



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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The Believer Exalted in Imputed Righteousness

by Ebenezer Erskine¹

["Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."—Isaiah 45:24-25

The subject of the following discourse is high, noble, and excellent. — But my design at that time, being only to preface a little before the action-sermon, by that eminent and worthy servant of Christ, Mr. William Moncrief, I took care to abridge my thoughts upon it as much as possible. I have since handled the same text, in my ordinary, at far greater length. But the discourse having been quarrelled with, as was hinted in the preface to that on Rev. 3:4, I judged it fit to send it abroad, in the very same dress in which, to the best of my remembrance, it was delivered. It is not accuracy of style or method I set up for, but the edification of the poor, to whom the gospel is preached; and therefore shall contend with none upon those heads. But as for the doctrines here delivered, if I durst not hazard my own salvation upon the truth of them, I had never adventured to preach them as the truths of God to others. I am fully persuaded, that one great reason why the gospel has so little success in our day, is, because our discourses generally are so little calculated for pulling down our own, and exalting the righteousness of Christ, as the alone foundation which God hath laid in Zion. Our sermons lose their savour and efficacy for salvation, if this be wanting: and I humbly think the great apostle Paul was of this mind, Rom. 1:16, 17: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." And if any ask, Whence comes the gospel to have such power to salvation? He immediately answers, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."]

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“In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.”—Psalm 89:16.

The psalmist, in the beginning of this psalm, having run out at great length in the praise and commendation of the God of Israel, proceeds, from the 15th verse of the psalm, to declare the happiness of his Israel, or of true believers, of whom Israel according to the flesh were a type.

Now, God’s Israel are a happy people upon several accounts. 1. Because they are privileged to *know* the *joyful sound*, in the beginning of the 15th verse. The gospel has a joyful sound; a sound of peace, a sound of life, a sound of liberty and salvation. You are all privileged to hear this sound with your bodily ears; but the great question is, do you know it, understand it, and give faith’s entertainment to it? Alas! Isaiah’s lamentation may but too justly be continued, with respect to the greatest part of the hearers of the gospel, “Who hath believed our report?” 2. God’s Israel are a happy people, because they “walk in the light of his countenance,” in the close of the 15th verse. They are privileged with the special intimations of his love, which puts more gladness in their hearts, than when corn, wine and oil abound. 3. Whatever discouragement they may meet with from the world, yet still they have ground of rejoicing in their God: “In thy name shall they rejoice all the day;” and, “Thanks be unto God,” says the apostle, “who always causeth us to triumph in Christ.” 4. Their happiness is evident from this, that they are dignified and exalted above others, by the immaculate robe of a Surety’s righteousness; as you see in the words of my text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.*

In which words briefly we may notice, 1. The believer’s promotion; he is *exalted*. In the first Adam we were debased to the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads: but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we “sit together with him in heavenly places,” says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer, who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious head and representative; and yet it is indisputably true, that we “sit together with him in heavenly places,” Eph. 2:6. Yea, in him he “rules the nations with a rod of iron,” and triumphs over, and treadeth upon all the powers of hell. 2. We have the ground of the believer’s preferment and exaltation; It is *in thy righteousness*. It is not in any righteousness of his own; no; this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but *dung and loss, filthy rags, dogs’ meat*: but it is in *thy* righteousness; that is, *the righteousness of God*,

as the apostle calls it, Rom. 1:17: “The righteousness which is of God by faith,” Phil. 3:9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in scripture.—Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature: Psal. 11:7: “The righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” — Sometimes for his rectoral equity, or distributive justice, which he exercises in the government of the world, rewarding the good, and punishing evil-doers; Psal. 97:2: “Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening; Psal. 36:5, 6: “Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: thy righteousness is like the great mountains.” Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ, the Son of God as our Surety and Mediator, brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners; and this, as I said, is frequently called the *righteousness of God*: and in this sense I understand it here in the text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted*.

The observation is much the same with the words themselves; namely, *That in, or by, the righteousness of Christ, believers are exalted*. Or thus, *To whatever honour or happiness believers are exalted, the righteousness of Christ is the ground and foundation of it*. It is owing to the complete obedience, and meritorious death of the ever-blessed Surety. This is “the foundation which God hath laid in Zion,” upon which all our happiness in time and through eternity is built.

I have not time now to adduce parallel texts of scripture for the confirmation of this doctrine, neither can I stand upon a long prosecution of it, considering what great work you have before you through the day. All I shall do, shall be only,

- I. To offer a few propositions concerning this righteousness, that you may understand both the nature and necessity of it.
- II. Give you a few of its properties, to clear its excellency.
- III. Speak a little of the believer’s exaltation by virtue of this righteousness.
- IV. Apply.

I. For the *first* thing, to *offer a few propositions respecting this righteousness for clearing its nature and necessity*.

1. Then, you would know, that God having made man a rational creature, capable of moral government, gave him a law suited to his nature, by which he was to govern himself in the duties he owed to God his great Creator. This law was delivered to man in the form of a covenant, with a promise of life upon the

condition of perfect obedience, and a threatening of death in case of disobedience, Gen. 2:17. Thus stood matters between God and man in a state of innocence.

2. Adam, and all his posterity in him, and with him, having broken the covenant, are become liable to the curse, and penalty of it; so that our salvation is become absolutely impossible, until justice be satisfied, and the honour of the broken law repaired. The law and justice of God are very peremptory, and stand upon a full satisfaction and reparation, otherwise heaven's gates shall be shut, and eternally barred against man and all his posterity. The flaming sword of justice turns every way, to keep us from access to the paradise that is above.

3. While man in these circumstances, was expecting nothing but to fall an eternal sacrifice to divine justice, the eternal Son of God, in his infinite love and pity to perishing sinners, steps in as a Mediator and Surety; offering not only to take our nature, but to take our law-place, to stand in our room and stead: by which the whole obligation of the law, both penal and preceptive, did fall upon him; that is, he becomes liable and obliged both to fulfil the command, and to endure the curse of the covenant of works, which we had violated. And here, by the way, it is fit to advertise you, that it was an act of amazing grace in the Lord Jehovah, to admit a surety in our room; for had he stood to the rigour and severity of the law, he would have demanded a personal satisfaction, without admitting of the satisfaction of a Surety: in which case Adam, and all his posterity, had fallen under the stroke of avenging justice through eternity. But "Glory to God in the highest," who not only admitted of a Surety but also provided one, and "laid help upon one that is mighty."

4. Christ, the eternal Son of God, being in "the fulness of time, made of a woman, *and* made under the law," as our Surety, he actually, in our room and stead, fulfilled the whole terms of the covenant of works; that is, in a word, he obeyed all the commands of the law, and endured the curse of it, and thus brings in a complete law-righteousness; by which guilty sinners are justified before God. And this is the righteousness by which we are exalted. By his active and passive obedience he *magnifies the law*, and *makes it honourable*, and the Lord declares himself to be *well pleased for his righteousness sake*.

[5. - DK] Although Christ obeyed the law, and satisfied justice, and thus brought in an everlasting law-righteousness for a whole elect world; yet the elect of God are never exalted by virtue of this righteousness, till, in a day of power, they be brought to receive it by faith, and submit to it for justification before God. We disclaim that Antinomian error, of an actual justification from eternity, or yet of a formal justification, bearing date from the death of Christ. We own, indeed,

with all sound Protestant divines, that it was the purpose of God to justify his elect from eternity, and that all the elect were represented by Christ in his obedience unto the death; but that they are actually justified before conversion, or before their application by faith to the blood of Jesus, is impossible; because the sentence of the broken law stands always in force against them, till they actually believe in the Son of God for *he that believeth not, is condemned already*. And how can they be both justified and condemned at the same time? Till then, they are *children of wrath even as others*.

6. This righteousness of the Surety is conveyed to us by imputation; as is abundantly plain from many places of scripture, particularly, Rom. 4:6,11,12,23,24. God reckons what the Surety did in our room to us; so that his righteousness becomes as much ours for justification before God, as though we had obeyed the law, and satisfied justice in our own person. Now, this imputation of the Surety's righteousness runs principally upon these two or three things: (1.) Upon the eternal transaction between the Father and the Son, in which the Son of God was chosen and sustained as the Surety of an elect world. Then it was that he gave bond to the Father, to pay their debt, in the red gold of his blood, saying, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: — Lo, I come: — I delight to do thy will." (2.) It is grounded upon the actual imputation of our sins to him: "The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." There is a blessed exchange of places between Christ and his people: he takes on our sin and unrighteousness, that we may be clothed with the white robe of his righteousness: 2 Cor. 5:21: "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (3.) This imputation goes upon the ground of the mystical union between Christ and the believer. When the poor soul is determined in a "day of power" to embrace the Lord Jesus in the arms of faith, Christ and he in that very moment coalesce into one body, he becomes a branch of the noble vine; a member of that body of which Christ is the glorious Head of eminence, influence, and government. And being thus united to Christ, the long and white robe of the Mediator's righteousness is spread over him; by which he is not only freed from condemnation, but for ever sustained as righteous in the sight of God; 1 Cor 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

II. The *second* general head was, to *offer a few properties of this righteousness in which believers are exalted, from whence its excellency will appear.*

1. Then, it is an every way *perfect* and *spotless* righteousness: and how can it be otherwise, seeing it is the righteousness of God? So perfect is it, that the holy law is not only fulfilled, but *magnified* and *made honourable* thereby, Isa. 42:21. So perfect is this righteousness, that the piercing eye of infinite justice cannot find the least flaw in it: yea, justice is so fully satisfied that God speaks of the soul who is clothed with it, as though it were in a state of innocence, and perfectly freed from sin: “Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.” Indeed, he beholds many spots in the believer, considered in himself; but not a spot is in him, considered as under the covert of this spotless righteousness.

2. It is a *meritorious* righteousness. *The redemption of the soul is so precious*, that it would have *ceased for ever*, unless it had been redeemed by this righteousness; for silver and gold, and such corruptible things, could never do it. Lay heaven, and all the glories of it, in the balance with this righteousness, they would be all light as a feather, compared, with it. Heaven is called a *purchased inheritance*, and this righteousness is the price that bought it. There is such merit in it, that it expiates sins of the blackest hue, and redeems a whole elect world from wrath and ruin. Such is the intrinsic value of it, that, had it been so designed, it was sufficient to have redeemed the whole posterity of Adam, yea, ten thousand worlds of angels and men, upon a supposition of their existence and fall. O with what confidence, then, may a poor soul venture its eternal salvation upon this foundation!

3. It is an *incomparable* righteousness. There is no righteousness among the creatures that can be compared with it. Compare it with our own righteousness by the law, and the apostle Paul will tell us, that he reckoned his Pharisaical righteousness before conversion, yea, his own obedience after conversion, but as *dung*, when laid in the balance with it, Phil. 3:8. Compare it with Adam’s righteousness in a state of innocence, or with the righteousness of the spotless angels, they are but like glow-worms, when compared with this sun: the one is but the righteousness of a creature, but here is “the righteousness of God.”

4. It is a *soul-beautifying* and *adorning* righteousness: Isa. 61:10: “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh herself with ornaments, and as a bride

adorneth herself with her jewels.” The poor soul, that was black, by *lying among the pots*, when clothed with this robe, shines “as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.”

5. It is an *everlasting* righteousness, as the prophet Daniel calls it, chap. 9:24. Indeed, this righteousness had no being, save in the purpose and promise of God, till Christ actually appeared in our nature, and satisfied the commands of the law, and demands of justice: however, upon that very being that it had in the purpose and promise of God, it became *effectual for the* justification of all the Old Testament saints. This righteousness, then, I say, is an everlasting righteousness, both as to the contrivance and duration of it. The contrivance of it bears date from the council of peace in the ancient years of eternity; for the Surety was *set up from everlasting*. And, as it is everlasting in its root, so also in its fruit; for upon this righteousness the saints will stand, and be acquitted at the day of judgment; and upon this bottom they will have their standing in heaven through eternity. The song of the redeemed for ever will be, “he loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”

6. It is a *soul dignifying* and *exalting* righteousness. Solomon, (Prov. 14:34,) speaking of equity in the administration of justice, says, that even that kind of righteousness *exalteth a nation*. I am sure this holds true of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, as you see in my text, *In thy righteousness shall they be exalted*. But this leads to,

III. The *third* thing in the method, which was to *speak of the believer’s exaltation by virtue of this righteousness*. And here I will very briefly show, 1. What evils it exalts him above. 2. What happiness and dignity it exalts him to.

First, What evils it exalts him above.

1. It exalts him above the law as a covenant of works; yea, above both the commanding and the condemning power of that covenant. “Ye are not under the law,” says the apostle, “but under grace,” Rom. 6:14.

And if they be not under it, it follows that they are exalted above it. Indeed, they are not, and cannot be above it as a rule of duty; no creature can be dispensed from the obligation of yielding obedience to the laws of the great Creator; and the believer, in a peculiar manner, is bound to obey the law of the Creator, in the hand of a Mediator. But considering the law as a covenant of works, demanding the debt of obedience as a condition of life, or threatening eternal wrath in case of disobedience, the believer is indeed exalted above it by

the righteousness of Christ. And if the law at any time attempt to bring the believer in bondage to it, he is to “stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free.” The bond woman Hagar, with her offspring of legal fears and terrors, are cast out by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Gal. 4:30. If a believer in Christ shall hear the thunderings and curses of mount Ebal, or Sinai, he has no reason to be affrighted; for “Christ,” by his righteousness, “hath redeemed from the curse of the law.” “Thou art not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest: — but thou art come unto mount Sion,— and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” The believer is “dead to the law by the body of Christ,” being married to a better husband, even him that is raised from the dead.

2. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above the world. Rev. 12:1, the “woman clothed with the sun, has the moon under her feet;” which may not only point at the believer’s duty to soar heavenward in his afflictions, but also his privilege in Christ, to trample both upon the frowns and flatteries of this lower world; according to that [declaration] of the apostle, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”

3. By this righteousness he is exalted above the power and malice of Satan, indeed, as long as the believer is on this side of Jordan, the devil will be harassing him with his fiery darts, and do his utmost to make him go halting to heaven; but by virtue of this righteousness, namely, the doing and dying of our ever-blessed Surety, the devil is both disarmed and destroyed. The head of the of the old serpent is bruised; for “through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. And by faith in the blood and obedience of the Lord Jesus, the believer treads Satan under his feet; they *overcome* him *by the blood of the Lamb*.”

4. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above death. Perhaps thou art in bondage through fear of death; thy heart is like to faint and fail thee, when thou lookest to the swelling of this Jordan. But take a view of this righteousness, and thou shalt be exalted above the fears of it for although thou be liable to the stroke of death, yet by this righteousness thou art freed from the sting of it. What is the sting of death? It is sin. Now, Christ has “finished transgression, and made an end of sin,” by bringing in “everlasting righteousness.” And therefore thou mayest roll that word like a sweet morsel under thy tongue, Hos. 13:14: “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”

5. By this righteousness the believer is exalted above all accusations, from whatever quarter they may come, Rom. 8:23. There the apostle gives a bold challenge, “who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?” The challenge is universal in every respect of all accusers: as if he had said, Is there any in heaven, earth, or hell that can accuse them? It is universal in respect of all the accused; for the whole elect of God are comprehended, among whom there have been as great sinners as ever breathed on God’s earth. And it is universal in respect of all crimes: it is not said, Who shall lay this, or that, or the other crime to their charge? But *any thing*? And what can be more comprehensive? Now, what is the ground of this bold challenge! It is grounded on the righteousness of Christ: for, says the apostle, “It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, &c.”

Secondly, I come to show what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted to by virtue of this righteousness. And, in so many words, I only name these two or three particulars: —

1. He is exalted by it to a state of peace and reconciliation with God: Rom. 5:1: “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” God forever lays aside every grudge in his heart against the soul that is clothed with it.

2. They are exalted by this righteousness to a state of son-ship. Christ was “made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons,” Gal. 4:4,5.

3. To a state of fellowship and familiarity with, God and access to him with holy confidence and boldness: Heb. 10:19-22: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a high priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” Heb. 4:14,16: “Seeing, then, that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace.” The believer may come, under the covert of this righteousness, with as great freedom to God as his Father in Christ, as ever Adam could have done in a state of innocence.

4. At last thou shalt be exalted to a state of endless glory. For heaven (as I intimated before) is the purchase of the obedience and death of Christ; and faith acted on this righteousness and satisfaction, is *the path of life*, by which we enter into these *rivers of pleasures*, and that *fulness of joy* which is *at God’s right hand for evermore*.

IV. The *fourth* thing was the *application* of the doctrine. And my *first* use shall be of *information*, in these few particulars: —

1. Is it so, that in a Surety's righteousness believers are exalted? then see hence, that whatever account the world may make of them; as the dross and off-scouring of the earth; yet they are dignified persons in God's reckoning: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable."

2. See, hence, that the believer has no ground of boasting. Why? Because it is not in his own, but in Christ's righteousness, that he is exalted: "Boasting is excluded," says the apostle. "By what law? of works! Nay; but by the law of faith," Rom. 3:27. If it were by our own doings or obedience that we were exalted, we would have something to boast of: but since it is in his righteousness that we are exalted, we have nothing whereof to glory in ourselves. There are three questions that the apostle asks, which may silence all flesh, and put all boasters to an eternal blush, 1 Cor. 4:7: "Who maketh thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive? Why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" Let believers themselves ask their souls these, or the like inquiries, when pride begins to rise in their breasts.

3. See, hence, what obligation we lie under to the Lord Jesus; who, although he was the great Lawgiver, yet was content to be made under the law; though he was the Lord of life, yet humbled himself unto the death, to bring in that righteousness by which we are exalted. He was content to be "numbered among the transgressors," that we might be counted among the righteous; he was content to become sin," that we might be made the righteousness of God;" content to become "a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might rest upon us." O admire this love, which *passeth knowledge*.

4. See, hence, a noble antidote against a spirit of bondage to fear. What is it that thou fearest, O believer? Indeed, if thou sin, thou mayest fear the rod of a Father; for he "will visit thy transgression with the rod, and thine iniquity with stripes." But art thou afraid of vindictive wrath? There is no ground for this, (Luke 1:74:) he has "delivered us out of the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him without fear;" that is, without all servile or slavish fear of wrath. Art thou afraid of the tempests of mount Sinai? There is no ground for that, for the storm broke upon the head of thy Surety; and, therefore, thou mayst sing and say; as Isa. 12:1, "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away." Art thou afraid, lest thou be refused access to the presence-chamber? Improve this righteousness by faith, and thou shalt see that the way to the holy of holiest is opened, and get the banner of love displayed over thee. Whenever the poor

believer takes the righteousness of the Surety in the hand of faith, and holds it up to God as a ransom of his own finding, he is so well pleased with it, that his frowns are turned into smiles. In a word, you shall never get rid of a spirit of bondage, till you learn by faith to improve this law-biding righteousness; and then, indeed, legal fears and terrors vanish, like the darkness of the night before the rising of the sun.

Use *second*, of *reproof* to all those who are seeking to exalt themselves by a righteousness of their own, like the Jews, Rom. 10:3; who “went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God.” There are some of the hearers of the gospel, who exalt themselves in a negative righteousness: they are not so bad as others: they are free of gross outbreakings, being no common drunkards, swearers, or Sabbath-breakers; and, therefore, conclude that all is right with them. But, sirs, the Pharisee could make this boast: and Paul before conversion could say, that *touching the law* he was *blameless*, and yet, when God opened his eyes, he found himself lying under the arrest of justice; for, “when the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.” Others are exalting themselves in a moral kind of righteousness; they not only cease to do evil,” but do many things that are materially good: they are sober, temperate, just in their dealings, liberal to the poor, good peaceable neighbours; they love every body, and every body loves them; they keep the commandments as well as they can: and this is the ground they are standing upon. But I may say to you, as Christ said to the young man, who told him, “All these things have I kept from my youth up, Yet lackest thou one thing.” O what is that? say you. I answer, it is to be brought off from the rotten bottom of a covenant of works, that you are standing upon. You want to see that you are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, and that you are legally dead, condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on you. You want to see, that “all your own righteousness is as filthy rags,” and to be made to say, with the church, “Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.” Others will go farther than bare morality: they will abound in the duties of religion, read, bear, pray, communicate, run from sermon to sermon, from sacrament to sacrament; and upon these things they rest. All these things are good in their proper places; but if you build your hope of acceptance here, you are still upon a covenant of works bottom, seeking righteousness, “as it were by the works of the law;” and while you do so, you do but seek the living among the dead. All your works are but dead works, till you are in Christ; and they will but stand for ciphers in God’s reckoning, till you be brought to submit to this righteousness, by which alone guilty sinners can be exalted. Others rely upon a mixed kind of righteousness: they will freely own, that their duties and performances will never exalt them into

favour and acceptance with God; but, O, say they, it is Christ and our duties, Christ and our prayers, he and our tears and repentance, that must do it. But believe it, sirs, Christ and the idol of self will never cement; these old rotten rags will never piece in with the white and new robe of the righteousness of the Son of God: and if you adventure to mingle them together, “Christ shall profit you nothing,” Gal. 5:2-4. Others again, will pretend to renounce all their works and duties, and own, with their mouths, that it is by faith in Christ only that they hope to be accepted: but though they own this with their mouth, yet still their hearts cleave fast to a covenant of works; they were never “through the law, dead to the law;” and when nothing else will do, they will make their own act of believing the righteousness on which they lead for acceptance; which is still a seeking righteousness in themselves: whereas, if ever we be justified before God, we must have it in the Lord Jesus, saying, “In him” will we “be justified,” and “in him alone” will we “glory.” Faith carries the soul quite out of itself; yea, faith renounces its own act in the point of justification. All these, and many other rooms and lying refuges, have the devil and our own hearts devised, to lead us off from Christ. But, O sirs, believe it, these are but imaginary sanctuaries, and the hail will sweep them away. Nothing but the doing and dying of the Surety, apprehended by faith, will ever exalt you into favour and fellowship with God, or acquit you from the curse and condemnation of the broken law. And unless you betake yourselves to the horns of this blessed altar, to this refuge of God’s appointing, you are undone; and you may read your doom, Isa. 50:11: “Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.”

Use *third*, of *trial*. Is it so, that in Christ’s righteousness we are exalted? O then, sirs, try if you be really exalted by this righteousness.

There is a the more need to try this now, that you are to approach the table of the Lord. This righteousness is the wedding-garment, without which you cannot be welcome guests. And if you adventure to meddle with the symbols of Christ’s body and blood without it, you may expect that the master of the feast will say to you, “Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?” For your trial, I offer these two or three things: —

1. Hast thou seen thyself condemned by the law or covenant of works? Every man, by nature, “is condemned already,” while out of Christ. Now, the ordinary way that God takes of bringing an elect soul into Christ, and under the covering of his righteousness, is by discovering to him the sentence of condemnation that he is under by virtue of the broken law; and thus paves the way

toward his acceptance of Christ as “the Lord our Righteousness;” for thus it is that “the law is our schoolmaster, to lead us unto Christ, that we may be justified by faith.” The Lord leads the sinner to mount Zion by the foot of Sinai: the Spirit’s way is, first, to “convince of sin,” and then “of righteousness.”

2. Has the Lord discovered the Surety and his righteousness to thee? And has thy soul found rest here? Perhaps the law, and its curses, justice and wrath, were pursuing thee; and thou couldst not find a hole in which to hide thy head, “all refuge failed.” At length the Lord drew by the veil, and discovered his righteousness as a sufficient shelter, saying, “Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope.” And thither thou fledst, as to a city of refuge, saying, “This is my rest, here will I dwell.” Readily, when it comes to this, there is a little heaven of serenity and joy enters into the soul; so that, if it were possible, it would make heaven and earth to ring with hallelujas of praise to God for “his unspeakable gift.” Dost thou not know, O believer, something of this, to thy sweet experience? This says, that in his righteousness thou art exalted.

3. When an arrow of conviction is at any time shot by the hand of God into thy conscience, by which thy peace and quiet is disturbed, whither dost thou run for ease and relief? The man that is “married to the law,” runs to the law for relief and ease: the law is the thing that heals him; his prayers, his tears, his reformation, is that which stops the mouth of conscience. But, as for the believer, he can never find rest on this side of “the blood of sprinkling,” he gets his healing only from under the wings of the Sun of righteousness. No other balm will give him ease, but the *balm of Gilead*; and no other hand can apply it, but *the Physician* there.

4. If you be exalted by imputed righteousness, you will be the real students of gospel-holiness. It is a gross perversion of the gospel, and a turning of the grace of our God into wantonness, for any to pretend that they are justified by the merit of Christ, while they are not at the same time concerned to be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. Sanctification, or freedom from the power and dominion of sin, is a part, and no small part, of that salvation which Christ has purchased by his obedience and death; Tit. 2:14: “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Justification and sanctification go always hand in hand. He who is *made of God unto us righteousness*, is also *made sanctification*; we are *justified and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*. Try yourselves, then, by this, whether you be exalted by this righteousness. Are you delivered from the reigning power of sin? at least, is it so far broken, that it is become your burden, under which you groan, saying, with the apostle, “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Use *fourth* shall be of *consolation* and *encouragement* to believers who are exalted in this righteousness. By virtue of it, O believer, thou art entitled to every thing that possibly thou canst stand in need of. Whatever grace or mercy thou wantest, thou shalt have it, if thou do but improve this law-biding righteousness. Dost thou want pardoning grace to take away the guilt of sin? That is one of the gifts of God, through the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith; for “he is set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.” Dost thou want to have thy peace with God confirmed? Improve this righteousness by faith; for “being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Dost thou want “access unto the holiest?” By faith in the blood of Jesus have we *access with boldness*. Dost thou want medicinal grace for healing of soul plagues? Improve this righteousness by faith; for by *his stripes we are healed*. Out of the side of our gospel-altar comes forth living water, that healeth the corrupt and dead sea of indwelling corruption, Ezek. 47:9. This is “the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.” Dost thou want a shadow or covering, to shelter thy weary soul from the scorching heat of divine anger, or of temptation from Satan or tribulation from the world? Improve this righteousness, and sit down under the shadow of it; it is “as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Dost thou want courage to look the law or justice of God in the face? Here is a fund for it; for under this covering thou mayst look out with confidence, and say, *Who can lay any thing to my charge?* Dost thou want to have the new covenant confirmed to thy soul? improve this righteousness by faith; for Christ, by his obedience and death, *confirmed the covenant with many*. His blood is the *blood of the New Testament*; and when the soul by faith takes hold of it, the covenant of grace is that moment confirmed to it for ever. In a word, by virtue of this righteousness thou mayst come to a communion-table, and to a throne of grace, and ask what thou wilt; our heavenly Father can refuse nothing to the younger brethren, who come to him in their Elder Brother’s garment. By virtue of this righteousness, thou mayst lay claim to every thing, to all the blessings of heaven and eternity. Thou didst, indeed, forfeit thy right in the first Adam; but the forfeiture is recovered, and the right restored to thee upon a better ground, namely, upon the obedience and death of the second Adam; and thou comest in upon his right. May not all this then revive thy drooping spirit, and make thee take up that song in the text, *In thy name will I rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness will I be exalted.*

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