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John Gill's

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY

Book 5—Chapter 12

**OF CHRIST'S BLESSING HIS PEOPLE
AS A PRIEST**

Thirdly, I proceed in this chapter to consider another part of Christ's priestly office; which lies in blessing his people; for this was what belonged to the priests. Aaron and his sons were appointed to bless the people of Israel in the name of the Lord; and had a form of blessing prescribed them; which they were to use, and did use on that occasion (Deut. 21:5; Num. 6:23-26). Indeed, the blessing of the priests was only prayer-wise; they could not confer a blessing, only prayed for one; yet when they did, the Lord promised to give one (Num. 6:27), and some think Christ's blessing his people is only a species or branch of his intercession; though Christ does not only intercede for blessings for his people, but he actually confers them; and whether this is to be considered as a branch of Christ's intercession; which is made, not in a supplicant, but in an authoritative manner, as has been shown; or whether as a distinct part of Christ's priestly office; I shall treat of it particularly and separately, and much in the same method as the other parts have been treated of; by showing,

1. That Christ was to bless his people; this was promised and prophesied concerning him, and was prefigured in types of him.

1a. First, It was promised to Abraham, that in his "seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed" (Gen. 22:1-24 28:1-22), and which was renewed to Isaac (Gen. 26:4), and also again to Jacob (Gen. 28:14), and which contains the sum of the gospel preached unto Abraham; for by "seed" is meant, not his numerous natural seed, descending from him by ordinary generation, in successive periods of time; but his single, special, and principal seed, the Messiah, who was to spring from him

(Gal. 3:8,16), and by "all nations" are meant some of all nations, the chosen vessels, who consist both of Jews and Gentiles, the redeemed of the Lamb, who are by him redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation; and are effectually called, by the Spirit and grace of God, out of the world, and the nations of it, in each of the periods of time, and so are all blessed, both in time and to eternity; and on this account Christ is truly called, "the desire of all nations" (Hag 2:7), whose coming as an High Priest with good things being promised, might be expected and desired by them; and those may be said not only to be blessed in him as their representative, as they are, both in eternity and in time (Eph 1:3,4; 2:5,6) and not only "through" him, all the blessings of goodness being put into his hands for them; and so they come to them, through his hands, and through the efficacy of his blood, as redemption, pardon, grace, and eternal life (Eph 1:7; Acts 13:38; Titus 3:6; Rom. 6:23), but they are blessed by him as it is his own act and deed; and so the apostle interprets and explains the phrase; "In thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed; unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:25,26).

1b. Secondly, Christ's blessing his people was prefigured in Melchizedek, the type of him, and of whose order he was. This illustrious person met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, "and blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:19), that is, May Abraham be blessed of God with both temporal and spiritual blessings, which he who is Lord of both worlds is able to bestow upon him: and on this benediction the apostle observes that Melchizedek, who "received tithes from Abraham, blessed him who had the promises"; not only of a Son to be his heir, and of the land of Canaan for his seed, but of the Messiah, and of the heavenly inheritance; from whence he infers the greatness, the excellency, and the superiority of Melchizedek, as a type of Christ (Heb 7:6,7). The priests under the law, one part of whose work and office it was to bless the people, and who did bless them, were types and figures of Christ in that action, and foreshowed what he was to do when he came (Lev. 9:22; Ps. 118:26).

2. Christ has blessed his people, does bless them, and will continue to bless them: he blessed them under the Old Testament; he appeared in an human form to Jacob, and wrestled with him; nor would Jacob let him go except he blessed him; and he had power with him, and prevailed, and got the blessing; as appears by the name of Israel he gave him; and having such an experience of his ability to bless, he addressed him for a blessing on his grandchildren, saying, "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads"; meaning Christ the uncreated Angel, the Angel of God's presence, the Angel of the covenant, who had protected him from all evil throughout his life, and particularly from the evil he feared from his brother Esau; when he appeared to him, and for him, and blessed him, as before observed (Gen. 32:24-29; 48:16), and as Christ came in the fulness of time, an High Priest of good things; he blesses his people with them, of which his blessing his disciples is a specimen; and which was done by him after he had offered himself a sacrifice, and was risen from the dead, and before his ascension to heaven; "he lift up his hands

and blessed them: and it came to pass while he blessed them he was parted from them" (Luke 24:50,51).

2a. First, Observe the qualifications of Christ to bless his people, his fitness, ability, and sufficiency for such a work.

2a1. As he is God, or a divine person, he must be able to bless; God is blessed; this is an epithet of his; blessedness is a perfection of Deity; it is a principal one; yea, all his perfections are comprehended in it, and serve to complete it; and hence he is the fountain of all blessedness to his creatures. Now Christ is "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom. 9:5), all the fulness of the Godhead is in him; all that the Father hath are his, he is the Lord God omnipotent, "and able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20), he is El-Shaddai, God all sufficient; as such he is the Creator of all things; nothing is made without him, but all by him and for him; and he has all the blessings of nature in his hands to dispose of; the earth is his, and the fulness thereof; and he can give it to whom and when he pleases: as such he is the God of providence; and as such jointly works in providence with his divine Father; and has all providential goodness to bless men with: as such he is the God of all grace, the God of his people, their sun and shield, who gives grace and glory; and his grace is sufficient for them; every good and perfect gift of grace comes from him; and grace and peace are equally prayed and wished for from him as from the Father; as in all the epistles.

2a2. Christ, as Mediator, has a fitness, ability, and sufficiency to bless his people; as such, God has "made him most blessed for evermore", and "prevented him with the blessings of goodness" (Ps. 21:3,6), by laying up in him the blessings of the covenant of grace, to communicate to his people; by first giving all the blessings of grace to him, and then to them in him. As God, he has a natural claim and right to all blessedness; he has it to the full, infinitely, in right of nature; it is independent of, and underived from another: but as Mediator, he is made blessed by the will and pleasure of his Father; the blessings of grace and goodness are given unto him; it is his Father's good pleasure, that all the fulness of grace should dwell in him; out of which, his people, in all ages, receive grace for grace; and all their spiritual wants are supplied from thence; nor can they want any good thing; his grace is sufficient for them, and he has enough to dispense unto them. Besides, as Mediator, he has obtained all blessings for them, in a way consistent with all the perfections of God, to bestow them on them. Who can doubt of his abilities to bless his people with deliverance from sin, Satan, the law, its curses and condemnation, and from ruin and destruction; since he has obtained eternal redemption for them? or with a justifying righteousness; since, as he came to bring in everlasting righteousness, he is become the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes? or with spiritual peace, he has promised to give, since he has made peace by the blood of his cross? or with salvation, and all things appertaining to it; since he is become the author of eternal salvation, and is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him?

2b. Secondly, The persons who are blessed by Christ: though "all nations" of the earth are said to be blessed in him, and by him; yet not every individual of all nations; for at the same time that this was promised to Abraham, God declared that he would curse them that cursed him; and so all such that curse his people, and blaspheme his name; yea, there are some whose very blessings are cursed, as well as their persons; and, indeed, all that are of the works of the law, or seek for justification by them, are cursed, "that continue not in all things written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10), which no man does; and therefore is cursed by that very law by which he seeks for justification. To which may be added, that all graceless and Christless sinners, instead of being blessed by Christ, will, at the last day, be bid to depart from him, saying, "Depart from me, ye cursed" (Matthew 25:41). But,

2b1. All that are blessed of the Father are blessed by Christ; God, as the God and Father of Christ, blessed his people with all spiritual blessings in him; and those that are blessed in him are blessed by him; the same the Father blesses, the Son does also; to whom he will say at the great day, "Come, ye blessed of my Father" (Eph. 1:3; Matthew 25:34).

2b2. All that are chosen of God in Christ are blessed by him; for they are blessed with all spiritual blessings according as they are chosen in him; their election of God is the standard, rule, and measure of all after blessings; that stands at the front of them and secures all the rest; "whom he did predestinate, them he also called", &c. (Rom. 8:30). The elect of God are the objects of all the blessings of grace which arise from Christ's death, resurrection, session at the right hand of God, and his intercession there; or otherwise there would be no strength nor force in the triumphant challenge of the apostle (Rom. 8:33,34).

2b3. All that are given to Christ by the Father are blessed by him; for these he prays for blessings, on these he bestows them; he manifests the name of God unto them, his favour and grace, and the blessings of it; his gospel, and the privileges belonging to it; he confers grace on them, keeps them by his power, and gives unto them eternal life (John 17:2,6,8,9,11,12,24).

2b4. All the covenant ones are blessed by Christ; all that are in covenant have a right to the blessings of it, and they are blessed with it; God is their covenant God, and happy are they whose God he is; God, even their own God, will bless them. The covenant of grace is ordered in all things and sure; and Christ, the mediator of it, in whose hands they are, gives them the sure mercies of David.

2b5. All the spiritual Israel of God, the whole Israel of God, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, are blessed by Christ; what is said of literal Israel, "Happy art thou, O Israel, —O people saved by the Lord" (Deut. 33:29), is true of mystic Israel, or the elect of God among all nations; that Israel whom God has chosen, and Christ has redeemed and called by name; these are the seed of Israel that are justified in

Christ, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation (Ps. 135:4; Isa. 43:1; 45:17,25).

2c. Thirdly, The blessings Christ blesses his people with, some of which are as follow.

2c1. With a justifying righteousness; this is a great blessing: David describes "The blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6), and that is the righteousness of Christ; and this Christ has not only wrought out, and brought in, but he brings it near to his people; he puts it upon them, he clothes and covers them with it; so that they are justified from all their sins, and secured from condemnation and death, and are saved from wrath to come; their persons and services are acceptable unto God; and it is well with them at all times, in life, in death, and at the last judgment.

2c2. With the pardon of their sins, which is another great blessing; "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps 32:1), and Christ has not only shed his blood to obtain remission of sins for his people, but through the ministry of his gospel, and by his Spirit and grace he applies it to them (Matthew 9:2), and which fills their hearts with joy and gladness.

2c3. Christ blesses his people with the adoption of children; they are not only predestinated of God unto it by him, and he has redeemed them that they might receive it, but he himself bestows it on them; (John 1:12).

2c4. Those are blessed by Christ with regeneration and conversion by his Spirit and grace through the ministration of his gospel; this is the instance mentioned by the apostle, of Christ's blessing his people, for whose sake he was raised up, and to whom sent (Acts 3:26). His blessing them lay in this, in turning them from sin and self; and in turning them to himself, to his blood, righteousness, and sacrifice, for peace, pardon, justification, and eternal salvation.

2c5. The same persons are blessed by Christ with the Spirit, which he has received without measure; and with the graces thereof in an abundant manner, at first conversion, which are richly shed on them, through Christ, their Saviour; and by whom they are blessed with all after supplies of grace, till he brings them to glory.

2c6. The Lord blesses his people with peace (Ps. 29:11), which flows from his peace speaking blood, his perfect righteousness, and atoning sacrifice; with peace which passeth all understanding; and is what the world can neither give nor take away.

2c7. He blesses them with the gospel, the ordinances of it, and the privileges of his house. He favors them with the joyful sound, with the good news and glad tidings of his gospel: he satisfies them with the goodness and fatness of his house; he gives them a place, and a name in it, better than that of sons and daughters; he makes

them fellow citizens with the saints, and makes them into the household of God, and causes them to partake of every blessing and privilege of the children of God.

2c8. And lastly, Christ blesses his people with eternal life and happiness; he not only intercedes for them that they may be with him where he is, and behold his glory; and not only is gone beforehand, to prepare mansions of glory for them; but, according to his promise, will come and take them to himself, and introduce them into his kingdom and glory, where they shall be for ever with him.

2d. Fourthly, The nature and excellencies of these blessings.

2d1. They are covenant blessings; which are laid up and secured in the covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure; and which are very comprehensive, and include both grace and glory.

2d2. They are spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), such as are of a spiritual nature, relating to the spiritual welfare of men, and suited to spiritual men; and for the good of their souls or spirits; and are what the Spirit of God takes, shows, and applies unto them.

2d3. They are solid and substantial ones; blessings indeed, such as Jabez prayed for; saying, "O that thou wouldst bless me indeed!" (1 Chron. 4:10). Earthly and temporal blessings, as riches and honours, are things that are not, non-entities, comparatively speaking, have no solidity and substance in them; but the blessings of Christ, both of grace and glory, have substance in them; faith is the "substance" of things hoped for; and heaven is a more "enduring substance"; which wisdom, or Christ, causes his people to inherit (Heb 11:1; 10:34; Prov. 8:21 23:5).

2d4. They are irreversible blessings; the blessing with which Isaac blessed Jacob was confirmed by him with a resolution not to alter it: and the blessing Balaam was commanded to bless Israel with, was what he could not reverse, whatever good will he had to it: but the blessings of grace by Christ, are such as God never repents of, revokes, or reverses; these are "the gifts and calling of God" to grace and glory, which "are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29).

2d5. These blessings are eternal; whatever is done in this way of Christ's blessing his people "is for ever" (Eccl. 3:14). Christ's righteousness is an everlasting righteousness; pardon of sin ever remains; once a child of God, always so; no more a servant, but a son, an heir of God, and a joint heir of Christ; so every blessing of grace, with glory and happiness, in the world to come.