

# CHAPTER 3

The apostle, in this chapter, carries on his discourse concerning justification. He had already proved the guilt both of Gentiles and Jews. Now in this chapter,

- I.** He answers some objections that might be made against what he had said about the Jews (v. 1-8).
- II.** He asserts the guilt and corruption of mankind in common, both Jews and Gentiles (v. 9-18).
- III.** He argues thence that justification must needs be by faith, and not by the law, which he gives several reasons for (v. 19 to the end). The many digressions in his writings render his discourse sometimes a little difficult, but his scope is evident.

## ◀✠▶ ROMANS 3:1-18

### THE DEPRAVITY OF THE JEWS AND GENTILES

**I.** Here the apostle answers several objections, which might be made, to clear his way. No truth so plain and evident but wicked wits and corrupt carnal hearts will have something to say against it; but divine truths must be cleared from cavil.

*Object.* **1.** If Jew and Gentile stand so much upon the same level before God, *what advantage then hath the Jew?* Hath not God often spoken with a great deal of respect for the Jews, as a non-such people (<sup>◀530▶</sup>Deuteronomy 33:29), a holy nation, a peculiar treasure, the seed of Abraham his friend: Did not he institute circumcision as a badge of their church-membership, and a seal of their covenant-relation to God? Now does not this levelling doctrine deny them all such prerogatives, and reflect dishonour upon the ordinance of circumcision, as a fruitless insignificant thing.

*Answer.* The Jews are, notwithstanding this, a people greatly privileged and honoured, have great means and helps, though these be not infallibly saving (v. 2): *Much every way.* The door is open to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, but the Jews have a fairer way up to this door, by reason of their

church-privileges, which are not to be undervalued, though many that have them perish eternally for not improving them. He reckons up many of the Jews' privileges <sup><R00></sup>Romans 9:4, 5; here he mentions but one (which is indeed *instar omnium* — *equivalent to all*), that unto them were committed the oracles of God, that is, the scriptures of the Old Testament, especially the law of Moses, which is called *the lively oracles* (<sup><A173></sup>Acts 7:38), and those types, promises, and prophecies, which relate to Christ and the gospel. The scriptures are the oracles of God: they are a divine revelation, they come from heaven, are of infallible truth, and of eternal consequence as oracles. The Septuagint call the Urim and Thummim the *logia* — *the oracles*. The scripture is our breast-plate of judgment. We must have recourse to the law and to the testimony, as to an oracle. The gospel is called the oracles of God, <sup><R02></sup>Hebrews 5:12; <sup><A001></sup>1 Peter 4:11. Now these oracles were committed to the Jews; the Old Testament was written in their language; Moses and the prophets were of their nation, lived among them, preached and wrote primarily to and for the Jews. They were committed to them as trustees for succeeding ages and churches. The Old Testament was deposited in their hands, to be carefully preserved pure and uncorrupt, and so transmitted down to posterity. The Jews were the Christians' library-keepers, were entrusted with that sacred treasure for their own use and benefit in the first place, and then for the advantage of the world; and, in preserving the letter of the scripture, they were very faithful to their trust, did not lose one iota or tittle, in which we are to acknowledge God's gracious care and providence. The Jews had the means of salvation, but they had not the monopoly of salvation. Now this he mentions with a *chiefly, proton men gar* — this was their prime and principal privilege. The enjoyment of God's word and ordinances is the chief happiness of a people, is to be put in the *imprimis* of their advantages, <sup><R03></sup>Deuteronomy 4:8; 33:3; <sup><A170></sup>Psalms 147:20.

*Object. 2.* Against what he had said of the advantages the Jews had in the lively oracles, some might object the unbelief of many of them. To what purpose were the oracles of God committed to them, when so many of them, notwithstanding these oracles, continued strangers to Christ, and enemies to his gospel? *Some did not believe*, v. 3.

*Answer.* It is very true that some, nay most of the present Jews, do not believe in Christ; *but shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* The apostle startles at such a thought: *God forbid!* The infidelity and obstinacy of the Jews could not invalidate and overthrow those

prophecies of the Messiah which were contained in the oracles committed to them. Christ will be glorious, *though Israel be not gathered*, <sup><2405></sup> Isaiah 49:5. God's words shall be accomplished, his purposes performed, and all his ends answered, though there be a generation that by their unbelief go about to make God a liar. *Let God be true but every man a liar*; let us abide by this principle, that God is true to every word which he has spoken, and will let none of his oracles fall to the ground, though thereby we give the lie to man; better question and overthrow the credit of all the men in the world than doubt of the faithfulness of God. What David said in his haste (<sup><1811></sup> Psalm 116:11), that all men are liars, Paul here asserts deliberately. Lying is a limb of that old man which we every one of us come into the world clothed with. All men are fickle, and mutable, and given to change, *vanity and a lie* (<sup><1811></sup> Psalm 62:9), *altogether vanity*, <sup><1811></sup> Psalm 39:5. All men are liars, compared with God. It is very comfortable, when we find every man a liar (no faith in man), that God is faithful. When *they speak vanity every one with his neighbour*, it is very comfortable to think *that the words of the Lord are pure words*, <sup><1811></sup> Psalm 12:2, 6. For the further proof of this he quotes <sup><1811></sup> Psalm 51:4, *That thou mightest be justified*, the design of which is to show,

1. That God does and will preserve his own honour in the world, notwithstanding the sins of men.
2. That it is our duty, in all our conclusions concerning ourselves and others, to justify God and to assert and maintain his justice, truth, and goodness, however it goes. David lays a load upon himself in his confession, that he might justify God, and acquit him from any injustice. So here, Let the credit or reputation of man shift for itself, the matter is not great whether it sink or swim; let us hold fast this conclusion, how specious soever the premises may be to the contrary, that *the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*. Thus is God justified in his sayings, and cleared when he judges (as it is <sup><1811></sup> Psalm 51:4), or when *he is judged*, as it is here rendered. When men presume to quarrel with God and his proceedings, we may be sure the sentence will go on God's side.

*Object.* **3.** Carnal hearts might hence take occasion to encourage themselves in sin. He had said that the universal guilt and corruption of mankind gave occasion to the manifestation of God's righteousness in Jesus Christ. Now it may be suggested, If all our sin be so far from

overthrowing God's honour that it commends it, and his ends are secured, so that there is no harm done, is it not unjust for God to punish our sin and unbelief so severely? If the unrighteousness of the Jews gave occasion to the calling in of the Gentiles, and so to God's greater glory, why are the Jews so much censured? *If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say?* v. 5. What inference may be drawn from this? *Is God unrighteous, me adikos ho Theos* — *Is not God unrighteous* (so it may be read, more in the form of an objection), *who taketh vengeance?* Unbelieving hearts will gladly take any occasion to quarrel with equity of God's proceedings, and to condemn him that is most just, <sup><3847></sup>Job 34:17. *I speak as a man*, that is, I object this as the of carnal hearts; it is suggested like a man, a vain, foolish, proud creature.

*Answer. God forbid;* far be it from us to imagine such a thing. Suggestions that reflect dishonour upon God and his justice and holiness are rather to be startled at than parleyed with. Get thee behind me, Satan; never entertain such a thought. *For then how shall God judge the world?* v. 6. The argument is much the same with that of Abraham (<sup><185></sup>Genesis 18:25): *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* No doubt, he shall. If he were not infinitely just and righteous, he would be unfit to be the judge of all the earth. *Shall even he that hateth right govern?* <sup><3847></sup>Job 34:17. Compare v. 18, 19. The sin has never the less of malignity and demerit in it though God bring glory to himself out of it. It is only accidentally that sin commends God's righteousness. No thanks to the sinner for that, who intends no such thing. The consideration of God's judging the world should for ever silence all our doubtings of, and reflections upon, his justice and equity. It is not for us to arraign the proceedings of such an absolute Sovereign. The sentence of the supreme court, whence lies no appeal, is not to be called in question.

*Object. 4.* The former objection is repeated and prosecuted (v. 7, 8), for proud hearts will hardly be beaten out of their refuge of lies, but will hold fast the deceit. But his setting off the objection in its own colours is sufficient to answer it: *If the truth of God has more abounded through my lie.* He supposes the sophisters to follow their objection thus: "If my lie, that is, my sin" (for there is something of a lie in every sin, especially in the sins of professors) "have occasioned the glorifying of God's truth and faithfulness, why *should I be judged* and condemned as a sinner, and not rather thence take encouragement to go on in my sin, that grace may abound?" an inference which at first sight appears too black to be argued,

and fit to be cast out with abhorrence. Daring sinners take occasion to boast in mischief, because the *goodness of God endures continually*, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 52:1. *Let us do evil that good may come* is oftener in the heart than in the mouth of sinners, so justifying themselves in their wicked ways. Mentioning this wicked thought, he observes, in a parenthesis, that there were those who charged such doctrines as this upon Paul and his fellow-ministers: Some affirm that we say so. It is no new thing for the best of God's people and ministers to be charged with holding and teaching such things as they do most detest and abhor; and it is not to be thought strange, when our Master himself was said to be in league with Beelzebub. Many have been reproached as if they had said that the contrary of which they maintain: it is an old artifice of Satan thus to cast dirt upon Christ's ministers, *Fortiter calumniari, aliquid adhaerebit* — *Lay slander thickly on, for some will be sure to stick*. The best men and the best truths are subject to slander. Bishop Sanderson makes a further remark upon this, *as we are slanderously reported* — *blasphemoumetha*. Blasphemy in scripture usually signifies the highest degree of slander, speaking ill of God. The slander of a minister and his regular doctrine is a more than ordinary slander, it is a kind of blasphemy, not for his person's sake, but for his calling's sake and his work's sake, ~~1~~ 1 Thessalonians 5:13.

*Answer.* He says no more by way of confutation but that, whatever they themselves may argue, the damnation of those is just. Some understand it of the slanderers; God will justly condemn those who unjustly condemn his truth. Or, rather, it is to be applied to those who embolden themselves in sin under a pretence of God's getting glory to himself out of it. Those who deliberately do evil that good may come of it will be so far from escaping, under the shelter of that excuse, that it will rather justify their damnation, and render them the more inexcusable; for sinning upon such a surmise, and in such a confidence, argues a great deal both of the wit and of the will in the sin — a wicked will deliberately to choose the evil, and a wicked wit to palliate it with the pretence of good arising from it. Therefore their damnation is just; and, whatever excuses of this kind they may now please themselves with, they will none of them stand good in the great day, but God will be justified in his proceedings, and all flesh, even the proud flesh that now lifts up itself against him, shall be silent before him. Some think Paul herein refers to the approaching ruin of the Jewish

church and nation, which their obstinacy and self-justification in their unbelief hastened upon them apace.

**II.** Paul, having removed these objections, next revives his assertion of the general guilt and corruption of mankind in common, both of Jews and Gentiles, v. 9-18. “*Are we better than they, we Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God? Does this recommend us to God, or will this justify us? No, by no means.*” Or, “*Are we Christians (Jews and Gentiles) so much better antecedently than the unbelieving part as to have merited God's grace? Alas! no: before free grace made the difference, those of us that had been Jews and those that had been Gentiles were all alike corrupted.*” They *are all under sin*. Under the guilt of sin: under it as under a sentence; — under it as under a bond, by which they are bound over to eternal ruin and damnation; — under it as under a burden (<sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 38:4) that will sink them to the lowest hell: we are guilty before God, v. 19. Under the government and dominion of sin: under it as under a tyrant and cruel task-master, enslaved to it; — under it as under a yoke; — under the power of it, sold to work wickedness. And this he had proved, *proetiasametha*. It is a law term: *We have charged them with it*, and have made good our charge; we have proved the indictment, we have convicted them by the notorious evidence of the fact. This charge and conviction he here further illustrates by several scriptures out of the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt depraved state of all men, till grave restrain or change them; so that herein as in a glass we may all of us behold our natural face. The 10th, 11th, and 12th verses are taken from <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 14:1-3, which are repeated as containing a very weighty truth, <sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 53:1-3. The rest that follows here is found in the Septuagint translation of the 14th Psalm, which some think the apostle chooses to follow as better known; but I rather think that Paul took these passages from other places of scripture here referred to, but in later copies of the Septuagint they were all added in Psalm 14 from this discourse of Paul. It is observable that, to prove the general corruption of nature, he quotes some scriptures which speak of the particular corruptions of particular persons, as of Doeg (<sup><BIB></sup>Psalm 140:3), of the Jews (<sup><BIB></sup>Isaiah 59:7, 8), which shows that the same sins that are committed by one are in the nature of all. The times of David and Isaiah were some of the better times, and yet to their days he refers. What is said Psalm 14 is expressly spoken of *all the children of men*, and that upon a particular view and inspection made by God himself. The *Lord looked down*, as upon the old world, <sup><BIB></sup>Genesis 6:5. And this

judgment of God was according to truth. He who, when he himself had made all, looked upon every thing that he had made, and behold all was very good, now that man had marred all, looked, and behold all was very bad. Let us take a view of the particulars. Observe,

**1.** That which is habitual, which is two-fold: —

**(1.)** An habitual defect of every thing that is good.

**[1.]** *There is none righteous*, none that has an honest good principle of virtue, or is governed by such a principle, none that retains any thing of that image of God, consisting in righteousness, wherein man was created; *no, not one*; implying that, if there had been but one, God would have found him out. When all the world was corrupt, God had his eye upon one righteous Noah. Even those who through grace are justified and sanctified were none of them righteous by nature. No righteousness is born with us. The man after God's own heart owns himself conceived in sin.

**[2.]** *There is none that understandeth*, v. 11. The fault lies in the corruption of the understanding; that is blinded, depraved, perverted. Religion and righteousness have so much reason on their side that if people had but any understanding they would be better and do better. But they do not understand. Sinners are fools.

**[3.]** *None that seeketh after God*, that is, none that has any regard to God, any desire after him. Those may justly be reckoned to have no understanding that do not seek after God. The carnal mind is so far from seeking after God that really it is enmity against him.

**[4.]** *They are together become unprofitable*, v. 12. Those that have forsaken God soon grow good for nothing, useless burdens of the earth. Those that are in a state of sin are the most unprofitable creatures under the sun; for it follows,

**[5.]** *There is none that doeth good*; no, not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not, <sup>2023</sup>Ecclesiastes 7:23. Even in those actions of sinners that have some goodness in them there is a fundamental error in the principle and end; so that it may be said, *There is none that doeth good. Malum oritur ex quolibet defectu — Every defect is the source of evil.*

(2.) An habitual defection to every thing that is evil: *They are all gone out of the way*. No wonder that those miss the right way who do not seek after God, the highest end. God made man in the way, set him in right, but he hath forsaken it. The corruption of mankind is an apostasy.

2. That which is actual. And what good can be expected from such a degenerate race? He instances,

(1.) In their words (v. 13, 14), in three things particularly: —

[1.] Cruelty: *Their throat is an open sepulchre*, ready to swallow up the poor and innocent, waiting an opportunity to do mischief, like the old serpent seeking to devour, whose name is Abaddon and Apollyon, the destroyer. And when they do not openly avow this cruelty, and vent it publicly, yet they are underhand intending mischief: the *poison of asps is under their lips* (~~SHR~~ James 3:8), the most venomous and incurable poison, with which they blast the good name of their neighbour by reproaches, and aim at his life by false witness. These passages are borrowed from ~~SHR~~ Psalm 5:9 and 140:3.

[2.] Cheating: *With their tongues they have used deceit*. Herein they show themselves the devil's children, for he is a liar, and the father of lies. They *have used* it: it intimates that they make a trade of lying; it is their constant practice, especially belying the ways and people of God.

[3.] Cursing: reflecting upon God, and blaspheming his holy name; wishing evil to their brethren: *Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness*. This is mentioned as one of the great sins of the tongue, ~~SHR~~ James 3:9. But those that thus love cursing shall have enough of it, ~~DAW~~ Psalm 109:17-19. How many, who are called Christians, do by these sin evince that they are still under the reign and dominion of sin, still in the condition that they were born in.

(2.) In their ways (v. 15-17): *Their feet are swift to shed blood*; that is, they are very industrious to compass any cruel design, ready to lay hold of all such opportunities. Wherever they go, *destruction and misery* go along with them; these are their companions — destruction and misery to the people of God, to the country and neighbourhood where they live, to the land and nation, and to themselves at last. Besides the destruction and misery that are at the end of their ways (death is the end of these things), destruction and misery are in their ways; their sin is its own punishment: a



man needs no more to make him miserable than to be a slave to his sins. — *And the way of peace have they not known*; that is, they know not how to preserve peace with others, nor how to obtain peace for themselves. They may talk of peace, such a peace as is in the devil's palace, while he keeps it, but they are strangers to all true peace; they know not the things that belong to their peace. These are quoted from <sup><3016></sup>Proverbs 1:16; <sup><2807></sup>Isaiah 59:7, 8.

(3.) The root of all this we have: *There is no fear of God before their eyes*, v. 18. The fear of God is here put for all practical religion, which consists in an awful and serious regard to the word and will of God as our rule, to the honour and glory of God as our end. Wicked people have not this before their eyes; that is, they do not steer by it; they are governed by other rules, aim at other ends. This is quoted from <sup><3811></sup>Psalm 36:1. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected. The fear of God is would lay a restraint upon our spirits, and keep them right, <sup><4685></sup>Nehemiah 5:15. When once fear is cast off, prayer is restrained (<sup><1804></sup>Job 15:4), and then all goes to wreck and ruin quickly. So that we have here a short account of the general depravity and corruption of mankind; and may say, O Adam! what hast thou done? God made man upright, but thus he hath sought out many inventions.

## <sup><4189></sup>ROMANS 3:19-31

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

From all this Paul infers that it is in vain to look for justification by the works of the law, and that it is to be had only by faith, which is the point he has been all along proving, from <sup><4117></sup>Romans 1:17, and which he lays down (v. 28) as the summary of his discourse, with a *quod erat demonstrandum* — *which was to be demonstrated*. We conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law; not by the deeds of the first law of pure innocence, which left no room for repentance, nor the deeds of the law of nature, how highly soever improved, nor the deeds of the ceremonial law (the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin), nor the deeds of the moral law, which are certainly included, for he speaks of that law by which is the knowledge of sin and those works which might be matter of boasting. Man, in his depraved state, under the power of such

corruption, could never, by any works of his own, gain acceptance with God; but it must be resolved purely into the free grace of God, given through Jesus Christ to all true believers that receive it as a free gift. If we had never sinned, our obedience to the law would have been our righteousness: “Do this, and live.” But having sinned, and being corrupted, nothing that we can do will atone for our former guilt. It was by their obedience to the moral law that the Pharisees looked for justification, <sup><A1></sup>Luke 18:11. Now there are two things from which the apostle here argues: the guiltiness of man, to prove that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, and the glory of God, to prove that we must be justified by faith.

**I.** He argues from man's guiltiness, to show the folly of expecting justification by the works of the law. The argument is very plain: we can never be justified and saved by the law that we have broken. A convicted traitor can never come off by pleading the statute of 25 *Edward III*, for that law discovers his crime and condemns him: indeed, if he had never broken it, he might have been justified by it; but now it is past that he has broken it, and there is no way of coming off but by pleading the act of indemnity, upon which he has surrendered and submitted himself, and humbly and penitently claiming the benefit of it and casting himself upon it. Now concerning the guiltiness of man,

**1.** He fastens it particularly upon the Jews; for they were the men that made their boast of the law, and set up for justification by it. He had quoted several scriptures out of the Old Testament to show this corruption: Now, says he (v. 19), *this that the law says, it says to those who are under the law*; this conviction belongs to the Jews as well as others, for it is written in their law. The Jews boasted of their being under the law, and placed a great deal of confidence in it: “But,” says he, “the law convicts and condemns you — you see it does.” That *every mouth may be stopped* — that all boasting may be silenced. See the method that God takes both in justifying and condemning: he stops every mouth; those that are justified have their mouths stopped by a humble conviction; those that are condemned have their mouths stopped too, for they shall at last be convinced (<sup><A15></sup>Jude 1:15), and sent speechless to hell, <sup><A22></sup>Matthew 22:12. *All iniquity shall stop her mouth*, <sup><A72></sup>Psalms 107:42.

**2.** He extends it in general to all the world: *That all the world may become guilty before God*. If the world likes in wickedness (<sup><A5></sup>1 John 5:19), to be

sure it is guilty. — *May become guilty*; that is, may be proved guilty, liable to punishment, all by nature *children of wrath*, <sup><del>411B</sup>Ephesians 2:3. They must all plead guilty; those that stand most upon their own justification will certainly be cast. Guilty before God is a dreadful word, before an all-seeing God, that is not, nor can be, deceived in his judgment — before a just and righteous judge, who will by no means clear the guilty. All are guilty, and therefore all have need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God. *For all have sinned* (v. 23); all are sinners by nature, by practice, and *have come short of the glory of God* — have failed of that which is the chief end of man. *Come short*, as the archer comes short of the mark, as the runner comes short of the prize; so come short, as not only not to win, but to be great losers. *Come short of the glory of God*.

**(1.)** Come short of glorifying God. See <sup><del>411C</sup>Romans 1:21, *They glorified him not as God*. Man was placed at the head of the visible creation, actively to glorify that great Creator whom the inferior creatures could glorify only objectively; but man by sin comes short of this, and, instead of glorifying God, dishonours him. It is a very melancholy consideration, to look upon the children of men, who were made to glorify God, and to think how few there are that do it.

**(2.)** Come short of glorying *before God*. There is no boasting of innocency: if we go about to glory before God, to boast of any thing we are, or have, or do, this will be an everlasting estoppel — that we have all sinned, and this will silence us. We may glory before men, who are short-sighted, and cannot search our hearts, — who are corrupt, as we are, and well enough pleased with sin; but there is no glorying before God, who cannot endure to look upon iniquity.

**(3.)** Come short of being glorified by God. Come short of justification, or acceptance with God, which is glory begun — come short of the holiness or sanctification which is the glorious image of God upon man, and have overthrown all hopes and expectations of being glorified with God in heaven by any righteousness of their own. It is impossible now to get to heaven in the way of spotless innocency. That passage is blocked up. There is a cherub and a flaming sword set to keep that way to the tree of life.

**3.** Further to drive us off from expecting justification by the law, he ascribes this conviction to the law (v. 20): *For by the law is the knowledge*

*of sin.* That law which convicts and condemns us can never justify us. The law is the straight rule, that *rectum* which is *index sui et obliqui* — that which points out the right and the wrong; it is the proper use and intendment of the law to open our wound, and therefore not likely to be the remedy. That which is searching is not sanative. Those that would know sin must get the knowledge of the law in its strictness, extent, and spiritual nature. If we compare our own hearts and lives with the rule, we shall discover wherein we have turned aside. Paul makes this use of the law, <sup><ROM></sup>Romans 7:9, *Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.* Observe,

(1.) *No flesh shall be justified, no man, no corrupted man* (<sup><GEN></sup>Genesis 6:3), *for that he also is flesh, sinful and depraved; therefore not justified, because we are flesh.* The corruption that remains in our nature will for ever obstruct any justification by our own works, which, coming from flesh, must needs taste of the cask, <sup><JOB></sup>Job 14:4.

(2.) Not justified in his sight. He does not deny that justification which was by the deeds of the law in the sight of the church: they were, in their church-estate, as embodied in a polity, a holy people, a nation of priests; but as the conscience stands in relation to God, *in his sight*, we cannot be justified by the deeds of the law. The apostle refers to <sup><PSA></sup>Psalms 143:2.

**II.** He argues from God's glory to prove that justification must be expected only by faith in Christ's righteousness. There is no justification by the works of the law. Must guilty man then remain eternally under wrath? Is there no hope? Is the wound become incurable because of transgression? No, blessed be God, it is not (v. 21, 22); there is another way laid open for us, *the righteousness of God without the law is manifested* now under the gospel. Justification may be obtained without the keeping of Moses's law: and this is called *the righteousness of God*, righteousness of his ordaining, and providing, and accepting, — righteousness which he confers upon us; as the Christian armour is called *the armour of God*, <sup><EPH></sup>Ephesians 6:11.

1. Now concerning this righteousness of God observe,

(1.) That it is manifested. The gospel-way of justification is a high-way, a plain way, it is laid open for us: the brazen serpent is lifted up upon the pole; we are not left to grope our way in the dark, but it is manifested to us.

(2.) It is *without the law*. Here he obviates the method of the judaizing Christians, who would needs join Christ and Moses together — owning Christ for the Messiah, and yet too fondly retaining the law, keeping up the ceremonies of it, and imposing it upon the Gentile converts: no, says he, it is without the law. The righteousness that Christ hath brought in is a complete righteousness.

(3.) Yet *it is witnessed by the law and the prophets*; that is, there were types, and prophecies, and promises, in the Old Testament, that pointed at this. The law is so far from justifying us that it directs us to another way of justification, points at Christ as our righteousness, to whom bear all the prophets witness. See ~~4104~~ Acts 10:43. This might recommend it to the Jews, who were so fond of the law and the prophets.

(4.) It is by the *faith of Jesus Christ*, that faith which hath Jesus Christ for its object — an *anointed Saviour*, so Jesus Christ signifies. Justifying faith respects Christ as a Saviour in all his three anointed offices, as prophet, priest, and king — trusting in him, accepting of him, and adhering to him, in all these. It is by this that we become interested in that righteousness which God has ordained, and which Christ has brought in.

(5.) It is *to all, and upon all, those that believe*. In this expression he inculcates that which he had been often harping upon, that Jews and Gentiles, if they believe, stand upon the same level, and are alike welcome to God through Christ; *for there is no difference*. Or, it is *eis pantas* — *to all*, offered to all in general; the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves; but it is *epi pantas tous pisteuontas*, *upon all that believe*, not only tendered to them, but put upon them as a crown, as a robe; they are, upon their believing, interested in it, and entitled to all the benefits and privileges of it.

2. But now how is this for God's glory?

(1.) It is for the glory of his grace (v. 24): *Justified freely by his grace — dorean te autou chariti*. It is *by his grace*, not by the grace wrought in us as the papists say, confounding justification and sanctification, but by the gracious favour of God to us, without any merit in us so much as foreseen. And, to make it the more emphatic, he says it is *freely by his grace*, to show that it must be understood of grace in the most proper and genuine sense. It is said that *Joseph found grace* in the sight of his master (~~4104~~ Genesis 39:4), but there was a reason; he saw that what he did

prospered. There was something in Joseph to invite that grace; but the grace of God communicated to us comes *freely, freely*; it is free grace, mere mercy; nothing in us to deserve such favours: no, it is all *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. It comes freely to us, but Christ bought it, and paid dearly for it, which yet is so ordered as not to derogate from the honour of free grace. Christ's purchase is no bar to the freeness of God's grace; for grace provided and accepted this vicarious satisfaction.

**(2.)** It is for the glory of his justice and righteousness (v. 25, 26): *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation*, etc. Note,

**[1.]** Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice, typified by the *hilasterion*, or *mercy-seat*, under the law. He is our throne of grace, in and through whom atonement is made for sin, and our persons and performances are accepted of God, <sup><111></sup>1 John 2:2. He is all in all in our reconciliation, not only the maker, but the matter of it — our priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our all. God was in Christ as in his mercy-seat, reconciling the world unto himself.

**[2.]** *God hath set him forth* to be so. God, the party offended, makes the first overtures towards a reconciliation, appoints the days-man; *proetheto* — *fore-ordained* him to this, in the counsels of his love from eternity, appointed, anointed him to it, qualified him for it, and has exhibited him to a guilty world as their propitiation. See <sup><117></sup>Matthew 3:17, and 17:5.

**[3.]** That *by faith in his blood* we become interested in this propitiation. Christ is the propitiation; there is the healing plaster provided. Faith is the applying of this plaster to the wounded soul. And this faith in the business of justification hath a special regard to *the blood of Christ*, as that which made the atonement; for such was the divine appointment that without blood there should be no remission, and no blood but his would do it effectually. Here may be an allusion to the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices under the law, as <sup><124></sup>Exodus 24:8. Faith is the bunch of hyssop, and the blood of Christ is the blood of sprinkling.

**[4.]** That all who by faith are interested in this propitiation have *the remission of their sins that are past*. It was for this that Christ was set forth to be a propitiation, in order to remission, to which the reprieves of his patience and forbearance were a very encouraging preface. *Through the forbearance of God*. Divine patience has kept us out of hell, that we might have space to repent, and get to heaven. Some refer the *sins that are*

*past* to the sins of the Old-Testament saints, which were pardoned for the sake of the atonement which Christ in the fulness of time was to make, which looked backward as well as forward. *Past through the forbearance of God.* It is owing to the divine forbearance that we were not taken in the very act of sin. Several Greek copies make *en teanoche tou Theou* — *through the forbearance of God*, to begin v. 26, and they denote two precious fruits of Christ's merit and God's grace: — Remission: *dia ten paresin* — *for the remission*; and reprieves: the *forbearance* of God. It is owing to the master's goodness and the dresser's mediation that barren trees are let alone in the vineyard; and in both God's righteousness is declared, in that without a mediator and a propitiation he would not only not pardon, but not so much as forbear, not spare a moment; it is owing to Christ that there is ever a sinner on this side hell.

[5.] That God does in all this *declare his righteousness*. This he insists upon with a great deal of emphasis: *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness*. It is repeated, as that which has in it something surprising. He declares his righteousness, *First*, In the propitiation itself. Never was there such a demonstration of the justice and holiness of God as there was in the death of Christ. It appears that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of Christ would satisfy for it. Finding sin, though but imputed, upon his own Son, he did not spare him, because he had made himself sin for us, <sup><402></sup>2 Corinthians 5:21. The iniquities of us all being laid upon him, though he was the Son of his love, yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, <sup><250></sup>Isaiah 53:10. *Secondly*, In the pardon upon that propitiation; so it follows, by way of explication: *That he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth*. Mercy and truth are so met together, righteousness and peace have so kissed each other, that it is now become not only an act of grace and mercy, but an act of righteousness, in God, to pardon the sins of penitent believers, having accepted the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to his justice for them. It would not comport with his justice to demand the debt of the principal when the surety has paid it and he has accepted that payment in full satisfaction. See <sup><412></sup>1 John 1:9. He is just, that is, faithful to his word.

(3.) It is for God's glory; for boasting is thus excluded, v. 27. God will have the great work of the justification and salvation of sinners carried on from first to last in such a way as to exclude boasting, that no flesh may glory in his presence, <sup><412></sup>1 Corinthians 1:29-31. Now, if justification were by the works of the law, boasting would not be excluded. How should it?

If we were saved by our own works, we might put the crown upon our own heads. But the *law of faith*, that is, the way of justification by faith, doth for ever exclude boasting; for faith is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne; therefore it is most for God's glory that thus we should be justified. Observe, He speaks of *the law of faith*. Believers are not left lawless: faith is a law, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth; and yet, because it acts in a strict and close dependence upon Jesus Christ, it excludes boasting.

From all this he draws this conclusion (v. 28): *That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

**III.** In the close of the chapter he shows the extent of this privilege of justification by faith, and that it is not the peculiar privilege of the Jews, but pertains to the Gentiles also; for he had said (v. 22) that there is no difference: and as to this,

**1.** He asserts and proves it (v. 29, 39): *Is he the God of the Jews only?* He argues from the absurdity of such a supposition. Can it be imagined that a God of infinite love and mercy should limit and confine his favours to that little perverse people of the Jews, leaving all the rest of the children of men in a condition eternally desperate? This would by no means agree with the idea we have of the divine goodness, for his *tender mercies are over all his works*; therefore it is one God of grace that *justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith*, that is, both in one and the same way. However the Jews, in favour of themselves, will needs fancy a difference, really there is no more difference than between *by* and *through*, that is, no difference at all.

**2.** He obviates an objection (v. 31), as if this doctrine did nullify the law, which they knew came from God: "No," says he, "though we do say that the law will not justify us, yet we do not therefore say that it was given in vain, or is of no use to us; no, *we establish the right use of the law*, and secure its standing, by fixing it on the right basis. The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future; though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own it, and submit to it, as a rule in the hand of the Mediator, subordinate to the law of grace; and so are so far from overthrowing that we establish the law." Let those consider this who deny the obligation of the moral law on believers.