

God has provided, in the sufferings and death of his Son, an atonement for sin with which he is well pleased—which honours the law which man has violated. The perfect, unsullied, righteousness of Jesus, consisting of his obedience until death, is in the room of perfect personal righteousness to those that believe in Jesus, so far as their justification is concerned. This righteousness of Christ is indeed “unto all,” provided for all, wrought for all. All may be justified on the ground of it. But it is upon those, and those only, that believe in Jesus. By faith in the finished and accepted righteousness of Jesus, beloved reader, you may be delivered from the penal consequences of your disobedience, and introduced into the pathway of holiness. Thus the grand design of the gospel is to bring you back to God, and to the law of God.

Man is responsible to God, the Supreme Lawgiver, for his actions. He is responsible, because he is endowed with freedom of will; he is endowed with the power of choice. Human free-agency is the only adequate basis of human responsibility. Hence there will be “a day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to the gospel.” Then we will be required to give an account of the deeds done in the body according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad: Solemn and impressive thought!

Man acts from motives, and is responsible to God for the motives from which he acts. It is proper to distinguish between volitions or acts of will and motives. This is a distinction which ethical philosophers are accustomed to make and which indeed every one must make, who studies his own mental experiences. There may be nothing to find fault with in an action, apart from the motive or motives from which the agent acted; there may be much to commend; yet when we view it in connection with the motive, there may be in it much to condemn. A man gives of his substance to a good cause. This is an action which is regarded as praiseworthy by all. But it may have been performed from an impure motive. The person may have given, because he wished to get credit from his fellow-men for generosity, to gain human applause, and not because he loved God, and loved the cause to which the donation was given. If he has given from an impure motive, the action is not acceptable in God's sight, and the doer of it, as he has been actuated by selfishness, is undeserving of the gratitude which the donation called forth.