage any soul that seeks life from it; so as that soul which in itself cannot keep the whole Law, shall never gain life by the works of the Law. {Gal.2:16} The Apostle there speaks positively twice, that no man is justified by the works of the Law; and that by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified. This is such a standing truth, that nothing which either is, or can be done shall contradict it.

Observation#2. That the Law of works condemns every soul in the first Adam, but justifies no soul. The Law speaks only thus, 'do and live,' which to fallen man is nothing but the language of death. {Rom.7:8,9} A righteous Law to an unrighteous soul gives life to the sin, but death to the soul. Observe the text; "when the commandment came, sin revived and I died." By the command sin became exceeding sinful. A soul fallen from God can in itself make no other use of the knowledge of God's righteous Law, but to sin against it; consult the text in this case. "But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence;" {Rom.7:8;} as if he had said; when once God discovered his holy Law, that sinful nature and unholiness that is in me, made use of it by way of opposition, to run into all manner of concupiscence; though the Law of creation justifies a Holy Creator, yet it condemns a fallen unholy creature. "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified in his sight;" but that soul which lives upon them shall be accursed and condemned in the want of one tittle; there lies a curse, a condemnation in the Law to fallen man, but no possibility of being justified by it in the sight of a holy and just God.

But now that we may not be as souls without hope, though he strips us here of all our own righteousness and leaves us by nature under the curse of the Law; yet in the next verse he shows us a Perfect Redemption from the curse of the Law by Christ who was made under the Law to bear the curse and to fulfil the Law on our behalf. And here I shall be a little more large than in what hath gone before; for I have found by experience, that the more clear knowledge the soul hath in this point, the more is the Free Grace of God with the comfort and safety of a poor soul advanced. In this 13th verse the Apostle lays down a third position; namely, that every elect soul is redeemed from the curse of the Law through or by Christ being made a curse for us. {Deut.21:23} The text speaks plainly thus, he that is hanged is accursed; and it is a parallel place with the end of this 13th verse, "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." Thus Christ was made a curse; now that Christ was thus made a curse for us, for his elect body which was under the Law, look into that word in Galatians 4:4,5, where the text saith, "but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." None can doubt but that Christ is here meant by the Son of God; and then the text plainly speaks, that

God in the fullness of his own time sent Christ in the flesh, made under the Law, to redeem his elect body, that were under the works and the curse of the Law, and to bring them to receive the adoption of sons; and in this work Christ was made a curse for us.

The first observation from hence is this, that whatever Christ hath borne for a believer, that a believer is fully redeemed from. It is the Apostle's own argument in this place, for that Christ being made a curse for us, we are thereby redeemed from the curse. The same Apostle in Romans 8:32-34, hath the same argument. If God delivered Christ up to death to die for us, then we are indeed delivered; and Christ having died for us, who shall lay anything to our charge, for it is God that justifies, and Christ that died. Christ died that God might justify. Christ was made a curse for us, so that God in justice might acquit us from the curse. So in the first two verses of Romans 8, "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ makes the soul free from the Law of sin and death; and in John 8:36, "if the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed." This is our Saviour's answer to those Jews which thought themselves not to be under bondage, because they were Abraham's seed in the flesh; though our Saviour tells them that this external interest did not make them free men; for says he, notwithstanding this, you are under sin. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;" {vs.34;} and your fleshly interest in Abraham does not acquit you from the bonds and servitude of sin, but "if the Son hath made you free, then you are free indeed." As if Christ had said, Abraham could not bear your sins, and the wrath of God due to them for you; and therefore you are in bondage still; but what the Son bears, he makes them perfectly free from, for all for whom he bears it. Christ came to save those that were lost, and he tells us when he gave up the ghost upon the cross, that the work was finished; and in John 17:4, "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Christ tells his Father that he had lost no glory in sending him upon the work of Redemption; for says he, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do;" which was to work out a perfect Redemption for his people. "To bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." {Is.61:1} If this be a truth, as doubtless it is, that whatever Christ hath borne for a believer, that a believer is fully redeemed from; then it will be worthy a saints best and most serious consideration in searching the Scriptures, and in the Spirit giving ear to hear and heart to consider, what they say Christ hath borne for us.

First, I find by that verse in II Cor.5:21, that Christ hath borne sin for us. "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." The text speaks in the abstract, "he was made sin for us." There cannot be a fuller expression; there is the act, God making Christ to be sin for us, or taking all sin off from us, and laying it upon him, as was typified under the Law in the scapegoat, which went into the land of forgetfulness. {Lev.16:8-10} Now the issue and effect of this act followeth in the text, "that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him." This expression is as full as the former, the Holy Ghost expresseth the sinner for whom Christ was made sin, to be as fully acquitted from sin, as Christ is made sin. Mark the words, "made the Righteousness of God in him;" so perfectly righteous that God owns the soul as one with himself, righteous as being one with Christ, who is the Righteousness of God. Now the soul that is thus righteous must needs be acquitted from all sin. The Righteousness of God and Condemnation for Sin is as light and darkness, which cannot be together in one soul. If Christ once comes into a soul, and tells that soul by his Spirit, that he hath borne all its sins, and so makes the soul to believe in the free Grace of God, and to rest upon Christ as his Righteousness, that soul is as fully in the sight of God acquitted from sin, as Christ was by God made sin for it. This soul stands before God complete in Christ, not having

spot or wrinkle in it; all that can be said, is said in this; that soul for whom Christ was made sin is thereby made the Righteousness of God in him; so that Christ having borne the sin, that soul never more bears that in his own person before God, but doth always stand, both before the throne of Justice and the throne of Grace, as fully clothed with Christ his Righteousness, as Christ upon the cross was with his sin. "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." {Is.53:6} Iniquity is one with sin here; now then read this truth with an eye and heart of faith, that what Christ hath borne for us, we are fully delivered from, and then will the glory of Free Grace be lifted up, and our souls made to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory in believing.

Secondly, Christ hath fulfilled the Law, and borne the curse of it for his people. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." {Gal.4:4,5} Christ was made under the Law to redeem his people from all that in the Law which was weight and burden; yeah, from the curse of the Law itself. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law." {Gal.3:13} From the reigning and condemning power of the Law; Christ hath fully satisfied the Law on our behalf. In Gal.4:5,6, there Christ hath redeemed us to the liberty of sons, the spirit of adoption reigning in our consciences and conversations above the letter of the Law. So that in Rom.8:2-4; there the Apostle tells us, that by virtue of the Law of the Spirit of life in his union with Christ Jesus, he had freedom from the Law of sin and death. That Law of commandment by which sin revived, and the soul died, he was delivered from by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. For says he, what the Law could not enable the soul to do because of the weakness of the flesh, that did God by sending his Son in the flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that is, condemned our sins, and satisfied his Law and Justice for them all in the death of Christ; so that now the Righteousness of the Law is fulfilled by Christ for us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The Law was fulfilled and had its accomplishment in Christ; that is, the Law in the letter, and the soul now through union with Christ is taken up to live in the Law of the Spirit of life; that is, the Spirit of God lives in the soul, and is a law, and a life to it, not only teaching, but leading the soul into all Truth. It is the Law of the Spirit, and so the Law of life; it is the Law of love, and so the Law of life. Nay it is God himself dispensing his love, and reigning by his Spirit in the souls and consciences of his people, and so it is the Law of the Spirit of life; and all this to the souls of his people in Christ Jesus. "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." {Gal.5:18} A soul which lives not, and acts not upon Christ in the Spirit, {so far as he doth not,} he is under the Law of Sin and Death in all that he doth; but it is a certain deliverance from the law of the flesh in our conversations, and the law of the letter in our consciences, it is to be led by the Spirit of Christ, and to walk in that Spirit. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light; for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, &c." {Eph.5:8,9} They were never without the letter; yet sometimes dark saith the text, but the light of the Lord, in which the redeemed of Christ should walk is the light of the Spirit. Now we have all this freedom, because the Son hath made us free, by bearing those burdens for us; and what Christ hath borne for a believer, that a believer is fully redeemed from.

Thirdly, Christ hath borne the punishment due to sin for us. Observe the text; "surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." "He was taken from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation; for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken; yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,

he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." {Is.53:4,5,8,10,11} I know not how fuller expressions could be made to set forth this thing; that Christ hath borne the punishment due to sin for the believer as fully as he hath the sins themselves. With his stripes we are healed; that is, the punishment of our sins which he did bear for us; so that as the wrath of God due to sin, we shall never bear them again; for what Christ hath borne for us, he hath delivered us from the bearing of it in our own persons, otherwise Christ died in vain; and this text is not made good if we be not healed by his stripes. Now if the punishment be not taken from the believer, as well as the sin, how are the wounds of that soul healed by the stripes that Christ bore for it? And if any shall say, God made Christ to bear the believer's sins, but the believer must bear the punishment due to those sins, though Christ was wounded, bruised and chastened for them. Such an affirmation will bear very hard upon the Justice of God, and question that truth of our Saviour upon the cross, that he had finished the work of Redemption, part of which is the punishment as well as the sin. I verily believe when Christ bore the curse of the Law, he did bear the punishment due to all the sins of his people; and though I do believe that God chastens every child whom he loveth, yet those chastenings are the fruits of his love and not of his wrath; Christ hath borne all that in being made a curse for us.

Lastly, Christ hath borne death for us as it is the wages of sin. I Cor.15:53, to the end. By which means death is swallowed up of victory; the sting of death which is sin, and the strength of sin which is the Law, hath lost themselves and their strength when they entered into Christ; so that now a believer can bless God, and through Christ he hath victory over death, sin, hell, law, and the grave; and why so? Why, because Christ had gone through, he has borne and overcome all these for us; and we are more than conquerors through Christ that loved us. We are more, because none of these can conquer Christ; but he hath to all eternity overcome them for us. This sting of death is swallowed up of victory; for it is buried in the wounds of Christ; and Christ is risen, and is seated at the right hand of God, and because he lives, we live also. {Jn.14:19}