

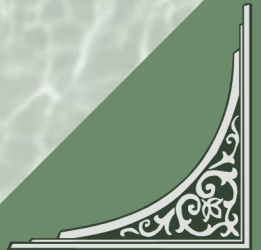


# The Doctrine of Justification



**Part Three**

**A. W. Pink**



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### 8. Its Instrument

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### 8. Its Instrument

“Being justified freely by *his grace*” (Rom. 3:24); “being now justified by His *blood*” (Rom. 5:9); “being now justified by *faith*” (Rom. 5:1). A full exposition of the doctrine of justification requires that each of these propositions should be interpreted in their Scriptural sense, and that they be combined together in their true relations as to form one harmonious whole. Unless these three propositions be carefully distinguished there is sure to be confusion; unless all the three are steadily borne in mind we are sure to land in error. Each must be given its due weight, yet none must be understood in such a way as to make its force annul that of the others. Nor is this by any means a simple task, in fact none but a real teacher (that is, a spiritual theologian) who has devoted a lifetime to the undivided study of Scriptures is qualified for it.

“The righteousness of God which is *by faith* of Jesus Christ” (Rom. 3:22); “A man is justified by *faith* without the deeds of the law” (Rom. 3:28); “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). What is the precise place and influence which faith has in the important affairs of justification? What is the exact nature or character of justifying faith? In what particular sense are we to understand this proposition that we are “justified by *faith*?” and what is the connection between that proposition and the postulates that we are “justified by *grace*” and “justified by His *blood*?” These are matters which call for the utmost care. The nature of justifying faith requires to be closely defined so that its particular agency is correctly viewed, for it is

easy to make a mistake here to the prejudice of Christ's honour and glory, which must not be given to another—no, not to faith itself.

Many would-be teachers have erred at this point, for the common tendency of human nature is to arrogate to itself the glory which belongs alone to God. While there have been those who rejected the unscriptural notion that we can be justified before God by our own works, yet not a few of these very men virtually make a saviour of their own faith. Not only have some spoken of faith as though it were a contribution which God requires the sinner to make toward his own salvation—the last mite which was necessary to make up the price of his redemption; but others (who sneered at theologians and boasted of their superior understanding of the things of God) have insisted that faith itself is what constitutes us righteous before God, He regarding faith as righteousness.

A deplorable example of what we have just mentioned is to be found in the comments made upon Romans 4 by Mr. J. N. Darby, the father of the Plymouth Brethren: "This was Abraham's faith. He believed the promise that he should be the father of many nations, because God had spoken, counting on the power of God, thus glorifying Him, without calling in question anything that He had said by looking at circumstances; therefore *this* also was counted to him for righteousness. He glorified God according to what God was. Now this was not written for his sake alone: the same *faith* shall be imputed to us also *for righteousness*" ("Synopsis" volume 4, page 133—italics ours). The Christ-dishonouring error contained in those statements will be exposed later on in this chapter.

"How doth faith justify a sinner in the sight of God? Answer: Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, nor of good works that are the fruits of it, nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for justification; *but only as it is an instrument* by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and His righteousness" (Westminster Confession of Faith). Though this

definition was framed upwards of two hundred and fifty years ago, it is far superior to almost anything found in current literature on the subject. It is more accurate to speak of faith as the “instrument” rather than as the *condition*, for a “condition” is generally used to signify that for the sake whereof a benefit is conferred. Faith is neither the ground nor the substance of our justification, but simply *the hand* which receives the divine gift proffered to us in the Gospel.

What is the precise place and influence which faith has in the important affair of justification? Romanist answer, It justifies us *formally*, not relatively: that is, upon the account of its own intrinsic value. They point out that faith is never alone, but “worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6), and therefore its own excellency merits acceptance at God’s hand. But the faith of the best is weak and deficient (Luke 17:5), and so could never satisfy the law, which requires a flawless perfection. If righteousness was given as a reward for faith, its possessor would have cause for boasting, expressly contrary to the Apostle in Romans 3:26, 27. Moreover, such a method of justification would entirely frustrate the life and death of Christ, making His great sacrifice unnecessary. It is not faith as a spiritual grace which justifies us, but as an instrument—the *hand* which lays hold of Christ.

In connection with justification, faith is *not* to be considered as a virtuous exercise of the heart, nor as a principle of holy obedience: “Because faith, as concerned in our justification, does not regard Christ as King, enacting laws, requiring obedience, and subduing depravity; but as a Substitute, answering the requirements of the divine Law, and as a Priest expiating sin by His own death on the cross. Hence, in justification we read of ‘precious faith... through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ (2 Pet. 1:1) and of ‘faith in His blood’ (Rom. 3:25), and believers are described as ‘receiving the atonement’ and ‘receiving the gift of righteousness’ (Rom. 5:11, 17). Therefore it is evident that faith is represented as having an immediate regard to the vicarious work of Christ, and that it is considered not under the notion of exercising virtue or of performing a duty, but of receiving a free

gift” (A. Booth).

What is the relation of faith to justification? The Arminian answer to the question, refined somewhat by the Plymouth Brethren, is, that the *act* of believing is imputed to us for righteousness. One error leads to another. Mr. Darby denied that Gentiles were ever under the law, hence he denied also that Christ obeyed the law in His people’s stead, and therefore as Christ’s vicarious obedience is not reckoned to their account, he had to seek elsewhere for their righteousness. This he claimed to find in the Christian’s own faith, insisting that their act of believing is imputed to them “for righteousness.” To give his theory respectability, he clothed it in the language of several expressions found in Romans 4, though he knew quite well that the Greek afforded no foundation whatever for that which he built upon it.

In Romans 4 we read “his faith is counted *for* righteousness” (verse 5), “faith was reckoned to Abraham *for* righteousness” (verse 9), “it was imputed to him *for* righteousness” (verse 22). Now in each of these verses the Greek preposition is “*eis*” which *never* means “in the stead of,” but always signifies “towards, in order to, with a view to:” it has the uniform force of “unto.” Its exact meaning and force is unequivocally plain in Romans 10:10, “with the heart man believeth *unto* [“*eis*”] righteousness:” that is, the believing heart reaches out toward and lays hold of Christ Himself. “This passage (Rom. 10:10) may help us to understand what justification by faith is, for it shows that righteousness there comes to us when we embrace God’s goodness offered to us in the Gospel. We are then, for this reason, made just: because we believe that God is propitious to us through Christ” (J. Calvin).

The Holy Spirit has used the Greek prepositions with unerring precision. Never do we find Him employing “*eis*” in connection with Christ’s satisfaction and sacrifice in our room and stead, but only “*anti*” or “*huper*,” which means *in lieu of*. On the other hand, “*anti*” and “*huper*” are *never* used in connection with our believing, for faith *is not* accepted by God *in lieu of* perfect obedience. Faith must either be the ground of our acceptance with

God, or the means or instrument of our becoming interested in the true meritorious ground, namely, the righteousness of Christ; it cannot stand in *both* relations to our justification. “God justifieth, not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ” (Westminster Catechism).

That faith itself cannot be the substance or ground of our justification is clear from many considerations. The “righteousness of God (i.e., the satisfaction which Christ rendered to the law) is revealed to faith” (Rom. 1:17) and so cannot be faith itself. Romans 10:10 declares “with the heart man believeth *unto* righteousness” so that righteousness must be a distinct thing from believing. In Jeremiah 23:6 we read “The LORD our righteousness,” so faith cannot be our righteousness. Let not Christ be dethroned in order to exalt faith: set not the servant above the master. “We acknowledge no righteousness but what the obedience and satisfaction of Christ yields us: His blood, not our faith; His satisfaction, not our believing it, is the matter of justification before God” (J. Flavel). What alterations are there in our faith! what minglings of unbelief at all times! Is this a foundation to build our justification and hope upon?

Perhaps some will say, Are not the words of Scripture expressly on Mr. Darby’s side? Does not Romans 4:5 affirm “faith is counted for righteousness?” We answer, Is the *sense* of Scripture on his side? Suppose I should undertake to prove that David was cleansed from guilt by the “*hyssop*” which grows on the wall: that would sound ridiculous. Yes; nevertheless, I should have the express words of Scripture to support me: “Purge me *with hyssop*, and I shall be clean” (Psa. 51:7). Yet clear as those words read, they would not afford me the least countenance imaginable from *the sense* and spirit of God’s Word. Has the *hyssop*—a worthless shrub—any kind of fitness to stand in the stead of the sacrificial blood, and make an atonement for sin? No more fitness has *faith* to stand in the stead of Christ’s perfect obedience, to act as our justifying righteousness, or procure our acceptance with God!!

An apology is really due many of our readers, for wasting their

time with such puerilities, but we ask them to kindly bear with us. We hope it may please God to use this article to expose one of Darby's many grievous errors. For "grievous" *this* error most certainly is. His teaching that the Christian's faith, instead of the vicarious obedience of Christ, is reckoned for righteousness (Mr. W. Kelly, his chief lieutenant, wrote "his [Abraham's] faith in God's word as that which he exercised and which was accounted as righteousness"—see article 5) makes God guilty of a downright lie, for it represents Him as giving to faith a *fictitious* value—the believer has no righteousness, so God regards his poor faith as "righteousness."

"And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). The one point to be decided here is: was it Abraham's faith itself which was in God's account taken for righteousness (horrible idea!), or, was it the righteousness of God in Christ which Abraham's faith prospectively laid hold of? The comments of the Apostle in Romans 4:18-22 settle the point decisively. In these verses Paul emphasizes the natural impossibilities which stood in the way of God's promise of a numerous offspring to Abraham being fulfilled (the genital deadness both of his own body and Sarah's), and on the implicit confidence he had (notwithstanding the difficulties) in the power and faithfulness of God that He *would* perform what He promised. Hence, when the Apostle adds, "Therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (verse 22), that "therefore" can only mean: Because through faith he completely *lost sight of nature and self*, and realized with undoubting assurance the sufficiency of the divine arm, and the certainty of its working.

Abraham's faith, dear reader, was nothing more and nothing else than *the renunciation of all virtue and strength in himself*, and a hanging in childlike trust upon God for what He was able and willing to do. Far, very far, indeed, was his faith from being a mere substitute for a "righteousness" which he lacked. Far, very far was God from accepting his faith in lieu of a perfect obedience to His Law. Rather was Abraham's faith the acting of a soul which found *its* life, its hope, its all *in the Lord Himself*. And *that* is what

justifying faith is: it is “simply the instrument by which Christ and His righteousness are received in order to justification. It is emptiness filled with Christ’s fullness; impotency lying down upon Christ’s strength” (J. L. Girardeau).

**“The best obedience of my hands  
Dares not appear before Thy throne;  
But faith can answer *Thy* demands,  
By pleading what my Lord has done.”**

What is the relation of faith to justification? Antinomians and hyper-Calvinists answer, Merely that of comfort or assurance. Their theory is that the elect were actually justified by God before the foundation of the world, and all that faith does now is to make this *manifest* in their conscience. This error was advocated by such men as W. Gadsby, J. Irons, James Wells, J.C. Philpot. That it originated not with these men is clear from the fact that the Puritans refuted it in their day. “By faith alone we obtain and receive the forgiveness of sins; for notwithstanding any antecedent act of God concerning us in and for Christ, *we do not actually receive* a complete soul-freeing discharge until we believe” (J. Owen). “It is vain to say I am justified only in respect to the court of mine own conscience. The faith that Paul and the other Apostles were justified by, was their believing on Christ that they *might* be justified (Gal. 2:15, 16), and not a believing they were justified already; and therefore it was not an act of assurance” (T. Goodwin, vol. 8).

*How* are we justified by faith? Having given a threefold negative answer: not by faith as a joint cause with works (Romanists), not by faith as an act of grace in us (Arminians), not by faith as it receives the Spirit’s witness (Antinomians); we now turn to the positive answer. Faith justifies only as an instrument which God has appointed to the apprehension and application of Christ’s righteousness. When we say that faith is the “instrument” of our justification, let it be clearly understood that we do not mean faith is the instrument *wherewith* God justifies, but the instrument *whereby* we receive Christ. Christ has merited



righteousness for us, and faith in Christ is that which renders it meet in God's sight the purchased blessing be assigned. *Faith unites to Christ*, and being united to Him we are possessed of all that is in Christ, so far as is consistent with our capacity of receiving and God's appointment in giving. Having been made one with Christ in spirit, God now considers us as one with Him in law.

We are justified *by* faith, and not *for* faith; not because of what faith is, but because of what it *receives*. "It hath no efficacy of itself, but as it is the band of our union with Christ. The whole virtue of cleansing proceeds from Christ the object. We receive the water with our hands, but the cleansing virtue is not in our hands, but in the water, yet the water cannot cleanse us without our receiving it; our receiving it unites the water to us, and is a means whereby we are cleansed. And therefore is it observed that our justification by faith is always expressed in *the passive*, not in the active: we are *justified* by faith, not that faith *justifies* us. The efficacy is in Christ's blood; the reception of it is in our faith" (S. Charnock).

Scripture knows no such thing as a justified unbeliever. There is nothing meritorious about believing, yet it is necessary in order to justification. It is not only the righteousness of Christ *as imputed* which justifies, but also *as received* (Rom. 5:11, 17). The righteousness of Christ is not mine until I accept it as the Father's gift. "The believing sinner is 'justified by faith' only instrumentally, as he 'lives by eating' only instrumentally. Eating is the particular act by which he receives and appropriates food. Strictly speaking, he lives by bread alone, not by eating, or the act of masticating. And, strictly speaking, the sinner is justified by Christ's sacrifice alone, not by his act of believing in it" (W. Shedd). In the application of justification faith is not a builder, but a beholder; not an agent, but an instrument; it has nothing to do, but all to believe; nothing to give, but all to receive.

God has not selected faith to be the instrument of justification because there is some peculiar virtue in faith, but rather because there is no merit in it: faith is self-emptying—"Therefore it is of

faith *that it might be by grace*” (Rom. 4:16). A gift is seen to be a gift when nothing is required or accepted of the recipient, but simply that he *receive it*. Whatever other properties faith may possess, it is simply *as receiving Christ* that it justifies. Were we said to be justified by repentance, by love, or by any other spiritual grace, it would convey the idea of something good in us being the *consideration* on which the blessing was bestowed; but justification *by faith* (correctly understood) conveys no such idea.

“Faith justifies in no other way than as it introduces us into a participation of the righteousness of Christ” (J. Calvin). Justifying faith is a looking away from self, a renouncing of my own righteousness, a laying hold of Christ. Justifying faith consists, first, of a knowledge and belief of the truth revealed in Scripture thereon; second, in an abandonment of all pretence, claim or confidence in our own righteousness; third, in a trust in and reliance upon the righteousness of Christ, laying hold of the blessing which He purchased for us. It is the heart’s approval and approbation of the method of justification proposed in the Gospel: by Christ alone, proceeding from the pure grace of God, and excluding all human merits. “*In the Lord* have I righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45:24).

None will experimentally appreciate the righteousness of Christ until they have been experimentally stripped by the Spirit. Not until the Lord puts us in the fire and burns off our filthy rags, and makes us stand naked before Him, trembling from head to foot as we view the sword of His justice suspended over our heads, will any truly value “the best robe.” Not until the condemning sentence of the law has been applied by the Spirit to the conscience does the guilty soul cry, “Lost, lost!” (Rom. 7:9, 10). Not until there is a personal apprehension of the requirements of God’s Law, a feeling sense of our total inability to perform its righteous demands, and an honest realization that God would be just in banishing us from His presence forever, is the necessity for a precious Christ perceived by the soul.

## 9. Its Evidence

In Romans 3:28 the Apostle Paul declared “that a man is

justified by faith without the deeds of the law,” and then produces the case of Abraham to prove his assertion. But the Apostle James, from the case of the same Abraham, draws quite another conclusion, saying, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24). This is one of the “contradictions in the Bible” to which infidels appeal in support of their unbelief. But the Christian, however difficult he finds it to harmonize passages apparently opposite, knows there cannot be any contradiction in the Word of *God*. Faith has unshaken confidence in the inerrancy of Holy Writ. Faith is humble too and prays, “That which I see not teach Thou me” (Job. 34:32). Nor is faith lazy; it prompts its possessor unto a reverent examination and diligent investigation of that which puzzles and perplexes, seeking to discover the subject of each separate book, the scope of each writer, the connections of each passage.

Now the design of the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:28 may be clearly perceived from its context. He is treating of the great matter of a sinner’s justification before God: he shows that it cannot be by works of the law, because by the law all men are condemned, and also because if men were justified on the ground of their own doings, then boasting could not be excluded. Positively he affirms that justification is by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. His reasoning will appear the more conclusive if the whole passage (Rom. 3:19-28) be read attentively. Because the Jews had a high regard of Abraham, the Apostle proceeded to show in the 4th chapter of Romans that Abraham was justified in that very way—apart from any works of his own, by faith alone. By such a method of justification the pride of the creature is strained, and the grace of God is magnified.

Now the scope of the Apostle James is very different: his Epistle was written to counteract quite another error. Fallen men are creatures of extremes: no sooner are they driven out of the false refuge of trusting to their own righteousness, than they fly to the opposite and no less dangerous error of supposing that, since they cannot be justified by their own works, that there is no *necessity* whatever for good works, and no *danger* from ungodly

living and unholy practice. It is very clear from the New Testament itself that very soon after the Gospel was freely proclaimed, there arose many who turned the grace of God into “lasciviousness:” that this was not only quickly espoused in theory, but soon had free course in practice. It was therefore the chief design of the Apostle James to show the great wickedness and awful danger of unholy practice and to assert the imperative necessity of good works.

The Apostle James devoted much of his Epistle to the exposing of any empty profession. In his second chapter, particularly, he addresses himself unto those who rested in a *notion* which they called “faith,” accounting an intellectual assent to the truth of the Gospel sufficient for their salvation, though it had no spiritual influence upon their hearts, tempers, or conduct. The Apostle shows their hope was a vain one, and that *their* “faith” was not a whit superior to that possessed by the demons. From the example of Abraham he proves that justifying faith is a very different thing from the “faith” of empty professors, because it enabled him to perform the hardest and most painful act of obedience, even the offering up of his only son upon the altar; which act took place many years after he had been justified by God, and which act *manifested* the reality and nature of his faith.

From what has been said above, it should be very evident that the “justification” of which Paul treats is entirely different from the “justification” with which James deals. The doctrine of the former is that nothing renders any sinner acceptable to God but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; the doctrine of the latter is that such a faith is not solitary, but accompanied with every good work, and that where good works are absent, justifying faith cannot exist. James is insistent that it is not enough to say I have justifying faith, I must *give proof* of the same by exhibiting those fruits which love toward God and love toward men necessarily produce. Paul writes of our justification before God, James of our justification before men. Paul treats of the justification of *persons*; James, of the justification of our *profession*. The one is by faith alone; the other is by a faith which worketh by love and produces

obedience.

Now it is of first importance that the above-mentioned distinctions should be clearly grasped. When Christian theologians affirm that the sinner is justified by faith *alone*, they do not mean that faith exists *alone* in the person justified, for justifying faith is always *accompanied* by all the other graces which the Spirit imparts at our regeneration; nor do they mean that nothing else is required in order to our receiving forgiveness from God, for He requires repentance and conversion as well as faith (Acts 3:19). No, rather do they mean that there is nothing else in sinners themselves to which their justification is in Scripture ascribed: nothing else is required of them or exists in them which stands in *the same relation* to justification as their faith does, or which exerts any casual influence or any efficacy of instrumentality in *producing* the result of their being justified (Condensed from Cunningham).

On the other hand, that faith which justifies is not an idle and inoperative principle, but one that purifies the heart (Acts 15:9) and works by love (Gal. 5:6). It is faith which can easily be distinguished from that mental faith of the empty professor. It is this which the Apostle James insists so emphatically upon. The *subject* of this Epistle is not salvation by grace and justification by faith, but the *testing* of those who claim to have faith. His design is not to show the *ground* on which sinners are accepted before God, but to make known that which *evidences* a sinner's having been justified. He insists that the tree is known by its fruits, that a righteous person is one who walks in the paths of righteousness. He declares that the man who is not a *doer* of the Word, but a "hearer *only*," is self-deceived, deluded. When God justifies a man, He sanctifies him too: the two blessings are inseparable, never found apart.

Unless the subject and scope of James' Epistle be clearly seen, the apprehension of many of its statements can only issue in God-dishonouring, grace-repudiating, soul-destroying error. To this portion of the Word of God, more than any other, have legalists appealed in their opposition to the grand truth of justification by

grace, through faith, without works. To the declarations of this Epistle have they turned to find support for their Christ-insulting, man-exalting, Gospel-repudiating error of justification by human works. Merit-mongers of all descriptions cite James 2 for the purpose of setting aside all that is taught elsewhere in Scripture on the subject of justification. Romanists, and their half-brothers the Arminians, quote “Ye see then how that *by works* a man is justified, and not by faith only” (verse 24), and suppose that ends all argument.

We propose now to take up James 2:14-26 and offer a few comments thereon. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he *hath faith*, and have not works? can faith save him?” (verse 14). Observe carefully that the Apostle does not here ask, “What doth it profit a man though he hath faith and have not works?”—such a supposition is nowhere countenanced by the Word of God: it were to suppose the impossibility for wherever *real* faith exists, good works necessarily follow. No, instead he asks, “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man (*not* “one of you!”) say he hath faith?” Professing to be a Christian when a man is not one, may secure a standing among men, improve his moral and social prestige, obtain membership in a “church,” and promote his commercial interests; but can it save his soul?

It is not that those empty professors who call themselves Christians are all (though many probably are) conscious hypocrites, rather are they deceived souls, and the tragic thing is that in most places there is nothing in the preaching which is at all calculated to *un*-deceive them; instead, there is only that which bolsters them up in their delusion. There is a large class in Christendom today who are satisfied with a bare profession. They have heard expounded some of the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and have given an intellectual assent thereto, and they mistake *that* for a saving knowledge of the Truth. Their minds are instructed, but their hearts are not reached, nor their lives transformed. They are still worldly in their affections and ways. There is no real subjection to God, no holiness of walk, no fruit to Christ’s glory. Their “faith” is of no value at all; their profession is

vain.

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” By noting the emphasis upon the word “say,” we perceive at once that James is arguing against those who substituted a theoretical belief of the Gospel for the whole of evangelical religion, and who replied to all exhortations and reproofs by saying, “We are not justified by our works, but by faith alone.” He therefore begins by asking what profit is there in professing to be a believer, when a man is devoid of true piety? The answer is, none whatever. To merely say I have faith when I am unable to appeal to any good works and spiritual fruits as the *evidence* of it, profits neither the speaker nor those who listen to his empty talk. Ability to prate in an orthodox manner about the doctrines of Christianity is a vastly different thing from justifying faith.

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding *ye give them not* those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” (verses 15, 16). Here the Apostle shows by an opposite illustration the utter worthlessness of fair talking which is unaccompanied by practical deeds: notice the “*say unto them, depart in peace*” etc. What is the use and value of feigning to be charitable when the *works* of charity are withheld? None whatever: empty bellies are not filled by benevolent words, nor are naked backs clothed by good wishes. Nor is the soul saved by a bare profession of the Gospel.

“Faith worketh by *love*” (Gal. 5:6). The first “fruit of the spirit,” that is of the new nature in the regenerated soul, is “*love*” (Gal. 5:22). When faith has truly been wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, that faith is manifested in *love*—love toward God, love toward His commandments (John 14:23), love toward the brethren, love toward our fellow-creatures. Therefore in *testing* the “faith” of the empty professor, the Apostle at once *puts to the proof* his love. In showing the pretence of his *love*, he proves the worthlessness of his “faith.” “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of

compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17)! Genuine love is *operative*; so is genuine faith.

“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17). Here the Apostle applies the illustration he has employed to the case before him, proving the worthlessness of a lifeless and inoperative “faith.” Even our fellow-men would promptly denounce as valueless a “love” which was gushing in words but lacking in works. Unregenerate people are not deceived by those who talk benignly to the indigent, but who refuse to minister unto their needs. And think you, my reader, that the omniscient God is to be imposed upon by an empty profession? Has He not said, “Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

That “faith” which is only of the lips and is not confirmed by evidence in the life, is useless. No matter how clear and sound may be my head-knowledge of the Truth, no matter how good a talker upon divine things I am, if my walk is not controlled by the precepts of God, then I am but “sounding brass and a tinkling symbol.” “Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” It is not a living and fruitful faith, like the faith of God’s elect, but a thing which is utterly worthless—“dead.” It is “alone,” that is, divorced from love to God and men and every holy affection. How could our holy Lord approve of *such* a “faith!” As works without faith are “dead” (Heb. 9:14), so a “faith” which is without “works” is a dead one.

“Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18). Here the true Christian challenges the empty professor: You claim to be a believer, but disgrace the name of Christ by your worldly walk, so do not expect the real saints to regard you as a brother till you display your faith in the good works of a holy life. The emphatic word in this verse is “show”—proof is demanded: demonstrate your faith to be genuine. Actions speak louder than words: unless our profession can endure *that* test it is worthless. Only true holiness of heart and life vindicates a profession of being justified by faith.



“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (verse 19). Here the Apostle anticipates an objection: I do *actually* believe in the Lord! Very well, so also do the demons, but what is the fruit of their “believing?” Does it influence their hearts and lives, does it transform their conduct Godward and manward? It does not. Then what is their “believing” worth! “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (verse 20): “vain” signifies “empty,” exposing the *hollowness* of one who claims to be justified by faith yet lacks the evidence of an obedient walk.

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” (verses 21, 22). The faith which reposes on Christ is not an idle, but an active and fruitful principle. Abraham had been justified many years before (Gen. 15:6); the offering up of Isaac (Gen. 22) was the open attestation of his faith and the manifestation of the sincerity of his profession. “By works was faith *made perfect*” means, in actual obedience it reaches its designed end, the purpose for which it was given is realized. “Made perfect” also signifies *revealed* or made known (*see* 2 Cor. 10:9).

“And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23). The “Scripture” here is God’s testimony to Abraham in Genesis 15:6: that testimony was “fulfilled” or verified when Abraham gave the supreme demonstration of his obedience to God. Our being informed *here* that Abraham was “called the *friend* of God” is in beautiful accord with the tenor of the whole of this passage, as is clear from a comparison with John 15:14: “Ye are my friends, *if ye do whatsoever I command you.*”

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (James 2:24). In the “ye see then” the Apostle draws his “conclusion” from the foregoing. It is by “works,” by acts of implicit obedience to the divine command, such as Abraham exercised—and not by a mere “faith” of the brain and the lips—

that we *justify* our profession of being believers, that we *prove* our right to be regarded as Christians.

“Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?” (verse 25). Why bring in the case of Rahab? Was not the example of Abraham conclusive and sufficient? First, because “*two* witnesses” are required for the truth to be “established”—cf. Romans 4:3, 6. Second, because, it might be objected Abraham’s case was so exceptional that it could be no criterion to measure others by. Very well: Rahab was a poor Gentile, a heathen, a harlot; yet she too was justified by faith (Heb. 11:31), and later *demonstrated* her faith by “works”—receiving the spies at the imminent risk of her own life.

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26). Here is the summing up: a breathless carcass and a worthless faith are alike useless as unto all the ends of natural and spiritual life. Thus the Apostle has conclusively shown the worthlessness of the garb of orthodoxy when worn by lifeless professors. He has fully exposed the error of those who rest in a bare profession of the Gospel—as if *that* could save them, when the temper of their minds and the tenor of their lives was diametrically opposed to the holy religion they professed. A holy heart and an obedient walk are the scriptural *evidence* of our having been justified by God.

## 10. Its Results

The justification of the believer is absolute, complete, final. “It is God that justifieth” (Rom. 8:33), and “I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it *shall be for ever*: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it” (Eccl. 3:14). So absolute and inexorable is this blessed fact that, in Romans 8:30 we are told, “Whom He justified, them He also glorified:” notice it is not simply a promise that God “*will* glorify,” but so sure and certain is that blissful event, the past tense is used. “Them He also glorified” is speaking from the standpoint of the eternal and unalterable purpose of God, concerning which there is no conditionality or contingency

whatsoever. To be “glorified” is to be perfectly conformed to the lovely image of Christ, when we shall see Him as He is and be made like Him (1 John 3:2). Because God has determined this, He speaks of it as already accomplished, for He “callesh those things which be not as though they were” (Rom. 4:17).

So far as the believer is concerned, the penal side of the sin question has been settled once and for all. His case has been tried in the supreme court, and God has justified him: in consequence thereof the Divine decision is “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Once those very persons *were* under condemnation—“condemned already” (John 3:18); but *now* that their faith has united them to Christ there is no condemnation. The debt of their sin has been paid by their great Surety; the record thereof has been “blotted out” by His cleansing blood. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth” (Rom. 8:33, 34). Who will reverse *His* decision! Where is that superior tribunal to which this cause can be carried? Eternal justice has pronounced her fiat; immutable judgment has recorded her sentence.

It is utterly and absolutely impossible that the sentence of the Divine Judge should ever be revoked or reversed. His sentence of justification results from and rests upon a complete satisfaction having been offered to His Law, and that in the fulfilment of a covenant engagement. Thus is effectually precluded the recall of the verdict. The Father stipulated to release His elect from the curse of the law provided the Son would meet the claims of justice against them. The Son freely complied with His Father’s will: “Lo, I come.” He was now made under the law, fulfilled the law, and suffered the full penalty of the law; therefore shall He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. Sooner shall the lightnings of omnipotence shiver the Rock of Ages than those sheltering in Him again be brought under condemnation.

How very, very far from the glorious truth of the Gospel is the mere *conditional* pardon which Arminians represent God as bestowing upon those who come to Christ—a pardon which may be rescinded, yea, which *will* be cancelled, unless they “do their

part” and perform certain stipulations! What a horrible and blasphemous travesty of the Truth is that!—an error which must be steadfastly resisted no matter who holds it: better far to hurt the feelings of a million of our fellow-creatures than to displease their august Creator. On no such precarious basis as our fulfilling certain conditions has God suspended the justification of His people. Not only is there “*now* no condemnation” resting upon the believer, but there *never* again shall be, for “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord *will not* impute sin” (Rom. 4:8).

The dread sentence of the law, “Thou shalt surely die,” cannot in justice be executed upon the sinner’s Surety and also upon himself. Hence by a necessity existing in the very nature of moral government, it *must* follow that the believing sinner be freed from all condemnation, that is, so cleared of the same that he is raised above all liability to punishment. So declared our blessed Saviour Himself, in words too plain and emphatic to admit of any misunderstanding: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come* into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). He, the habitation of whose throne is “justice and judgment,” has sealed up this declaration forever, by affirming “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” Sooner shall the sword of justice cleave the helmet of the Almighty than any Divinely pardoned soul perish.

But not only are the sins of all who truly come to Christ eternally remitted, but the very righteousness of the Redeemer passes over to them, is placed upon them, so that a perfect obedience to the law is imputed to their account. It is theirs, not by promise, but by gift (Rom. 5:17), by actual bestowment. It is not simply that God treats them as if they were righteous, they *are* righteous and so pronounced by Him. And therefore may each believing soul exclaim, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10). O

that each Christian reader may be enabled to clearly and strongly grasp hold of this glorious fact: that he is now truly righteous in the sight of God, is in actual possession of an obedience which answers every demand of the law.

This unspeakable blessing is bestowed not only by the amazing grace of God, but it is actually required by His inexorable *justice*. This too was stipulated and agreed upon in the covenant into which the Father entered with the Son. That is why the Redeemer lived here on earth for upwards of thirty years before He went to the cross to suffer the penalty of our sins: He assumed and discharged our responsibilities; as a child, as a youth, as a man, He rendered unto God that perfect obedience which we owed Him. He “fulfilled all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15) for His people, and just as He who knew no sin was made sin for them, so they are now made “the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). And therefore does Jehovah declare, “For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness *shall not depart* from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isa. 54:10).

By actually believing with a justifying faith the sinner doth receive Christ Himself, is joined to Him, and becomes immediately an heir of God and joint-heir with Christ. This gives him a right unto and an interest in the benefits of His mediation. By faith in Christ he received not only the forgiveness of sins, but an inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Acts 26:18), the Holy Spirit (given to him) being “the earnest of our inheritance” (Eph. 1:13, 14). The believing sinner may now say “in the LORD have I righteousness” (Isa. 45:24). He is “*complete* in Him” (Col. 2:10), for by “one offering” the Saviour hath “*perfected for ever* them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). The believer has been “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6), and stands before the throne of God arrayed in a garment more excellent than that which is worn by the holy angels.

How infinitely does the glorious Gospel of God transcend the impoverished thoughts and schemes of men! How immeasurably superior is that “everlasting righteousness” which Christ has

brought in (Dan. 9:24) from that miserable thing which multitudes are seeking to produce by their own efforts. Greater far is the difference between the shining light of the midday sun and the blackness of the darkest night, than between that “best robe” (Luke 15:22) which Christ has wrought out for each of His people and that wretched covering which zealous religionists are attempting to weave out of the filthy rags of their own righteousness. Equally great is the difference between the truth of God concerning the *present* and *immutable* standing of His saints in all the acceptability of Christ, and the horrible perversion of Arminians who make acceptance with God contingent upon the believer’s faithfulness and perseverance, who suppose that Heaven can be purchased by the creature’s deeds and doings.

It is not that the justified soul is now left to himself, so that he is certain of getting to Heaven no matter how he conducts himself—the fatal error of Antinomians. No Indeed. God also imparts to him the blessed Holy Spirit, who works within him the desire to serve, please, and glorify the One who has been so gracious to Him. “The love of Christ constraineth us... that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). They now “delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22), and though the flesh, the world, and the Devil oppose every step of the way, occasioning many a sad fall—which is repented of, confessed, and forsaken—nevertheless the Spirit renews them day by day (2 Cor. 4:16) and leads them in the paths of righteousness for Christ’s name’s sake.

In the last paragraph will be found the answer to those who object that the preaching of justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, apprehended by faith alone, will encourage carelessness and foster licentiousness. Those whom God justifies are not left in their natural condition, under the dominion of sin, but are quickened, indwelt, and guided by the Holy Spirit. As Christ cannot be divided, and so is received as Lord to rule us as well as Saviour to redeem us, so those whom God justifies He also sanctifies. We do not affirm that all who

receive this blessed truth into their heads have their lives transformed thereby—no indeed; but we do insist that where it is applied in power to the heart there always follows a walk to the glory of God, the fruits of righteousness being brought forth to the praise of His name. Each truly justified soul will say:

***“Let worldly minds the world pursue,  
It has no charms for me;  
I once admired its trifles too,  
But grace has set me free.”***

It is therefore the bounden duty of those who profess to have been justified by God to diligently and impartially examine themselves, to ascertain whether or not they have in them those spiritual graces which *always accompany justification*. It is by our sanctification, and that alone, that we may discover our justification. Would you know whether Christ fulfilled the law *for you*, that His obedience has been imputed to your account? Then search your heart and life and see whether a spirit of *obedience to Him* is daily working in you. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled only in those who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4). God never designed that the obedience of His Son should be imputed to those who live a life of worldliness, self-pleasing, and gratifying the lusts of the flesh. Far from it: “If any man be in Christ, he is *a new creature*: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Summarizing now the blessed *results* of justification.

The sins of the believer are forgiven. “Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:38, 39). All the sins of the believer, past, present, and to come, were laid upon Christ and atoned for by Him. Although sins cannot be actually pardoned before they are actually committed yet their obligation *to the curse of the law* were virtually remitted at the Cross, antecedently to their actual commission. The sins of Christians involve only the governmental dealings of God in this life, and these are remitted upon a sincere repentance and confession.

An inalienable title unto everlasting glory is bestowed. Christ purchased for His people the reward of blessing of the law, which is eternal life. Therefore does the Holy Spirit assure the Christian that he has been begotten “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). Not only is that inheritance *reserved* for all the justified, but they are all *preserved* unto it, as the very next verse declares, “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (verse 5)—“kept” from committing the unpardonable sin, from apostatising from the truth, from being fatally deceived by the Devil; so “kept” that the power of God prevents anything separating them from His love in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:35-38).

Reconciliation unto God Himself. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son” (Rom. 5:1, 10). Until men are justified they are at war with God, and He is against them, being “angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11). Dreadful beyond words is the condition of those who are under condemnation: their minds are enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), all their ways are opposed to Him (Col. 1:21). But at conversion the sinner throws down the weapons of his rebellion and surrenders to the righteous claims of Christ, and by Him he is reconciled to God. Reconciliation is to make an end of strife, to bring together those at variance, to change enemies into friends. Between God and the justified there is peace—effected by the blood of Christ.

An unalterable standing in the favour of God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” (Rom. 5:1, 2). Mark the word “also:” not only has Christ turned away the wrath of God from us, but in addition He has secured the benevolence of God toward us. Previous to justification our standing was one of unutterable disgrace, but now, through Christ, it is in one of unclouded grace. God now has naught but good-will toward us. God has not only ceased to be offended at us, but is well-pleased with us; not only will He never



afflict punishment upon us, but He will never cease to shower His blessings upon us. The throne to which we have free access is not one of judgment, but of pure and unchanging grace.

Owned by God Himself before an assembled universe. “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified” (Matt. 12:36, 37): yes, justified publicly by the Judge Himself! “These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the *righteous* into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46). Here will be the final justification of the Christian, this sentence being *declaratory* unto the glory of God and the everlasting blessedness of those who have believed.

Let it be said in conclusion that the justification of the Christian is *complete* the moment he truly believes in Christ, and hence there are no degrees in justification. The Apostle Paul was as truly a justified man at the hour of his conversion as he was at the close of his life. The feeblest babe in Christ is just as completely justified as is the most mature saint. Let theologians note the following distinctions. Christians were *decretively* justified from all eternity; *efficaciously* so when Christ rose again from the dead; *actually* so when they believed; *sensibly* so when the Spirit bestows joyous assurance; *manifestly* so when they tread the path of obedience; *finally* so at the Day of Judgment, when God shall sententiously, and in the presence of all created things, pronounce them so.

The third of three booklets.

