

~Other Speakers S-Z: Robert Traill:

"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." — Gal. 2:21.

The most sacred things revealed to us in the word of God are these two — the grace of God, and the death of Christ; and they are joined close together. They are two things that all who have a mind to be saved must constantly have in their eye — the grace of God, and the death of Christ; and yet there are not a few that despise both — that frustrate the one, and make the other in vain; and this charge the apostle lays upon an error that he is reproving the Galatian churches for, and that was, their seeking righteousness by the law, and the works of it. I have spoken unto these words, as containing two strong arguments against seeking of righteousness by the works of the law.

1st, That thereby the grace of God is frustrated.

2dly, That thereby Christ's death is made to be in vain; as far as the wickedness of man can do the one or the other.

Upon this second argument I was the last time, and spoke something to four notes that I drew from it; two of them negatives, and two of them positives.

1st, That there is no righteousness, for the justifying a sinner, that can come by the law. Never man got to heaven by the law: never a man got to heaven by his own good doings. All go to hell for their own evil doings; but no man, since sin came into the world, ever went to heaven by his own good doings. That I proved.

2dly, The other negative contained here is, That Christ hath not died in vain: for the apostle doth certainly imply that he did not die in vain, when he brings a charge against the sin of seeking righteousness by the law, as inferring so horrible an absurdity; for he is pointing forth the heinousness of this sin in very dreadful colours, on purpose to make it hated.

The two positive truths contained here are these: —

1. If there was any righteousness that could come by the law, Christ's death would be in vain. Christ had died in vain, if any man could have stood accepted before God without the virtue of his death. The virtue of Christ's death was of efficacy for the rendering men accepted before God, even before he came into the world. The fathers, that died before Christ came, were saved by the same faith that believers on Christ were saved by, after he came. So saith the apostle, "But we believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved, even as they," (Acts 15:11); comparing the Old Testament and the New Testament dispensation together.

2. The second positive was this, That making Christ's death to be in vain was a great and horrible sin. I told you it was impossible to make it vain really, or to hinder any of its excellent fruits. As no man could hinder the solid causes of it, so no man can hinder the strong fruit of it: the fruit of the death of Christ is quite out of the reach of men or devils. When our Lord was in his humbled state, the devil could, upon permission, carry his body up to the pinnacle of the temple; but he had no power to hurt him. When he was in this world, one wicked disciple betrayed him, and the rest cowardly forsook him; his enemies prevailed against him in the hour and power of darkness, and took away his life; but for the fruit and virtue of his death, that is lodged higher than man can reach: yet men may make Christ's death to be in vain,

1st, To themselves. A poor creature that hath not faith in Christ, gets no more good of him than if Christ had never died, or if Christ's death had been in vain; than if he had never died, or had died to no purpose.

2dly, God will always reckon with men according to their design in sinning. All sin is a breaking of God's law; but yet God's law will not be broken, but will break all the breakers of it. Sin is counted and charged as a dishonouring of God; and yet the Lord's honour is advanced in the ruin of the sinner.

I proceed now to shew you the dreadfulness of this sin, of doing any thing that hath a tendency to the making Christ's death to be in vain. I would, 1st, bring a charge against this sin in its just measures; and, 2dly, come to the application, and shew how common a sin this is. It is a great sin to make Christ's death in vain, in the way wherein it is practicable, and in that sense that the apostle here means.

1st, Let us consider God. Whensoever we are to take the just measure of any sin, we are to take it with respect to God. This is the grand accusation against all sin, that it is against God. When David is confessing, with deep remorse, his vile sins of adultery and murder, which were sins against his neighbour, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," saith he, "and done this evil in thy sight," (Psalm 51:4). Now, let us consider what this sin doth with respect to God: and here we must take up some account of God, according to the gospel revelation of him; for as Jesus Christ is not revealed by the law, so neither is the sin of rendering his death to be in vain, brought up on charges by the law as it is by the revealing of God's nature in the gospel. It is a sin against God the Father, and against God the Son, and against God the Holy Ghost.

To make this sin appear in its greatness, first, it is against God the Father wofully. The greatest contrivance that ever the infinitely wise God had, for the glory of his name, was the working out of eternal redemption, by the death of his own Son, for a company of lost sinners. This is the chief of the ways of God: all things revealed of him, and of his counsel, and of his purpose, and of his actions, are all but low in regard of this; all others are subservient to this act of Divine Providence: this is the chief of the ways of God. Let us see what treasures of his glory are concerned therein.

1. There is infinite wisdom in contriving a way that the understanding of angels and men could not find out, and when it is revealed it cannot be fully known. It is said concerning the angels, that they "desire to pry into those things:" into those things that the Spirit reveals, "concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," (1 Pet. 1:11,12). Now, if the glorified angels in heaven be students of Jesus Christ, and of the glory of his sufferings, and of the glory that was the fruit thereof, how much more should men do so! There is a "manifold wisdom of God" that shines therein, and is perceived by and made known to them, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to his eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;" (Eph. 3:10). Now, where the wisdom of God is so much concerned, judge you what a provocation it must needs be, when foolish man does all that may be to defeat this wisdom. "Christ as crucified," is called "the wisdom of God and power of God;" but unto poor ignorant man he is foolishness and weakness, (1 Cor. 1:23, 24).

2. In this way of saving us by the death of Christ, there is the great grace and mercy of God that he would magnify. Now, what a great sin must it be to count all this in vain? "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but should have everlasting life," (John 3:16). "God commendeth his love to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Rom. 5:8). And shall this love be so far despised, as that a man shall endeavour to make it be in vain?

3. This is a contrivance, also, for the magnifying the holy law of God. The Lord is so zealous for his law, that he will part with it for no man's sake. He will not reduce an hair's breath of the rigour of his law for the saving of the world; but he hath found out a way to give the law all its due, and yet to give the poor sinner all that he needs. This is astonishing: the law gets all the righteousness it demands, and the sinner gets all the justification he needs: the law shall be honoured, and justice shall be satisfied, and the sinner shall be saved, and not destroyed: "God is just, and, the justifier of him that believes in Jesus Christ," (Rom. 3:26).

2dly, This sin is also magnified, as it is against God the Son. Let us consider what Christ's death was: it was the greatest concernment of a divine person. It was a great deal better to say, all the martyrs died in vain: it were a far less sin to say, as the ungodly world doth, "That they threw away their lives, with their folly and rigidity, when they might have saved them with a word, or a bow, or a cringe, to the idols of the nations." It were a great sin to say so. You know how the apostle increases the gravity of this as a great absurdity, as to the doctrine of the resurrection: "Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," (1 Cor. 15:18). But that was a small matter, in regard of making Christ's death to be in vain, which was a special concern of a divine person. The blood shed was the "blood of God," (Acts 20:28). And can God's Mood be shed in vain? It was the lowest step, and the crowning act of Christ's sufferings: all that went before would not serve. The low estate he was born in, and the manifold afflictions he lived in; his being seized on in the night with soldiers, and lanterns, as a thief; his being bound, his being scourged, his being nailed to the cross in torment — this will not be in vain. The crowning and saving act of our Lord Jesus Christ was his dying. It was also the grand pledge of our Lord's love, the great display, the great proof of his love to his people. "He loved his church, and gave himself for it," (Eph. 5:25) "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," (Rev. 1:5). "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend," that is, "A greater testimony of love than this can no man give, than to part with his life for them that he loves," (John 15:13). Now, judge you what a great sin it must needs be for a man to lay an imputation of vanity, and unprofitableness, on this great pledge of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ, to say he died in vain?

3dly, This sin of charging Christ's death to be in vain, is a sin against the Holy Ghost; it is sinning against the Holy Ghost. We find concerning the Holy Ghost, that he prepared that body that our Lord lived in, and died in; he was conceived of the Holy Ghost, (Matt. 1:20). Next, Christ was anointed by the Spirit without measure, which was our Lord's text at Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," (Luke 4:18): "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." The Holy Ghost did assist him, and witness to him, in his death and at his resurrection. And therefore, when Stephen was preaching Christ to Christ's murderers, he increases the gravity their sin by this, "Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." Especially, this sin is greatest when the Holy Ghost is convicting men, by the law, of their vileness; and convincing men, by the gospel, of the relief that is offered by Christ Jesus; and a great many struggle against the Spirit of God in both these cases. It is a long while before the sinner yields to the conviction of the Spirit, that all things are faulty within, and that there is nothing right in them; and it is as long, many times, before they yield to the Holy Ghost, in venturing their souls on Christ as a sufficient Saviour. — And thus you see how this sin is increased, as being against God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. But to come a little lower.

This sin of making Christ's death to be in vain, is a dreadful sin against others also. It is a sin against sinners, and against believers also. It is so far a sin against others, that every unbeliever, every stubborn refuser of life and salvation by Christ's death, doth, in a manner, teach all others to run on in the same way of destruction that he takes: — He that saith Christ died in vain, doth in a manner cut the throats of the whole world; for all that are saved, must be saved by the virtue of his death. It is also a great sin against believers. The apostle add weight to this in the case of scandal; and the scandal that the apostle there speaks of, was in the un-tender use of Christian liberty. You sin against Christ, and then you also "cause your weak brother to perish, for whom Christ died," (1 Cor. 8:11, 12). The word perish there, might well have been rendered in another English word that is less offensive: "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish," or rather, 'stumble and fall,' for whom Christ died, for when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ." Now, the thing that I am driving at is this; if the apostle thus brings charges against the indiscriminate use of Christian liberty, without a due regard to the weakness of other Christians, that may be overthrown and hurt thereby, how much more must this sin be indicted, of endeavouring to make Christ's death to be in vain? For,

1. This strikes at the foundation of the Christian's faith; for if a man hath any faith at all, it must be built on Christ's death; that you will make no question of: that faith which is not built on a dying Christ, is but a perilous dream: God awaken all from it that are in it! When the apostle is placing the foundation of his confidence, in that song of triumph, (Rom 8:33,34), the very first word of it is, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is Christ that died."

2. This sin strikes against the foundation of all the Christian's peace and comfort. Not only is the believer's state secured by his faith in Jesus Christ; but his quiet, and the calm of his conscience, are maintained also the same way. If the virtue of the death of Christ be taken away, all the joy of believers goes with it; for it stands only in this. The death of Christ is of eternal virtue and value, and, therefore, the believer's joy springs up perpetually,

3. This sin strikes against all the praises of the saints on earth, and of the glorified in heaven. To make Christ's death in vain, would drown all the music both of heaven and earth. No believer here could give any praise; and there would be no praises there. The song of Moses and the Lamb rises from this — the Lamb was slain; "Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," (Rev. 5:12). They sing that praise eternally, because they eternally feel the virtue of his blood.

APPLICATION. — I come now to make some profitable use of this point. If it be so dreadful a sin to make the death of Christ to be in vain, how fearful a thing is it, that yet this sin is so common? I know multitudes think themselves as free from it, as the Galatians, to whom Paul wrote, thought them, selves free from the error he charges them with: but men's imaginations are no proof of their innocency. It is here charged upon them that they were guilty of it; otherwise they would not thus have been charged, by the Holy Ghost, with the sin of making Christ's death to be in vain, as much as man can do, and as to themselves. I will instance in a few things, as proofs of this:

1st, To begin with that instance in the text, of "seeking righteousness" by the law: — Whosoever they be that

seek righteousness by the law, these men make Christ's death to be in vain. If they do so," Christ is become of no effect to them; Christ profits them nothing," (Gal. 5:2, 4). "But who are these," say you, "that seek righteousness by the law?" I might answer this question with another, Who doth not? Every body doth, in one measure or another. Seeking righteousness by the law, is when a poor sinner thinks he can be able, some time or another, to do that which God will be gracious to him for: whether it be a work of the law, or a work of the gospel, it is all one for that; when a man thinks to do that for which God will accept him as a righteous man, and account him no more a sinner—this is one that makes Christ's death to be in vain: for if it were possible that any man could be righteous before God, by any thing that he could do, saith the apostle, "Christ is dead in vain."

2dly, All apostates from the Christian profession are chargeable with this sin of making Christ's death to be in vain; and there are not a few of them in the age we live in. They are so dreadfully painted forth in the word of God, that, if I may so say, their very picture hath scared many an honest heart; many honest-hearted believers have been scared dreadfully with seeing the picture of these apostates. It is said, "They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame;" (Heb. 6:6). "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:29). These persons once made a profession that there was virtue in the blood of Christ; but now they are come to renounce it. I am truly afraid of this thing; it hath often come in my mind: we have a generation amongst us, that are plagues come from hell; men called DEISTS, which is nothing else but a new polite word for an Atheist: and they that are called Socinians, which is only a more civil word for a Turk; people who do not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, but only a good man that died at Jerusalem. They believe not that Christ died for any other ends than to testify the truth of his doctrine, and to set us an example to suffer patiently for the truth. My thoughts are not only about the horror of this heresy, that all should tremble at: but my real jealousy is, that there are amongst them not a few that have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; that have come up to blaspheming the Spirit of God, and the blood of the everlasting Covenant, shed by the Son of God. The Spirit of God hath written their doom, and let the saints wait in fear and patience, till God execute it: for execute it he will, were their social position ever so high, their number ever so great, their wisdom and power ever so strong. They are combined against the Son of God, and he will be avenged upon them; and let the faith and prayer of the saints hasten it.

3dly, All that seek not righteousness, and eternal life, through Jesus Christ, and his death, they are guilty of this sin, of thinking, and counting that Christ died in vain. All that do not seek eternal life by Christ, are guilty of this sin. And how many such poor creatures are there, that for as often as they have read the Bible, and for as often as they have heard the gospel preached, yet to this day they never saw any need of the death of Christ for themselves? They run away with a notion, that it was needful the Son of God should come into the world, and die for men; but they were never convinced of this, that it was simply needful for thee, and for thy salvation; that unless the Son of God had come, and laid down his life for thee, thou couldst not be saved. Every man must be convinced of his personal need of Christ's death, that ever expects to get any good thereby.

4thly, A great many poor creatures never saw any glory in the death of Christ. I do acknowledge that the cross of Christ was the greatest and thickest veil upon his glory, when he was forsaken by his followers; when he was insulted over by his enemies; when heaven and earth forsook him, and hell was enlarged against him. What was more low than the man Christ when he died? Yet, notwithstanding, to a believer, the great beaming forth of the glory of God shined in the face of Christ crucified. Herein shined the manifold wisdom and grace of God. Every lash, in a manner, that the Father laid upon the Son, proclaimed aloud the love of the Father, that put him to that suffering, and the love of the Son that underwent it. The poor Jews were sorely distressed believers (John 11:36): when they saw Christ weeping at Lazarus's grave (although I believe Christ wept not so much for Lazarus, as in contemplation of the common calamity of mankind, and it may be, this was the first grave that ever Christ was so near to in his life), "Behold," say they, "how he loved him!" Surely, then, Christ's cross should far more teach us to cry out, "Behold, how he loved his people!" than Lazarus's grave, and Christ's weeping over it, did the Jews, to say, "Behold, how he loved him!" Christ's dying for his people proclaimed his love to them indeed; but yet a great many see no glory in all this.

5thly, Many poor people have no business with Christ, about the virtue of his death; they have no engagement with him about that thing, to have the virtue of the death of Christ applied to them for their salvation. This is that the apostle was so mighty earnest for, but they have no thought, no understanding of it: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." What was this conformity to the death of Christ that Paul was here labouring for? Was it only wishing that he was a dead man? No, no; he would have, and find the virtue of Christ's death quickening him: raising him up, and saving him more and more.

I will tell you, there are some things about the grave of Christ that should make every believer's heart to be much about it, and to make us visit it daily by faith.

1. There the law is buried, there the old husband is laid that we can never be well till we are divorced from. The apostle tells us several things concerning this "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross," (Col. 2:14,15). There were few eyes so good as to be able to see the condemnation of the law nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ; to see sin condemned by him, as the word is (Rom. 8:3), "He condemned sin in his flesh," being made a sacrifice for it. Therefore, when the apostle is, in the 7th chapter of the Romans, speaking of the difference between the law and the gospel— between a natural state and a believer's— he resembles it plainly to this, to the state of a woman that hath two husbands. The first husband was the law, and a dreadful one it was; no fruit was brought forth by that marriage but that which was unto death. Now, she must be sure that this husband be dead before she can be lawfully married to Jesus Christ. "If whilst her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from the law; and so she is no adulteress, although she be married to another man." (Ver. 3).

2. In the grave of Christ, by faith, believers are to see that their sin is buried. Saith the apostle, "He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," (Heb. 9:26). "He put away sin:" he hath so far put it away, that it shall never rise up in judgment against any that the virtue of Christ's death is applied to: thereupon the apostle grounds his triumph on this, "It is Christ that died," therefore the believer cannot be condemned, (Rom. 8:34).

3. In Christ's death there is a charter sealed by his blood. And how should believers be exercised in looking to Christ's death on this account? There are many seals to God's covenant: seals on God's part, and seals on our part. God puts to the seal of his word, and of his oath, and of the sacraments, and of manifold repeated promises; and believers they put to their seal of faith. "He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true;" (John 3:33). But the best and greatest seal is Christ's death, confirming the covenant. "The covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ," saith the apostle, (Gal. 3:17).

Lastly, To bring the charge of this sin yet more close, even believers themselves are not innocent of it: not only all that seek righteousness by the law— not only all apostates from the faith of the gospel— not only they that seek not righteousness and life by the virtue of Christ's death— but even believers themselves, are guilty of this sin. There is something in their frame that saith, "Christ hath died in vain."

1. There is conscience of sin arises many times in believers. The apostle, speaking of the Old Testament administration, finds fault with it as defective upon this account, That it did not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. "They could not make the comers thereunto perfect, for then would not they have ceased to be offered; because that the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins;" (Heb. 9:9 and 10:1,2). Pray observe the scope of the apostle in both these chapters: he is there telling us what shadows the Jews had of that grand sacrifice that was to be offered by the true High Priest, Jesus Christ, in their daily, and weekly, and monthly sacrifices; but the greatest of all was in that grand sacrifice of atonement that was offered up once a-year. "Now," saith the apostle, "all these sacrifices do not make the comer thereunto perfect as to his conscience;" that is, "they did not remove all awareness of sin in the Israelite, but there was a secret fear still that their sin was yet in remembrance before God." And what is the argument with which the apostle proves that these sacrifices did not make the comers thereunto perfect? Saith the apostle, "It is proved by this, Because they were so often repeated." The daily sacrifice was repeated every day, and the weekly sacrifice every Sabbath day, and the monthly sacrifice every new moon, and the yearly sacrifice once a year, upon the seventh month. "Now," saith the apostle, "If these things could have made the comers thereunto perfect, they would not thus have needed to have been repeated." And from this argument he concludes the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices to quiet the conscience, and he also proves the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice to quiet the conscience by its once-for-all efficacy. "But this man," saith he, "after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down on the right hand of God," (ver. 12); and again, "By one offering, he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified," (ver. 14). The case lies plainly here: Every true believer, that hath acted faith on Jesus Christ distinctly, and hath lodged his eternal salvation, and his everlasting acceptance with God, on the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, this man chargeth Christ's death with being in vain, if conscience rise again, and lie hearken to it. I know sin will be, and conscience will check for sin; but remember this, Christ died not in vain: the virtue of Christ's death remains still; it made that peace that no future transgressions shall be able to weaken or impair.

2. In the case of sanctification. Saith the poor believer, "The work of holiness and sanctification goes on slowly:" and truly so it doth; and we should see it, and bewail it greatly. Well, what then? Hath Christ died in vain? Christ's dying is sanctification: "For their sakes I sanctify myself," saith our Lord, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth," (John 17:19). "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," (Titus 2:14). It were a great blessing if believers had but skill to draw, by faith, sanctifying virtue from the death of Jesus Christ. This is what the apostle is upon, Rom. 6, throughout. "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" But how are believers dead to sin? Have they not sin living in them? "We are dead to sin in Christ," saith the apostle; "he died for sin, and he hath dominion over sin, and we reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ," (ver. 11).

3. There is weakness of faith in believers, as to the glory to come. Not only are there many qualms of conscience, and many defects in their holiness, but when believers think of the glory to come, and the great prize of their high calling, and see it great, and high, and far above them, the more they see of the glory of it, the more they see they are unworthy of it. "May such a vile wretch as I expect this great reward of eternal life?" Yes, for Christ bought it; he hath not died in vain. It will be best known at that day what Christ died for, and for whom: when all the kings that he hath bought, and all the crowns that he hath purchased for them, and ail the kingdoms shall be seen, it will then be known Christ died not in vain. Every shaking of faith, as to any blessing that Christ's death purchased for his people, every shaking, of that faith, hath this woful charge to he given in against it, that Christ then hath died in vain. Indeed, if the crown of life was to be enjoyed as a reward of thy works, it were a vain thing to expect it: if it were to come in as a reward for our performances, it were a dream to expect it: but, since it is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord — since Christ hath bought it — every believer should expect it: "As great as it is, as unworthy as I am; yet, notwithstanding, the confidence of faith should be maintained." Therefore, now, for the consolation of believers, labour by faith to drink in these two things, — That righteousness comes not by the law, and that Christ hath not died in vain; and what strong consolation will they yield!

1. Righteousness comes not by the law; and there is great comfort in this. Righteousness comes not by the law, to any man out of Christ; and there is no condemnation comes by the law, to any man in Christ. If so be that men will give glory to God, and renounce their own righteousness, and all their expectations of relief that way, and betake themselves to God's device of salvation by Jesus Christ, and believe on him, as they can expect no good by the law, so they should fear no hurt by it; for, as sin hath made it impossible that, the law of God should justify us, so the grace of God in Christ hath made it impossible that the law should condemn a believer in him. Therefore, saith the apostle, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Why so? "The law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death: for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, that God hath done by Jesus Christ, that so the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," (Rom. 8:1,2,3,4).

2. Feed also upon this by faith, That Christ died not in vain. There is nothing you can desire, nothing that you can pray for, nothing that you can ask for in time, nor enjoy to eternity, but it is contained in this, "Christ died not in vain:" for Christ died to all those blessed purposes that are needful to make them happy for ever that are sharers therein. Whensoever you come to have any dealings in earnest with God about salvation, and your justification, and eternal life, always remember these two things, —

The grace of God, and Christ's death. The law hath nothing to do in this case; it cannot help you whilst you are under it, but condemn you: and if you be believers, the law cannot hurt you, for you shall be absolved; for this is a righteousness without the law, "But witnessed to be the law and the prophets," (Acts 10:43).