

The Doctrine of Justification Opened and Applied



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“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 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 by works, either of Jew or Gentile, in the foregoing discourse, is now proving what he asserted (verses 21, 22)—viz., “That 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 proveth, by showing what the gospel teacheth concerning the way of justification; for the gospel only reveals the righteousness of God: Rom. 1:16, 17, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.”

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*, 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—viz., justification of persons, or their being justified. And the meaning of it here, is, to be cleared and freed from all ambiguities and misunderstanding. Justification signifieth “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 judicial sentence discharging guilt, freeing from blame and accusation—approving, judging, owning, and pronouncing a person to be righteous. Use alters the signification. It is a juridical word, or law term, and hath reference to trial and judgment. 1 Cor. 4:3, 4: “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.” And it is so opposed to condemnation in judgment, Deut. 25:1: “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.” And Matt. 12:37: “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” And it is opposed both to accusation and condemnation, Rom. 8:33, 34: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Who is he that condemneth?” And so Job 11:20, “If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me;” chapter 13:15, “I will maintain mine own ways before him;” verse 18, “I have ordered my cause: I know that I shall be justified;” verse 19, “Who is he that will plead with me?” Here justification is plainly opposed unto the accusation or fault. And it is as plainly opposed to the passing sentence of condemnation, 1 Kings 8:32: “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,” In this sense, it is a sin to justify the wicked (Isa. 5:23; Prov. 17:15; Job 27:5). Actions must be existent already, and brought to trial, that they may be justified (Job 33:32; Isa. 43:9, 26).

Justice or righteousness consists, not in the intrinsic nature of an action, but in its agreeableness to a rule of judgment, so that actions are called just and righteous by an extrinsical denomination, 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 actings. 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,—viz., when their righteousness is declared; as Christ was said to be begotten the Son of God at the resurrection (Acts 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—*i.e.*, 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; Luke 7:29); though nothing can be added to the infinite righteousness of God. And wisdom is said to be justified of her children (Matt. 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 trope 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, and before, verses 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.

In the text we have,—

1. The persons justified:

(1). Sinners.

(2). Such sinners of all sorts that shall believe, whether Jews or Gentiles.

2. The justifier, or efficient cause, GOD.

3. The impulsive cause, *grace*.

4. The means effecting, or material cause, *the redemption of Christ*.

5. The formal cause, *the remission of sins*.

6. The instrumental cause, *faith*.

7. The time of declaring, *the present time*.

8. 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.

Observation I. “They who are justified are sinners, such as have come short of the glory of God,”—*i.e.*, of God’s approbation (John 5:44); of God’s image of holiness (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:24); of eternal happiness (1 Thess. 2:12; Rom. 5:2; 2 Cor. 4:17).

1. The law condemns all sinners, and strikes them dead as with a thunderbolt (Rom. 3:20); and adjudgeth them to shame, confusion, and misery, instead of to glory and happiness, by the strict terms of it (Rom. 2:6, 9, 11, 12); which none fulfil, neither can do (Rom. 8:7); neither Jews nor Gentiles. There is no hope, if free grace restore them not.

2. Christ came only to save sinners, and died for this end. Rom. 5:6: “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” And 1 Tim. 1:15: “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.” Matt. 9:13: “I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” Matt. 18:11: “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” And God must be believed on to salvation, as a God that justifieth the ungodly; he must believe, as one that worketh not, on Him that justifieth the ungodly (Rom. 4:5).

Observation II. “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 (verses 21, 22), 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 (Acts 10:28, 45; Eph. 3:4, 5, 8; Col. 1:25-27). And it is confirmed,—

1. Because, notwithstanding the Jews' 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).

2. 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. 19:15; Zech. 14:9.

3. 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).

4. 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.

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

1. Because He is the lawgiver, and hath power to save and destroy (James 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 (1 Cor. 4:3, 4).

2. 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; Mark 2:7).

Observation IV. "God justifieth souls freely by His grace" [*doreon te autou chariti, i.e., "freely by His grace"*]. One of these expressions had been enough by itself; but this redoubling it showeth 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 righteousness, whereby it might be challenged as a debt to us. Rom. 4:4: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." Chapter 11.6: "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.” Eph. 2:8, 9: “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.” 2 Tim. 1:9: “Who hath saved us, and called us with a 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.” Verse 10: “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ,” &c. 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,—

1. 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; Ezek. 16:6).

2. 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, Eph. 2:7, 9: “That, in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus.” And so Rom. 3:27.

Observation V. “God justifieth sinners through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 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 viz., redemption and propitiation through the blood of Christ; which is the righteousness of God treasured up in Him.

By redemption is meant properly such deliverance as is by paying a price; and so the words, “redeem” and “redemption,” are frequently used (Exod. 13:13; Lev. 25:24, 51, 52; Num. 3:48, 49, 51; Neh. 5:8; Jer. 32:7, 8). From this proper signification it is borrowed to signify a deliverance without price (Luke 21:28; Eph. 1:14, and 4:30); or rather, by a metonymy 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 effects of Christ’s redemption; therefore it is called the purchased possession.

By “a propitiation” is meant, that which appeaseth the wrath of God for sin and wins His favour. And this propitiation of Christ is two ways typified; *first*, in the propitiatory sacrifices whose blood was shed; and, *second*, 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 the atonement was sprinkled by the high priest before it. And this mercy-seat was a sign of God’s favourableness to a sinful people, in residing among them, and was called *hilasterion* (Heb. 9:5.)

Now, this doctrine appears confirmed for these reasons,—

1. Because Christ, by the will of God, gave Himself a ransom for us, to redeem us from sin and punishment, wrath and curse (Tit. 2:14.) He gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity; 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 unto us righteousness” (1 Cor. 1:30); and Matt. 20:28, as also 1 Tim. 2:6, “He gave his own life a ransom for many;” He bought us with this price (1 Cor. 6:20). “He redeemed us not with silver and gold, but with his precious blood, as of a lamb without spot” (1 Peter 1:18, 19; 2 Peter 2:1; Rev. 5:9). He suffered the penalty due to us for sin: 1 Peter 2:24, “He bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” Gal. 3:18, “He was made a curse for us,” and thereby redeemed us from the curse of the law; and, that He might be made a curse, He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 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 (John 14:31; Heb. 10:7); and His obedience was for our justification. Compare Rom. 5:19 with Phil. 3:8, 9. So Christ satisfied both for 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 obnoxiousness 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 (2 Cor. 8:9). We are righteous by Him, as we were guilty by Adam (Rom. 5:18).

2. God accepted this price as a satisfaction to His justice, which He showed in raising Christ from the dead, and so acquitting Him from all our sins: “He was justified in the Spirit” (1 Tim. 3:16) for us; Rom. 4:25, “raised for our justification.” See Rom. 8:33, 34: “It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that

died, yea rather, that is risen from the dead.” And Heb. 10:14: “By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified;” and, Eph. 5:2, This sacrifice was “a sweet smelling savour unto God.” If Christ had sunk under the weight of our sins, and not been raised, the payment had not been finished, and so the debt not discharged: (John 16:10), “of righteousness, because I go to my Father.”

3. 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 expresseth, and showeth, that He is the propitiation; and, as so, He is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). We have redemption and righteousness in Him (Eph. 1:7; 2 Cor. 5:21); and therein our freedom from condemnation (Rom. 8.1). Christ died, that His seed—those that are in Him by spiritual generation (1 Cor. 4:15)—might be justified (Isa. 53:10, 11).

Observation VI. “The formal cause of justification, or that wherein it consists, is the remission of sin—*i.e.*, not only the guilt and punishment is removed, but the fault; because it is a pardon grounded on justice, which cleareth the fault also. By Him we are justified from all things that the law chargeth us with” (Acts 13:39).

In men subject to a law, there is no middle condition between not imputing sin, and imputing righteousness; and so these terms are used as equivalent (Acts 13:38,39): “Through this man is preached the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified,” &c. (Rom. 4:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Rom. 5:17). This is through the blood shed of Christ (Eph. 1:7; Matt. 26:28).

Observation VII. “God justifieth a sinner through faith in Christ’s blood.” Faith is the instrumental cause of receiving this benefit, faith in the blood of Christ.

1. This faith is a believing on Christ, that we may be justified by Him: Gal. 2:16, “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.” We believe in Christ for justification, out of a sense of our inability to obtain justification by works.

2. This faith doth 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, which excludes all consideration of any works of ours, to be our righteousness under any denomination or diminutive terms whatever, whether you call it legal or evangelical; though you reckon it no more than the payment of a peppercorn (Rom. 11:6). 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 satisfieth for what we ought to have done or suffered; as hath been showed.

3. God justifieth by faith, as the instrument whereby we receive Christ and His righteousness; by which we are justified properly; and we are 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 (Acts 26:18, and 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 nourisheth, his food and drink. “The cup” is “put for the liquor in the cup” (1 Cor. 11:26, 27). See Rom. 1:17, and 3:22. Christ is in us by faith (Eph. 3:17); received, ate, drunk (John 1:12, and 6:50, 51, 53, 54).

4. 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; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:8, 9; Rom. 4:16).

5. 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; 2 Cor. 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 is contrary to charging us with sin and condemnation; which charging signifieth 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; Matt. 26:28).

Observation VIII. “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; Matt. 18:26). The ground of those pardons is now revealed by Christ’s coming (Isa. 51:5, 6, and 56:1; Dan. 9:24; 2 Tim. 1:9, 10); that those pardons may be no blemish to the justice of God now satisfied (Exod. 34:7; Psa. 85:10).

1. 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—viz., the righteousness of God; not His essential righteousness, that which is an essential property of God; but a righteousness which is upon all them that believe; Christ’s righteousness, which is the end of the law (Rom. 10:3, 4), and therefore called God’s righteousness; that which Christ wrought for us, which is given to us, and we receive by faith; that whereby Christ answered the law for us—by which, as the price, He redeemed us; which is called God’s righteousness, because it is of God’s working, and it only hath God’s acceptance and approbation—as Christ is called the Lamb of God because God provided Him, and accepts Him as an offering (John 1:29). Upon the like account, Christ’s kingdom is called the kingdom of God, because God’s own hand sets 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 (Phil. 2:6, 8). And this is that righteousness which the apostle opposeth to his own; that which is in Christ; which he had through faith. And this is the righteousness of God here; and in other places—“the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Phil. 3:9).

2. God aimed at declaring, in gospel-times, His righteousness in forgiving sins, past, in the time of 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, &c. (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 (Matt. 18:26, 27). But then God promised, that He would reveal His righteousness in due time (Isa. 56:1, and 51:5, 6; Psa. 98:2; Dan. 9:24). And this He hath done by the appearance of Christ (2 Tim. 1:10).

Observation IX. "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 believeth in Jesus." Here the essential property of God is exalted, and appears glorious, in justifying by the forementioned righteousness of God.

1. As God justifieth freely by grace, He would appear hereby 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 be gracious and merciful, yet He will not clear the guilty (Exod. 34:7; Gen. 18:25; Exod. 23:7). And so the saints of God concluded, that God had a righteousness and redemption whereby He forgave sin, though it was not then revealed (Psa. 2:14, 130:7, 8, and 143:1, 2). God would have justice and mercy to meet in our salvation (Psa. 85:10).

2. God would have it appear that He only is just, and therefore saveth 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. 3:5; Dan. 9:7).

3. 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, and 45:22, 24, 25); that we may glory in the Lord only (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

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 all the world, through the redemption that is by the blood of Christ; and this benefit contains all blessedness of life, and the consequences thereof (Rom. 4:6). That man, unto whom God

imputeth righteousness without works, hath a blessedness therein, and such an extensive blessedness, in regard of the spiritual part, as Abraham had, comprehending all spiritual blessings in Christ: "For they which be 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 [*Tis egkalesei?*]: "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 justifieth them; and Christ hath died and risen again." "They are redeemed from among men, being the first fruits to God and the Lamb. In their mouth there is no guile; and they are without fault [*amomoi*] before the throne of God (Rev. 14:4, 5). See also Col. 1:22.

2. They are delivered from all condemnation in sentence and execution; the curse and wrath of God, Gal. 3:13: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." 1 Thess. 1:10: "Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Psa. 85:3: "Thou hast taken away all Thy wrath: thou hast turned Thyself from the fierceness of Thine anger." See verses 5, 6. The wrath of God is an insupportable burden, and the foundation of all miseries; which foundation is razed, and a foundation of blessedness laid, whereby we have peace with God, and are fully reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1,2; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; Col. 1:21, 22). "You that were sometimes 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 unreprouvable in His sight." 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 (Acts 15:10; Rom. 8:15); from a wrath-working law (Rom. 4:15); from a sin-irritating law (Rom. 7:5); from a killing law, a ministration of death

and condemnation (2 Cor. 3:6, 7, 9); “Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage” (Gal. 4:24).

4. Hence, they are delivered from a condemning conscience, which otherwise would still gnaw them as a worm: Heb. 9:14, “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.” 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 this foulness of guilt from the conscience; therefore the blood of Christ hath the only efficacy this way, to take off the conscience of sin (Heb. 10:1-4, &c.) Hence they come to have a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21), void of offence towards God (Acts 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 to-day typically, might fall under condemnation, so far as to need another sacrifice for sin to-morrow; 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 sway all sins past, present, and to come (1 John 1:7).

6. It is a righteousness of infinite value, because it is the righteousness of One that is God; and his name is JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS (Jer. 23:6; Heb. 9:14). 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” (1 Cor. 1:24). Hence we are powerful, and conquer, by faith. Likewise there is a marvellous 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 (Josh. 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, of delivery from the power and dominion of sin, as well as the charge of it before God, and guilt in our own consciences; for this was the end of Christ's death, Tit. 2:14; Rom. 6:14, and 8:3, 4, 30: "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." The law was the strength of sin; for sin had its title to rule in us by reason of the curse; and thence 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 way of holiness, serving out of love (Gal. 3:14; 1 John 4:19; Gal. 4:5; Heb. 9:15; Rom. 5:11; Luke 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. 44:9; 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 (John 14:13, 14); and expect all good things from Him, Eph. 3:12: "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him." Heb. 10:22, 23: "Let us draw near with full assurance of faith." 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, and 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; 2 Cor. 3:6, 7; Gal. 3:12, 24); it is contrary in terms to faith, though it were subservient.

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

1. Consider, whether you be made really sensible of sin, and of 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; Matt. 9:13; Acts 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. Those that were stung with the fiery serpents, looked up to the brazen serpent.

2. Dost thou trust only upon free mercy for justification in God's sight, renouncing all thy 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 (Luke 18:13, 14). Paul, notwithstanding all that the world might think he had to plead for himself, "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"—*i.e.*, the redeeming and propitiation-righteousness of Christ, whereby 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 (Phil. 3:7-9; Rom. 4:5).

3. Dost thou trust with any confidence on Christ, not continuing in a mere suspense? In a way of mere doubting, we can receive no good thing from God (James 1:6, 7). Mere doubting will not loose the conscience from the guilt of sin (Heb. 10:22); but leaveth the soul under terrors. Abraham's confidence is the example and pattern of our justifying faith, that we should endeavour to come up unto, 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 doth not give up itself to the dominion of them (Psa. 42:11; Mark 9:24). It hath always something contrary to them, and striving with them.

4. Dost thou come to Christ for remission of sins, for the right end, namely, that thou mayest be freed from the dominion of sin before the living God? (Heb. 9:14; Psa. 130; Tit. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24). If otherwise, thou dost not receive it for the right end, and desirest not really the favour and enjoyment of God, and to be in friendship with Him.

5. Dost thou walk in holiness, and strive to evidence this justification by the fruits of faith in good works? If otherwise, thy faith is but a dead faith; for a true faith purifieth the heart (Acts 15:9). If Christ be thine, He will be sanctification as well as righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 8:1, 9; John 13:8). If God hath taken thee into His favour, He will doubtless cleanse thee. 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 seeth, yet it is not alone without other members. So the apostle James declareth faith that is alone to be dead, and biddeth 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 (James 2:14-26). 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 (Matt. 12:33-37); not as being our righteousness themselves, or conditions of our having Christ's righteousness, or qualifying us for it.

Use 3. It serveth for exhortation to several duties.

Exhortation 1. To the wicked. It is dehortation unto 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 they will 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 saith 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 (Luke 24:47; Acts 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 (John 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 (John 15:22). You cannot say you are undone, by your past sins, beyond recovery, and, therefore, it is in vain to strive; for, behold, remission of sins is proclaimed unto you (Ezek. 33:10, 11). And what a horrid sin is it to despise the blood of the Son of God! (John 3:18, 36; Heb. 10:28, 29).

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

Answer. Thou canst not seek justification truly except thou hast 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 (2 Cor. 5:19). The use thou art to make of it is, to seek God’s friendship by it, and the enjoyment of Him. Why doth a man seek a pardon, if he intend to go on in rebellion, and stand out in defiance to his prince? (1 Pet. 2:24). They seek pardon in a mocking way, and 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! and how great sinners were of both sorts! (Rom. Chapters 1 through 3); and even for those that killed and murdered the Lord of glory (Acts 2:23, 36; 1 Cor. 2:8); for the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15; Acts 16:28-34). Where sin abounds, grace superabounds (Rom. 5:20). Your sins are but the sins

of a creature, but His righteousness is the righteousness of God (John 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 thou mayest be wise” (1 Cor. 3:18); otherwise you will labour 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 have received you into favour; for justification is, in order of nature, before true holiness of heart and life (1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 9:14). Faith is the great work and mother-duty (John 6:29; Gal. 5:6; Isa. 55:2), &c.; and, therefore, while you believe not, you dishonour Christ and His death (Gal. 2:21, and 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 cometh by hearing the gospel preached (Rom. 10:17), and that comes in working faith, not in word only, but in power (1 Thess. 1:5), beyond what can be done by natural or human attainment (John 6:63). Therefore, if thou hast no beginning of it in thee, thy only way is to attend to the gospel, and to meditate on thy sin and misery and Christ’s excellency, that so thou mayest be inclined in thy heart to believe (Song 1:3; Gal. 2:16; Psa. 9:10), for this is the way God useth to beget faith (Isa. 55:3). But if thou hast a desire and inclination to fly from thyself to Christ in the bent of thy heart, so that thou preferrest Christ above all, then the Spirit hath begun, and will carry on the work, so that now thou mayest pray confidently for faith (Song 1:4; Luke 11:13; Mark 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 thou hast righteousness in Christ, God will make thee 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 promiseth a new heart. If sin be forgiven, thou shalt be delivered from its power, and quickened by the same death and resurrection of Christ, whereby thou art justified (Col. 2:12, 13).

Exhortation 3. It exhorteth 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 hath satisfied, and His righteousness is above their sins (Ezekiel 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; 1 John 4:9, 10, and 3:16; 2 Cor. 8:9). And what a glorious and excellent righteousness hath God given us in Christ! (Isa. 61:10).

3. To walk comfortably [*conformably*], 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 that 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 never so much ungodliness, no good qualifications, yet Christ is at hand for your comfort (Isa. 50:10; 2 Thess. 2:16, 17). In all your sins, apply yourselves to this fountain (Zech. 13:1; 1 John 1:7). If sin lie on the conscience, it weakens peace and spiritual strength. Lie 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, from the Papists, and from many Protestants (Gal. 1:6). And the apostle reckons it is by a spiritual bewitchery (Gal. 3:1). 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 colour or pretence whatever, you lose *all* (Gal. 5:2, 3). Do not so dishonour 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, and chapter 4:7). This is the doctrine which glorifieth God, and abaseth 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 thee (1 Pet. 2:8; Rom. 9:32, 33).

5. Walk as one that enjoys the favour of God in Christ. Let Him have the honour of it. Walk therefore in holiness, knowing by what price you are redeemed (1 Pet. 1:17-19; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 1 Cor. 6:20). Love God that hath loved you first (1 John 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 of 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; Matt. 6:14, 15, and 18:21). Desire that grace may be exalted upon others; and wait patiently for the full declaration of justification at the great day (Gal. 5:5; Acts 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.

