

# *The Doctrine of Justification Defended*

SERMONS ON THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

XXIV. LORD'S DAY.

## **Johannes VanderKemp (1664-1718)**

Rom. iii. 27, 28. Where is boasting then? it is excluded. By what law? of works? nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

*Q. 62. But why cannot our good works be the whole, or part of our righteousness before God?*

A. Because, that the righteousness, which can be approved of before the tribunal of God, must be absolutely perfect, and in all respects conformable to the divine law: and also, that our best works in this life, are all imperfect, and defiled with sin.

*Q. 63. What! do not our works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?*

A. This reward is not of merit, but of grace.

*Q. 64. But doth not this doctrine make men careless and profane?*

A. By no means: for it is impossible that those who are implanted into Chris; by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness.

WHEN "Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking, she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bond-woman and her son; for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." This Moses relates to us, Gen. 21.9,10. Paul having respect to this, saith Gal 4.22,23. "It is written that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bondmaid, and the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born of the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise." When the bondwoman would have that her son should inherit, and the lad mocked, Sarah said, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. These things are an allegory, for these are the covenants," &c. saith the apostle, Gal 4.24-31. It appears very plainly, that by these two covenants he understands, (a) the covenant of works, the sum of which, together with the covenant of grace, which was administered in a legal manner under the Old Testament, was proposed at mount Sinai, and often exhibited for the condemnation of sinners, and in order to urge them to the Messiah,

who was to come; and therefore the Jews, the Jerusalem of Paul's time, seeking their righteousness and the inheritance by this covenant, showed that they, being born after the flesh, of the servile covenant of works, were also servile with their children, since they, like Ishmael, mocked and persecuted them who were born after the Spirit. (b) The second covenant which Paul mentioneth is the covenant of grace, which is established only in promises; and therefore all who believe, the Jerusalem that is above, the true church, being born like Isaac, after the Spirit, of this covenant, are free, and obtain the inheritance by promise. When now the carnal Jews sought a right to the inheritance by the servile covenant of works, through their own doings, yea, when they mocked the free children, who sought their inheritance by the promises, "saying blasphemously that they said, Let us do evil, that good may come," Rom. 3.18. We say, when they did this, the true Sarah, the believing church, after she was become fruitful, according to Isaiah 54.1, compared with Gal. 4.17, cried to her Abraham, her Maker, the Lord of hosts, who is her husband, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son:" and so his Hagar was called by the Lord, "Loruhama, not having obtained mercy, and Lo-ammi, not my people." See Hosea 1.6,9. And the Lord hath ordered that it should be said to her, "Thou art not my wife, and I am not thy husband," Hosea 2.1. And thus "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumblingstone." Thus Paul speaks, Rom. 9.31,32.

How long was the free Sarah, the true church with her children of promise, obliged to sigh, on account of grievous mockings and persecutions among the Popish Hagarenes, who sought the inheritance by the law! but when the church cried, Cast out the bondwoman with her son, the Lord drove these Hagarenes out of the house of Abraham, his church, in the time of the reformation: by which means the doctrine of justification by the promise through faith without works, having been brought to us, hath continued with us until now, and is defended, when we are taught that the righteousness of Christ, and no other, is our righteousness before God, in the foregoing Lord's day; and that our works cannot be our righteousness before God, nor a part of it, as we are now taught in this Lord's day, in the sixty-second question. These Hagarenes set themselves against this doctrine, and insist on a reward according to the merit of their works; but being opposed in the sixty-third question, they show the temper of Ishmael, by mocking us, when they blasphemously say in the sixty-fourth question, that our free doctrine makes men careless and profane.

In order that we may silence them, we will, agreeably to this clue, illustrate somewhat more particularly these three general heads:

I. That our works cannot be our righteousness before God, nor a part of it, Question

62.

II. That though God rewards the works of his children, they nevertheless do not merit, Question 63.

III. That our doctrine cannot with any propriety be reproached, as making men careless and profane, Question 64.

I. In order to render it evident that our works are not our righteousness before God, nor a part of it, we must first exhibit the state of the controversy, and then produce our arguments against the erroneous opinion.

In order to represent the state of the controversy, we must show that not only the Papists, but also many others, both now and of old have erred in this matter. All men, being children of the broken covenant of works, are by nature infected with this evil, that they imagine that their own works are their righteousness before God, either in whole, or in part.

We see this in the heathens; those at least among them, who were in any measure solicitous to enjoy the favour of the gods, sought the atonement of their sins in their sorrow for their sins, in their prayers, their washings and sacrifices, either of beasts or men: also in afflicting their bodies, yea, they sometimes bereaved themselves of their lives; they thought they should obtain a right to life by their good and virtuous actions.

The carnal Jews, though they had been taught better from the word of God, would nevertheless seek their righteousness even of old, in their repentance, sacrifices and virtues; "they exacted all their labors," Isaiah 58.3. See what the apostle saith of them, Rom. 9.31,32. & 10.2,3. The Jews had declined to this error especially in the time when Jesus came in the flesh, as appears sufficiently in the writings of the New Testament. The Jews of later times, abandoned to hardness of heart, have smugged up this unsuitable notion exceedingly. And indeed thus, seeing that they all without exception, though ever so virtuous, needed forgiveness, they have placed a right to forgiveness of sins in repentance, almsgivings, prayers, a changing of their name, (whereby, as they imagine, a Jew becomes another person, and is thus reckoned free from his former guilt,) a change of work, patience under sufferings observing the ecclesiastical law of Moses, as circumcision, washings, and sacrifices, and especially on the great day of atonement. Is there aught else wanting, they think that they shall atone for that by their death, or by suffering the pains of hell during one year. They seek a right to eternal life in their good works; they speak indeed of faith, but they mean by it a fulfilling of the whole law. If they mention aught of the mercy of God, it is without respect to the righteousness of the Messiah, and it only effects that God accepts of the penitent, who satisfy for their sins. Doth any one desire a fuller account of these things, let him read H. Witsius's discourse on justification, prefixed to the apostolical antiquities of William Cave.

Is it matter of wonder, that the Jews, the proper people of God, are so silly, it is matter of still greater wonder, that the majority of Christians, who have a clearer discovery of the righteousness of faith in the writings of the apostles, do, like those who are blind, grope here in the dark: this appears in all those, who are not of our communion, or of the Lutheran.

The Socinians, who deny the righteousness of works according to the law of Moses, and say that Christ is a new Law giver, who hath enlarged and improved the law of Moses, assert indeed, that we are justified by faith; but they imagine that faith consists in keeping the commandments of Christ, and in confiding that our sins are forgiven, and that we will obtain eternal life, not through the satisfaction of Christ, for they do not believe in that, but through a common goodness of God, who promiseth that he who doth good, shall receive a good reward.

The Remonstrants pretend that Christ hath merited a general covenant of grace for all men, the condition whereof is faith, perfected by the power of freewill; which is indeed an ignoble act, but is nevertheless considered and accepted of God by a gracious estimation, as a perfect fulfillment of the whole law.

The Mennonites unite either with the Socinians or Remonstrants. But as the instructor opposes more particularly the Papists, we must declare their opinion also. Justification consists, according to them, not in the forgiveness of sins, and in granting a right to life, but in an infusion of holiness, by which they obtain the forgiveness of sins, and a right to life through the merit of works. They say, this justification is either of the ungodly, by which an ungodly person becomes holy; or of the godly, by which a godly person becomes more holy. Works are either before regeneration, and proceed from the power of freewill, which merit the justification of the ungodly *ex congruo*, from a certain fitness and suitableness, that God should further in some measure the conversion, that is, the justification of the ungodly: or works are such as are done after regeneration by faith and grace, which assist freewill, and merit the justification of the godly, *ex condigno*, from an equal value of the work with the reward. If they have need of any works in consequence of their coming short in some measure, and have thus only a part of their righteousness, they will then betake themselves to the supererogatory works of other saints, who were more than perfect, or they will supply the defect, either in this life by penance, or after this life in purgatory. They speak also of the merits of Christ, but these do no more than obtain that their works merit. They allow that they are justified also by faith, but not otherwise than that faith is the root of other virtues, which producing others, and therefore being accompanied with others, justifieth on account of its superior excellency above other virtues, and merits justification.

In opposition to this, we teach that the satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ, received by faith, is the righteousness of man before God, as we have declared and proved on the foregoing Lord's day. We do not deny that good works are highly necessary to salvation, but we

assert that they cannot be our righteousness before God, nor a part of it. And therefore the controversy is, whether our good works can be our righteousness before God, or a part of it; which our adversaries affirm, but we deny.

That our good works cannot be our righteousness before God, appears.

1. Because the holiest persons, and those who had done the most good works, have with humility acknowledged that they had no righteousness at all, but sought their salvation only in the mercy of God, and in the righteousness of his Son. Job, who had the testimony of God that there was none like him in the earth for integrity, uprightness, fearing God and eschewing evil, said, chapt. 9.2,3, "how should man be just with God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." David, the man after God's own heart, said, Psalm 130.3,4, "if thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." He prayed, Psalm 143.2, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Daniel, the man greatly beloved, spoke also in the same manner, chapt. 9.18. "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies." If there ever was a man that excelled in holiness, it was Paul; but even he also "sought not his own righteousness, which was of the law, but only the righteousness of Christ, which is by faith," Gal. 2.16. Phil. 3.8,9. Surely if the good works of these saints could have been their righteousness before God, or a part of it, they would not have spoken thus.

2. The word of God teacheth us that there is no righteousness at all in good works for justification, since works are in every respect opposed to justification, as inconsistent with it. For (a) The judge doth not "set" works, but "his Son forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," Rom. 3.25,26. (b) The person cited is one who is "ungodly, who worketh not," Rom. 4.5. (c) The Advocate doth not plead the righteousness of the sinner, which is of works, but the ransom, which he himself hath found. Job. 33.24. Isaiah 53.12. 1 John 3.1,2. (d) The sentence is pronounced "freely, by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," Rom. 3.24. (e) Works are not imputed to the sinner, but only the righteousness of Christ without works, as Paul speaks from the opinion of David, Rom. 4. 6-8. (f) Faith which receives the sentence of grace, is also set in opposition to works. See this in the text.

3. Our righteousness, which is of works, cannot endure the judgment of God. In order to show this, we must prove, (a) That the righteousness, which shall endure the judgment of Gods must be perfect, and in every respect commensurate with the law of God. This is evident, because "Moses, describing the righteousness of the law, saith, The man which doth those things shall live by them," Rom. 10.5. And what are those things? the perfect love of God, and of our neighbour, as the Saviour explains the demand of the law, Matt. 22.37-39. We must keep the law perfectly, if we shall have the righteousness which God approves, or we are cursed, as Paul saith, Gal. 3.10 Deut. 27.6. This is still more evident, if we consider that God, who will judge men according to their works,

must judge them according to the law: "The judgment of God is according to truth," as Paul speaks, Rom 2.2. Now he cannot justify man, unless he have a perfect righteousness, according to the law; for if a man incur guilt in any respect by his misconduct, "God will not hold him guiltless," as he saith himself, Exod. 34.7. Did not the Lord himself show that he would not approve of any righteousness in his judgment, but that which was perfectly conformable to his law, when he appointed his Son to satisfy his justice according to the complete demand of the law, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," as Paul saith, Rom. 8.3,4. The matter of the greatest importance here, is, whether our works are so perfect: but we will also prove (b) That our works are not so perfect, but that "even our best works in this life are all imperfect, and defiled with sin," as the catechism speaks. Is not this true? surely it is; for there is "not one man who sinneth not," as the word of God repeatedly testifieth. See 1 Kings 8.46. Prov. 20.9. Eccl. 7.20. Matt. 6.12. James 3.2. 1 John 1.8, and the good, yea, even the best works of men are defiled with sin, and imperfect. The prophet confesseth this of the church, of which he was a member, and therefore also of himself, when he saith, Isaiah 64.6, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." This doth not denote that they were sins for then they would not be good works, or righteousnesses, but it denotes that they were imperfect, and proceeded from a heart that was not perfectly purified: the old man and the flesh hinders and withstands the new man and the spirit, "so that he doth not do what he would." Thus speaks Paul concerning believers and himself, Gal. 5.17. Rom. 7.14,26. The saints "did not indeed defile their garments," according to Rev. 3.14, but this doth not denote that their works were altogether pure and free from filth; for they would not then have had need "to wash them, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev 7.14, but it only means, that they did not pollute themselves with the abominable conduct, and the false doctrines of the pretended Christians of Sardis. If we will now deduce a conclusion from these premises, we will discover that our works cannot be our righteousness before God; for if our righteousness must be perfect, and if our best works be imperfect, it is evident that our works cannot be our righteousness before God, but deserve that we should be banished from his presence, and that he should cast them, as the filth of our holy things, in our faces.

Say not, the good that is in our good works may be a part of our righteousness, and God may graciously reckon it as perfect; for imperfect works do not lessen our guilt, but increase it. He who keeps the law in part, by imperfect good works, sins also in part, yea, renders himself altogether guilty: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all," as we are taught, James 2.10. Yea, if our good works were a part of our righteousness before God, and the righteousness of Christ, or the gracious estimation of God supplied their deficiency, then would our works form an unsuitable connexion with the righteousness of Christ and the grace of God, and we should be justified partly by works and partly by grace, which is contrary to the doctrine of Paul, Rom. 11.6, "If it be by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." Further, our adversaries cannot say with any reasonableness that our good works are a part of our righteousness

and not the whole of our righteousness: for they who oppose us say that a man can keep the law of God perfectly; yea, the Papists will have that a man may be more than perfect by works of supererogation, and so afford a portion of his righteousness to another. The Socinian thinks that he doth more by his obedience to the improved law of Christ, than God demanded in the law which he gave by Moses. What remains then for the righteousness of Christ to do? nothing but to effect, as the slave of man, that his works should merit, and that he should do more works than Moses required, and that Christ should merit a general grace, by which man should be enabled to will, not be rendered actually willing to keep the law of God perfectly, and that God should esteem the faith of man, a perfect observation of the law. And thus they place their righteousness altogether in works, and all that is divine must subserve this purpose, that the sinner may find a righteousness in his works. Abominable!

4. Add to this, that the works of the sinner cannot be his righteousness, because he must have a righteousness, and be justified by it, before he can either have, or do works that are acceptable to God. For "the ungodly who worketh not is justified," according to the language of Paul, Rom. 4.5. All his works, as long as his person is not justified, reconciled to God, and thus acceptable to him, are disagreeable to God: "The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering: but when he had not respect to Cain, he had not respect to his offering neither," Gen. 4.4,5. With this agrees wise Solomon, when he saith, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight," Prov. 15.8. All the good works of men are wrought in them by the Lord through his Spirit, as we have shown from Philip 2.13. Eph. 2.8. Now God doth not bestow his Spirit for sanctification, except on account of the righteousness of Christ: he is first made righteous to the sinner, and then sanctification. See 1 Cor 1.30. For by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ he obtains a right to life, and thus also to all the benefits, and the sanctification of the covenant of grace. If the sinner must now be justified before he can either have, or do good works, he cannot then obtain righteousness by his works; for he hath it before his works, and his works are the fruits of it.

5. The doctrine, that our works are our righteousness before God, is replete with absurdities. For (a) "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain," Gal. 2.21. (b) Grace, which alone the Spirit of God commends here, hath then no place, according to Rom. 11.6. (c) We have then no need of forgiveness of sins, contrary to Psalm 30.4. (d) "If they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect," Rom. 4.14. (e) Humility, the greatest virtue of Christianity, is then banished out of the church, and pride and boasting of our works obtain the chief place in it, contrary to Rom. 3.27,28. & 4.2. Eph. 2.8,9. We see Luke 18.11,12,14, how ill the Pharisee fares by boasting of his works. (f) If the sinner can merit so much by works, he needs not then beg at the throne of grace for his daily bread. (g) No sinner, who hath a sense of his sins, and sees that his works are like filthy rags, can then have any hope of grace, but he must abandon himself to despair, must hide himself with Adam, run from God with Cain, and flee to the

halter with Judas. Many of the Papists, seeing this absurdity, have borne witness to the truth, especially at their death. The time would fail me if I should speak of the cardinals Contarene, Bellarmine, Pope Adrian the sixth, the emperor Charles the fifth, and George, duke of Savoy. (h) Suffer me to add this also, if righteousness come by works, then the righteousness of the gospel is wholly made void, the covenant of works is established, the covenant of grace denied, and the doctrine of Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, in which he excludes all works, is enervated, and rendered absurd.

Our adversaries, in order to disentangle themselves out of these snares, which they lay for themselves, seek various evasions, and say,

1. That the apostle excludes works done only by the power of freewill, without the assistance of grace, but not those that are done by the assistance of grace. But thus our adversaries condemn themselves, because they assert a justification of the ungodly by the merits of their works, which are performed before regeneration by freewill, as we have shown before: Paul needed not to exclude works, which are done without grace, because they are only shining sins, and therefore evil works, which, as all know, deserve death. He excludes all works without any exception; we may not then make him speak of an exception, where he himself is silent. Yea, he excludes the works of godly Abraham and David, Rom. 4.1-8.

2. They say further that he excludes only the works of the ceremonial, or ecclesiastical law: but this also is an invention, which is beside Paul; for he speaks of the law that was innate to the Gentiles, Rom. 2.14,15, which forbids stealing and adultery, Rom. 2.21,22, which is opposed to circumcision, Rom. 2.25-27, which opposeth and condemneth Jews and Gentiles, and discovers their sins to them, Rom. 3.9-20. Yea, he speaks of the law which Abraham had, and which he observed, before the ceremonial or ecclesiastical law was imposed on him by circumcision; and nevertheless his works according to the moral law are also excluded. See Rom. 4.1-3,9-12. It is true, the apostle hath respect in his epistle to the Galatians chiefly to the law of the fleshly commandment, since he therein manfully opposes the false apostles, who taught justification by works according to that law; but he doth this, because those false apostles looked upon those ceremonies, as the demand of the covenant of works, and as the proper performances to obtain life; for he alleges, in order to silence them, the promise and the threatening of the covenant of works. See Gal. 3.10,12. And he doth this, in order to show that we cannot be justified by our own performances, either according to the moral, or the ceremonial law. Therefore when he excludes the ceremonies according to the law of commandments contained in ordinances, he then also excludes all kinds of works.

3. In this manner do the Papists endeavour to disentangle themselves, but the Socinians pursue another method. Christ, according to them, preached a different doctrine and law from that of Moses. Paul, as they say, excludes from justification works done according to the law of Moses,

but not works done according to the law of Christ, which they call the gospel. The Remonstrants differ not much from this, when they say that we are now justified by the faith of the gospel; for they consider faith as a work done according to the law of Christ, containing every virtue according to the commands of the gospel. But faith is a virtue by itself, distinct from other virtues, and may not be considered in justification as a work, but as an instrument and hand, by which we receive Christ, and Paul excludes all our own works, and besides this, we say, it is not true that Christ preached another, and a new law, as we will show in the proper place. God the Lord would then have abrogated the law of Moses; but how was this possible, when it expressed the image of God, and his demand against the sinner? he would then have dispensed with his right, which was impossible, as we have proved on the fifth Lord's day. If Christ had preached a new law, with a design, that men should be justified by works according to that law, then would that law have been "able to give life, contrary to the promise," and so "righteousness would come by the law," contrary to the doctrine of Paul, Gal. 3.21.

II. The adversaries of the light, not willing to be convinced of their erroneous opinions think that they will strengthen themselves by the word of God, which promiseth a reward to works. We cannot gainsay this, verily "in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward," according to the language of David, Psalm 19.11. God will reward good works, not only in this life, but also in that which is to come, Heb. 6.10. Matt. 6.4,6,18. Yea, the people of God encourage themselves by the consideration of the reward to greater diligence in doing good works. Moses "had respect to the recompense of the reward," Heb. 11.26, but good works do not therefore merit; for (a) We owe good works, and we are naturally bound to keep the law of God perfectly. How can we merit by doing our duty? Hear what the Saviour saith, Luke 17.10. "When ye shall have done all these things, which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do." (b) If good works did merit that great reward, then we ought to do them of and by ourselves; for we cannot merit by the work and assistance of another; but good works are not of man himself, but of God: "Faith is not of yourselves; it is the gift of God," saith the apostle, Eph. 2.8. "It is God, which worketh in you both to will and to do," so the same man speaks, Philip. 2.13. (c) Works ought to be equal in value with the reward, if they shall merit the reward; but "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," Rom. 8.18. 2 Cor. 4.17. (d) Can good works profit God, for this is required in order that they may merit? no! "Can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?" These questions are rightly asked, in order to deny the assertions, Job 22.2,3

Do evil works merit perdition, because they are perfectly evil, good works do not therefore merit salvation, for they are not perfectly good. And if they were perfect, as they might have been before the fall, they would not however merit by their worthiness, but only by the promises of God in the covenant of works.

How doth God then reward works, if they do not merit the reward? Paul will declare, when he teacheth that there is not only "a reward of debt," but also "of grace," Rom. 4.4. The reward of debt is bestowed on account of the perfection of the work, which obligeth the Lord to bestow on his servant the promised recompense: the reward of grace is bestowed in consequence of certain endeavours, and a certain defective work, from kindness, and it is of more value than the work, and is therefore not merited. Say not, How can this be a reward? for thou shouldest not inquire wisely concerning this. Can any man "buy without money, and without price?" yet this is asserted, Isaiah 55.1, there can then be a reward of grace. Although a son owes his father obedience, his father can nevertheless reward him from kindness; especially if his obedience be not perfect, and nevertheless sincere. Thus also the Lord, when he beholds the sincere endeavours of his children to please him by good, although defective works, rewards them. Is the recompense of God from grace called a reward without reason? no: for as a proper reward is bestowed in consequence of a promise upon the work, as it encourageth the worker, sweetens the labour, and follows the work, so also is the reward according to grace bestowed.

They will nevertheless have that God bestows a reward of merit and debt upon works, since "the few at Sardis, who had not defiled their garments, should walk with the Saviour in white, because they were worthy." Rev. 3.4. But their works were not worthy of this, for they should be "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. 12.14. But their persons were worthy of it, because they were "found" in Christ, and so were "perfect in him," according to Phil. 3.9. Col. 2.10. And their good works were evidences of this, since "they had not defiled their garments," and so "he will reward according to works," as evidences of a person's good state, agreeably to the words of Christ and of Paul, Matt. 16.27. Rom. 3.6,8.

"Was Abraham justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar;" as James asks, James 2.21. This doth not militate against us, because it cannot militate against Paul, who had said, that "Abraham was not justified by works," Rom. 4. From which nominal Christians took occasion to boast largely of their faith, and conceived that if they had faith, it was enough, although they had not works. James sets himself against these, and he shows that faith without works is not good, and that it must be manifested by works: in order to demonstrate this to them, he alleges the example of Abraham, who was justified by works, when he had offered his son Isaac. And he speaks not therefore of the justification of Abraham as a sinner, as Paul doth, Rom. 4. but as a godly person, by which the Lord God declares of him to his posterity, that he had proved himself to be a righteous and godly person. Abraham was justified by faith, before he had offered his son, for so it is said Gen. 15.6. "Abraham believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness." But when he had offered his Son, it appeared, and God declared in consequence of his work, and because he feared him, that he was righteous: the Lord said, Gen. 22.12, "For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only son from me."

III. When our adversaries can do no more, and we have disarmed them, they betake themselves to slandering, reproaching and scoffing, saying, that the doctrine of justification without works "makes men careless and profane." But why need we regard this? It is indeed an ancient slander, which was cast also upon Paul's doctrine of justification in his time, but which was manfully opposed and repelled by him. See Rom. 3,8. & 6.1. Our adversaries show thus, that they are in their temper exceedingly like Ishmael, who scoffed at the freeborn Isaac, who was entitled to the inheritance by promise. But that we may show them that our doctrine cannot justly be reproached in this manner, we say with the instructor, that it doth not make men careless and profane, but exceedingly serious, fervent, and godly, for no doctrine excites and influenceth more than this to zealous godliness, as we will show at large upon the thirty-second Lord's day. We say no more at present, than "that it is impossible, that those who are implanted into Christ by a true faith, should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness." It is frequently declared in the word of God, that they who are justified are implanted and ingrafted into Christ, and thus most intimately united to him, as the graft is united to the stock. Being thus united and ingrafted into him, "they partake of the root and fatness of that olive tree," Rom. 9.47. Is it now possible that they should not bring forth fruits of thankfulness? the Saviour saith, John 15.5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," If our doctrine make men careless and profane, then the doctrine of the legalist ought to make men exceedingly zealous and godly; but how doth this appear, when they are so ignorant, wanton, and exceedingly riotous on their holydays so called, unless we will acknowledge that it is godliness to present God with a certain number of mumbled prayers, paternosters, avemarys, with hearing masses, abstaining from meats, neglecting the body, and I know not what other bodily exercises; but "these things are not of any profit, but only a satisfying of the flesh," Col. 2.23. And what is the Socinian and Arminian godliness? is it a "worshipping of God in the Spirit?" no, for they "rejoice not in Christ Jesus, but have confidence in the flesh." See Phil. 3.3 The whole morality of those men doth not exceed the decent conversation of the most moral heathens. And how can they say that our doctrine renders men careless and profane? this truly the doctrine of the Hagarenes, the hirelings, and the servants who labor for a reward, doth, and no other. Have not the Papists proffered for sale indulgences of sins, heaven and all that is holy? What will induce me to pursue sanctification, if my money, my skill in reckoning bodily exercises can obtain for me the pardon of my sins, and every other advantage? Every legalist teaches that a man may be perfect in this life, if he will only exert his freewill: why then are not all those men perfect? is it not because they conceive that they can offer to God a righteousness by their own works for their sins, or that he will wink at them, if they only perform penance, and amend their conduct? See to what all this tends.

#### APPLICATION

Hearers, ye who attend to these things, will any one of you contradict us? and will he not manifest his aversion from that impious opinion, that a man is justified by his works? I believe he

will. But do ye know that the most of you, while they know not what they do, walk in the paths of the legalist, and seek their righteousness by their works; and thus justify by their conduct, the false doctrine of our adversaries? it is certain, that all men are by nature children of the covenant of works, born under the law, and after the flesh, and that they do therefore seek life by their own works. Our living under the ministration of the covenant of grace, of the gospel, and of the Spirit, doth not translate us into the state of grace, and into Christ, and it doth not furnish us with a justifying faith; and we cannot all say, that "we are not under the law, but under grace," as Paul speaks of believers only, Rom. 6.14. Now it cannot be otherwise, but that those, who are yet under the covenant of works, under the law, and after the flesh, must work agreeably to their nature and state, and therefore seek righteousness by works. Luther, considering this, said that every man had a Popish priest in his own bosom.

Many will not believe this concerning themselves, because they are not Papists; but suffer me to discover it to you, that ye may have a palpable demonstration of it.

1. Ye know that ye have sinned against God, and have deserved death and hell; why are ye not concerned and disturbed at this, and fearful that the wrath of God will light on you every moment? is it not because ye think that ye are not so ungodly as this and that person, that ye do many things, are civil, honest, devout, and zealous after your manner? have ye committed a sin, for which your conscience reproves you, ye soothe yourselves with a little sorrow, and with a purpose to amend your conduct, and to repent, and upon this ye bless yourselves, and think that God will forgive your sin. Is it not then your own doing and work, that renders you so unconcerned, and banishes fear out of your hearts? do Papists seek righteousness by their works otherwise than ye do? Surely the Pharisee did not act otherwise, Luke 18.11,12.

2. Ye say, we know indeed that we must not be justified by our works, but only by the merits of Christ. It is true, ye know this, but doth this knowledge influence you so, that it effects a change of your condition and behaviour, that it drives you, from a concern on account of your damnable condition, out of yourselves to the Mediator, and that ye accept of him and his righteousness truly, heartily, and frequently, and that to be sanctified, as well as justified and saved, and are ye urged thereby to "pursue after perfection," with Paul? Phil. 3.7-14. Is it true, that ye are implanted into Christ by a sincere faith, and that it is impossible for you not to bring forth fruits of thankfulness; ye are then surely justified by his merits. But how few are there, who conduct in this manner! Many have heard others speak concerning Christ, and his merits, and they depend upon this, especially when they are moral, civil and devout, thinking that though their works are not perfect, they will not however be condemned on account of that imperfection; that God will wink at their defects, as the Socinians talk; or that Christ will supply that which they lack with his merits; and so they have a part of the righteousness, as the Papists speak. In this manner the Jews also had "a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge; for they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God,"

Rom. 102,3. Once more:

3. To what doth it lead many of you, that they know that they are not justified by their works, but only by the merits of Christ? Our doctrine doth not make men careless and profane, but your imagination, that ye are justified through Christ, although ye have never truly passed into him, nor been implanted into him, makes you careless and profane. If ye did not imagine this, but were convinced of your damnable condition, would ye not be more engaged, and bestir yourselves more for your souls, that ye might not by any means perish, but be saved? But now ye have heard of Christ and his merits only with the hearing of the ear, therefore ye leave all to him without concern, and busy yourselves only with the things which are visible, and with your lusts, yea, many indulge in excess of riot, every one for his own ends. And when they must die, then Christ must save them, and take them to heaven. But is not this "making Christ a minister of sin?" Gal. 2.17, is it not allowing the slander of our adversaries, when they rail at our doctrine, and say that it makes men careless and profane? And tell us, what is the reason of your reproaching and slandering as legalists and Pharisees, persons who separate themselves from the world, and pursue a different conduct from the generality, and who endeavour to shine as lights in a crooked and perverse generation? is it not, because their behaviour convinces you? because ye cannot endure such goads in your sides, and such thorns in your eyes? because ye wish to become careless and profane by this doctrine, at least, because ye endeavour to persuade yourselves that men need not be so precise? What think ye, shall a person, who is implanted into Christ, conduct only like a civil person, and a man of common morality? ought not the image and Spirit of Christ to shine forth in him? And why do ye look upon such persons as hypocrites, legalists, and Pharisees? is it not on account of their modest appearance, their discourse, which is agreeable to godly persons, and seasoned with salt, or their decent behaviour? must justified persons then conform themselves to the world, be loose and disorderly? Ye will say, No, but we hate their hypocrisy, and those outward things are the whole of their religion and merit. How do ye know this? do ye know the heart? no, but ye are not willing that their behaviour should shame and condemn you; therefore "judge not, that ye be not judged," according to Matt. 7.1.

Let each one now inquire how he conducts with respect to these matters. Do ye rest in your own works? is your religious zeal the foundation of your hope, and would it appear strange to you, if God should not bestow heaven upon you and do ye with the Jews "exact all your labours?" Isaiah 58.3. Know then that ye are yet under the law and the broken covenant of works, and therefore "under the curse," Gal. 3.10. And so God "will not clear you," according to Exod. 34.7. Do not flatter yourselves with the merits of Christ, for ye have surely no interest in them by an active faith, which would implant you into him; for ye would then reckon all your own doings as loss and dung; but ye are now so exceedingly pleased with your own works; and therefore ye are yet without the Mediator; "Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace," Gal. 5.4. When God will enter into judgment with you, consider whether all your

works will then justify you.

Do ye say, We trust not in our works, but in the merits of Christ through faith? But are ye implanted into Christ by faith, and do ye therefore bring forth fruits of thankfulness? this is well; but do ye think that works will not avail to save you, but faith only and do ye therefore live as ye list, ye are then a reproach to our holy doctrine, and "the name of god is blasphemed through you, as it is written," Rom. 2.24. Your faith is without works, is a dead faith, as James speaks, James 2.17. Verily, your outward ado, and saying, Lord, Lord, will not procure you an entrance into the kingdom of God: "Faith only, which worketh by love, avails in Christ Jesus," Gal. 5.6.

O that ye would all of you see your misery with anxiety, and that ye cannot deliver yourselves, that ye might cry out with concern, "What shall we do!" as those did, Acts 2.37. Rest not, before ye are in the Son of God; he is willing and able to bestow a sufficient righteousness on you. Hear him cry to you, Isaiah 45.22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: to him shall men come."

But, believers, who, according to your evidences exhibited in the former Lord's day, have indeed been justified before God freely, without works, by faith, and who must still daily seek justification and reconciliation for your daily offences, this leaven of working with your own righteousness is not wholly purged out of you, any more than your natural depravity is wholly rooted out of you: for ye also are frequently driven to pursue your own righteousness. This is evident, (a) Because ye often dare not believe, that ye have grace, and are justified, unless ye have just such a measure of holiness. If ye depended only upon the righteousness of Christ, would ye suffer yourselves to be shaken on account of the degree of your sanctification? it would humble you, that ye had not made a greater progress, but it would not cause you to reject your state, since your justified state is not founded upon any measure of sanctification, but upon the perfect righteousness of the Mediator. (b) It appears also from this, that a greater or less progress in virtue causes you to draw near more or less boldly to the throne. When ye have done your duty tolerably well, ye will then venture to draw near; but when ye have behaved improperly, ye then wander about, and seek for excuses, only in order to remain aloof: and when ye dare not neglect to draw near, ye are possessed with a prejudice, that God will not hear you, ye dare not persevere, but make short work, and wait until ye have behaved yourselves better. It is proper to go to God, with a holy awe, with a deep humility and shame, on account of your misbehaviour; but to forbear altogether to draw near, or to draw near only with such an unbelieving trembling, when we have misbehaved ourselves, and courageously only when we have done well, evidences that we found our right to draw near, not upon the righteousness of Christ, but on our own works. (c) This is also evident, because men are often urged to holiness by fear, as if they stood near mount Horeb. "The Lord hath delivered you, that ye might serve him without fear," Luke 1.74. But a slavish fear, proceeding from the covenant of works, sometimes possesses the soul, and urgeth her to do this or that, as a command of God, as if every misdeed subjected her to the curse. Yea, this renders the soul so

scrupulous and anxious, that she sometimes looks upon certain actions to be sinful, which a Christian may perform freely. (d) This is still more evident, because men sometimes pursue holiness, in order to seek and find rest for their souls. They have made a breach in their spirits by sin, this they will heal, what do they do? embrace the righteousness and atoning blood of Christ, in order to pacify their minds? no, they will bewail it, and reform, and thus their work, and not Christ will afford them rest. Further, (e) Men dare not embrace the proffered and promised grace, and Christ, because they are not so contrite as they imagine besides the word of God that they ought to be. And thus they attend to their own doings, and not to the perfect righteousness of Christ, and they do not surrender themselves to him, as altogether wretched, and seek his favour only. It appears also, (f) because they sometimes become impatient, when they do not obtain their desire, after great earnestness: what doth this denote but that they imagine, that their earnestness obliges God to be favourable to them.

But God doth not approve of all this self-tormenting, it dishonours Jesus, it keeps the soul from her rest, and confounds the grace and righteousness of God and Christ with our unclean and filthy works: "If it be by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace: but if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work;" thus speaks Paul, Rom. 11.6. A Christian must part with all that is his own, he must count it loss and dung, that he may be found wholly in Christ: he must be stripped, naked, and bare, as one who is dead, and he must surrender all that is his own, as one who is become a bankrupt, that he may be completely clothed and enriched with the righteousness of Christ only. All that he hath in himself is but rags and tatters, it can neither clothe nor feed him.

Shall a Christian then, as if he were not obliged to any duty, sit still, and be careless, and think now I have nothing to do, Christ hath done all for me? No, this is impossible: his looking off from his own righteousness doth not teach him this. Justification by the righteousness of Christ alone through faith obligeth him to prize this truth, to thank the Lord for it, to conduct himself humbly and worthily of this truth by a diligent pursuit of holiness, which we have urged on the foregoing Lord's day. But we must see that we pursue sanctification, as those who are implanted into Christ, and therefore,

1. As justified persons in him by faith: for how can sanctification be acceptable to God, as long as he hath aught against the soul on account of her guilt, by which the Father is justly incensed against her? How can she draw near him boldly with her sacrifice of thanksgiving, except she be delivered from doubts, and able to acquit herself? We must "draw near with a true heart, and a full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water," Heb. 10.22. It behoves you therefore, believers, to labour first and mostly for justification, in order to pursue sanctification therefrom. Endeavour then to obtain an assurance, that ye have been already justified before God, as sinners, and have thus a right to request sanctification on account of the merits of the Lord Jesus: for since he is made righteousness to you,

he is also "made sanctification to you," as Paul saith, 1 Cor. 1.30. Labour then, after any misbehaviour in future, not first and mostly to amend your conduct, but to be justified and reconciled to the Father, and to make your peace with him by accepting your Surety, and pleading on your title to him before the throne, that ye may pursue sanctification from such a justified, pacified and reconciled mind, and thus begin your former holy conversation anew.

2. Pursue sanctification by all means from, and in union with Christ: "Your life must be hidden with Christ in God," according to Col. 3.3. Believers being implanted into Christ, bring forth fruits of thankfulness: "Having been planted together with him in the likeness of his death, we must also be so in the likeness of his resurrection," as the apostle requireth, Rom. 6.5, "Our good conversation is in Christ," as Peter saith, 1 Peter 3.6. It must necessarily be bitter fruit that grows upon a wild tree, but the fruit of a grafted tree is pleasant. No action can be agreeable to God but that which is performed in, and from the union of the soul with Christ: "The fruits of righteousness are to the praise and glory of God" only "through Jesus Christ," as Paul teacheth, Philip 1.11. Hear also what Peter saith, 1 Peter 2.5. "Spiritual sacrifices are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Ye must therefore not reckon it enough that ye have been implanted into Christ by faith, but ye must also abide in and near him continually, and operatively.

3. Strive to do all your works by his Spirit, influence, virtue and power, as the graft bears no fruit, unless it derive its sap from the tree. As long as we exert, fatigue and afflict ourselves without the Spirit, in order to do our duty, we will never perform aught that is acceptable to God: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts," Zech. 4.6. We have shown on the eighth and ninth question how often the soul labours in her own and not in Christ's strength, and thus mars her work. If the soul shall labour rightly, she must abide near and by her stock Jesus, sucking incessantly through the pipes and conduits of the promises from his fullness, grace for grace. Therefore the Saviour saith to you, John 15.4,5, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing."

4. Look nevertheless at the reward, in order to encourage and animate you in your work. The Lord offers a crown at the end of your race, to urge and induce you to strive for it, namely, an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which fadeth not away. When "the prophet Azariah said to king Asa, and to all Judah and Benjamin, Be strong, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded: Asa encouraged himself with all the people," to effect a great reformation and amendment among themselves, 2 Chron. 16. Moses having respect to the recompence of the reward, esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure in Egypt," Heb. 11.26. The Lord is in himself worthy of your universal obedience, faith, love, fear and service; he hath also deserved all this at your hands: yea, believers, ye are yourselves earnestly desirous to please him, and pleasing him is a sufficient reward for you. The Lord will nevertheless be abundantly good to you,

since he will excite you by a reward. Improve this therefore by stirring yourselves up thereby to greater activity in your way. Look not however on the reward, as an equivalent compensation of your work, but have respect to it, as the fruit of the righteousness of Christ, which was purchased for you by him, that it should be given to you upon your work; for "eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ," Rom. 6.23.

Do ye lament that your work is so imperfect, it doth not please the Lord yet to render you perfect, that ye may seek your perfection in the righteousness of his Son. How good is it therefore, that it is not necessary for you to seek your righteousness in your works, but in him, who hath obtained a perfect righteousness for you, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in you," according to Rom. 8.3,4. Do others scoff at you, on account of your zeal, why should ye regard what the despicable slaves, the Hagarenes and Ishmaelites do? Look upon it to be of greater importance what your Saviour saith, Matt. 5.11,12. "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Say not with Asaph, Psalm 73.13,14. "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." For would ye, though ye should suffer ever so much, exchange your condition with an ungodly person, who enjoys the greatest property? although it were even so, that the condition of the ungodly was better in this life than that of the godly, will not their comforts end with their lives, and will not their sorrows begin then? But how will it be then with you? Peter informs you, 1 Peter 5.4. "When the chief shepherd shall appear, then shall ye receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away." Amen.

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