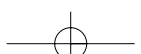
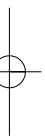


Sermon
on
Romans 4:16

by

George
Whitefield



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A SERMON

by

GEORGE WHITEFIELD M.A.

Quinta Press

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ROMANS 4:16.

Therefore it is of Faith, that it might be by Grace.

It is very observable in the Writings of the great Apostle *Paul*, that as he distinctly and zealously asserted, so he strongly and invincibly proved, the Doctrines of *Free-Grace* in the highest Sense of that Word; and particularly the Doctrine of Justification by Grace, as it stands in direct Opposition to the Notion of Justification by the Works of the Law. And it must be very delightful to an inquisitive and rational Mind, to perceive the Pertinency and Strength of the Arguments he produces, both in proving the Doctrine he taught, and in answering the Objections that were or might be raised against it. Yet ye are to remember, that since the Apostle was an inspired Writer, it would have been a just Warrant and sufficient Ground for our Belief, if he had only *asserted* the Truth as it is in *Jesus*; for the Spirit of Truth, we are sure, could neither

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dictate a Falsehood, nor set his Seal to a Lie. But since the Holy Ghost condescends, in the Writings of the Apostle, not only to *assert*, but to *prove* the Truth; and requires our Belief, not merely upon a divine Authority, but upon a close Appeal to our rational Powers, we ought surely with Thankfulness to receive the Satisfaction that is offer'd.

There is another Instance of the Spirit's Care, which likewise most remarkably appears in the Writings of this Apostle; which is, that divine Subjects are treated, and Arguments and Sentences relating to them, are connected in such a Manner, as fixes the Meaning of his Words, and prevents Ambiguity of Expression. Thus the Meaning of the Expressions in the Text is so settled, that we need not be at a Loss about one Word contained in it. *Therefore it is of Faith, that it might be by Grace.*

If it be enquired, what that is which is here declared to *be so of Faith, as to be by Grace*, the Answer may be gathered from Verses 13, 14. where 'tis said, *For the Promise, that he should be the heir of the World, was not to*

Abraham, or his Seed, through the Law, but through the Righteousness of Faith, &c. Now if we read the Words of the Text, in a strict Connection with these preceding Verses, as we ought to do; then 'tis evident, that either the Promise of the Inheritance

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made to *Abraham*, or the Righteousness through which the Inheritance was obtained, must be the *Antecedent* to the *Relative* understood in the Text. And whether we take the Word *Promise*, or the Word *Righteousness*, to be that which the Apostle says, is so of Faith as to be by Grace, it will equally appear, that the Design of his Reasoning in this Context is to show, that the Saints obtain their Justification and Salvation in the same Way, that *Abraham* obtained the Inheritance; which was not through the Law, but through the Righteousness of Faith. And since Justification, in the Sight of God, is the great Subject that the Apostle treats of in the preceding Part of this Epistle; and since his main Drift therein is to prove, that we are justified, not at all by the Works of the Law, but entirely by the Faith of Jesus Christ; we may conclude the Meaning of the Text to be the same, as if he had expressly said, *Therefore, Justification is of Faith that it might be by Grace*. Now as our Justification in the Sight of God, is a Matter of the greatest Importance; it becomes us, for a just Explication of this Assertion in the Text, diligently to enquire into these three Things.

I. What is here the Meaning of the Word *Grace*.

II. What is the Meaning of the Word *Faith*.

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III. What is the Connection between Faith and Grace in the new Covenant, especially in our Justification.

1. Let us enquire, what is, and must be meant by the Word *Grace*, in the Text.

I acknowledge this Word is of very general signification in itself; for it is applicable to any *good Work* of God upon us, and to any Discovery of his *good Will* towards us.

But whatever Latitude of Signification the Word *Grace* will bear; yet it is not difficult, from the surrounding Context, to fix the precise and determinate Meaning of it here. There are several Establishments, or Schemes, divine or human, respecting the Happiness of Man, that in some Sence may be said to be *gracious*; which may easily be perceived to be quite foreign from that which is here intended.

For Instance; the Covenant of Works made with *Adam* in his State of Innocency, might, in some Respects, be look'd upon as a gracious

Establishment; particularly because God had freely bestowed upon him his noble Powers and Capacities; freely implanted in him a Principle of Holiness, inclining him wholly to that which is Good; and had freely annexed the Promise of eternal Life upon Condition of perfect Obedience. But after all that can be said, or supposed to this Purpose; yet the Word *Grace*, as it stands in the Text, could not be applicable to

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to that Constitution: For, notwithstanding all the Favour that was shown in that Covenant, yet Justification thereby must strictly and properly have been of Works: And according to the Form of that first divine Establishment there could be no Use or Room for Faith, as 'tis opposed to Works, in order to eternal Life. Whereas the Text plainly suggests, that if Salvation or Happiness be not of Faith, it cannot be by Grace.

Farther, I acknowledge it to be great Grace in God, to send his only begotten Son into our World, to satisfy divine Justice, and to fulfil the divine Law for Sinners, and so to open a Way of Salvation to them. 'Tis a great Mercy that he declares to us this Way of Salvation in his Word, and has appointed a Variety of Means of Grace for our Recovery, and the like.

But after all that can be urged, and must be allowed of this Nature, still if our Interest in *Christ*, and our partaking of the Salvation he has obtained, are suspended upon the Condition of our Obedience, and Adherence to the Duties of the Law; 'tis plain, that even such Grace as this, falls vastly short of that which is mentioned, and intended in the Text: And this Scheme is so far from excluding Works from being the Cause of our Justification, that it introduces, and establishes them as such; and makes the Covenant of Grace to degenerate into the

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Essence and Form of a Legal Covenant; and would oblige us to say, not as the Apostle teaches: Therefore Justification is of *Faith*, but, on the contrary, therefore it is of *Works*, that it might be by Grace.

Farther, I confess it would be *Grace* indeed; if God, for *Christ's* Sake, were pleased to accept of our sincere, but imperfect Obedience, in the room of a perfect legal Righteousness. But as such a Kind of Grace was never established, so it is entirely inconsistent with the Text and Context. For upon this Supposition, the Reward must be reckon'd not of Grace but of Debt. The Nature of the Thing requires it. For although it would be of Grace to establish such a Constitution, yet when the Constitution

is established, a Person could claim his Justification as a Debt, by Virtue of his sincere Obedience. That a general Rule laid down by the Apostle, *Romans 4:4. Now to him that worketh*, (namely, to obtain Salvation in that Way) *is the Reward not reckon'd of Grace, but of Debt.* Besides, the Supposition, that God will graciously reckon our sincere Obedience to us, for a perfect legal Righteousness, represents him as reckoning false, in reckoning a Thing to be what it is not: And farther, it entirely over turns the Opposition between Faith and Works, in the Matter and Ground of our Justification, which the Apostle continually

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insists upon in his handling this Subject.

I might here mention some other Schemes of human Invention, whereby Men have endeavoured to account for the Word *Grace* in our justification, and might show that each of them necessarily fall short of the Thing really intended by it in the Text.

But I shall only observe, that since the Apostle assures us, Justification is of Faith; since he very emphatically sets Faith, in the great Business of our Justification in direct Opposition to all legal Works; and since he plainly signifies, that it was necessary Justification should be of Faith, that it might be by Grace; we cannot but conclude, that he here speaks of absolute, free, and unconditional Grace. For indeed, to suppose this Grace properly conditional in any Sense, is to destroy the very Nature of it, and to make our Enjoyment of Salvation to rest not upon Grace, as the Apostle assures us it does, but upon Works, which the Apostle declares it does not.

But that we may see that a Justification by Faith, is truly Justification by *Grace*, let us enquire,

Secondly, What is here meant by *Faith*. The Scripture speaks so much of Faith, of its Nature and Object, of its Arts and Effects; as makes an Enquiry into this Subject a Matter of great Consequence, and a right

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Understanding hereof will give us a very distinct and delightful View of the Method of Grace.

Here some enquiring Mind may put such a Question as this; If the Word *Grace* must be taken in such a strict and complete Sense, for absolute, unconditional Grace, which has no Regard to, Dependence upon, or necessary Connection with, any prior Works of ours, whether Ceremonial or Moral, Legal or Evangelical, Perfect or Imperfect, what then can Faith be? Is not *that* a *Work*? Is it not an Act of Evangelical

Obedience? If therefore Faith be a Work, and Justification be by Faith, this supposes that it must be by some Work of ours.

A satisfactory Answer to such an Enquiry, and to the Objection therein contained, may be gathered from the Scripture-account of the Nature and Workings of a true living Faith: yea from the Description we have of it in this very Chapter; in which we are taught both *negatively* what it is not, and *positively* what it is.—It is not any Thing that comes under the Notion of working for Justification, or for our Acceptance before God. This appears particularly from Verse 13th, *For the Promise that he should be Heir of the World, was not to Abraham or his Seed thro' the Law, but thro' the Righteousness of Faith.* And again, from Verse 14th, where he adds, *For if they which are of the Law be*

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Heirs, Faith is made void, and the Promise made of none Effect. Let any real serious Christian, tho' but of common Understanding, fix his Eye upon these Passages, and he cannot but observe, that the Righteousness of the Law, and the Righteousness of Faith, are placed in a direct Opposition; or that Believing and Working are so contrary to one another, that in point of Justification, they cannot stand together; but where the one is, the other is not; *i.e.* where a Person does any *Work* for his Justification, he does not *believe* for it; and so, *vice versâ*, where he does really *believe* for it, he does not *work* for it. And all this is farther confirmed by the Distinction which the Apostle had laid down, Verse 5th, *To him that worketh not, but believeth, &c.* But let us look farther into this Chapter, and we shall see *positively* what Faith is, and how it operates.

Here the Apostle sets forth the Nature and Strength of *Abraham's* Faith, for our Instruction and Imitation, and expressly styles him the Father of all them that believe; so that, by taking a distinct View of the Faith of *Abraham*, we may come at a satisfactory Knowledge in general, who are true Believers, and what true Believing is; from this single Instance, which is most highly renowned and recommended: And by reading, what follows the Text, to the

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End of the Chapter, you will find the Matter stands in this Light; There was of old a free, absolute, gracious Promise made to *Abraham*, which was, *That in him all the Families of the Earth should be blessed*, Genesis 12:3. The spiritual Meaning and Intent of this Promise may be learned, both from the Apostle's Application of it in this Chapter to the Doctrine of Justification, and from the express Exposition he gives of it in Galatians

3:8. where he says, *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen thro' Faith, preached the Gospel before unto Abraham; saying, In thee shall all Nations be blessed.* Here we should observe, This Gospel-promise was not made to *Abraham* or his Seed upon any Condition of Works of any kind: neither did he set about working in order to obtain an Interest in it; but all that he did, or was directed and enabled to do by the Divine Spirit, was only to believe the Promise, to embrace it, lay hold of, and trust upon it, as entirely free. But yet his Faith was not a bare, cold Assent, or a mere speculative Belief. The Language, in which the Apostle speaks it, is too strong to admit of such a low and mean Interpretation. He esteemed the Blessing promised as most suitable and desirable, and looked upon the Promise itself as most free and faithful. His whole Heart was engaged

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in this View of the Promise, in his Application of it, and Dependence upon it; And 'tis easy to see, that such a kind of Faith is quite opposite to working for an Interest in the Promise.

If a Person sets about to work for a Blessing, he, in his own Mind and Heart, looks upon the Promise of it not as free, but as clogged with some legal Condition to be perform'd by him; so that he dares not lay hold of, plead upon, trust in, or lay Claim to the Promise, until he has, and until he sees he has performed the Condition.

But the Faith of *Abraham*, and consequently the Faith of all true Believers, is of quite a different, yea, and opposite Nature to this: And tho' a realising hearty Persuasion of the Freeness, Fullness, and Faithfulness of the Promise begets in the Heart the Acts of *flying to, trusting upon, laying hold of,* and the like and tho' these Actings may, in a *physical* Sense, be called Acts or Works of ours; yet 'tis plain, they are of such a Nature and Kind, as that they cannot stand in the View or Quality of Works in their Relation to our Justification: For, in such Actings as these, the Souls of Believers go to God as one *that justifieth the Ungodly*, disclaiming all Right and Title to the Blessing upon account of any Worthiness in them, or Work performed by them; yea, such Actings of Soul as these do expressly,

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professedly, and experimentally exclude the View or Thought of any proper Condition. And let it be remembered, that Faith doth not justify us, either as a Principle wrought in us, or as a Work performed by us, but only as it has a strict Eye upon, and lays hold of the free Promise or

Declaration; and the Promise itself is not made to us, because we believe; but directly the contrary, we believe, or at least have absolute Ground and Warrant for Faith, because the Promise is freely made and declared to us.

The Sum of what has been represented is this.

Faith is such a spiritual real hearty Persuasion of the Fulness, Freeness, and Suitableness of the Promise of Salvation in CHRIST, wrought in the Mind by the Divine Spirit, as engages the Soul to go out of itself, and actually refer itself to, lay hold of, trust in, and build upon the Promise of Grace, as entirely free, for all that Salvation that is exhibited by, and contained in the Promise.

By what has been already observed, one would think, that both the Nature and Necessity of the Connection between Faith and Free-Grace should be sufficiently clear. But, for the farther Illustration of this Matter, I would proceed distinctly to consider,

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Thirdly, The strict Connection that subsists between, these two. Understanding by *Grace*, absolutely free Favour; and by *Faith*, the Soul's real apprehending this Favour, as contained in the Promise, and declared in the Gospel; together with its resting and building upon it for its own Personal Salvation.

There is, there can be nothing, that so falls in with the Nature of the Gospel, and so agrees to the Freeness of the Grace of God in *Christ*, as Faith in this View of it does. And we may be sure, from these Considerations, that it is an universal Truth. That whatsoever is of Faith, must be of Free-Grace: Whereas, if we take *Faith* or *Grace* in any other Light, we overturn the Nature of the Gospel, make the Covenant of Grace a Covenant of Works, and destroy the very Foundation of Evangelical Holiness and Obedience.

Now this *Connection* between *Faith* and *Grace* will plainly appear, upon the Consideration of many Things, that relate to Faith: whether we attend to its *Nature* or *Object*, to the *Matter*, *Means*, or *Encouragement*, to the *Acts* or *Author* of it.

1st, The necessary Connection between Faith and Grace appears from the *Nature* of Faith: which is, as we are told, Verse 5th, *not working, but believing on him that justifieth the Ungodly.* And indeed, if we look

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into the Thing itself, in a rational Way; shall be forced to conceive,, that the abstract Nature of Faith is, not to perform a Duty, but to believe a Truth.

If therefore a Sinner becomes interested in a Blessing, by the real hearty Belief of a Truth; that Truth believed, in order to answer that End, must be a Doctrine of Free-Grace. *Believing* and *Working* are so very distinct in their Natures, that when soever any Favour is obtained or received by mere *believing*, it cannot in any proper Sense be said to be obtained by working.

Let us look into the Scripture Account of this Matter. We have a general Description of the Nature of Faith in *Hebrews 11:1*, and a most rational, accurate and distinct Account it is. *Now*, (says the Apostle) Faith is the Substance (*ὑποστασις* Subsistence) of Things hoped for, and the Evidence (*ἔλεγκος* Conviction) of *Things not seen*. I need not here stay to criticise largely upon these Words, since the plain and natural Meaning is this. That Faith is the realising, heart-impressing Sense of Things as hoped for and unseen, by means whereof, the Truths declared have a proper *Subsistence* in the Mind, and produce an effectual *Conviction* upon the Conscience. By Faith, or in real Believing the Soul takes in the Evidence and Impression of the Truth,

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In believing we receive a Blessing as freely given; in working, we obtain it upon some Condition. Where nothing but Faith is necessary to a Person's becoming interested in a Favour; there the Favour is not worked for, but freely granted, without regard had to any Obedience of ours.

There is another Description of Faith; which speaks the Truth with farther Evidence still. 1 *John 5:10*, *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son*. What I have here my Thoughts particularly upon are those Words, *He that believeth, hath the Witness within himself*. Here the Believer is described to be One that takes in or receives the Evidence and Influence of the Gospel-Record into himself, into his Heart and Conscience. Observe, both these Words *Witness* and *Record* are one in the Original, tho' differently translated here (*μαρτυριά*). Now if you ask what this Record is, which is thus believed and taken in, so as to possess the governing Powers of the Soul; you have the Answer, Verse 11th, *And this is the Record that God hath given us, eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son*. A glorious and most gracious Declaration indeed! Now if God, by his Spirit, brings this Testimony home to the Conscience, makes

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Application of it to the Soul, writes it in the Heart, and so produces Faith; every one may see, that whatsoever is of Faith, must be of Free-Grace. Whatsoever Blessings are conveyed into the Soul, or conferred upon it in this Way, must be Gifts of free, rich and effectual Grace, and received in that Light only.

Secondly, The necessary Connection between Faith and Free-Grace appears, if we consider the *Object of Faith*, which is exprest to be *Christ* or God in *Christ*: For Faith itself is frequently called *believing on CHRIST*, or *on God thro' CHRIST*, or *believing on him that justifieth the Ungodly*, or *believing on him that raised up JESUS CHRIST from the Dead*, as one delivered for our *Offences*, and raised again for our *justification*. And many other Phrases of the like Nature occur in Scripture. Now, observe, if this be the Object to which the Soul in believing flies, if this be the Prop on which it leans, this be he on whom it relies; 'tis easy to see from hence, that whatsoever is received by the Soul, or conferred upon it in this Way, must be of Free-Grace! Faith can be supposed to act no other Way upon a personal Object; than by *coming, fixing, receiving, leaning, trifling*, and the like. Now consider *Christ* as the proper and immediate Object of these spiritual Acts,

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and then we cannot but conceive that *Christ* is viewed by the Soul, not only as a necessary and complete, but likewise as a *free* Saviour. 'Tis clear, I say, that the proper, direct and immediate Object of such Acts must be a free *Jesus*, as having in him a *free* Salvation. For if *Christ* were proposed as a conditional Saviour, that Condition must obstruct the Exercise of such Actings. If this were the Case, the poor Soul would have no Warrant or Ground to fly to *Christ*, trust in him, or rest upon him, until it has, and knows it has, performed that Condition, whatever it be, upon which an Interest in *Christ* is supposed to be suspended. And here let me farther add, that the very Command to believe on and trust in the Lord Jesus *Christ*, supposes that the poor Sinner not only *may* but *ought* thus to act upon *Christ* directly and immediately; for this Command to believe is the first and great Command of the Gospel. We are not exhorted first to work and then believe; because we have worked; not to perform Duties, and then trust in *Christ*, because we have performed them; but what we are directed and warranted to do, is from a Sense of our own Guilt, Pollution and Insufficiency to go to *Christ*, and receive

from him and thro' him all that Grace we need, both for the Safety of our Persons, and for the Performance of our Duties: So that Faith

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is first, and Works afterwards; we first believe, and then obey; we first trust in *Christ* for Strength, and then in his Strength work out our own Salvation.

What a gracious encouraging Truth is this! That whosoever we are, and whatsoever Circumstances of Spiritual Distress we are in, we may and ought immediately to cast our Souls upon him, place our Hope in him, and build upon him. This very Liberty, Grant and Command, suppose that *Christ* and all his Salvation are entirely free.

Upon the whole, then, it appears, that our Warrant to trust in *Christ* is not suspended upon the Condition of our working; but that we must receive all from *Christ* in a Way of believing. *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the Ungodly, his Faith, or the Object of his Faith believed on, is accounted for Righteousness.* There is such an utter Inconsistency between Faith and Works in the Point of Justification, that the Apostle plainly assures us, Verse 14th, *If they which are of the Law be Heirs, Faith is made void, and the Promise made of none Effect.* The Case seems to stand thus; Whatsoever or whosoever be the proper Object of Trust and Confidence, that Object is fled to, and rested in as free. Whensoever a Person is directed to fly to any Refuge, this supposes that

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Refuge is free to be fled to. Whensoever a Person is commanded to build upon any Ground, this supposes that that Ground is free to be built upon: So, since we are allowed and commanded to confide in *Christ* for all Salvation, this supposes (if the Command be just and well-grounded) that he has all Salvation to bestow, and that he is free to be confided in for it.

But if the Exhibition of *Christ* and his Salvation be clogged with any Condition; this puts an insurmountable Bar in the Way of such Acts of Trust and Reliance, until the Condition be performed: And then if a Person trusts, because he has performed that Condition, it cannot be said that he receives *Christ* in a Way of *Believing*, but in a Way of *Working*. And thus by the Interposition of a proper Condition, *Faith is made void, and the Promise made of none Effect.* 'Tis plain then, from the Nature of the Object, that whatsoever is of Faith, must be by Free-Grace. And, to clear the whole, take this one Observation; Faith is not that which

gives us a Claim to *Christ*; but that by which we really claim him, upon the Footing of a free Promise. Faith is not that which gives us either our Liberty, Ground or Warrant to trust in *Christ*; but 'tis that by which we trust upon him, having the Liberty and Warrant for it from the free Exhibition of *Christ*, and the free Invitations of

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of the Gospel. But this brings me on to observe,

Thirdly, That the necessary Connection between *Faith* and *Free-Grace* appears from the Consideration of the *Matter, Means* and *Encouragement* of Faith. Each of these might be considered distinctly; but I join them together under one head; because they all relate to one and the same Thing, and that is the *Gospel*.

The Substance of the Gospel is the *Matter* of Faith; 'tis what we are commanded to believe. The *Declaration* of the Gospel is the *Means* of Faith, for *Faith cometh by Hearing, and Hearing by the Word of God*. 'Tis the Method which God usually takes by his Spirit to beget Faith in us, to promote and strengthen it, and to draw it forth into Exercise. The *Freeness* of the Gospel is the *Encouragement* of Faith. It is good News, glad Tidings; it contains in it a vast Variety of *Promises, Proposals* and *Invitations*, which give all-sufficient Ground, and the strongest Encouragement for the Soul to build upon *Christ* in a Way of believing. We have a clear Intimation, that the Gospel is the *Matter, Means* and *Encouragement* of Faith, in the Direction our Lord gave to his Disciples, and the Declaration he made just before his Ascension to heaven; Mark 16:15,16. *Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every*

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Creature: He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be dammed.

Some have been ready to conceive that these *Words, He that believeth, shall be saved*, are the Substance of the Gospel itself; as they imply a Command to believe. But were it asked by any, What does such a Person believe who shall be saved? What is the *Matter* of his Faith? Surely the Answer must be, He believes that *Gospel* which *Christ* commanded his Disciples to preach to all. And from hence it appears, that the Gospel, strictly speaking, must be a different Thing from the Command to believe it.

Now if we look upon the Gospel in this Light, as the *Matter* laid before us, for us to believe, and as the *Means* and *Incouragement* of Faith in *Christ*; 'tis easy to observe from hence, that it is, and must be a Gospel of free

Grace. 'Tis really a free Proclamation of Sight to the Blind, of Pardon to the Guilty, of Justification to the Condemned, of Cleansing to the Filthy, of Strength to the Weak, and of all Salvation in *Christ* to the most Unworthy, being the very chief of Sinners. Such a Proclamation as this, commands Belief, and grants Incouragement, by reason of its Fullness. Freeness, and Suitableness. The Gospel, thus considered, stands in a most beautiful and amiable Light; and its Relation to Faith, as the *Matter, Means,*

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and *Incouragement* of it appears clear and full.

And the Apostle's Description of the Gospel, as the Ministry of Reconciliation, confirms this Account of the Nature and Substance of it, 2 Corinthians 5:19, 21. *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them; for God hath made him to be Sin for us who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.*

I might here introduce Abundance of scripture Expressions to show what is strictly and properly the Matter of Faith: To mention a few; *That through Christ is preached unto us the Forgiveness of Sins: That in Christ all Fullness dwells: That God hath given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son: That all the Promises are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus: That God hath set forth Christ to be a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood: That Christ was delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification.* And are these, and such like Articles of divine Revelation, the Matter of our Faith? then surely they not only demand our Belief, as they come with a divine Authority; but the Declaration of them is the most likely Means of exciting, and incouraging us to those various Actings of Soul, which correspond with the Gospel Revelation: And when these spiritual Truths are really

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received into the Soul, and applied to the Conscience by the effectual Working of the Holy Spirit, they are a Foundation laid in the Soul for all the Actings of Faith upon *Christ*.

In a Word, the Gospel, strictly speaking, is the Exhibition of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, as a necessary, suitable, complete, and in all Respects, a free Saviour. It holds forth *Christ* as an Object fit to be trusted in; and gives the guilty, helpless Sinner, the greatest Incouragement to rely upon him: This is the Nature, Substance, and Form of the Gospel. And indeed, such a Gospel as this, is necessary for us; to give us ground for, and to

be a Means of exciting, in us the spiritual Exercises of absolute flying to *Christ*, and receiving of him, of hoping in him, and resting upon him; and the like humble, and fiducial Actings. And all these Things taken together, concur to evidence, and confirm this Truth, *that whatsoever is of Faith, must be of Grace.*

IV. The necessary Connection between Faith and Free Grace farther appears from the Acts of Faith. What these *Acts* are, I have already mentioned; and described them under the Terms *flying, trusting, &c.* But what I would now more particularly insist upon, is the *Sense, Meaning, Drift, Tendency* and *Sentiment* of the Believer's Heart, when in the actual Exercise of Faith on

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Christ: And we shall find, that the purer and more lively these Actings of the Soul are, the more they evidence and proclaim free Grace. This is indeed a very experimental, serious, and spiritual Subject; and a close Search into it may be very serviceable, both for the inlightning our Minds, and the quickning of our Graces.

Come, *Christians*, look back upon those Seasons, when your Souls have been really, exercising themselves towards and upon the Lord *Jesus Christ*: And remark, what were, at that Time, the inward Sentiments of your Mind, the Motions of your Souls, and the Breathing of your Hearts. When first you fled to *Christ*, and committed your Souls, and all your Spiritual Concerns, both for Time and Eternity, into his Hands: How was it with you then? Did you not then see, feel and acknowledge before God, that you were quite lost and undone, polluted, helpless, and condemned in yourselves? Were not your Souls driven to a Non-plus, and plunged into the greatest Perplexity? Did you not then see, that your Condition was so deplorable, that unless *Christ* were not only a full, but a *free* Saviour, you could have no Hope at all from him? And when you first gathered any Hope; was it not by an absolute Recommendation of your guilty, polluted, unworthy Souls unto *Jesus*, casting yourselves upon him because of the

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Freeness of his Grace, and his Willingness to save? Could you then see any Thing in you, or venture to bring any Thing with you, to, recommend you to *Christ*, whether Duties or Indeavours, Privileges or Attainments? And was not the powerful, lively, effectual Application of free Grace to your Souls, the first Ground of your Comfort and Hope?

But if you cannot recollect your first Actings towards *Christ*; see how it has been with you since, at various Times, in the Course of your Experience. Have you not, at particular Seasons, been brought into such spiritual Distress; that if you had not a free *Jesus*, and free Salvation in him to lay hold of, your Souls must have been lost? Farther, when such Workings and Sentiments were in your Souls, how did you gain Relief? Was it not by a direct Application of your Souls to *Christ*, or by a special Appropriation of *Christ* to your Souls? Let me ask, What did you think of *Christ*, of Grace and Salvation then? Did you, or could you apprehend Grace as conditional, or as suspended upon any Works to be done by you?

Thus I might proceed in reasoning with your Souls upon such Experiences: And unless these are all Delusions, they, plainly demonstrate the Freeness of divine Grace: And 'tis hard to conceive that such Sentiments are

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delusive, since they so exactly fall in with the Meaning, and proper Intention of all those Expressions, by which the Acts of a real living Faith are described in the divine Word. The Nature of the Thing testifies; that while a poor Soul is in the very Act of flying to *Christ*, and trusting in him, it is sensible of its own Misery and Helplessness, and sees the very Blessings it needs to be in Christ. It sees that it has nothing in itself, and that *Christ* is its all: It feels itself *empty*, and sees *Christ full* of all Grace. Upon the whole, it finds nothing to rest itself, its Hope, and its Salvation upon, but free Mercy in *Jesus Christ*. When a Soul flies to *Christ*, it views him as a free Refuge; when a Soul receives *Christ*, it views him as a free Gift; when it trusts in *Christ*, it views him not only as a sure, but likewise a *free* Foundation: And, in Proportion, as a Soul views this Freeness; so it trusts with more or less Confidence. Thus 'tis clear, that the Heart, in all such Actings as these, cannot but look upon Salvation, and all that relates to it, as the Gifts of free Grace; for this is the very *Intention, Drift, Apprehension*, and only *Incouragement* of the Soul in these Actings.

How strong then is the Connection between Faith and free Grace!

V. And lastly, This Connection appears still fuller and plainer, if possible, from the Consideration of *Author* of Faith.

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Were it in our own Power to produce this gracious Principle in ourselves, and to draw it forth into. Exercise; there would still be some Room left for Boasting, and some Ground for Self-Confidence. 'Tis

natural for us to introduce *Self* some-where or other. I have endeavoured to drive it out of many of its strong Holds already, by representing the Nature and Acts of Faith: What remains now is to show; that even Faith itself, and its Acts, are ascribed to God as the *Author*. Indeed our own Experience does in a great Measure give a Testimony to this. Can we believe, trust, and rely in a hearty Manner when we please? No, no. If we believe, it is *given us to believe*: And he that is the Object and Finisher, is likewise the Author of Faith, *Hebrews* 12:2. This the Apostles acknowledged, when they, in an humble and earnest Manner, cried out, *Luke* 17:5. *Lord increase our Faith*. This precious Grace does not grow in Nature's Garden; 'tis the Spirit of God that works it in us: And *trusting* is made the Matter of a *Promise* as well as of a *Precept*, *Zephaniah* 3:12. *I will also leave in the Midst of thee, an afflicted and poor People, and they shall trust in the Name of the LORD*. But nothing can be more full and express to this Purpose, than what is written, *Ephesians* 2:8. *For by Grace ye are saved thro' Faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God*.

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Thus it appears upon the whole; that Faith is of such a Nature, as to exclude all Boasting, and loudly to proclaim free Grace upon every Consideration of it. 'Tis a Grace in us, that in every Respect tallies with the Grace of God in *Christ*, as 'tis revealed in the Word to poor, undone, and helpless Sinners; yea, 'tis every Way subservient, and suited to the Freeness of that Grace. And for this Reason I conceive it to be said in the Text, *Therefore it is of Faith, that it might be by Grace*. But to draw to a Conclusion: From what has been delivered, we may observe by Way of

APPLICATION

I. *What peculiar Wisdom appears in this Constitution! Herein God hath abounded towards us in all Wisdom and Prudence.*

That we might have some Insight into the Beauty of this Establishment and Method of Salvation, it is proper to look upon it in the following Light.

God from Eternity foreseeing the Apostacy of Man, determined to exalt and glorify all the Perfections of his Nature in the Recovery of a chosen Remnant; but especially to display the Glories of free and distinguishing Grace; that he might have all the Honour of his Contrivance and Work. Now the Question is. What Method could be fixed

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upon, by which these glorious and gracious purposes might best be answered? And after all that the Invention, or Thought of Man can suggest; we must fall down, admire, and adore the divine Wisdom and Prudence in this Establishment; which is it a most wonderful Manner adapted to secure the high and holy Ends which God aimed at in it. For in this Method of Salvation, God doth not only bestow divine and saving Blessings, in a gracious, powerful, and sovereign Way, as he is the Author of all Grace and Holiness in us; but he imprints such Sentiments of Things in the very Minds and Consciences of those that are saved; that they, by the very Motions of their Hearts, and by the most inward Actings of their Souls, do give him the Glory of his saving Work: They are directed and enabled to *receive* saving Blessings in the very Light in which he *gives* them; namely, as the Fruits of his absolute Love, as the Gifts of his free Grace, and as the Tokens of his distinguishing Favour. By this Means, and in this Way, they are *experimentally*, as well as *really*, brought out of themselves, and led into another.

Thus their own Emptiness, and Unworthiness, are discovered to them; and their Eyes, Hearts and Hopes are fixed upon him in whom all Fullness dwells. God, by bestowing Salvation in this Way, convinces the

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the Soul; that it has nothing in itself, and can do nothing of itself; has nothing in itself to depend upon, and can do nothing to recommend itself to God. Thus the Creature is stripped of all his fancied Glory, and made to lie low at the very Footstool of rich and free Grace: And the divine Spirit gives the Believer such an affecting, and appropriating View of the Fullness, Suitableness, and Freeness of the Grace of *Christ*, as excites him to glorify the Redeemer with all his Powers, and by all the Workings of his Heart. And herein those Words of *Christ* are fulfilled, which he spake concerning the Spirit, *John 16:14. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you.* And thus the saved, delivered Soul, is brought with humble, adoring Acclamations, to cry out, Grace. Grace, from first to last.

II. *How valuable and useful are the Doctrines of free Grace!* No Doctrines but these have any Suitableness, or Tendency, to produce, or excite, that most necessary important, and precious Grace of Faith. We acknowledge indeed, that the most evangelical Discourses have no Power, or Influence in themselves to work Faith: 'Tis the divine Spirit alone that can give them an Efficacy; but there is, and ought to be a Suitableness between

the Means and the End. And how well adapted the Doctrine of free Grace is, to answer this End, is plain

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to those that have felt the Power of them, and may be learn'd from the very Nature of the Truths themselves.

That we might be instrumental in the hands of the divine Spirit, to lead you out of yourselves to fly to, and trust upon the Lord *Jesus Christ* by Faith, we *on the one hand* are obliged as Ministers of the Word, to inform you of, and declare unto you, your deplorable, and in itself desperate Condition by Nature; to assure you, that no Works of your own can atone for your Sins, satisfy divine Justice, or make the least Amends for your past Iniquities. For this End we assure you, that you cannot work any saving Change in your Hearts, or make any saving Alteration in your State towards God. For this End we frequently set forth before you, the Corruption of your Natures, the Deceitfulness of your Hearts, the Guilt and Malignity of your Sins, the Purity and Spirituality of the divine Law, and the Strictness of divine Justice. We are obliged faithfully to insist upon such Truths as these; not to drive you into absolute Despair, or to make you more miserable than you are; but to shut you up unto the Faith of the Gospel; to hedge up every false Way of Peace with Thorns, and to deter you from receiving any other Help, and from being satisfied with any other Hope, but that which the Gospel presents before you.

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On the other hand; for this End we preach to you *Jesus Christ*, in his *Person, Offices, and Benefits*. We preach him as GOD, and so able to save; as *Man*, and so suited to save as *Mediator*, and so appointed and designed to save.

For this Cause we preach him as the only atoning Sacrifice, as the LORD our Righteousness and Strength; and as the Trustee, and Repository of all saving Blessings. For this Cause we proclaim, in the Name of *Christ*, all this Grace that is treasured up in him, as entirely free: If by any Means you may be led out of yourselves, and be engaged to trust in *Christ*, and live upon him, for all you really need; and may learn by direct Acts of Faith, *to receive of his Fullness, and Grace for Grace*.

III. *How dangerous are any Tenets that contradict the Doctrines of Free-Grace in Jesus Christ!* Consider, *Christians*, that Errors of this kind, are not merely speculative, such as may be received, or rejected with equal Safety; but they are dangerous in their very Nature, and must be pernicious

in their Tendency; and that for this Reason. Because the Scripture is full of this Doctrine; that Remission, Justification, and all Salvation are by Faith; and that the Way in which a Soul acts in the Reception of Christ, and his Salvation, is by *trusting, relying, and depending* upon him. Now observe, whatsoever

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ever Doctrines have a Tendency in their own Nature, to cloud, or hinder, to overturn, pervert, or contradict these most important, and spiritual Actings, have a real Tendency to destroy Souls. Think a little, and you may see, how every other Doctrine naturally leads us away from *Christ*. Were we to tell you, that Salvation is by Works; this would lead you to trust in your own Performances. Did we tell you, that sincere, though imperfect Obedience, is accepted in the Room of perfect; this directly tends to lead you to trust in, and lay the Stress of your Souls upon your Sincerity: Nay, were we to tell you, that your Repentance and Faith, were properly Conditions of Justification to Life; this would lead you to trust in your Repentance and Faith, whereby the very Nature of both would be contradicted. For what is Repentance, but a Soul's going out of itself, under a humble Sense of Sin and Guilt? And what is Faith, but the Soul's going to Christ, and relying upon him? If therefore we lead you to rely on your Repentance, we in effect bid you trust in yourselves, instead of directing you to go out of yourselves. And if by any Doctrine we should induce you to trust in your Faith; what is this? but to make Faith its own Object, which contradicts its very Nature and Tendency; since its Business and Office is to trust in another?

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In, a Word, did we give you any, even, the least Ground, by our Preaching, to think that any Thing, done by you is the Matter of your Justification, or the proper Condition thereof, you would be hereby induced to trust in *that Thing*, whatever it be; and so would fall short of a direct and absolute Trust in Christ; which would be ruinous to your precious and immortal Souls. And therefore, as we have a pure Design to advance the Glory of *Christ*, as we highly prize, and value the Method of Grace, and as we have a tender Concern for the Good of your Souls; we would not, we cannot, we dare not declare any Thing in the Name of the Lord, that should have any Tendency to turn your Hopes, or Desires, your Confidences, or Expectations, any other Way, than towards him, in whom all Fullness dwells.

IV. *What an admirable Tendency is there in these Doctrines to produce true Holiness!* The more we look into this Scheme of Grace, the more our Souls will be surprised at it, and ravished by it. There is not any, the least Flaw or Imperfection to be found in it; but under every Consideration, it recommends itself both to the rational Mind, and to the awakened, inquiring Conscience. Nor can there be any Room for the holy Tendency of this Doctrine to be suspected. 'Tis only when Persons trifle with it, that they pervert it, and so turn the Doctrine of Grace into

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Lasciviousness. But let us now seriously consider the Case of a poor Soul, that is really wrought upon to see its own Misery and Helplessness, and is truly led to behold and receive the Grace of God in *Christ*, as entirely free, and then observe; what Effect such Convictions, Persuasions, and Impressions, must necessarily produce. Tho' such a Faith, as has been described, is only *instrumental* in our Justification; yet 'tis greatly *influential* into our Sanctification. Such a spiritual Persuasion of the *Free-Grace* of God, not only produces the Acts of *trusting, relying*, and the like; but, at the same Time, it forms the Heart, for Holiness, and fills it with an Aversion to Sin. Can we suppose a Soul to have been in Distress upon the Account of Sin, and to have had realising Views of *Christ*, and the free Promises; and not be in some Measure roused from its natural Carelessness about Salvation; purged from its Fondness for Sin, and drawn forth into a real Love of God in *Christ*? And will not this Love operate in the fearing of his Name, in obeying his Precepts, and delighting in the Law of God after the inward Man?

Nay, farther; did we really and truly consider what *holiness* is; we should upon close Examination find; that nothing has a direct Tendency to produce it, but the powerful Impression of the *Free-Grace* of God. For true Holiness includes, not merely the Regulation

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of the Tongue, or an outward Reformation of Life; but likewise a Rectification of the Heart and Conscience. A good Temper, moral Honesty, extensive Knowledge, natural Abilities, and learned Acquirements, may render a Man fit for civil Societies, and in some measure useful in religious Societies; but all this may be without true Holiness; for this consists in an inward, hearty Love, and Fear of God; in a inward Hatred of Sin, and a Delight in the Law of God after the inward Man. Nothing short of this can justly be called a real Renovation of Soul, or a spiritual Conformity to God, or be any proper Meetness for Heaven. Now how

shall this be brought about? 'Tis true, Precepts may bind us, conditional Promises may excite us to some Good; and Threatenings may deter us from some Evil; but without something farther than all this, there is no true Holiness; for after all the Amendment that can be wrought by these Means alone, the Heart, the Spirit of the Mind, remains the same as before. But true Faith in *Christ*, being an Impression of the Grace of God upon the Heart, and an Application of it to the Conscience, never fails of making a gracious, holy Alteration in the Soul itself.

Do we therefore desire true Holiness; let us not expect it from the Law, but from *Christ*: Let us daily meditate upon the Doctrines of *Free-Grace*, and beg that the holy Spirit

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may make an effectual Application of them to our Souls, and write them upon our Hearts; and if this be done, we shall find that our whole Souls are going out to *Christ*, in a way of Dependence and Love; and our Hearts will be more and more formed averse to Sin, and furnished out for every good Word and Work.

Fifthly, and Lastly, *How exactly suited is this Doctrine to our necessitous Circumstances!* Let us here be persuaded to look a little into our Case as *Sinners*. 'Tis not so small a Matter to be *Sinners* as we are ready to imagine. We have naturally slight Thoughts of Sin, of the Law, and Justice of God. But after all our Excuses and Evasions; to *sin* is no less than to break the divine Law, to affront the divine Holiness, to inflame the divine Justice, and to subject ourselves to the divine Wrath and Displeasure. And what Hope is there now for us? Will the divine Justice give up its Strictness, or the divine Law give up its Purity and Spirituality; or God infringe upon the Faithfulness of his Threatnings; or can we make Atonement for our own Sins, or satisfy the Justice of God? Or can we do any Thing to engage the great God to lay aside his Holiness, Justice, Law, and Faithfulness, in order to save us?

Again, are we *Sinners*, and are not our Hearts corrupted, our Natures defiled, our Affections vitiated? And can we purge all

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this away? Oh *Christians*, did we truly know the Plague of our Hearts, we should be forced to acknowledge, that all this is beyond our Power. How great then is our Need of a complete Atonement, a perfect Righteousness, and the most powerful Grace!

Now behold: all this is contained in the Lord *Jesus Christ*; he is the Repository of all spiritual Blessings, and in him is a complete Fullness

of Grace; surely then this Thought should recommend this Scheme to us; for here is sufficient Provision made for our Deliverance, both from the Curse of the Law, and the Bondage of Corruption. Surely none that knows himself, could ever be offended at these Things, or think the Power of *Christ too great*, or his Grace *too full*.

But farther, as we need all this Help from another; so we likewise need that it should be given freely; and unless the Exhibition was suited in this Respect, all the Declarations signify nothing to us; for as for Conditions, we can of ourselves perform none, that are suited to the Blessings to be bestowed, or fit for God to require. If we could indeed truly repent and believe, there would then be Room for Conditions; but how can an hard Heart repent, or a blind Mind believe, or a depraved Nature obey? But now in this Perplexity and Difficulty, how encouraging, exciting, and suitable, is the Proposal and

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and Exhibition of free, powerful, and saving Grace?

Are there any Souls sensible of their Need, through the Corruption and Depravity of Nature, the Hardness of their Hearts; the Guilt of their Sins, and the Wrath of God upon them? Do they see their Condition to be in itself hopeless and desperate? Let me assure you, that all the Grace of *Christ* is held forth in such a free Form as to answer your Need directly. Through *Christ* is preached unto you *Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification* and *Redemption*. Are you guilty? with *Christ* is free pardon. Are you filthy? with him is free Cleansing. Are you helpless? in him your Help is found. Are you weak? with him is everlasting Strength. Indulge thy Discouragements and Fears no longer; see all in *Christ* thou needest, and all to be freely given: Hesitate no longer, look up and live, Thou mayest, poor Soul, whosoever thou art, how sinful, guilty, or polluted soever; thou mayest and oughtest immediately to fly to *Christ* and receive him for thy Salvation. Now if such a Proclamation as this be brought home to the Conscience, and applied to the Soul by the Spirit; this will satisfy the doubting Soul, encourage the trembling Soul, strengthen the weak Soul; and it will see and feel that this answers all its Desire. Now there is nothing between *Christ* and it; but it is enabled to receive, embrace, and rest upon

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Christ as freely held forth in the Gospel. Such a Representation as this, will sometimes make the Heart of a poor Sinner to leap for joy.

Oh that the Spirit of Grace did more frequently and powerfully apply the Word of Grace; then careless Sinners would be roused from their Stupidity; self-righteous Sinners would be drawn off from their vain Confidences; and convinced, despairing Sinners, would receive the Hope and Joy of Faith!

In the hope and Expectation, of this, we would be found frequently insisting upon the Doctrines of *Free-Grace*; knowing their wonderful Tendency to beget and promote true Faith and Holiness; looking up and waiting for the divine Spirit, that he would set his Seal to those Doctrines, which so much humble the Creature, and advance the Glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Scheme, of Redemption, and the Method of Grace.

FINIS

