

Shorthand Sermon on Romans 3:23–24¹

This is the third of six sermons by Charles Wesley, written shortly after his evangelical awakening, that survive only in copies he composed in the shorthand that he had learned from John Byrom. CW appears to have preached directly from the shorthand manuscript. These sermons were inaccessible, even to most scholars, until an expansion of the shorthand was published by Thomas R. Albin and Oliver A. Beckerlegge in 1987.²

John Byrom’s shorthand is constructed of consonant sounds, with vowel markers; though the latter are often omitted when assumed to be obvious. It also frequently uses single letters for entire words, abbreviations for phrases, and the like. As such, expansion of shorthand texts necessarily involves varying degrees of interpretation and hypothetical renderings.³ Since the entire sermon that follows is in shorthand, we do *not* enclose each line or paragraph in double square brackets “[[]],” as we do for brief shorthand additions to longhand texts. But when more than one expansion might make sense, the letters indicated by the shorthand are given, enclosing the remainder of our suggested expansion in single brackets “[].” When the expansion is more tentative, a question mark is included within the brackets “[?]”.

While there is no title given in the original manuscript, CW referred to this sermon in his MS Journal as “on justification by faith.” Its opening section is composed of extended extracts from two of the standard *Homilies* of the Church of England that deal with this topic; followed by extracts from related Articles of Religion. His goal is to prove that the emphasis on justification by faith which CW and his brother John had introduced into their preaching in recent weeks was not antithetical to the teaching of the Church of England.

On the inside cover of the booklet containing this shorthand manuscript CW recorded a longhand list of the first three dates and places where he preached the sermon:

Jan. 21, 1739 Islington
Feb. 25 [1739] Bexley
Mar. 11 [1739] St. Catherine’s

The manuscript containing this sermon survives at the Methodist Archive and Research Centre (MA 1977/597/10). The transcription which follows is our expansion of the shorthand, which differs on a few occasions from that of Albin & Beckerlegge. We focus on CW’s final text—ignoring any text ~~struck out~~ and replaced by CW. We also indicate the page transitions (in **red** font) of the original manuscript.

¹This document was produced by the Duke Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition under editorial direction of Randy L. Maddox, with the assistance of Aileen F. Maddox. Last updated: Sept. 27, 2024.

²Thomas R. Albin and Oliver A. Beckerlegge (eds.). *Charles Wesley’s Earliest Evangelical Sermons: Six Shorthand Manuscript Sermons Now for the First Time Transcribed from the Original* (Ilford: Wesley Historical Society, 1987), 37–49.

³See Timothy Underhill, “John Byrom’s Shorthand: An Introduction,” *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society* 104 (2008): 61–91.

I[n] N[omine] D[ei]¹

Romans 3:23–24

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

[I.] Of all the questions which ever did or can employ the minds of men, the most important is that of Bildad’s, “How can man be justified with God?” (Job 25:4). We are all by nature sold under sin, and enemies to God; and consequently children of wrath and heirs of hell.

[1.] This our Church² shows at large from Scripture, in her Homily of the misery of man, and of his condemnation to death everlasting by his own sin.³ Some of her words are these:

God, who knoweth us best, [...] thus setteth us forth by his faithful apostle St. Paul, “All men, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin. There is none righteous; no, not one. [...] They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable, there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”⁴ [...] God hath concluded all in unbelief. [...] We cannot think a good thought of ourselves, much less can we say well or do well of ourselves. [...]

St. John in the name of himself and all other holy men, be they never so just, makes this open confession, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. [...] If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and his word is not in us.” [...] So the wise man: “There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not” [Eccles. 7:20]. And David is ashamed of his sin, but not to confess it. How oft, how earnestly and lamentably doth he desire God’s mercy for his great offences, and that God would not enter into judgment with him [Ps. 51]. And again, how well weigheth this holy man his sins, which he confesses, that they be so many in number, and so hid and hard to understand, that it is in a manner impossible to know, utter, or number them. Wherefore, not yet coming to the bottom of them, he maketh supplication to God to cleanse him from his secret faults [Ps. 19:12]. [...] He weigheth

¹“In Nomine Dei”; i.e., In the Name of God.

²Church is capitalized throughout this sermon whenever it is clear that CW is referring specifically to the Church of England.

³I.e., *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of the late Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory; and now Thought fit to be Reprinted by Authority from the King’s Most Excellent Majesty* (Oxford: Thomas Guy, 1683), Homily II: “Of the Misery of All Mankind,” 6–11. CW begins abridging (and rewording somewhat) halfway through Part I, near the bottom of p. 7. We indicate elisions longer than a couple of words. The scripture references in the margins of the Homily are inserted editorially in brackets.

⁴Thomas Cranmer, author of the early homilies, rendered his own translation of Scripture quotations. CW substitutes the wording of the AV; or in the case of psalms, the BCP psalter.

rightly his sins from the original root and springhead, [...] and saith, “Behold, I was conceived in sin!” [Ps. 51:5]. [p. 2]

Our Saviour Christ saith, “There is none good but God.” [Mark 10:18; Luke 18:19]. And without him we can do nothing [John 15:5], nor can any man come to the Father but by him [John 14:6]. He commandeth us also to say that we are unprofitable servants when we have done all that we can do [Luke 17:10]. He preferreth the penitent publican before the holy Pharisee [Luke 18:14]. He calleth himself a physician—but not to them that be whole, but to them that be sick and have need of him [Matt. 9:12]. He teacheth us in our prayers to acknowledge ourselves sinners and to ask righteousness and deliverance at our heavenly Father’s hands. He declareth that the sins of our own hearts do defile our own selves. He teacheth that an evil thought or word deserveth condemnation [Matt. 12:36]. He saith he came to save only the sheep that were utterly lost and cast away [Matt. 15:24]. Therefore few of the proud, just, learned, wise, perfect and holy Pharisees were saved by him, because they justified themselves by their counterfeit holiness before men. [...]

Thus have we heard how evil we be of ourselves, how of ourselves and by ourselves we have no goodness, help or salvation; but contrariwise, sin, damnation and death everlasting. Of ourselves we are very sinful, wretched and damnable; not able either to think a good thought, or work a good deed, so that we can find in ourselves no hope of salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh unto our destruction.⁵

It is thus our Church, before she treats of the salvation of man, describes his misery. Because till we are deeply sensible of this, all attempts to remove it must prove vain and ineffectual. Before we can take one step towards our divine Physician, we must go and confess and groan under our disease. We must own it is by us incurable, and in a holy despair go out of ourselves for a remedy. But to you who truly feel yourselves sick, do I show the way of p[ea]ce and s[al]vation.⁶ “Come unto me,” saith the Author of it, “all ye that are weary and heavy laden.”⁷ He calls only the weary and heavy laden, because he knows no one else will come. Such only do I invite in his name. Such as are not startled at being told they deserve not one, but ten thousand hells, even as many as their own infinite sins and transgressions. [p. 3]

[2.] To you therefore, my fellow sinners and fellow prisoners, who are in the same condemnation with me, do I declare the way, the only way whereby we may flee from the wrath to come. And this I shall show in the words of our own excellent Church, as they are plainly set forth in the Homilies of salvation—which are perhaps the noblest compositions now upon earth, excepting only the inspired writings.⁸

⁵This paragraph is extracted from the second paragraph of Part II of Homily II (p. 10).

⁶The shorthand indicates only a phrase where the lead consonant sound in the first word is a “p” (or possibly a “b”) and the lead consonant sound of the second noun is “s.” Several other combinations are possible.

⁷Matt. 11:28.

⁸By “Homilies of salvation” CW means the three *Parts* of Homily III, “A Sermon of the Salvation of Mankind, by only Christ our Saviour, from Sin and Death Everlasting.” The next eight paragraphs are drawn from Part I; *Certain Sermons* (1683), 12–14.

Because all men be sinners and offenders against God, and breakers of his law and commandments, therefore can no man by his own acts, works, or deeds, seem they never so good, be justified or made righteous before God. But every man of necessity is constrained to seek for another righteousness or justification to be received at God's own hands; that is to say, the forgiveness of his sins and trespasses. And this justification or righteousness, which we so receive of God's mercy and Christ's merits, embraced by faith, is taken, accepted and allowed of God for our perfect and full justification.

For the more full understanding hereof it is our duty ever to remember the great mercy of God, how that (all the world being wrapped in sin by breaking of the law) God sent his only Son our Saviour Christ into this world to fulfil the law for us, and by the shedding of his most precious blood to make a sacrifice and satisfaction or amends to his Father for our sins, and assuage his wrath and indignation conceived against us for the same.

Insomuch that infants, being baptized and dying in their infancy, are by his sacrifice washed from their sins, brought to God's favour, and made his children, and inheritors of his kingdom of heaven. And they which in act or deed do sin after their baptism, when they turn again to God unfeignedly, they are likewise washed by his sacrifice from their sins in such sort that there remaineth not any spot of sin that shall be imputed to their damnation. This is that justification which St. Paul speaketh of, when he saith, "No man is justified by the works of the law, but freely by faith in Christ Jesus." And again he saith, "We believe in Christ Jesus, that we be justified freely by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, because that no [p. 4] man shall be justified by the works of the law" [Gal. 2:16]. [...]

God, in the mystery of our redemption, hath so tempered his justice and mercy together, that he would neither by his justice condemn us unto the everlasting captivity of the devil and his prison of hell remediless, forever without mercy; nor by his mercy deliver us clearly without justice or payment of a just ransom. [...] And whereas it lay not in us to pay it, he paid a ransom for us, which was the most precious body and blood of his most dear and best beloved Son Jesus Christ; who besides this ransom, fulfilled the law for us perfectly. And so the justice of God and his mercy did embrace together and fulfilled the mystery of our redemption.

Of this justice and mercy of God knit together speaketh St. Paul [in] Romans 3, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness" [Rom. 3:23–25]. And chapter 10 [v. 4], "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." And chapter 8 [vv. 3–4], "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."⁹

In these places the apostle touches three things which must go together in our justification. Upon God's part his great mercy and grace; upon Christ's part justice, that is the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his

⁹As before, CW replaces Cranmer's scripture translations with the text of the AV.

body and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling the law perfectly and throughly; and upon our part true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us. [...]

St. Paul declareth here nothing upon behalf of man concerning his justification but only a true and lively faith which nevertheless is the gift of God. And yet this faith doth not shut out repentance, hope, love, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in every man that is justified. But it shutteth them out from the office of justifying. So that although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not all together.

Neither doth faith shut out our own good works, necessarily to be done afterwards of duty towards God—for we are most bounden to serve God, in doing good deeds commanded by him all the days of our life. But it [p. 5] excludeth them, so that we may not do them with this intent, to be made just by doing them. For all the good works that we can do be imperfect, and therefore not able to deserve our justification. But our justification doth come freely by the mercy of God, and of so great and free mercy that, whereas all the world was not able of themselves to pay any part towards their ransom, it pleased our heavenly Father, of his infinite mercy, without any our deserving, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom might be fully paid, the law fulfilled, and his justice fully satisfied. So that Christ is now the righteousness of all them that truly do believe in him. He for them paid their ransom by his death; he for them fulfilled the law in his life.

In her second homily on salvation, our Church proceeds thus:¹⁰

Ye have heard of whom all men ought to seek their justification or righteousness, and how also this righteousness cometh unto men by Christ's death and merits. Ye have heard also how that three things are required to the obtaining of this righteousness; God's mercy, Christ's justice, and a true and lively faith, out of which spring good works. Also before was declared at large, that no man can be justified by his own good works, that no man fulfilleth the law according to the strict rigour of the law.

And St. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians, proveth the same, saying thus, "If there had been any law given which could have justified, verily righteousness should have been by the law" [Gal. 3:21]. And again he saith, "If righteousness come by the law then Christ is died in vain" [Gal. 2:21]. And again, "You that are justified by the law are fallen from grace" [Gal. 5:4]. And furthermore he writeth to the Ephesians on this wise, "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast" [Eph. 2:8–9]. And to be short, the sum of all Paul's disputation is this, that if righteousness come of works, then it cometh not of grace; and if it come of grace, then it cometh not of works. And to this end tend all the prophets, as St. Peter saith, "To him give all the prophets witness that through his name whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" [Acts 10:43].

And after this wise, to be justified only by this true and lively faith in Christ, speak all the ancient authors, both [p. 6] Greeks and Latins. St. Hilary saith these words

¹⁰That is, CW is moving to Part II of Homily III; *Certain Sermons* (1683), 14–16.

plainly, “Faith only justifieth.” St. Basil, “This is a perfect and full rejoicing in God, when a man advanceth not himself for his own righteousness, but acknowledgeth himself to lack true righteousness, and to be justified by the only faith in Christ. And Paul, saith he, doth glory in the contempt of his own righteousness and looketh for the righteousness of God by faith.” [...]

St. Ambrose saith these words, “This is the ordinance of God, that they which believe in Christ shall be saved without works, by faith only, freely receiving remission of their sins.” Consider diligently these words, “Without works, by faith only, freely we receive remission of our sins.” [...] Nevertheless, this sentence is not so meant of them, that the said justifying faith is alone in man, without true repentance, hope, charity and the fear of God, at any time or season. Nor do they mean that we are so justified without works that we might be idle, and that nothing should be required on our part afterward. But this saying—we be justified by faith only, freely, and without works—is spoken to take away clearly all merit of our good works, and thereby most plainly to express the weakness of man and the goodness of God; the great infirmity of ourselves, and the might and power of God; the imperfection of our own works, and the most abundant grace of our Saviour Christ, and therefore wholly to ascribe our justification unto Christ only, and his most precious blood-shedding.

This faith the Holy Scripture teacheth us, is the strong rock and foundation of the Christian religion. This doctrine all ancient authors of Christ’s church do approve. This doctrine advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and beateth down the vainglory of man. This whosoever denieth, is not to be accounted for a Christian man, nor for a setter-forth of Christ’s glory, but for an adversary to Christ and his gospel, and for a setter-forth of men’s vainglory.¹¹ [...]

Justification is not the office of man, but of God; for man cannot make himself righteous by his own works, neither in whole nor in part. For that were the greatest arrogancy and presumption of man that Antichrist could set up against God, to affirm that a man might by his own works take away and purge his own sins, and so justify himself. But justification is the office of God only, and is not a thing which we render unto him, but which we receive of him by his free mercy, and by the only merits of his most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer, Saviour, [p. 7] and Justifier, Jesus Christ. So that the true understanding of this doctrine—that we be justified freely by faith without works, or, we be justified by faith in Christ only—is not that it is our own act to believe in Christ, or this our faith in Christ, which is within us, doth justify us and deserve our justification unto us (for that were to account ourselves justified by some act or virtue that is within ourselves). But the true meaning is that although we hear God’s word and believe it, although we have faith, hope, repentance, and the fear of God within us, and do never so many works thereunto, yet we must renounce the merit of all our said virtues and good deeds which we either have done, shall do, or can do, as things that be far too weak and insufficient to deserve remission of our sins, and our justification. And therefore we must trust only in God’s mercy, and the sacrifice which our High Priest and Saviour Jesus

¹¹CW placed a “q” in the margin with brackets marking this paragraph. It was apparently a reminder to include it in his University sermon on Rom. 3:23–25 (he omitted the two prior paragraphs from that sermon).

Christ the Son of God, once offered for us upon the cross, to obtain thereby God's grace and remission as well of our original sin in baptism, as of all actual sins committed by us after our baptism, if we truly repent and turn unfeignedly to him again. So that as St. John the Baptist, although he were never so virtuous and godly a man, yet in this matter of forgiveness of sin, he did put the people from him, and appointed them to Christ, saying thus unto them, "Behold, yonder is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world" [John 1:29]. Even so, as great and godly a virtue as the lively faith is, yet it putteth us from itself, and remitteth or appointeth us unto Christ, to have only by him remission of our sins or justification. So that our faith in Christ, as it were, saith unto us thus, It is not I that take away your sins, but it is Christ only; and to him only I send you for that purpose, forsaking therein all your good virtues, words, thoughts, and works, and only putting your trust in Christ.

In the third homily upon salvation you have these words:¹²

It hath been manifestly declared unto you that no man can fulfil the law of God, and therefore by the law all men are condemned. Whereby it followeth necessarily that some other thing should be required for our salvation than the law, and that is a true and a lively faith in Christ, bringing forth good works and a life according to God's commandments. And also you see the mind of this saying (we be justified by faith only) is this: "We put our faith in Christ, that we be justified by him only, [...] and by no virtue or good works of our own that is in us, or that we can be able to have, or to do, to deserve the same, Christ himself only being the cause meritorious thereof. [p. 8]

[...] Truth it is, that our works do not make us of unjust, just before God. But God of his own mercy through the only merits of his Son Jesus Christ doth justify us. Nevertheless, because faith doth directly send us to Christ for remission of our sins, and that by faith given us of God, we embrace the promise of God's mercy, and of remission of our sins (which thing none other of our works or virtues properly doth) therefore the Scripture useth to say, that faith without works doth justify. [...]

Yet that faith which bringeth forth either evil works, or no good, is not a right, pure and lively faith, but a dead, devilish, counterfeit, and feigned faith. For even the devils know and believe all the Articles of our creed,¹³ and yet, for all this, they be but devils, remaining still in their damnable estate. For the right and true Christian faith is not only to believe the holy Scripture to be true, [...] but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ; whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments. [...]

Therefore to conclude, these great and merciful benefits of God do not minister unto us occasion to be idle, and to live without doing any good work, neither yet stir us up by any means to do evil things, but contrariwise, if we be not desperate, they move us to render ourselves wholly unto God with all our will, hearts, might, and power to serve him in all good deeds, obeying his commandments during our lives; to seek in all things his honour and glory, not our own sensual pleasures and vainglory, evermore dreading

¹²CW moves now to Part III of Homily III; *Certain Sermons* (1683), 16–19.

¹³The Homily walks through several articles, which CW reduces to this brief phrase.

willingly to offend such a merciful God and loving Redeemer in word, thought or deed. And the said benefits of God, deeply considered, move us for his sake also to be ever ready to give ourselves to our neighbours, and to study with all our endeavour to do good to every man. These be the fruits of true faith, to do good as much as lieth in us to every man, and above all things, and in all things, to advance the glory of God, of whom only we have our sanctification, justification, salvation and redemption.

[3.] This is our Church's doctrine concerning justification which she thus sums up in her Article:

We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification.¹⁴ [p. 9]

[4.] In her Article of good works our Church thus teaches:

Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.¹⁵

[5.] Of works done before justification her judgment is this:

Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) to deserve grace of congruity. Yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.¹⁶

[II.] Having now laid before you the full doctrine of justification by faith only, as plainly proved from Scripture by our own Church, I shall first apply myself to those that deny this truth, and secondly to you who receive it.¹⁷

[1.] And first as to those who deny this doctrine, and ignorantly call it new and the preachers of it schismatics. Would they look into their Bibles, they would find it as old as Christianity. They would find it as old as the fall of man, and his redemption in Christ Jesus, who

¹⁴BCP, Articles of Religion, Article XI: "Of The Justification of Man."

¹⁵Ibid., Article XII: "Of Good Works."

¹⁶Ibid., Article XIII: "Of Works Before Justification."

¹⁷The next five paragraphs are again marked with a "q" in the margin. CW quoted them with only minor modifications in his University sermon on Rom. 3:23–25.

was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world to take away the sins of the world.¹⁸ But they do therefore err because they know not the Scriptures, neither the power of faith.¹⁹ They find no such efficacy in their own historical, lifeless, shadowing faith,²⁰ and so cannot conceive how faith only should justify. That their faith cannot justify, we readily grant. For if it could the devils, having the very same, would be justified too. But what must they do then to be justified? Why, they will take in outward good works to their assistance, and then the business is done. The works of a heathen and the faith of a devil will, in their judgment, make a man [a] complete Christian, and fully justify him in the sight of God.

Thus mighty are these men in the Scriptures.²¹ And as deeply skilled are they in the doctrines of our Church. Tell [p. 10] me, you that are of the Church, do ye not hear the Church? I know ye do, and to you I therefore appeal. Judge you which are the schismatics, we who maintain or they who deny justification by faith only? Indeed they are worse than schismatics who deny it; for if they have ever subscribed to our Articles, they are perjured schismatics. God forbid that I, or any of my brethren the clergy, should preach another gospel or bring any other doctrine than this. For we have solemnly declared upon oath our belief of this everlasting truth, “We are justified by faith only.”²² And for us to teach any other doctrine would be willful, flat, inexcusable perjury.

One infamous evasion I know there is, but hope we all have it in equal abhorrence, namely that every man may subscribe the Articles in his own sense. We grant that the Seventeenth Article is purposely so worded as to take in persons of differing sentiments, yet without giving the least sanction to the horrid doctrine and decree of reprobation.²³ But what is this to those Articles where the sense is plain, precise, and det[ailed]? As it is in that of justification, for the full understanding of which the Church refers us to her Homilies, and thereby ties us down to the one sense therein delivered. Nor is it in the power of words more fully and plainly to express any truth than she has there expressed that everlasting truth: “We are justified by faith only without works.”

What then my brethren can we think of those, if any such there be, who swear to this Article in a sense altogether repugnant and contrary to the true? Who declare upon oath their belief that “we are justified by faith only”—that is, say they in their hearts, we are not justified by faith only but by a popish jumble of faith and works. What horrid mockery is this of God and man? Can charity itself suppose that their mental reservation acquits them of perjury? Or does it not rather wholly aggravate it? I shall say no more of this wicked subterfuge but that it was

¹⁸See Rev. 13:8, John 1:29.

¹⁹See Matt. 22:29.

²⁰In his University sermon on Rom. 3:23–25 CW revises this to “their own hearsay faith.”

²¹See Acts 18:24.

²²CW is referring to the Oath of Allegiance sworn at the time of ordination; his certificate of having signed survives in MARC (DDCW 6/82).

²³CW is correct that Article of Religion XVII, “Of Predestination,” affirms only election to salvation (unlike reprobation too as in double predestination). It is less clear it was intended to allow an “Arminian” reading (basing that election on God’s foreknowledge of human response) like that bequeathed to both JW and CW by (among others) their mother Susanna (Annesley) Wesley; see her letter to JW, Aug. 18, 1725, *Works*, 25:179–80.

found out by our modern Arius, that hereby he subscribed our Articles though he denied the Lord that bought him;²⁴ as might the elder Arius likewise, or any other heretic old or new. [p. 11]

Let not those therefore who deny this doctrine any longer call themselves of the Church of England. They may be of the Church of Rome, but cannot be of ours, who allow works any share in our justification. Papists indeed they are, though they may not know it. For they lay the wood, hay, stubble of their own works, not as the superstructure, but as the very foundation of their acceptance with God. Pharisees are they, for they justify themselves. Perjured are they likewise, as many of them as have sworn to the truth of what they deny. In short, they may call themselves anything but Christians and Church of England men. For such we can never allow them to be since, to repeat the words of the Church, “Whosoever denieth this doctrine of justification by faith only, is not to be counted for a Christian man, nor for a setter-forth of Christ’s glory, but for a setter-forth of man’s vainglory, an adversary to Christ and his gospel.”

[2.] I am secondly to apply myself to you who receive this doctrine, as must everyone who receives the testimony of God and his Church. If it appears new to any of you that a man is justified by faith only without the deeds of the law, let that man be assured that he trusteth in his own righteousness, and consequently he is not justified. He hath not faith. Whosoever trusts not on the merits of Christ alone for justification, him we must account to trust in something else. And he that does so cannot be justified by faith only, because he does not desire or expect it. This you own, my brethren, but say that you do not trust in your own righteousness. I hope you do not. But no man thinks he does. And of all instances of self-deceit this is the most common. There is no one of us all who hath not trusted to his own righteousness more or less, and yet who of us will acknowledge it?

That you may know whether you still trust in it, let me persuade you to make this experiment. Suppose you see before you a scandalous and filthy sinner—stained with the most abominable, gross, and notorious vices; guilty of fornication, adultery, theft, perjury, covetousness, and murder; one who has lived in these and every other vice; who has done no good in his whole life, and all sorts of evil. Ask yourselves, What has this man to trust to? Nothing but the very grace of God, the infinite mercy of Christ Jesus. [p. 12] This you will readily answer. But do you see that you have no more to trust to than he? That he has just as much to trust to as you have? The same physician of souls, the same friend of sinners, the same saviour of that which was lost. Do you now depend upon the b[enefits²⁵] of Christ as fully, entirely, and solely as you would do were you this sinner? Do you rely on his death as the one sufficient satisfaction, oblation, and sacrifice for your sins, and own nothing else?²⁶ Own nothing

²⁴CW surely has in mind the Church of England theologian Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), who insisted in *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712) that emphasis on the equality of the three “persons” of the Godhead in creeds betrayed the affirmation of the monarchy of the Father in Scripture, and that Scripture should be considered more authoritative. Clarke was widely assumed to be adopting a model where only the Father was God eternal, with the Son and Spirit being brought into being by the Father, akin to that taught by Arius (c. 250–336), which was condemned by the Council of Nicaea. See Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 62–164.

²⁵The shorthand indicates only the first consonant; “blood” would be another possibility.

²⁶See BCP, Articles of Religion, Article XXXI, “Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross.”

you either are or have done? If you think you have more to trust to than this murderer, thief, adulterer, then do you most infallibly trust not to the merits of Christ only but to something of your own, your own works or righteousness. If you cannot herein put yourself upon a level with this sinner, in that you look, like him, to receive a free pardon from the mere mercy of God in Christ Jesus; if you cannot submit to be judged as ungodly; then are you of those that justify themselves. Then are you farther from the kingdom of God than the publicans and harlots. Then will even this thief, adulterer, and murderer enter into the kingdom of heaven before you.

My brethren, let me press this matter something farther. Why are you offended at being told you have just as much to trust to, just as much merit, as a thief or common prostitute? Is it not because you really think you have more? But while you think you have any at all, the merits of Christ can never avail you. They can never be made yours till you renounce your own. If you have the least unwillingness to part with all the merits of all your best actions, it is plain to a demonstration that you fancy there is some merit in them, or in other words that you trust in them. If you imagine God cannot forgive a sinner because he has done no good works, you make good works into justification, and evidently show what you depend upon. You do trust to your own righteousness, unless in the matter of justification you utterly renounce it as filthy rags,²⁷ unless you count it but as dung and dross that you may win Christ and be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.²⁸

Turn your eyes once more to the wretch above mentioned and behold him full of all filthiness both of flesh and spirit,²⁹ guilty of all the sins that ever were committed. Can anyone be in a worse condition than him? Yes, the man who thinks himself in a better without Christ. Does anyone more need the merits of Christ? [p. 13] The man who imagines he needs them less. Is anyone at a greater distance from God? Yes, the virtuous, holy, self-justifying Pharisee. The greatest sin upon earth is self-righteousness. And [it is] what God hates with the most perfect hatred. It is the quintessence of that pride which cast Satan out of heaven and man out of paradise. And though Christ hath died that we might receive m[er]cy, yet till we are purged of this abomination, Christ with regard to us is died in vain.

[III.] The sum of all is this: They that be whole need not a physician, but they that be sick. Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.³⁰ He is the friend and saviour of sinners. Not indeed of those who wilfully continue in sin, but of those who feel the weight of it, and groan to him for deliverance.³¹ Whosoever is saved by him is saved as a sinner. His mouth is first stopped. He becomes guilty before God and submits to be justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.³²

Which of you, my brethren, will consent to these conditions, and suffer God to save him in his own way? You have often told him in the words of the Church, that the remembrance of

²⁷See Isa. 54:6.

²⁸See Phil. 3:8–9.

²⁹See 2 Cor. 7:1.

³⁰See Luke 5:31–32.

³¹See Rom. 8:21–22.

³²See Rom. 3:19, 24.

your sins was grievous unto you, the burden of them intolerable.³³ Was it so indeed, or did you only mock God when you told him so? Can you from your heart join in this prayer now? Would to God you could, for then you might be healed, you might believe unto righteousness and most assuredly know that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.³⁴

Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,³⁵ even that kingdom of God within which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.³⁶ What hinders its being just now set up in your souls? Nothing but your not knowing yourselves sinners. To him that feelingly knows it, our Lord himself hath said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”³⁷ “Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden and I will refresh you.”³⁸ “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, and the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.”³⁹

He that hath ears to hear let him hear!⁴⁰ [p. 14] He that hath a heart to believe, let him come. Whosoever thou art to whom thy sins are a burden, come even now and lay them down at the feet of Jesus. This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.⁴¹ He justifies not the righteous but the ungodly.⁴² He quickens those that are dead in trespasses and sins.⁴³ Hast thou faith to be healed, oh thou poor, infirm, helpless sinner? Believest thou that he is able to do this? To speak peace to thy soul at this very instant, and seal thy pardon by his promised Spirit?⁴⁴ If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.⁴⁵ It is possible for thee to know this moment that all thy sins are forgiven thee. And if thou dost believe, thou dost this moment know it. Thou feelest I have [a] divine commission for speaking comfortably to thee and crying, “Thy legal warfare is accomplished, thy iniquity is pardoned, for thou hast received of the Lord’s hand double for all thy sins!”⁴⁶

[At the bottom on the inside front cover (under the register of occasions preached) is the following text, inverted and numbered as p. 17. It is a shortened version of the last two paragraphs of the sermon]

³³See BCP, Holy Communion, General Confession.

³⁴See Rom. 1:16.

³⁵See Matt. 5:3.

³⁶See Rom. 14:17.

³⁷John 6:37.

³⁸Matt. 11:38.

³⁹John 7:38 combined with John 4:14.

⁴⁰See Matt. 11:15, etc.

⁴¹See Luke 15:2.

⁴²See Rom. 4:5.

⁴³See Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13.

⁴⁴See Eph. 1:13.

⁴⁵See Mark 9:23.

⁴⁶Cf. Isa. 40:2.

“Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.” “Come unto me, all that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.” He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. He to whom his sins are a burden, let him come and lay them down at [the] foot of the cross. If any man thirst let him come unto Christ and drink, and the water which he shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.

Source: Methodist Archive and Research Centre, MA 1977/597/10.