

Justification by Faith

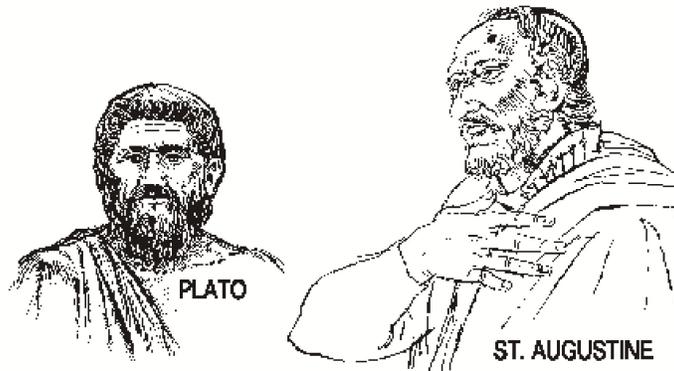
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The Basic Catholic Doctrine of Justification by Faith

Romanism is the religion of human nature. Catholic theology is based on classical Greek logic, the best logic that humanity can muster. If our own understanding of the gospel is the product of human reasoning, it is sure to contain elements that are essentially Catholic. If the eyes of our understanding have not been anointed with the heavenly eye salve, then we should not be surprised to find that our thinking is reflected in the best Catholic authors.

Catholicism Affirms "By Grace Alone"

The New Testament writers are emphatic that salvation is by grace alone (Rom. 3:24, 28; 4:5; 11:6; Gal.



2:16-21; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-8). The first open challenge in the Church to salvation by grace was by Pelagius (about A.D. 400). He proposed that man was able to live a holy life by the natural powers given him of God, and thus obtain salvation.

Augustine vigorously opposed Pelagianism and spelled out the orthodox view of man's depravity and need of divine grace.

In a series of councils, the Catholic Church sided with Augustine. And it is important to notice that Augustine was a great champion of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Within the Church, others arose to oppose Augustinian theology by proposing views which

became known as semi-Pelagianism. The councils of the Church even condemned semi-Pelagianism. Catholic authors cite these facts of history in an effort to demonstrate how the Church has always stood by the New Testament teaching of salvation by grace.

It comes as a surprise to many Protestants to see how freely Catholic authors quote the Bible on salvation by grace. It appears that the Roman authors can live quite comfortably with these passages of Scripture. We quote from a representative Catholic book, *The Theology of Grace*, by Jean Daujat (London; Burns & Gates, 1959):

"St. Paul tells us that we are 'justified freely by his grace',¹² and that we are 'saved according to the election of grace, and if by grace it is not now by works: otherwise grace is no more grace'.¹³ To the Corinthians, he writes: 'By the grace of God I am what I am',¹⁴ and speaks to the Ephesians of 'Christ, by whose grace you are saved . . . for by grace you are saved . . . and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God'.¹⁵ He reminds Timothy that 'God has called me by his holy calling, not according to our own works, but according to his own purpose and grace'.¹⁶ And again: 'To every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ'.¹⁷ The same Apostle writes to Titus: 'That being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to the hope of life everlasting'.¹⁸ and again to the Ephesians that God has predestinated us unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in his beloved Son'.¹⁹"

"We have already quoted St. Paul's words to the Romans: The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom we have received. Charity is the life of Christ present in us by the Holy Spirit. It is Jesus who, dwelling in us through the gift of the Holy Spirit, loves God perfectly in us through the Holy Spirit by whom we are animated and moved. So St. Teresa of Lisieux could write: 'When I am charitable, it is only our Lord acting in me.' Of ourselves, we are incapable of a single movement of love, unless it comes to us by the grace of Christ abiding in us by the Holy Spirit."

"Of ourselves, we have not, and cannot have, merit, virtue or holiness. It is Jesus Christ, living in us, substituting his life of grace for our natural, sinful life, who is our merit and our sanctity. We are capable of meritorious and holy living only in the measure in which we have renounced the sinful, natural life inherited from Adam, our desires and impulses that are purely sensuous, as also our own opinions and self-will, in order to live henceforth the 'Christ-life' that

must permeate everything in us."

In his book, *The Life of Grace*, P. Gregory Stevens says:

"St. Paul has summarized the plight of man without Christ and without grace in a single sentence: 'For when we were in the flesh the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in our members so that they brought forth fruit unto death.' (Rom. 7.5) Man without Christ is doomed to death because he is subject to and unable to control the sinful movements of the flesh, a principle of rebellion against God. In causing man to become more conscious of sin, the Law heightened his responsibility; but it gave no power to fulfill its own prescriptions. Even those Jews who, like the pharisees, took pride in their own ability to live out the Law are defeated by the Law, for grace comes only through Christ. Only through grace is man liberated from that bondage to Satan which leads to death. In his gracious mercy the Father has sent his Son to free man, to unite man with the living Trinity, to lead man to the plenitude of his destiny in the grace of Christ. (Ephesians 2 may be studied as a summary of this whole doctrine in Paul's own words and expression.)"

"For there is no distinction, as all have sinned and have need of the glory of God. They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3.22-24)

"Paul is writing to oppose those Jews and Christians who saw justification as something to be accomplished by a person through his own good works. In this aberration, man was seen as bringing about grace as a reward or even as a salary from God for good deeds done. Paul vigorously opposes this religion of human self-sufficiency, denying, as we have seen, man's power to perform the good works of the Law, and constantly affirming that justification is a work of God bestowed on faithful men as a free divine gift. The Apostle strongly opposes a religion based on 'boasting,' on self-sufficiency before God. Such a religion is injurious to the divine goodness and is based on an unreal view of the human condition."

"From its genesis at the beginning of man's life to its consummation at the end, the work of man's salvation is inseparably the gratuitous gift of God and the free cooperation of man."

Then there are the canons of the Council of Trent. In 1547 the Church convened to issue a proclamation on justification in order to counter the Reformation theology. In Canon 1 the Catholic council declared:

"If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema."

Canon 3 appears to be very evangelical also:

"If anyone says that without the predisposing inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and without His help, man can believe, hope, love or be repentant as he ought, so that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon Him, let him be anathema."

In his *Doctrinal Catechism*, Stephen Keenan makes this startling presentation:

"Q. What justification?

A. It is a grace which makes us friends of God.

Q. Can a sinner merit this justifying grace?

A. No, he cannot; because all the good works which the sinner performs whilst he is in a state of mortal sin, are dead works, which have no merit sufficient to justify.

Q. Is it an article of the Catholic faith, that the sinner, in mortal sin, cannot merit the grace of justification?

A. Yes; it is decreed in the seventh chap. of the sixth session. of the Council of Trent, that neither faith, nor good works p~ ceding justification, can merit the grace of justification.

Q. How then is the sinner justified?

A. He is justified gratuitously by the pure mercy of God, not on account of his own or any human merit, but purely through the merits of Jesus Christ; for Jesus Christ is our only mediator of redemption, who alone, by his passion and death, has reconciled us to his Father.

Q. Why then do Protestants charge us with believing, that the sinner can merit the remission of his sins?

A. Their ignorance of the Catholic doctrine is the cause of this, as well as many other false charges."

The Catholic Concept of Justification

Now let us look at Rome's doctrine of justification. In the words of its own apologists, the Roman doctrine of justification is "the heart of Catholic teaching."

Without question, the Church teaches that justification is by an act of God's grace. Stephen Keenan has a point when he says that Protestants often show their ignorance of Catholic doctrine. The Church does not teach, and never has officially taught, that justification is anything else than God's gracious act. Those who imagine that Catholic theologians teach a bald righteousness by man's own works, are not prepared to meet or recognize the doctrine of the mystery of iniquity.

In brief, Catholicism teaches that justification is God's renovating act within man. Without this new birth, or regenerating act of the Holy Spirit, the Church declares that sinners can never be justified.

The Council of Trent declared:

" . . . if they [men] were not born again in Christ, they would never be justified, since in that new birth there is bestowed upon them, through the merit of His passion, the grace by which they are made just . . . "

The editors of the Roman Catholic Douay Version make these footnote comments on Romans 3 and 4:

"The justification of which St. Paul here speaks is the infusion of sanctifying grace which alone renders a person supernaturally pleasing in the sight of God."

"But justification, that is, an infusion of sanctifying grace, cannot be merited by us; it is an entirely gratuitous gift of God."

And P. Gregory Stevens writes the following in *The Life of Grace*:

"What is the reality of the justification accorded by God when man cooperates in faith? Is it merely like a statement of God declaring the sinner just? Or is it a divine act by which the sinner is internally transformed and becomes a new reality before God?"

Catholic thought has always been that the justice bestowed on man is a gratuitous gift (Gal. 3.6ff), and a true justice which actually

transforms man into a person pleasing to God."

"Catholic doctrine on these questions, formulated in opposition to Lutheranism, was presented in full at the Council of Trent, as it had been previously by Pope Leo X in the Bull 'Exsurge Domine' of June 15, 1520. The teaching of Trent centers on two points of fundamental importance for the understanding of the Catholic doctrine on grace. First of all, justification is a real and profound transformation of man, a genuine gift of sanctification to him. It can in no way be reduced to something purely external."

"In a clear, religiously profound statement the Council defines the inner nature and structure of justification. It does so in direct opposition to the extrinsicist position of Reformation theology. The heart of Catholic teaching is contained in this passage. First of all comes the assertion that justification is not only the remission of sins, but sanctification and renovation of the interior man through the voluntary reception of grace and the gifts, whereby man becomes just instead of unjust, a friend instead of an enemy, that he may be an heir in the hope of life everlasting." The Council then details the causes of this inner transformation: its goal and purpose is God's glory; it is brought about by God through the merits of our Redeemer, and communicated to man in faith and baptism."

Summary and Conclusion

The Catholic doctrine of justification may be accurately summarized as follows:

1. Justification is the internal renovation and renewing of a man, i.e., human sanctification.

2. Justification comes by an infusion of God's grace. Man is justified on the basis of what the Holy Spirit has done in him.

3. Justification means that man himself is made just-made pleasing to God in his own person.

In practical terms, Catholic justification may be expressed this way: "Here is a sinner, vile and wicked. God's grace acting within him changes him into a person pleasing to God. By this grace acting within him, he is justified before God."

A devout Catholic may say: "Righteousness by faith means that I cannot save myself, but by faith I can receive God's transforming grace. His grace can change my heart, and by His grace in my heart I can be acceptable in His

sight.

"Or to use the words of Jean Daujat (*The Theology of Grace*):

"Sinful man cannot, of himself, be pleasing to God. For that, he must receive a gift from God which transforms him interiorly, cleanses him and sanctifies him by adorning him with qualities that render him pleasing to his Creator."

The foregoing is a faithful reflection of Romanism, not only presented after a careful research in Catholic literature, but also personally verified with theologians from that Church. If you honestly cannot see much wrong with the doctrine set forth in the preceding material, then, dear friend, it is because you have been a good Catholic without knowing it. We do not say this to offend. Romanism is merely the religion of human nature, and we are all human. Unless we are anointed with the Spirit of divine enlightenment, we are bound to be confused with the doctrine of the mystery of iniquity.

12 Rom. 3.24

13 1b1d., 11.5-6

14 1 Cor. 15.10

15 Ephes. 2.5-8

16 2 Tim. 1.9

17 Ephes. 4.7

18 Titus 3.7

19 Ephes. 1.6

The Reformation Concept of Jusification by Faith

Rome and the Reformers both declared that a man is justified by God's work of grace. It is all-important that we see the real contrast between the Roman and the Reformation faiths:

Rome

Justified by God's work Justified by God's work of grace **in man.**

Reformation

Justified by God's work of grace **in Christ.**



The real difference between Rome and the Reformation was in fundamental emphasis. Romanism is essentially subjective-it is man-centered, experience-centered. The Reformation faith was objective-it was Christ-centered.

The focal point of Catholic theology is God's work of grace **within** human experience. That is why it is so devastating to Christian freedom. Man is a prisoner because his own experience has become the center of his concern. Catholic doctrine adds despair to grief by basing a man's standing with God on what grace does within him.

If a man's acceptance and right standing with God depend upon God's grace within his own heart, then he must ask himself, "How much grace must I have operative in me before I can stand justified before God? How prayerful, repentant, loving or obedient must grace make me before God can accept me?" This was the problem that confronted that devout Augustinian monk, Martin Luther. While he based his right standing with God on God's work of grace in his heart, he could never be sure that he had enough of God's grace in his heart. In fact, the more he looked within his own experience to find a basis of his acceptance with God, the more he was tormented by the sight of his own sinfulness.

Then came the enlightenment of the gospel in the rediscovery of Paul's doctrine of justification. Says the apostle: ". . . being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3:24. The New English Bible translates the passage: ". . . all are justified by God's free grace alone, through His act of liberation in the person of **Christ Jesus**." This shows us that rather than being justified by what God does within us, we are justified by what God did altogether outside of us. God accomplished His act of liberation for all men in Jesus Christ. Here is the dividing of the way between Rome and the Reformation. Rome declares that a man is justified by God's work of grace in his heart. The Reformation declares that a man is justified by God's work of grace in Jesus Christ.

Christ-Our Everlasting Father

How did we become sinners before God? The answer to this question throws great light on the vital question, How do we become righteous before God?

Paul's doctrine is this: We did not become sinners before God by something that happened within us. We became sinners because of something that happened outside of us, in another Person altogether. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Rom. 5:19. Adam was our first father. He stood as our federal head. The whole human family was constituted in him. When he fell, it was the same as if every man had fallen. This is Paul's argument in Romans 5:15-19: One man's offence brought death and condemnation upon many. Other translations read "the many," "the whole race."

The tragedy of the fall and condemnation of the whole human race in Adam, was the outworking of the law of fatherhood. Children share the lot of the father. The Canaanite children were destroyed along with their parents. Achan's family died because of the father's covetousness. Even in secular life, if a wealthy father loses his property in business reverses, the children are made poor in their

father's poverty.

Satan rejoiced at the fall of Adam - rejoiced because he won the whole human race in him. Now if Satan could cause the condemnation of all men in one man, could not God do the same thing in one Man? Indeed, this was the gospel mystery that took the devil by surprise.

God reversed the fall of Adam by giving the human race another Father, as it is written, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, **The everlasting Father**, The Prince of Peace." Isa. 9:6. We do not generally think of Christ as being our Father, but this is exactly as Paul presents Him who became "the second Adam." God gave His only-begotten Son to be our everlasting Father.

Just as the whole race was comprehended in Adam, God comprehended all humanity in His Son. Jesus became the new Head, the Representative, the Father of the fallen race.

Christ's Victory Is Every Man's Victory

The law of fatherhood applies not only negatively for bad, but positively for good. Children are constituted clean by the believing parent (1 Cor. 7:14). Even in secular life, children participate in the happy fortune of the father. If he comes into possession of great wealth, the children rejoice, exclaiming, "We are rich!" If he buys a shiny new automobile, the children say, "We have a new car." And they say all this as if it is their perfect right (as indeed it is), even though it was entirely their father's work without their help, that procured it all.

When Jesus became our new Father, He undertook the responsibility of keeping the law of God perfectly for us. As our Head and Representative, He rendered to the law an obedience that in every way measured with its infinite claims. We must see that before God and the bar of eternal justice, Christ stood as if He were every man. All humanity was constituted in Him. Thus His obedience was every

man's obedience. It was the same as if every man had personally kept the law of God with the same infinite perfection as Jesus Christ. So Paul says, "For as by one man's disobedience many [literally, the many, i.e., the whole race) were made [or constituted] sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many [the many) be made righteous." Rom. 5:19.

Thus it is forever settled that only the obedience rendered personally by Jesus Christ makes us righteous in the sight of God. Just as we were made sinners by an act of disobedience outside of us, so we are given right standing with God by an obedience outside of us-even by the personal doing of Jesus Christ.

Christ's obedience was more than His holy living. It included His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). When Christ consented to become our Father, He assumed the debt accruing to all our delinquencies. For instance, if children damage your property, you seek justice by dealing with their father. You may rightfully ask him to pay for all the damage done by his children.

What love caused Christ to become our Father, and thus to assume the full extent of our debt! As Luther put it:

"Our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law, and so to be holden under the same that we could never be delivered from it by our own power, sent His Son into the world and laid upon Him all the sins of all men, saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, blasphemer, and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief that hanged upon the cross; and briefly, be thou the Person which hath committed the sins of all men; see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them. Here now cometh the law and saith: I find Him a sinner, and that such an one as hath taken upon Him the sins of all men, and I see no sins but in Him. Therefore let Him die upon the cross. And so he setteth upon Him and killeth Him. By this means the whole world is purged and cleansed from all sins, and so delivered from death and all evils. Now sin and death being abolished by this one man, God would see nothing else in the whole world, especially if it did believe, but a mere cleansing and righteousness."-Commentary on Galatians, p.272.

The apostle Paul declares, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead." 2 Cor. 5:14. By this precious statement, the apostle means to say that since Christ died, it is the same as if all men had suffered death for their sins.

Christ's victory is every man's victory if he will but believe and accept it. Christ has vanquished. This is the joyful news. Our everlasting Father has restored all that was lost in Adam.

Objective Justification

The gospel is the good news of what God has done for all men in Jesus Christ. He has accomplished our act of liberation in the Person of His Son. While we were ungodly, without strength, and enemies in our minds by wicked works, God wrought out our complete salvation in our great Head. He placed our sins upon Christ, punished them in Christ and put them away by Christ. So Paul declares, ". . . [He] was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." Rom. 4:25. Some translations read that He was raised again "because of our justification." This means that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was God's witness that He had forgiven all men in Jesus Christ. If there were one sin left for which atonement had not been made, if there were one transgression for which Christ had not made full satisfaction. He would still be a prisoner in Joseph's tomb. But the gospel proclaims, "Christ is risen! The tomb is empty! God has liberated you from all sin in Christ!" This is why the resurrection was the dynamic of the apostolic message.

Then in the fifth chapter of Romans, Paul continues, "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Rom. 5:18.

The resurrection is the witness that in Jesus Christ the entire human family has been justified. Liberation, forgiveness and redemption are accomplished realities in

Jesus Christ. For if we can confess that we were made sinners by the disobedience of our first father, how "much more" (to use Paul's expression) should we now confess that God has made us righteous and accepted in the Beloved. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He ascended as our Representative. It was the same as if we had gone into heaven. Did God receive Him? He received Him with great joy. He glorified Him with glory impossible to describe. He seated Him on His right hand far above the angels. But we must see that all this was done for humanity. It was the same as if God had already done this for all of us. In Christ humanity is not only pardoned but promoted, not only justified but glorified.

This is the good news of the gospel. It is good news for poor, struggling sinners. They need no longer look within their own experience for anything on which to base their hope of acceptance with God. God has already reconciled the whole rebellious world to Himself in the death of Jesus Christ. As surely as Jesus has been given to every lost sinner, just so surely has pardon and justification passed upon all men by God's gracious Gift. Every sinner may respond to the gospel, saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Isa. 45:24.

The declaration of what God has done in the uplifted Christ creates faith in the heart of a sinner. And it is by faith that every sinner may possess his Possession and know the peace and assurance in the certainty of right standing with God on the basis of what grace has already done for all men in Jesus Christ.

A Four-point Summary of Reformation Justification

We present hereunder a four-point contrast of the basic differences between the Roman and Reformation doctrines of justification:



Romanism

1. Justified by God's work of grace in a man.
2. Justified by faith that has become active by charity.
3. Justified by infused righteousness.
4. Justification means making a man righteous in his own person.

Reformation

1. Justified by God's work of grace in Christ.
2. Justified by faith alone.
3. Justified by imputed righteousness.
4. Justification means that a man is accounted righteous.

1. Justified by God's Work of Grace in Christ.

Christian doctrine has two poles: (1) "in Christ"; (2) "Christ in you." Or we can express it this way:

1. Christ's work for us.
2. Christ's work in us.

In the matter of justification, we must never confuse these two aspects of redemption. By Number 1 we mean the doing and dying of Christ. Number 2 embraces the work that the Holy Spirit does in the believer's heart. The Reformers maintained the Pauline position that we are justified solely on account of Number 1-Christ's work for us.

2. Justified by Faith Alone. God's redemptive act for all men in the Person of Christ has already taken place at the cross. The empty tomb is the seal to Christ's perfect atonement for all sin. Humanity has already been justified in its great Head (objective justification). This means that in order to receive the blessing of justification (subjective justification), man has only to submit himself to God's verdict passed upon him in the Person of Christ. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Rom. 3:28.

"By faith alone" (*sola fide*) became the slogan and war cry of the Reformation. And the Reformers meant that nothing else was required for justification save that a man believe in what God had done for him. In this context, they saw that faith was not an act which initiates a man's justification, but a becoming conscious of something already in existence.

The papists were willing to concede that a man could be justified by faith if that faith were clothed with love. But since love is the fulfilling of the law, the Reformers recognized that the papal view was a veiled attempt to support righteousness by the fulfillment of law. Hence Protestantism insisted on *sola fide*, for they saw that love would be the fruit in man's experience of sanctification. According to Romans 5:1-5, love is the fruit of justification.

3. Justified by Imputed Righteousness. The Reformers merely re-emphasized the clear teaching of Paul, especially as set forth in Romans 4. In this chapter the

words translated "accounted," "reckoned" and "imputed" all come from the same Greek word.

"For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Verse 3.

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works . . . Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness." Verses 5, 6, 9.

"... and [Abraham] being fully persuaded that, what He [God] had promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." Verses 21-24.

The word "impute" means that the righteousness by which we are justified is outside of us. Instead of being poured into us, as the Catholics teach, it is credited, or accounted, to the believer in Jesus. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* gives both the Protestant and Catholic definitions of justification as follows:

"**justify** . . . (Theol.) declare (person) free from penalty of sin on ground of Christ's righteousness or (Rom. Cath.) of the infusion of grace ..."

The Council of Trent pronounced a curse on anyone who would teach that justification comes "through the imputation of Christ's righteousness alone."

There is full assurance and freedom in the truth. Justification by righteousness wholly outside of us means that we do not have to look within our own hearts to see a certain amount of infused righteousness. Rather, we go to Christ just as we are, realizing that in our Substitute there is righteousness enough to give us favor and right standing with God.

4. Justification-Accounted and Declared Righteous. In the Latin the word "justify" means "to make

righteous." And the Roman Church contended that "justification" means making a man righteous in his own person. The Catholic reasons, "How can God pronounce a man to be righteous in His sight unless he is actually righteous?" He therefore thinks that a man must be born again and transformed before he can have right standing with God. In this system of thought, a man can have no real assurance of justification, for he can never be sure whether the Holy Spirit has made him righteous enough to be accepted of God.

In contrast, the Reformation theology says with Paul, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:5. God justifies sinners, and sinners of all sorts, not on the condition of any preceding righteousness, but on the condition that they believe with their whole heart what God has done for them, namely, that He has already reconciled and accepted them in the Substitute.

The Reformers pointed out that the words "justify" and "justification" are legal and judicial words, closely related to the idea of trial and judgment (Deut. 25:1; 1 Kings 8:32; 1 Cor. 4:3, 4; Matt. 12:37; Rom. 3:4). The words imply a **declaration** and **pronouncement** from the divine court of the believer's right standing with God. "Justification" in itself does not mean a change in the man, but a declaration of how he appears in God's sight.

Divine "justification" does not mean to actually make a believer righteous as an empirical reality, but it means to account him as righteous. And God does this for the believing sinner before he has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Paul illustrates this from the experience of Abraham:

"... (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Rom. 4:17.

God did not pronounce Abraham a father after Isaac was born, but while Sarah was still barren. By faith

Abraham accepted that he was a father because it was so **in the Word of God** rather than by empirical reality. In the same way, we are to believe when the gospel tells us that we have been made righteous in Christ. If we stop to consider what we are, faith staggers as Abraham's faith would have staggered if he had considered his own dead body and the deadness of Sarah's womb. Therefore, in justification God "calleth those things which be not as though they were."

Thus the believer is secure only in the merciful reckoning of God. The Lord accounts him as having more moral worth than the angels who have never sinned. But the believer knows that in himself he is not as he appears before God in His exalted Substitute. Indeed, his nature is still sinful, and the nearer he comes to Christ, the more sinful he sees himself to be. This keeps him humble, utterly dependent upon his Substitute in whom he stands wholly righteous, wholly acceptable in the sight of God.

The Righteousness Which Is of Faith



Paul was the greatest human teacher that ever lived. God committed the teaching of righteousness by faith to his trust. His understanding of this gospel truth was in advance of all the other apostles. When the Reformers were

struggling to get out of the darkness of Romanism, only the writings of Paul could bring them the needed deliverance. It was his clear utterances on the righteousness which is of faith that gave birth to the Reformation:

"He [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, **a seal of the righteousness of the faith.**" Rom. 4:11

"For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but **through the righteousness of faith.**" Rom. 4:13

"The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, **even the righteousness which is of faith.**" Rom. 9:30

"The **righteousness which is of faith** speaketh on this wise." Rom. 10:6

"For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of **righteousness by faith.**" Gal. 5:5

". . . **the righteousness which is of God by faith.**" Phil. 3:9

"Noah . . . became heir of the **righteousness which is by faith.**" Heb. 11:7

What Is Righteousness?

It is in the book of Romans, more than any other epistle, that Paul most fully explains the truth of the righteousness which is by faith. And the first thing that we must determine is, "What does the apostle mean by 'He is not speaking about the right doing of the saints, nor any holy quality revealed in their lives, even though they do live righteously in this present evil world.' " When Paul speaks of this saving, justifying righteousness, he means nothing but the righteousness of God Himself:

"But now the **righteousness of God** without the law is manifested . . . even the **righteousness of God** which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Rom. 3:21, 22

God's righteousness was so infinite, so incomprehensible, so beyond the ability of angels to endure, that no language of heaven or earth could describe it. But God unfolded it and put it on display in the gospel of His

crucified Son:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For **therein is the righteousness of God revealed** ,,," Rom. 1:16, 17

". . . 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." Rom. 3:24-26

Hanging on the cross for guilty sinners, Christ was the gospel. In this act God revealed His righteousness to angels and to men.

How Much Righteousness?

When God gave His Son to die on behalf of sinful men, He gave His own life and righteousness for their justification. This was so because in Jesus was not only the life of the Father, but the total life of the Father. Jesus could say, "All things that the Father hath are Mine." John 16:15. And Paul declared: "For in Him the complete being of God, by God's own choice, came to dwell." "For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied." ". . . in Him lie hidden all God's treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Col. 1:19; 2:9, 3, N.E.B.

Jesus Christ was not only perfect, but infinitely perfect. His life was of infinite value because He was the embodiment of divine life and righteousness. He came to the cross and freely gave this life of infinite value for the worthless lives of sinful men. Jesus was the total outlay of heaven's treasure, the accumulated love and wealth of eternity, the totality of God's righteousness. When we raise our little minds to comprehend the gospel, we are surveying the biggest thing in the universe - the righteousness of God Himself. And it is by His righteousness, all of His righteousness, and nothing less than all of it, that sinners are

justified.

Again we ask, by whose righteousness are sinners justified? By God's righteousness alone! And how much of God's righteousness does it require to justify sinners? All of it! Such is the value of the sacrifice made on Calvary. If one could collect all the righteousness of all the angels and all the saints and total it together, it would be as nothing compared to the incomprehensible and infinite righteousness which was poured out for the salvation of guilty sinners. Such is the righteousness which is unto all and upon all them that believe in Jesus.

Justified by Righteousness Imputed

Once we grasp the truth that it is God's righteousness which justifies, and that it requires all of it to justify, we can appreciate Paul's doctrine of justification by the imputation of righteousness.

The great error of Romanism consists in the idea that a sinner can be justified by having righteousness poured into him. As if the full glory and dimension of God's righteousness could be reduced to an intra-human experience! How could the little human temple contain the sum total of the accumulated treasure of eternity? Thus does the mind of antichrist try to reduce the unspeakable gift of God (2 Cor. 9:15) to something no bigger than a little human experience.

Imagine yourself standing beside the mighty Amazon River, awed by the sheer vastness of its ceaseless stream. Then in your thirst you step down to its bank with your little vessel. Would you be foolish enough to think that you could contain it all in your stomach? Yet that Amazon is only a little thing in this little dot of a world, which is only a dot in our solar system; and our solar system is but a speck in the great galaxies of the universe. But above, beyond and greater than all, is the mighty God and His righteousness; and even ten thousand million Amazons could only faintly portray the mightiness of His righteousness. Yet all of it has been poured out as a mighty stream of grace for my

justification; and it requires all of it, and nothing less than all of it, to justify me, a sinner. Therefore, in order to be justified by an infused righteousness, I would be confronted with something more impossible than drinking one million Amazons. Remember, it takes the whole stream of God's grace to give me right standing with God. Therefore I could never contain enough in my experience in order to be justified.

If you received the news that you had inherited a gift of thirty billion dollars, would you run to collect it in a couple of suitcases? Why, it would be so vast that you could only deposit it in your account at the bank. So God's gift of righteousness in Jesus Christ is so incomprehensibly vast that He credits it to him who believes and receives Jesus as a personal Savior. The little human temple is far too small, too finite, to contain all of the immeasurable wealth of God's favor; yet God freely imputes all of it for the believer's justification:

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works . . ." Rom. 4:5, 6.

The Believer's Righteousness Is in Heaven

Since the little human temple cannot contain all of the righteousness of God, it is utterly impossible to stand justified by a "within" righteousness. There is only one temple great enough to contain this saving righteousness, and that is the temple in heaven (Rev. 11:19). And more glorious yet, there is a Man in that temple who contains the sum total of God's righteousness. This is the mystery of the incarnation. That Man is the God-Man, and in Him dwells "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9. Therefore our justification may be found only in Him (See Isa. 45:24).

Thus, it is most certain that the righteousness which gives believers right standing with God is found only in heaven, only in one Man. Indeed, the righteousness of the

saints is Christ Himself, as Jeremiah 23:6 declares, "This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."

Justifying righteousness is not found on earth, but millions of light years away. Justifying righteousness is never found in the believer, but it always remains outside of and extrinsic to him. The righteousness which is of faith does not try to bring that righteousness down to earth (Rom. 10:6), but the word of faith which is preached in the gospel enables man to believe "unto righteousness." Rom. 10:10. Faith reaches beyond this earth, enters heaven itself, and embracing that Man at God's right hand, declares, "This is my Righteousness."

God has mercifully placed the treasure of our righteousness in heaven. No moth can eat it, no rust can corrupt it, and no thief can steal it. This righteousness is tried and tested. It can never fail, for it is everlasting. The only thing we need is faith in it. If our faith lays hold on this heavenly treasure, one day God will take us to where our righteousness is. In the meantime we must be content to have this righteousness only by faith. If on the other hand we follow the mind of antichrist by trying to bring this righteousness down to this earth, God will leave us on this earth to perish with the man of sin.

The Reformation Concept of Righteousness by Faith

God revealed the Pauline teaching of righteousness by faith to Martin Luther, and with it he blazed the trail from the darkness of Romanism. His was the clearest voice in Christendom on justification by faith since the days of the apostle Paul. Said Luther:

"This, then, is the amazing definition of Christian righteousness. It is the divine imputing or accounting for righteousness or unto righteousness because of faith in Christ or for Christ's sake. When the sophists hear this definition, they laugh, because they imagine righteousness to be a certain quality that is poured into the soul and then spread into all the parts of man. . . . Therefore this unspeakable gift excels all reason: God accounts and acknowledges

him as righteous without any works who apprehends His Son by faith alone."

- *What Luther Says*, compiled by Ewald M. Plass, vol.3, pp.1229, 1230.

When the troubled soul of John Bunyan heard a voice saying, "Your righteousness is in heaven," he was delivered from darkness and stepped into the light of the righteousness which is of faith. This soul, who breathed the very atmosphere of heaven in Bedford jail, expressed the same concepts as Martin Luther.

Wrote Bunyan:

"Indeed this is one of the greatest mysteries in the world - namely, that a righteousness that resides with a person in heaven should justify me, a sinner, on earth."

- *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness* (Swengel, Penn.: Reiner Publications, 1967).

"That this righteousness still resides in and with the person of Christ, even then when we stand just before God thereby, is clear, for that we are said when justified to be justified 'in him.' - In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified.' And again: 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness,' &c. And again: 'For of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us of God righteousness,' Isa. 14.24, 25; 1 Cor. 1.30

"Mark, the righteousness is still 'in him,' not 'in us'; even then when we are made partakers of the benefit of it, even as the wing and feathers still abide in the hen when the chickens are covered, kept, and warmed thereby.....

"It is absolutely necessary that this be known of us; for if the understanding be muddy as to this, it is impossible that such should be sound in the faith; also in temptation, that man will be at a loss that looketh for righteousness for justification in himself, when it is to be found nowhere but in Jesus Christ." - *Ibid.*

". . . Men can be justified from the curse before God while sinners in themselves by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by, and remaining with, the person of Christ.

"The righteousness by which we stand just before God from the curse was performed by the person of Christ. . . This righteousness is inherent only in him. . ." - *Ibid.*, p.60.

"Look, then, upon Christ as the man, the mediator, undertaker, and accomplisher of the righteousness in himself, wherein thou must stand just before God; and that he is the covenant or conditions of the people to Godward, always having in himself the righteousness that

the law is well pleased with, and always presenting himself before God as our only righteousness." -*Ibid.*, p.70

The righteousness which is imputed to the believer in Jesus gives him a standing with God higher than the standing enjoyed by Adam in his sinless state. It gives him a higher standing than the angels. It raises him in the scale of moral value to be on an equality with Jesus Christ. Such is the gift of God's justifying righteousness, which comes by the faith of Jesus Christ. Yet it is in heaven, not on earth; outside of us, never within the greatest saint; in Jesus Christ, and no one but Jesus Christ.

The Gift of the Spirit

But says one, "Don't you believe that righteousness must be inwrought in the human character? What about the believer's sanctification?" To which we answer, We certainly believe in the necessity of moral renovation within man. Christians will live righteously in this present evil world. But the most excellent virtues within the saints have no part in their justification before God. The law requires a far more excellent righteousness than is found within any man's experience.

It is most important to observe that Paul never confuses the saving righteousness of God with the work of grace upon the hearts of God's people. Paul speaks of two gifts: the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17), and the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). In the book of Romans Paul shows that this gift of righteousness is **imputed** (credited), and the Spirit is **imparted** (infused). The gift of righteousness places the believer in such favorable standing with God that he is given access to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:1-5 shows that the Spirit is poured in the heart as a result of justification. Or as Paul says in Romans 8:10, the Spirit brings life "because you have been justified." N.E.B.

The Spirit is poured upon believers on no other basis than the righteousness of Christ. It is not bestowed because of men's attainments, but because of Christ's atonement.

Nothing but the doing and dying of Christ can entitle anyone to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. But when a sinner grasps by faith the sacrifice of Christ in His behalf, God's righteousness is upon him. He appears before God not only as if he had never sinned, but he is clothed with more moral excellence than the angel Gabriel.

The Spirit reproduces in the life of the believer the attributes of the character of Christ. He stirs him up to all manner of diligence, making him willing to do and to die for the Master. But none of these virtues, be it ever so excellent, justifies the believer. They are not the cause of his right standing with God, but the fruit of it.

The Holy Spirit does not come to speak of Himself (John 16:13). There is a reason for not knowing His name. He comes only to glorify Christ. It is His work to create faith in Jesus, and to lead the believer from one measure of faith to another measure of faith (Rom. 1:17). The just lives by faith in his Righteousness which is up in heaven, and it is the Spirit's work to create, maintain and strengthen that faith. The more the Spirit works within a believer, the more it will lead him to rely on that righteousness which is outside, above and beyond him. The Spirit will never lead a man to look within his own experience for salvation. As John Bunyan testified:

"As for thy saying that salvation is Christ within, if thou mean in opposition to Christ without, instead of pleading for Christ thou wilt plead against him; for Christ, God-man, without on the cross, did bring in salvation for sinners; and the right believing of that justifies the soul. Therefore Christ within or the Spirit of him who did give himself a ransom, doth not work out justification for the soul in the soul, but doth lead the soul out of itself and out of what can be done within itself, to look for salvation in that man that is now absent from his saints on earth....

"And indeed they that will follow Christ aright must follow him without, to the cross without, for justification on Calvary without - that is, they must seek for justification by his obedience without - to the grave without, and to his ascension and intercession in heaven without; and this must be done through the operation of his own Holy Spirit that he has promised shall show these things unto them, being given within them for that purpose. Now the Spirit of Christ, that leads

also; but whither? It leads to Christ without." - *The Riches of Bunyan* (New York: The American Tract Society, 1850), pp.142, 143.

". . . if you do not put a difference between justification wrought by the Man Christ without, and sanctification wrought by the Spirit of Christ within . . . you are not able to divide the word aright; but contrariwise, you corrupt the word of God, and cast stumbling blocks before the people, and will certainly one day most deeply smart for your folly, except you repent." - *Ibid*, p.140.

True sanctification, being an inward work, is for the most part invisible and imperceptible to the one who experiences it. It may be illustrated by this physical fact: We can see others, but we cannot see ourselves. So it is in the spiritual realm. It is our work to behold Christ, to rejoice that He is our righteousness, and to rest in the fact that His righteousness is all-sufficient.

The Justification of Sinners

The relationship between justification and regeneration was a major point of contention between Roman Catholic theologians and the Reformers. The papists said that regeneration was a necessary condition for justification. The Reformers taught that regeneration was the immediate consequence and fruit of justification.

Rome

Regeneration - a necessary condition for justification.

Reformation

Regeneration - the immediate consequence and fruit of justification.

There are many souls today who are not clear on the mighty doctrinal gains of the Reformation. Not only do they

confuse **justification** and **regeneration**, but some even imagine that regeneration and transformation of character must take place in the heart before God can justify the believer in Jesus.

Unless a Christian is clear on this point, it is impossible to be sound in the faith. Therefore we shall examine the evidence from God's Word - evidence that will clearly prove that God justifies men while they are still sinners in themselves.

According to Paul

The book of Romans is the inspired thesis on justification. Here the subject is set out in the most careful and logical order. Paul makes five points to show that men are justified while still sinners in themselves:

1. God justifies the ungodly. First Paul sets forth the truth that all men are sinners. In the third chapter of Romans he declares that faith is the only condition of receiving justification. Then in chapter 4 he says: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Verse 5. In the original language, the word "ungodly" is one of the strongest expressions that can be used to describe a sinner. This scripture certainly contradicts the notion that God justifies only regenerate saints.

2. God justifies the uncircumcised. In order to illustrate that justification comes on the ungodly who believe, Paul illustrates his point from the example of Abraham. The father of the faithful was justified by faith while he was uncircumcised.

"Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that

he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." Rom. 4:9-11.

In the minds of the Jews, uncircumcision stood for an unclean and unsanctified state. Circumcision is a symbol of the new heart (Deut. 30:6; Col. 2:11-13). So the new life is the sign and witness of the blessing of justification, not the cause or even the condition necessary for justification. Paul's gospel declares that God justifies the ungodly, the uncircumcised and the heathen through faith and faith alone (Rom. 4:5, 10; Gal. 3:8).

3. God calls the things that be not as though they were. Human wisdom will question, "How can God pronounce a man righteous before the Holy Spirit has made him righteous?" This is how the Catholic reasons. Paul anticipates this objection, and so he cites Abraham's experience again to illustrate God's way of justification: ~ . . . (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Rom. 4:17. God did not give Abraham a son and then pronounce him a father. He pronounced him a father while his own body and Sarah's womb were still dead (See verse 19). In the same way, God pronounces the believing sinner righteous even before the fruit of a new life is seen. He calls "those things which be not as though they were."

4. The new heart of peace, joy and love is the consequence of justification. Nothing could be plainer than Romans 5:

"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, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. . . . and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Verses 1,2,5.

Thus does Romans 5 begin to enumerate the fruits of being justified by faith. Nothing works moral renovation like the sense of God's pardoning love. As Luther said, ". . . when I learned how the sinner's justification proceeds from the pure mercy of the Lord by means of faith, then I felt myself revive like a new man, and entered at open doors into the very paradise of God." - J.H. Merle D'Aubigne, *History of the Reformation in the Sixteenth Century*, vol. 1, p.73

5. Only the justified receive the gift and infilling of the Spirit. Paul speaks of two gifts - the gift of righteousness, and the gift of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5, 17). Righteousness is imputed to give the believer right standing with God; the Spirit is imparted to work renovation and sanctification in the heart of the believer. As we have seen from Romans 5:1,5, the gift of the Spirit is given to those who have been justified by faith. In fact, Paul's thorough treatment of the Spirit's work is presented in Romans 8 - only after he has thoroughly presented justification through the imputation of God's righteousness. The Spirit is the witness that the justified are children of God (Rom. 8:16; cf. Eph. 1:13, 14). In Galatians the apostle declares:

"And the Scripture,foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; **that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.**" Gal. 3:8,9,13,14.

The apostle Peter also confirms that the gift of the Spirit is given to the justified, for he says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38.

It is true that the Spirit pleads with the hearts of all men as long as Jesus continues to make intercession for the

transgressors in the sanctuary above. To those who respond to His drawing, the Spirit gives faith and repentance. In theology this is called "prevenient grace," and should not be confused with the gift and infilling of the Spirit, which comes upon the justified.

Thus men are justified by faith while they are still sinners in themselves.

According to Ezekiel

"Thus saith the Lord God unto Jerusalem: Thy birth and thy nativity is of the land of Canaan; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite. And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I, passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. . . . Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love, and I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest Mine. **Then washed I thee with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and I anointed thee with oil.**" Ezek.16:3-6, 8,9.

What a tremendous illustration of the justification of sinners by the pure mercy of God! Notice how God washes and anoints with oil (the Holy Spirit) **after** He covers the sinner with His righteousness. Commenting on this scripture, John Bunyan says:

Quest. But how could a holy God say, live, to such a sinful people?

Ans. Though they had nought but sin, yet he had love and righteousness. He had, 1. Love to pity them; 2. Righteousness to cover them 'Now when I passed by thee and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love,' Ezek, xvi.8 what follows? 1. 'I spread my skirt over thee;' and, 2, 'Covered thy nakedness;' yea, 3, 'I swore unto thee;' and, 4, 'Entered into covenant with thee;'and, 5, 'Thou becamest mine.' My love pitied thee; my skirt covered thee. Thus God delivered

them from the curse in his sight. 'Then I washed thee with water (after thou wast justified); yea, I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee, and anointed thee with oil.' ver. 9. Sanctification, then, is consequential, justification goes before - the Holy Ghost by this scripture setteth forth to the life, free grace to the sons of men while they themselves are sinners. I say, while they are unwashed, unswaddled, unsalted, but bloody sinners; for by these words, 'not washed, not salted, not swaddled,' he setteth forth their unsanctified state; yea, they were not only unsanctified, but also cast out, without pity, to the loathing of their persons; yea, 'no eye pitied them, to do any of these things for them;' no eye but his whose glorious grace is unsearchable; no eye but his who could look and love; all others looked and loathed; but blessed be God that hath passed by us in that day that we wallowed in our own blood; and blessed be God for the skirt of his glorious righteousness wherewith he covered us when we lay before him naked in blood. It was when we were in our blood that he loved us; when we were in our blood he said, Live. Therefore, men are justified from the curse in the sight of God while sinners in themselves.' " *Justification by an Imputed Righteousness*, pp.31,32.

According to the Way of Divine Forgiveness

According to the glorious gospel of saving grace, God forgives sinners rather than transformed, born-again saints But according to Rome, a sinner cannot be forgiven unless he first becomes a new creature. In this way the poor sinner is unable to grasp the free gift of God's pardon, for, looking to himself, he is never sure if he is transformed enough for God to accept him. This was the nature of the struggle in the heart of Luther as he wailed, "How can I know that God forgives me when there is nothing in my heart like true conversion?" But as soon as he grasped God's free pardon to an unworthy sinner, he experienced the peace, joy and love of the regenerate life. The great evil of the mystery of iniquity is in that it takes the fruit of justification and presents that as the means of justification.

Jesus' act of forgiving and healing the sick of the palsy is a beautiful illustration of the relationship of justification and newness of life.

"When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes

sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, Why doth this Man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, He said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." Mark 2:5-12.

The sick man's physical restoration was the sign, or seal, of the righteousness which he had by faith (cf. Rom. 4:10, 11). This miracle was an illustration of Jesus' power to bring regeneration and newness of life to souls that are palsied by sin. It shows that forgiveness and regeneration are never to be separated. Yet they must not be confused. First the palsied man was forgiven. Then he was restored to the vigor of new life. Here is an illustration of the gospel. The soul palsied by sin is first forgiven, then restored to spiritual soundness.

According to the Sanctuary

As soon as the repentant Hebrew stepped through the "door of the court" and into the enclosure of the sanctuary, he found himself surrounded on all sides by the white linen of the outer court. Here is an illustration of the imputed righteousness of Jesus. The moment the sinner steps through the door of faith and repentance, he is justified by the righteousness of God.

It is significant that the altar of burnt offering and the laver were within the court. This teaches us that the blessings of the covenant are found only in Christ. None are found outside. Sinners must run into Christ before anything else. If God wanted to show us that we must be free from sin before we run into Christ, He would have instructed Moses to put the altar and laver outside the court. This is what people do when they teach that men must experience

regeneration before God can cover them with His righteousness.

According to the Reformers

The Reformers were not without fault in their understanding of truth. But God gave them the light on justification by faith, and despite differences that existed among some of them on certain points, they were all united on justification, the foundation of the Protestant Reformation. They gave united witness to the truth that God justifies men while they are still sinners in themselves.

Andrew Osiander broke from Luther and the Reformation position on justification. He confounded justification and regeneration, and contended that men are made righteous before God by the indwelling of Christ with His essential righteousness in a person.

The Reformers recognized that Osiander's doctrine constituted a return, in principle, to the doctrine of Romanism. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin devoted a section to refute Osiander's theology. Among other things, he said:

"6. Osiander erroneously mixes forgiveness of sins with rebirth."

"To prove the first point - that God justifies not only by pardoning but by regenerating - he asks whether God leaves as they were by nature those whom he justified, changing none of their vices. This is exceedingly easy to answer: as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable - namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [Rom. 8:15], by whose power he remakes them to his own image. But if the brightness of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by its light, or lighted by its heat? Is there anything more applicable to the present matter than this comparison? The sun, by its heat, quickens and fructifies the earth, by its beams brightens and illumines it. Here is a mutual and indivisible connection. Yet reason itself forbids us to transfer the peculiar qualities of the one to the other.

In this confusion of the two kinds of grace that Osiander forces upon us there is a like absurdity. For since God, for the preservation of righteousness, renews those whom he freely reckons as righteous, Osiander mixes that gift of regeneration with this free acceptance and contends that they are one and the same. Yet Scripture, even though it joins them, still lists them separately in order that God's manifold grace may better appear to us. For Paul's statement is not redundant: that Christ was given to us for our righteousness and sanctification [1 Cor. 1:30]. And whenever he reasons - from the salvation purchased for us, from God's fatherly love, and from Christ's grace that we are called to holiness and cleanness, he clearly indicates that to be justified means something different from being made new creatures."

John Wesley was noted for his great emphasis on holiness of life; yet he stood decidedly with the Reformers on the true relation of justification and regeneration. Said Wesley:

"If any doctrines within the whole compass of Christianity may be properly termed fundamental, they are doubtless these two; the doctrine of justification, and that of the new birth: the former relating to that great work which God does for us, in forgiving our sins; the latter, to the great work which God does *in us*, in renewing our fallen nature. In order of time, neither of these is before the other; in the moment we are justified by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus, we are also 'born of the Spirit;' but in order of thinking as it is termed, justification precedes the new birth. We first conceive his wrath to be turned away, and then his Spirit to work in our hearts." *Sermons on Several Occasions*, sermon 45, "The New Birth."

Unless Wesley was clear on this matter of justification, he could not have preached for the conversion of thousands of sinners. See how he concluded a powerful sermon on justification:

"Thou ungodly one, who hearest or readest these words, thou vile, helpless, miserable sinner, I charge thee before God, the Judge of all, go straight unto him, with all thy ungodliness. Take heed thou destroy not thy own soul by pleading thy righteousness more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell; and thou shalt then find favour in his sight, and know that he justifieth the ungodly. As such thou shalt be brought unto

the blood of sprinkling, as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus look unto Jesus! There is the Lamb of God, who taketh away thy sins! Plead thou no works, no righteousness of thine own! No humility, contrition, sincerity! In no wise. That were, in very deed, to deny the Lord that bought thee. No; plead thou, singly, the blood of the covenant, the ransom paid for thy proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who art thou, that now seest and feelest both thine inward and outward ungodliness? Thou art the man! I want thee for my Lord! I challenge thee for a child of God by faith! The Lord hath need of thee. Thou who feelest thou art just fit for hell, art just fit to advance his glory; the glory of his free grace, justifying the ungodly and him that worketh not. Oh come quickly! Believe in the Lord Jesus; and thou, even thou, art reconciled to God." *Ibid.*, sermon 5, "Justification by Faith."

Conclusion

There is freedom and power, as well as a wealth of comfort, in the truth. We need to know that God justifies sinners who believe His gospel message. But if we once accept the devil's premise that God will justify us on the basis of some inward righteousness, faith totters, and the soul falls into uncertainty and despair. Those who would teach that regeneration must precede justification do dig ditches in the path to Christ that neither themselves nor poor sinners who heed them can ever get across. But in the light of the gospel, the conviction of our utter sinfulness need not drive us to despair. Indeed, such conviction prepares us for the comfort of the gospel. The fact that we are sinners entitles us to come to Christ. We may come just as we are and, throwing ourselves in all our unworthiness entirely upon His mercy, may grasp the promise: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Rom. 4:5.

The Merits of Christ and the Work of the

Holy Spirit

John Knox was dying. Some of his friends were gathered around his bed. The Reformer related how Satan made his final effort to steal away his hope of salvation. First he tried to shake his faith by pointing to the sins of his life, the follies of his youth and the failures of his ministry. When Knox had vanquished the adversary with the mighty argument of the blood of Christ, Satan presented his final temptation. He whispered to the Reformer, "Surely God will have mercy on you. You have nothing to fear, for see how the Holy Spirit has wrought in your life to bring the evangelical faith to Scotland." But John Knox knew that his salvation and right standing with God did not even rest on the Holy Spirit's work in him. It was grounded solely on what Christ had done for him.

Roman Catholicism teaches that there is saving merit in the Holy Spirit's work in the human heart. But there are also many Protestants who today fall for this error of the mystery of iniquity, for they reason: "Is not the Holy Spirit a Person of the God-head? Is not His work as meritorious as Jesus' work? Is there not saving merit in **impacted** righteousness? I know I cannot trust in my own work for salvation, but surely I can rest my salvation in what the Holy Spirit does in me." How little do they realize that they are voicing the sentiments of the papacy!

It is time for God's people to pray in earnest for the power of the Holy Spirit, but for the right reason. Unless we clearly understand the principles of justification by faith, we shall not recognize the significant developments about us. This is the "charismatic age." In the religious bodies there is a growing interest in the Pentecostal experience. Religious groups who experience the power of what they call the Holy Spirit are springing up everywhere. And it is this interest in the Holy Spirit that is doing more to unite Catholics and Protestants than anything else. It is not bringing Catholics over to the Protestants, however, but it

causes Protestants to look more favorably toward Rome. The reason is that the basic philosophy of these Pentecostal-type revivals is Roman Catholic. Instead of leading men and women to look wholly without to the doing, dying and intercession of Jesus in heaven, this popular infatuation with "the Spirit" is leading multitudes to worship "the Spirit" in them, and to rely on the Spirit's inward work for salvation. This is the delusion of the mystery of iniquity. This spiritual phenomenon will soon reach its climax when apostate Protestantism brings "fire" down from heaven, and causes the earth to worship the papacy (Rev. 13:11-14).

The Spirit Points to Christ's Merit

There is no safety for us unless we appreciate the principles so solidly laid in the Reformation, for in these last days God's people must build on those principles. Unless they do, it would be better to see no revivals in the church. Certainly we do not want to see cheap youth revivals. They are not based on God's Word, and they tend to nothing higher than the worship of human experience.

Mark Stubner was a leader in a "Spirit-filled" revival in the days of Luther. This "Spirit-filled" revivalist sought an interview with the great Reformer. Cried Stubner and his associates. "The Spirit, the Spirit!" Luther replied, "I slap your spirit on the snout."

In opposition to Rome, the Reformers taught that saving merit is found only in Jesus Christ. Merit is inseparable from His divine Person. Like a Christian's righteousness, merit is found only in heaven, only in one Man, and never on earth, never in the saints. Merit is **imputed** to the believer, never **infused**. In this way, "Christ's merit" can never become "my merit," for merit is always extrinsic to the believer.

The Holy Spirit does not come to draw attention to His merits. We do not even know His name. His nature is a mystery. He does not speak of Himself (John 16:13, 14). The Spirit glorifies Christ. He points the soul to the merits

of the Savior. The Spirit will never teach the believer that there is saving merit in His own work in the soul, except as His work will lead the soul out of itself to look wholly to the merits of Him who stands as man's Representative at the right hand of God.

The apostle Paul says: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Gal. 5:22, 23. And the apostle Peter admonishes us:

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." 2 Peter 1:5-9.

The fruits of the Spirit which will abound in every true believer are not the ground of his acceptance with God, but the result of it. The law requires a far more excellent price than the best virtues revealed in the lives of the greatest saints. For Paul declares: ". . . [He] loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20. When we see something of the infinite sacrifice, the price required to ransom the soul from death, we shall realize that our only hope is in the merits of Christ. Faith will then rest upon what He has done for us.

In the year 1738 Christian David stated this truth so clearly in a sermon:

"The word of reconciliation which the apostles preached as the foundation of all they taught, was that we are reconciled to God not by our own works, nor by our own righteousness, but wholly and solely by the blood of Christ.

"But you will say, Must I not grieve and mourn for my sins? Must I not humble myself before my God? Is not this just and right? And must I not first do this before I can expect God to be reconciled to me? I answer, It is just and right. You must be humbled before God. You must have a broken and contrite heart. But then observe, this is

not your own work. Do you grieve that you are a sinner? This is the work of the Holy Ghost. Are you contrite? Are you humbled before God? Do you indeed mourn, and is your heart broken with in you? All this worketh the selfsame Spirit.

"Observe again, this is not the foundation. It is not this by which you are justified. This is not the righteousness, this is no part of the righteousness, by which you are reconciled unto God. You grieve for your sins. You are deeply humble. Your heart is broken. Well. But all this is nothing to your justification. The remission of your sins is not owing to this cause, either in whole or in part. Nay, observe further, that it may hinder your justification; that is, if you build anything upon it; if you think, I must be so or so contrite, I must grieve more, before I can be justified. Understand this well. To think you must be more contrite, more humble, more grieved, more sensible of the weight of sin, before you can be justified, is to lay your contrition, your grief, your humiliation, for the foundation of your being justified; at least for a part of the foundation. The right foundation is, not your contrition (though that is not your own), not your righteousness, nothing of your own, nothing that is wrought in you by the Holy Ghost; but it is something without you, namely, the righteousness and blood of Christ."

Justification Before God and Men



Our justification before God and before our fellow men are not the same. Before God we are justified by faith without works (Rom. 3:28; 4:5, 6). Before men we are justified by works and not by faith only (James 2:24). As soon as the sinner accepts Christ by faith, his name is inscribed in the Lamb's book of life - he is registered as a member of the church universal. But in order to join the church on earth, something more than faith is required. He must show his faith by his works. Before heaven he is justified by faith. Before men he is justified by works.

Failure to understand the difference between justification before God and man has occasioned much misunderstanding over the interpretation of Paul and James. Paul declares that man is justified by faith. James says he is justified by works. Unless we understand that one is speaking of justification before God, and the other of justification before men, James would appear to flatly contradict Paul. But they were writing about different issues. Paul is concerned with the question, "How should man be just with God?" In Romans 3 he says that the whole world stands guilty "before God," and that by works no man can be "justified in His sight" (Verses 19, 20). Then in the next chapter he continues, "If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God." Rom. 4:2. It is therefore clear that Paul is dealing with justification "before God" - right standing "in His sight."

James addresses himself to another problem. Here were professed believers hearing the Word without doing it. They were failing to bring forth the fruit of practical godliness. This was revealed in their attitude to their fellow men. So the apostle declared:

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 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? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." James 2:14-18.

Notice that James is dealing with the matter of showing his faith:" . . . I will shew thee my faith by my works." If "faith" yields no fruit, it is not faith at all, but a counterfeit. So James continues:

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? 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? 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. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James 2:19-24.

In his justification with God, Abraham believed God, and that was counted unto him for righteousness. But how do we know that his faith was genuine? How do we know that God's way of making men righteous in His sight is genuine? Abraham's life of implicit obedience proves this. It requires faith to obey God in all things.

Writing on the problem of Paul and James, Luther declared:

"Insist on it, then, that inwardly, in the spirit, before God, man is justified through faith alone, without all work but outwardly and publicly, before the people and himself, he is justified through works, that is, he thereby becomes known and certain himself that he honestly believes and is pious. Therefore you may call the one a public justification, and the other an inward justification, but in this sense that the public justification is only a fruit, a result, and a proof of the justification in the heart. Accordingly, man is not justified by it before God but must previously be justified before Him. Just so you may call the fruits of the tree the obvious goodness of the tree, which follows and proves its inner, natural goodness.

"This is what St. James means in his Epistle when he says (2:26): 'Faith without works is dead,' that is, the fact that works do not follow is a certain sign that there is no faith, but a dead thought and

dream, which people falsely call faith." - *What Luther Says*, vol.3, pp.1231, 1232.

Paul Justified by Works Before Men

Paul also knew that before men he was justified by his works. He frequently justified himself before the churches by recounting his works. To answer his critics, he magnified his office of apostleship and vindicated his course of action. In this manner of justification, Paul did not talk of his faith, but he talked of his works. To the Thessalonian believers he wrote:

"For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." 1 Thess. 2:3-10.

Thus was the apostle justified by his works before the Thessalonians. Then, to answer his critics at Corinth, he wrote:

"Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors, more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received

I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." 2 Cor. 11:18-28.

Thus was Paul justified by works before the Corinthians. And in many other places, and before many other people, Paul showed that he was justified by works.

No Works Could Justify Before God

When arraigned before his judges and accusers, Paul protested that he had done nothing worthy of death. He said that his conscience was void of offence toward God and toward men (Acts 24:16;25:11). But this was never his plea before God. His blameless life and holy ministry were not the basis of his right standing before God. So he declared: "I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not there by acquitted [justified - K.J.V.]." 1 Cor. 4:4, R.S.V. He well knew that his justification before God was by grace alone, by the blood of Christ alone, and that it was not ever on the basis of what the Holy Spirit had done in him, but on the basis of God's act of liberation on the cross in the Person of Christ (See Rom. 3:24, N.E.B.).

God's people must be grounded on this gospel of justification before Heaven can entrust them with the latter rain, for under the great outpouring of God's Spirit, signs and wonders will follow the believers as they proclaim the truth in the might of the Spirit's power. Yet with Paul they will still confess, "I am not hereby justified."

It requires God's righteousness, all of His righteousness, to be accepted in His sight. That righteousness is found only in the Man Christ Jesus. We can rest our salvation on nothing less than His humiliation, suffering and death. His was not just the humiliation of a

man, but of a God. His excellence of character was infinite, for His earthly life was the embodiment of divine perfection. His sufferings were infinite, His death of infinite value. The sacrifice of Christ amazed the angels. It will be the science, song and wonder of the redeemed for eternity. Upon this one magnificent and unspeakable Gift we must base our right standing with God for time and for eternity. Praise God that there is such a solid ground of hope! What comfort to know that we need never ground our salvation on anything that is within us! And to teach us these things God gives the Holy Spirit.

The Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

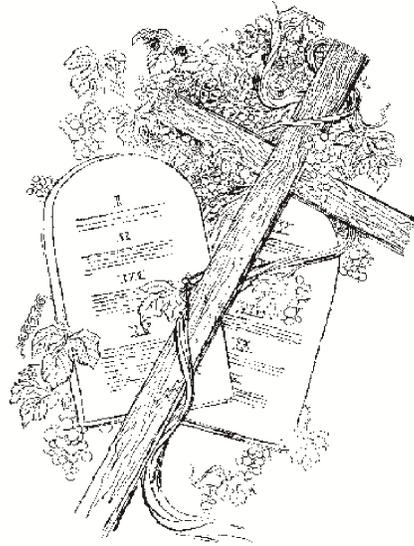
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| Law says Do | Gospel says Done |
| Law Commands | Gospel Promise |
| Law Kills | Gospel gives Life |
| Law Condemns | Gospel Justifies |

Part I

Romanism had come about through a confusion of law and gospel. According to Luther, the Reformation was born when men were enabled to rightly divide the law and the gospel. Thus, the proper distinction between the law and the gospel was the great contribution of the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

The Reformers rightly defined law as any command, instruction or exhortation which defines duty -i.e., what we should do, how we should live, what we must be. "Love thy neighbour," "Be ye therefore perfect," "Purify your minds," "Entertain strangers," are examples of **law**. **Gospel** is the good news that God has fulfilled the

demands of the law for all men in Jesus Christ. For example, "Christ died for our sins," "Ye are bought with a price," "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," are pure gospel. Law says, "Do"; gospel says, "Done." Law commands; gospel promises. Law kills; gospel gives life. Law condemns; gospel justifies.



Yet the battle of the Reformation was not finished when God rescued the church from the terrible error of comingling law and gospel. There is an opposite error. This consists in divorcing the law from the gospel. While the Church of Rome made shipwreck by confusing law and gospel, the Protestant church faces the peril of separating the law from the gospel. The first error causes men to attempt salvation by their own works. The second error leads them to think they can be saved in their sins.

The gospel takes the law seriously. The sinner can be justified on no other basis than perfect obedience to the law (Rom. 2:13). The Law Giver Himself came to this world to render that perfect obedience in man's behalf. By His own perfect living in human flesh He magnified the law and made it honorable (Isa. 42:21). By dying under its penalty Christ showed that the law is holy, just, good, unchangeable and everlasting (Rom. 7:12; Ps. 19:7-9).

The gospel has a higher and broader purpose than man's salvation. It is that God Himself might be just as well as the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). The object of the atonement is that the divine law and government might be maintained.

Here is a view of the atonement that transcends any subjective benefit. God was not only saving lost men at the cross, but he was securing the whole universe. He was not only justifying sinners, but he was justifying His own law and government.

Here is a sinner in rebellion against God's law. He longs to be saved. What he must see is that his salvation depends upon the vindication of the very law which he has despised. The cross, above all else, is a vindication of God's law. Christ honored its claims by bearing its just penalty in behalf of sinners. If the sinner really sees the meaning of the cross, he will exercise repentance toward God for the transgression of His law, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all its claims in His behalf.

The law of God may be likened to a tree, and the gospel to the fruit which it bears. In heaven a controversy arose over that "tree." Lucifer contended that it should be plucked up, and he proposed planting a better one. Even the angels did not understand the full extent of the love, wisdom and holiness of the law. But with the advent of sin, the time had come for that "tree" to bear "fruit" and demonstrate its worth.

The life and death of Jesus were the unfolding of God's law to angels and to men. Hanging on the cross, Christ was the gospel - the fruit of the tree. What a wonderful tree God's law proved to be at Calvary! When the angelic hosts saw the Son of God yield up His life of infinite value, with one voice they extolled the greatness of God's law. Every soul who sees Calvary as the law of God unfolded will say with the psalmist, "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day." Ps. 119:97.

In his state of rebellion against the law of God, man has been denied access to the Tree of Life. But not the sinner who looks upon the cross and sees the awful results of breaking a law so good and holy. As he sees His Substitute bearing the curse of his transgression upon the tree (Gal. 3:13), that tree of shame is discerned as the Tree of Life. This Tree has borne Fruit so precious that if a repentant sinner eats of it he shall be cured of sin and live forever. That Fruit is the Son of God Himself. He declares, "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life." John 6:54.

The law is the tree, the gospel is the fruit. Those who eat this fruit assimilate the very life of the tree. Thus

the true believer in the gospel assimilates the very life and character of the law of God (See Rom. 8:4).

Perfect Obedience to the Law As a Gift

"By the obedience of One shall many be made righteous." Rom. 5:19. Jesus showed us plainly the nature of His obedience: "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." John 15:10. The righteousness of Christ is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah. The law is infinite, and it embodies an infinite righteousness (Ps. 119:96, 144, N.E.B.) In manifesting an infinitely perfect character, Jesus rendered an obedience that measured with the broadest claims of God's law.

When the gospel offers men the righteousness of Christ, it offers them a life of unblemished obedience to the law of God. As Christ dies on the cross, He gives His most precious legacy to His disciples - the law of God unbroken, unmarred in the gift of His own life.

Everyone wants to keep a precious gift. God's law has been given to us in the unblemished character of Jesus Christ. This gift cost the life of the Son of God; it emptied heaven; it contained all the accumulated wealth of eternity. Surely a believer could not bring himself to despise and spit upon a gift like that. In His last words to His disciples, Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." John 14:15.

Only those who believe on the Son of God can **keep** the commandments, for the law is a gift to the followers of Christ. The psalmist declares: "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart." Ps. 119:111. Let us illustrate how perfect obedience to the law is a gift in Jesus Christ, and see how a believer will keep the law because it is given to him as a precious heritage:

Here is a Christian who is convicted by the law that he is a slothful servant in his service for God. He sees that he may be lazy or be a Christian, but he cannot be both. Unless he becomes "diligent in business," the sentence

will be pronounced upon him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

The only right way to become diligent is by way of the gospel. The convicted sinner looks upon the diligence of His Substitute. In His life there were no idle moments. He was always about His Father's business. He was the unwearied servant of man's necessities. Not one careless, thoughtless act marred that life of infinite value. He did not fail, nor was He discouraged, but set His face as a flint until He could say, "I have finished the work that Thou gavest Me to do." The contemplation of this life not only works conviction and repentance for slothfulness, but **it works** faith. For the sinner's history was imputed to Christ in order that His history may be imputed to the sinner. The sinner grasps by faith the history of Jesus as his own. He comes before God and His law with nothing to present as his plea save the diligence of Jesus Christ. The Father accepts with great joy the merits of His Son offered in the transgressor's behalf. He calls His angels and says in the presence of the universe, "See this repentant sinner. This is My diligent son in whom I am well pleased."

By faith in Christ's diligence, the believer stands as diligent in the sight of God. But having accepted this life of perfect diligence, what does the believer now aspire to be above everything else? He wants to be what God has pronounced Him as being in Jesus Christ. His determination to be diligent does not come from outward compulsion, but from inward constraint. The Holy Spirit has written the law of diligence in his heart, and helps him to walk in the way of God's commandment.

The way of the gospel is completely contrary to the way of righteousness by law. **God pronounces the believer diligent in order that it may motivate him to become diligent.** The same principle operates in any area of Christian living.

But if a man strives to become diligent in order that God will pronounce him diligent, he is always under the law, under the curse, because he always falls short of the

divine standard. The gospel believer may also fall short of reaching the standard in himself, but because he trusts in Christ's diligence and not his own, the merit of His Substitute constantly makes up for his deficiency.

Thus the gospel presents a life of perfect obedience to the law of God as a free gift in Christ. The believer in Jesus keeps the law, not in order to become righteous in God's sight, but because he has become righteous in God's sight. He aspires to keep what God has given him in Christ. The law is an expression of God's idea. When we receive it in Christ, it becomes our idea.

Rejoicing in the Law

Have you ever wondered why the psalmist seems to almost leap for sheer joy and delight in the law of the Lord? No one who receives the commandments as mere threats, commands and directions could do that. God imputes to the believer the perfect righteousness of the law. This means that the believer can survey the law as a heritage, as some mighty wealth that belongs to him. He strolls about the law in the sheer joy of a man who inspects a wonderful inheritance. Why, he is looking at the extent of the righteousness given him in Jesus! The broader, the higher and the deeper he discovers the law to be, the more he wonders and appreciates what wealth is his in Jesus Christ. "Oh," he exclaims, "I did not realize so much was imputed to me!" This is not only his Father's law, but because he is now a son, it is his law too. He too is jealous for it:

"Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law."

"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not Thy law." Ps. 119:53, 136.

As contempt for God's law becomes more and more universal, His people will hold it more and more sacred. All of God's people will pray in earnest, "It is time for

Thee, Lord, to work: for they have made void Thy law." Ps. 119:126. In response to that prayer, the Spirit will fall in power upon the church. The whole world will be enlightened with that message of justification by faith which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God.

Part II

Ye are not under the law, but under grace." Rom. 6:14. "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" Gal. 4:21.

To be under the law means to be under the old covenant. Under the terms of this covenant, the people



promise God to meet all the claims that the law has upon their lives (Ex. 19:8). They accept the responsibility to present to God a life that will measure with the broadest demands of the law.

There is no salvation under such a covenant, for there is none among the fallen race who can, in himself, meet the claims of God's law. In Romans 7:1-8 Paul likens being under the law to being married to a husband who stirs up all manner of evil. Imagine a woman married to a husband who only criticizes her best efforts to please. Let her try ever so hard to serve him, the husband still finds fault. Naturally, love cannot exist in such a union. Only evil can come of it. So it is when a man assumes the responsibility to please the law with his obedience. The

law will always find fault. It will always condemn. And under the exasperating experience of trying to satisfy its demands, the heart of man will fret against God and loathe a service that seems so intolerably exacting.

Of course, as Paul hastens to point out, we do not condemn the law because it finds fault with sinful man. We rather extol it as "holy, and just, and good," for the very reason that it refuses to come down to the level of fallen man.

There are some who say, "Oh, I know that in my own strength I cannot tender an obedience that will satisfy the demands of God's law. But by God's help through His Holy Spirit, I can do it." They do not stop to consider that even the Pharisee could pray, "God, **I thank thee**, that I am not as other men." Everyone who places himself under the law will say that he intends to satisfy its demands with God's help.

But we want to make the point crystal clear that God does not help any man fulfill the conditions of His covenant. We believe in imparted righteousness, but not for the purpose of helping a believer satisfy the demands of God's law. There are many people who think that **imparted righteousness** is a means of fulfilling the terms of the old covenant. Never!

The new covenant is established on better promises (Heb. 8:6). Whereas the old covenant was between God and the people, the new covenant was between God and Christ (Zech. 6:13). In the new arrangement, Christ stands in the place of the people. As their Substitute, He promises to meet every demand of the law on man's behalf.

Whereas under the old covenant man failed to meet the demands of the law, under the new covenant, man (the Man) made good every promise to satisfy the broadest claims of the law.

In the first place, Christ, as man's Substitute, rendered an obedience that equalled the law in every respect. Jesus revealed a character that was infinitely perfect (Col. 1:19; 2:9). No one but the infinite Son of the

infinite God could render an obedience equal to the Law.[1] But the law also demanded that man die for his transgression. Christ was executed in man's place. By infinite humiliation and inexpressible suffering, He met this demand of the law. When the Son of God died on the cross, He fully exhausted the demands of the law. He fulfilled all righteousness (Matt. 3:15). He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law (Matt. 5:17, 18). He could truly say, "All that the Lord hath said, I have done." He met every condition of the covenant. It was ratified and sealed by His blood.

Since Christ, on behalf of the whole human race, has fulfilled every condition of the covenant, the believer is never called upon to satisfy the demands of God's law. Those who insist on doing it, however, will certainly do what they choose. By suffering the same sort of death as Jesus Christ, the law will exhaust its demands upon their shelterless heads.

We repeat: Christ did not come to give us power to stay under the law and meet its demands. Never! The apostle Paul emphatically declares:

"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Gal. 4:4,5.

Only a life of infinite value could satisfy the law on behalf of humanity. Only a sacrifice of infinite worth could exhaust the debt. The life of Jesus may be copied, but it cannot be duplicated. Thus it is clear that Jesus did not come to give us strength to fulfill the conditions of the covenant. He fulfilled the conditions Himself. And since He did it as the Substitute of the human race, it was the same as if every man had lived and died as Jesus did (2 Cor. 5:14). Christ Himself is "a covenant of the people" (Isa. 42:6) - that is to say, he who accepts Christ is counted as having met every covenant condition.

The End of the Law for Righteousness

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." Rom 10:4. This means that the one who accepts Christ by faith has met and fulfilled every requirement and demand of the law. Therefore the believer is not under law, but under grace - meaning that he is no longer required to satisfy the demands of the law. The entire debt has been paid by Jesus Christ.

Christ is the termination of the broadest demands of the law. When the sinner runs into Jesus as his covenant refuge, the law is fully satisfied.

Against every "Do" of the law, the believer in Jesus can write the "Done" of the gospel. Law says, "Be ye therefore perfect" (Matt. 5:48). Gospel says, "Ye have been brought to perfection in Him" (Col. 2:10). Thus Christ is the end (the fulfillment) of that law which says, "Be perfect." Nothing is lacking.

The New Service of Love

We have seen that being under the law is the same as being married to the law as the first husband (referring to Paul's analogy in Romans 7). And the apostle declares:

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. . . . But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." Rom. 7:4, 6.

Deliverance from law does not mean paying no regard to its just and holy principles. It means the end of the old relationship to it. As believers in Jesus, we are no longer condemned debtors, no longer slaves ground down by the impossible task of trying to satisfy the law's demands. The freedom which Paul speaks of is the freedom of sons who "serve in newness of spirit." "So

then with the mind I myself serve the law of God." Rom. 7:25; see Gal. 4:1-6.

This service is free. It does not come from slaves, but from sons. It is not offered to meet the law's infinite demands, but to express thanks for adoption. In Christ, and in Him alone, is there an obedience with which the law is well pleased. An obedience that measures with the highest claims of the law is found only as God's people abide in Christ by faith.