

CHRIST SET FORTH



CHRIST SET FORTH

In His Death, Resurrection, Ascension,
Sitting at God's Right Hand, and Intercession
As the *Cause* of Justification, and
The *Object* of Justifying Faith,
from Romans 8:34.

Thomas Goodwin

*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather,
that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God,
who also maketh intercession for us.*

ROMANS 8:34.



THE BANNER OF TRUTH TRUST

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Footnotes from the Nichol edition of Goodwin's *Works* are attributed to 'Ed.' The present publisher has included a few additional footnotes—these are attributed to 'P.' Some spellings have been modernised. Greek words have been transliterated, and along with many Latin phrases are explained in the footnotes where necessary.

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Foreword

It is hoped that this new typeset edition of one of Thomas Goodwin's most beloved and enduring works will bless a new generation of readers. It is a book full of theological riches and penetrating pastoral insights.

It should be pointed out that this book is not an abridgement of the original. It is rather a faithful reproduction of the version found in volume 4 of the *Works of Thomas Goodwin*, which was published as part of the Nichol series of Puritan reprints in 1862. In this Banner of Truth Puritan Paperbacks edition it appears in a much more attractive typesetting which makes Goodwin's valuable little work more accessible to modern readers.

Thomas Goodwin was born in 1600 in Rollesby, a village near Norwich in the south-east of England. During his nearly eighty years he became an important and influential figure in the religious and political issues of his day. He was educated at Cambridge where he came under the influence of John Preston and Richard Sibbes. Goodwin became a well-loved lecturer, preacher, and pastor. He rose in prominence in the Puritan movement,

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and was subsequently a frequent preacher before Parliament, a prominent member of the Westminster Assembly, a personal chaplain to Oliver Cromwell, and the President of Magdalen College, Oxford. When England restored the monarchy in 1660, and the Puritans found themselves out of favour, Goodwin continued to preach and write until his death in 1680. Most of his books published during his lifetime (including *Christ Set Forth*), appeared in their first editions between the years 1636 to the mid 1640s. After his death, his son edited and printed five extensive volumes of unpublished manuscripts which Goodwin had amassed during his prodigious lifetime. His legacy and writings have been a blessing to countless Christians.

Though rich in theology and pastoral insight, *Christ Set Forth* is primarily a book written to encourage Christians. It is a guidebook for keeping one's heart and faith pointed in the right direction, towards Christ himself. In it Goodwin pushes aside anything that might displace Christ in one's heart. In chapter after chapter he sets forth the glory of Christ and his work as mediator as the only object of one's faith and affection.

Goodwin wrote this book out of deep personal and pastoral concern. He explains in his introduction that he had seen many believers stray in their faith by looking into their own hearts for signs of grace instead of looking away from themselves to Christ. This tendency

arose out of the quest for the assurance of salvation, a hot topic in Goodwin's day. Much time and effort was spent in examining one's life and soul to detect signs and evidences of saving grace. While biblically motivated this search for internal signs can easily divert the attention of the believer from Christ. How subtle the temptation for the soul to cling to these internal evidences and treat them as the sole ground of confidence before God. On the other hand, many a believer looks within and sees little to inspire confidence and bring a sense of assurance. In both cases, Christ, who is the believer's only true confidence and hope, is no longer the focus.

We know that this was a problem for Goodwin in early life. In the biography compiled by his son he says

I was diverted from Christ for several years, to search only into the signs of grace in me: it was almost seven years e'er I was taken off to live by faith on Christ, and God's free love, which are alike the object of Faith.

The search for signs of saving grace within somewhat unhinged Goodwin, even to the extent of his neglecting Christ as the sole object of his faith. When he writes in the introduction to this work of those 'many holy and precious souls' who have become carried away from Christ, he is speaking out of his own personal experience.

The remedy for this misplaced focus is a rich and full exposition of Christ's saving work, and that is

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Goodwin's object in writing this book. In it the author sets forth the finished, yet continuing, work of Christ as the only object of a believer's faith. Goodwin glories in Christ the Mediator and teaches believers to rest in the Saviour's redeeming work. 'Who will condemn?' since Christ has done all to secure the salvation of the elect.

May this book be an encouragement to your faith. You may not face precisely the same struggles Goodwin faced and many of his fellow Christians faced in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, with Goodwin you may learn to revel in the saving work of Christ for sinners and admire the way in which he has accomplished it. Take joy in the Bible's promises that point to Christ as the one who justifies completely. Be blessed by Goodwin's warm, pastoral exhortations as he points you in the right direction. And having read this book, may you walk with confidence in the light of that glorious scriptural declaration: 'Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.' You will find no greater foundation on which to rest your confidence.

Scott T. Berggren
Bandung, Indonesia
December 2014

Author's Introduction

To the Reader,

What the scope of this treatise itself is, the title-page and the table of contents will sufficiently inform you: I shall only here acquaint you with what was mine, in a few words. I have by long experience observed many holy and precious souls, who have clearly and wholly given up themselves to Christ, to be saved by him his own way, and who at their first conversion (as also at times of desertion) have made an entire and immediate close with Christ alone for their justification, who yet in the ordinary course and way of their spirits have been too much carried away with the rudiments of Christ in their own hearts, and not after Christ himself: the stream of their more constant thoughts and deepest intentions running in the channel of reflecting upon, and searching into the gracious dispositions of their own hearts, so to bring down, or to raise up (as the apostle's words are, Rom. 10:8), and so get a sight of Christ by them. Whereas Christ himself is 'nigh them' (as the apostle there speaks), if they would but nakedly look upon himself through thoughts of pure and single faith.

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Although the use of our own graces, by way of sign and evidence of Christ in us, be allowed us by God, and is no way derogatory from Christ, if subordinated to faith; and so as the heart be not too inordinate and immoderate in poring too long or too much on them, to fetch their comfort from them, unto a neglect of Christ: yet as pleasures that are lawful are unlawfully used when our thoughts and intentions are too long, or too frequent, or too vehement in them, so as to dead the heart, either to the present delighting in God, or pursuing after him, with the joint strength of our souls, as our only chiefest good: so an immoderate recourse unto signs (though barely considered as such), is as unwarrantable, when thereby we are diverted and taken off from a more constant actual exercise of daily thoughts of faith towards Christ immediately, as he is set forth to be our righteousness, either by the way of assurance (which is a kind of enjoyment of him), or recumbency and renewed adherence in pursuit after him.

And yet the minds of many are so wholly taken up with their own hearts, that (as the Psalmist says of God) Christ 'is scarce in all their thoughts'. But let these consider what a dishonour this must needs be unto Christ, that his train and favourites (our graces) should have a fuller court and more frequent attendance from our hearts than himself, who is the 'King of Glory'. And likewise what a shame also it is for believers themselves,

who are his spouse, to look upon their husband no otherwise but by reflection and at second hand, through the intervention and assistance of their own graces, as mediators between him and them.

Now to rectify this error, the way is not wholly to reject all use of such evidences, but to order them, both for the season, as also the issue of them. For the season, so as that the use of them go not before, but still should follow after an address of faith first renewed, and acts thereof put forth upon Christ himself. Thus whensoever we would go down into our own hearts, and take a view of our graces, let us be sure first to look wholly out of ourselves unto Christ, as our justification, and to close with him immediately; and this as if we had no present or by-past grace to evidence our being in him. And if then, whilst faith is thus immediately clasping about Christ, as sitting upon his throne of grace, we find either present or fore-past graces coming in as handmaids, to attend and witness to the truth of this adherence unto Christ (as after such single and absolute acts of faith it oftentimes falls out);—the Holy Ghost (without whose light they shine not) ‘bearing witness *with* our spirits’, that is, our graces, as well as *to* our spirits;—and then again, for the issue of them, if in the closure of all, we again let fall our viewing and comforting ourselves in them, or this their testimony, and begin afresh (upon his encouragement) to act faith upon Christ immediately

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with a redoubled strength; if thus (I say) we make such evidences to be subservient only unto faith (whilst it makes Christ its Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of all), this will be no prejudice at all to Christ's glory, or the workings of faith itself; for by this course the life of faith is still actually maintained and kept upon wing in its full use and exercise towards Christ alone for justification. Whereas many Christians do habitually make that only but as a supposed or taken for granted principle, which they seldom use, but have laid up for a time of need; but actually live more in the view and comfort of their own graces, and the gracious workings thereof in the duties towards Christ.

The reason of this defect, among many others, I have attributed partly to a 'barrenness' (as Peter's phrase is) 'in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ', and of such things revealed about him, as might be matter for faith to work and feed upon: as also to a want of skill (whilst men want assurance) to bend and bow, and subjugate to the use of a faith for mere adherence, all those things that they know and hear of Christ as made justification unto us. It being in experience a matter of the greatest difficulty (and yet certainly most feasible and attainable), for such a faith as can yet only rely and cast itself upon Christ for justification, yet rightly to take in, and so to make use of all that which is or may be said of Christ, his being made righteousness to us, in his death, resurrection,

etc., as to quicken and strengthen itself in such acts of mere adherence, until assurance itself comes, for whose use and entertainment all truths lie more fair and directly to be received by it. They all serve as a fore-right wind to assurance of faith, to fill the sails thereof, and carry on with a more full and constant gale (as the word used by the apostle for assurance¹ imports), whereas to the faith of a poor recumbent, they serve but as a half side-wind, unto which yet, through skill, the sails of such a faith may be so turned and applied towards it, as to carry a soul on with much ease and quietness unto Christ the desired haven; it notwithstanding waiting all that while for a more fair and full gale of assurance in the end.

Now to help or instruct believers in that latter, namely, the use of such a skill, is not directly the drift of this treatise, I having reserved that part (if God assist me and give leisure, and this find acceptance) unto another about the *Acts of Justifying Faith*, wherein this art now mentioned is to be the main scope.² That which I have here endeavoured, is, to set forth to all sorts of believers (whether they have assurance or not) Christ as he is the object of our faith as justifying, and as the cause of justification to us; and so I send forth this as a premise and preparatory to that other. And to that purpose I

¹ Viz. πληροφορία [*plerophoria*].—Ed.

² *Of the Object and Acts of Justifying Faith*, *Works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. 4 (1697); repr. as vol. 8 of the Nichol edition (1864); repr. by the Banner of Truth Trust (1985).—P.

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have run over some few articles of our faith or creed, as I found them put together in one bundle by the great apostle, namely Christ, in his death, resurrection, ascension, sitting at God's right hand, and intercession, and have handled these no further than as in all these he is made Justification unto us, therein having punctually kept unto the apostle's scope. By all which you may (in the mean time) see, what abundant provision God hath laid up in Christ (in the point of justification) for all sorts of believers to live upon: every thing in Christ, whatsoever he was, or whatsoever he did, with a joint voice speaking justification unto us. You may see also that God hath in Christ justified us over and over; and thereby come to discern what little reason you have to suffer your hearts to be carried aside to other comforters, and so be spoiled and bereft of these more immediately prepared, and laid up for us in Christ himself. To have handled all those considerations, which his obedience unto death affords unto the justification of a believer, and his comfort therein, in this small tractate, would have made that part too disproportioned to the rest: it alone deserves, and will require a distinct tract, which therefore I have cast into another method;¹ and so in this treatise have touched only upon what may for the present be sufficient to furnish that part, to keep company with its fellows. Only when I had thus presented Christ along

¹ See footnote on p. 45.—P.

from his death, resurrection, and ascension, unto his sitting in heaven, and there performing that great part of his priesthood, the work of intercession, I judged it both homogeneal to all these, and conducing to the greater encouragement of believers in the exercise of their faith, to subjoin that to the other treatise, *How Christ's Heart, now he is in Heaven, stands affected to us sinners here below.*¹ And a better token (take the argument itself, if I could have fuller represented it) how to present unto his spouse I know not, than a true character of her Husband's heart, now he is in glory: and (but for method's sake) I would have placed it first, it being more suited to vulgar capacities, whose benefit I aim at. Now in that discourse I confess I have not aimed to keep so strictly unto the matter of justification only, as in the other I have done; but have more generally discussed it, and shown how his heart stands towards us, under all sorts of infirmities whatsoever, either of sin or misery, yet so as it will serve for the matter of justification also. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant us according to the riches of his glory, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and that we may know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge! Amen.

¹ *The Heart of Christ in Heaven, Towards Sinners on Earth* (1642), repr. in vol. 4 of the Nichol edition (1862). Also available as *The Heart of Christ* in the Puritan Paperback series (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2011). As Goodwin indicates, the above treatise was published together with his *Christ Set Forth*—P.



SECTION I

SHOWING BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION THAT CHRIST IS THE EXAMPLE AND OBJECT OF JUSTIFYING FAITH

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

ROM. 8:34.



Chapter I

The scope of these words: that they were Christ's originally.—Christ the highest example of believing.—Encouragements to our faith from thence.

These words are a triumphing challenge uttered by the apostle in the name of all the *elect*; for so he begins it in verse 33 foregoing, 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's *elect*? It is God that justifies.' And then follow these words, 'Who shall condemn?' namely, God's *elect*. 'It is Christ that died,' *etc.* This challenge we find first published by Jesus Christ himself, our only champion, Isa. 50 (a chapter made of and for Christ), verse 8, 'He is near that justifies me; who will contend with me?' They were Christ's words there, and spoken of God's justifying him: and these are every believer's words here, intended of God's justifying them. Christ is brought in there uttering them as standing at the high priest's tribunal, when they spat upon him, and buffeted him, as verses 4, 5; when he was condemned by Pilate, then he exercised

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this faith on God his Father, 'He is near that justifies me.' And as in that his condemnation he stood in our stead, so in this his hope of his justification he speaks in our stead also, and as representing us in both. And upon this the apostle here pronounces, in like words, of all the elect, 'It is God that justifies; who shall accuse?' Christ was condemned, yea, 'hath died; who therefore shall condemn?' Lo, here the communion we have with Christ in his death and condemnation, yea in his very faith; if he trusted in God, so may we, and shall as certainly be delivered. Observe we first from hence, by way of premise to all that follows,

Observe: That Christ lived by faith as well as we do.

In John 1:16, we are said to 'receive of his fullness grace for grace'; that is, grace answerable and like unto his; and so (among others) faith.

For explication hereof.

First; in some sense he had a faith for justification like unto ours, though not a justification through faith, as we have. He went not, indeed, out of himself, to rely on another for righteousness, for he had enough of his own (he being 'the Lord our righteousness'); yet he believes on God to justify him, and had recourse to God for justification: 'He is near', says he, 'that justifies me.' If he had stood in his own person

merely, and upon his own bottom¹ only, there had been no occasion for such a speech; and yet consider him as he stood in our stead, there was; for what need of such a justification, if he had not been some way near a condemnation? He therefore must be supposed to stand here (in Isaiah) at God's tribunal, as well as at Pilate's, with all our sins upon him. And so the same prophet tells us, chap. 53:6, 'God made the iniquities of us to meet on him.' He was now made sin, and a curse, and stood not in danger of Pilate's condemnation only, but of God's too, unless he satisfied him for all those sins. And when the wrath of God for sin came thus in upon him, his faith was put to it, to trust and wait on him for his justification, for to take off all those sins, together with his wrath from off him, and to acknowledge himself satisfied and him acquitted. Therefore, in Psalm 22 (which was made for Christ when hanging on the cross, and speaks how his heart was taken up that while), he is brought in as putting forth such a faith as here we speak of, when he called God his God, 'My God! my God!' then, when as to his sense, he had forsaken him, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' Yea, he helped his faith with the faith of the forefathers, whom upon their trust in him God had delivered; 'Our fathers',

¹ basis; foundation.—P.

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saith he, ‘trusted in thee; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.’ Yea, at verse 5, we find him laying himself at God’s feet, lower than ever any man did. ‘I am a worm’, says he (which every man treads on, and counts it a matter of nothing for to kill), ‘and no man’, as it follows; and all this, because he bare our sins. Now his deliverance and justification from all these, to be given him at his resurrection, was the matter, the business he thus trusted in God for, even that he should rise again, and be acquitted from them. So Psa. 16 (a psalm made also for Christ, when to suffer, and lie in the grave), verses 8-10: ‘The Lord is at my right hand, I shall not be moved: Therefore my heart is glad, my flesh also resteth in hope’, or, as in the original, ‘dwells in confident sureness’. ‘Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell’, that is, under the load of these sins, and thy wrath laid on me for them; ‘neither wilt suffer thy Holy One [in my body] to see corruption.’ This is in substance all one with what is here said in this one word, ‘He is near that justifies me’, for Christ’s resurrection was a justification of him, as I shall hereafter show.

Neither, 2, did he exercise faith for himself only, but for us also, and that more than any of us is put to it, to exercise for himself; for he in dying, and emptying himself, trusted God with the merit of all his sufferings

Christ the Example of Faith

aforehand, there being many thousands of souls to be saved thereby a long while after, even to the end of the world. He died and betruſted all that ſtock into his Father's hands, to give it out in grace and glory, as thoſe for whom he died ſhould have need. And this is a greater truſt (conſidering the infinite number of his elect as then yet to come) than any man hath occaſion to put forth for himſelf alone. God truſted Chriſt before he came into the world, and ſaved many millions of the Jews upon his bare word. And then Chriſt, at his death, truſts God again as much, both for the ſalvation of Jews and Gentiles, that were to believe after his death. In Heb. 2:12-15, it is made an argument that Chriſt was a man like us, becauſe he was put to live by faith like as we are (which the angels do not); and to this end, the apoſtle brings in theſe words prophesied of him, as ſpoken by him of himſelf, 'I will put my truſt in him', as one proof that he was a man like unto us. Now for what was it that he truſted God? By the context it appears to be this, that he ſhould be the ſalvation of his 'brethren' and 'children', and that he ſhould have 'a ſeed and a generation to ſerve him', and raiſe up a church to God to praiſe him in. For this is made his confidence, and the iſſue of his ſufferings, in that fore-cited Pſa. 22, from verſe 22 to the end.

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Use. How should the consideration of these things both draw us on to faith, and encourage us therein, and raise up our hearts above all doubtings and withdrawals of spirit in believing! For in this example of Christ we have the highest instance of believing that ever was. He trusted God (as we have seen) for himself, and for many thousands besides, even for all his elect; and hast not thou the heart to trust him for one poor soul? Yea, Christ thus trusted God upon his single bond; but we, for our assurance, have both Christ and God bound to us, even God with his surety Christ (for he is God's surety as well as ours). A double bond from two such persons, whom would it not secure? If God the Father and God the Son thus mutually trusted one another for our salvation, whom would it not induce to trust them both, for one's own salvation, when as otherwise they must be damned that will not?

1. This example of Christ may teach and incite us to believe. For did Christ lay down all his glory, and empty himself, and leave himself worth nothing, but made a deed of surrendering all he had into his Father's hands, and this in a pure trust that God would 'justify many by him' (as it is in Isa. 53)? And shall not we lay down all we have, and part with whatever is dear unto us aforehand, with the

like submission, in a dependence and hope of being ourselves justified by him? And withal;—

2. It may encourage us to believe, especially against the greatness of sins. Hast thou the guilt of innumerable transgressions coming in and discouraging thee from trusting in him? Consider but what Christ had, though not of his own; Christ was made (as Luther boldly, in this sense that we speak of him, speaks),¹ the greatest sinner that ever was, that is, by imputation; for the sins of all God's chosen met in him. And yet he trusted God to be justified from them all, and to be raised up from under the wrath due to them. Alas! thou art but one poor sinner, and thy faith hath but a light and small load laid upon it, namely, thy own sins, which to this sum he undertook for, are but as an unit to an infinite number. 'God laid upon him the iniquities of us all.' Christ trusted God for his own acquittance from the sins of all the world, and when that was given him, he yet again further trusted him, to acquit the world for his satisfaction's sake.

But thou wilt say, Christ was Christ, one personally united to God, and so knew that he could satisfy him; but I am a sinful man. Well, but if thou believest, and so art one of those who are one with Christ, then Christ speaking these words in the name both of

¹ *Commentary on Galatians* (Gal. 3:13), *Tabletalk*, #202.—P.

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himself and of his elect, as hath been showed, thou hast the very same ground to utter them that he had, and all that encouraged him may embolden thee, for he stood in thy stead. It was only thine and others' sins that put him in any danger of condemnation; and thou seest what his confidence beforehand was, that God would justify him from them all. And if he had left any of them unsatisfied for, he had not been justified; and, withal, in performing his own part undertaken by him, he performed thine also, and so in his being justified thou wert justified also. His confidence, then, may therefore be thine now; only his was in and from himself, but thine must be on him: yet so as by reason of thy communion with him in his both condemnation and justification, thou mayest take and turn all that emboldened him to this his trust and confidence, to embolden thee also in thine, as truly as he did for himself. Yea, in this thou hast now a farther prop and encouragement to thy faith, than he had; for now (when thou art to believe), Christ hath fully performed the satisfaction he undertook, and we now see Jesus crucified, acquitted, yea crowned with glory and honour, as the apostle speaks; but he, when he took up this triumph, was (as Isaiah here foretold and prophesied it of him), but as then entering upon that work. The prophet

seeing the day of his arraignment and agony, utters these words as his; showing what thoughts should then possess his heart, when Pilate and the Jews should condemn him, and our sins come in upon him, 'God is near that justifies me; who therefore shall contend with me?' But now this comes to be added to *our* challenge here, that 'Christ *bath* died, and is also risen again'; that he *was* condemned and justified; who therefore shall condemn? may we say, and say much more.

But thou wilt yet say, He knew himself to be the Son of God, but so do not I. Well, do thou but cast thyself upon him, to be adopted and justified by him, with a giving up thy soul to his saving thee his own way, and, though thou knowest it not, the thing is done. And as for that so great and usual discouragement unto poor souls from doing this, namely, the greatness and multitudes of sins, this very example of his faith, and the consideration of it, may alone take off, and help to remove it, more than any I have ever met with; for he, in bearing the sins of his elect, did bear as great and infinitely more sins than thine, yea, all sorts of sins whatever, for some one of his elect or other, for he said upon it, that all (that is, all sorts of) sins shall be forgiven unto men, and therefore were first borne by him for them; and

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yet you see how confident beforehand he was, and is now clearly justified from them all. And by virtue of his being justified from all sorts of sins, shall all sorts of sinners in and through him be justified also; and, therefore, why mayest not thou hope to be from thine? Certainly for this very reason our sins, simply and alone considered, can be supposed no hindrance.

Thus we have met with one great and general encouragement at the very portal of this text, which comes forth to invite us ere we are entered into it, and which will await upon us throughout all that shall be said, and have an influence into our faith, and help to direct it in all that follows.

Chapter 2

The scope and argument of this discourse is, either direction to Christ as the object of faith, or encouragement to believers, from all those particulars in Christ mentioned in the text.

Faith and the supports of it, or rather Christ, as by his death and resurrection, *etc.*, he is the foundation of faith and the cause of our justification, is the main subject of these words. All which therefore, to handle more largely, is the intended subject of this