

righteousness of Christ can be put on. Whatever is of nature's putting on, Satan will come and plunder every rag away, and leave the soul naked and open to the wrath of God. All that nature can do, will never make up the least gram of grace, that can mortify sin, or look Christ in the face one day.

You are known as a "Christian" person, continuing in prayer and in church, yet miserable you may be. Look about you. Did you ever yet see Christ to this day, in distinction from all other excellencies and righteousness in the world, and all of them falling before the majesty of His love and grace (*Isaiah 2:17*)?

If you have truly seen Christ, you have seen pure grace, pure righteousness in Him in every way infinite, far exceeding all sin and misery. If ever you saw Christ, you saw Him a Rock, higher than self-righteousness, Satan, and sin (*Psalms 61:2*); and this Rock follows you (*1 Cor 10:4*), and there will be continual droppings of honey and grace out of that Rock to satisfy you (*Psalms 81:16*). Examine your heart to see if ever you have beheld Christ as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (*John 1:14*). Be sure you have come to Christ, that you stand upon the Rock of Ages, and have answered His call to your soul, and have closed with Him for justification.

When you believe and come to Christ, you must leave behind your own righteousness, and bring nothing but your sin. Oh, that is hard! Leave behind all of your holiness, sanctification, duties, humbling, and so on; and bring nothing but your needs and miseries, or else Christ is not fit for you, nor you for Christ. Christ will be a pure Redeemer and Mediator, and you must be an undone sinner, or Christ and you will never agree. It is the hardest thing in the world to take Christ alone for righteousness, to truly acknowledge Him "Christ." Join any thing to Him of your own, and you un-Christ Him.

Whatever comes in when you go to God for acceptance other than Christ, call it anti-Christ; bid it be gone; make only Christ's righteousness triumphant. All besides is Babylon, which must fall if Christ stand, and you shall rejoice in the day of the fall thereof (*Isaiah 14:4*). Christ alone did tread the winepress, and there was none with Him (*Isaiah 63:3*). If you join anything to Christ, Christ will trample upon it in fury and anger, and stain His raiment with the blood of it.

To believing, there must be a clear conviction of sin, and the merits of the blood of Christ, and of Christ's willingness to save upon this consideration, merely, that you are a sinner. All the power in nature cannot get up so high in a storm of sin and guilt as really to believe there is any grace, any willingness in Christ to save. When Satan charges sin upon the conscience, then for the soul to charge it upon Christ, that is gospel-like; that is to make Him Christ. He serves for that use. To accept Christ's righteousness alone, His blood alone for salvation, that is the sum of the gospel. When the soul, in all of its duties and distress, can say, "Nothing but Christ, Christ alone, for righteousness, justification, sanctification, and redemption" (*1 Cor 1:30*); not humbling, not duties, not graces—that soul has got above the reach of the billows.

All temptations, Satan's advantages, and our complaining, are laid in self-righteousness, and self-excellency. These must be torn from you, be as unwilling as you will. These hinder Christ from coming in; and till Christ comes in, guilt will not go out; and where guilt is, there is hardness of heart; and therefore much guilt argues very little if anything of Christ.

Make Christ your peace, "for He is our peace" (*Eph 2:14*); not your duties, your tears, and your graces. You may destroy Christ by duties, as well as by sin. Look at Christ, and do as much as you will.

Stand with all your weight upon Christ's righteousness. Beware lest you have one foot on your own righteousness, another on Christ's. Till Christ comes and sits on high upon a throne of grace in the conscience, there is nothing but guilt, terrors, and secret suspicions; the soul hanging between hope and fear, which is an ungospel-like state.

He that fears to see sin's utmost vileness, the utmost hell of his own heart, he suspects the merits of Christ. Though you be the greatest of sinners, Christ will be your Advocate; and you shall find Him "Jesus Christ the righteous." In all your doubts, and fears, and storms of conscience, look at Christ continually, never argue with Satan, he desires nothing better; bid him go to Christ, and He will answer him. It is His office to be our Advocate (*1 John 2:1*), His office to answer law as our Surety (*Heb 7:22*), His office to answer justice as our Mediator (*Gal 3:20; 1 Tim 2:5*); and He is sworn to that office (*Heb 7:20, 21*). Put Christ upon it. If you will do anything yourself, as to satisfaction for sin, you renounce Christ the righteous, who was made sin for you (*2 Cor 5:21*).

Satan may bring forward and corrupt Scripture, but he cannot answer Scripture. It is Christ's word of mighty authority. Christ foiled Satan with it (*Mat 4:7*). In all the Scripture there is not an ill word against a poor sinner stripped of self-righteousness. No! It plainly points out this man to be the subject of the grace of the gospel, and none else.

You complain much of yourself. Does your sin make you look more at Christ, less at yourself? That is right, or else complaining is but hypocrisy. To be looking at duties and graces, when you should be looking at Christ, that is pitiful. Looking at them will make you proud; looking at Christ's grace will make you humble. By grace you are saved (*Eph 2:5*). In all your temptations, be not discouraged (*James 1:2*). Those surges are

not to break you, but to heave you off yourself upon the Rock Christ.

Whatever Satan or conscience says, do not conclude against yourself, Christ shall have the last word. He is Judge of quick and dead, and must pronounce the final sentence. His blood speaks reconciliation (*Col 1:20*), cleansing (*1 John 1:7*), purchase (*Acts 20:28*), redemption (*1 Peter 1:19*), purging (*Heb 9:13-14*), remission (*Heb 9:22*), liberty (*Heb 10:19*), justification (*Rom 5:9*), and nearness to God (*Eph 2:13*).

The sun may as well be hindered from rising as Christ "the Sun of Righteousness" (*Mal 4:2*). Look not a moment off Christ. Look not upon sin, but look upon Christ first. In every duty look at Christ; before duty to pardon; in duty to assist; after duty to accept. Without this it is but carnal, careless duty. Do not legalize the gospel, as if part remained for you to do and suffer, and Christ were but half a Mediator and you must bear part of your own sin, and make part satisfaction. Let sin break your heart, but not your hope in the gospel.

When we come to God, we must bring nothing but Christ with us. Any ingredients, or any previous qualifications of our own, will poison and corrupt faith. He that builds upon duties, graces, etc., knows not the merits of Christ. This makes believing so hard, so far above nature. If you believe, you must every day renounce, as dung and dross (*Phil 3:7-8*), your privileges, your obedience, your baptism, your sanctification, your duties, your graces, your tears, your humbling, and nothing but Christ must be held up. Every day your workings, your self-sufficiency must be destroyed. You must take all out of God's hand. Christ is the gift of God (*John 4:10*). Faith is the gift of God (*Eph 2:8*). Pardon is a free gift (*Rev 2:6*). Ah, how nature storms, frets, rages at this, that all is a gift, and it can purchase nothing with its tears and duties, that all of our works are excluded and of no value in heaven.

If nature had been left to contrive the way of salvation, it would have rather put it into the hands of saints or angels to sell it, than of Christ who gives it freely (*Isaiah 55:1*). It would have set up a way to purchase it by doing. Nature would do anything to be saved rather than go to Christ. The soul would force something of its own upon Christ (*Matt 9:13*). Christ will have nothing.

We see sin great; we think Christ does too. We measure infinite love with our own line, infinite merits with our sins, which is the greatest pride and blasphemy (*Psalms 103:11-12; Isaiah 40:15*). Hear what He says, "I have found a ransom" (*Job 33:24*). "In Him I am well pleased" (*Matt 3:17*). God will have nothing else. Nothing else will do you good, or satisfy conscience, but Christ who satisfied the Father. God does all on account of Christ. You deserve hell, wrath, and rejection. Christ's deserving is life, pardon and acceptance.

You say you cannot believe, you cannot repent. Sinners are most fit for Christ who have nothing but sin and misery. Go to Christ with all your impenitence and unbelief to get faith and repentance from Him (*Eph 2:8; Acts 5:31*). Tell Christ, "Lord, I have brought no righteousness, no grace to be accepted in, or justified by: I am come for Thine, and must have it." We would be bringing to Christ, and that must not be. Not a penny of nature's highest improvements will pass in heaven. Grace will not stand with works (*Titus 3:5; Rom 11:6*).

Let nature but make a gospel, and it would make it quite contrary to Christ; it would be to the just, the innocent, and the holy. Christ made the gospel for you: that is, for needy sinners, the ungodly, the unrighteous, the accursed (*Rom 5:6-10*). Nature cannot endure to think the gospel is only for sinners (*1 Tim 1:15*). When nature is but put to it by guilt or wrath, it will go to its old haunts of self-righteousness and self-goodness. An infinite power must

cast down those strongholds. Christ will look at the most abominable sinner before Him. None but the self-justified stands excluded from the gospel.

To say that you are a "sinner" is easy; but to pray with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," is the hardest prayer in the world (*Luke 18:13*). It is easy for you to say that you believe in Christ; but to see Christ full of grace and truth, of whose fullness you may receive grace for grace; that is faith indeed (*John 1:14,16*). It is easy to profess Christ with the mouth; but to confess Him with the heart, as Peter, to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, the alone Mediator, that is above flesh and blood (*Matt 16:15-17*). Many call Christ "Saviour." Few know Him so. To see grace and salvation in Christ is the greatest sight in the world. None can do that, but at the same time they shall see that glory and salvation to be theirs. Sight will cause application (*Isaiah 45:22*).

A Christless, formal religion will be the blackest sight next to hell. You may have many good things, and yet one thing may be lacking that will make you go away sorrowful from Christ. You have never sold all; you have never parted with all your own righteousness. You may be high in "Christian" duty and yet a perfect enemy and adversary to Christ. Labor after sanctification to your utmost; but make not a Christ of it to save yourself. Christ's infinite satisfaction, not your sanctification, must be your justification before God. When the Lord shall appear terrible out of His holy place, fire shall consume that as hay and stubble.

To a self-secure soul Christ is but a fable, the Scriptures but a story. Blessed soul! whom Christ shall find not having on his own righteousness (*Phil 3:9*), but having his robes washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb (*Rev 7:14*). The more you look at Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, the stronger and clearer will the eye of faith be. Look at Christ; you will love Him and live on Him.

Think on Him continually. Keep the eye constantly upon Christ's blood, or every blast of temptation will shake you. If you would see sin's sinfulness, to loathe it and mourn, do not stand looking upon sin, but look upon Christ first, as suffering and satisfying (*Zech 12:10*).

Believe in Christ's willingness, and that will make you willing. If you find you cannot believe, remember it is Christ's work to make you believe. Put Him upon it; He wills and does of His good pleasure (*Phil 2:13*). Mourn for your unbelief, for unbelief is but a setting up of guilt in the conscience above Christ, and undervaluing the merits of Christ, accounting His blood an unholy, common, and unsatisfying thing.

Despairing sinner! You are tumbling over all your duties and professions to patch up a righteousness to save you. Look at Christ now; look to Him and be saved all the ends of the earth. There is none else. He is a Saviour, and there is none beside Him (*Isaiah 45:21-22*). Look anywhere else and you are undone. God will look at nothing but Christ, and you must look at nothing else.

Christ is lifted up on high, as the brazen serpent in the wilderness, that sinners at the ends of the earth, at the greatest distance, may see Him and look and live. The least sight of Him will be saving; the least touch will be healing. And God intends that you should look on Him, for He has set Him on a high throne of glory, in the open view of all poor sinners who desire Him.■

—Thomas Willcox
(1621-1687)

**"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name."**

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honey out of the rock

A word of advice to my own heart and yours. You are a religious person and partake of all the ordinances. You do well; they are glorious privileges. But if you have not the blood of Christ at the root of your religion, it will wither, and prove but painted pageantry to go to hell in. If you retain guilt and self-righteousness under it, those vipers will eat out all the vitals of it at length.

Examine what ground your hope of glory is built upon, whether it was laid by the hand of Christ. If not, it will never be able to endure the storm that must come against it; Satan will throw it all down, and great will be the fall thereof (*Matt 7:27*).

Ask yourself daily: Where is the blood of Christ to be seen upon my soul? What righteousness is it that I stand upon to be saved? Have I got away from all my own self-righteousness? See that the wound that sin has made in your soul be perfectly cured by the blood of Christ. Be sure that it's not skinned over with religious duties. Apply what you will besides the blood of Christ, it will poison the sore. You will find that sin was never truly mortified, if you have not seen Christ bleeding for you upon the cross. Nothing can kill it, but beholding Christ's righteousness.

Nature can afford no balsam fit for soul cure. Healing from duty, and not from Christ, is the most desperate disease. Poor, ragged nature, with all of its highest improvements, can never spin a garment fine enough—"without spot" (*1 Peter 1:19*)—to cover the soul's nakedness.

Whatsoever is of nature's spinning must be all unraveled before the