

## Divine Righteousness

J. N. Darby.

The progress of discussion on the question of divine righteousness, and a rapid review of what I have myself written, present the whole matter to me in so serious a light, that I have been led to resume my pen upon it. I do this the rather as I see that more are entangled in the pernicious error which I seek to oppose than I was at first aware of, and that **the error is more grave than I had thought when I first rejected it as wrong.**

That the "British and Foreign Evangelical Review," and after it, the "Irish Christian Examiner," should have admitted an article so utterly anti-christian in doctrine as they did, proves such utter blindness as to what truth and error is, in the professed leaders of religious opinions, that I feel more than ever the need of having the truth as to the righteousness of God fully and clearly before the mind. I am not unaware of the clamour that has been raised, nor of the warnings against dangerous errors, which have been the natural resource of those who could not answer what was said, and would not admit the truth that was produced. Nor am I ignorant how any error was accepted, provided the divine truth I insisted on from scripture was condemned. All this has only served to shew me the real source of the opposition and the importance of the question raised.

Were it merely a question as to "Brethren" (so-called), I should not feel disposed to stir; but this is in no way the case. What the Church is, and its present state, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, is that which is important, and with that, the coming of the Lord. But the question of what is righteousness before God, and the righteousness of God, is of vital importance for the whole Church of God. I am satisfied that a large number of souls are misled as to it, and that a right apprehension of it is a means of spiritual deliverance for them. Many a simple soul has no distinct thought about it, resting simply in peace before God upon Christ's work. They are happy. They may learn more, no doubt, but I can only hope they may keep their simplicity and their peace. But many are kept back by false teaching on the subject. What has been taught beyond simple redemption and atonement has, I am bold to say, only darkened counsel. I am perfectly aware that I shall have a whole host of evangelical teachers warning and denouncing. Save for their sakes, I am quite indifferent to that, if I have scripture with me and guiding me; as I have no kind of doubt I have. The opposition only shews the need of being decided, and making the matter plain from scripture. My opponents have gone wrong, and the clamours of those I am sure are wrong do not move me, except to be still more decided.

Some may blame my confidence as to the possession of the truth, and this apparent braving of others. **But scripture is of sacred and sufficient authority, and if the school of doctrine I oppose is misleading the saints, it is worth while to denounce their doctrine as unscriptural and mischievous error.** Had I any bitter feeling, I should be blameable; but I do not even know the persons I am opposed to, save one or

two by name. I am not conscious of any such feeling. **But I do denounce the doctrine of our righteousness being made out by Christ's keeping the law for us, as unscriptural, and subversive of the whole scheme of Christianity, as regards our position before God.** Paul (who, as is well known, is the great teacher of the doctrine of justification) laboriously argues against every thought of the kind;\* and the doctrine which Paul teaches is wholly set aside, if such a notion be received. It is this which makes me earnest on it. **It subverts the doctrine of the New Testament as to the true standing of a Christian before God. My adversaries insist that Christ kept the law for us, and that that constitutes our positive righteousness before God. This I deny: not that He kept the law, but that this is our righteousness. Scripture teaches no such doctrine; but it teaches the contrary.** Issue is thus fairly joined. I denounce the doctrine as unscriptural and contrary to christian truth. I affirm that those who teach it are in this respect false teachers. The arguments of my adversaries I have sufficiently met as they have been presented from time to time in the controversy. My object now is different – to treat the subject as a whole from its source as a system of doctrine.

{\* . . . the expression of "the Pauline doctrine of righteousness." . . . while surely one only divine Spirit indited the whole, no apostle, with the exception of James insisting on its demonstration by works, treats the question, or speaks of justification at all; and there cannot be a more appropriate or apt expression than "the Pauline doctrine of righteousness." It is in the writings of Paul, and there only, that this doctrine is found elaborately treated. That all other scriptures are in accordance with it, I do not for a moment doubt.}

**The starting point of these doctors is the law.** Righteousness [they say] is measured by the law. There must be a law to have righteousness, or sin on the other hand. Sin is the transgression of the law. "It is evident then," says Dr. O'Brien, "that in the justification with which we have to do – in which man is the party and God is the Judge\* – we have only to look to the law to which man is answerable, to see what justification means." **This is the doctrine of the whole party. Hence, all must be put under the law and the same law.** Thus Adam is placed under it; and hence Mr. Molyneux, who does but refer to the common doctrine, says, "It was said to Adam 'Do this and live.'" And this is carried so far, that in the "Marrow of Modern Divinity," it is explained how Adam broke each of the commandments. So the heathen are put under the same law; hence the Christian also; while distinctions of absolute law, and particular formal law, are invented to meet the plain argument which scripture affords against this.

{\*Note here, it is only a justification provided for God of which He judges, not His work to justify. But even so, it is not true; Gentiles are judged differently from Jews.}

**The whole system is false in every part of it;** and if, instead of saying, "we have only to look to the law to which man is answerable," I do look to scripture and revelation, I find the apostle there very carefully shewing that this is not the ground on which we stand at all, but another – God's righteousness, which he carefully and diligently

contrasts with it. He diligently shews that we are not to do, what Dr. O'Brien says we are to do; and moreover, that we are under the curse if we do it. This evidently is a serious question. **These teachers of the law are telling us to do exactly what the apostle is telling us not to do – what he denounces – what he tells us puts men under a curse.** But I must answer each portion in detail to clear the ground, before I take up the system as a whole.

**Every part and parcel of it is false. In the first place (for it is well to give the first place to what is alleged as scripture) sin is not the *transgression of the law*.** The translation [of 1 John 3:4] is a false one, brought about, I doubt not, by this system of doctrine. The word [ἀνομία] is used in *contrast* with being under law. It is translated differently by the translators themselves elsewhere. They that have "sinned without law shall also perish without law," and they that have "sinned under the law shall be judged by the law." (Rom. 2:12.) Now, what has been translated "transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4) is the same (as to the force of the word, only here as an adverb) as what is translated here "*without law*" (Rom. 2:12), in contrast to being under it and judged by it. That is, what has been translated "transgression of the law," is by the apostle expressly contrasted with it. It is *lawlessness*. This is a serious thing. **This doctrine as to the law has led to the falsification of the scriptural definition of sin. I do not think any honest man will pretend to say that ἀνομία means *transgression of the law*, or the same thing as παράβασις νόμου.**

The principle of the system is, that "Do this and live" was said to Adam. This is equally false. "This do and live" was not said to Adam; nor, as is stated in the "Marrow of Modern Divinity," implied in the threat of death on his eating the forbidden fruit [i.e., from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil]. **Adam had nothing to do. He was not put to gain life by doing anything. He was not yet fallen under the power of death at all.** As far as security of life was attached to any act at all, it was to the eating of the other tree [i.e., the tree of life]; **but that he was never told to *eat and live*.** It is a striking fact, that responsibility, and a source or sustainment of life, were thus set as distinct things even in Paradise. That which has been the puzzle of heathens and Jews, and school men, and theologians, to reconcile – responsibility, and the free gift of life – stood out there, were represented in these two trees. The creature failed in his responsibility – *did*, and died. **It is to this these teachers seek to bring us back,** when the revelation of God is "the *gift of God* is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." **But Adam was never given a promise of life conditioned on his doing anything; was never put on this ground by God; but had a warning of death, he being alive, if he disobeyed. What is said on this subject is a mischievous, fatal, and anti-scriptural statement.** Not only is it not found in scripture (for they can never produce scripture for any of their statements) but scripture puts Adam on wholly different ground. **There was nothing he was set to do, there is no promise of life in doing it. He was alive and threatened with death. This false doctrine subverts the whole truth of the fall, and of our condition as fallen. Adam fell from what *he was in* – did not lose a promise, for none was made to him. All the revealed principles of God's dealings are falsified by this system.**

We have seen man on the ground of responsibility, and failing; and the tree of life, otherwise free to him without any doing or condition, untouched. Man was now fallen and sinful; separated from God, and sinful in nature. I pass over the great and solemn judgment, executed on earth as the result of this state, because it was a judicial act.

The next thing God does is to give a promise, not of life, but of the *Seed*, of Christ (an unconditional promise that all nations should be blessed in Abraham), and this subsequently is confirmed to the Seed. No promise of life was given to Adam, fallen or unfallen. It was declared in the judgment on Satan, that the Seed of the woman should bruise his head. But the Seed of the woman – the first Adam was not; but the Second. This seed is now promised to Abraham without any condition as to its gift. Up to this, the one only law, and which in its nature (as a covenant on express terms) excludes all other as ground and measure of responsibility, was the prohibition of eating the forbidden fruit. **Man's heart and nature had departed from God before even he outwardly broke through the prohibition;** but this is another matter. The spiritual man may perceive this, but this has nothing to do with a law or the terms of a covenant.

After this promise, made unconditionally to Abraham (not of life, but of the Seed), came the law. Not that it could touch that promise or the covenant – impossible, as the apostle shews us in the Galatians; but it was added that there might be transgressions till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made. Up to this there had been no promise of life at all. There had been the legal covenant made with Adam, the transgression of which involved death; and the promise of the Seed, without any condition at all – as to its principle, an unconditional promise. Such unquestionably are the scriptural facts as to this, and the statement, in fact, of the Galatians. **When the law came, there was a promise of life [not eternal life, but earthly life, “enjoying life, under God's blessing, in this world,” “human life in blessing before God”], a conditional promise:** “he that doeth them shall live in them” (Lev. 18), quoted by Paul in Romans 10, as the expression of the law's principle as to the way of righteousness, although it remains still and infallibly true, that life and incorruptibility were *brought to light* by the gospel [2 Tim. 1:10]: it is not said [that life and incorruptibility were] first *given* [by the gospel].

**But thus far we have found – that the statement as to Adam, that he was put under the terms “Do this and live,” is not found in scripture; but that, on the contrary, he was set in a quite different condition, and on other terms. It is a subversion of scripture instruction to place him under the law as subsequently given. He was under a covenant; but, as living, threatened with falling under the power of death. We have found that Abraham, the next remarkable *dealing and revelation* of God, was not placed under any law at all as the ground of righteousness – he was justified by faith [note: until the giving of the Mosaic Law (“a special system introduced to test man when he was really a sinner under death . . . to bring to light what he really was”), God had not yet raised the question of righteousness, of acquiring righteousness before God; though, *in principle*, it was**

settled in Abraham]; and that the promise was given to him without any condition whatever, and that that promise was not of life, but of the Seed, Christ. These cases shew that this general putting under law, from Adam onwards, is an effacing of the clear positive instruction of scripture as to the various positions in which men were set. The notion that the law was written in Adam's heart is equally unfounded. He had not yet acquired the knowledge of good and evil necessary to the application of the law, and it is yet more evident, for he had another formal law to test obedience; and, certainly, that was not written on his heart.

But we are arrived, in the progress of God's dealings, *at the giving of the law*. The *question of righteousness*, which the unconditional promise had not raised, is *now* raised. Righteousness is required from man. But we must notice this a little more particularly.

We find, again, the two great principles of paradise, responsibility and life; but life dependent on man's satisfying his responsibility, "This do, and thou shalt live." No doubt the literal statement in Leviticus *refers to their enjoying life, under God's blessing, in this world*; still the great principle is laid down, and hopes beyond this world gleamed through the darkness by the inspired cravings of men's hearts, and the prophetic testimony of the word. If a man kept God's commandments, he would live. But, as the apostle says, "that which was ordained for life, I found to be unto death." "If there had been a law given, which could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law." But there was not.

The law was a special system introduced to test man when he was really a sinner under death, yet pretending to power and free will, and to bring to light what he really was. It was found to be a ministration of death and condemnation, the strength of sin, making sin exceeding sinful; and, though not by any fault of the law, provoking the action of sin. But it was only added *till* the Seed should come, to whom the promise was made. It was the exact rule of what God required from man, but man was a sinner. It did not give life, did not lead into righteousness before God. The keeping of it would make a man find life. But this [keeping of it], Christ excepted, no man ever did. It prohibited, necessarily and rightly, what man did and was and felt; and commanded what was contrary to his state and feelings, according to the nature of the old man. It was a process, a dealing with man, of the weightiest character, because its contents were the perfection of man as such; but it was a testing process, it did not give life. It could not do so in itself, even if it were kept. It resulted in sin's becoming exceeding sinful, not in righteousness.

In Christ, God took up the question of the trees again; but not in requiring or forbidding, but in acting. He gives life – life in Christ, and Christ takes the whole consequence of our responsibility on Himself; puts all away; and, having perfectly glorified God therein, places man, according to sovereign goodness, in the glory of God. I speak, of course, of the efficacy of His work for believers. Here only can man find the conciliation of responsibility and the possession of life. But it is **grace, the act and work of God**. He has given His only begotten Son, that we might live through

Him, and to be the propitiation for our sins. Now, as He is, so are we in this world. It is a glorious and blessed solving, by God in sovereign grace, of what never could be solved in any other way. Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Law never was the means of obtaining righteousness, or giving life, and was never meant to be. It was given to Adam in a way not involving the knowledge of good and evil, but testing obedience under the penalty of death. On failure the Seed of the woman was announced in the judgment on the serpent, but no promise was given to Adam. Promise of the blessing of all nations is given to Abraham, and confirmed to the Seed, Christ. Then the question of acquiring righteousness before God is raised (which, yet in principle, was already settled in Abraham) in the giving of the law, and divine favour on obedience. The result, and necessarily so to a sinful nature, is that law works wrath by transgression. We may add, man's state is then fully tested by God's manifestation in grace on the earth, and judgment pronounced on the world: "Now is the judgment of this world." But thus God is perfectly glorified by the Second Adam's work; and He the author of divine life and eternal salvation.

We may consider the law and Christ, as the two great principles on this question of life and righteousness; the old covenant, and the great foundation of the new; or (which more concerns us now, because both are directly made with Israel) as the two great principles of righteousness – on man's part, under responsibility *for* God, and life sought for thus (and here God is simply a *Judge*, as Dr. O'Brien says), or righteousness on God's part for man, and eternal life given, our sins being put away, and God perfectly glorified (and here God is a *justifier*), this leading into heavenly places by sovereign grace to us, according to the perfect glorifying *of* God, accomplished by Christ.

Now the law, as we have seen, was never the way of getting life – law, either on tables of stone, or on the heart, never the way of obtaining righteousness, though if it could have *given* life, it might have been so; that is, of obtaining the *righteousness of law, not God's, but man's*.

The notion of a universal legal righteousness is proved false by God's various ways with man. But if we reject the thought of one general rule – the law, by which righteousness was to be obtained – were there then various ways of obtaining life and righteousness before God, because God dealt in these various ways? By no means. But God's way of giving life alike proves the falseness of their legal system. These were means of testing and instructing man by the dealings and ways of God, that he might know himself in relationship to God. Eternal life was always the gift of God. It was promised before the world began, and was manifested in due time through preaching. Our saving and calling were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, and is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel." No man can give himself natural life; still less, divine: this is in and from Christ for man. The law did not give it, so Paul tells us; no law was given that

could, and no better law was possible than what was given. It did declare that "he that doeth these things shall live in them;" but declared it to one who had a nature not subject to the law of God, and which could not be. But righteousness and life cannot really be separated. If we live before God, it must be as accepted and righteous in His sight. If a law had been given which could have given life, righteousness should have been by the law. So Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law on this wise, "The man that doeth these things shall live in them." The righteousness of faith is not separated from life, though not by it. Christ is both to us, both to all who ever had life, or ever had righteousness. His death proved the righteousness of God in forgiving the sins of believers before He came. "God hath set him forth for a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his (God's) righteousness." But eternal life was promised before the world was. The question of righteousness was raised by sin coming in.

To turn now to this: Adam, innocent, had never the question of his acceptance raised, nor that of righteousness. He was what God made him. To speak of justifying him were to call in question the workmanship of his Maker. But conscience once come in [with the knowledge of good and evil, upon the fall], the question is there: "how can a man be just with God?" Abraham was not justified by law or by works, but by faith without works; for "to him that worketh is the reward of debt not of grace." Those under the law were not justified by its works, as is manifest from scripture. The whole system of the law as the means of righteousness was left behind by the christian Jew, to have it in another way (Gal. 2:15, 16), the faith of Christ. Was the law then abrogated for those who were under it? It was not. But they died from under it by the body of Christ, to stand on another footing and in another life altogether – even in Christ, their life and their righteousness. They are not in the flesh, they are not under the law; but they have put off the old man and put on the new man. They are alive unto God through Jesus, according to all the value of what He has done for them, purged from sin, and accepted in the Beloved. The law is always an *individual* thing. "The *man that doeth* shall live in them." The very essence of it is that the man *himself* does it, that he is obedient; not he disobedient, and *another* obedient for him. The man that does them is justified. But the law had raised the question of righteousness.

The knowledge of good and evil was come in, sin and conscience together, and for peace and divine acceptance there must be righteousness. The law had put it on the ground of man's doing, as alive and responsible to God in this world. It could only have done it thus. No doubt faith [in OT saints under the law] looked beyond, but man on earth had to be righteous according to his state on earth. That was the way, the only way, on the ground of man's responsibility, and as God, in giving the rule of this in the law (though its highest requirements were, so to speak, hidden in it), gave a perfect rule for man as His creature down here, man has applied it to all times, and as eternal, necessary, and the only ground of righteousness, the only one for all times. So it would be, if man was to have his own righteousness. But is that so? And if eternal life, promised in grace before the world was, is to be conferred, is that to be found by earning it under law? Or, has not God some other way, and man another

need? **Man's conscience tells him he ought to be what the law requires; his pride tells him he may be; and theologians, feeling they cannot, seek to meet it by making it up some other way, but keep it as the measure.**

**This, then, is the question: the law being the perfect rule of man's conduct as a creature, is it the one ever true abiding way of life and righteousness to him, or has God another? That which makes it difficult to man to get out of this thought that the law has this eternal place is, that it is the measure of righteousness for man, the true perfect rule of it, and his conscience owns it. My adversaries say it is the one abiding way of righteousness, and that what God has done is to fulfil it for man, maintaining it, not merely as right, and as the rule of righteousness for man, but as that by the fulfilling of which righteousness is to be obtained and life eternal. I affirm that it is the perfect rule of human or creature righteousness; but that it is not, and never has been, the way of obtaining righteousness before God; the way of God's righteousness; that God's ways have shewn it; and that, though it be in itself a perfect, and therefore, immutable rule for creature righteousness, God, who did not mean us to have righteousness that way, brought it in by the by. I go farther, and say, it was never meant to be, and never could be, that by which righteousness was established for us, but that God has shewn the weakness of the creature, and the impossibility of his attaining to righteousness as such, and has condemned and set aside the whole nature and state of things in which the law has its operation, in view of our introduction into heavenly places.\***

**{\*The law will be written in men's hearts for the establishment of government and righteousness on earth under Christ. But even that is founded on the work by which divine righteousness is established.}**

In the first place, our salvation and calling was given us, not according to any works at all, but in Christ Jesus before the world began. There was the promise of eternal life. It is the sovereign gift of God. The Son quickens whom He will. No law has been given which could give life. As regards righteousness, the law could do nothing in it. **Adam, innocent, had no need to acquire any righteousness. As I have said, he was what God had made him; the law, as God has given it, could have no application to him; stealing, lust, and loving his neighbour, had no force for him. In no way could the principle of law, as requiring righteousness, be applied to an innocent person. An imposed rule does not suit such a one; nor a law which supposes evil, one who is ignorant of it. When he had fallen, it is quite clear the law could not justify or give righteousness. It was applicable then, but could only condemn. By it was the knowledge of sin. Neither the purpose nor the ways of God give righteousness by any law.** The law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. In Him was life, and "he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" – the eternal source of it, He that hath "brought life and incorruptibility to light by the gospel."

The great question then arises as to direct proof: has not God set up another *kind* of righteousness than that of law? And if so, the fulfilment of the law cannot accomplish



that righteousness, a righteousness which is not the adequate fulfilment of man's obligations (and the law can be no more), but the glorifying of *God's* nature fully, so that He is glorified in blessing according to all that that nature is. Not the setting aside of the authority of the law; for both God's authority and real creature-righteousness were involved in it; but magnifying it, yet putting man on another ground as to his acceptance, the fruit of God's thoughts and God's work, made good in setting Christ at His right hand; setting man on the ground of resurrection by the glory of the Father, and, I may add, heavenly glory; the law knowing nothing of resurrection, but applying to man alive in this world. I affirm that, according to scripture, there is such a new divine justification and righteousness. It has a double bearing or aspect. It meets the failure of men, as under the responsibilities of the first Adam, including the transgression of the law. It places man, accepted of God, in a wholly new position, in which divine life in power is also found: and God is just or righteous in both. It is according to what *He is*, not what man ought to be merely, though atonement meets that. It is from Him, His doing, and put in force by Him in justifying. He it is that acts in it in grace, so that it is His righteousness. It is in contrast with man's, founded on Christ's work in manhood, but in which God Himself was glorified; and into which man is brought, so that in it, He, *God*, is *just* and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus; otherwise God could only have been just in condemning, for justice had nothing to do with unfallen Adam. He was, I repeat, what God had made him, and should have stayed so. God cannot judge or call in question His own work, so as to apply justice to it.

Now, in scripture, we find man's righteousness, or legal righteousness, always contrasted with God's, in nature, in fact, and in principle; the latter being distinctively introduced by the gospel, while promised of old; the law having in the interval raised the question of man's righteousness and given the true measure of it so that God has confirmed it by His divine sanction. Thus "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not . . . That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "That is," as he says, "the word of faith which we preach." Now, here I find expressed that the righteousness which is of the law speaks one language, and the righteousness which is of faith another. This is expressly declared, but it is confirmed by the fact that, when speaking of Christ, it speaks nothing of His life or law-keeping, as connected with the righteousness of faith, but of His death and resurrection. Remark further, that, in this righteousness of faith, man does not do or act, but believe; God acts. He has raised Christ from the dead. I believe in what *God has done*.

Paul is not ashamed of the gospel, because therein the righteousness of God is revealed in the way of faith to faith – a new thing as to its revealed completeness and ground, though prophesied of old. So, in Romans 3, God's righteousness apart from law is manifested. It is "at this time," and "*His* righteousness," that *He* might be just and justify him that was of the faith of Jesus. It may be alleged, Yes, but that is by Christ's keeping the law. But it is not. The same passage says, "God hath set

him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his *blood*, to declare his [God's] righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." God's righteousness is shewn in remission through blood-shedding; and this, the apostle emphatically declares, that God might be just and the justifier of believers. **And note, in speaking of the sins of believers in past times, there is not a hint of fulfilling law for them, but of His blood. That made God evidently righteous as regards Old Testament saints. Surely, if the other had been true, it would have come in here as regards these. But no; he is justified freely by His grace through redemption; but keeping law is not redemption.**

So, in Galatians, the law was our schoolmaster unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. **It is not faith in one's fulfilling law; but faith in contrast with law – faith in the Seed to which *the promise* was made, according to the statements we had already gathered from scripture; and if the inheritance be of law, it is no more of promise. It is a diligent contrast of the two principles. One is Hagar, the other Sarah. But Hagar is cast out with her children. Law can have no place with the promise and faith. And that no man is justified by law is evident, for the just shall live by faith. But the law is not of faith – is another and a contrasted principle. Curse came by the law. Is it then set aside? No. Christ has glorified it, and redeemed us from its curse, having been made a curse for us. Is there anything added to shew that He kept it for us, that we might be justified? Not a word – contrast with it only. It is not of faith. I find, then, an opposite principle to law brought in, and that by which we are justified set in careful contrast with law – *God's righteousness by faith*, contrasted with man's, our own by law, Christ's keeping it for others being never hinted at nor supposed to be possible (righteousness by law being always considered as *our own*, and rejected, as in Philippians 3: 9, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is of the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"). The law, if kept, would be man's righteousness; what we have through faith is God's.**

But if the law be not thus a rule of life and way of righteousness, and Christ's own obedience unto death makes us righteous who believe in Him, what principle have we to guard us against sinning and practical ungodliness? Here what answers to the other tree of Paradise comes in – the tree of life. **It is not by imposing a law that we are kept in obedience (that failed us, for the same reason that it did in obtaining righteousness), but by giving a life. Christ becomes our life, and our obedience is in this life to God Himself, in contrast still with law. (Romans 6.)** But this introduces another point, which applies to law too. The law indeed kills us, as alive in conscience without it; but this could only be ruin and condemnation. Christ has died in grace for us, and this is appropriated to us by faith in Him that is risen. We say we are crucified with Christ. **The faults of the old man are not made up by law-keeping, but the old man itself is wholly condemned and set aside. God has condemned sin in the flesh by Christ's death, and set it aside; for we are dead. He only that is dead is really justified from sin. The sins have been put away, for Christ is crucified for us; sin in the flesh condemned by His death, but we are crucified with Him, not in the flesh.**

We were in the flesh, and then the motions of sin could be excited by the law. We reckon ourselves, being baptized to His death, dead to sin, and alive to God; Christ risen, our life; so that we walk in newness of life. But this is our deliverance from law; because He who was under it has died and satisfied its claims, and come from under them; law having dominion over a man as long as he lives – and we are dead, and alive with a new kind of life, out of the state and place where law reached us. We have died wholly out of that, as truly as Christ has died and risen into another, God's true place for man in Christ. It is a new creation in us, and by which we are placed in the new creation, where the old things are passed away and all things are new.

Thus life is new, as well as righteousness. It is divine life, as well as divine righteousness: Christ our life, and Christ our righteousness. Neither is obtained by the law, both in and through Christ. Deliverance from the law is not by abrogating its authority; that could not be, for it was God's, and was the necessary and right rule for living man, *alive in this world*. But as such, he was wholly guilty, wilful, and condemned. But in Christ we have died to that state of being to which the law applied. *We are not alive in the world*. Thus the first man has been tested by law as the rule and measure of man's righteousness in the flesh, but he was already a sinner, and faith, looking to that which was in God's counsels before the world existed, but which has been manifested in Christ and by the gospel, knows that while the law was a perfect rule for man in flesh as long as he lived, it was, in God's use of it, only a temporary thing between promise and the Seed, when man was already a sinner; useful to convict, but incapable of giving life or righteousness. Having seen the promised Seed dead and risen again, faith knows our sins to be put away, reckons the flesh dead, and *ourselves alive in a new state (where Christ raised is our life, Christ raised our righteousness)*, out of the nature, scene, life, and condition, to which alone law applied. Hence, we are always said to be as Christ is *now*, not as He *was*; while we are to walk as He *walked*.

And this leads me to the rule of practice, which is, equally with our justifying, in principle and nature above and out of law, divine and not human, though in human forms and circumstances. Law required that we should love our neighbour as ourselves, a perfect rule where all is right, mutual and common blessing; but unsuited to, unequal to meet, a state of sin. *We are called to love as Christ loved, and to give ourselves, our lives, if needed, for others*. One recognizes self as a measure in a happy state of things; the other, the giving up of ourselves for need, misery, or want of any kind. It looks for the self-sacrificing power of divine love, as manifested in Christ; not mutual kindness measured by self. We are to be imitators of God as dear children.

This then is the christian position. It takes life as it was in Christ before the worlds, but manifested in Him in the flesh, the eternal life which was with the Father, which we have as having the Son. It knows nothing of life by the law. It is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, the Son quickening whom He will. It is man made the righteousness of God in Christ; not by law, though Christ kept it,

but through Christ's having perfectly glorified God in His death, obedient even unto death – put away our sins wholly, so that we are justified completely from them – condemned absolutely and set aside the old man (so that we are not in flesh); and brought us into God's presence according to His glory, according to the worth of that sacrifice in which God Himself was perfectly glorified. Man's perfect righteousness is measured by the law, but that law was given to sinners as requirement to obtain it, and served to convict of sin. The law was made, not for a righteous man, but for sinners and profane, "οὐ χεῖται" does not apply to the righteous. But this way of righteousness is not what is ever made good at all and the creature set up before God by it; but a new kind of righteousness is set up, God's righteousness by faith. The law is *man's* righteousness: we are not justified by that; the gospel reveals God's – the righteousness in which he is just; not just in recognizing that man has, or has not, come up to the measure required of him (that will have its place, as justice, in condemnation in the day of judgment); but just in accepting and glorifying, because He, God Himself, has been perfectly glorified, and glorified where sin was, so that He should be glorified in all He is, love as well as righteousness. Man's righteousness, were there such (in Christ there was), there is no difficulty in measuring and defining; the law gives it us perfectly. **Human righteousness, and human life in blessing before God, would be the result of keeping it. God's righteousness is God's, and not man's; and yet man (that is, the believer) stands in it before Him.** This is the difficulty which attaches to the expression. It is God's; yet man is in it, yea, said to be it, before God.

My adversaries consequently reduce it [God's righteousness] to the former, and make it to be man's righteousness; only that Christ has fulfilled it. The Reformers, while bursting into light, soar far beyond this, and declare that the Christian was far away out of and beyond law. Yet, pressed by those who accuse them of setting aside law, they slipped back into vague language, or held Christ's fulfilling it, while Luther suppressed the expression in his translation of the New Testament altogether. Since then this has been systematized. But it is a curious fact, that that because of which the apostle says he was not ashamed of the gospel, is not found in Luther's Testament.

**The reason of all this confusion and error is that men have not seen that the old man is wholly set aside by the gospel, with all its life and standing before God; that we have, as seen in Christ, died out of it altogether, are not alive in the world, and are set on a new footing altogether, founded on death and resurrection in Christ; Christ for us, and we in Christ, namely in Christ risen, and before God, according to that which He has wrought and in the power of a divine and endless life, but in resurrection, sin being put away, death overcome, and we in the place of the second Adam, according to what He has wrought (and wrought as offering Himself, and made sin), and not according to what the first Adam wrought, nor, I may add, according to what he ought to have wrought, nor any more in question as to that, and brought to this state as recognizing ourselves wholly dead in trespasses and sins, guilty and ruined in him, transgressors if under law, enmity against God, but now passed out of that state as quickened together with Christ, consequent upon the**

**blessed work in which He glorified God.** And as the first Adam sinned and left God and was turned out of an earthly paradise, and was then the parent of a ruined race in that state, so the Second has perfectly glorified God, making an atonement for our sins; and, having perfectly glorified God in that place of sin when it was now needed (Himself sinless or He could not have done so, yea, His sinlessness in it was His perfection), has entered into a heavenly paradise, and we (as spiritually, so to speak, born of Him) stand in His place before God. But He has entered into this place now, *not* as filling up the measure of man's righteousness, though when alive He surely did so and much more; but by glorifying God in the place of sin, i.e., made sin for us, all that God is, so that we should stand, *not* on the footing of man's righteousness measured by man's duty, but God's measured by God's glory, Christ having in that put away all our sins and guilt incurred in our standing as men.

Now I fully admit, that many a beloved child of God only knows this last (that is, the blessed and righteous forgiveness of sins), and such are on a sure ground of grace. May they ever hold it! But these do not know the whole blessing of their position. They go to Romans 5: 11, a blessed journey for the heart too; but they do not with intelligence go through chapter 6 or on to chapter 8. If they get into chapter 7, they stop at it, inconsistently perhaps, but they do.

**Why then (though man be it before God by grace) is this righteousness God's righteousness, not man's? Man's is simple. That is the fulfilment of his duty to God, of which the law may be taken as the perfect measure: man's work measured by man's duty. This [God's righteousness] is God's work measured by God's glory. It is His counselling entirely, and no duty of any man to any one.** His acting as the fruit of His own love, the Son's undertaking in His own blessed love, but so undertaken for His Father's glory, the divine glory. So Hebrews 10, "A body hast thou prepared me . . . Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me . . . Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Surely God's law was in His heart, but was man's duty the measure of that work? Was it by keeping that law we were sanctified? Was that the will He did to sanctify us, and to perfect us before God? No: "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of Jesus Christ once for all." But perhaps we needed the other to be perfected before God? No: "By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It was not, though obedience, merely that of a creature who had his measure of duty from the place he was in naturally, but a divine surrender of Himself, and undertaking to do God's will, a heavenly undertaking of obedience to do God's will, be it what it might, but completed, not by doing what was the duty of man, but by suffering in obedience and love the whole wrath of God, as offering up Himself. When the blessed Lord became a man, He was, I need not say, a perfect man, and consequently an obedient man; for that was man's place. But the obedience was absolute. **All was obedience even to death, to death under wrath, which proved its perfectness. He, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. Of that the law could know nothing.** It had its duly prescribed measure, and was perfect because it had. He gave Himself a ransom for many. No doubt He kept the law in this, for He loved God with all His heart, but He did a divine work too.

But there is more. God's love was perfectly glorified, not to holy beings, but in its own supremacy according to its sovereign glory in and through Christ. God commended *His* love, what is peculiar to Himself, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us, and this at **the cost of the infinite self-sacrifice of Christ**, so that it should be a motive for His Father to love Him: "Therefore doth my Father love me." **God's righteousness against sin was glorified; and mark, not in the way simply of judgment against the evil – the day of judgment will do that, but in the way of drinking that cup of wrath for others, in love to others, in love to those His Father loved, and to glorify God's love to man, so that God would be glorified in justifying;** not justifying the just, but sinners: "Just, and the justifier of them that believe in Christ Jesus;" "the justifier of the ungodly." **This was a glorious glorifying of God, i.e., not merely a doing of man's duty, but of displaying sovereign and otherwise unknown and impossible qualities (after all a very feeble word), and sovereign excellences in God, there only possibly brought out.** How was God's sovereign majesty there brought out? "It became him, [what a word!] in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." How was the truth, that the wages of sin was death, here made good! Not a mere human succumbing, though He truly died as man, but a divine testimony to its import!

But I stay myself, however much more we might attempt to say, because I feel the thought and pen of man are feeble when they treat such a subject. They may suggest, but the Holy Ghost alone can give divine thoughts on so holy a subject, and we bow better than we explain. Still we have the word of the Lord Himself for this solemn hour: "**Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.**" It was this that brought man to divine and heavenly glory, not the keeping of the law. Christ had always, as an obedient man, glorified His God and Father; but there was a "now" when all had another character, though it threw the lustre of its perfectness on all His path from the beginning. **His life, though truly man, was always a divine life; but this was a divine work to do which He had come. He gave Himself. As then it was God's counsel, God's will, so it was in its nature a divine work (though He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death), and God Himself glorified in it, a display of God's righteousness which could justify through grace;** which mere righteousness, dealing with responsible man, could not do. **It was redemption in righteousness – grace reigning through righteousness. Man's? No, God's; where man was only sin, but where sin was put away – put away by the sacrifice of Himself.**

**If any say that Christ did not glorify God by more than mere obedience to the law, they lie against the truth.** Say, He fulfilled the law in doing it, I have nothing to say. We are called to do it by walking in the Spirit. But He gave Himself. He was made sin, was obedient to death, drank the cup of wrath. He who was the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His being, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. It is not man's righteousness, which is doing his duty in his place as man; but God's counsels, God's thoughts, God's work, God's love, when the question of man's righteousness was over, and the One righteous

man made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. A work carried on by the love of God as man, between Him and God, where we had no part at all but sin, and where He, though sinless, was made sin, and stood only as such; and where, if there were any righteousness, it must be God's, and that was displayed in raising Him up, and that is shewn in justifying us because of it, and hence giving us glory in the Christ according to His title in redemption.

It was the voluntary act of God, yea, even in Christ, not the duty of the first Adam fulfilled, though that He surely did, when man was in a state of sin. **It is God's righteousness, because God has been displayed in it, glorified in it, as He could not have been by any innocence or any law-keeping, because it is His thought and His work – a thought which would have been blasphemy for any one else, but which is His sovereign glory; a work which no creature could have done, innocent or guilty, which is necessarily divine in its nature and character, and by which God is righteous in justifying sinners, not by their legal righteousness, but by His own.**

Man ought now to keep the law – does, so far as heart, in the new creature. Could he have done that work? though, blessed be God, a man did it.\* Well then, it is not man's righteousness, in its nature or in fact. **Done between God and Christ the Son of God, it is for man, but God's righteousness for him. That righteousness is displayed in setting Christ at His right hand, and bringing us into divine glory because it is Christ's, because it was done for us. Would keeping the law entitle us to be like Christ in glory?** In doing more than that, we should only have to say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do. But whom He justified, them He also glorified; predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

{\*The Christian is called to imitate Christ fully, in spirit; but it needs no argument to shew he never could have undertaken it as a work for God.}

. . . [My] object has been positive truth, not controversy. **The notion has been expressed that God cannot justify without the person's being righteous in fact. This has no sense, if it is a sum of another's righteousness imputed. It is a denial of that grace which justifies the ungodly. But what I would note here is, that the point I insist on is that it is God's righteousness which is revealed, not the claims of God on man satisfied,\* so that it is man's measure reached in conduct, but God's work according to *His own glory* in contrast with what *man* should be for Him. **In virtue of God's own work for man, He justifies him; not in virtue of man's work for Him, by whomsoever accomplished.** Hence glory with Christ is the fruit of it. Hence it is not justice sitting to estimate debt (though this be satisfied by atonement), but *grace reigning* through righteousness. **God has acted for Himself in the matter according to His own glory, though for man, and imputing it to him.** But the principle is false, as it is stated: for the righteousness of God (Rom. 3) is known in remission. God justifies therein, and that is through faith in Christ's blood. So that it is false that there must be actual righteousness in conduct for God to justify. His righteousness is revealed. He is just, and justifies through blood and faith in it.**

{\*In atonement they were, but that is a divine work; we speak of positive righteousness.}

I have yet another word to add as regards the difficulties, insisted on with some pretension, of making a **difference between "imputed righteousness," and "imputing righteousness."** The attempt to confound them may serve to mislead; and souls who trust others, and do not examine, may be misled by it. But as to those who raise the difficulty, it is either wilful, or very great stupidity. **Change the word expressive of the thing imputed. He imputes goodness to that man in that matter, but he did not deserve it. Here it is simply *accounting* the man to be good, *reckoning* him to be such in the given case. Or, on the other hand, say, it was imputed goodness as to him, though I shewed him favour as such, for *the act was his father's doing*. Here it is an act of goodness in the father imputed to the son, and he therefore *treated as the good person* [as the person who accomplished the act of goodness].**

**Now scripture always uses it in the first sense. God imputes righteousness to man without works (that is, He holds the man for righteous), just as if I impute goodness to a man in some matter, I account him good. That is all it means, and no more. It does not say why. Only in our case, it is because of faith. But imputing righteousness to a person, that is, accounting him righteous, is not a statement that there is a quantity of righteousness accomplished outside him, in virtue of which he is so accounted righteous. The question I am discussing is, why a believer is accounted righteous, beyond that righteousness which is equivalent to remission. My adversaries say, it is making up the legal righteousness in which they have failed. I affirm that it is God's work for them, accomplished in Christ, for His own glory and their good (demonstrated in putting Christ in that glory) according to His own glory, not merely according to the legal claim on man. Hence it is God's righteousness, which the legal righteousness could not be; not man's. And legal righteousness can be no more, for it is not *righteousness* in respect of a claim, if it goes beyond the claim. In either case, righteousness is imputed in virtue of a work, which the man himself has not done. There we are one; but I affirm that it is that glorious work, the glorifying of God by Christ, in virtue of which He now sits at God's right hand, and we shall be in glory with Him. They say it is Christ's fulfilling the law for them during His life. Thus they put the Christian back now under the law, as if he were alive in the flesh, and Christ's living obedience his righteousness. I say no. His life was blessed, perfect, or He could not have been a spotless Lamb. But our connection is with Christ *after He is dead and risen*; consequently we are not in the flesh, nor know Him after the flesh – not alive, for faith, in the life to which law applies. We have died and risen with Christ. We belong to the other world, to heaven. We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.**

**The *standard of walk* follows. For my adversaries, it is the law. That is their rule of life. I say, Nay; I am dead and not under it, but obedient in a new nature to God, in which His holiness and love are to be developed in my heart. I am called to**



be a follower, an imitator, of God as His dear child. **And the measure is different. My opponents say the *fulfilment of the law is my righteousness*, the accomplishment of it the aim of our practice. I say, No; *Christ is my righteousness*, as having glorified God Himself, and so, being in His glory and Christ the standard of my path, *His actual glory my point of attainment*, and I, changed here from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord, I am to purify myself as He is pure, for I am to be like Him when He appears.**

By the law my measure is to love my neighbour as myself. In grace I am to give up myself, as Christ offered Himself up a sacrifice and an offering to God. He laid down His life. I am to lay down my life for the brethren. I am become light in the Lord, and I am to arise from among the dead, and He will give me light. But the principle of the contrast is clear. **The law requires us to love our neighbours as ourselves. The gospel calls the Christian to act like Christ, and give himself up for others in the path of love. That is the kind of love wanted in a sinful world. But these are consequences. The main point is that I stand in God's righteousness, according to the effectual work of the Lord Jesus, for the glorifying of God; which is so imputed to me, that I shall be with Him in the glory,** and meanwhile know the love which has imparted to me the unspeakable gift, the love shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Ghost given to me.

**It is God's righteousness by grace, and the work of Christ, not man's righteousness by law, for God – what God has wrought for man, not what man has wrought for God – that of which God's glory, not man's duty, is the measure; though man's failure in that duty has been atoned for in it.**