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SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL

SERMONS PREACHED AT JOHN GILL'S DEATH OR IN
VINDICATION OF HIS FAITH & PRACTICE

Dr. Gill And Mr. Brine Vindicated From The Charge Of Error And Mistake With Respect To Faith In Christ

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*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth*

— Psalm 60:4

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DR. GILL AND MR. BRINE VINDICATED

FROM THE CHARGE OF ERROR AND MISTAKE WITH RESPECT TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

1stly. I BELIEVE that God from all eternity elected some persons to everlasting life: and this number neither can be increased nor diminished.

2ndly. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ redeemed the elect and no others; and consequently, that redemption and election are of equal extent.

3rdly. I believe that the Lord Jesus by His blood and righteousness, purchased faith, repentance, and universal holiness for the elect, and for no others.

Note. When I use the word purchase, I mean Christ has satisfied the justice of God in so perfect a manner, as to make it an act of justice in God to give His people faith, repentance, and life. When we speak of the purchase of faith and holiness, we do not mean that Christ purchased the love of God; and consequently we do not eclipse God's love, which gave us Christ, who is a greater gift than all worlds, and infinitely higher in worth than all the blessings of grace and glory.

4thly. I believe that the Holy Spirit of God regenerates none but the elect and redeemed: He determined from all eternity to regenerate no other; and all those who are elected and redeemed shall most certainly be regenerated and finally saved.

5thly. It is exceedingly erroneous to represent the regenerate and the unregenerate as in all respects upon a level with regard to their obligations to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

6thly. It is very injurious to the moral perfections of God to represent Him as requiring special spiritual faith of all unregenerate men wherever the Gospel comes, equally with the regenerate children of God.

7thly. There is a most astonishing difference between a regenerate and an unregenerate state; the one is a state of the highest and purest life, the other is a state of the vilest and most malignant death. The one is a state of noble holy habits, or spiritual dispositions to live to God; the other is a state of wicked inclinations to live like the devil. The one is a resemblance of the moral perfections of God; the other is a resemblance of the temper of Satan. The one is an inscription of the Divine Law; the other is a rooted enmity to that Law.

8thly. If God had never given us one line of Divine Revelation, all mankind would have been under an eternal obligation to love God. This is the case with the devils and lost spirits in Hell, and will be their case through all eternity.

9thly. The Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace must never be confounded nor blended together: they must be considered clearly and distinctly, in their different natures; and the different characters of the parties that are under them must be marked out with great accuracy and precision. To describe a regenerate man as in all respects, or in any respect, under the Covenant of Works, would be very injurious to the comfort and happiness of such persons, and exceedingly reproachful to the gracious nature of God. On the other hand, to represent all the unregenerate, wherever the Gospel comes, as in all respects under the Covenant of Grace, will be a downright lie, and contrary to every part of the Bible.

10thly. To represent God as requiring all the same actions of special spiritual faith in Christ in the unregenerate, as He requires of His own regenerate people, is to represent Him as unmerciful and unjust.

Can any man of good, sound common sense suppose, that a man Divinely alive, with Divine habits, impressed with the image of God, having passed under a Divine change, and the seat and subject of a new birth; I say, that this man is not to be supposed as under any more obligations to spiritual acts of faith in Christ, than the man under the Covenant of Works, dead in sin, and exposed to the curse of God?

I have already observed, that to represent it to be the duty of every man, wherever the Gospel comes, to believe immediately in the Lord Jesus Christ, with a special, spiritual, vital faith, is an error that injures all the moral perfections of God.

I have also observed before, that the life of a regenerate man is a life superior to that which Adam had in innocence; it is a holy habit, flowing out of the holiness of Christ, superior to the holiness of Adam: it is an image of God, superior to the image of God upon Adam's heart: it is an inscription of the Divine Law, which when finished will be superior in extent, perfection, and glory, to that Law which was written upon Adam in innocence: it has grace in it, and glory annexed to it; which Adam never had, nor had a right to have: it is superior to all he had in fact, or in right.

Now to represent the wise and good God as requiring in every unconverted man acts of life superior to the life in Adam; habits of holiness superior to the holiness of Adam; obedience to the Law superior to the obedience of Adam; the exertion of a brighter resemblance to God than that which Adam possessed in Paradise, is a notion contrary to reason and common sense, and bears hard upon the wisdom and benevolence of the Deity.

This erroneous notion answers no good end to the unregenerate; puts no life into a dead man; it creates no habits of holiness in a sinners heart; but it has rather a tendency to puff him up with pride, and give him a vain notion of his ability to believe, which he never had, and never will have, until he is made a regenerate man.

Mr. Brine was one of the holiest men I ever knew in my life; he was a most upright searcher after truth, and as cautious of being deceived as any man in the world.

Dr. Gill was a man of great natural powers, of immense erudition; but his piety and honesty in the inquiry after truth were superior to the natural powers of his mind or his accomplishments in learning. He has given us his undisguised sentiments in his *Sermon on 2 Chronicles 20:20*, entitled, "Faith in God and His Word the Prosperity and Establishment of His People." These are his own words which follow:

"True faith in Christ comes from another quarter than from the Covenant of Works, and flows in another channel; it is a blessing of the Covenant of Grace; of that Covenant which is ordered in all things and sure, for the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and for the good of the Covenant ones; it provides all blessings of grace for them, for time and eternity, and among the rest, faith in Christ Jesus. This lays open and exposes a mistaken and false notion of

some, who assert that faith and repentance are conditions of the Covenant of Grace, when they are the blessings of it, included in that promise, *'a new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stoney heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.'* and these are gifts without repentance, which God never revokes, or takes back, or suffers to be of no effect. Faith in Christ is the fruit of electing grace, and is as sure as salvation itself; the one is in the decree of the means, the other in the decree of the end; that decree of election which secures the end, *salvation*, secures also the means, *sanctification of the Spirit*, and *belief of the truth*; or faith in Christ, who is the Truth: so it has been in all ages, now is, and ever shall be, *'that as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.'* Hence true faith is called the faith of God's Elect; it being certain, proper, and peculiar to them: and that is the true reason why one believes, and another does not; as our Lord says of some, *'Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep;'* the sheep which the Father gave unto me in election, and in the Covenant of Grace: let any man rise up and give a better reason if he can, than this that Christ has given, why one believes in Him, and another does not. Believing in Him is the pure gift of God, of His rich, sovereign, and distinguishing grace; He gives it to one, and denies it to another as He pleases: He *hides* the things of Christ and of the Gospel from the *wise and prudent*, and does not vouchsafe unto them faith in them; and *reveals* them unto *babes*, and gives them faith in His Son; and no other reason can be given for it than His Sovereign pleasure: *'Even so, Father, says Christ, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.'*"

[Again in] *Gill's Sermon on 2 Chronicles 20* [he said:]

"As is the revelation which is made to men, such is the faith which is required of them. If there is no revelation made unto them, no faith is required of them; and unbelief, or want of faith in Christ, will not be their damning sin, as is the case of the heathens; *'for how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?'* No; they will be condemned not for their want of faith in Christ, or His Gospel, which they never heard of, but for their sins committed against the

law and light of nature, *'As many as have sinned without Law shall perish without Law'*: if a revelation is made, this is either external or internal; if only an external revelation is made, the faith required is an assent unto it, and a reception of it; and such who do not attend to the evidence it brings with it, or reject and despise it, shall be damned: but if besides the external revelation, an internal revelation is made by the Spirit of Wisdom, in the knowledge of Christ; or if God by His Word calls men effectually by His Grace, and reveals His Son in them, as well as to them; this kind of revelation comes with such power and influence upon the mind, as *certainly* to produce a true and living faith in the soul, which *infallibly* issues in eternal life and happiness; and of such persons, and of such only, acts of special faith in Christ are required". [Once more in] *Gill's Sermon on 2 Chronicle 20* [he said:]

"The whole of Divine Revelation is to be believed, which God has made by His Prophets, whether of the Old or of the New Testament; and which is all comprehended in these words our Lord began His ministry with, *'Believe the Gospel.'* Not to believe this, is the damning sin of unbelief, same as spoken of in the New Testament: this was the sin of the Jews, and in which the greater part died, that they believed not that Jesus was the Messiah, and other important truths concerning Him, though they came with such full evidence; this is the sin of all to whom the external revelation of the Gospel comes, and they believe it not; this is the sin of the Deists of the present age, of all deniers, rejecters, and despisers of the Gospel; who either neglect to examine the evidence of it, or, notwithstanding the evidence of it, reject and condemn it. This sort of unbelief, and not want of special faith in Christ, is the cause of men's damnation. No man will be lost or damned because he has not this faith; to say that God will damn any man because he has not this special faith in Christ, is to represent Him as the most cruel of all beings, as the Arminians say we make Him to be; to damn a man for that which is solely in His own power to give; for no man can believe in Christ with this sort of faith, unless it be given him of His Father; and which yet he determines not to give unto him, as unto all the non-elect; and which man never had in his power to have or exercise, no, not in the state of innocence. Can any man believe that God will ever damn a man on such an account

as this? This is just such good sense as if it should be said, that a malefactor dies in Tyburn for want of receiving the king's pardon he did not think fit to give him; it is true, if the king had given him his pardon, and he had received it, it would have saved him from dying; but then it is not the want of the king's pardon, or of his receiving it, that is the cause of his condemnation and death, but the crimes he was charged with and convicted of in open court. So, if it please God to give men special faith in Christ, for the remission of their sins, they will certainly be saved; but then it is not the want of this faith in the blood of Christ, for the pardon of sins, that is the cause of any man's condemnation and death, but the transgressions of the Law of God, and the contempt of His Gospel they have been guilty of."

All our Calvinistic ministers of every denomination, instead of contending with each other concerning the nonessentials of religions, should unite against their common enemy, the Socinians. Here is scope enough for our most jealous exertions. It is our highest dignity and duty to state, defend, and improve the great doctrines of the Divinity of Christ; the necessity, reality, and perfection of His Satisfaction to the Justice of God for the sins of the elect; the doctrine of Justification by Christ's imputed righteousness; adoption into God's family; Christ in the heart, or vital union with His Person; the Godhead, personality and operations of the blessed Spirit; the necessity and excellence of regeneration and vital holiness; with final perseverance in grace. These are the objects to which we should bend all our attention, and concerning which we should exert all our zeal. Here is work enough for our whole lives, without spending our time in contending with each other.

I ought to be exceeding cautious how I censure wiser and better men than myself. I ought never to assert that a wise and judicious man is mistaken in any point of religion, unless I have proved him to be so; and even that should be done in a modest and respectful manner. Mr. Brine's excellent pamphlet, entitled, "*Motives to Love and Unity Amongst Calvinists Who Differ in Some Points,*" is a pattern to all old and young authors, to show them how to treat their friends with decency and good manners: there is not one word of bitterness and scorn to any person that differs from him; and I must leave it as my testimony to his character, that he was one of the wisest and holiest men of the Baptist denomination I ever knew.

I do suppose some good men among the Calvinist ministers may have opposed this true and judicious determination, under an apprehension that this idea would lead to doctrinal and practical Antinomianism. It is certain, that not a line of this tendency can be found in any of the writings of these great and good men. If there are any persons of weak heads and bad hearts, who have drawn such pernicious consequences from so sublime and beautiful principle, let them bear their own blame, and their own burden. There were such wrong-headed and bad men in the time of the Apostle Paul, who drew the worst of inferences from the glorious doctrine of justification by Christ's imputed righteousness, and who said, 'Let us continue in sin that grace may abound' and 'Let us do evil that good may come.' The Apostle rejects such men with infinite contempt and disdain, and declares their damnation is just. Dr. Gill and Mr. Brine did the same. They hated all sin, and loved universal holiness. They knew how to exhort the regenerate and the unregenerate. They never confounded characters, nor blended the Covenant of Works with the Covenant of Grace. They represented unregenerate men as every moment dependent upon God in their existence, powers of reason, springs of action, and capacities of rational enjoyment. They represented the whole world of mankind as supported by the immediate agency of our Lord Jesus Christ. They considered, that wherever God was pleased to send His Divine Revelation, He always clothed it with such evidences as fully proved that the Bible is not the invention of good men or bad men, of angels or devils, but must be from God. The miracles wrought were the broad seal of Omnipotence. The prophecies have been fulfilled in a thousand instances, and are now fulfilling in the world, and will be fulfilling every moment to the end of time. The goodness of the doctrine, or its wonderful tendency to advance the glory of God, and salvation and happiness of men, is every way as bright as seven suns united in one. The holiness of the penmen has no parallel in the Pagan world; it has no parallel in the Christian world: they stand superior and alone, unrivaled by all mankind.

These evidences dart upon the mental eye, and appeal to the common sense of all men wherever the Gospel comes. Here is work enough for unconverted men, without urging them to acts of life above the life of Adam -- above the life of angels: such is special spiritual faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Instead of irritating Calvinists against each other, I would wish them to come into a stronger bond of brotherly love and unity of faith with respect to the eternal Person, the supreme Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe Him to be Jehovah our righteousness. He is God over all, blessed for evermore. He is our Lord and our God. We glory in His cross; and God forbid that we should glory in anything else. His death is the Satisfaction to Divine Justice for our sins: His righteousness, placed to our account and credit, is the groundwork and matter of our justification before the burning tribunal of God: His Person is the Principle of our life: His temper is the pattern of our actions: His glory is the end of our existence; and with Him we shall live for ever and ever.

P. S. I know not one of all Mr. Brine's writings but what bears the marks of a mind uncommonly strong and penetrating: but his *Treatise On Various Subjects*, 8 vo, first published in 1750, may be justly styled a spiritual Body of DIVINITY. There is such a vein of rich sense and experience, as renders it a most precious treasure to every lively Christian.

August 18, 1791.

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