

SERMON IX

MEN'S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS THEIR GRAND IDOL

Tobias Crisp

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." {Rom.10:3}

Provident and well-wishing pilots, observing the rocks on which many ignorant and heedless passengers have split and sunk, and where they themselves have escaped but narrowly, use to set up seamarks as cautions or warnings to such as shall come after, that by other men's harms they may learn to be wary. It is the Apostle's very practice in this place; in the former part of this epistle; and especially in chapter 9, where he mightily contends for the free grace of God unto peace, life, and salvation, without works. "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works," but of grace; as it was said, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" therefore, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" I say, this is the main doctrine that he preaches from the beginning of the Epistle to the closure of chap 9.

Then he comes upon the Jews with an argument to their reproach, for he says that "the Gentiles that followed not after righteousness have attained unto righteousness," when they themselves that did follow after righteousness could not attain it; and he gives the reason why they that pressed so hard after it could not attain it; "because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the Law." {Rom.9:32} Why, what hurt was there in that, will some say? The Apostle answereth, that hereby "they stumbled at that stumblingstone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence;" they would have their righteousness set up to do them good, and this they sought as it were by the works of the Law.

But some men might think that the Apostle had a bitterness of spirit, or some malice against his own brethren, and that this was but the fruit of it; therefore in the beginning of this chapter, he clears himself from any such base ends in his ministry; for his part he wishes with all his heart, it may be well with them. "My heart's desire, and prayer for Israel is, that they may be saved;" nay, so far as he may speak well of them, and the most he can say, he will; and he will not conceal anything; in verse 2, he confesses, nay he bears witness to it, that "they had a zeal of God;" but yet he must not dissemble, he must deal friendly, though ever so plainly; though they had a zeal of God, "yet it was not according to knowledge."

And because he had taxed them with ignorance, here in the text; he discovers what this ignorance of theirs was; and what the fearful and desperate fruits of it were; that whereof they were ignorant was God's righteousness, "being ignorant of the righteousness of God;" the fruit of it is twofold, both very bitter, the one immediately issuing from the other.

First, this ignorance of God's righteousness put them upon a fearful mistake; for they go about, {upon this,} to "establish their own righteousness."

Secondly, and that mistake put them upon another as bad as that, if not worse; therefore they submitted not to the righteousness of God.

The proposition the words afford us is briefly this, {for we will sum up the whole verse into one head} namely that ignorance of God's righteousness puts men upon these two dangerous mischiefs, an establishing of their own righteousness, and a not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.

Men will establish their own righteousness; they will not submit to the righteousness of God, while they are ignorant of it. Beloved, they were not so easily misled, as we are apt to follow them, having gone before us; we are like sheep leaping without looking, if any leap before us; it hath been the rock of offence, a stumbling-stone from the beginning to this day, and will be to the end of the world; there will be an establishing of our own righteousness, without submitting to the righteousness of God, while there is an ignorance of this righteousness.

Now, that we may take warning, and so escape the danger that they have felt the smart of already, it will be requisite we take into consideration.

First, what this righteousness of theirs and ours is, that they did, and we are apt to go about to establish. Secondly, what it is to go about to establish this our righteousness. Thirdly, what this righteousness of God is that they did not submit unto. Fourthly, what it is not to submit unto this righteousness of God. Fifthly, what this ignorance is, from whence both these fearful evils issue, the establishing of our own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God. And lastly, what the issue in the end will prove of these or as many of these as the time will permit in their order.

To begin with the first, what is that righteousness of theirs and ours that the Apostle complains of, that being established, is a rock of offence? I am not ignorant, that the eyes of some persons are only, or most, upon a righteousness of man's own devising and contriving; such a righteousness as never came into God's thoughts; a righteousness according to the precepts and traditions of men; such a righteousness as our Saviour, {in Matt.15:9,} taxeth the Pharisees withal, who "taught for doctrines the traditions of men;" and by their own traditions, as much as in them lay, made void the commandments of God. This kind of righteousness in our time proceeds from the presumption of men, that dare put anything of their own, without warrant and commission from God, into the worship and service of God; charging things upon men as duties of religion, that God binds not men unto; for my own part, I am clear of the mind, that this kind of righteousness is far from the righteousness of God, the Apostle here speaks of; and that it is the highest presumption that a man can possibly take upon himself, to set himself so in the place of God, as not only, not to command from him, but also to command without and against him. Law-givers hold themselves then most disparaged and contemned when any inferior will take upon him to make laws without them, or against them. It will lie heavy when it shall once come to an account, not only upon the actors, but also upon those that may be the redressers, if this kind of righteousness established by some be not brought down, and laid in the dust.

But, under favour, I conceive that the Apostle aims at a more sublime righteousness, than the righteousness in the precepts of men; he speaks of such a righteousness, which some it may be are too forward to establish, who yet abhor to establish the other, we have now spoken of; the righteousness the Apostle complains of being established, is not the righteousness of man's making, but of God's own making, a righteousness according to his own will; I mean a righteousness consisting in obedience to the things that God himself hath commanded unto men; a righteousness which is a walking in all the commandments of God, though it be in a way of blamelessness; this very righteousness, I say, is that, which being established, proves a stumbling-stone, and rock of offence to all that shall establish it.

This may seem harsh, beloved, at first, but I shall make it clear to you from the Apostle's own interpretation of himself, who best knew his own mind; that this is the righteousness he here speaks of, mark but the words immediately following the text, {chap.10:4,} "for, {saith he,} Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." To what purpose doth he bring this passage, that Christ is the end of the Law; but that by these words he might confute their vanity who think to establish their own righteousness in the fulfilling of the Law? As if he should say, you think by your keeping the Law, by your righteousness that you perform, you can attain to the end of it, that so you may obtain the grace and goodness of the Lord; but it is in vain, it is not you that can reach the end of the Law; neither doth God aim at it that you should reach it, but he hath constituted and ordained Christ to be the end of it. Therefore the righteousness of God must be the righteousness of Christ; the

righteousness that God aims at is perfect, a righteousness that reaches to the very end of the Law; your righteousness can never reach to the end of it; it is Christ's alone that doth it.

And yet again, in verse 5, the Apostle clears more fully what he means by our righteousness, for there he begins to make the distinction between our righteousness and the righteousness of God, explaining what they both are; "for Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the Law," {that which he calls our own righteousness, in verse 4, from Moses, he calls the righteousness of the Law in verse 5;} Moses, {saith he,} describing the righteousness of the Law, saith thus, "that the man which doeth those things shall live by them." And if you will look into Leviticus 18:5, you shall there see what the righteousness of the Law is, which the Apostle speaks of in this place; and if you observe but the margin of your Bible, you shall find this very text, in verse 5, is wisely referred to that of Leviticus, "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments; which if a man do, he shall live in them; I am the LORD." See, the Apostle makes use of the very phrase, "he that doth them shall live through them, and in them." It is the righteousness of the Law, saith he; it is the keeping of God's statutes, and doing of God's judgments, saith Moses. By this, you may see what righteousness it is, that the Lord by the Apostle speaks of; a righteousness that consists in doing the statutes and judgments of the Lord.

And if you will but consider in Luke 18:11,12, the condition of the Pharisee that Christ speaks of, who went up into the temple to pray as the Publican did; in him you shall see, I say, and easily perceive, what the righteousness was, that they went about to establish; for there the Pharisee justifies himself in respect of many particular branches of the Law; "I thank thee, {saith he,} that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Mark it well, I pray, see what it is that he pleads for, as that which must prevail with God for good to him; it is his own righteousness; and what is that? It is a righteousness according to the Law; it is a righteousness of piety, of justice; "I fast twice in the week, I am no extortioner, nor unjust person, nor adulterer, &c." Now hear Christ's answer concerning this Pharisee; and you shall see what he thinks of this righteousness he speaks of; "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;" the publican went away rather justified than the Pharisee, and the reason is, because he did go in the strength of this righteousness of his, to speed with God; his expectation was from this; it was not a righteousness of his own devising and contriving; but a righteousness according to God's Law.

If you look further into Philippians chapter 3, you shall find, the Apostle speaks fully to the case in hand, instancing in himself in verses 5-9, where he gives an account of his estate, in which he was before the time of his conversion. First, he saith, he had a zeal for God, and that put him on so hot, that he persecuted the church of God, merely out of ignorance; for, saith he of himself, "I did it ignorantly;" and "concerning the righteousness of the Law {saith he} I was blameless." Mark that passage well; as all this was before conversion; afterwards he tells us, this was in the time of his ignorance, wherein he made full account that this righteousness of his was his gain; but, saith he, "what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law." By all these passages, I say, put together, wherein the Apostle so fully expounds himself, it plainly appears, that the righteousness of the Law, the establishing whereof; he here taxeth, as a dangerous mistake, and a fruit of ignorance, is that, wherein men walk according to God's own Law blamelessly.

I am not ignorant, beloved, how this assertion goeth under the foul blur of Antinomianism, that blameless walking according to the Law, being established, is a fruit of ignorance, and a cause of men's not "submitting to the righteousness of God." And no marvel it goes for such now; for, in the Apostle's time it was accounted so; nay, it was objected against the Apostle himself as direct Antinomianism; and, therefore, he was enforced to vindicate himself thus, "do we make void the Law, {saith he} through faith? God forbid!" {Rom.3:31} He takes away the objection they put to him, upon his establishing of God's righteousness, and his overthrowing our righteousness. It was objected, that

hereby he went about to make void the Law; and, therefore, it is no marvel it holds still as an objection, that the maintaining of this principle is the overthrowing of the Law. But, beloved, I must say to you, as the Apostle did in the same case, "God forbid! Yea, we establish the Law;" that is to say; in its right place. It takes men off from performing duties to corrupt ends, and from the bad use they are apt to make of them; namely, idolizing their own righteousness. And, therefore, he doth not condemn the use of the Law, and our righteousness, simply; that which he speaks against here is the establishing of our righteousness. Our own righteousness is good in its kind, and for its own proper uses; but then it proves a fruit of sin, ignorance, and a dangerous stumbling-block, and an idol, when we go about to establish it.

I come, therefore, to the second thing, which is to clear this truth more fully, namely, what it is to establish this righteousness; or what establishing the Apostle drives at in this place? For the clearing of which, the antithesis, or the opposition, that he sets, will give you a great deal of light to understand his meaning and purpose here, by "going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting to the righteousness of God." He speaks here, therefore, of such an establishing of our righteousness, according to the Law, as to bring it into the room, and stead, or place of God's righteousness. It is such an establishing of it, as that for it we cannot, nor will not admit, that the righteousness of God should do its office. So far forth, then, as any righteousness of ours encroaches upon the privileges and prerogatives of the righteousness of God, so that that cannot do its own work, or at least must be circumscribed in doing it, by this, so far is there an establishing of our own righteousness, which is a fruit of ignorance, and is a stumbling-block, and a rock of offence.

It will be worth the while, therefore, to consider, when our righteousness is said truly to be established in the room and stead of the righteousness of God. This will be cleared by the consideration of the main scope and drift of men, in the performing of the righteousness which they establish. When men put that upon their own righteousness, which should have been put upon God's only; when men make that the sanctuary and refuge that God's righteousness only should be, then is it set up as a grand idol, and established in the room and place of God's righteousness. To clear the case to you, by some particular instances; it is a thing of great importance, as at all times, so now at this time of eminent danger, the sword being over our heads, and over the whole nation {the Lord having revealed to the spirits of men, by his truth, that in case of eminent danger, there should be a great deal of zeal to God;} that the people of God should be put mightily on, to deal with God in this present extremity and necessity; but, I am afraid, many have a zeal of God, in this very case, but yet, not according to knowledge; for that too many {ignorantly and zealously, I confess, yet, I say, too many,} in this zeal to God, for their own safety and security, too much establish their own righteousness; and, I fear, if there be a miscarriage after so many fasting-days, and so much praying and seeking God, that the fruits will be the establishing of our own righteousness in the room and place of the righteousness of God. As, for example, when sin abounds, whether personally or generally, what is the way to get off, or get out of such transgression? Appeal to your own spirits, you that are spiritual; is not this your end that you propound? To fast, and pray, and mourn it out; this that which must bring you a discharge of your sins; this is that which must bring you tidings that God will be pacified towards you, that God will turn away his anger from you; if you do but fast spiritually, mourn bitterly, pray zealously with strength of spirit, this is that that shall overcome God.

I ask, or I beseech you rather to ask your own spirits {I mean still, you that are spiritual,} do not your hearts run out continually this way? Do they, or do they not? What then mean all the complaints of yours upon the defects of your fasting, your humiliation, self-denial, and the subduing of your corruptions? That this is that which pulls down the wrath of God upon us; is not this common among us, as long as men do not mend, there is no hope that God will? And, if every man would mend one, this is the way to redress the evil of the times? Beloved, let me deal plainly and freely with you; they that put deliverance from sin and wrath, upon the spiritual performances of that righteousness, which the Law commands them, they put that righteousness in the room and place of the righteousness of God; they make it as great an idol as can be; for they make it to be that which God's righteousness only is. I speak not against the doing of any righteousness according to the will of

God revealed. Let that mouth be forever stopped, that shall be opened to blame the Law that is holy, just, and good; or shall be the means to discourse people from walking in the commandments of God blameless.¹

All that I speak is this, that it will prove a rock of offence in the end, if it be not turned from; namely, that we should expect that our own righteousness should bring down a gracious answer from God to our spirits; that when we have done our work, in effect, that must prove our mediator and messenger from God; and, as that will speak, so will we have peace, or remain in bitterness of spirit. What can the righteousness of God himself do more than this, to have power with God, to prevail over God for good to us?

Beloved, although some peradventure, may magnify performances done in a spiritual way with attributes and titles even of God's own peculiar; I mean with attributes of omnipotency and invincibleness; certainly there is no omnipotency but God himself, and the righteousness that is God's own; the best righteousness that ever any man could act, or perform in all his life, is not able to divert the least effect of sins, or wrath, or procure or obtain the least smile of favour from God. You know, that "God is a God of purer eyes, and cannot behold iniquity;" you know, that iniquity is that which separates between God and a people; now what is the perfectest righteousness which the best man upon earth performs? Is it not full of unrighteousness and iniquity? "All our righteousness {saith the prophet Isaiah} are but as filthy rags;" and, saith the Apostle, "I account all as dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness." Is there dung and filth in the best of man's righteousness; and can this righteousness have power with God, and prevail over him?

Look upon Christ himself, when he did bear the sins of many upon his own person; he himself was deserted and forsaken of God, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Is Christ forsaken, when the sins of men are upon him, and shall men's persons be accepted and received in respect of such an act of theirs that carries sinfulness in the face of it? Nay, that carries a universal leprosy in the nature of it? Suppose your righteousness were a fulfilling of the whole Law of God, if you fail but in one point, that very failing in one point, makes you guilty of the breach of all the rest; and, when men stand guilty before God, shall they plead that which is full of guilt, to procure favour, mercy, or grace from him? No, no, the sacrifice of God, which is accepted of him, must be a male lamb, and a lamb without blemish; till, therefore, you can purge your righteousness, and separate all iniquity from it, know that all your righteousness in its own nature doth but separate you from God; so far is it from prevailing with him.

Surely, will some say, the righteousness that is performed according to the will of God, pleases him, and moves and melts him, and prevails with him to do this and that good to his people. I answer, too many people in the world too much stint the will of God, so much spoken of when they speak of a righteousness according to it, or a righteousness to do it; what is it? It is true indeed, righteousness done according to the will of God infinitely prevails with God; but show me the man that can perform it, a mere man without Christ? Show me a man that ever did, or ever can do this, acting righteousness according to the will of God? "Of myself," saith Paul, "I can do nothing;" "without me," saith Christ, "ye can do nothing;" nay, the Apostle goes further, "how to perform that which is good, I find not;" whilst men conceive that the will of God consists only in the materials of righteousness; peradventure they may think theirs is according to it; but alas the materials of righteousness are but the least part of the will of God wherewith he is pleased. Now to do an act partly with the will of God and partly against it, is this to do an act according to it? To do something that God calls for at your hands in some things and to walk directly contrary to him in others; is this to do his will? Suppose for the matter, the righteousness you do, be according to the will of God, that you do the thing that he calls for of you; as for instance, you fast, and pray, and the like; do you do these things according to the will of God, because the outward act is done? The will of God extends to the manner of doing, to the disposition of the person that is to do, as well as to the matter; as in Isaiah chapter 1, were not new moons, sabbaths and solemn assemblies God's own ordinances? And was not the performance of

¹ {Note: Is this Antinomianism? Or, can such a preacher be called an Antinomian? Gill.}

them materially according to the will of God? Yet, nevertheless, God loathed this service of righteousness; he was weary of it, he could not bear it; there was sinfulness mixed with it. "Your hands are full of blood," saith the Lord; therefore, though the things were materially according to his will, yet his soul abhorred them, being done amiss. "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." {Is.1:12-14}

Suppose men go further than simply doing things according to the will of God materially; they do not only the things, but do them spiritually with enlargedness of heart and affection; you fast, and you fast with bitterness of spirit, you eat bitter herbs in fasting; you mourn, and you mourn bitterly for your transgressions; you pray, and pray zealously in the heat and fervor of your spirits; now if all this be not done in faith, it is abominable; for "without faith, it is impossible to please God; he that comes to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him;" he that hath performed a duty, and expects from that performance, an answer according to his mind, he doth not do it in faith; for "we must do all we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," saith the Apostle; and "when we have done all, must say, we are unprofitable servants;" and it must be Christ alone that must prevail with the Father for us; all our righteousness will prevail nothing at all with God, nor move him a jot, except it be to pull down wrath; there is not one act of righteousness that a person doth but when that is finished, there is more transgression belonging to him than before he had performed it; and there is no composition, there is no buying out of evil by good doings; the doing of good doth not make a recompense for what sin doth; we pay but our debts in doing good; so that as there is a new righteousness performed, there is still a new reckoning added to the former; by acting of righteousness, you make up a greater number of sins than before; {Rom.14:23;} so that it is only Christ from whom we must have the expectation of success, in whatsoever thing we desire.

In a word, let a man's righteousness be never so exact; yet that is not according to the will of God, which hath not God's ends, which he proposeth in the doing of righteousness; you shall find the general rule of Christ and his apostles, to be this, that what we do, we must not only do it in the name of Christ, but also to the Lord, and for the Lord; "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness;" {Lk.1:74,75;} it is not, let us serve ourselves in holiness and righteousness, but let us serve him. "For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." {I Cor.6:20} He doth not say, being bought with a price, let us now seek our own good, as if we were still our own men; as if we had now liberty to trade for our own selves; you are "not your own," and therefore not your own, because you are "bought with a price;" therefore "glorify God in your bodies and spirits." It is most certainly true, that God having provided through Christ all things appertaining to life and godliness for his people; thereby calls them off from all self-ends, and by-respects in his services, to have only respect to him in them; he hath done all that may be done for yourselves.

But some may say, peradventure, this is a way to overthrow all righteousness at once; what, all that ever a man doth, though he doth ever so spiritually, though ever so exactly is to no purpose and in vain? Doth a man get nothing by all the righteousness he performs? Then we had as good sit still, and do nothing at all, will some say. I answer, this is carnal reasoning indeed; look but into the ground of this argument, and it will discover nothing but the selfishness of the person that makes it; I dare be bold to say, that that man will do no righteousness, but simply for his own sake; who, if he should know beforehand, that his righteousness will get him nothing, would therefore sit still, and do nothing; I dare be bold to say, he had as good sit still indeed, and do nothing, for he serves himself, not God, and though he performs righteousness ever so exactly, if he serves himself, God will never reckon that he serves him; when self is eyed, we can never serve God; when our commodity and advantage be not in the thing, we will sit still.

But, beloved, though the righteousness we are to perform be superfluous and vain in respect of any power it hath with God; to move him to do us good, yet it is not altogether superfluous; it is

most true, that all the righteousness of man cannot prevail with God to do us good; there is but one mover of God, the man Christ Jesus, who is the only and sole mediator. If you will have your own righteousness to be your mediator with God, to speak to God for you, to prevail with God for you; what is this, but to put it in the room and place of Christ? What is the mediation of Christ else, but for him to come between God and man, and be the daysman to lay his hand upon both, and at once to reconcile them? {Job 9:33} And shall your righteousness be the daysman, and lay hands upon God and man; then farewell Christ and his mediatorship; for this is the peculiar office of Christ, to be man's mediator, and advocate with the Father, to prevail with him for any good for us; so far, therefore as any person looks after his own righteousness, to bring glad tidings from God to him, so far a man establishes it in the room and place of the righteousness of God; which proceeds from the ignorance of that righteousness, and will in the bud prove a stumbling-block to men, and a rock of offence to them.

All this while I desire not to be mistaken; some, it may be, will desire to know then to what use this righteousness of ours serves, seeing it is not of power to prevail with God. "My goodness extendeth not unto thee," saith David; not to God, but it may to men; "to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." {Ps.16:3} Our righteousness is appointed for excellent uses, if we could be contented with those God hath ordained it unto.

First, it serves as a real way to manifest our thankfulness to God, for what we have already received of him. In Psalm 103, David is excellent, "Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Why, what is the matter David? "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Mark it well, I pray, all that is within us must be praise, and nothing but praise; and the ground is this, God pardons our sins, heals our infirmities, and supplies all our wants; in consideration of this, all that is within us should continually express his praise.

Again secondly, there is this usefulness in it, namely, that we may serve our generation; and the Apostle gives this charge, that "men study to maintain good works," because, saith he, "these things are profitable unto men;" as we may therefore do good to men, so according to our ability, and talent received, we must employ ourselves to the utmost for that end and purpose. The heathens could say, "they were not made for themselves, but for others;" therefore there is this usefulness in our righteousness, that others may receive benefit by it. "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven;" that men may be drawn on to glorify God, we must shine before men in a godly conversation.

Thirdly, it is useful, as it is the ordinance of God, wherein the Lord hath appointed us to meet with him, and wherein he will make good those things which before he hath promised. And this is the very end and ground of our fasting, praying, and mourning in our exigencies and extremities; not that these duties do at all prevail with God, or at all move him; for it is God that moves even these services and all the spiritualness in us in them; and therefore he moves them in us, because when we are moved by his Spirit, and according to his will come forth to meet him where he appoints, there he will pour out himself in grace and love, according to his promise, not according to our performances. Thus, I say, this great objection may be answered easily, why we fast, and pray, and mourn in adversity, if they do us no good? I say, though they do us no good, yet we fast and pray, in that the Lord saith, come to me, meet me in this and that ordinance, and I will come with my hands full; then, and there, I will pour out that which mine own freeness hath engaged me to do for you; is it not injustice not to meet him then? We confess our sins to him, but what is the ground of forgiveness? Not our confession of sins, not our fasting, prayers, mourning and tears; but "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." {Is.43:25}

I will draw towards the conclusion. In a word, whoever he be that is selfish in his own righteousness, and goes about to establish it in the room of Christ, laboring to procure some good unto himself thereby, and makes that righteousness do that for him, that God's righteousness should do, so making an idol of it; first, he plays the most dishonest part with God that can be. Do you

profess yourselves to be the servants of God? If you be, what dishonesty is there in you, that you professing to serve him, do notwithstanding, by secret and by stealth, serve yourselves? If an apprentice should hide himself all day long, to earn and gain money for himself, might not his master justly tax him for a dishonest fellow? Why doth the master keep him, and find him, but that all he doth, he should do for him, and not for himself? Are you at God's finding, or are you at your own? Miserable are you that are at your own; are you at God's finding then, and not at your own? What is it you seek for, and would get by the righteousness you seek so eagerly after? The truth is, there is nothing to be gotten that you have not already; if you have Christ, all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's. {I Cor.3:23} Are you one of Christ's? A man need not work for that which is his own already; why then do you work for that which is yours already? Are you in Christ, or are you not? Do you work to get into Christ? Alas; how long might men work out of Christ, and work themselves into hell at last? What can a man get of God by all his righteousness and works, if he hath not Christ to get it for him? Therefore all things are yours, because you are Christ's, or else you shall have nothing at all. God gives nothing of gift, and of his dear love, but as men are in Christ, and for his sake; therefore you do but labour in vain, if you labour for that which is yet to be produced.

But to do good to others; Christ in speaking to Peter saith, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." {Lk.22:32} Let these be the ends of your services; work because good is already made sure to you, and not to make it sure; when a father settles an inheritance upon his son, he makes the deed so, that the son shall not work for the father's means; because the father hath passed over all that he hath to his son, he serves out of love, for what he hath already received, not for what is hoped for.

And as there is dishonesty in self-seeking; so, secondly, there is a foul blur cast upon God. Beloved, if you should see a servant go about the streets complaining thus, Sir, help me to a little work, I must starve except I can work for myself; what would you think of this man's master? Surely, you will say, he is a hard master, that his servant must starve, except he seek for himself, and purvey for himself; you that say in your hearts, you are undone, you must perish, you are lost, except your prayers and humbling of yourselves can get some supply; is not this a working for yourselves? Is not this plain saying, there is no trusting to God, and that we must work for ourselves, or else we shall perish?

I should come to consider the other particulars in this text; but time not permitting we will wind up all in one word of application. We now stand before the Lord, and among other mercies, we expect this great mercy, salvation; not only, salvation in heaven, but salvation from the sword; it is not, it must not be your good doings that must procure it; or your repentance, that must bring it; you must not rest upon your performances to get it; do all that God calls for when you are in his way; in this respect be doing; but as for your help look up unto the hills from whence it cometh; your help stands in the name of the Lord, that made heaven and earth; and, therefore, in the expectation of help; all your business must lie in this: "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD." {Ex.14:13}