

The Doctrine of Grace Cleared From the Charge of Licentiousness.

by John Gill

John Gill's sermon defends the doctrine of grace against accusations of promoting licentiousness, emphasizing its alignment with true godliness and moral living.

Scripture: Romans 6:1, 1 Timothy 6:3

Topics: "Grace", "Holiness"

Description

John Gill preaches on the doctrine of grace, defending it against accusations of promoting licentiousness. He emphasizes that true grace leads to godliness and that the teachings of the gospel encourage a life of holiness rather than sin. Gill explains that while some may abuse the doctrine, the essence of grace is pure and promotes obedience and righteousness. He argues that the charge of libertinism is a misunderstanding of the nature of grace, which is fundamentally tied to godly living. Ultimately, he calls believers to uphold the doctrine of grace and live in a manner that reflects its true purpose.

Transcript

THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

Cleared from the

CHARGE OF LICENTIOUSNESS

A Sermon,

Preached at a Wednesday's Evening Lecture in

Great-Eastcheap, December 28, 1737.

1 TIMOTHY 6:3

And to the doctrine which is according to godliness.

The apostle Paul well understood the doctrine of the gospel, and its natural tendency to influence the lives of men; and was very much concerned for the honour and credit of it; that the conversations of professors might be as became it, and that they would in all things adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. He was

very desirous of instructing men of the meanest capacities, and in the lowest situation of life as servants, to behave agreeable to their masters, that the name of God, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed, ver., 1, 2.

He charges Timothy, to teach these things, and exhort men to their duty; and adds, ver. 3. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, &c; plainly intimating, that the words of Christ, or the salutary doctrines of the gospel, perfectly accord with practical godliness; and that a dissolute life and conversation is very disagreeable to them.

My view in reading these words is to vindicate the doctrine of grace from the charge of licentiousness, and to prove it to be a godly doctrine, and tending to godly edification; or that it is, as expressed in the text, a doctrine according to godliness. The method I shall take in treating on this subject, will be as follows: I. I shall explain what is necessary in the proposition, "That the doctrine of grace is according to godliness." II. Consider the Charge of licentiousness, which is brought against it, and the nature of it.

III. Make some concessions concerning the abuse of the doctrine, by evil and wicked men. And, IV. Prove that the doctrine itself is pure and innocent, and free from the imputation of libertinism. I. I shall explain what is necessary in the proposition, "That the doctrine of grace is according to godliness." By the doctrine of grace, I mean that system of evangelical truths which is commonly called Calvinistical; as, that God has from all eternity loved some of the human race, and has chosen them unto everlasting salvation, by Jesus Christ; that he has made a covenant of grace with his Son on the behalf of the chosen ones, which is absolute and unconditional; that Christ in the fulness of time assumed human nature, suffered and died, to redeem a special and peculiar people to himself; that by bearing their sins, and all punishment due unto them, he has made full satisfaction to the justice of God; that a sinner's justification before God is only by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, without any consideration of works done by him; that pardon of sin is only through the blood of Christ, and for his sake, according to the riches of his grace; that God sees no sin in his justified and pardoned ones, so as to condemn them for it; that regeneration and conversion, are by the powerful and efficacious grace of God; and that those who are effectually called by grace, shall persevere to the end, and be eternally saved, This is the doctrine of the Bible, of the scriptures given by inspiration of God, and which are profitable for doctrine, (2 Timothy 3:16) for explaining, stating, and defending this doctrine.

This is the doctrine of Christ, which if a man brings not with him, who pretends to be a preacher of the gospel, he is not to be received, nor bid God speed. (2 John 9:10) This is the doctrine of the apostles (Acts 2:42) we are steadfastly to continue in and abide by; and is summarily comprised in that excellent chain of truths, Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:29, 30) By godliness I understand not any particular grace, or the exercise of it; which seems to be the sense of the apostle, when he says, Add to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness; (2 Peter 1:6, 7) nor the whole of internal religion only; though that is the main and principal part of godliness, and is what an inspired writer means, when he observes, that bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things; (1 Timothy 4:8) but by it I understand the whole of practical religion, both external and internal, the exercise of every grace, and the discharge of every duty: which is what the apostle designs, when he thus concludes; Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness? (2 Peter 3:11) By the doctrine of grace

being a godly doctrine, or a doctrine according to godliness, I mean, that godliness is the very life and soul of it; that it runs through every part of it, and is breathed by it; that it is the truth which is after godliness; (Titus 1:1) that there is a perfect harmony and agreement between them; the mystery of Christ, of his person, and grace, being the great mystery of godliness; and that nothing more powerfully and effectually teaches and engages men to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present evil world, (Titus 2:11, 12) than the doctrine of the grace of God, which bringeth the news of free and unconditional salvation by Jesus Christ.

II. Though such is the nature and tendency of the doctrine of grace, a charge is brought against it, as encouraging looseness of life, and opening a door to libertinism; and it is urged, that "if God has chosen some infallibly to salvation, and made a covenant with them in Christ, to give them grace and glory, in an absolute and unconditional way; if Christ has redeemed them by his blood, and they are justified alone by his righteousness, and being called by his grace shall never perish; then they may live as they list, and take their whole swing of sin, since their state is safe and unalterable."

But this charge is no other than a suggestion of Satan; the reasoning is borrowed from him; the argument is an aping of him; it is shaped according to his plan; and perfectly agrees with what he said to our Lord; If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone; (Matthew 4:6) which is, as if he should say, "if this is the case, thou mayest do what thou wilt with thyself, no damage can arise unto thee, no hurt can be done thee."

Moreover, Satan never more transforms himself into an angel of light, than when he sets up for a preacher of holiness, in opposition to the doctrine of grace; nor do his ministers ever more act the same part, than when under the guise of ministers of righteousness, or preachers of good works, they endeavour to undermine and sap the foundation of gospel-doctrine. This charge springs from malice and ignorance; and it is hard to say which is the most predominant in it; the men that bring it, are, as concerning the gospel, enemies for our sake, (Romans 11:28) and do as Diotrophes did, prate against us with malicious words; (3 John 10) their carnal minds being enmity against God, and whatsoever is spiritually good; and being without any spiritual discerning of the things of the Spirit of God, they pronounce them foolishness, and speak evil of the things they understand not.

The charge is false and groundless, and to be treated as mere slander and calumny, and must be rejected with the utmost abhorrence and indignation; and ought to have no other answer than what the apostle gives; What shall we say then, Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1, 2) However, this may serve somewhat to relieve and alleviate our minds under this horrid and heavy charge, that it is no other than what was leveled against Christ and his apostles.

The spiteful and ignorant Jews charged our Lord with being an Antinomian, both in doctrine and practice; in doctrine, as appears from his vindication of himself; Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; am not come to destroy, but to fulfill: (Matthew 5:17) In practice, as is evident from those words of his; John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a devil; (Matthew 11:18, 19) he is an unsociable man, he will not be conversed with in any form: The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners; but, adds he, Wisdom is justified of her children.

And that the apostles of Christ were treated after this manner, is plain front what the apostle Paul says; And not rather, as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, Let us do evil that good may come, whose damnation is just. (Romans 3:8) All which should confirm us in the doctrine of grace we hold and maintain as true; since the same objections are made unto it, as were to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles. III. It will be allowed, that the doctrine of grace may be, and has been abused by evil and wicked men, The apostle Jude speaks of some men in his days, who were turning the grace of God into lasciviousness; (Jude 4) where by the grace of God is not to be understood the love and favour of God shed abroad in the heart by the Spirit; for that can never be turned to such a purpose, it always working in a contrary way, as it did in David; thy loving kindness, says he, is before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth: (Psalm 26:3) nor the principle of grace wrought in the soul by a divine power; for that being of a spiritual nature lusteth against the flesh, and can never be turned into it: But by it is meant the doctrine of the gospel, which, though lasciviousness is not in the nature of it, nor has it any natural tendency to it, yet wicked men transfer it from its original nature, design, and use, to a foreign one: Just as unlearned and unstable men, who have no spiritual understanding of the word of God, nor any scheme of truth consistent with it, wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. (2 Peter 3:16) But then, as the scriptures are not to be thought the worse of, because of these men's wresting them; so neither is the doctrine of grace a whit the less to be valued, because it is abused by ill-disposed men.

Let the characters of the men that turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, be enquired into; and first, they appear to be ungodly men, men devoid of the fear and reverence of God, and devotion to him; who are not worshippers of him. Now who are they that neglect the private and public worship of God? Who are they that walk abroad in the fields on Lord's-days? or take their horses and ride, seeking their own pleasure? Who are they that frequent taverns and public houses, when they should be attending the house of God?

Are these the men who are commonly called Calvinists, the asserters of the doctrine of grace? Should the examination be strictly made, the above persons will be found, if not to a man, yet by far the greatest part, Arminians, if capable of giving any account of their religious sentiments. And secondly, the other part of their character looks with a dreadful aspect upon, and plainly points out those who are on the other side of the question; denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who are the deniers of Christ's person, of his proper deity and equality with the Father, of his plenary satisfaction and expiatory sacrifice, of his imputed righteousness, and the efficacy of his blood? The deniers of these things are the men that turn the grace of God into lasciviousness; either by asserting it to be a licentious doctrine; or by treating the doctrine of special grace in a wanton and ludicrous manner, scoffing at it, and lampooning it; or by making the doctrine of grace universal, extending it equally alike to all mankind, and thereby harden and encourage men in sin.

Again: Be it so, that some who have notionally received and professed the pure doctrine of grace, have abused it to vile purposes; the doctrine itself is not to be rejected on that account, but the abusers of it. The best things in the world may be ill used by wicked men; yea, even the perfections and providences of God. Mercy is a perfection of the divine nature, and what God delights in: God is merciful, and therefore, says a profane sinner, I will take my fill of sin, and doubt not, if I have but opportunity at last to say, "Lord have mercy on me," all will be well.

God is patient, long-suffering, bears with sinners, and does not stir up all his wrath immediately: What effect has this upon them? Does it lead them to repentance? It should do so: But they despise the riches

of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. (Romans 2:4) Yea, as the apostle Peter says, and we have lived to see it verified, There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. (2 Peter 3:3, 4) Which is as if they should say; we see no likelihood of the coming of the Judge, nor of the awful judgment, or dreadful doom that shall befall ungodly persons, which have been talked of; this is all dream and enthusiasm; and therefore we will take our own pleasure, and walk after our own lust.

Thus because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. (Ecclesiastes 8:11) Now must it be said that God is not merciful, patient, long-suffering and forbearing, or that he ought not to be so, because sinners make such an ill improvement of these things? How are the common mercies of life, and the most kind instances of divine providence abused, by the worst of men! Yea, even Jeshurun himself, when he waxed fat he kicked, then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation. (Deuteronomy 32:15) But must we deny the providences of God, and reject the instances of his goodness, because of the ill use that is made of them, through the wretched depravity of human nature?

Nor should we discard the doctrine of grace on such an account: At this rate, the best of things, the plainest facts, and clearest truths, must be denied and rejected. Once more: It will be owned, that there have always been some bad men in the best of societies. There was a Judas among Christ's disciples; there has always been chaff upon his floor, and will until the winnowing time comes; and tares among the wheat, wolves in sheep's clothing, and foolish virgins among the wise, until the bridegroom appears.

But then the faults and blemishes of some are not to be imputed to the whole body, nor these to principles held and professed. If this must be admitted the measure and rule of judgment, no church or congregation, no society or set of men whatever, have been, or can be free from the vilest imputations. But are the generality of those who are called Calvinists, or Antinomians, men of bad characters? Or are there more immoral persons among them, than on the other side of the question?

Let them look at home, we are ready to compare notes and numbers with them; we are obliged in defence of ourselves, since our principles are charged, to use some sort of boasting, and say, in like manner as Samuel did; here we are, witness against us, before the Lord, and before his anointed: Whose ox or ass have we taken? Whom have we defrauded; or oppressed? (1 Samuel 12:3) This is worthy of notice, that the doctrine of grace never had a run among rakes and debauchees whereas it is well known the opposite to it has been, and is embraced by such, Strange! if the doctrines of free grace are of such a malignant nature and influence, have such a tendency to licentiousness, and give so much encouragement to sin, as is said, that such persons should not greedily catch at them and embrace them, at least make trial of them; when it is plain they are ready to give into all the absurd and wretched schemes of Infidelity and Atheism, in order to keep their lusts; but, instead of this, none shew a greater hatred to them: And indeed, these are as forward as any to be our accusers; though the charge comes with an ill grace from such who are abandoned to the worst of crimes, and are avowed enemies to holiness of life.

One thing more I would observe, and that is, That when any who have embraced and professed the doctrine of grace fall into any open and scandalous sin, there is immediately a great clamour and uproar about it; whereas when it is the case, as it frequently is, on the opposite side, little or no notice is taken of it. What should be the reason of this? Because the case is common on one side, and comparatively rare, and but seldom heard of on the other: So that the noise that is made, and the notice that is taken, do but

indeed make to our credit and reputation in general.

But supposing the instances of immorality were more than they are, and whenever they happen, are matter of lamentation: yet, IV. I aver, that the doctrine of grace itself is pure and innocent, and not to be charged with the faults and blemishes of any of the professors of it; nor does it give any encouragement to sin, but is all the reverse: And this will be made to appear, by considering the several particular doctrines contained in it. As, 1. The doctrine of God's everlasting and unchangeable love to his elect, in every state and condition and circumstance of life into which they come.

This is no ways contrary to the purity and holiness of the divine nature; for though he loves the persons of his people, and delights in them as considered in Christ, he takes no delight in their sins; sin is the abominable thing he hates; he is of purer eyes than to behold it with approbation and delight; he is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with him: nor does he encourage them in sin; or connive at it, but rebukes and chastises them for it in a fatherly way; though at the same time he does not take away his loving-kindness from them; for he takes pleasure in their persons, though he bears a displeasure to their sins; nor does this doctrine in the least lead men to sin, but on the contrary, most strongly engages to the love of God, and a cheerful obedience to him: his love to them indeed does not arise from their love to him, it being prior to theirs; but then they love him because he first loved them; (John 4:19) and this love in them to him, constrains them to a willing obedience; when their hearts are enlarged with it, then do they run with alacrity the ways of his commandments; when this loving-kindness of God in choosing them in Christ, redeeming them by his blood, and calling them by his grace is before their eyes, and they have a sense of it upon their hearts, they walk in his truth; (Psalm 119:32, 26:3) in the truth of his gospel, and have their conversations as become it.

This love, according as it is shed abroad in their hearts, casts out fear, and influences them to serve the Lord without fear, in righteousness and holiness all the days of their lives. (1 John 4:18) What can lay a man under a greater obligation to love the Lord, fear and obey him, than this consideration, that he loved him when he had no love in his heart to him, nay was an enemy to him; and that his thoughts were concerned about his everlasting salvation, when he had no thoughts of God, nor any for himself?

Such a consideration as this, must work much more powerfully upon him, as it must upon any ingenuous mind, than such a one as this; that the Lord began to love him and continued to do so, because he loved him and was obedient to him; and would continue to do so as long, and no longer. That is the purest obedience that is influenced by love; it is the obedience of a child, and not of a slave; and must be the most acceptable unto God; nay, there is no other service that is acceptable to him, but what springs from love influenced by his own. 2.

The doctrine of the eternal, personal election of some of mankind unto everlasting salvation. Good works indeed are not the causes of God's act of election: For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated: (Romans 9:11-13) Nothing that is temporal can be the cause of that which is eternal; nor the will of man, nor any thing done by it, be the cause of the will of God; but yet good works are what God has fore-ordained, that his chosen people should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10) Holiness is a means that is fixed in election, and an end that is secured by it; all those who from the beginning, from everlasting, are chosen unto salvation by Christ, are chosen to it through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; (2 Thessalonians 2:13) all that are elect according to the fore knowledge of God the

Father, are so through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus: (1 Peter 1:2) which sanctification is as infallibly secured, as salvation itself; for though men are not chosen because they were, yet they are, that they should be holy; and in consequence of electing grace become so through the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God.

Election is the source and spring of all true and real holiness: There would not have been such a thing as holiness in the world, since the fall of Adam, had it not been for electing grace; except the Lord had left a seed, and reserved a remnant for himself, according to the election of grace, the world had been as Sodom and as Gomorrah: And so it is, where there are no instances of this grace. Strange then, that this innocent doctrine, so friendly to holiness and good works, should be thought to open a door to licentiousness!

Besides, holiness of heart and life is an evidence of election; the internal grace of sanctification is an evidence, being a fruit of it to the person himself: Knowing, brethren, says the apostle, your election of God; for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. (1 Thessalonians 1:4, 5) External holiness, or that which appears in the outward conversation, is the evidence of election to others. Hence that advice is given to the saints, to give diligence to make their calling and election sure; (2 Peter 1:10) that is by good works, as in some copies it is read, and as the sense requires; since both calling and election are to be made sure by some third thing.

Not that they can be made surer in themselves, or to the believer, than they are; but a more sure and certain evidence may be given of them to others. Nor does any thing, nor can any thing more powerfully engage men to holiness and good works, and to honour and glorify God that way, than the consideration of this; that they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9) 3.

The doctrine of the absoluteness and unconditionality of the covenant of grace, is far from being a licentious one. It is true indeed, that the good works of men do not put them into this covenant, nor their evil works, their transgressions and sins, turn them out of it, who are in it; yet this does not suppose that God overlooks and connives at the sins of his people; since it is expressly said, and it is a part of this covenant, If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my Statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes: Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (Psalm 89:30-34) Besides, nothing more fully provides both for internal and external holiness, than the covenant of grace; and that by the most absolute and unconditional promises: it provides for internal holiness, by such promises as these, I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you: A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh: (Ezekiel 36:25, 26) And in another place, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts. (Jeremiah 31:33) It provides for external holiness, and that in the most effectual manner; since God in it promises, saying, I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:27) Nor is there any thing under the influence of divine grace that more powerfully operates upon, and stirs up, the desires of the saints, their care, diligence, and industry to discharge their duty, than the absolute and unconditional promises of grace; such as these: As God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:16, 18 and 7:1) Wherefore, says the apostle, having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Add to all this, that God in the covenant of grace provides in an absolute and unconditional way for the saints final perseverance in faith and holiness; saying, I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. (Jeremiah 32:40) 4.

The doctrine of particular redemption by Christ, is free from any imputation of libertinism. It is indeed a redemption from the bondage, curse, and condemnation of the law; but does not exempt from obedience to it, as it is in the hands of Christ; for saints are still under the law to Christ; (1 Corinthians 9:21) nor do any more delight in the law of God after the inward man, or more cheerfully serve it with their mind, than those who are most sensible, that they are become dead unto it, and delivered from it by the blood of Christ.

Redemption is a deliverance from sin, from all sin, original and actual; and that not only from the guilt of sin, and the punishment due unto it: but in consequence of redeeming grace, the redeemed ones are delivered from the dominion and governing power of sin, and at last from the being of it. Christ saves his people from their sins; he does not indulge them in them; the deliverer that comes out of Zion, turns away ungodliness from Jacob. Strange! that a redemption from a vain conversation should ever be an encouragement to one; or that a person's being ransomed out of the hands of Satan, and taken as a prey out of the hands of the mighty, should be an argument with him to give up himself to him and his service; or can he thought to have any tendency to engage him in a state of bondage to him, to be led as a captive by him at his will.

Besides, the great end of Christ's giving himself for any of the sons of men, is, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. (Titus 2:14) Nor does anything lay such an obligation upon men to glorify God with their body and spirit, as the consideration of this, that they are not their own, but are bought with a price, (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20) even with the precious blood of Christ; nor can any thing like the love of Christ, the redeeming love of Christ, constrain men to obedience, to live not unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15) 5.

The doctrine of Christ's bearing our sins, and making satisfaction for them to the justice of God, is another pure and holy doctrine: For though Christ has bore all the sins of his people, all the guilt and filth of them, and all the punishment due unto them; has taken all away, for his blood cleanseth from all sin; it removes all that is in sin, and belongs to it; yet this gives no encouragement to sin; for one end of Christ's bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, was, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness. (1 Peter 2:24) Though Christ as a priest has satisfied justice, by fulfilling the law, yielding perfect obedience to its precepts and bearing the whole penalty of it; yet this does not free those for whom he has made satisfaction from obligation to regard the law, as held forth by him as King of saints; whom they own, and look upon themselves obliged to own as their judge and lawgiver; and indeed consider themselves under still greater obligation to obey his laws and commands, since he has finished transgression for them, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

Though they through the law are dead to the law, yet it is, that they might live unto God; (Galatians 2:19) the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself a pure and spotless sacrifice for sin, purges their consciences from dead works, that they may serve the living God: (Hebrews 9:14) it is only

such who walk in the light and have fellowship with Christ, whom his blood cleanses from all sin; for if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; (1 John 1:6, 7) Christ's suffering, the just for the unjust, the punishment due to sin, was to bring us to God; (1 Peter 3:18) not only to reconcile us to him, and to enjoy his favour, but to walk with him, to walk in his ways, and to walk humbly before him; whereas if it gave a loose to sin, and encouraged in it, it would set us at a greater distance from him Christ's satisfaction for sin does not at all weaken our obligation to duty, but increases it.

6.

The doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is a doctrine according to godliness, however it may be traduced as a licentious one; It neither makes void the law: nor discourages the performance of good works; nor encourages in sin; it does not annul, or make the law useless: Do we, says the apostle, make void the law through faith, that is, by the doctrine of justification through the righteousness of Christ, received by faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law; (Romans 3:31) since we assert that men are justified by a perfect righteousness, which is every way agreeable to the demands of the law, and by which that is magnified and made honourable.

Nor does it at all discountenance the discharge of duty, but is the greatest motive and inducement to it. Thus, the apostle, having observed that we are not saved by works of righteousness done by us, that we are justified by the grace of Christ, and are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life, adds, This is a faithful saying; and these things, that is, these doctrines, I will that thou affirm constantly; (Titus 3:8) that thou assert them without any doubt or hesitation about them; and that thou dwell upon them in thy ministry, and frequently inculcate them; that to this end and purpose, they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works.

Nothing like these doctrines will induce them thereunto. Nor does this doctrine give any countenance to sinful practices; for though God justifies the ungodly, yet he does not indulge them in ungodliness. Christ's righteousness justifies from all sin, but does not justify persons in a continuance in sin. Besides, faith, which receives this blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of salvation, (Psalm 24:5) which is the reason why men are said to be justified by it, works by love; (Galatians 5:6) is an operative grace, is attended with the fruits of righteousness, is evinced by good works, made perfect by them, and is without them dead.

Yet some will say, the doctrine of justification by faith is no licentious doctrine, but the doctrines of eternal justification and eternal union are. This comes from another quarter, from a set of men who should know better. What diabolical charm? what satanic influence can there possibly be in a date? If justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, without the works of the creature, has no bad influence upon the life and conversation; the moving of the date of it higher than where it has been commonly put, can never be attended with any bad consequence that way; nor can any consequences arise from it, but what must also unavoidably follow upon eternal election: And as for eternal union with Christ, it is the foundation of all the good things Christ has done for his people, of all the good things the Spirit works in them, and of all the good works which are done by them; and therefore can never give birth and countenance to evil practices.

7.

The doctrine of free and full remission of sins, according to the grace and mercy of God, and by the blood of Christ, and for his sake, and not on account of our repentance and good works, as procuring it, has no influence to make the conversation of a truly sensible sinner bad, but the reverse; sin never appears so odious, and in its true colours, or so exceeding sinful, as it does in the glass of pardoning love; a soul is

never more ashamed or sin, and confounded on the account of it, or blushes at it, than when he is most sensible and most satisfied that God is pacified towards him for all that he has done; (Ezekiel 16:63) and that all is forgiven through the blood of Christ: nor does he ever more truly and heartily, and in an evangelical manner, mourn over sin, or is humbled before the Lord for it, than when he looks to Christ, and views all his iniquities bore by him, and washed away in his blood; (Zechariah 12:10) nor can any thing more powerfully engage men to forsake their evil ways, and course of living, and turn to the Lord, than this consideration, that he does abundantly pardon; (Isaiah 4:7) and indeed the end which the Lord has in setting forth Christ in his purposes to be the propitiation for sin, and procure the remission of it, and in providing this blessing in the covenant of his grace, and in sending Christ to obtain it, through the shedding of his blood, and in publishing and proclaiming it in his gospel, and in applying it by his spirit, is that he might be heartily and sincerely feared and worshipped; there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. (Psalm 130:4) He would have been feared with a slavish fear, or dreaded, as he is by devils, if there had been none; but he would never have been feared by sinful men, with a filial and godly fear, or have been worshipped in sincerity and truth, had it not been for pardoning grace and mercy through the blood of Christ; and such must be very disingenuous indeed, that can abuse such a doctrine as this, that because God has pardoned them, therefore they will sin the more against him; if there are any such that go on in sin upon such a presumption, that their sins are pardoned, they manifestly shew, that they never had any true sense of sin, or application of pardon to them. 8.

The doctrine of God's seeing no sin in his people, is spoken against as an immoral one, and giving liberty to sin; but is pure, holy and innocent: For this doctrine does not suppose sin not to be sin; or that that is not sin which is done amiss by them; or that God does not in any sense take notice of their transgressions. Though they are, as considered in Christ, holy and unblameable, and unreprouable in his sight; (Colossians 1:22) yet, as considered in themselves, they have and do many things which are faulty and blameworthy.

Though God sees no sin in them, with respect to the article of justification, yet he sees all their sins, with respect to the article of his omniscience; or though he sees them not with his avenging eye of justice, yet he sees them all with his eye of omniscience. Again: Though he sees no sin in them, to condemn them, yet he takes notice of their iniquities and transgressions, so as to rebuke and chastise them in a fatherly way on the account of them. There is indeed no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; but then these are described as such who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1) God has nothing against his people, as they are justified by the righteousness of Christ, and washed in his blood; but he has many things against them, which he takes notice of in a providential way, for their good, and his glory: Nevertheless, says Christ to the church at Ephesus; I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (Revelation 2:4, 5) This is the true state of this doctrine. Let any one judge, whether, in this view of it, it can be thought to be a licentious one. 9. The doctrine of efficacious grace in conversion, or of effectual vocation by the powerful and insuperable grace of God, can surely never be reckoned to have any tendency to lead persons into a vicious course of living; since they that are called by it, are called with an holy calling, and unto holiness: They have new principles of grace and holiness implanted in them: they are formed anew for God, are made new creatures, new men; and have put on the new man, which after God is created in, or unto, righteousness and true holiness: (Ephesians 4:24) They are created in Christ Jesus unto good works; and

are put into the best capacity of performing them, from the best principles, with the best views and to the best ends. 10.

The doctrine of the saints final perseverance can never be chargeable with encouraging immorality; unless continuance in faith and holiness is an immorality; or that it can be thought, that the way to persevere in holiness is to abound in sin. Nor does this doctrine make the use of means, or exhortations to diligence, care and watchfulness, unnecessary. The apostle Peter though he asserts that those who are elect according to the foreknowledge of God, and are begotten again according to his abundant mercy, are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; (1 Peter 1:5) yet exhorts these same persons to gird up the loins of their mind, to be sober, and hope to the end, to be holy in all manner of conversation, and to pass the time of their sojourning here in fear; (1 Peter 1:13, 15, 17) and makes use of their sure and certain redemption by the precious blood of Christ, from a vain conversation, to move and engage them to a regard to these things.

And indeed, though there is no danger of true believers falling, so as to be lost, and perish; yet inasmuch as through the weakness of the flesh, the temptations of Satan, and the snares of this world, they may so fall, as to dishonour the name of God, wound their own souls, and stumble others, there is good reason why he that thinks he stands, should take heed lest he fall. (1 Corinthians 10:12) It is, indeed, in the way and use of means, that the Spirit of God leads on the saints in faith and holiness to the end.

Thus we have seen that the several peculiar doctrines of grace are pure and innocent, having no manner of tendency to licentiousness; but the genuine nature and design of them are, to promote holiness of life and conversation. We might easily recriminate, by shewing that the charge of licentiousness may be brought with much more truth and justice against the opposite doctrines: As for instance; if Christ has redeemed all mankind, every individual of human nature, then may a profane sinner say, "I am redeemed by the blood of Christ, and shall undoubtedly be saved, let me live as I will; for Christ could not die, or his blood he shed in vain."

Should it be said, that though it is asserted that Christ died for all men, yet none can receive any benefit by his death, but such as believe, and repent of their sins: Be it so; since it is affirmed that man has a power to believe and repent when he pleases; the profane sinner may go on to say, "Seeing this is my case, I am endued with a free-will, I can believe and repent at pleasure, I will take my fill of sin, and at a convenient time I will reform, repent and believe, and doubt not but all will be well with me."

So the doctrine of the saints apostasy may be improved by wicked men, to encourage them to continue in sinful courses, and to procrastinate all concerns as yet about a future state: "For," may the sinner say, "if this is the case, that a man may be truly converted, he a true believer, and penitent, and a real child of God, and yet so fall and apostatize, as to be in the same state he was before; may amend, and fall away again, and in this way go on to the end, so that it is very uncertain and precarious in what state he will die then I may, for the present at least, indulge myself in sinful pleasures; for certainly it will be acting the wiser and more rational part, for me to amend, repent, and put myself into a good state, since these are in my power, toward the close of my days, when it may be more rationally concluded I shall continue therein, and so die in a happy situation."

Thus, I say, we might easily recriminate; but I choose not to load principles with consequences which are denied; nor should our opponents charge ours as they do, when we declare our abhorrence of every thing of this nature. To conclude: Let us, notwithstanding these imputations, value and esteem the doctrine of

grace, and not entertain the less opinion of it on this account. Let us stand fast in it, abide by it, and earnestly contend for it. Let us endeavour, by the assistance of the grace of God, to have our conversations as become the gospel; to adorn the doctrine of Christ in all things; to hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; and so to live, as to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and such to the blush, who falsely accuse the doctrine of grace, and our conversation in Christ.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/the-doctrine-of-grace-cleared-from-the-charge-of-licentiousness/>

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