

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION OPENED AND APPLIED



WALTER MARSHALL (1628-1680)

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THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION OPENED AND APPLIED

“For 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 for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

—Romans 3:23-26

The apostle having confuted and overthrown all justification, either of Jew or Gentile, by works, in the foregoing discourse, is now proving what he asserted in verses 21 and 22: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference,” showing that now in the Gospel times there is no difference

between Jew and Gentile, but that in the justification of both, the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested. This he proves by showing what the Gospel teaches concerning the way of justification, for *the Gospel* only reveals the righteousness of God: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Rom 1:16-17).

So the words are a declaration of the Gospel way of justification by the righteousness of God, and that so clearly and fully, and the benefit spoken of so great and glorious, being the first benefit that we receive by union with Christ and the foundation of all other benefits, that my text is accounted to be *evangelium evangelii*,¹ a principal part of the written Gospel, as briefly and yet fully expressing this excellent point more than any other text.

Note in the words particularly the subject declared and explained, namely, justification of persons, or their being justified; the meaning of it here is to be cleared and freed from all ambiguities and misunderstanding. Justification signifies “making just,” as sanctification is “making holy,” glorification “making glorious”; but not making “just” by infusion of grace and holiness into a person, as the Papists teach, confounding justification and sanctification together—but making “just” in trial and judgment, by a radical sentence discharging guilt, freeing from blame and accusation—approving, judging, owning and pronouncing a person to be righteous. Use alters the signification.² It is a juridical³ word, or law term, and has reference to trial

¹ *evangelium evangelii* – Latin, the Gospel in the Gospel.

² **signification** – meaning; the idea or sense of a word.

³ **juridical** – of judicial proceedings.

and judgment: “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord” (1Co 4:3-4).

And it is so opposed to⁴ condemnation in judgment: “If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked” (Deu 25:1). And, “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Mat 12:37). And it is opposed both to accusation and condemnation: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect...Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom 8:33-34). And so, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me” (Job 9:20). “I will maintain mine own ways before him...I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified...Who is he that will plead with me?” (Job 13:15, 18, 19). Here justification is plainly opposed to the accusation or fault. And it is as plainly opposed to the passing sentence of condemnation: “Do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness” (1Ki 8:32). In this sense it is a sin to justify the wicked (Pro 17:15). Actions must be existent already and brought to trial that they may be justified (Isa 43:9, 26).

Justice of righteousness consists not in the intrinsic⁵ nature of an action, but in its agreeableness to a rule of judgment, so that actions are called just and

⁴ **opposed to** – the opposite of.

⁵ **intrinsic** – internal; essential; inherent.

righteousness by an extrinsical⁶ denomination⁷ with relation to God's rule of judging. And this righteousness appears by trying the action according to the rule, and by making an estimate of it; which estimate is either approving or disapproving, justifying or condemning, finding it to be sin or no sin, or breach of the Law. So we may say of the righteousness of persons with reference to such habits or acting. And because the righteousness of righteous persons appears when they are brought to trial and judgment, therefore they are said then to be in a special manner justified, as if they were then made righteous, that is, when their righteousness is declared: as Christ was said to be begotten the Son of God at the resurrection (Act 13:33), because He was then declared to be the Son of God (Rom 1:4).

And in the same sense we that are adopted at present are said to "wait for our adoption," that is, the manifestation of it (Rom 8:23). And thus even God is said to be justified when we judge of His actions as we ought to do and deem them to be righteous (Job 32:2; Psa 51:4; Luk 7:29), though nothing can be added to the infinite righteousness of God. And wisdom is said to be "justified of her children" (Mat 11:19).

So justification is not a *real* change of a sinner in himself (though a real change is annexed to it) but only a *relative* change with reference to God's judgment. And thus the word is used in the text, and so also in matters of judicature throughout the Scripture. Yea, some contend against the Papists that it is nowhere in Scripture used otherwise, except by a trope⁸

⁶ **extrinsical** – external; outward; opposite of intrinsic.

⁷ **denomination** – act of naming.

⁸ **trope** – a word used in a different sense from its original meaning.

borrowed from this as the proper sense. And in the text it is beyond all doubt meant of being deemed and accounted just in the sight of God; for such a justification is here only treated of as appears in the text, Romans 3:19-20. And I have been the longer explaining the sense of the word because the mistaking it, by reason of its composition, occasioned that popish error whereby the benefit signified by it is obscured, yea, overthrown, so that we had need to contend for the sense of the word.

1. Eight Points in the Text Identified

In the text we have the eight following things: *First*. The *persons* justified—[A.] Sinners. [B.] Such sinners of all sorts that shall believe, whether Jews or Gentiles. *Second*. The *justifier*, or *efficient*⁹ cause—God. *Third*. The *impulsive*¹⁰ cause—grace. *Fourth*. The *means* effecting, or *material* cause—the redemption of Christ. *Fifth*. The *formal*¹¹ cause—the remission of sins. *Sixth*. The *instrumental* cause—faith. *Seventh*. The *time* of declaring—the present time. *Eighth*. The *end*—that God may appear just.

From hence, therefore, will arise several useful observations, all tending to explain the nature of justification, which shall be laid down and cleared out of the text and confirmed particularly, and then I shall make use of them altogether.

First. They who are justified are: [A.] sinners, such who are come short of the glory of God, that is, of God's approbation (Joh 5:44); of God's image of holi-

⁹ **efficient** – causing effects; producing.

¹⁰ **impulsive** – having the power of moving or driving.

¹¹ **formal** – having the power of making a thing what it is.

ness (2Co 3:18, Eph 4:24); and of eternal happiness (1Th 2:12; Rom 5:2; 2Co 4:17).

(a) The Law condemns all sinners and strikes them dead as with a thunderbolt (Rom 3:20), and adjudges them to shame, confusion and misery, instead of glory and happiness, by the strict terms of it (Rom 2:6-12), which none fulfills, neither can do (Rom 8:7)—neither Jews nor Gentiles. There is no hope, if free grace restore them not.

(b) Christ came only to save sinners and died for this end: “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom 5:6). And “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1Ti 1:15). “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mat 9:13). “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost” (Mat 18:11).

And God must be believed on to salvation, as a God that “justifies the ungodly.” He must believe, as one that works not, on Him that justifies the ungodly (Rom 4:5).

[B.] Sinners of all sorts, without difference, whether Jews or Gentiles, that believe, are the subjects of this justification. This is the scope of the apostle, to show that whereas Jews and Gentiles were universally condemned by the light and law of nature, or the law written, so “the righteousness of God is upon all them that believe” without difference. This was a great point to be defended against the Jews in the apostle’s time, who appropriated justification to themselves in a legal way, and to such as were proselytes to the Law and circumcision, and therefore the Apostle Paul vehemently urged it (Rom 10:11-12). And it was a point

newly revealed to the apostles, that the Gentiles might be accepted without turning Jews, and much prized as a very glorious revelation (Act 10:28, 45; Eph 3:4, 5, 8; Col 1:25-27). And it is confirmed,

(a) Because, notwithstanding the Jew's privilege of the Law, by reason of breaking the Law they had as much need of free justification as the Gentiles, and no worthiness above the Gentiles by their works, but were rather greater sinners (Rom 2:23-24). And when there is equal need and worth, God might righteously justify one as well as another (Rom 3:9).

(b) God is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews (Rom 3:29), as He promised (Rom 4:9, 12, 13; Gal 3:8; Isa 19:25; Zec 14:9).

(c) Abraham was justified before he was circumcised, that he might be the father of those that believe, though uncircumcised, that they might inherit the same blessing (Rom 4:10-12).

(d) This will appear further by showing that justification is only by faith and without dependence upon the Law, merely by the righteousness of another, and so Jews and Gentiles are alike capable of it.

Second. That the justifier, or efficient cause of justification is God. It is an act of God (Rom 8:33). It is God that justifies. He only can justify authoritatively and irreversibly.

(a) Because He is the Lawgiver, and has power to save and destroy (Jam 4:12). This case concerns God's Law, and can only be tried at His tribunal. He is the Judge of the world (Gen 18:25). It is a small worthless thing to be justified by man, or by ourselves merely (1Co 4:3-4).

(b) To Him the debt of suffering for sin and acting righteousness is owed and therefore He only can give a

discharge for payment, or a release of the debtor (Psa 51:4; Mar 2:7).

Third. God justifies souls *“freely by his grace.”* One of these expressions had been enough, but this redoubling it shows the importance of the truth, to quicken our attention the more. Here is the impulsive cause of justification and His free manner of bestowing it accordingly. And this signifies God’s free undeserved favour, in opposition to any works of our own righteousness whereby it might be challenged as a debt to us: “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Rom 4:4). “If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Rom 11:6). “By grace are ye 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). “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Ti 1:9-10). Grace is mercy and love showed freely, out of God’s proper motion showing mercy, because He will show mercy, and loving us, because He will love us (Rom 9:15). And this is confirmed,

(a) Because there was not, nor is anything in us, but what might move God to condemn us, for we have all sinned (Eph 2:3; Eze 16:6).

(b) Because God would take away boasting and have His grace glorified and exalted in our salvation. He will have all the praise and glory, though we have the blessedness. “That in the ages to come he might

shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:7).

Fourth. God justifies sinners through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood" This is the effecting means, or material cause of our justification, namely, redemption and propitiation through the blood of Christ, which is the righteousness of God treasured up in Him.

By "redemption" is meant properly such a deliverance as is made by paying a price, and so the words "redeem" and "redemption" are frequently used (Exo 13:13; Num 3:48, 49, 51; Lev 25:24, 51, 52; Jer 32:7-8; Neh 5:8). From this proper signification it is borrowed to signify a deliverance without price (Luk 21:28; Eph 1:14; 4:30). Or rather, by a metonymy¹² of the cause, put for the highest effect, the state of glory; so that the state of glory is called "redemption," as being the completing and crowning effect of Christ's redemption; therefore it is called the "purchased possession."

By a "propitiation" is meant that which appeases the wrath of God for sin and wins His favor. And this propitiation of Christ is two ways typified: first, in the propitiatory sacrifices, whose blood was shed; and, secondly, by the Mercy Seat, which was called the Propitiation, because it covered the ark wherein was the Law, and the blood of the sacrifices for atonement was sprinkled by the high priest before it. And this Mercy Seat was a sign of God's favorableness to a sinful people in residing among them, and is the same word as "propitiation" (Heb 9:5).

¹² **metonymy** – figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated.

Now this doctrine appears confirmed for these reasons:

(a) Because Christ, by the will of God, gave Himself a *ransom* for us to redeem us from sin and punishment, wrath and curse. “He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity” (Ti 2:14). He gave Himself to death for us, was delivered for our offences; His death was the price of our redemption, that we might be justified in God’s sight. God gave Him up to death; He spared Him not, that He might be made righteousness. He gave His own life a ransom for many (1Co 1:30; Mat 20:28; 1Ti 2:6). He bought us with this price (1Co 6:20). He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with His precious blood, as of a lamb without spot (1Pe 1:18-19; 2Pe 2:1; Rev 5:9). He suffered the penalty due to us for sin. He “bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1Pe 2:24). He was “made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13), and in this way redeemed us from the curse of the Law; and, that He might be made a curse, He was made sin for us (2Co 5:21; Isa 53:5-6). He subjected Himself to the Law, in active as well as passive obedience (Gal 4:4), and obeyed His Father even to death, doing and suffering at His commandment (Joh 14:31; Heb 10:7)—and His obedience was for our justification. Compare Romans 5:19 with Philippians 3:8-9. So Christ satisfied both our debt of righteousness and debt of punishment, for our faultiness, taint of sin and want of righteousness, as well as for our guilt and obnoxiousness¹³ to punishment, that we might be free from wrath and deemed righteous in God’s sight. His suffering was the consummating act of redemption, and so all is attributed to it (Heb 2:9-10)—even to His blood, though other doings and sufferings concur (2Co

¹³ **obnoxiousness** – liability.

8:9). We are righteous by Him as we were guilty by Adam (Rom 5:12).

(b) God accepted this price as a satisfaction to His justice, which He showed in raising Christ from the dead and so accepting Him for all our sins: He was “justified in the Spirit” (1Ti 3:16) for us, and “raised...for our justification” (Rom 4:25). “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen” from the dead (Rom 8:33-34). And “by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Heb 10:14). And this sacrifice was a “sweetsmelling savour” to God (Eph 5:2). If Christ had sunk under the weight of our sins and had not been raised, the payment had not been finished and so the debt not discharged: “Of righteousness, because I go to my Father” (Joh 16:10).

(c) This redemption is in Christ, as to the benefit of it, so that it cannot be had except we be in Christ and have Christ. So the text expresses and shows that He is the propitiation and, as such, He is our righteousness (1Co 1:30). We have redemption and righteousness in Him (Eph 1:7; 2Co 5:21), and therein our freedom from condemnation (Rom 8:1). Christ died that His seed might be justified (Isa 53:10-11), those that are in Him by spiritual regeneration (1Co 4:15).

Fifth. The formal cause of justification, or that wherein it consists, is the remission of sin, that is, not only the guilt and punishment is removed, but the fault; because it is a pardon grounded on justice, which clears the fault also. By Him we are justified from all things that the Law charges us with (Act 13:39).

In men, subject to a law, there is no middle condition between not imputing sin and imputing right-

eousness, and so these terms are used as equivalent: “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified” (Act 13:38-39). This is through the bloodshed of Christ (Eph 1:7; Mat 26:28).

Sixth. God justifies a sinner through faith in Christ’s blood. Faith is the instrumental cause of receiving this benefit, faith in the blood of Christ.

(a) This faith is a believing on Christ, that we may be justified by Him: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law” (Gal 2:16). We believe in Christ for justification, out of a sense of our inability to obtain justification by works.

(b) This faith does not justify us as an act of righteousness, earning and procuring our justification by the work of it, for this would have been justification by works, as under the Law; diametrically opposite to grace and free gift (Rom 11:6), which excludes all consideration of any works of ours to be our righteousness, under any denomination or diminutive¹⁴ terms whatever—whether you call it “legal” or “evangelical,” though you reckon it no more than the payment of a peppercorn. Faith in this case is accounted a not-working (Rom 4:5). And it is not faith that stands instead of the righteousness of the Law, but the righteousness of Christ, which satisfies for what we ought to have done or suffered, as has been shown.

(c) God justifies by faith, as the instrument by which we receive Christ and His righteousness, by which we are justified properly; and we are [said to be]

¹⁴ **diminutive**—small; little.

justified by faith only metonymically, by reason of the righteousness received by it; and to be “justified by faith” and “by Christ” is all one (Gal 3:8; Rom 5:19). By faith we receive remission of sins (Act 26:18; 10:43). Its effect is the reception of justification, not the working it; as a man may be said to be maintained by his hands, or nourished by his mouth, when those do but receive that which nourishes—his food and drink. The cup is put for the liquor in the cup (1Co 11:26-27). See Romans 1:17 and 3:22. Christ is in us by faith (Eph 3:17); received, ate, drunk (Joh 6:51, 53, 54).

(d) This faith is to be understood exclusively to all our works for justification. We defend against the Papists justification by faith only, and there is nothing more fully expressed in Scripture phrase (Rom 3:28; 4:16; Gal 2:16; Phi 3:8-9).

(e) We must understand faith in a full sense of receiving remission of the fault, as well as of the punishment. We believe God accounts not the fault to us of the least sin. And, where faith is said to be accounted for righteousness, it is because of the object it receives (Rom 4:5-8; 2Co 5:19, 21). We believe Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as our sins are to Him, or else we receive not remission of sins by believing; which [imputation of righteousness] is contrary to charging us with sin and condemnation, which charging signifies imputing sin (Rom 8:33-34). Together with the removal of the charge of sin, we receive the gift of righteousness (Rom 5:17). And this we have in the reception of Christ's redemption and bloodshed (Eph 1:7; Mat 26:28).

Seventh. That God, in setting forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, aimed to declare His righteousness now under the Gospel, for the remission of sins that are past as well as present—of

those sins that were past and committed under the Old Testament, which was God's time of forbearing in pardoning, long before His justice was actually satisfied by Christ's atonement (Heb 13:8; Rev 13:8; Mat 18:26). The ground of these pardons is now revealed by Christ's coming (Isa 51:5, 6; 56:1; Dan 9:24; 2Ti 1:9-10), that those pardons may be no blemish to the justice of God now satisfied (Exo 34:7; Psa 85:10).

(a) By this righteousness is meant that righteousness of God mentioned in the proposition (Rom 3:21-22), of which the text is but a confirmation—namely, the righteousness of God; not His essential righteousness, that which is an essential property of God, but righteousness, which is upon all them that believe—Christ's righteousness, which is the end of the Law (Rom 10:3-4). And [it is] therefore called “God's righteousness,” that which Christ wrought for us, which is given to us and we receive by faith; that by which Christ answered the Law for us, by which as the price, He redeemed us. [It is that] which is called “God's righteousness” because it is of God's working, and it only has God's acceptance and approbation¹⁵—as Christ is called the “Lamb of God” because God provided Him and accepts Him as an offering (Joh 1:29). Upon the like account, Christ's kingdom is called the “kingdom of God” because God's own hand set it up, and maintains it, and rules it (Eph 5:5). Christ, Who became obedient to death to work this righteousness, was God as well as man (Phi 2:6, 8). And this is *that* righteousness of God here, and in other places: the righteousness which is of God by faith (Phi 3:9).

(b) God aimed at declaring in Gospel times His righteousness in forgiving sins past, in the time of

¹⁵ **approbation** – approval.

God's forbearance under the Old Testament (Rom 3:25), and also in justifying those that believe in Christ at present, for it was by the righteousness of the same Christ that sins were pardoned under the Old Testament, as well as now (Heb 13:8). Christ was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8); only the righteousness was not actually fulfilled and revealed then, but it was shadowed out then by the sacrifices, ransoms, redemptions, and so forth (Heb 10:1-3, 9, 10). So this was a time of God's forbearance, because He pardoned sins, as it were, without present payment and satisfaction. He had patience and did not exact the debt, until Christ paid all (Mat 18:26). But then God promised that He would reveal His righteousness in due time (Isa 56:1; 51:5; Psa 98:2; Dan 9:24). And this He has done by the appearance of Christ (2Ti 1:10).

Eighth. The end of this manifestation is that God may appear just, in forgiving sins past as well as present, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Here the essential property of God is exalted and appears glorious in justifying by the aforementioned righteousness of God.

(a) As God justifies freely by grace, He would appear in this way just in justifying sinners, for it would be a blemish to God's justice to forgive without a satisfaction and righteousness performed. And therefore, though He is gracious and merciful, yet He will not clear the guilty (Exo 34:7; Gen 18:25). And so the saints of God concluded that God had a righteousness and redemption by which He forgave sin, though it was not then revealed (Psa 51:14; 130:7, 8; 143:1, 2). God would have justice and mercy to meet in our salvation (Psa 85:10).

(b) God would have it appear that He only is just, and therefore saves us, not by our own righteousness, but by His, which is indeed the more exalted by our unrighteousness occasionally, though God is not therefore unrighteous in taking vengeance (Rom 3:4-5; Dan 9:7).

(c) God would appear to be the only procurer and worker of our righteousness, and so our justifier by way of procurement, as well as by way of judgment. And so He will justify us by a righteousness of His own, and not by our own (Isa 54:17; 45:22, 24, 25), that we may glory in the Lord only (1Co 1:30-31).

2. Two Uses of the Text

Use 1. It serves for *instruction*, by way of encouragement and consolation, that the great happiness of those that are in Christ is that their sins are forgiven, and they accounted just in the sight of the Judge of the world through the redemption that is by the blood of Christ. And this benefit contains all blessedness of life and the consequences of it (Rom 4:6). That man to whom God imputes righteousness without works has a blessedness in it; and such an extensive blessedness, in regard of the spiritual part, as Abraham had, comprehending all spiritual blessings in Christ—for they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (Gal 3:9). For this righteousness, being the fundamental blessing, is revealed from faith to faith; and they that are by faith just, and justified through that righteousness, do live by faith, always receiving it and receiving nourishment and comfort by it (Rom 1:17).

(1) They are delivered from the charge of sin and fault before God (Rom 8:33-34). Who shall lay anything to their charge, or be suffered to bring in at

God's tribunal any indictment, charge, or accusation against them? It is God that justifies them, and Christ has died and rose again. They are redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits to God and the Lamb. In their mouth there is no guile, and they are *without fault* (Rev 14:4-5) before the Throne of God (see also Col 1:22).

(2) They are delivered from all condemnation in sentence and execution, the curse and wrath of God: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1Th 1:10). "Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger" (Psa 85:3). The wrath of God is an insupportable burden and the foundation of all miseries—which foundation is razed and a foundation of blessedness laid, by which we have peace with God and are fully reconciled to God (Rom 5:1-2; 2Co 5:18-19). "You, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight" (Col 1:21-22). Now, where there is no blame before God, there can be no wrath from God.

(3) They have no need to seek salvation by the works of the Law, and so are delivered from a yoke that cannot be borne, from endless observances that Pharisees and Papists have heaped up; from continual frights, doubts, fears and terrors by the Law (Act 15:10; Rom 8:15); from a wrath-working Law (Rom 4:15); from a sin-irritating Law (Rom 6:5); from a killing Law, a ministration of death and condemnation (2Co 3:6, 7, 9); [from] Mount Sinai, which genders to bondage (Gal 4:24).

(4) Thus they are delivered from a condemning conscience, which otherwise would still gnaw them as a worm. "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb 9:13-14). A guilty conscience is a foul conscience, and it will make all services and duties dead works, unfit for the service of the living God. It is the blood of Christ applied by faith that takes off the foulness of guilt from the conscience; therefore the blood of Christ has the only efficacy this way to take off the conscience of sin (Heb 10:1-4). Thus they come to have a good conscience (1Pe 3:21), void of offence toward God (Act 24:16).

(5) It is an everlasting righteousness by which their standing in Christ is secured (Dan 9:24). It is an eternal redemption that is obtained (Heb 9:12), whereas by the Law those that were justified today typically might fall under condemnation so far as to need another sacrifice for sin tomorrow. They had no real purgation of conscience from sin by those sacrifices, and therefore could not have a lasting delivery of their consciences from guilt by them. Here it is far otherwise; here is an effectual, complete and perpetual redemption, reaching the conscience of the sinner, and for the purging away all sins, present and to come (1Jo 1:7).

(6) It is a righteousness of infinite value because it is the righteousness of One that is God, and His Name is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer 23:6). It is therefore more powerful to save than Adam's sin was to destroy or condemn (Rom 5). Christ is here the power of God (1Co 1:24). Hence we are powerful, and

conquer by faith. Likewise there is a marvelous plenty of mercy and grace that is brought to us by Jehovah our Righteousness, plenteous redemption (Psa 130:7). It must be most plentiful, because infinite. Though no creature could satisfy for sin, yet Jehovah could do it abundantly; and therefore in Christ, God's mercy prevails high above our sins (Psa 103:11-12).

(7) God's grace and justice are both engaged on our behalf in this righteousness. Justice is terrible and seems to be against mercy, and dreadful to natural people, but it is otherwise to believers. It is pacified and appeased through this righteousness; it is satisfied by Christ for our sins. Justice becomes our friend, joins in with grace and, instead of pleading against us, it is altogether for us, and it speaks contrary to what it speaks to sinners out of Christ (Jos 24:19-20). We may also plead justice for forgiveness through mercy in Christ (Rom 3:26).

(8) We may be sure of holiness and glory, delivery from the power and dominion of sin, as well as [from] the charge of it before God, and guilt in our consciences, for this was the end of Christ's death (Ti 2:14; Rom 6:6, 14; 8:3-4). "Whom he justified, them he also glorified" (Rom 8:30). The Law was the strength of sin, for sin had its title to rule in us by reason of the curse, and then Satan also rules; but here is our deliverance from sin and Satan, yea, from death too (Heb 2:14-15; Hos 13:14). And, by the same reason, we are raised by this excellent righteousness to a better state than we had in Adam at first—for Christ died that we might receive the adoption of sons and the Spirit—that we might be brought under a new covenant, and be set in the right way of holiness, serving out of love (Gal 3:14; 1Jo 4:19; Gal 4:5; Heb 9:15; Rom 5:11; Luk 1:74; Col 2:13).

(9) We may be sure, hence, of a concurrence of all things for our good. All things shall work for good through grace to bring us to glory, because God is for us, Who is the Creator and Governor of all things (Rom 8:28, 31, 33). God will never be wroth with us, nor rebuke us in anger any more (Isa 54:9; Rom 5:2, 5).

(10) Hence we may come before God without confusion of face, yea, with boldness to the throne of grace in Christ's name (Joh 14:13-14) and expect all good things from Him. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him (Eph 3:12). "Let us draw near with...full assurance of faith" (Heb 10:22). Christ's blood pleads for us in heaven (Heb 12:24); and we may, and are to plead boldly a satisfaction on His account.

(11) We live in those times when this righteousness is fully revealed, and sin made an end of (Rom 3:21-22). This is our happiness above those that lived before Christ's coming, who were under types and shadows of this righteousness—whereas we have the substance in its own light, and so we are not under the Law, which they were under as a schoolmaster. We are not servants, but sons, called to liberty (Gal 3:23, 26; 4:7; 5:13). The preaching the old covenant, as a Church ordinance to be urged, now is ceased; the Law is not to be preached now in the same terms as Moses preached it, for justification (Rom 10:5-8; 2Co 3:6-7; Gal 3:13, 24). It is contrary in terms of faith, though it were subservient.

Use 2. For *examination* whether we are in Christ and have received this justification by faith with all our hearts.

(1) Consider whether you are made really sensible of sin and your condemnation by the Law. This is necessary to make us fly to Christ, and for this as one great end was the Law given (Gal 3:22-24; Mat 9:13; Act 2:37). Without sense of sin, there will be no prizing of Christ or desire of holiness, but rather abuse of grace to carnal security and licentiousness.¹⁶ Those that were stung with the fiery serpents looked up to the brazen serpent.

(2) Do you trust only on free mercy for justification in God's sight, renouncing all your works whatever in this point, as not able to stand in them before God's exact justice, crying mercy with the poor publican? Perfectionists and self-righteous persons have no share in this matter (Luk 18:13-14). Paul, notwithstanding all that the world might think he had to plead for himself (Phi 3:6), counted all but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his "own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Phil 8-9)—that is, the redeeming and propitiating righteousness of Christ, by which he desired only to be justified and which he believed in for that end, opposing it to anything inherent in himself which therefore he calls his own righteousness (Rom 4:5).

(3) Do you trust with any confidence in Christ, not continuing in a mere suspense? In a way of mere doubting, we can receive no good thing from God (Jam 1:6-7). Mere doubting will not loose the conscience from the guilt of sin (Heb 10:22), but leaves the soul under terrors. Abraham's confidence is the example and pattern of our justifying faith that we should en-

¹⁶ **licentiousness** – unrestrained immorality.

deavor to come up to, believing with a fullness of persuasion, in hope against hope (Rom 4:20, 24). Though a believing soul may be assaulted with many doubtings, yet it fights against them and does not give up itself to the dominion of them (Psa 42:11; Mar 9:24). It has always something contrary to them and striving with them.

(4). Do you come to Christ for remission of sins for the right end, namely, that you may be freed from the dominion of sin before the living God (Heb 9:14; Psa 130; Ti 2:14; 1Pe 2:24)? If otherwise, you do not receive it for the right end and do not desire really the favor and enjoyment of God and to be in friendship with Him.

(5). Do you walk in holiness and strive to evidence this justification by the fruits of faith in good works? If otherwise, your faith is but a dead faith, for a true faith purifies the heart (Act 15:9). If Christ is yours, He will be sanctification as well as righteousness (1Co 1:30; Rom 8:1, 9; Joh 13:8). If God has taken you into His favor, He will doubtless cleanse you. Though faith alone justifies, without the concurrence of works to the act of justification, yet that faith is not so alone as not to be accompanied with good works. As the eye alone sees, yet it is not alone without other members. So the Apostle James declares faith that is alone to be dead, and bids us show our faith by our works; which is to be understood, not as if works were the conditions of attaining justification, but sure evidences of justification attained by faith, and very necessary (Jam 2:14). The Gospel is no covenant of works, requiring another righteousness for justification by doing for life. Works justify us from such accusations of men as will deny us to have justification by faith, or that we have a true and lively faith, or are good trees (Mat

12:33, 37); not as being our righteousness themselves, or conditions of our having Christ's righteousness, or qualifying us for it.

3. Three Exhortations from the Text

Exhortation 1. It exhorts the wicked to several duties. It is deportation¹⁷ to them from continuance in sin, under God's wrath, running headlong to damnation; for here is a door of mercy opened to them, a righteousness prepared that they may be freely accepted of God. Some men are desperadoes; they have loved strangers, and after them will they go (Jer 2:25). They are resolved to run the risk of it, and please themselves that they shall speed as well as others. And some men would be justified but seek for it in a wrong way. Some will go to the pope, to quiet their consciences by his deceits; some to their own works and performances, but you are exhorted to look out for the true righteousness. Christ says in the Gospel, Behold Me, Behold Me, the kingdom of heaven is open, mercy and righteousness are freely offered (Isa 55:6-7; Jer 3:12). Repentance is preached with remission of sins (Luk 24:47; Act 2:38). Beware you do not neglect this acceptable time, this day of salvation (Heb 2:1, 3). For,

(1) If you do, you remain under the wrath of God (Joh 3:36), under the curse of the law, which, like a flood, sweeps away all that are found out of this Ark, the Lord Jesus Christ (Psa 11:5-6).

(2) Your condemnation will be aggravated by refusing so great salvation (Heb 2:3). You will have no cloak for your sins, when you refuse mercy (Joh 15:22). You cannot say you are undone by your past

¹⁷ **deportation** – transportation; a carrying away.

sins beyond recovery, and therefore it is in vain to strive, for, behold, remission of sins is proclaimed to you (Eze 33:10-11). And what a horrid sin is it, to despise the blood of the Son of God (Joh 3:18, 36)!

Objection 1. If God justify the ungodly (Rom 4:5), what need I forsake ungodliness at all (Rom 6:1)?

Answer. You cannot seek justification truly, except you have a mind to live to God in friendship with Him, for justification is God's way of taking us into friendship with Him (Rom 5:1-2), and of reconciling us (2Co 5:19). The use you are to make of it is to seek God's friendship by it, and the enjoyment of Him. Why does a man seek a pardon, if he intends to go on in rebellion and stand out in defiance to his prince (1Pe 2:24)? They seek pardon in a mocking way, that intend not to return to obedience (Gal 6:7-8).

Objection 2. My sins are so great that I have no encouragement to hope.

Answer. Christ's righteousness is for all sorts of sinners that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles (Rom 1:16)—and how great sinners were of both sorts!—and even for those that killed and murdered the Lord of glory (Act 2:23, 36; 1Co 2:8), and for the chief of the sinners (1Ti 1:15; Act 16). "Where sin abounds, grace did much more abound (superabounds)" (Rom 5:20). Your sins are but the sins of a creature, but His righteousness is the righteousness of God (Joh 6:37; Rom 10:3, 11, 13).

Exhortation 2. It exhorts those that have a mind to turn to God, to turn the right way by faith in Christ for justification. Let them not seek by works, as most in the world do, and all are prone to do (Rom 9:31-32). But this doctrine seems very foolish, yea, pernicious to a natural man. Become a fool, that you may be wise

(1Co 3:18); otherwise you will labor in the fire, and weary yourselves for very vanity, and be under continual discomforts and discouragements. For you can do no good work while you are in the flesh, under the Law and its curse, before God has received you into favor, for justification is in order of nature before true holiness of heart and life (1Ti 1:5; Heb 9:14). Faith is the great work and mother duty (Joh 6:29; Gal 5:6; Isa 55:2), and therefore while you believe not, you dishonor Christ and His death (Gal 2:21; 5:2-4). Therefore come boldly, though you have been a great sinner (Acts 10:43), and seek righteousness in Christ with holiness (Rom 8:1)

Question. But how shall I get faith?

Answer. Faith is the gift of God (Eph 2:8), and by the Gospel (Rom 1:15-17). Faith comes by hearing the Gospel preached (Rom 10:17), and that comes in working faith, not in word only, but in power (1Th 1:5), beyond what can be done by natural or human attainment (Joh 6:63). Therefore, if you have no beginning of it in you, your only way is to attend to the Gospel and to meditate on your sin and misery and Christ's excellency, that so you may be inclined in your heart to believe (Song 1:3; Gal 2:16; Psa 9:10), for this is the way God uses to beget faith (Isa 55:3). But if you have a desire and inclination to fly from yourself to Christ, in the bent of your heart, so that you prefer Christ above all, then the Spirit has begun and will carry on the work, so that now you may pray confidently for faith (Song 1:4; Luk 11:13; Mar 9:24).

Objection 3. But without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb 12:14). And how shall I get holiness? I cannot sanctify myself, and this confidence you speak of may slacken my diligence.

Answer. If you have righteousness in Christ, God will make you holy, and this confidence is the only way to get holiness, because of that righteousness (Rom 5:21). The new covenant is confirmed in Him, which promises a new heart. If sin is forgiven you shall be delivered from its power and quickened by the same death and resurrection of Christ whereby you are justified (Col 2:12-13).

Exhortation 3. It exhorts them that are justified by faith.

(1) To walk humbly, as being nothing of themselves; to acknowledge themselves enemies to God by nature, and acknowledge their sins in the greatness and heinousness of them, that they are saved freely by the righteousness of another, not by their own—yea, that they are so far fallen that the justice of God would have been against them, if it had not been satisfied (Psa 71:16; Rom 3:27)—but now they see that Christ has satisfied, and His righteousness is above their sins (Eze 36:31).

(2) To praise and glorify God through Christ for His grace. Oh, what abundant grace and love appears in God's washing and cleansing us by His Son's blood (Rev 1:5; Gal 2:20)! And in making His Son sin and a curse for us (Rom 5:5, 8; 1Jo 4:9, 10; 3:16; 2Co 8:9)! And what a glorious and excellent righteousness has God given us in Christ (Isa 61:10)!

(3) To walk comfortably, upon the account of this righteousness (Isa 40:1-2). Triumph over sin and affliction (Rom 8:33, 39). Be confident in expecting great things from God (Heb 10:22), for though you may be unworthy and grace will show you your own unworthiness, yet you stand upon the righteousness of Christ. Glory in the hope of God's glory, for if Christ

died to reconcile you when you were enemies, much more will He save you by His life, now you are reconciled (Rom 5:3, 10). Ask boldly for what you want, for God is in Christ's manhood as the Mercy Seat. Whenever sin stings you and objections trouble you, look to the brazen serpent, confess sin and trust for pardon, meditate on Christ's righteousness and the abundance of grace in Him (Rom 8:32). If you find ever so much ungodliness, no good qualifications, yet Christ is at hand for your comfort (Isa 50:10; 2Th 2:16-17). In all your sins apply yourselves to this fountain (Zec 13:1; 1Jo 1:7). If sin lie on the conscience, it weakens peace and spiritual strength. Lay not under guilt with a slavish fear; you have a righteousness to deliver you from it—apply it by faith, that you may have no more conscience of sin as condemning (Heb 10:2; Psa 32). You have a better righteousness than any perfectionists can have.

(4) Hold fast this way of justification, notwithstanding all the noise that is made in the world against it, for the devil will strive to scare you out of it or steal it from you, as he did from the Jews, from the Galatians, the Papists, and many Protestants (Gal 1:6). And the apostle reckons it is by a spiritual bewitchery. He will strive to get you to trust on works, and tell you it is for the promoting of holiness, and to trust on works to get Christ, and to lay works lowest in the foundation. If you lose this righteousness of Christ, under any color or pretense whatever, you lose all (Gal 5:2-3). Do not so dishonor Christ as to think of procuring that by works which you have fully in Christ. Think not that the Gospel requires another justification to gain this, for the Gospel is no legal covenant, but a declaration of the righteousness of faith and we, being justified, are heirs by adoption and promise (Gal 3:24, 26; 4:7). This

is the doctrine which glorifies God and abases the creature, which is a great mark of its truth. Beware therefore of carnal reason, which will go quite contrary, and make Christ's righteousness a stumbling-stone to you (1Pe 2:8; Rom 9:32-33).

(5) Walk as one that enjoys the favor of God in Christ. Let Him have the honor of it. Walk therefore in holiness, knowing by what price you are redeemed (1Pe 1:17-18; 2Co 5:14-15; 1Pe 1:5, 11; 1Co 6:20). Love God that has loved you first (1Jo 4:19; Psa 116:16). Believe that God will enable you for the practice of holiness (Rom 6:14). Particularly, walk in love to the saints; exercise forgiveness to your enemies. Sense of your own sins and God's forgiving you will cause you to pity and forgive others, else you cannot pray or trust for forgiveness of your own sins upon reasonable grounds (Eph 4:31-32; Mat 6:14-15, 18:21). Desire grace may be exalted on others, and wait patiently for the full declaration of justification at the great day (Gal 5:5; Act 3:19), for here your justification is known only by faith, but in outward things you are dealt with as a sinner. Then your righteousness shall appear openly and you shall be dealt with according to it.

