

(i) Scripture

The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'. So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'.

But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith'. Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them'.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3. 8-14 (New King James Version)

(ii) Food for thought.

'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us' (Gal. 3. 13).

The only man to keep the Law of God in its entirety throughout His life bore in His death the curse of the Law which He had never broken and which, therefore, had no claim on Him.

Let me say that again. Just think of it:

The only man to keep the Law of God in its entirety *throughout His life* bore *in His death* the curse of the Law which He had never broken and which, therefore, had no claim on Him.

'He made Himself of no reputation ... He humbled Himself' (Phil. 2. 7-8).

'Such is the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, that it is said of God that He "dwells on high" and "humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth", Psa. 113. 5-6 ...

'If such be the perfection of the divine nature, and its distance so absolutely infinite from the whole creation ... so that every regard in Him unto any of the creatures is an act of self-humiliation and condescension ... what heart can conceive, what tongue can express, the glory of that condescension in the Son of God, whereby He took our nature upon Him?'

(John Owen, *'Meditations and Discourses on the Glory of Christ'*, The Works of John Owen, Volume 1, pages 324-325.)

Jesus not 'cast down' in Luke 4.

(i) 'The devil ... brought him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto Him, "If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence" (Luke 4. 9).

(ii) 'They in the synagogue ... rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong' (Luke 4. 28-29).

'He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes' (Mark 1. 22).

'In our day we take it as a matter of course that a really great man will be original. But that was not the feeling of the men of the first century. To them it was an axiom that their fathers were wiser than they, and teachers were always careful to disclaim originality, and to show that what they put forward was the teaching of the ancients ... But Jesus did no such thing ...

'The Rabbis spoke *from* authority, Jesus *with* authority. Those who heard Him "were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1. 22. C. H. Dodd renders, "He taught them like a sovereign, and not like the Rabbis") ...

"Thus says *the Lord*" is typical of the Old Testament, but Jesus' characteristic expression is "Truly, truly, *I* say to you". The difference is significant. Jesus appealed to no other authority as He spoke to men of the deep things of God'.

(Leon Morris, *'The Lord from Heaven'*, pages 13-14.)

Gardens, crowns and thorns.

'Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, John's passion is ... bookended by references to *gardens*. It opens in the garden near the river Kidron [John 18. 1] and closes in the garden in which Jesus' tomb is located [John 19. 41]. Its events thus (symbolically) unfold within the context of a garden ...

(i) 'Whereas [in a garden] the first Adam *incriminates* ("The woman gave it to me!" [Gen. 3. 12]), the last Adam *protects* ("Let these men go!" [John 18. 8]).

(ii) 'Whereas the first Adam hides in the garden [Gen. 3. 8], the last Adam puts Himself in the cross hairs [in the firing line], that is; John 18. 4-8].

(iii) 'Whereas the first Adam is provided with a helper [Gen. 2. 20-23], the last Adam is abandoned [Matt. 27. 46] ...

(iv) 'Whereas the first Adam is crowned with glory and honour [Psa. 8. 5], which he later exchanges for thorns [Gen. 3. 18], the last Adam is crowned with thorns [John 19. 2], to be exchanged for a crown of glory [Heb. 2. 9] ...

(v) 'And, whereas the first Adam's disobedience brings death to his descendants, the last Adam's obedience brings life to His people [Rom. 5. 17-19].

(James Bejon, 'Echoes of Eden'; accessed at: <https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/echoes-of-eden/>.)

'By the obedience of one the many will be made righteous' (Rom. 5. 19).

'Jesus' obedience matters immensely and without it no one can be saved. But that is not because Jesus was racking up frequent flyer points that could be transferred into our account. Jesus' obedience and faithfulness in His vocation as Son ... qualified Him to be the sacrifice who could redeem Israel and humanity in their alienation from God. Hence the New Testament emphasizes His passive obedience, that is, His obedience to death on the cross (Rom 5. 19; Phil. 2. 8)'.
(Michael Bird, 'Justification: Five Views', page 145.)

'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Matt. 26. 28).

'It is the covenant by which God forgives sinners, and it is ratified in the death of Christ. God forgave sinners before Christ died. God forgives sinners since Christ died. But God forgives all sinners because Christ died'.

(J. MacArthur Jr, 'The Final Passover, the First Communion', accessed at <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/42-269/the-final-passover-the-first-communion>.)

'Today ... with me in Paradise' (Luke 23. 43).

'The thief had nails through both hands, so that he could not work; and a nail through each foot, so that he could not run errands for the Lord; he could not lift a hand or a foot toward his salvation, and yet Christ offered him the gift of God; and he took it. Christ threw him a passport, and took him with Him into Paradise'.

(D. L. Moody, quoted by G. R. Carlson, 'Our Faith and fellowship', pages 32-33.)

God's clock keeps perfect time.

It was from the palace of the man (Herod) who failed to put the Lord's Christ to death before God's time (Matt. 2. 13), that our Lord was led out to crucifixion and death (Matt. 27. 31) 'at the right time' (Rom. 5. 6).

'Once in the end of the world He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself' (Heb. 9. 26).

'I know the work is done, for that which He came to do He accomplished perfectly. I do not ask myself what I think of it; I know what God thinks.

'God has raised Him from the dead; not only accepted Him, but glorified Him as a man, in consequence of His having perfectly glorified Him about sin. Once seen, this clears away a thousand cobwebs of man's mind and invention. I shall never get another Christ to do the work, and the One who has died never can die again.

'Blessed be God, He has done the work, and its value never can cease so long as He is before God'.

(J. N. Darby, 'Christ on the Cross', Collected Writings, Volume 31, page 151.)

'He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption' (Heb. 9. 12).

'Christ has obtained "eternal" redemption for us: not a redemption like that which was annually achieved for Israel, and which had to be annually repeated, as though its virtue faded away [Heb. 9. 7, 25; 10. 1, 3], but a redemption the validity of which abides for ever'.

(James Denney, 'The Death of Christ', page 119.)

'Upholding all things by the word of His power' (Heb. 1. 3).

'The Greek word translated "upholding" ... is commonly used in the New Testament for carrying something from one place to another, such as bringing a paralyzed man on a bed to Jesus (Luke 5. 18), bringing wine to the steward of the feast (John 2. 8), or bringing a cloak and books to Paul (2 Tim. 4. 13).

‘It does not mean simply “sustain”, but has the sense of active, purposeful control over the thing being carried from one place to another. In Hebrews 1. 3, the use of the present participle indicates that Jesus is “continually carrying along all things” in the universe by His word of power.

‘Similarly, in Colossians 1. 17, Paul says of Christ that “in Him all things hold together.” The phrase “all things” refers to every created thing in the universe (see v. 16), and the verse affirms that Christ keeps all things existing—in Him they continue to exist or “endure” (NASB mg.).

‘Both verses indicate that *if Christ were to cease His ongoing activity of sustaining all things in the universe, then everything except the triune God would instantly cease to exist*. Such teaching is also affirmed ... by Ezra: “You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you” (Neh. 9. 6)’.

(Wayne Grudem, ‘*Bible Doctrine*’, page 143.)

‘Looking for that blessed hope’ (Tit. 2. 13).

‘The apostolic church thought more about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ than about death and heaven. The early Christians were looking, not for a cleft in the ground called a grave but for a cleavage in the sky called Glory. They were watching not for the undertaker but for the upptaker’.

(Alexander Maclaren, quoted in ‘*W. E. Vine’s New Testament Word Pictures: Romans to Revelation*’, page 607.)

‘He will joy over you with singing’ (Zeph. 3. 17).

‘You do not know, poor soul, how glad God is when He forgives a soul. The angels sang when God made the world [Job 38. 7], but we do not read that He sang then. Yet, in the last chapter of the prophecy of Zephaniah, we read, “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing”. Only think of it—the Triune God singing! ...

What a thought—the Deity bursting out into song ... over His pardoned people’.

(C. H. Spurgeon, ‘*Ready, Ay, Ready*’, Sermon No. 2868 in Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume 50.)

‘Thy rod and thy staff’.

‘We often learn more of God under the rod that strikes us than under the staff that comforts us: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes”, Psa. 119. 71’.

(Stephen Charnock, ‘*Discourse of the Knowledge of God*’, The Complete Works, Volume 4, page 81.)

‘Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ’ (2 Tim. 2. 3).

‘If we are Christ’s indeed, we are called not to a holiday but to a campaign ... our tent is pitched upon a field of battle’.

(H. C. G. Moule, ‘*Studies in 2 Timothy*’, page 74.)

Sufferings.

It is a great encouragement to know that, although we will last forever, any trials and sufferings for Christ will not:

(i) ‘The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory’ (Rom. 8. 18).

(ii) ‘Our light affliction, which is for the moment’ (2 Cor. 4. 17).

(iii) ‘Now for a season ... you have been put to grief by various trials’ (1 Pet. 1. 6).

(iv) ‘After you have suffered a little while’ (1 Pet. 5. 10).

‘When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold’ (Job 23. 10); ‘He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver’ (Mal. 3. 3).

‘This picture of the Refiner is straight from Eastern life. The Eastern goldsmith sits on the floor by his crucible. For me, at least, it was not hard to know why the Heavenly Refiner had to sit so long. The heart knows its own dross.

‘Blessed be the love that never wearies, never gives up hope that even in such poor metal He may at last see the reflection of His face. “How do you know when it is purified?” we asked our village goldsmith. “When I can see my face in it”, he answered’.

(Amy Carmichael, ‘*Rose from Brier*’, page 31.)

(iii) Go on, smile.

‘To sleep – perchance to dream’, (William Shakespeare, ‘Hamlet’, Act-III, Scene I).

1. An exhausted Paddy struggled into the local doctor's surgery.

'Doctor', Paddy gasped out, 'you've got to help me. There are dogs all over my neighbourhood. They bark all day and all night and I haven't been able to get a wink of sleep for weeks now'.

'I've got some good news for you, Paddy', Dr O'Donnell said, rummaging through a drawer full of sample medications.

'Here', he continued, 'are some new sleeping pills which are guaranteed to work quickly and with no side effects. One at a time will be enough. After that, your trouble will be over'.

'Grand', Paddy replied. 'I'll give it a shot'.

Two weeks later, Paddy was back, looking worse than ever. 'Doctor', Paddy gasped, 'the tablets you gave me didn't work. I'm more shattered than I was before!'

'I sure can't understand it', said Dr O'Donnell, shaking his head. 'Those are the strongest sleeping pills on the market!'

'That may or not be', answered Paddy wearily, 'but I've been up every night legging it after those noisy dogs and, I tell you, Doctor, if I finally catch one, *it's no' been easy getting the mutt to swallow the tablet*'.

2. It is said that the Methodist Bishop, Cyrus D. Foss (1834-1910), once visited a Philadelphia physician for some trifling ailment.

'Do you, sir', the doctor asked, in the course of his examination, 'talk in your sleep?'

'No, sir', answered the Bishop. *'I talk in other people's'*.

