Present Truth

A magazine dedicated
to the restoration
of New Testament Christianity
in this generation

Sola Gratia Solely by Grace
Solo Christo Solely by Christ
Sola Fide Solely by Faith

JULY 1974
Vol. 3, No. 3

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS

Present Truth

Present Truth is a magazine dedicated to the restoration of New Testament Christianity and committed to upholding the great Reformation principle of justification by faith.

Editor: Robert D. Brinsmead
Publishing Editor: Norman Jarnes

Publishers: A group of Christian scholars and businessmen without denominational sponsorship who have united to uphold the objective gospel amid the present deluge of religious subjectivism. Multitudes are being caught up in the popular and frantic effort to find satisfaction in some sort of religious experience. *Present Truth* is a voice in this barren wilderness of groveling internalism, a voice which boldly proclaims those great principles upon which the Reformation was founded—namely:

1. *Sola gratia.* God's saving activity outside of us in the person of Jesus Christ is the sole *ground* of our salvation.

2. *Solo Christo.* Christ's doing and dying on our behalf is the sole *basis* of our acceptance and continued fellowship with God.

3. *Sola fide.* The Holy Spirit's gift of faith through the hearing of this objective, historical gospel is the sole *means* whereby Christ's substitutionary life and death are imputed to us for justification unto life eternal. He who is thus justified by faith and filled with God's Spirit will glory only in Christ's cross and make God's saving work in Christ the central affirmation of his Christian witness. Though he will be careful to obey God and please Him in all things, he will continue to repent rather than glory in the feeble attainments of his own Spirit-filled life.

4. *Sola Scriptura.* The Bible and the Bible only is the Christian's objective and infallible rule of faith and practice, alone sufficient that he may "be established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12).

Present Truth is not only committed to the task of upholding these founding principles of the Reformation, but it believes that we today must allow these principles to call all that we do and all that we teach into question. These principles call all traditions into question and all statements about the truth into question—even the ones set forth in this magazine. Our vision is a new Reformation that will recover what the Reformers bequeathed us and complete the restoration they so nobly began.

To Contributors: Since truth is above the preferences and prejudices of any denomination, the editors welcome contributions from anyone and will judge them on their merit alone. If you wish a manuscript returned, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Tweed Heads, N.S.W. 2485
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Present Truth is supported solely by freewill offerings. Gifts are tax deductible in the U.S.A. Published by New Reformation Fellowship.

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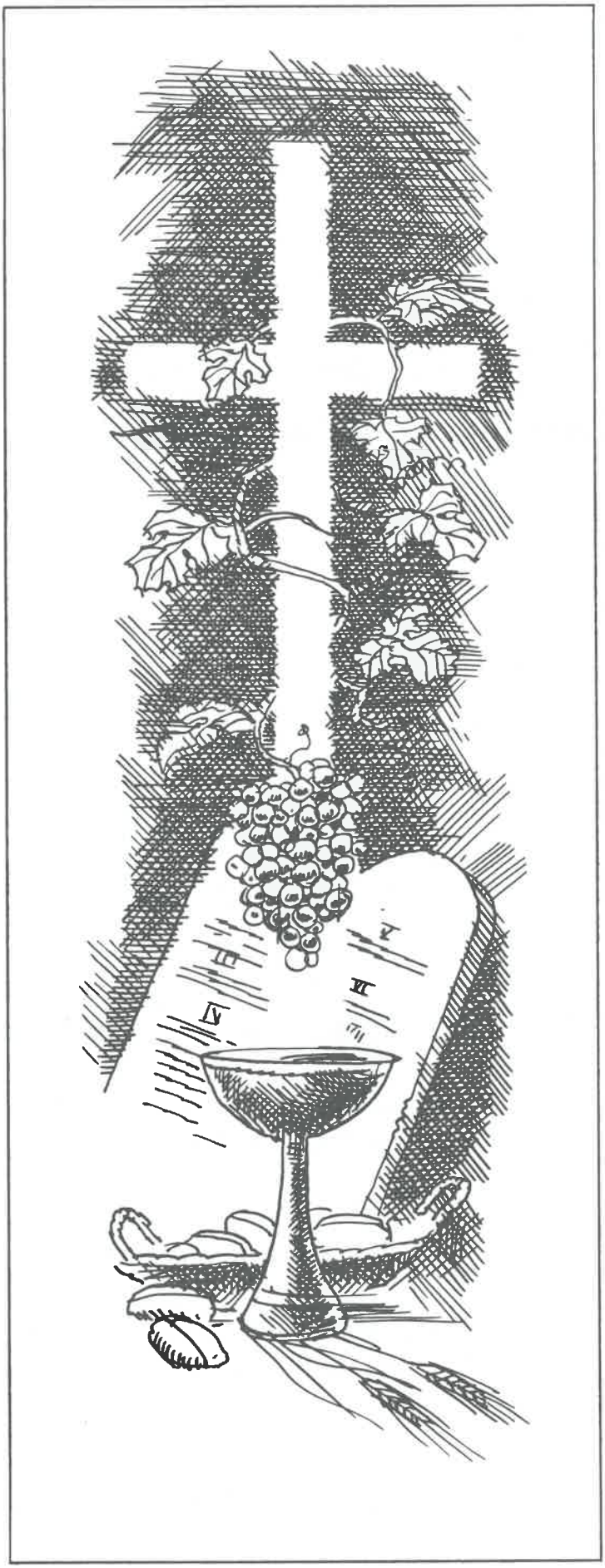

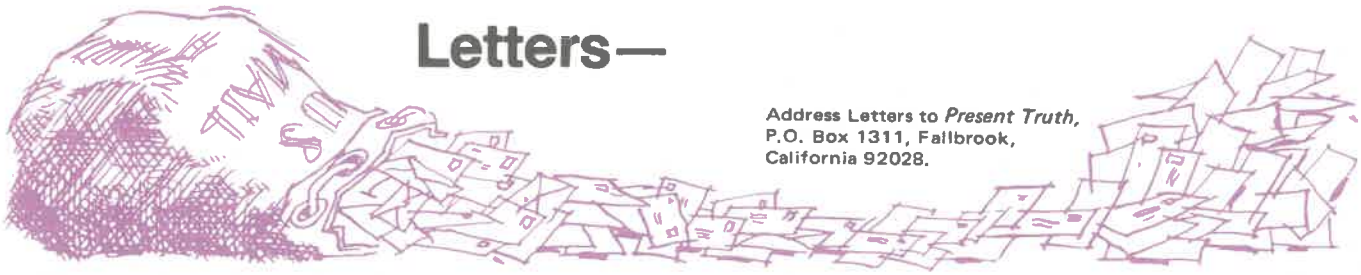

Letters—

Address Letters to *Present Truth*, P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook, California 92028.

The Current Religious Scene

Sir / I commend the entire *Present Truth* issue of February, 1974 as a courageous statement of the pivotal religious issue of our time. If we at all value the name "Christian" or wish to call ourselves by it, we had better make up our collective mind to return to the concepts of the adequacy and authority of the Scriptures by themselves for "all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

I must add a word of thanks to you for disabusing me of some incorrect second-hand opinions I have had of Martin Luther and John Calvin. I know they were fallible men like myself, but I was not aware of the fullness of their viewpoint and its closeness to the actual claims of Scripture. They were much more Biblical than I have given them credit for being.

T. B., Church of Christ Minister
Michigan

Sir / The ministry of *Present Truth* is sorely needed to counteract the fallacy of the modern "tongues" movement. Your February, 1974 issue, in the section entitled "The Current Religious Scene and the Gospel," touched the sore nerve of the entire charismatic movement: the inclusion of those who deny the Bible's cardinal truths. I refer to the Episcopalian priest who denies the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ, yet who has received the "baptism." This is typical. Many Catholic Pentecostals continue to smoke, drink and endorse papal authority and Mariolatry. Anyone who thinks this represents the "fullness" of the Holy Spirit must be blind! Your message is desperately needed in a day of gross religious confusion.

J. J., Minister
Illinois

Sir / Your statement concerning an Episcopalian priest who speaks in tongues and at the same time denies the virgin birth and resurrection does not prove anything. A good theologian would know that Satan can counterfeit the genuine. Because a person speaks in tongues does not mean he is a Christian. You are taking isolated human experiences and throwing them in the same bag with all charismatics.

I don't care what Fr. Edward O'Connor or J. Rodman Williams say. Are you saying that you have all the truth? While you are spending your time "putting Christianity on solid ground," the charismatics are preaching the kingdom and saving souls from hell!

B. S.
Illinois

Sir / After reading your February, 1974 issue and comparing it to other past publications, it is obvious that either your articles on the "charismatic," "Holy Spirit" movement are greatly misinformed or you really don't understand it at all. It is too bad that such a magazine is read by ministers and laymen alike, who may have valid questions but, after viewing such articles, may thoroughly be in confusion—which, incidentally, is not our Lord's will for us.

I refer specifically to the article, "The Burning Passion of the Current Religious Scene." Why is it necessary to give information about an extremist, referring to the Episcopalian priest who was so liberated that he neither believes in the virgin birth nor in the resurrection? Yet it was claimed he has received the "baptism" in the Spirit. Apparently, throughout this entire article your primary aim is to find radicals to probe into and label as "charismatics" just because they assume the name "Pentecostal."

Don't you realize that the spirit spoken of is not necessarily the Holy Spirit of God? Satan himself manifests himself as many spirits and essentially tries to persuade us that he is the "Holy Spirit." This obviously will lead many questionable believers in the wrong direction and to eventual damnation.

In Acts 4:8, 31 Paul clearly states that the pouring out of God's Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and Saviour of the world. Also, this act enables us to speak with boldness of our Lord Jesus Christ, thus bearing witness to others. How can one assume that a spiritually full person would then deny Christ? How ridiculous!

There are indeed many tests of the Spirit, and certainly if it is not Scriptural, then it cannot be of God. In simple words, denying Christ is definitely not intended or Scriptural but must be the devil working overtime.

C. S.
Massachusetts

Sir / I found your articles on "The Current Religious Scene and the Gospel" (*Present Truth*, Feb., 1974) informative. Your desire to cast the light of God's Word on un-Scriptural religious experience is appreciated. It must however be recognized that there is a Scriptural experience. Christ called it the new birth. It is a radical change: sins are forgiven and their burden lifted; a heart once in rebellion loves God and man; a spirit once dead comes to life and receives the witness of God's Spirit; a life of vanity becomes a life of fruitfulness; in short, all things become new. It is an experience "solely by grace, solely by Christ and solely by faith." To Christ goes all the glory.

The gospel must hold first place over experience—that is, the redemptive acts of God in history must never be neglected or distorted by total subjectivism. Yet the end result, the purpose of these historic acts —the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, etc.—was one: to bring salvation to fallen man. The historic acts and the experience, made possible by the acts, go hand in hand. To deny the acts is to call God a liar, but to affirm the acts and deny the experience is to reject the salvation they offer. The balance and interdependence of objective fact and subjective experience must be maintained.

P. C., Bible College Dean of Men
Florida

Sir / Just finished the section, "The Current Religious Scene and the Bible," in the February, 1974 *Present Truth*. Excellent! Like a fresh, cool breeze in the desert of humanism.

I heartily agree. There is no revelation or experience apart from the revealed Word of God, the Holy Bible. May all fall under its enlightening pages, as we will all stand before it in judgment.

I am reminded of Isaiah 8:20 in reference to those who place their experience above the Word of God: ". . . if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

May God continue to encourage you to minister to those who love the Book above pseudo-religious experiences.

F. S., Baptist Minister
Illinois

Sir / I am delighted with your February, 1974 issue on the current religious scene. I certainly appreciate your publication and have found nothing like it in all of Japan—neither in the Japanese language nor in English. It would certainly benefit many Japanese pastors, evangelists, Christian workers, laymen, etc., if they had something like this in their language. It has helped me over many rough spots.

I understand, from a national pastor here in Japan, that speaking in ecstatic speech is not limited to the Pentecostal movement but can be found in Buddhism as well.

P. M., Missionary
Japan

Sir / I just finished reading the February, 1974 issue of *Present Truth.* It was a liberating experience, and I went on my way rejoicing. Though I do not agree with everything you say, I am basically in sympathy with your view.

D. C., Lutheran Minister
Minnesota

"Four Great Certainties"

Sir / For a long time I have admired and appreciated the material in *Present Truth.* However, I had one reason for disappointment with it. The material was great, but I felt that because of the type of arguments presented, it was not suitable to give to non-Christians. I had hoped that you would sometime publish something with this doctrinal basis which would be suitable for non-Christians. I believe you have done it with your booklet, *Four Great Certainties.*

J. K.
Colorado

"Sola Scriptura"

Sir / I agree with you that ecumenism and neo-Pentecostalism are dangers to the church. However, I would like to point out that another very dangerous threat to the church lies in the un-Scriptural higher critical method, which many liberal and misguided pastors are using today. The laymen of the church should be aware of this danger and be able to recognize it when they hear higher critical sermons from the pulpit. The method has as its basic premise that the Bible is not totally inerrant, that since men wrote the Bible there must necessarily be errors in it, that the Bible is only a container for the Word of God and not the very Word of God itself, and that through human reason a man can finally dig out what is God's Word from all the fallible human words in the Bible. This method not only denies the inerrancy of Scripture but purports to be able to interpret through human reason, which is a denial of the principle that only Scripture interprets Scripture. If one is to follow the Reformation dictum of *sola Scriptura,* then this subjective method of interpretation is false.

J. B., Lutheran Seminary Student
Missouri

Sir / Your position on justification by faith seems correct, fundamental and Scriptural. For that reason I like your magazine. We must base our position on the whole Bible, not on the word of men—even giants like Calvin and Luther (whom I have a great deal of respect for).

J. H.
California

Sir / When I first came to know the Lord, it was in one of the "Jesus freaks" movements. But I thank the Lord that He has now revealed His truth to me and that I am now truly headed in the right direction. Yet so many others—old friends—seem to be still caught up in the movement and are so involved with the experiences with the "Spirit" that they seem to neglect the Word of God and the importance of the Bible. I'm sure that if they read their Bibles more, they could see that what they are doing is plainly against the Word of God.

L. F.
Canada

"The Protestant Era at an End!"

Sir / I believe that your brochure, *The Protestant Era at an End!* "hits the nail on the head" as far as stating where we are at this critical time in our history. The more people can understand what is happening, the better they will be able to make a stand for the historic faith once for all delivered to the saints.

T. S., Presbyterian Minister
Virginia

Eternal Security

Sir / Wow, what a relief! For so long I have been searching for my salvation in an almost forgotten childhood experience and, in the process, only reaping a harvest of doubts. *Present Truth* has come as a true gift as I've come to see that my salvation has been made complete in Jesus Christ and that His imputed righteousness is mine today through faith. This is real assurance. The truth shall indeed make one free!

D. B.
California

"Narrow"

Sir / You are "narrow" in your views on the authority of Scripture. You are "narrow" in your view of the work of the Holy Spirit. You are "narrow" in your view of experience versus gospel. You are "narrow" in your view of the current Pentecostal, Catholic and neo-evangelical movements. Thank God for that "narrow" view, for it is needed today in a world of theological "broadness." I enjoy your publication.

D. B., Baptist Minister
Michigan

Surprise

Sir / Brinsmead continues to delight with his deep insight into the heart of the gospel. But it is a surprise to find him comfortably quoting Paul Tillich, however true the isolated quotation might be.

R. R., Lutheran Minister
California

Freedom to Obey

Sir / I have read most of the special issue of *Present Truth* entitled "Justification by Faith and the Charismatic Movement." You are making a helpful contribution to what will be, I suspect, the most intense and, hopefully, the most fruitful theological debate within the Christian church in a long time. We may indeed be on the verge of a new Reformation. In so far as it is of God, I am sure you would agree that we can welcome it.

As I observe the charismatic movement locally and stay in touch with it personally, I share your concern about a total submersion in subjectivity. On the other hand, the growth, not only of the charismatic movement, but of the human potential movement in secular circles, and its appeal to Christians and to church programing in such forms as "relational theology" as propagated by Faith at Work and WORD publishers, is an unmistakable sign that the dimension of the emotional life has been woefully neglected in the teaching and Christian experience of our "mainline" Protestant churches. We seem unable to reach a balance between the objective reality of the gospel, which alone gives us a place to stand in assurance of God's saving grace, and the filling of the Spirit, which enables us, without debauchery, to express freely and joyfully the feelings that, as creatures of the flesh, are also God's gift. To literally thousands, perhaps millions, of serious, struggling, earnest Christians, this question of how to experience within the liberty and joy which Christ came to bring is "where it's at."

Unless the gospel we preach is God's vehicle of grace for truly setting people free for joyous, obedient living, there is something wrong in the way we are communicating it. Simply to say that we must hold on to the objectivity of the gospel, while necessary, is not sufficient, The same apostle who so powerfully upholds the value of law while insisting on the all-sufficiency of grace, calls us to walk "in the Spirit" and manifest the fruits of love, joy, peace, etc. While these qualities are deeper than our feelings in their fullest implications, they are exceedingly difficult for most Christians to appropriate with any sense of reality if their emotional life never gets healed.

I hope and pray that your concern for the preservation of Reformation truth may be broad enough to explore its weaknesses as well as its strengths and so encourage those who see both to stay with the struggle to preach and experience a genuinely "full gospel."

J. F., Presbyterian Minister
New Jersey

Faith and Works

Sir / I find *Present Truth* articles well written and worth the time and effort to read. As an Anglo-Catholic Episcopalian priest, there is, of course, more than a little with which I do not agree. I do, however, feel very much in sympathy with the references to "subjectivism" so rampant throughout many areas of Christendom today. Often it does seem as if the folks involved in the charismatic movement are in truth trying their best to force God's hand: "Show us a sign!" I tend to agree with one of my teachers (perhaps one of the greatest), the late Prof. Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, that the predominance of natural religion in America, and common in practically every denomination, does account for the popularity and strength of subjectivism so evident throughout the present religious scene in America.

Where I part company with you is, as you can well imagine, in your presentation of justification by faith in its pristine purity. For it seems so evident that, from a historical perspective, and certainly as observable throughout Protestantism in America, one just cannot find illustrations of what you promise: "Then will the conscience be cleansed, the heart will find peace with God, and a life of good works will flow from the certain conviction of being accepted of God." As O. H. Mower, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, has observed, how many are those who have tried to believe in and follow the orthodoxy which you postulate to their spiritual desperation! In particular he cites clergy who go on and on preaching "justification by faith" and yet whose consciences stand accused because of undisciplined lives and personal moral crises which let them know in obvious terms that unless they let the apostle James have his say too, they are destined for spiritual suicide. I must say in all honesty that I have yet to meet a minister or layman who manages to translate what you write about —"justification by faith"—into his own day-to-day experience.

Never for a moment do I consider that the "works" which I do earn me a farthing in the eyes of God. Yet I do believe that God expects acts of obedience and response to His commands. I also believe that faith leads to a "conscience cleansed" (but see nothing wrong with and much to commend in what seems to me a fruit of faith: the motivation to confess my sins without feeling it stained with the brand of "works"). And that faith leads on then to "a life of good works." But I also believe that when the fire of faith burns low, better to settle for "works" than to simply throw up one's hands in despair (as has happened with so many to leave the church, usually with a guilty conscience).

I admire your kind of clear and forceful writing, which is obviously supported with some honest scholarship and yet coupled with genuinely sincere faith.

D. G., Episcopalian Priest
Vermont

Why?

Sir / Thank you for the help you have given (and still are giving) to me in sorting out what the Bible has to say about my assurance of salvation. Coming out of a conservative Lutheran environment, then being involved for a time with the Jesus People, and now studying for the Lutheran ministry, you have provided me with very valuable counterbalance to the emotionalism prevalent today in much theology.

In the last two years I have seen some of my former Christian associates fall away from Christ, others get further into "tongues," and some become deeper Christians. Why is it, though, that so many people seem to equate "faithfulness to the Bible" (a very necessary thing) with "Everyone must be a Christian just like me"? I find this tendency far too many times in myself —demanding that everyone allow me to live out my own style of life but claiming that if they are to be Christians, then they must do it my way. I wish that more people could remember that we are to take a firm and unified stand on the basis of Scripture and that we are free in other areas to disagree.

Among the Jesus People I found a tolerance of disagreements on *adiaphora* but a unity of theology (although admittedly embryonic). Now I find that I am among people with whom I share a deeper and more accurate understanding of Christ's work and yet less tolerance for deviation in unimportant matters.

Lest you think that I am postulating a "return to basic theology and forget the rest," I am not. But I think that we many times *do* fall under the indictment made against us by Pentecostals—that we show very little love. If we truly (and I believe that we do) teach Christ correctly, shouldn't our lives show it in such measure that any counterfeits (be they liberal "social concern," Pentecostal enthusiasm, etc.) will be shown up as nothing more than a carbon copy?

I really want to know why it is that the world doesn't still say of us as it did of the early New Testament church, "See how they love one another."

M. H.
Wisconsin

Lacking

Sir / I am thankful for the warning that we Protestants are lacking faith in Christ. Your magazine has answered many personal questions concerning what Christ has accomplished for me. It has also clarified certain teachings in the church which I felt uneasy about but was unable to diagnose — namely, the position that one could accept Christ as Saviour and then, at a later date, accept Christ as Lord by asking the Holy Spirit to fill him.

T. S.
Nebraska

Misguided

Sir / One finds it difficult not to thoroughly admire your courage, zeal and enthusiasm, however misguided. At your earliest convenience you might check Paul's two admonitions in Acts to believe on Jesus and be saved, while the apostle asked another group of believers, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" If this line of thinking is followed open-mindedly, I think you will agree there is a possibility of two separate works of divine grace.

F. G., Minister
Texas

Prejudiced

Sir / Your magazine is only partly true. Quite evidently it is quite prejudiced against the manifested , thus bringing division in the body of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ did baptize me in the Holy Spirit *after* He saved me. I do not feel that I have to prove anything to anyone. I *know* what the Lord Jesus did for me and *when* He did it. Neither does God have to prove anything to anyone—He is God.

L. C.
Tennessee

From England

Sir / Thank you so much for your publication, *Present Truth.* I agree entirely with your views. I have been an evangelical Christian for nearly forty years and, like you, can find nothing in Holy Writ to support the "second blessing" of the tongues movement. Indeed, I have been puzzled and worried over the drift towards Romanism in the Pentecostal movement and the World Council of Churches despite the great issues of the Reformation. The tendency today is to forget the past and cover over doctrinal differences, forgetting the great doctrines of the Reformation.

H. D., Minister
England

Sir / I have had the same concern as you express regarding Pentecostalism for many years, and your ministry is an echo of my concern. Constantly one finds that "evangelicalism" is a meaningless term and is seldom synonymous with the Reformed faith.

I have given close attention to Pentecostalism for many years and, in recent times, to its ecumenical impact, specially in relation to Rome. I think there are signs of a genuine reformation amongst *some* Roman Catholics—and they will pay the price for their faithfulness. But the system is still giving all the evidence it ever did as to who masterminds it.

D. P., Minister
England

From South Africa

Sir / Here in South Africa we face the same problems as you face—i.e., an aggressive Pentecostalism, a remarkable growth in Catholicism, and widespread doctrinal ignorance of our Protestant heritage among English-speaking South Africans. I have been concerned about this for some time but have not known what to do in the circumstances. Unfortunately, Pentecostalism makes such a great appeal to our people, although among Baptists the movement is not great. But as far as I can see, the writing is on the wall, and the Baptists will not be able to withstand the great pressures that are going to come upon them—unless something is done to stem the tide. On the other hand, there is a growing Reformed movement apparent among many Baptists, and I feel that there is going to come a time when the issues will become so clear-cut that division will result.

Reading some of the material in *Present Truth* was like a breath of fresh air after being surrounded on every side by voices of subjectivism. God make strong your arm to forward the proclamation of truth! May the Lord, the living God, bring about in our day such a day of His power that New Testament Christianity shall be restored to its purity, that churches shall know the power of the God who justifies the ungodly, and that countless numbers shall come to faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

R. J., Baptist Minister
South Africa

Cohesive

Sir / I find the letters in *Present Truth* interesting—particularly those from the so-called charismatics. Having been involved in Pentecostalism in my early Christian life, I can understand their position although I do not share their discomfort. I have no argument with *sola gratia, solo Christo* and *sola fide* as well as *sola Scriptura* because my salvation is utterly dependent upon the written Word of God apart from any outward manifestations or physical experiences.

I feel that the tongues movement is a cohesive element which seems to further the ecumenical movement, which has compromise as its foundation. If Babylon is to be rebuilt, perhaps this babble is the root or foundation of this event. Satan can counterfeit the Spirit of God, and we see the evidence on every hand.

G. S.
Washington

On Campus

Sir / As a student, I first read *Present Truth* on the recommendation of one of my instructors. I'm very impressed with your stand on the Word alone and with your emphasis on justification by faith. I've been very disturbed by the subjective, experiential, Pentecostal trend on our campus. It seems to be spreading like an epidemic. I know that several students and most of the faculty share my concern. We have become acquainted with *Present Truth,* and we have been gaining perspective on the implications of justification by faith and on its meaning. We've also been seeing the very real dangers in subjectivism and our obligation, as dorm counselors, to combat this both in our personal lives and in our ministries. *Present Truth* has been a real help in pointing out the danger and in providing a solidly Biblical foundation. We'll keep recommending your magazine to those we meet.

C. G.
Colorado

Sir / I'm a student at a Christian college and have found strength and assurance in your stand for the gospel of grace. It isn't often heard with clarity.

J. C.
New York

Wondering

Sir / I'm wondering how you arrived at the name of your magazine. You couldn't be farther from the truth!

L. R.
Ohio

Quite a Job!

Sir / You do not know which way the wind (Holy Spirit) is blowing. You have quite a job on your hands, for this charismatic movement is of God, and no man can stop it! God said that in the last days He would pour out His Spirit on *all* flesh. If you had ever been to a charismatic service and felt the beautiful presence of God, you couldn't print *Present Truth* magazine.

M. J.

Devisive

Sir / It is tragic that in a day and age such as ours, when Christians are finally beginning to love and accept each other, you have nothing better to do than publish a magazine, the entire contents of which only speak against movements that differ from you. Even though I may agree with some of the magazine's content, I think it is one of the most divisive things I have seen!

R. B., Methodist Minister
Ohio

Sir / You claim that Pentecostals promote their experience above Jesus Christ. How is it possible to exalt our Lord when you are constantly attacking the beliefs of Pentecostalism and Catholicism—both Christian beliefs? Is unity to be gained by constantly fighting those who are in opposition against you. Your method of "guilt by association"—associating Pentecostalism with the evils of Catholicism—is sickening.

D. F.
Minnesota

A Blessing

Sir / It is a blessing to my soul to see that someone is knowledgeable enough to be able to correct, by Scripture, the fallacies of Pentecostalism without becoming embroiled with hellfire and brimstone.

W. J.
Texas

Likes Emphasis

Sir / I've read some of your articles in *Present Truth,* and although I don't share your view of today's "Jesus Revolution," "charismatic" or "Pentecostal" movement, I am most thankful that the centrality of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ was emphasized in these articles.

B. B.
California

Editorial Introduction

This issue has been devoted to a discussion of some of the principles of Christian ethics in the light of the great Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. We have included a couple reprints of choice articles from two books published by The Banner of Truth Trust. Also included is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's onslaught against "cheap grace." Some have considered this essay as Bonhoeffer's best. It fits well with the theme of this *Present Truth* issue.

Some of our readers may raise their eyebrows that we would use any material from the writings of the man some would regard as the father of "religionless Christianity." We take the position, however, that truth is truth, even if it is spoken by the mouth of an ass (and we are not suggesting that Bonhoeffer was an ass). It is disappointing when people ask, "Who said it?" and judge on that basis, rather

Judges 12:6

than asking, "What is said?" We do not feel bound to judge a man's pedigree before we quote him. We certainly do not go along with all that the neo-orthodox theologians have contributed; neither do we want to ignore any contribution that they have made to Christian thought. We deplore the narrow spirit that wants to damn everyone who does not shout our shibboleths.

Justification by grace alone means that we are not justified by doctrinal rectitude. It is right to contend for good theology and for a clear understanding of the Word. But that is a different matter from refusing to acknowledge those who differ with us as good Christians. We happen to take sharp issue with Pentecostalism, not because we want to be contentious, but because we feel that vital principles of truth are at stake. Yet we gladly salute many fine Christians who are Pentecostal. James Buchanan, who wrote that great classic on *The Doctrine of Justification,* takes very sharp issue with Arminianism. Yet he happily salutes the great evangelical Arminians, like John Wesley, as true children of God. He just regarded their hearts as better than their heads, and grace as greater than either.

We should not err on the side of thinking that good theology is unimportant as long as we have good hearts toward God. The truth and the glory of God are inseparable, and we should strive to correctly represent God in all our doctrinal statements. On the other hand, we should not err on the side of those who say, "Unless you believe as we do, you can't be saved." That sounds too much like the Pharisees who said, "These people who know not the Torah [the teaching] are cursed." In heaven we may find out that some great saints on earth held some queer ideas.

When the Reformation started, the Catholics damned the Lutherans. When the Calvinists came on the scene, they were damned by the Lutherans. When the Arminians arose, they were damned by the Calvinists. We may let all this go by and gladly confess that Jesus alone can say, "I . . . have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. 1:18.

Truth is broader than any theological system. It is bigger than Lutheranism or Calvinism. It cannot be confined to any party system. It would be safer to let truth call our opinions into question than for us to call truth into question. Come, therefore, and "let us reason together."

The Editors

The Nature of Christian Existence

Geoffrey J. Paxton

Editor's Note: In the February, 1974 issue of *Present Truth,* we promised to publish some material on the nature of Christian existence, presented by The Australian Forum in its 1973 visit to the United States. The following is a transcript of Professor Geoffrey J. Paxton's talk to the students and faculty at Grace Bible Institute, Omaha, Nebraska, November 6, 1973.

This lecture was delivered with great vigor and conviction. Geoffrey Paxton is a college president himself, and he understands students. Those who think young people will only listen to subjective, "romantic" evangelicalism should have seen the rapt attention with which those students listened to real theology.

Professor Paxton took off his clerical coat, rolled up his evangelical sleeves and gave this address without notes, straight from the heart. We thought our readers would enjoy this material more if we forego formal literary finesse and reproduce the talk as given with the salt and pepper of Paxton's Australian idioms and Down Under humor.

This address is also available on tape (cassette or reel).

Part 1

We want to talk about a subject that is extremely important. Therefore I want to make a special plea that you give me your undivided attention from beginning to end.

One of the great tragedies of the evangelical church today is that it stresses *God's work in us by the Holy Spirit* to the near exclusion (and in some instances certainly the exclusion) of *God's work for us in Christ.* But there is another tragedy that we would like to highlight. Not only does the evangelical church stress God's work *in us* through the Spirit to the exclusion of God's work *for us* in Christ, but insofar as God's work *for us* in Christ is imperfectly understood, God's work *in us* by the Spirit is wrongly presented.

What I am saying is no mean statement. We need to stress God's work *for us* in Christ, and we need to stress God's work *in us* by the Spirit. But we need to stress God's work for us to the *degree* that the New Testament stresses God's work for us, and we need to stress God's work in us in the *way* that the New Testament stresses it. We must have a New Testament understanding of what it means for God to be at work in the believer. We need to understand the way the New Testament talks about God's work in the believer. We need to understand the nature of Christian existence.

I want to make two introductory statements about Christian existence:

1. We in The Australian Forum believe utterly in the sovereignty of God. But we must realize that God's sovereignty in creation and salvation in no way diminishes the necessity of good works, evangelism, missions and great activity in the life of the believer. Ultra-Calvinism (as it is called)—the type of teaching which stresses the sovereignty of God in such a way that it minimizes the responsibility of man, the teaching which stresses the greatness of grace in such a way as to minimize the meaningfulness of human behavior—is not Biblical and not Reformation. We ought to repudiate it forever from our thinking. Properly understood, the sovereignty of God and the grace of God are a great motivating force in Christian behavior, evangelism and missions.

2. When I say that we need to have a New Testament understanding of Christian existence, I not only mean to stress the *necessity* of Christian existence, the necessity of Christian behavior and good works. We also need to know what the New Testament teaches about the *nature* of Christian existence.

Distorted Views of Sanctification

How are we to understand sanctification? That is a big question. Could I offer you a statement on it to think about?

Sanctification = Justification in Action

We of The Australian Forum have no time for ultra-Calvinism. The Bible does not teach it. When we say that the nature of Christian existence is sanctification, that means action. There is a necessity for good works, for

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good behavior. We ourselves are a work created in Christ Jesus for good works. How anyone could deduce that you don't have to do good works because you are a Christian is incredible to us! The Bible is full of the necessity for good works. So sanctification is *justification in action.* Don't sing "Standing on the Promises" and just "sit on the premises."

Yet we must stress more than the necessity of activity. Action is important. But we need to stress what sort of action it is. Please notice what I put on the board. Every word I say is carefully chosen.

Justification Sanctification (Justification in Action)

One of the big questions of theology is concerning the relationship between justification and sanctification. I will tell you of a great mischief. It is to confuse justification and sanctification—to make the two synonymous. But I will tell you of another great mischief. That is to entirely separate justification and sanctification so that sanctification is regarded as optional for the believer.

Sanctification is not optional. We have met people in this country who have said, "Surely you believe in 'once saved, always saved.'" We ask, "What do you mean by that?" "Well," they reply, "if you have believed in Jesus and then fall away and don't do any good works or live as a Christian should, you will still have salvation." No sir! The Bible teaches nothing of the kind. Calvin, bless his name, would have had a seizure if he heard you say that. He would! Calvin believed in the perseverance of the saints. He didn't believe in the perseverance of the unbeliever. If you don't believe, and if you are not showing that your belief is real by your behavior, you have absolutely no basis to regard yourself as a child of God. Don't ever let the devil delude you about this. The great promises and comforts of the Bible are for those who believe and who show that Christ is theirs by their behavior day by day. We must have none of this business of "faith for a moment will bring life for eternity." None of that!

We say again: *Sanctification is justification in action.* It is a great mischief to confuse justification and sanctification. And it is a great mischief to separate them so that you think you can be justified while sanctification becomes optional.

I have a good friend who was a minister of religion. I think very highly of him. He has repudiated the faith and is now involved in secular studies at a university. He doesn't believe and makes no confession of Christ. A mutual friend came to me and said, "Well, it is wonderful to know he is still the Lord's." Listen, brethren! My reply was this: "I have absolutely no ground for saying he is the Lord's. The Bible never points back to the fact that you once believed to prove that you are now saved. If you are not believing, if you are not persevering in good works and if you are not seeking the honor of God, you have absolutely no ground to affirm that you are a Christian." Now this man may repent and embrace Christ. But so long as he does not believe and so long as he is not persevering in good works, I have not the slightest ground for saying that he is a Christian.

So a great mischief is not only to confuse sanctification and justification, but to separate them so that you think you can be justified and then regard sanctification as optional. Brethren, where do you get that? You don't get that from the Bible! You get it out of the crucible of someone's skull. You will pardon my stressing this. But this type of teaching that we find so widespread in the United States is a distress to us. To think that sanctification is optional! To stand on the promises and sit on the premises! To think that the Christian church is a mere convalescent home! It is an army. The Christian life is a warfare, a fight, a slog.

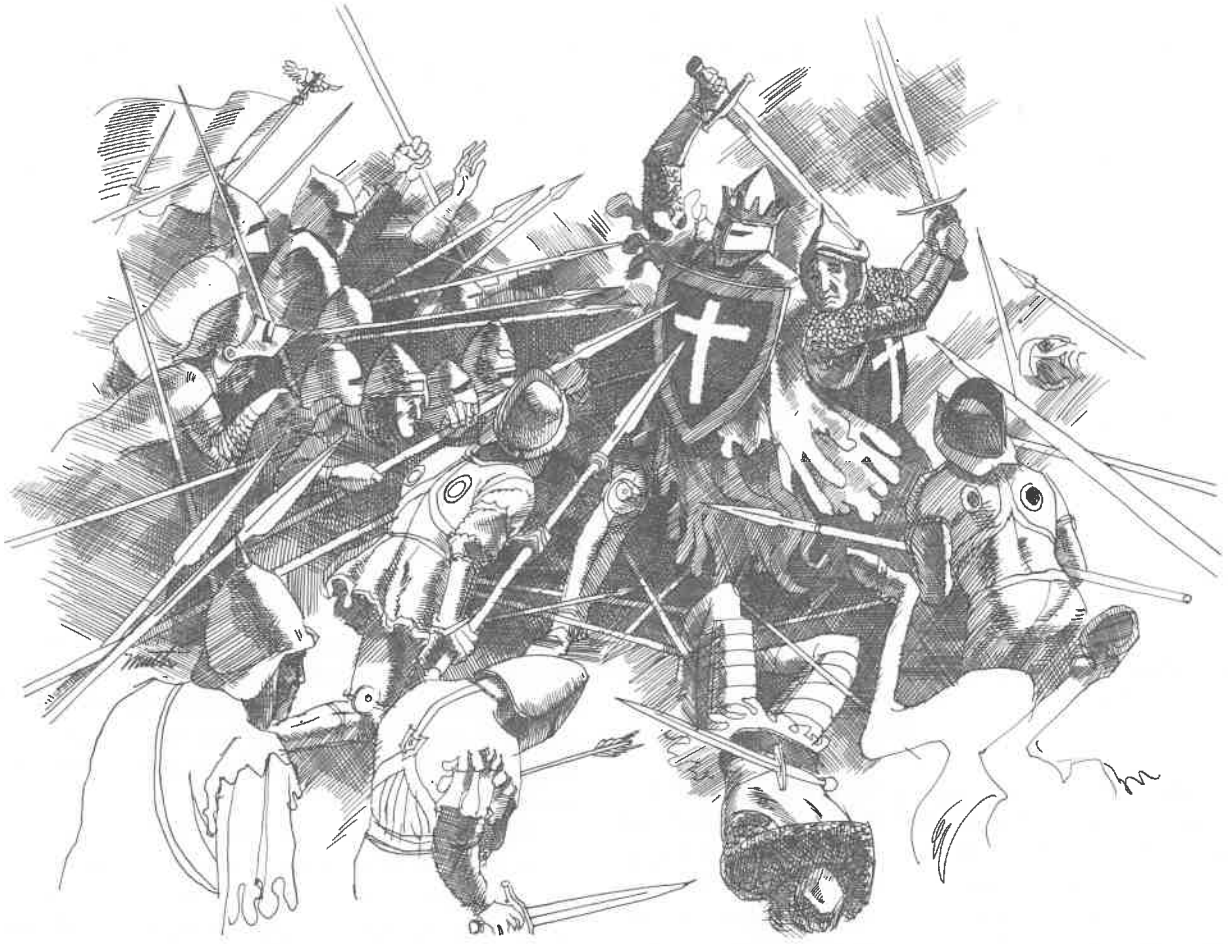
Sanctification = Justification in Action

The Distinctiveness of Christian Existence

I believe that one of the great tragedies of the evangelical misunderstanding of the nature of Christian existence is that Christian existence has lost its distinctiveness. Christian existence is unique. It cannot be reproduced on the face of the earth by anyone who is not a Christian. The world ought to be able to look at the Christian community and see an existence, a type of life in the community, that they can see nowhere else on the face of the earth. I want you to understand that.

I'll tell you why I think the Christian existence has been "de-distinctivized" today. The Christian existence has lost its distinctiveness because sanctification and justification have been separated. This is that type of mentality: "We praise the Lord for justification. God has been marvelous in saving us through Christ. We thank the Lord for the gospel. We praise His name for our conversion, for our incorporation into Christ—we thank the Lord for that! But we have to go on from there, brother! We leave the gospel there. It deals with the beginning of the Christian life, but we need to go on to deeper and greater things. We don't have to keep talking about the gospel. That is for the initiation of the Christian. For the continuation we go on to the higher and deeper work of sanctification." That is the mentality, and the Bible knows nothing of it. It is a great tragedy.

At one college we had a student say to us, "Well, surely you don't just preach the gospel. There are other things in the Bible to preach about." We asked, "Is there a passage that doesn't talk about the gospel or is not relevant to the gospel in one way or another?" When challenged to give us an example, he wanted to change the subject, yet I wouldn't let him do it. "But surely there are other doctrines besides justification by faith," he said. "Surely you don't always preach the gospel. You can go on to other doctrines like prophecy and events in Israel, etc." I replied by asking, "Is there any doctrine that is not determined by the gospel?" He shook his head, saying, "Man, you are making it difficult now."



The Christian life is a warfare, a fight, a slog.

I hope that student examines the implication of my question. There is no passage in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation that does not in one way or another deal gloriously with the gospel of God—the redeeming, saving activity of God for His people. There is not one doctrine in the Bible that does not in one way or another—implicitly or explicitly, directly or indirectly—talk about the doctrine of God's saving grace.

Christology. Why, you would have to have a head on you like a block of cement not to see the relevance of salvation and grace for Christology.

Soteriology. The doctrine of salvation.

Eschatology. The gospel is as relevant for eschatology as for any other doctrine.

Pneumatology. The doctrine of the Spirit.

Theology. How can you talk about theology without talking about the great grace of God in the work of the First Person of the Trinity sending the Second Person of the Trinity, and the Second Person of the Trinity offering Himself to God through the Third Person of the Trinity? How can you talk about these doctrines apart from the gospel?

So it is a great mischief to think that the gospel tells of the beginning of our Christian life but then we go on to deeper and higher things. This thinking is revealed in some of our churches when it is so often said, "In the morning we shall have a teaching service for the believer, and in the evening we shall have a gospel service for the unbeliever." If there is no gospel in the morning service, it will be defective, and if there is no teaching in the evening gospel service, it too will be very defective. That is an utterly false distinction, a false dichotomy that the Bible knows nothing about.

Justification in Action

Let me illustrate what I mean when I say that *sanctification is justification in action.*

What do we receive in justification? What do we receive in and through the gospel? Do not we receive God? Does not God come to us, make Himself known to us and bring us into His fellowship? Indeed He does. We receive God in the gospel. Now what does it mean to say that *sanctification is justification in action?* If sanctification is justification in action, then sanctification must be God in

action. This means that we behave *God-ly.* The God that is perceived in sanctification is no different from the God that is received and perceived in justification. The God who comes to us in the gospel shows Himself through the behavior of the believer.

Justification	Sanctification (Justification in Action)
God	godly

Do not we receive *love* in justification? Has not love come to us, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him . . ." We receive the love of God, do we not? According to 1 John we receive the Love who is God. Now how are we going to behave? You may say we can behave *love-ly.* (But to put this into its adverbial form), we behave *lovingly.* Please note this: The love that is demonstrated in Christian existence is no different from the love that we receive in justification. It is no different from the love that we receive in the gospel. Indeed, it is the love of justification. It is the love of the gospel.

Justification	Sanctification (Justification in Action)
God	godly
Love	lovingly

So often the Christian community claim to believe in the gospel and to have accepted God's justification, but their entire life style bears little or no relation to the gospel. There is little or no relation to justification. Sometimes they get involved in intricate systems of building radiant Christian personalities. They get involved in an intricate labyrinth of rules and principles on how to deal with a pimple on the end of your nose or how to get rid of the "itty-bitty" bitterness in your heart—about your mother-in-law or something like that. But the love of the believer's existence is the love of justification, the love of the gospel. It is not different from this.

Do we not receive *hope* in justification? In sanctification we behave *hope-fully.* Please note that the hope of sanctification is not different from the hope of justification. The hope that peeps through the doors of unpretentious Christian existence is not separated from the gospel. It is the gospel hope. So it is extraordinary for me to hear a believer say, when asked, "Are you going to be received into God's kingdom at the end?" "I hope so." That is not justification hope, is it? Of course not! "I am trying my best. I'm getting prepared." Man, a person needs the gospel if he talks like that.

Justification	Sanctification (Justification in Action)
God	godly
Love	lovingly
Hope	hopefully

In the gospel do we not receive Jesus as *Lord?* The Bible says that if you will confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. (Can you meaningfully believe that Jesus is Lord unless you believe that God has raised Him from the dead? A dead Lord is no good.) We believe that Jesus is Lord. But how is this seen in our day-by-day existence? How do we live so as to show this faith? We live as *subjects.*

Justification	Sanctification (Justification in Action)
God	godly
Love	lovingly
Hope	hopefully
Lord	subjects

It was the devil's trick to get Adam to think that the way to live was as Lord. You live as a subject. You live day by day, bowed down with the realization that Jesus is Lord of the entire universe. He is the Lord of life, of death, of tragedy, of exhilaration, of you, of me, of the birds, of the animals, of all. When you live bowed down with the realization of Jesus' Lordship and that you belong to Him, you are His property, believer. That is what it means to be a Christian. You belong to Him. You are His property. You owe Him your allegiance day by day. He has indelibly written into your being the mark of His ownership. When we live as subjects day by day, people see our *subjecthood,* and they are pointed to the Lordship of Jesus.

But do we not receive Jesus as *Saviour* in the gospel as well? Now here is *the* question. How is the Saviourhood of Jesus seen in Christian existence? Think about it! Don't rush in with a quick answer. If sanctification is *justification in action,* and if we receive Jesus as Saviour in the gospel, how are we to live as Christians? Remember that the Saviourhood of Jesus will be seen at the point of our daily behavior.

Christians must live as *sinners.* What do I mean by that statement? There is to be no point in your life when you confess yourself anything but a sinner. One of the constant characteristics of your existence is your confession of your *sinnerhood.* One of the constant characteristics of my existence is the confession of my sinnerhood. That is what John is saying in 1 John 1:9. We confess our sins, and God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. A distinctive characteristic of Christian existence is the willingness to admit that we are sinners—whether we feel like sinners or not.

I am so sinful that I very seldom feel sinful. Once in about every fortnight[1] I feel sinful. But the other times I don't feel sinful. I feel quite perfect. Sometimes I'll get a pain in the stomach, and that will make me feel like sin incarnate. And the feeling may not be directly attributable to sin at all.

You get up in the morning, and you say, "Good morning, world. I have arrived." You go to the breakfast table and down your breakfast. And somehow that material

[1] For those not acquainted with the term, *fortnight* means *two weeks.*

which you poke into yourself gets mixed up in that labyrinth down there, your eyes cross, and then the world has changed. You have to stagger into the lecture room and hold yourself up. *We are sinners whether we feel like it or not.*

Justification	Sanctification (Justification in Action)
God	godly
Love	lovingly
Hope	hopefully
Lord	subjects
Saviour	sinners

We are sinners despite what we think of ourselves. I don't know whether American people are like us or not, but we Australians are very biased toward ourselves. If you are one of a dozen people in a room, you always think of the other eleven being the culprits before yourself. Or maybe it is different here, and you blame yourself immediately. We don't do that at home. As humans, we are biased toward ourselves. We are always going to have a biased opinion of ourselves. So you can't believe what you feel. You can't believe what you think. You can't believe what your friends say about you either, because they are biased. They are for you. You don't go to a very good friend for him to tell you the truth about yourself. Friends who will tell you the truth about yourself are as rare as hens' teeth. You can't take any notice of what your enemies say either. They are biased too. So you can't believe what you feel. You can't believe what you think. You can't believe what your friends say about you. You can't believe what your enemies say about you. The only way that you are going to know what you really are is by what God says about you. The gospel message has come to you, beloved Christian, and come to me, and it has told us that we are sinners. *We must accept our sinnerhood by faith.* I accept the fact that I am a sinner by faith. Faith is not feeling. Faith is not sight. Faith is not the advice of friends. Faith is not the advice of enemies. Faith is faith in the Word of God—despite what we feel, despite what we think, despite what our friends tell us, despite what our enemies tell us.

All believers, at all times, never refuse to admit that they are sinners—and sinners to the extent that the Bible tells them that they are sinners. So I want none of this pretending, if you don't mind. If I sit next to you at lunch, I want none of this pretending that you are a "goody-goody," for you are going to make me feel very awkward. I'll feel awkward because: (1) I'm not a "goody-goody." The Bible tells me this. And when I'm not a "goody-goody" and I am sitting beside a "goody-goody," it makes me feel quite out of this world. (2) I have a sneaking suspicion that you are not a "goody-goody" either, and I am going to think you are a hypocrite. So there must be real admission, a real acknowledgment of sinnerhood. Why pretend otherwise?

You don't have to be a Christian to be a sinner, although you have to be a Christian to acknowledge you are a sinner. But we live as forgiven sinners. Sinners still! If you ever decide to get rid of your sinnerhood, at the same time get rid of God's forgiveness. God only forgives sinners. Can you see what I am saying? It is important to have this embedded into our skulls. Why, you can stop the strain of pretending. It might add ten years to your life. You may get through your course with an A instead of a B if you really stop the burden of pretending. That psycho-physical drain will go away from you, and you will say, "Listen, I'm a sinner. The sooner I really acknowledge it and stop pretending, the better. I am going to start to live the gospel."

Let me illustrate this forgiven sinner with the example of Mephibosheth. Remember Mephibosheth? He was a social derelict, an outcast and a cripple, thrown out on the scrapheap. Because of King David's love for another, that social outcast, that psycho-physical derelict, was brought to the king's presence to sit at the king's table.

Mephibosheth must have sat down in that banquet hall bowed down with the mercy of the king's kindness to him. Do you think Mephibosheth sat in that banquet hall looking around and thinking who he was better than? Do you think he would have given the impression that there was something in himself that made the king bring him to the banquet table? He was bowed down with the king's kindness. Read also Ezekiel 16.

A little woman came to me after a meeting in Australia and said, "Mr. Paxton, I have not long been converted. The group through whom I was converted said that I ought to be a good witness to my husband. Now please tell me how I can be a good witness to my husband. I want to win him for the Lord."

"Indeed you must be a good witness," I replied, "and I will try to give you some guidelines. First, whatever you do, don't go home to your husband and give him the impression that now that you have become a Christian, you have become morally infallible. If you do that, he will do two things. (1) If he knows anything about his heart (and usually husbands do), he will first write off any possibility of his becoming a Christian. [Have you ever heard an unbeliever say, "I couldn't live up to it"? This shows that an unbeliever has a fundamentally wrong concept of Christianity. Where did that concept come from? It must have come from the Christian community.] (2) When you 'goof,' your husband will also do something else. (And believe me, you will 'goof' sooner or later. You may go just perfectly for a week. Then the kids may get you down, the pressures will be very great, you will suddenly explode, and there will be shrapnel all over the house. You are going to feel miserable, because with that explosion your understanding of Christianity is going to be blown right out of your life and out of the home.) As soon as your husband sees you 'goof,' he will not only believe he could never be a Christian, but he will write off the validity of your Christianity as well."

"Mr. Paxton," the woman gasped, "that's different from anything I've ever been told. Then how am I going to witness to my husband?"

"You go home," I said, "and tell your husband you have discovered that all those things he said about you in that quarrel he had with you, were correct. That will knock him out on the floor for three minutes at least. And while he is out, you can compose the rest of your sermon. When he opens his eyes and rolls them about, tell him he didn't tell you half the truth. That was because he was either too kind or too ignorant. Confess that you are far worse than he ever said. Tell him that you have discovered you are a wretched sinner, but one who has found forgiveness at the hands of a merciful God. Then you can tell him that if he were to acknowledge his wretchedness and ask Jesus Christ to forgive him and to become his Substitute, he too could find forgiveness at the hand of a merciful God. Then when you try to work for God's glory day by day and you 'goof,' you will only confirm the gospel. You can say, 'Lord, there it is again. That's what You have forgiven. How can I ever grasp it!' "

The forgiveness of God is only meaningful in the light of an awareness of our wretchedness. We show the Saviourhood of Christ by living as forgiven sinners.

> Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, 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. Ezek. 16:1-6.

Any person who lives with this burning into his mind will be bowed down with the mercy of God.

Part 2

Sanctification is justification in action. There must always be action. But it must always be the gospel in action. It must always be justification in action. It must always be the grace of God in action.

Let us summarize the ground we have covered:

1. In justification we receive *God.* God comes to us by His Spirit. We therefore live a *God-ly* existence. The God of justification is seen at the point of the believer's existence. The same God must be seen.
2. We receive *love* in justification. We receive love in the gospel. The Holy Spirit has poured the love of God into our hearts (Rom. 5:5). The *love-ing* existence must be the same love of the gospel. It is not a different type of love.
3. We receive *hope* in justification. We receive hope in the gospel. We live *hope-fully.* And the hope-ful existence we live is the same hope as in justification.
4. Jesus comes to us as *Lord* in the gospel. We show the Lordship of Christ in the gospel by living as *subjects* in our daily life. When people see our subjecthood, it points to Christ's Lordship.
5. In the gospel we receive Christ as *Saviour* as well as Lord. The Saviourhood of Christ is seen in the forgiven *sinnerhood* of the believer. We live constantly acknowledging our sin, constantly owning up to the fact that we are wretches, but constantly praising God for the fact that He has forgiven us wretched sinners. The Christian always remains two things: (a) He always remains a sinner despite the fact that he fights against sin. (b) He constantly recognizes that he is a forgiven sinner.

Ezekiel 16:1-6

The Big Three of Christian Existence

Now we want to deal with the three great characteristics of Christian existence—faith, hope and love.

Let's Talk About Faith. There is no doubt about the distinguishing characteristic of Christian existence being *faith.* We receive faith in the gospel, do we not? Is faith not a gift of God? So if we receive faith in the gospel, if faith is the gift of God in the gospel, we ought to live faith-ful existences. We ought to live faith-fully. The faith of justification is expressed in the faithful existence of sanctification.

What is the distinctive characteristic of New Testament faith? Answer: You never go to faith itself for a distinctive characteristic. The distinctive characteristic of faith is that you go out of faith for its distinctive characteristic. Faith in the Bible is always affixed to the grace of God. The preoccupation of real faith is the grace of God. The preoccupation of Biblical faith is the mercy of God. The preoccupation of real, Biblical faith is the forgiveness of God in Christ. The preoccupation of real, Biblical faith is the love of God our Father. That is very important. So our whole life has to drip God's mercy. All our behavior, actions and attitudes are to represent the grace and mercy of God in the gospel.

You show me a man in the New Testament who is strong in faith, and his dominant characteristic will be that he is strong in the grace of God. You show me a man in the New Testament who is strong in faith, and I will show you a man who is preoccupied with God's mercy for his life. You show me a man in the New Testament who is strong in faith, and I will show you a man who is tickled red hot with forgiveness of sins. The notion that after you become a Christian, faith leaves grace—that faith leaves forgiveness and mercy and gets involved in techniques for Christian advancement—is un-Biblical through and through. The more strongly you grow in faith, the more strongly you appreciate the grace of God. The more strongly you grow in faith, the more strongly you appreciate the love of God the Father and His mercy. That is very important. It is surprising to see the number of Christian men and women you meet who are so intricately bound up in labyrinth-like complexes of advancing Christian personality and yet know almost nothing of the grace of God in Christ. They are not tickled pink with the gospel. They have left the gospel at commencement point.

The next statement I will make is fundamental. If I had the ability to take a stamp and impress this statement into each one of you so that you would never forget it for a minute, I would be a delighted man. Faith in the New

Testament is always faith in the grace of God. It is always faith in the mercy of God. It is always faith in the forgiveness of God in Christ. It is always faith in the love of God. *Faith only and always has a vertical reference point. It is never faith in anything horizontal.* It is not faith in the church. It is not faith in your conversion. It is not faith in your perseverance. It is not faith in good Bible teachers. It is not faith in your grasp of the Bible. It is not faith in anything horizontal. It is always faith in God. It is always faith in the grace of God, the mercy of God, the forgiveness of God, the love of God our Father. That is fundamental. I find people believing in their ability to persevere, Christians believing in their ability to maintain their walk with God. We find Christians directing their faith to horizontal reference points. The Bible knows nothing about this.

Here is another statement which could be the most fundamental I have made thus far: Faith is preoccupied with the love of God our Father. And this means that true, Biblical faith will be affixed to the love of God our Father in such a way that it comes to appreciate God. It comes to love God. This means that we will not want to hurt God. We will not want to sin. We will not want to go against Him. It is not Biblical to maintain the idea that a believer may go on in his sin because he realizes he has been converted and has become a child of God, and though he is out of temporal fellowship with God, he will no doubt come back into eternal fellowship with God when he dies. Faith in God is faith in the love of God our Father. Faith becomes so entranced with that love that we do not want to hurt Him. We don't want to go on in sin. We don't want to keep bringing shame to His name. The Bible knows nothing about the hypothetical notion that a believer can go on in sin and be out of temporal fellowship with God but still possess eternal fellowship with God. This dichotomy between temporal and eternal fellowship is an un-Biblical hypothesis.

The motivation for all our fighting against sin is faith in God, faith in what God has done for us. To understand what God has done for us in Christ melts our heart. When you come into vital, living relationship with someone you love, do you want to go on hurting that person? Of course you don't.

Let's Talk About Love. What is love? May I suggest that unless we are able to state clearly what love is, we may as well use the word "gobbledygook." "Dear brethren, let us 'gobbledygook' one another. He that 'gobbledygooketh' is born of God, and he that doth not 'gobbledygook' is not born of God. How can a man say that he 'gobbledygooketh' God if he does not 'gobbledygook' his brother."

We ought to be able to give concrete expression to what we mean by *love.* Christianity means something by *love.* Now what is it? Would you ever consider it possible that you loved someone while you behaved in an ungodly way toward him? Would you think it possible that while you behaved in a godly way toward him, you couldn't love him? Or you didn't love him? You would say that ungodly behavior can't be love, and you would say that godly behavior is love. And that is exactly what it is. Love in the New Testament is behaving in a God-ly fashion. Write it in your minds. How could you possibly behave in an ungodly way toward someone and call it love? On the other hand, how could you behave in a godly way toward someone and not call it love? God is love. To behave in a godly way is to behave in a love-ing way.

Now let me give you a statement on love. I have already said that sanctification is justification in action. Now I say, Love is behaving toward each other as God has and does behave toward us. That is what *godly* means. We behave the way God behaves. *Love is behaving toward each other as God has behaved toward us.* This takes love away from being an ooey-gooey feeling in the tummy. It is incredible that when some folk talk about love, they always grab their tummy. I used to think they had a pain. Love is as fussless and as down to earth as this—*behaving toward each other as God has behaved toward us.*

How has God behaved toward us? There is a very real sense in which God does not have direct fellowship with His people. Why do we say at the end of our prayers, "Through Jesus Christ, our Lord"? Why do we pray, "For Jesus sake"? Why do we pray, "In Jesus name"? We pray in this manner because we are constantly acknowledging that although our access is real, bold and confident, it is not a direct access. It is through Jesus. Now if we have fellowship with God through His Son Jesus, God has fellowship with us through Jesus. St. Paul declares, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." There is Someone between God and us. If love is behaving toward each other as God has behaved toward us, then we must see that God has behaved toward us through a Mediator. There is a very real sense in which God does not have direct fellowship with us. We are not Unitarians; we are Trinitarians. There is a terrible teaching going about in ecumenism which says that you can dispense with Christ, that you can have fellowship with God despite Christ, that you do not have to come to God through Christ. The Bible recognizes no fellowship with God apart from Christ. This is what we ought to echo home to the "ecu-maniacal" thinking deluging our world. The exclusivity of Christ is in danger of being denied. Love is behaving toward each other in and through Christ.

Love means having no direct fellowship with one another. That is right! Does God have direct fellowship with us? Should we then have direct fellowship with each other if God does not have direct fellowship with us? Of course not! We want to behave the way God behaves, don't we? Love is behaving toward each other through a Mediator. Love is the Mediator between man and man just as He is between God and man. If this is good enough for God, why isn't it good enough for us?

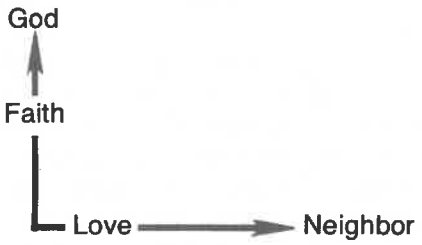
Now I'll tell you something that will rock you. The New Testament thinks of love in such a factual, fussless manner, that I earnestly believe, after several years of quiet and patient research, that the New Testament says *love is behaving as a Christian. Love is behaving in Christ and through Christ.* The believer is one who is in Christ. The believer is one who has fellowship through Christ. The believer is one who has fellowship with his fellow believer through Christ. The believer is one who behaves toward his fellow man in exactly the way that God has and does behave toward him. We shouldn't think for a moment that we can behave toward our brother in a different way from the way God behaves toward us.

Why does God accept you? Because of Christ. Have you any right to accept yourself for any other reason? No! Why does God accept your brother? Because of Christ. Have you any right to accept him for any other reason? Have you the right to reject him if God accepts him?

What does it mean to love God? Sometimes I see pictures of people who are held up as being great examples of loving God. They are depicted in great, ecstatic trances, shaking their hands, faces or bodies convulsed as if "smitten by the wound of love." I am inclined to think it is pornographic. I really am. It wasn't without reason that that Presbyterian woman described the feeling of speaking in tongues as being like the exultation of the finished sex longing (which testimony we read yesterday). You don't have to look glassy-eyed and you don't have to shake all over to show that you love God. Let me ask you: What is the highest thing you can do for God? Can you do any more for God than trust Him? That is the very best thing you can do to let God be God. Love and trust are identical in life. It is because he is a believer that the believer loves God. That is why Paul says in Romans 8:28, "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." You don't have to get "ooey-gooey" in the tummy to love God. I am not denying that this may be involved. But you must not think that the distinctive element in loving God is "ooey-gooeyism" in the tummy.

This is serious. We have to pull ourselves back into Biblical thinking. In reference to loving God, it simply means trusting Him. That is why Paul very seldom speaks of loving God, and John very seldom speaks of faith in God. Faith in God for Paul is the same as John's love for God. And love for God in John is the same as faith in God for Paul. When you trust God, you love Him. It may or it may not involve feeling. I think one of the most profound statements ever given in the Bible is found in Job. We see Job sitting there with scabs all over him. But he says, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." That must delight the heart of God more than any lover could delight the heart of his beloved. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." How glorious!

What does love mean for each other? Love toward each other is the outworking of our faith toward God. That is why John said that you cannot say you love God and hate your brother. If we love God, i.e., if we trust God, then the outworking of this in the horizontal relationship will be that we love each other. We always love our brother when we are trusting God. Paul says in Galatians 5:6 that it is "faith working through love."



What does this mean in concrete terms? Faith in God is always faith in the life of Jesus. Do you believe that Jesus lived for Himself? Who did He live for? Jesus lived for me. That perfect life was on my behalf. This means that Jesus is the only good that I have. There is none good but One. Therefore we all have the one good.

Let's think of the implications of that. The good that Gloria has is the good that I have, and that is the same good as you have. If we all have the one good, it must mean that no one is superior. How can you be superior if your good is the same as my good? How can any of us be superior if we all have the one good? You can only be superior if you think you have a good apart from Christ. A fundamental tenet of Christian faith is the acknowledgment that we only have one good in Christ.

If no one is superior, then no one is inferior. No superiority. No inferiority. Superiority and inferiority fly out the window in the Christian circle. This is what the Bible calls "love." You see, my dearly beloved brother, if I feel inferior to you, I deny the gospel, and if you feel superior to me, you deny the gospel. You cannot live by faith and think you are superior to anybody. That is important.

Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins? Do you believe that He died for the sins of your brother? Do you believe He died for the sins of your Christian sister? Do you believe He took the responsibility for all believers' sins? Then why do you judge them? The only way you can condemn your brother or condemn your sister is if you cease to believe. So when you deal with your erring brother, though you may try to get him to see that the gospel has implications for the way he lives, though you may seek to bring his life into conformity with the gospel, you never hold him responsible for his faults. You believe that Jesus took that condemnation.

There is no superiority, no inferiority and no condemnation. That is not a bad community to start with, is it? Acts 2:32 says that when Jesus ascended into heaven, God gave Him the promised Holy Spirit. There is a very real sense in the Bible in which the Holy Spirit belongs to Jesus. And by our faith in Jesus, all that He has and all that He is is ours. If we have faith in Jesus, it means the Holy Spirit becomes ours by virtue of our faith in Christ.

That is why the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ. Jesus "owns" the Spirit, and all those who have their faith in Jesus, by virtue of that union with Him, "own" what Christ "owns," i.e., in this respect, the Holy Spirit. What is the ministry of the Spirit? Is it to make one Christian an economy-class Christian and another a first-class Christian? The ministry of the Spirit is to highlight Christ's life so there is no superiority and no inferiority. It is to highlight His death so we may see that judgment is taken and we are not to meet out judgment on each other. The ministry of the Spirit is to expound the life and death of Jesus for the life and death of the believer. Paul can say, "Maintain the unity which the Spirit gives," because when there is no one superior, no one inferior and no one condemning another, we are not far away from being united. I wish we had a semester to discuss what it means to be a Christian, to examine the radical implications for simply saying that love is living as a Christian.

Let's Talk About Hope. Do you desire to be absolutely surrendered to God? [Audience indicates in the affirmative.] Did you desire to be absolutely surrendered to God before you were a Christian? [Audience indicates in the negative.] After you became a Christian, you desired to become absolutely surrendered to God. The reason why believers desire to become absolutely surrendered to God is because the Holy Spirit has made them that way. That is a characteristic of being a Christian.

There are some who teach that being a good Christian is *being* absolutely surrendered to God, but I believe that being a good Christian is *wanting to be* absolutely surrendered. You go out into the streets of this town, pick the healthiest, happiest pagan you can find, bowl up to him and ask, "Do you desire to be absolutely surrendered to Jesus?" He will think you are mad or drunk—or both. We desire to be absolutely surrendered to Jesus. Doesn't it hurt us when we fail Him? Don't we constantly seek not to hurt Him? That is all because of the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the great hope of the believer? It is that we are not going to fail God. The hope of the believer is that one day we are going to serve Him as graciously and as perfectly as He deserves. There is coming a day, says the Bible, when we will trust Him in such a way that it will mirror perfectly His love for us in Christ. Isn't that a wonderful hope?

Now I will tell you a great mischief. The mischief is to be told that we can have absolute surrender here and now. I will tell you what happens if you become absolutely surrendered now. You become proud that you are "absolutely surrendered." Insofar as you are proud that you are absolutely surrendered, it shows that you are not absolutely surrendered.

When an evangelist is low in accreditation stocks — low in converts — and he wants to convince people that he is still a good evangelist, he ceases to preach the gospel and starts to call people to absolute surrender. "Do you desire to serve God absolutely?" he asks. "Do you serve Him as you ought to?" "No," his listeners respond. "Don't you think He deserves your full commitment?" "Yes!" "Would you not like to be absolutely surrendered?" "Indeed I would." "All right, we are going to have a hymn. I want all those who want to be absolutely surrendered to come out to the front." And the sad thing is that if I had preached this way this morning, I would have gotten at least a third of this gathering out here to the front. Two things would be amazing to me: (1) that the third would not see the error in this and (2) that there would be two-thirds still sitting back there. With that type of preaching, we all ought to be out here, for by virtue of the Holy Spirit's work in us, we should all desire to be absolutely surrendered.

We must call ourselves out and out for Jesus every day. We must constantly exhort ourselves to be absolutely surrendered. We ought to call each other to absolute surrender, to full commitment. *But* we must never give each other the impression that we attain to it here and now. Calling believers to absolute commitment is to call believers to press on to the coming of the kingdom and perfection.

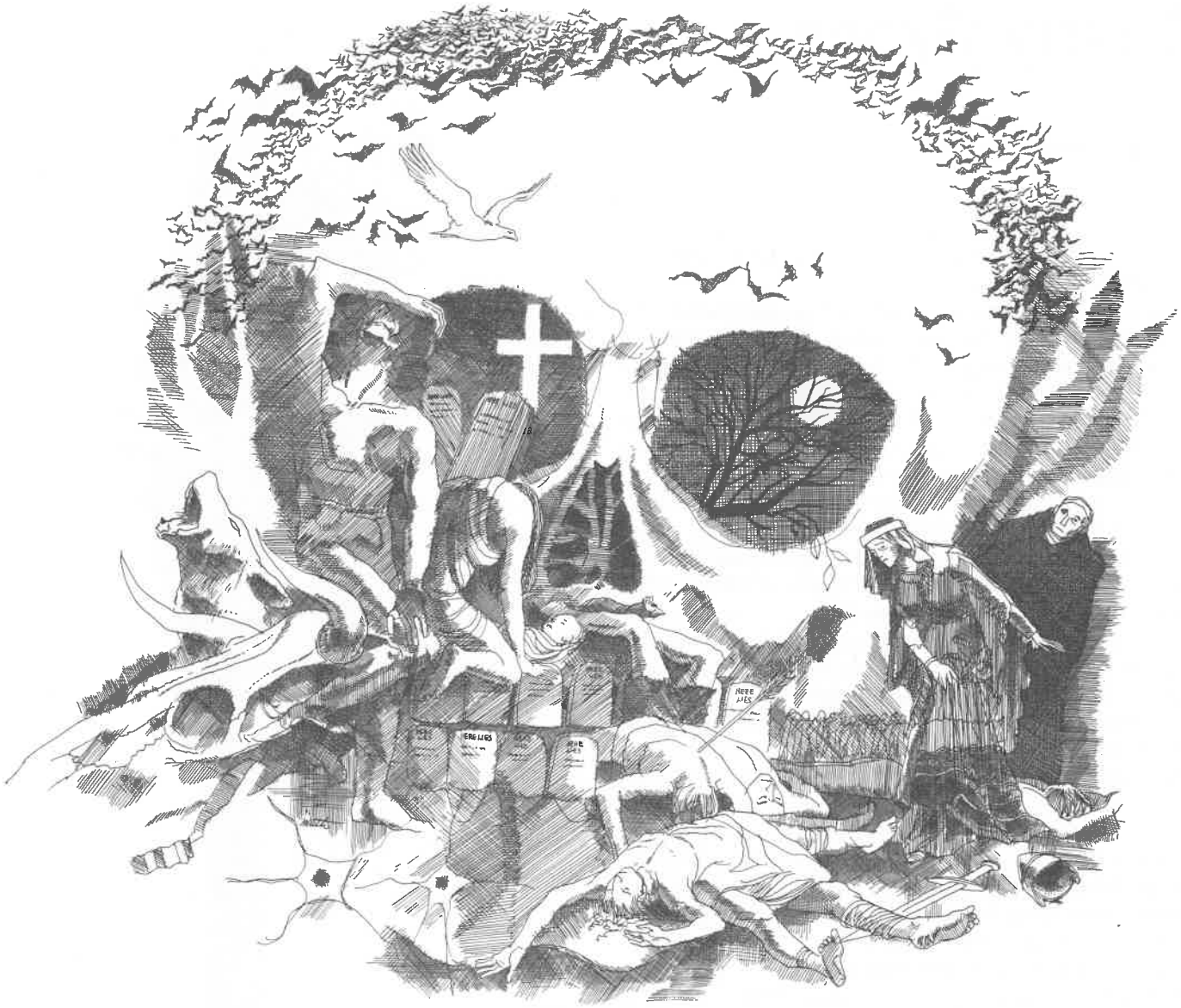
I want to say a few words about Romans 8. After a conference in Brisbane, Australia not long ago, an iridescent, bossy little woman came up to me. She asked, "Brother Paxton, are you out of Romans 7 and into Romans 8?" "My dear woman," I replied, "I am not even preaching on Romans." "O brother," she continued, "are you out of the defeat of Romans 7 and into the victory of Romans 8? Are you out of the Spiritlessness of Romans 7 and into the Spirit-filled life of Romans 8?" So I replied, "Are you asking me, Does my life square with what the Bible says here in Romans 8?" "Precisely," she answered. So I read Romans 8:18:

> For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

"You are asking me if I am presently suffering and have unrevealed glory? Very much so!" I said. Look also at verse 19:

> For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Can you go up to a pagan and ask, "Can't you see that I'm a son of God?" We are not even seen to be sons of God yet. Further, read verses 22 and 23:



Romans 8:22, 23

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

We ourselves also groan within ourselves because we only have a small portion of the Spirit within us during this mortal existence. We must wait for the full harvest of blessing. Now look at verses 25 and 26:

But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

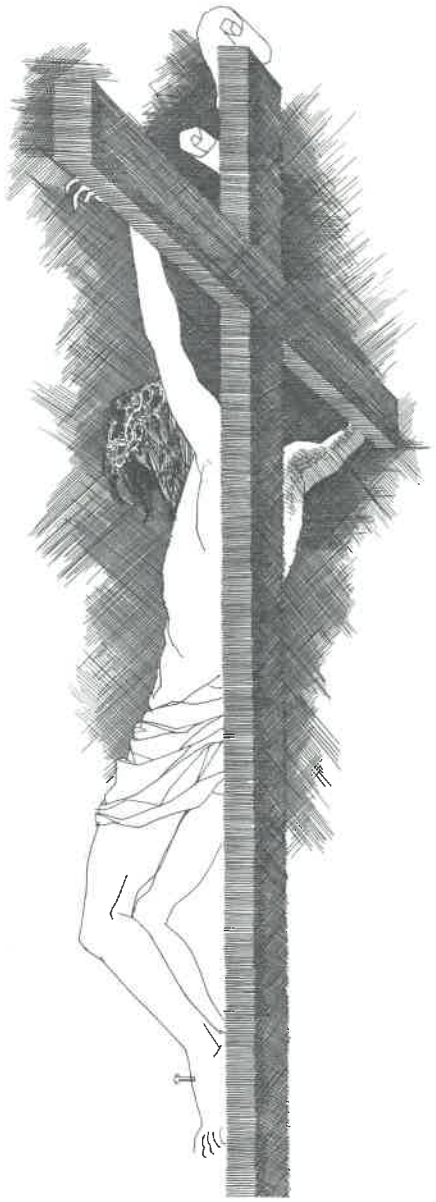
This is what Romans 8 says that real Christians have now:

1. Present suffering.
2. Unrevealed glory.
3. Not seen to be children of God.
4. Groaning inwardly.
5. The first fruits of the Spirit only.
6. Waiting for the second blessing—the second coming of Jesus, the blessed hope.

We have only had time to introduce this subject of Christian existence. We don't want you to agree with everything we say. When two minds think alike on everything, one is redundant. What does the New Testament teach on Christian existence? What does it mean to live by faith? What does it mean to live by hope and to live in hope? Seek to come to grips with these questions. Bask in the realism of the Bible and not in the fantasy of man-made ideas.

Costly Grace

Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace.

Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjack's wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church's inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?

Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian 'conception' of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins. The Church which holds the correct doctrine of grace has, it is supposed, *ipso facto* a part in that grace. In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. 'All for sin could not atone.' The world goes on in the same old way, and we are still sinners 'even in the best life' as Luther said. Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin. That was the heresy of the enthusiasts, the Anabaptists and their kind. Let the Christian beware of rebelling against the free and boundless grace of God and desecrating it. Let him not attempt to erect a new religion of the letter by endeavouring to live a life of obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ! The world has been justified by grace. The Christian knows that, and takes it seriously. He knows he must not strive against indispensable grace. Therefore—let him live like the rest of the world! Of course he would like to go and do something extraordinary, and it does demand a good deal of self-restraint to refrain from the attempt and content himself with living as the world lives. Yet it is imperative for the Christian to achieve renunciation, to practise self-effacement, to distinguish his life from the life of the world. He must let grace be grace indeed, otherwise he will destroy the world's faith in the free gift of grace. Let the Christian rest content with his worldliness and with this renunciation of any higher standard than the world. He is doing it for the sake of the world rather than for the sake of grace. Let him be comforted and rest assured in his possession of this grace—for grace alone does everything. Instead of following Christ, let the Christian enjoy the consolations of his grace! That is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace which amounts to the justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs. Cheap

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Reprinted from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM Press Ltd.), pp. 35-47.

grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves.

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be *sought* again and again, the gift which must be *asked* for, the door at which a man must *knock*.

Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is *costly* because it cost God the life of his Son: 'ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is *grace* because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

Costly grace is the sanctuary of God; it has to be protected from the world, and not thrown to the dogs. It is therefore the living word, the Word of God, which he speaks as it pleases him. Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is grace because Jesus says: 'My yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

On two separate occasions Peter received the call, 'Follow me.' It was the first and last word Jesus spoke to his disciple (Mark 1:17; John 21.22). A whole life lies between these two calls. The first occasion was by the lake of Gennesareth, when Peter left his nets and his craft and followed Jesus at his word. The second occasion is when the Risen Lord finds him back again at his old trade. Once again it is by the lake of Gennesareth, and once again the call is: 'Follow me.' Between the two calls lay a whole life of discipleship in the following of Christ. Halfway between them comes Peter's confession, when he acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God. Three times Peter hears the same proclamation that Christ is his Lord and God—at the beginning, at the end, and at Caesarea Philippi. Each time it is the same grace of Christ which calls to him 'Follow me' and which reveals itself to him in his confession of the Son of God. Three times on Peter's way did grace arrest him, the one grace proclaimed in three different ways.

This grace was certainly not self-bestowed. It was the grace of Christ himself, now prevailing upon the disciple to leave all and follow him, now working in him that confession which to the world must sound like the ultimate blasphemy, now inviting Peter to the supreme fellowship of martyrdom for the Lord he had denied, and thereby forgiving him all his sins. In the life of Peter grace and discipleship are inseparable. He had received the grace which costs.

As Christianity spread, and the Church became more secularized, this realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded. The world was christianized, and grace became its common property. It was to be had at low cost. Yet the Church of Rome did not altogether lose the earlier vision. It is highly significant that the Church was astute enough to find room for the monastic movement, and to prevent it from lapsing into schism. Here on the outer fringe of the Church was a place where the older vision was kept alive. Here men still remembered that grace costs, that grace means following Christ. Here they left all they had for Christ's sake, and endeavoured daily to practise his rigorous commands. Thus monasticism became a living protest against the secularization of Christianity and the cheapening of grace. But the Church was wise enough to tolerate this protest, and to prevent it from developing to its logical conclusion. It thus succeeded in relativizing it, even using it in order to justify the secularization of its own life. Monasticism was represented as an individual achievement which the mass of the laity could not be expected to emulate. By thus limiting the application of the commandments of Jesus to a restricted group of specialists, the Church evolved the fatal conception of the double standard—a maximum and a minimum standard of Christian obedience. Whenever the Church was accused of being too secularized, it could always point to monasticism as an opportunity of living a higher life within the fold, and thus justify the other possibility of a lower standard of life for others. And so we get the paradoxical result that monasticism, whose mission was to preserve in the Church of Rome the primitive Christian realization of the costliness of grace, afforded conclusive justification for the secularization of the Church. By and large, the fatal error of monasticism lay not so much in its rigorism (though even here there was a good deal of misunderstanding of the precise content of the will of Jesus) as in the extent to which it departed from genuine Christianity by setting up itself as the individual achievement of a select few, and so claiming a special merit of its own.

When the Reformation came, the providence of God raised Martin Luther to restore the gospel of pure, costly grace. Luther passed through the cloister; he was a monk, and all this was part of the divine plan. Luther had left all to follow Christ on the path of absolute obedience. He had renounced the world in order to live the Christian life. He had learnt obedience to Christ and to his Church, because only he who is obedient can believe. The call to

the cloister demanded of Luther the complete surrender of his life. But God shattered all his hopes. He showed him through the Scriptures that the following of Christ is not the achievement or merit of a select few, but the divine command to all Christians without distinction. Monasticism had transformed the humble work of discipleship into the meritorious activity of the saints, and the self-renunciation of discipleship into the flagrant spiritual self-assertion of the 'religious'. The world had crept into the very heart of the monastic life, and was once more making havoc. The monk's attempt to flee from the world turned out to be a subtle form of love for the world. The bottom having thus been knocked out of the religious life, Luther laid hold upon grace. Just as the whole world of monasticism was crashing about him in ruins, he saw God in Christ stretching forth his hand to save. He grasped that hand in faith, believing that 'after all, nothing we can do is of any avail, however good a life we live'. The grace which gave itself to him was a costly grace, and it shattered his whole existence. Once more he must leave his nets and follow. The first time was when he entered the monastery, when he had left everything behind except his pious self. This time even that was taken from him. He obeyed the call, not through any merit of his own, but simply through the grace of God.Luther did not hear the word: 'Of course you have sinned, but now everything is forgiven, so you can stay as you are and enjoy the consolations of forgiveness. No, Luther had to leave the cloister and go back to the world, not because the world in itself was good and holy, but because even the cloister was only a part of the world.

Luther's return from the cloister to the world was the worst blow the world had suffered since the days of early Christianity. The renunciation he made when he became a monk was child's play compared with that which he had to make when he returned to the world. Now came the frontal assault. The only way to follow Jesus was by living in the world. Hitherto the Christian life had been the achievement of a few choice spirits under the exceptionally favourable conditions of monasticism; now it is a duty laid on every Christian living in the world. The commandment of Jesus must be accorded perfect obedience in one's daily vocation of life. The conflict between the life of the Christian and the life of the world was thus thrown into the sharpest possible relief. It was a hand-to-hand conflict between the Christian and the world.

It is a fatal misunderstanding of Luther's action to suppose that his rediscovery of the gospel of pure grace offered a general dispensation from obedience to the command of Jesus, or that it was the great discovery of the Reformation that God's forgiving grace automatically conferred upon the world both righteousness and holiness. On the contrary, for Luther the Christian's worldly calling is sanctified only in so far as that calling registers the final, radical protest against the world. Only in so far as the Christian's secular calling is exercised in the following of Jesus does it receive from the gospel new sanction and justification. It was not the justification of sin, but the justification of the sinner that drove Luther from the cloister back into the world. The grace he had received was costly grace. It was grace, for it was like water on parched ground, comfort in tribulation, freedom from the bondage of a self-chosen way, and forgiveness of all his sins. And it was costly, for, so far from dispensing him from good works, it meant that he must take the call to discipleship more seriously than ever before. It was grace because it cost so much, and it cost so much because it was grace. That was the secret of the gospel of the Reformation—the justification of the sinner.

Yet the outcome of the Reformation was the victory, not of Luther's perception of grace in all its purity and costliness, but of the vigilant religious instinct of man for the place where grace is to be obtained at the cheapest price. All that was needed was a subtle and almost imperceptible change of emphasis, and the damage was done. Luther had taught that man cannot stand before God, however religious his works and ways may be, because at bottom he is always seeking his own interests. In the depth of his misery, Luther had grasped by faith the free and unconditional forgiveness of all his sins. That experience taught him that this grace had cost him his very life, and must continue to cost him the same price day by day. So far from dispensing him from discipleship, this grace only made him a more earnest disciple. When he spoke of grace, Luther always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was now for the first time subjected to the absolute obedience of Christ. Only so could he speak of grace. Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship. There was no need for Luther always to mention that corollary explicitly for he always spoke as one who had been led by grace to the strictest following of Christ. Judged by the standard of Luther's doctrine, that of his follower was unassailable, and yet their orthodoxy spelt the end and destruction of the Reformation as the revelation on earth of the costly grace of God. The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship.

Luther had said that all we can do is of no avail, however good a life we live. He had said that nothing can avail us in the sight of God but 'the grace and favour which confers the forgiveness of sin'. But he spoke as one who knew that at the very moment of his crisis he was called to leave all that he had a second time and follow Jesus. The recognition of grace was his final, radical breach with his besetting sin, but it was never the justification of that sin. By laying hold of God's forgiveness, he made the final, radical renunciation of a self-willed life, and this breach was such that it led inevitably to a serious following of Christ. He always looked upon it as the answer to a sum, but an answer which had been arrived at by God, not by

man. But then his followers changed the 'answer' into the data for a calculation of their own. That was the root of the trouble. If grace is God's answer, the gift of Christian life, then we cannot for a moment dispense with following Christ. But if grace is the data for my Christian life, it means that I set out to live the Christian life in the world with all my sins justified beforehand. I can go and sin as much as I like, and rely on this grace to forgive me, for after all the world is justified in principle by grace. I can therefore cling to my bourgeois secular existence, and remain as I was before, but with the added assurance that the grace of God will cover me. It is under the influence of this kind of 'grace' that the world has been made 'Christian', but at the cost of secularizing the Christian religion as never before. The antithesis between the Christian life and the life of bourgeois respectability is at an end. The Christian life comes to mean nothing more than living in the world and as the world, in being no different from the world, in fact, in being prohibited from being different from the world for the sake of grace. The upshot of it all is that my only duty as a Christian is to leave the world for an hour or so on a Sunday morning and go to church to be assured that my sins are all forgiven. I need no longer try to follow Christ, for cheap grace, the bitterest foe of discipleship, which true discipleship must loathe and detest, has freed me from that. Grace as the data for our calculations means grace at the cheapest price, but grace as the answer to the sum means costly grace. It is terrifying to realize what use can be made of a genuine evangelical doctrine. In both cases we have the indentical formula—'justification by faith alone'. Yet the misuse of the formula leads to the complete destruction of its very essence.

At the end of a life spent in the pursuit of knowledge Faust has to confess:

> 'I now do see that we can nothing know.'

That is the answer to a sum, it is the outcome of a long experience. But as Kierkegaard observed, it is quite a different thing when a freshman comes up to the university and uses the same sentiment to justify his indolence. As the answer to a sum it is perfectly true, but as the initial data it is a piece of self-deception. For acquired knowledge cannot be divorced from the existence in which it is acquired. The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ. Such a man knows that the call to discipleship is a gift of grace, and that the call is inseparable from the grace. But those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ are simply deceiving themselves.

But, we may ask, did not Luther himself come perilously near to this perversion in the understanding of grace? What about his *Pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide et gaude in Christo* ('Sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ more boldly still')? You are a sinner, anyway, and there is nothing you can do about it. Whether you are a monk or a man of the world, a religious man or a bad one, you can never escape the toils of the world or from sin. So put a bold face on it, and all the more because you can rely on the *opus operatum* of grace. Is this the proclamation of cheap grace, naked and unashamed, the *carte blanche* for sin, the end of all discipleship? Is this a blasphemous encouragement to sin boldly and rely on grace? Is there a more diabolical abuse of grace than to sin and rely on the grace which God has given? Is not the Roman Catechism quite right in denouncing this as the sin against the Holy Ghost?

If we are to understand this saying of Luther's, everything depends on applying the distinction between the data and the answer to the sum. If we make Luther's formula a premiss for our doctrine of grace, we are conjuring up the spectre of cheap grace. But Luther's formula is meant to be taken, not as the premiss, but as the conclusion, the answer to the sum, the coping-stone, his very last word on the subject. Taken as the premiss, *pecca fortiter* acquires the character of an ethical principle, a principle of grace to which the principle of *pecca fortiter* must correspond. That means the justification of sin, and it turns Luther's formula into its very opposite. For Luther 'sin boldly' could only be his very last refuge, the consolation for one whose attempts to follow Christ had taught him that he can never become sinless, who in his fear of sin despairs of the grace of God. As Luther saw it, 'sin boldly' did not happen to be a fundamental acknowledgement of his disobedient life; it was the gospel of the grace of God before which we are always and in every circumstance sinners. Yet that grace seeks us and justifies us, sinners though we are. Take courage and confess your sin, says Luther, do not try to run away from it, but believe more boldly still. You are a sinner, so be a sinner, and don't try to become what you are not. Yes, and become a sinner again and again every day, and be bold about it. But to whom can such words be addressed, except to those who from the bottom of their hearts make a daily renunciation of sin and of every barrier which hinders them from following Christ, but who nevertheless are troubled by their daily faithlessness and sin? Who can hear these words without endangering his faith but he who hears their consolation as a renewed summons to follow Christ? Interpreted in this way, these words of Luther become a testimony to the costliness of grace, the only genuine kind of grace there is.

Grace interpreted as a principle, *pecca fortiter* as a principle, grace at a low cost, is in the last resort simply a new law, which brings neither help nor freedom. Grace as a living word, *pecca fortiter* as our comfort in tribulation and as a summons to discipleship, costly grace is the only pure grace, which really forgives sins and gives freedom to the sinner.

We Lutherans have gathered like eagles round the carcase of cheap grace, and there we have drunk of the poison which has killed the life of following Christ. It is

true, of course, that we have paid the doctrine of pure grace divine honours unparalleled in Christendom, in fact we have exalted that doctrine to the position of God himself. Everywhere Luther's formula has been repeated, but its truth perverted into self-deception. So long as our Church holds the correct doctrine of justification, there is no doubt whatever that she is a justified Church! So they said, thinking that we must vindicate our Lutheran heritage by making this grace available on the cheapest and easiest terms. To be 'Lutheran' must mean that we leave the following of Christ to legalists, Calvinists and enthusiasts—and all this for the sake of grace. We justified the world, and condemned as heretics those who tried to follow Christ. The result was that a nation became Christian and Lutheran, but at the cost of true discipleship. The price it was called upon to pay was all too cheap. Cheap grace had won the day.

But do we also realize that this cheap grace has turned back upon us like a boomerang? The price we are having to pay today in the shape of the collapse of the organized church is only the inevitable consequence of our policy of making grace available to all at too low a cost. We gave away the word and sacraments wholesale, we baptized, confirmed, and absolved a whole nation unasked and without condition. Our humanitarian sentiment made us give that which was holy to the scornful and unbelieving. We poured forth unending streams of grace. But the call to follow Jesus in the narrow way was hardly ever heard. Where were those truths which impelled the early Church to institute the catechumenate, which enabled a strict watch to be kept over the frontier between the Church and the world, and afforded adequate protection for costly grace? What had happened to all those warnings of Luther's against preaching the gospel in such a manner as to make men rest secure in their ungodly living? Was there ever a more terrible or disastrous instance of the Christianizing of the world than this? What are those three thousand Saxons put to death by Charlemagne compared with the millions of spiritual corpses in our country today? With us it has been abundantly proved that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. Cheap grace has turned out to be utterly merciless to our Evangelical Church.

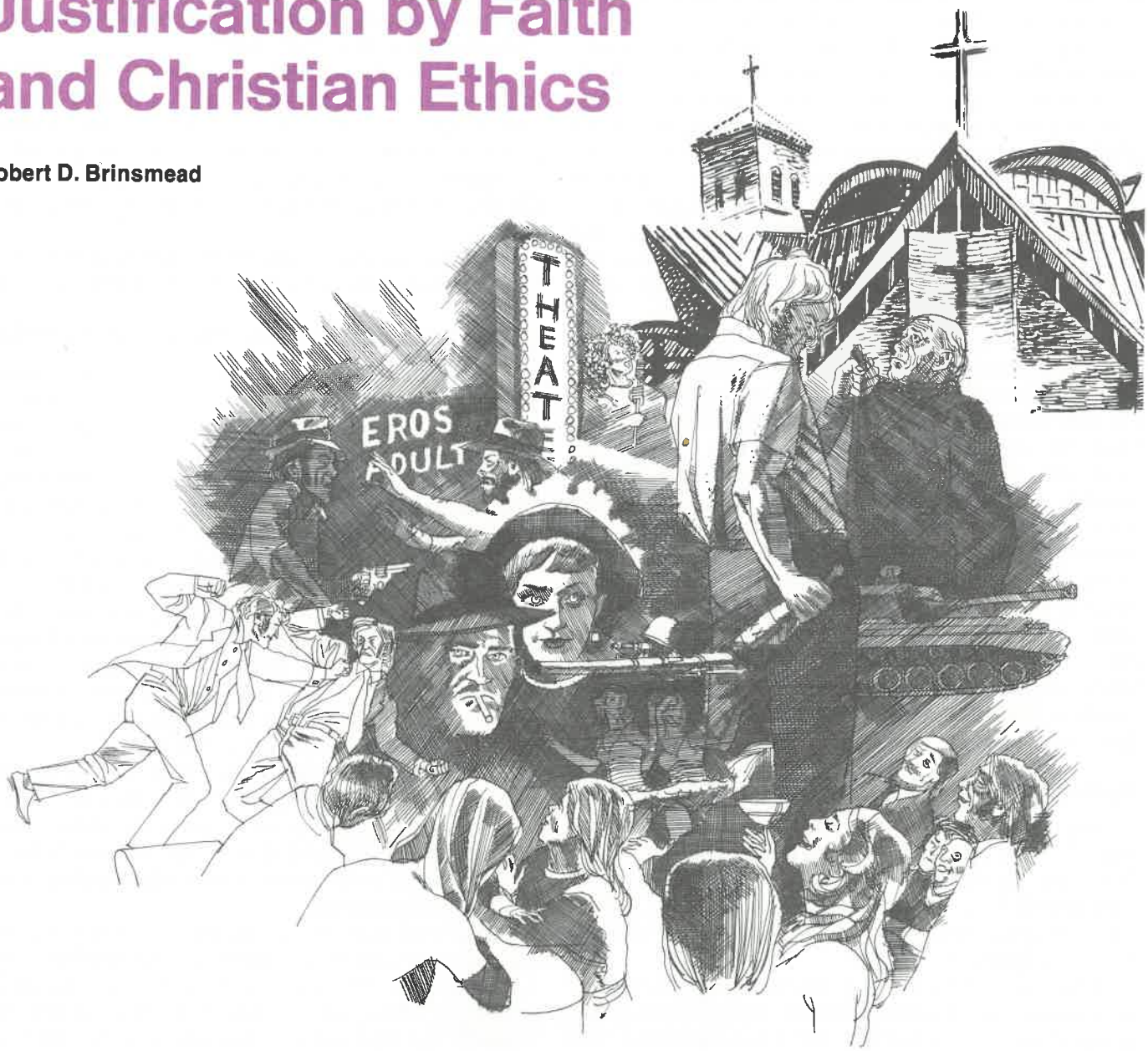
This cheap grace has been no less disastrous to our own spiritual lives. Instead of opening up the way to Christ it has closed it. Instead of calling us to follow Christ, it has hardened us in our disobedience. Perhaps we had once heard the gracious call to follow him, and had at this command even taken the first few steps along the path of discipleship in the discipline of obedience, only to find ourselves confronted by the word of cheap grace. Was that not merciless and hard? The only effect that such a word could have on us was to bar our way to progress, and seduce us to the mediocre level of the world, quenching the joy of discipleship by telling us that we were following a way of our own choosing, that we were spending our strength and disciplining ourselves in vain—all of which was not merely useless, but extremely dangerous. After all, we were told, our salvation had already been accomplished by the grace of God. The smoking flax was mercilessly extinguished. It was unkind to speak to men like this, for such a cheap offer could only leave them bewildered and tempt them from the way to which they had been called by Christ. Having laid hold on cheap grace, they were barred for ever from the knowledge of costly grace. Deceived and weakened, men felt that they were strong now that they were in possession of this cheap grace—whereas they had in fact lost the power to live the life of discipleship and obedience. The word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works.

In our subsequent chapters we shall try to find a message for those who are troubled by this problem, and for whom the word of grace has been emptied of all its meaning. This message must be spoken for the sake of truth, for those among us who confess that through cheap grace they have lost the following of Christ and further, with the following of Christ, have lost the understanding of costly grace. To put it quite simply, we must undertake this task because we are now ready to admit that we no longer stand in the path of true discipleship. We confess that, although our Church is orthodox as far as her doctrine of grace is concerned, we are no longer sure that we are members of a Church which follows its Lord. We must therefore attempt to recover a true understanding of the mutual relation between grace and discipleship. The issue can no longer be evaded. It is becoming clearer every day that the most urgent problem besetting our Church is this: How can we live the Christian life in the modern world?

Happy are they who have reached the end of the road we seek to tread, who are astonished to discover the by no means self-evident truth that grace is costly just because it is the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Happy are the simple followers of Jesus Christ who have been overcome by his grace, and are able to sing the praises of the all-sufficient grace of Christ with humbleness of heart. Happy are they who, knowing that grace, can live in the world without being of it, who, by following Jesus Christ, are so assured of their heavenly citizenship that they are truly free to live their lives in this world. Happy are they who know that discipleship simply means the life which springs from grace, and that grace simply means discipleship. Happy are they who have become Christians in this sense of the word. For them the word of grace has proved a fount of mercy.

Justification by Faith and Christian Ethics

Robert D. Brinsmead



2 Timothy 3:1-5

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Tim. 3:1-5.

This age is notorious for its lack of respect for law. "The quarrel of the world today is not so much between right and wrong as between rival ways of defining and doing right."[1] Once it was generally accepted that right and wrong must be judged by some objective, absolute standard. A little more than one hundred years ago society began to opt for belief in evolution instead of divine creation. The next step was perfectly logical and inevitable. If God is not our Creator, He is not our Judge, And if He is not our Judge, we must be our own judge. Ever heard of existentialism, situation ethics, relativism, the new morality? Of course you have! These philosophies are all based on the premise that I am my only judge of

[1]J. R. Coates, in *Preface to Righteousness*, by Gottfried Quell & Gottlob Schrenk.

right and wrong, and therefore I am not responsible to any absolute, outside-of-me standard for my conduct.

We do not here intend to dwell in the appalling breakdown of ethics which is taking place in the nation. We all know that *disrespect for law* has become a social epidemic. What Christians need to be especially alarmed about is that this same spirit of *disrespect for law* has rubbed off on the church. Let us be careful to notice that in St. Paul's delineation of last-day sins, quoted previously, the burden is not to show how bad the world will be at the end time. The apostle describes the conditions that will exist in *the church* in the last days (i.e., among those "having a form of godliness").

While the secular liberals talk of "the responsible self," "social consciousness," etc., in place of law, many Christians talk of "Christian love" and "the guidance of the Holy Spirit" as taking the place of law. (It is the same tune, only different word forms.) Even we evangelicals have often carried on such a one-sided attack against *legalism* that law has, for many of us, become a dirty word. Under the influence of liberalism, *legalism* has evolved a new meaning. Whereas it used to mean the wrong use of law (as a means of salvation), now it is often taken to mean conscientious obedience to rules of any kind. ("Who needs rules, man, when you're tanked up on the Spirit?") As society is being deluged by corruption, lawlessness and rottenness that defies description, it needs no encouragement from the church to show disrespect for law.[2]

Justification by Faith and Respect for Law

We agree with New Testament scholar, J. Gresham Machen, who said, "One way to encourage respect for law, we think, would be to make law more respectable."—J. Gresham Machen, *What Is Faith?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), p. 168. How do we make law more respectable?

There are some who are ready to blame too much emphasis on justification by faith for lack of ethical action in the church. They feel that this great Protestant "war cry" doctrine needs to be played down, while more emphasis needs to be given to sanctification and practical Christian living. This is a happy eventuality for Rome, who has always contended that Luther's doctrine loosens the reins of moral restraint.

The great Reformation principle of justification by faith is in no way responsible for fostering disrespect for law. It is the distorted and false views of our great Protestant heritage which take all the force out of the Bible's ethical imperatives. This is an age that knows almost nothing about that great Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. It is impossible to be strong on justification by faith and weak on ethics. *Justification* is a term of *law*. No two Bible concepts stand more closely related than *justification* and *law*. To honor and uphold one is to honor and uphold the other (Rom. 3:31).

Returning to Machen's proposition, how may we make law more respectable? By putting the truth of justification back into the center of the Christian message, where it belongs. Wherever and whenever this truth is exalted and taught, the Spirit of God breathes new life into the church and furnishes its members for "every good work."

It is now our task to specifically state how the truth of justification by faith is the backbone of all right conduct.

1. The Fear of God, Justification and Ethics

What would you think of a fellow who tried to show you some picture slides of his latest overseas trip and did not bother to put up a background screen but simply focused his pictures out in midair? Of course, his pictures would not make sense. Just so, the great Biblical truth of *justification by faith* does not make sense unless it is focused against the background of the fear of God.

"The fear of God is the soul of godliness."—John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (The Tyndale Press), p. 229. The Bible says it is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 9:10), the foundation of piety (Job 1:8), the soul of obedience (Eccl. 12:13; Gen. 22:11, 12), the basis of ethical integrity (Gen. 20:11; Prov. 8:13; 16:6) and the foundation of sanctification (2 Cor. 7:1). The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit . . . of the fear of the Lord." Isa. 11:2.

To fear God means to respond to Him with reverential awe, humble respect and profound adoration. This attitude toward God comes by a lively sense of the majesty of Him who is constantly aflame with holiness, truth and goodness, and of the wrath of Him whose justice is fiery indignation against sin.

Whenever men are taught the fear of the Lord by a confrontation with God's righteousness and His claims upon their lives, they are led to cry out, "How can I be just with God?" They do not take it for granted that God forgives, but they are so impressed with the righteousness of God that their own conscience demands, "How can God justly forgive me?" They feel like Spurgeon, who cried out, "I felt I could not be forgiven unless I could be forgiven justly." This is the great problem that St. Paul solves for us in his message to the Romans—how God demonstrates His justice in the remission of sins (Rom. 3:25, 26).

When we look at the current religious scene, there is little evidence that people are asking such *theocentric* (God-centered) questions. Instead, they are asking *anthropocentric* (man-centered) questions like, "How can God make me happy? How can Christ make my life run smoothly and joyously? How can I solve my [petty] problems and find fulfillment in life?" Never has so much religious activity been so disinterested in the question of *justification* with God. Why? Because there is so little fear

[2]By *law*, as used in this article, we refer to the moral law of God—every ethical imperative which tells us how to behave, all instruction about the duty of a Christian, all commandments which show us how to concretely express our love for God and man.

of God. People can wave their arms or jump up and down "in the Spirit." But if the religious interest is not marked by a great fear of God, it is not the work of the Holy Spirit, for He is "the Spirit . . . of the fear of the Lord."

Again, why is there such an appalling disinterest in justification by faith? Because people are taking it for granted that God is gracious and forgiving. In fact, they feel that they are on such good terms with Him that they talk to Him as if He were (to use Luther's complaint against the Enthusiasts) "a shoemaker's apprentice." How can justification be a burning question when there is no marked fear of God?

Consider how these man-centered questions are patently foolish in the light of man's predicament. Here is a wretched sinner, bound hand and foot and consigned to hell for his great crimes against his Maker. Standing on the threshold of eternal damnation, he presumes to ask, "How can God make me happy?" (as if God were in his debt). Such a question shows he has no true sense of his awful predicament. If the Spirit gives him any true enlightenment of his situation, he will rather cry out, "How can I be right with God?"

We are not suggesting that God is indifferent to the happiness of His earthly children. But we do not find happiness in trying to use God as if He were our lackey. Nowhere do we find such genuine, exultant joy as in Romans 5 and 8. This holy, sacred joy comes to the man who, because of Christ, has found justification at the hand of a just and merciful God. Such a man is ready to follow Christ anywhere, to make any sacrifice, to perform any duty, to obey any commandment, and to count it all a "reasonable service" from an "unprofitable servant." He does not take his forgiveness for granted or begin to walk before God with irreverent familiarity, but with the Psalmist, he prays, "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared." Ps. 130:4.

A pastor asked me, "My congregation has no vital joy in the Lord. They're not Spirit-filled Christians. What can I do?" I replied, "Teach them salvation and what it means to be just with God." "Oh," he rejoined, "they all know that—they've been saved." Great fallacy of much modern evangelicalism! That is the very condition Paul says would exist in the church—". . . unthankful, unholy . . ." Imagine saying to the man who wrote Romans, "Paul, I accept your doctrine of justification by faith, I thank God that I'm not a legalist like those Strong Will Baptists. But can you tell me how my life can be vitalized with Christian joy?" With one fell stroke of the Word, the apostle would say, "Happy are they whose iniquities are forgiven." "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom.4:7; 5:11. Justification without joy in the Holy Spirit is unthinkable!

The message of justification by grace, because of Christ, through faith, is the sweetest and most joyful melody that can ever come to the human heart. Then why are people rushing off to find "the Spirit" a la the second blessing, tongues or some guru of victorious living fame? It is because the fear of God is the one great ingredient most lacking in the current religious scene, and therefore the truth of justification is unappreciated as the only doorway to the Spirit.

The New Testament teaches the fear of God as much as does the Old Testament. Luke describes the church as "walking in the fear of the Lord." Acts 9:31. The writer to the Hebrew Christians exhorts the believers not to "draw back" and find that it "is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. 10:38, 31. And Paul exhorts the Gentile Christians, "Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." Rom. 11:20, 21.

We are not unmindful that gratitude for salvation motivates the man who knows that he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. But the tendency in a lot of modern evangelicalism is to strain out the sterner element of "fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12) and insist on nothing but gratitude for being saved as a motive for Christian ethics. Many want to talk about nothing but "confidence," "boldness" and "assurance" (which are very needful too), but they fall into the heresy that comes by stressing only one side of the paradox. The Christian life must be lived in the tension of fear and trembling on the one hand, and faith and confidence on the other.

God is not a popular somebody with whom sinners may fraternize on their own level. He is so high, so holy, that He can have no direct fellowship with any man save Jesus Christ. Christ's person alone will He accept, and Christ's righteousness alone makes Him propitious toward us. Well may the most holy saint flee from His throne with dread and terror except that he may *keep* looking to his Substitute at God's right hand and *keep* believing the good news that he is justified in God's sight solely because Jesus stands there instead of him and for him. This is the only atmosphere in which the Christian continues to live and breathe. Such a Christian will never look on sin as if it were as harmless as a Sunday afternoon frolic.

In short, two things belong together—the fear of God and Christian ethics—just as Solomon declares, "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Eccl 12:13. And the last book of the Bible declares, "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth . . ." Rev. 14:7.

2. The Atonement, Justification and Ethics

St. Paul did not write the book of Romans just to tell us that God is willing to forgive. The Old Testament had already made that abundantly clear. Nor did he write Romans just to tell us that we should live by trusting in God's mercy. The Old Testament was clear enough on that too. The central issue that the Epistle deals with is this: How can the God of law and justice forgive sin? How can the moral Governor of the universe justify people who deserve to be blamed? It is important to see that the theme of Romans, therefore, is not merely the justification of sinners, but *the justification of God in His justification of sinners.*

God's justice in passing over sins was prefigured in types and shadows of the old dispensation. The prophets who "prophesied of the grace that should come" "inquired and searched diligently" into God's answer to the problem of sin (1 Peter 1:10, 11).

So often God had revealed Himself as gracious and forgiving. He passed over the sins of Israel times without number. He passed over the sins of David without inflicting upon him what justice required. He even forgave the sins of Manasseh, who filled Jerusalem with the blood of God's saints. How is all this consistent with justice? Does the supreme Judge treat His law as a mere bylaw to be modified, relaxed or set aside at pleasure? Should not the Judge uphold the law irrespective of any person? We might even say that God's passing by the sins of men might look like moments of weak leniency on the part of the great Judge, and therefore His act of pardon might appear as a scandal against the divine government.

Then God Himself answers in the bolts of holy wrath that fell on Himself in the person of Christ. Never had earth or heaven beheld such a display of awful, infinite justice as when God spared not His only Son. So Paul points to the cross of Christ and declares:

> God meant by this to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance He had overlooked the sins of the *past* [i.e., in past ages]—to demonstrate His justice *now* in the present, showing that He is Himself just and also justifies any man who puts his faith in Jesus. Rom. 3:25, 26, N.E.B.

There are some who feel that forgiveness of sins proceeds from an easy-going benevolence. Consequently, they are also easy-going about sin, saying in their hearts, "There is plenty of forgiveness with the Lord." Others propose that Christ died merely to show us that God will excuse our sins and good-naturedly pass them by. Such sentimental thoughts of Calvary allow them to sin with an easy conscience. Then there are some who see the atonement as a skillful maneuver on the part of God to "get around His law." So why should not they also spend their lives getting around the law?

The Biblical doctrine of atonement undergirds all Christian ethics. It shows us that God was not only providing for the justification of sinners, but for the justification of the moral order of the universe. *It shows us that the divine law and government must be maintained and vindicated.* Calvary was the highest honor that God Himself could pay to His law. Prophecy had declared of Christ, "He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." Isa. 42:21. As Flavell, the Puritan, observed, never was the law of God more highly honored as when Christ stood before the bar of justice to make reparations for the damage done. And Luther declared, "Now although out of pure grace God does not impute our sins to us, He nonetheless did not want to do this until complete and ample satisfaction of His law and His righteousness had been made."—*What Luther Says,* ed. Ewald M. Plass, Vol. 2, p. 709. Calvary shows us that "in this universe debts are paid" (Leon Morris).

Says E. F. Kevan, principal of London Bible College:

> Death is the doom of sin, the sanction, the curse, the sentence of the law; and in dying for us Christ recognized without abatement the utmost claims of the law as expressive of the holy will of God. It is in this sense that He is said to have become a curse for us, and to have been made sin for us by God; it is in this sense also that God is said in Him to have condemned sin in the flesh. All these passages (Gala-

tians iii.13; iv.4f; 2 Corinthians v.21; Romans viii.3) describe the same thing: the absolute honour paid to the law by Christ in freely submitting to that death in which the law's condemnation of humanity is expressed (James Denney, *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible,* Article Law [In New Testament], Vol. III, p. 80). Fascinated by the simplicities of forgiveness some writers have mistaken the part for the whole and have denied any deep relation between our Lord's work and the Law of God; but the relation of our Lord's work to the Law of God is undeniable. By His complete fulfilment of it and His utter satisfaction in respect of our transgressions of it, His atonement becomes what E. Y. Mullins describes as "the "transformation and glorification of law" (E. Y. Mullins *The Christian Religion in Its Doctrinal Expression,* p. 322).—E. F. Kevan, *The Evangelical Doctrine of Law,* pp. 21, 22.

Says Carl Henry in his excellent book, *Personal Christian Ethics:*[3]

> The Cross is the center of the moral universe, unveiling God's absolute refusal to suspend his law of holiness. The sanctity with which penal theory invests the moral law is one element of its strength. It stands as the supreme obstacle to making sin relative, to reducing the justice of God to anthropomorphic projections, to concealing his moral indignation and ethical anger. That the moral law cannot be defied with impunity is dramatically clear from the fact that "God spared not his own Son." The moral world is one in which holiness reigns absolutely and uniformly. Whatever tampers with this undermines respect for the fact that the moral claim reaches to every last motive and act of the responsible being. If the claim of the law or the punishment of sin is relaxed in but a single province of the moral universe, the Divine ethical government is to that extent dishonored and weakened. What fact more fully enforces the majestic righteousness of God than the conviction of the inviolability of his moral law published by the atonement of the Cross?—p. 367.

> The doctrine of redemption does not relax the believer's obligation to the Divine commandments, nor weaken his motives to observe them.—p. 375.

> While it may be true that examples can be found of those who presume on Divine goodness by living a life of unholiness while they fool themselves with the hope that they will escape the consequences of their sins through Christ's sacrifice, this is not characteristic of the evangelical temper.—p.375.

3. Faith, Justification and Ethics

We must now consider the nature and action of faith in the sinner's justification. Faith is the root of every good work, the tree that blossoms and bears a harvest of ethical action.

When the nature and action of faith are misunderstood, people are not too concerned about being "zealous of good works." For instance, people listen to a preacher who keeps harping, "We are not saved by living a life of good works, but by faith. Keeping the law does not justify us with God, but faith does." In the first place, the hearers may easily conclude that God is not too concerned about good works and the honor of His law, so why should they be too concerned about it? In the second place, they may also conclude that a certain quality in their own hearts called "faith" is going to please God and move Him to open heaven for them.

Each of these conclusions is a terrible mistake, for:

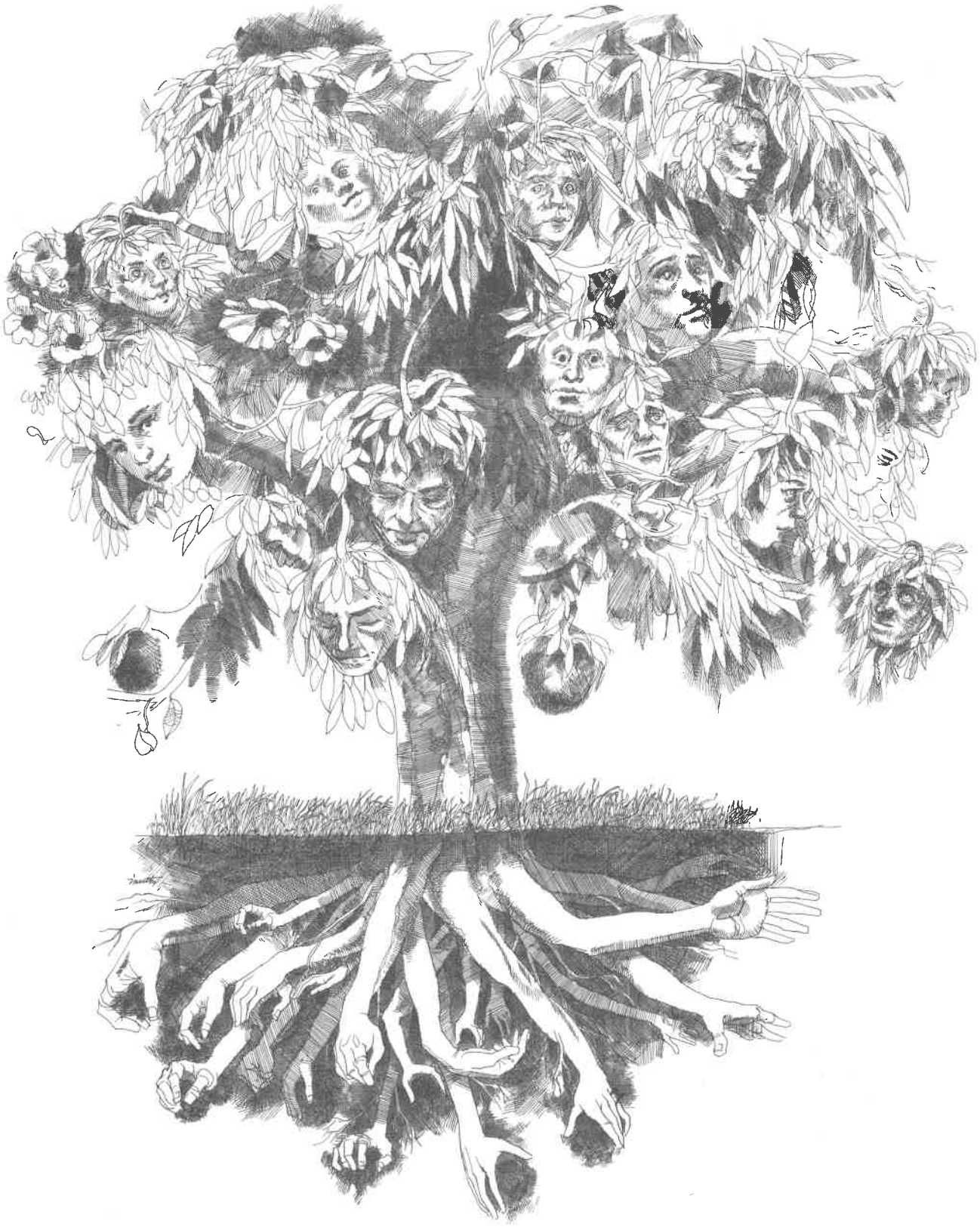
a. God does care for good works and the honor of His law. His holy nature demands a righteousness that conforms to His commandments without variableness or shadow of turning. St. Paul declares, ". . . the doers of the law shall be justified." Rom. 2:13. Perfect obedience to His law is the only condition upon which God will give any man eternal life (Matt. 19:17). As Luther said, "The law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope."—*Luther's Works,* Vol. 31, pp. 348, 349.

The good news of the gospel is that Christ has lived this life of perfect obedience. He has fulfilled the conditions upon which God will justify unto life eternal. He lived this life in our name and on our behalf. This is why the apostle says that we are justified by Christ (Gal. 3:17), by His obedience (Rom. 5:18, 19). So it is perfectly true to say that the *meritorious* cause of our justification is a life of good works—not ours, of course, but His. While the death of Jesus (passive obedience) is the basis upon which God forgives sin, the life of Jesus (active obedience) is the basis upon which God can impute to us a life of perfect obedience. We need to hear more about the redemptive nature of Christ's life, for this is what fulfills the law and entitles us to eternal life.

b. God does not justify us because of our faith—as if faith had any redemptive value. Neither does God now accept faith instead of perfect obedience to His law. (This is the error of neo-nomianism, which says that Christ died to change the conditions, to make it possible for God to demand an easier standard.) Faith is not the *meritorious cause* of justification but merely the *instrumental cause,* i.e.: Here is a poor sinner who hears that God will accept nothing but a life of perfect righteousness. Then he hears how Christ kept the law of God for him and so provided this perfect life. This good news kindles faith in his heart by the working of the Holy Spirit. He cries out, "Mine are Christ's living, His doing and dying; mine as much as if I had lived, spoken, suffered and died as He did." By faith he identifies himself with Christ's life of perfect obedience and presents it to God on his behalf. Justice acknowledges that this life, which the sinner now accepts as his, meets the demands of the law, and God pronounces him justified.

This *instrumental* action of faith is not a mere relic of

[3]We highly recommend Carl Henry's book on *Personal Christian Ethics* (Eerdmans) and consider his chapters, "The Law and the Gospel" and "Christian Ethics Predicated on the Atonement," as especially excellent.



Faith is the root of every good work, the tree that blossoms and bears a harvest of ethical action.

Protestant orthodoxy. It is necessary to give the sinner a high view of God's law and an appreciation of His unalterable demand for a righteous life. How can the believing sinner identify himself with Christ's obedient living, how can he present that life to God in faith, how can he rejoice in the law-abiding life of Jesus Christ as his hope of salvation, unless that life he holds to in faith becomes his own standard of conduct? Faith honors the perfection of God in concrete obedience.

4. The Dynamic Nature of Justification and Ethics

Every well-informed Protestant knows that justification by faith is "the article of the standing or falling church" (Luther). This doctrine must be guarded with special care, and, as Luther constantly affirmed, it cannot be learned too well.

Just as Luther and Calvin were the two principal Reformers, so two streams emerged from the Reformation—Lutheran and Reformed. We are all greatly indebted to the contribution made by these two branches of the Reformation. But has the ethical fruit of these two movements always adorned the doctrine of Christ?

In his monumental *History of the Christian Church,* Philip Schaff cites these remarks of Bishop Martensen of Denmark:

> I am more and more convinced that the deepest defect of Lutheran churchism heretofore has been a lack of the full appreciation of the ethical element of Christianity. This becomes manifest so often in the manner of the Lutheran champions. There is lacking the tenderness of conscience and thorough moral culture which deals conscientiously with the opponent. Justification by faith is made to cover, in advance, all sins, even the future ones; and this is only another form of indulgence. The Lutheran doctrine leads, if we look at the principle, to an establishment of ethics on the deepest foundation. But many treat justification, not only as the beginning, but also as the goal. Hence we see not seldom the justified and the old man side by side, and the old man is not a bit changed. Lutherans who show in their literary and social conduct the stamp of the old Adam would deal more strictly with themselves, and fear to fall from grace by such conduct, if they had a keener conscience, and could see the necessary requirements of the principle of justification; for then they would shrink from such conduct as a sin against conscience. But the doctrine of justification is often misused for lulling the conscience to sleep, instead of quickening it.—Vol. 7, p. 667.

Those who stand in the Reformed tradition have often been careful to guard the proper forensic meaning of *justification,* and they have come in for not a little criticism for making justification sound like some dry, legal procedure of celestial credit. Although the criticism is often made by those who want to eliminate all legal categories from salvation, there is some truth to their criticism. While Roman Catholic theologians think along Aristotelian lines, Reformed theology, for all its strength, does tend to be Platonic. It often fails to capture the *dynamic* spirit of Hebrew thinking that is so characteristic of the Bible writers. And without a dynamic view of *justification,* the church fights a losing battle against sterile orthodoxy. How many Reformed men lament the deadness of their church!

What do we mean by a dynamic view of *justification?* It is perfectly true that we are here dealing with a legal word, a term of the law court. The sinner who hears[4] the gospel knows he is a wretched captive of the devil. He knows that the enemy of God and man has destroyed the dignity and freedom of his manhood and robbed him of his original inheritance. Yet this sinner has faith to know that his case can be heard at the court of divine judgment. The moment of *justification* is the moment of *judgment.* The Judge is about to render His verdict. Now we must not think of this court scene as if this poor man were like a defendant in the dock hoping at best for mere acquittal or pardon. We must picture the scene more like a civil case where the believing sinner is the plaintiff. He knows the rights and titles Christ has won for him. He is confident that by coming in Christ's name he has a good case. If he is declared to be right with God, then he may proceed to exercise his rights as a son of God, as a righteous man. With this verdict he may walk out of the miserable service of the devil, live in the restored dignity of God-given manhood and walk in "the way of the King's pilgrims." So he presses his case to the Judge that he may gain those rights and titles. The verdict of justification sets him free to act. He is delivered out of the hand of the enemy *that He may now serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life* (Luke 1:74, 75). He is purged from dead works *to serve the living God* (Heb. 9:14). Justification means he is set free for a new life of ethical action. It means he is set free for loving service to his neighbor.

A "justification" that does not release the sinner for ethical action is just plainly Platonic. Charles Wesley captured the dynamic spirit of justification in these lines from "Amazing Love":

> Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
> Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
> Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
> I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.
> My chains fell off, my heart was free,
> I rose, went forth and followed thee.

So far we have considered some rights and titles that justification gives to the believing sinner. Now let us take a higher view and see what rights and titles justification gives to God. God can only be in fellowship with those who are perfectly righteous. He cannot take charge of the life that does not belong to Him. The moment God pronounces the believer righteous because of Christ (not

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[4]We are using the word *hear* in the dynamic Hebrew sense of obedient response.

because of faith), He can then, with perfect justice, begin to treat him as a righteous man. How does God treat the believer as righteous? By giving him the Holy Spirit—"the Spirit of holiness." The Spirit inspires and empowers *every* justified believer to follow after "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." It is certain that those who have not the Spirit of holiness are not justified. These two cannot be separated—justification and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Justification is God's title to pour out His Spirit. It sets Him free to act dynamically within so we may live fruitfully unto every good work. While the overwhelming sense of God's pardoning love enters into the deepest motives of conduct, the Holy Spirit provides the believer with power for conduct. We must remember that two streams flowed from the pierced side of the Crucified—blood and water. They represent the *legal* and the *vital* aspects of salvation, which must be distinguished but never separated. Wherever the blood delivers from the curse and condemnation of the law, the Spirit is present to cleanse the heart from the pollution and power of sin. There is good theology in that grand old hymn:

> Be of sin the double cure,
> Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

5. The Concrete Nature of Justification and Ethics

Hebraic or Biblical modes of thinking are not only *dynamic* but *concrete. Justification* is a law term. Sin means nonconformity to the law, and righteousness means conformity to the law.[5] The Bible is as simple and as concrete as that. *Justification* is God's verdict that the believer in Jesus conforms to the law of God. As a response to this gracious verdict, the believer will henceforth strive to conform his life to the law of God. It is inconceivable that he could do otherwise.

Again, *justification,* as a term of law, means "setting one right before law."—A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology,* p. 856. Justification means establishing a right relationship to the law as well as a right relationship with God (for how can God and the expression of His will be separated). Before faith comes, the sinner is "enmity against God . . . not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7. And the law works condemnation and wrath against this enemy sinner (Rom. 4:15). Where there is justification, there is reconciliation. The law is able to regard the believing sinner as righteous. The believing sinner is able to regard the law as "a friendly guide" (Berkouwer).

This changed relationship of law and believing sinner is nothing short of astounding—it is a miracle. The *legal* change becomes effective in a *vital* change. The holy commandments, once "grievous" (1 John 5:3), become delightsome (Rom. 7:22). According to the new covenant promise, the Holy Spirit writes the law in the believer's heart (Heb. 8:10), and he now reflects the spirit of the man who wrote Psalm 119: "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day." So the great Puritan divine, Thomas Watson, could say:

> The ten commandments are a chain of pearls to adorn us; they are our treasury to enrich us; they are more precious than lands of spices, or rocks of diamonds. The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver!—Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments* (The Banner of Truth Trust), p. 14.

The Reformers clearly saw that the law of God has three uses, viz.:

a. First Use—*civilis*–as a social use to restrain sin in society.

b. Second Use—*pedagogicus*–to point out sin and be a tutor to lead the sinner to Christ.

c. Third Use—*tertius usus legis*–to be a rule of life for Christians.

In the last one hundred years it has become quite a popular doctrine to reject "the third use of the law." This is antinomianism. It undermines the whole structure of Christian ethics, destroys all ethical content of justification by faith and betrays the cause of the Reformation.

When we say that the Christian is not under the obligation to the law, we had better be clear that we mean *obligation to satisfy its claims for perfect righteousness* and not *obligation to obey it as a rule of life.* But many fail to make that distinction. Does the justified believer have any further dealings with the law? As a means of salvation, No! In connection with a loving response, Yes! The atonement should be to us a constant reminder of the unrelieved heinousness of breaking God's law. The freedom of justification by faith is freedom to obey, the privilege to obey a law so royal, so holy (Rom. 7:6, 12, 25; James 2:10). Far from not being under obligation to keep it, love puts us under double obligation to keep it. Says Carl Henry, "The growing hostility in contemporary statements of Christian ethics to keeping the commandments is profoundly in error."—Carl Henry, *Personal Christian Ethics,* p. 361.

There are four kinds of teachings that effectively deny "the third use of the law" and open the door to antinomianism:

a. *Making Grace Antagonistic to Law.* The Reformers made a sharp distinction between the law and the gospel, but they were careful to write into all the great confessions that the law of God always remains valid as a rule of life for believers. But in the last one hundred years there has developed a kind of teaching that sets the law in opposition to grace and discards the concept of the law's third use. Reformed scholar, Oswald T. Allis, makes these observations in reference to this teaching:

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[5]See 1 John 3:4; Girdlestone's *Synonyms of the Old Testament* on *sin* and *righteousness;* John Murray, *Principles of Conduct,* p. 191.

> The gospel age is the age of the new covenant; and it is not marked by freedom from the law, by return to a dispensation of promise which knew nothing of obedience as a condition. Rather is it pre-eminently the age when the law of God, the revealed will of God, is and will be kept as never before—not as the means of salvation, but as the fruit of a life that is hid with Christ in God! . . . But this erroneous conception of the relation in which the promise, the law, and the gospel stand to one another could not but have serious consequences. The most important of these is the failure to apprehend correctly the close and intimate relation which exists between Justification and sanctification.—Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.), pp. 42, 43.

b. *Enthusiasm.* By "Enthusiasm" we do not mean religious fanaticism which causes people to jump up and down in spiritual ecstasy. "Enthusiasm" is a teaching which claims a direct guidance from the Holy Spirit apart from the written, outside-of-me Word of God. Instead of a sound teaching on the third use of the law, there are many today who feel that the Holy Spirit dwells in them and tells them what to do quite apart from any teaching of the law. Luther had to meet this error from those whom he called "Enthusiasts." The Reformer saw that their basic error was to make a dangerous separation of Word and Spirit. Luther and Calvin had to maintain that the Holy Spirit works in the Word and never apart from the Word. The only way to hear the Holy Spirit speak to us is to listen to the Word, and the only way to obey the Spirit is to obey that objective Word of God. We must have none of this notion that we can get a private word from the Lord. We need the law as that outside-of-me direction; otherwise we must live by the uncertain voices within.

The charismatics who claim visions, private revelations and direct information from God are only carrying what has been a popular notion to its logical end. "Enthusiasm" sets up a mystical inner witness and inner light instead of the objective Word of God. Under the guise of honoring the Holy Spirit, the Enthusiast's inner voices become a norm to replace the (absolute) norm of God's law. Says Carl Henry:

> The rule of the Spirit does not remove man from the will of God objectively revealed in the Bible, and emancipate him to moral self-sufficiency. The Spirit rules in and through the written Word, which he has inspired. The spiritual discernment of the regenerate man is not relieved of the need for ethical instruction and guidance . . . Paul does not arrive at a "Spirit ethics."—Henry, *op. cit.*, p.360.

c. *Quietism.* Quietism is the teaching that the Christian life is lived by being a passive channel for the operation of the Holy Spirit. The victorious life is said to be lived when the believer stops trying and lets God do it all. ("Let go and let God.")

The error of Quietism is that it tends to make the Holy Spirit's work in the heart *substitutionary.* This is the result

. . . let go and let God . . .

of an inadequate focus on the grand facts of Christ's substitutionary work. The work Christ did in life and death was substitutionary—it was in our place and instead of us. Justification comes by the passive acceptance of what was done on the cross apart from any effort of ours. But the same thing cannot be said about the inward, sanctifying work of the Spirit. The Spirit does not replace human effort. He does not substitute for human obedience. The Christian life is not a matter of refraining from effort while the Spirit does it all. The Christian life is a struggle, a race, a fight; and the Spirit stirs the believer up and empowers him for holy warfare. Faith is not an opiate but a stimulant. It does not compose us for sleep but for action. As Bishop J. C. Ryle well said, if this is not the teaching of the Bible, we ought to throw Bunyan's great allegory, *The Pilgrim's Progress,* into the fire.

d. *Easy Believism.* Easy Believism has come about by a gross perversion of Calvin's doctrine of "the perseverance of the saints." Calvin taught that the elect would never fall from grace; but he also noted that the only sign of election was that the believer persevered in the faith. That Reformed concept is a far cry from the popular notion that "faith for one moment brings life for eternity."

Justification is possessed only *by faith.* He who has no present faith has no present justification. Saving faith is in Christ, not in some past experience of being born again! There is a popular doctrine which says that a man can be eternally saved whether he pursues sanctification or not. But the pursuit of holiness is not optional. He who does not obey does not believe, and he who does not believe and keep on believing will not be saved. Says John Murray, former Professor of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary:

> Holiness is exemplified in obedience to the commandments of God . . .
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> The new covenant as an everlasting covenant reaches the zenith of its realization in this: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people" (Revelation 21:3). But we must ask: Do believers continue in this relationship and in the enjoyment of its blessing irrespective of persevering obedience to God's commands? It is one of the most perilous distortions of the doctrine of grace, and one that has carried with it the saddest records of moral and spiritual disaster, to assume that past privileges, however high they may be, guarantee the security of men irrespective of perseverance in faith and holiness . . .
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> Paul knew well that if he were to attain to the resurrection of the dead all the resources of Christ's resurrection power must be operative in him and all the energies of his personality enlisted in the exercise of those means through which he would apprehend that for which he was apprehended by Christ Jesus (cf. Philippians 3:10-12). This is just to say that the goal is not reached, the consummation of covenant blessing is not achieved in some automatic fashion but through a process that engages to the utmost the concentrated devotion of the apostle himself. It is not reached irrespective of perseverance, but through perseverance. And this means nothing if it does not mean concentrated obedience to the will of Christ as expressed in his commandments.We readily see, however, that the attainment of the goal is not on the meritorious ground of perseverance and obedience, but through the divinely appointed means of perseverance. Obedience as the appropriate and necessary expression of devotion to Christ does not find its place in a covenant of works or of merit but in a covenant that has its inception and end in pure grace.—John Murray, *Principles of Conduct,* pp. 199, 200.

We cite a contemporary "evangelical" book to show how a false doctrine of security can open the door to the most outrageous antinomianism:

> Now, when he becomes a believer, the fears that restrained sin are removed. Often he will go through a period of unrestrained sin or carnality because he knows he has eternal life, regardless. He no longer runs scared. During this period, although he is permanently indwelt by the Spirit, the old sin nature controls his life and the Spirit is quenched.—*The Spirituality of Grace,* p. 65.

> If the carnal or baby believer never understands the doctrine of the two laws and how to operate under the law of the Spirit of life he can never begin to move in Phase Two. He is going to operate under the law of the old sin nature, and without the restraint of fear, he will get into unrestrained sin and will actually become worse than before he was saved . . . So they say, 'Goodby, God, I'll see you in heaven!"—*Ibid.,* p. 67.

While Rome's great error was to confuse justification and sanctification, many Protestants have gone to the opposite error and destroyed the close and inseparable relation between justification and sanctification. The preceding quotation is an example of that.

The churches are full of spiritually dead souls who are asleep in their sins; yet they content themselves that they are saved because of some past experience. Dreadful delusion! While legalism is killing its thousands, these antinomian sentiments are killing their tens of thousands. We live in the midst of an immoral revolution. We need a message of sterner stuff. We need to hear God's law, which will give us a high view of the gospel, and we need that gospel which will give us a high view of the law. We need to listen to that law which will point us to Christ as the way of salvation, and to that Christ who will point us to the law as the way of service. We need to see a restoration of the third use of the law so that the glorious truth of justification by faith may have that concrete expression without which it cannot live.

Lectures on Justification

Geoffrey J. Paxton

LECTURE 2: The Ground of Justification

Editorial Note: This article is not intended to provide an easy devotional exercise before you fall asleep. There are times when we need to do some careful, analytical thinking. What Professor Paxton says is not only important to a correct understanding of justification; it is also vital as a base for Christian ethics. This article will reward those who are prepared to think!

The subject of our first lecture was the meaning of "to justify." Does it mean "to declare just" or "to make just"? We contended for the former meaning: "to justify" means God's declaring a person just, not God's making him just.

In this lecture we must go a step further. It is not sufficient to speak of justification as God's declaring the sinner just. In fact, to stop there would be to fall into very serious error. We need to ask: On what ground does God make this declaration? What is the basis of God's pronouncement? *That* is the question to which we shall address ourselves in this lecture. We will approach our subject in the following way:

1. We shall draw attention to those who have denied the *necessity* for any such *ground of justification* and their reasons for doing so.
2. We shall look at those who, having conceded the necessity for such a ground, nevertheless propound an unsatisfactory ground, or basis, of the sinner's justification.
3. We shall set forth the true ground of our justification and the reasons for its necessity.

1. Those Who Deny the Necessity of the Ground of Justification

Here is cause for great lamentation among all godly people. Those who have not been able to bring about their reconciliation with God have spurned the way of God Himself! Here is the arrogance of the human heart! Here is the foolishness of sin!

a. Some assert, "God is Almighty, and therefore He does not need any 'ground' on the basis of which to forgive sin. In fact, to insist upon such a ground is to dishonor God. Such an insistence casts reflections upon God's omnipotence. God is quite capable of forgiving sin and restoring the sinner without having recourse to any ground!"

In this particular emphasis forgiveness is seen as that which comes from the Sovereign. Forgiveness, or pardon, is mere forgiveness, mere pardon. In other words, pardon, in this view of things, is not at all related to justice; it is the act of sovereign power. Of course, the Biblical evidence for the omnipotence of God is well-nigh endless. It is the relating of pardon to the omnipotence of God and seeing it as the expression of such (solely) that comes into question.

b. Others say, "God is all-loving, and therefore to insist upon any such ground on the basis of which God

must forgive sin is to deny that love. The only ground, so to speak, is the love of God's heart. All expressions such as 'redemption by ransom,' 'substitution,' 'satisfaction,' etc., are unworthy of God."

In this view the cross is not seen as the propitiation of God but rather the unsurpassable demonstration of the love of God. God suffers with and in the sins of His people but not for (i.e., the penalty) man's sins. This view has been advocated by ancient teachers in the church (Origen and Abelard) and more modern ones (Bushnell in America; Robertson, Maurice, Campbell and Young in Great Britain; Schleiermacher and Ritschl in Germany).

It is said that the unsurpassable demonstration of God's love at the cross affects not God but man. This love acts upon man and brings forth love from the heart. Rather than the death of Christ removing any obstacle in the path of the sinner's reconciliation with God, that death, it is said, demonstrates to the sinner that there is no obstacle at all between himself and God.

This view of the atonement has been aptly called the "magnet view." The crucifixion acts as a great magnet to bring men and women to repentance, and God is said to accept them on that basis (i.e., their repentance) alone.

c. The third attribute within God that is called upon to deny the necessity for any such ground of justification is, interestingly enough, the justice of God. "For God to require a 'satisfaction,' " it is said, "would involve Him in blatant injustice. Christ is innocent, and for God to punish an innocent Christ in the stead of guilty sinners is less than just. In fact, it is downright injustice! Such a concept is cruel and vindictive and smacks of a God who cares more about His precious law than about human beings. This is an immoral picture of God."

So it is that, to deny the necessity of any ground outside of God upon which He must forgive the sinner, men appeal to something within God Himself: (a) His omnipotence, (b) His great love and (c) His infinite sense of fairness. It needs to be reiterated that each of these views (whether appearing separately or with the others) can marshal a great deal of Biblical evidence which appears to endorse it. The Bible is full of the almighty, sovereign power of God, the love of God (cf. the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep and the lost son in Luke) and the justice of God! Whether or not this is a correct use of Scripture remains to be seen.

2. Those Who Concede the Necessity of a Ground Outside of God but Give Unsatisfactory Views of It

In his great epistle to the Romans, St. Paul declares that "the righteousness of God" is the ground whereupon a sinner is declared righteous in the sight of God.

In addition to the appeal to God to deny the necessity of the ground of justification, there is also an appeal to man. "The righteousness of God" is sometimes understood as an inward righteousness of man. It must not be thought that those who have propounded this view have always been of a legalistic bent. This is not the case. There have been those who have held this view (i.e., that the righteousness of God refers to man's inward righteousness) who have insisted upon the grace-nature of this righteousness. It is, we are reminded, the righteousness *of God*. It is not of works but of grace. Faith as that which opposes works has been strongly stressed by such people.

However, notwithstanding the emphasis upon grace, the referring of the righteousness of God to something within man is as mistaken as the reference to something within God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 is decisively against this view. Paul means us to understand that the believer is made the righteousness of God in the same way as Christ is made sin. It is out of the question to say that Christ was made sin by an impartation of sin into His being, and so it is out of the question to speak of the believer being made the righteousness of God by infusion, or impartation. Though sin was *on* Christ, it was not *in* Christ. Likewise, though the righteousness of God is *on* the believer, it is not *in* the believer. As sin was outside of Christ, so the righteousness of God is outside the believer.

Then there have been those who see *faith itself* as what is meant by "the righteousness of God." Though there are different modifications of this view, none of them see the righteousness of God as something which is outside of man. The mind is not thrown onto Christ for its foundation but rather back onto itself. Much modern preaching on faith reflects this particular view. Faith is elevated to a position not sanctioned by the Biblical witness.

When faith is seen as the ground on which God forgives the sinner, faith is made into a new law. When this new law is fulfilled (i.e., when a person believes), God is pleased, made happy. Such a view of faith (as a "work"—albeit, an "evangelical work") is in flat contradiction to the clear teaching of the Scriptures that we are justified neither by a work done by us nor a work in us but solely because of the work of Another—namely, Christ. This work was done *outside of us* and *for us*.

Those who elevate faith to the grand status of the ground of justification, represent God as accepting an imperfect title for a perfect one. In this view God accommodates His standards to the capability of the sinner. If this were the case, what would stop God from waiving His requirements altogether? It is obvious that God would require very little of men if faith were the ground of His acceptance. It is not so obvious why he could not waive His requirements altogether. The weakest faith, if it is real faith, still justifies a man, just as the feeblest drinking still saves a man who is dying of thirst. This is because the act of drinking appropriates the life-maintaining water. So also, faith, even though it is weak, appropriates the life-giving substance of the Son of God. However, if the act

itself is the thing that matters, then there is only a very short step from feeble drinking to not drinking at all. If God accepts so little, why need He insist upon even that?

3. The True Ground of Justification—Its Nature and Necessity

We must now turn to an examination of that righteousness of God which is the ground of justification. "The righteousness of God" is that which is both outside of God and outside the believer. In its essential nature this cardinal expression denotes nothing in God Himself or in the believer. It is external to both. Obviously, the expression itself would seem to contradict this view. Is it not, after all, "the righteousness *of God*"? If what we have said is correct, what is meant by "the righteousness of God"?

a. First, it is called "the righteousness of God" because God, in His great love and mercy, has initiated and authored it. The Lutherans used to be fond of saying that it is called the righteousness *of God* because it is a righteousness which is *valid* before God. This is, of course, derivative of the first point. If God's great love and mercy planned it and made it possible, this righteousness must be valid in His sight!

b. Second, "the righteousness of God" is the work of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. The Mediator between God and man cannot be God only or man only (Gal. 3:20). The Mediator supposes two parties between whom He intervenes. Hence, the Mediator must be related to both and the equal of either (cf. 1 Sam. 2:25; Job 9:33; Heb. 10:5). The Mediator must be both God and Man. Because the righteousness of God is the work of the God-Man, such righteousness is infinitely valuable and eternally valid. It is also a completely voluntary righteousness and therefore capable of being given away!

c. Third, the righteousness of God has, as its standard, the divine attribute of righteousness mirrored in the law of God. The divine character is seen chiefly in two respects. (1) It is seen in the *demand* for satisfaction. Jesus Christ in the flesh, fulfilling the law of God, is the declaration of the just God, who is true to Himself. (2) The divine character is also seen in the *provision* of the satisfaction. Jesus Christ in the flesh, fulfilling the law of God, is the declaration of the infinite love of the just God seeking the salvation of men. Jesus Christ is the declaration of the infinite justice and mercy of God.

The law is the transcript of God's character. As such, it makes a twofold claim upon all creatures. (1) It urges its inflexible claims to sinless obedience as the only way to life (Gal. 3:12). (2) It comes armed with a curse incurred by its violation (Gal. 3:10-13). The God-Man, Jesus Christ, was made under the law—voluntarily made under the law—that He might meet the demands of the law in both respects *on our behalf.* The doing and dying of the Son of God was a doing and dying not for Himself but for all who believe. Through the instrument of faith, God reckons that doing and dying to the account of the sinner. This doing and dying is what is known as the righteousness (sponsored by God) of which the apostle Paul speaks, and it is the only sufficient ground of the sinner's justification.

So much for the nature of the ground of our acceptance at God's tribunal. We may now ask: Why was this ground necessary? Why could not God have behaved in a sovereign way and pardoned the sinner without the mediatorial work of the Man for others?

a. In the first place, *the character of God* would not permit this. Each of the arguments set forth at the beginning of this lecture are based upon a subjective and arbitrary selection of the attributes of God. The full (Biblical) picture of the character of God is bypassed for those aspects which suit our sinful dissertation! God *is* all-powerful. But He is also all-holy. To declare that God abrogates the law (for such is what mere pardon does)

because He is all-powerful, is to neglect the important teaching of Scripture that God has an all-holy aversion to sin (Hab. 1:13) and that He determines to punish it. The true picture is that the God and Father of Jesus Christ exercises His all-powerfulness, not to waive sin and its consequences, but to deal adequately with sin for those who believe. P. T. Forsyth spoke the truth when he said, "There is only one thing that can satisfy the Holiness of God and that is Holiness—adequate Holiness?"

Once again, the great love of God, that indescribable love of which the Bible is full, exercises itself, not in the arbitrary abolition of the law, but in the minute fulfillment in precept and penalty of that law by the Son of His love. Hence, to see the cross as *only* the demonstration of the love of God is to fail to see it as the clearest proclamation of how seriously God takes sin and its consequences.

The accusation of injustice is safe only on Unitarian grounds. In other words, if we view Jesus Christ as One who is foreign to God, then the accusation of injustice is well-nigh inescapable. However, if we hold to the Biblical (and Trinitarian) position that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself," then what is said to be unworthy of God is the greatest tribute to God's character. He provides the very satisfaction which His all-holy person demands. Rejection of such love is inexcusable!

No less despite is done to the holiness of God by those who concede the necessity for the ground of justification but posit that ground either in an inward righteousness of the believer or his faith. Such things as these do not make up that adequate holiness of which Forsyth speaks. The character of God not only demands a ground of justification, but also an adequate ground. The only adequate ground recognized by Scripture is the perfect concurrence in the divinely-given law in both its precepts and penalty. We might even say it is to concur in word, thought and deed to the extent that God Himself concurs! Away then with imperfect substitutes such as the holiness of sinful men and their faith!

In conclusion, then, God is all-powerful, but He is also all-holy. God is all-loving, but He also hates sin. God does punish Christ, the Innocent, in the stead of the guilty; but that Christ is, in a very real sense, God with us, bearing the brunt of His own law in our place! The righteousness which God approves is the righteousness which reflects His character—perfect mirroring of the law, perfect honoring of the law in precept and penalty.

b. Second, not only does the character of God demand an adequate ground for justification, but so does *the nature of sin.* All who deny the necessity of the ground of justification or who propose insufficient grounds, have a flimsy evaluation of moral evil. The unrelieved heinousness of sin demands adequate atonement. The cross is, as Denney has said, "homage paid by Christ to the moral order of the world established and upheld by God." The incessant proclamation by the early church of the death of Christ, stamped a shaming sense of sin upon the pagan conscience. This is why Paul is agasp at the thought of continuing in sin that grace may abound. Embracing the cross is embracing God's estimate of sin. It is repudiation of sin.

c. Third, adequate satisfaction is demanded by the character of God, the nature of sin and *the demand of the conscience.* This is an aspect of reality not recognized as much as it should be. The mediatorial satisfaction of the God-Man honors God (and of course the law in and through which God is mirrored) and man as made in the image of God. Those proposing makeshift satisfactions do not realize that they deny the very integrity of man as made in God's image. Just as there is only one thing that will satisfy the holiness of God, so there is only one thing that will satisfy the conscience of the sinner—that which satisfies the holiness of God! Nothing less than what satisfies God's justice satisfies the conscience!

Mere pardon does not produce peace. The conscience is left unsatisfied. Inadequate grounds like infused righteousness or the faith of the sinner do not produce peace! Only that which satisfies God satisfies the conscience of the sinner—namely, the perfect atonement of the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

Mere pardon does not produce reconciliation. Reconciliation means that God and the sinner delight in the same things. The sinner being reconciled to God means that the sinner and God have one mind on matters. Reconciliation means that our "at-one-ment" has taken place. Only in Christ do God and the believing sinner concur. God rejoices in His own perfection, and so must the sinner if reconciliation has taken place. Mere pardon would mean only the (negative) cessation of penalty. It would not mean the (positive) fellowship of God and the sinner. Heaven is promised as a reward only to the righteous. The merely pardoned have no title to such.

What is true of mere pardon (see section 1 of this lecture) is also true of inadequate grounds of justification. Those proposing infusion of righteousness or faith as the righteousness valid before God, take no real note of guilt. The conscience craves complete assurance. And what if that righteousness which is infused be perfect in degree? What of the past (pre-infusion) acts of transgression, written indelibly into the conscience of the transgressor, which cry out for satisfaction? Infusion of righteousness is adequate only when and where there is no guilt—i.e., where there has been *no* transgression (Adam before the Fall).

So, in conclusion, we contend that the perfect satisfaction of Christ is demanded by the character of God, the Heinousness of sin and the craving of the conscience. All who deny the necessity of such a satisfaction and all who propound inadequate views of it, pay little or no attention to these demands.

On the Second Use of the Law

The Law Magnified by the Cross

James Buchanan

Editorial Note: Born in 1804, James Buchanan became Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free Church College in Edinburgh. The following material is from his book, *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, published by The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013.

The principal means of conviction is the *law,* the *law* of God in its purity, spirituality, and power; for 'by the law is the knowledge of sin,' and 'the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.' The law in its holy commandment, the law in its awful curse, the law in its spiritual nature, as reaching to the heart, and in all its length and breadth as extending over every department of human life, the law in its condemning power, whereby 'every mouth must be stopped, and all the world must become guilty before God'—this law is unfolded to the understanding and applied to the conscience by the Holy Spirit, and immediately, by its own self-evidencing light, it convinces; the conscience is constrained to do homage to the law, and to acknowledge that 'the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good;' while, self-convicted and self-condemned, the sinner exclaims, 'But I am carnal, sold under sin.' And yet it is not a new law, nor one of which the sinner had heretofore been entirely ignorant, that becomes the means of his conviction; he may have read and repeated the ten commandments a hundred times, and may be familiar with the letter of God's requirements, and yet some one of these very commandments may now become as an arrow in his conscience, the very sword of the Spirit. A notional acquaintance with the law is one thing, a spiritual experience of its power is another. Witness the case of the apostle Paul, an educated man, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, walking from his youth upwards according to the straitest sect of the law, a Pharisee; who can doubt that he was familiar with the letter of God's law? yet, being destitute of any spiritual experience of its power, he regarded himself as having been without any due knowledge of the law till he was taught by the Spirit of God; for, says he, 'I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.' Previously he had only that notional and common knowledge which he elsewhere describes as 'the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law.' And what was it that converted the form into substance? It was one of those very commandments which he had often read and repeated without perceiving its spiritual import or feeling its convicting power: 'I had not know sin but by the law, for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not *covet.*' He seizes the tenth commandment, a commandment which directly refers to the state of a man's heart, and finding that his heart cannot stand the test of a law so pure and spiritual, he is inwardly convinced of sin, as well as made conscious of its power; and so every sinner who obtains a glimpse of the real nature of the divine law, which, like its heart-searching Author, is heart-searching too, must on the instant feel, that if this law be the rule of judgment, then, by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified; for 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.'

But when it is said that *the law* is the principal means by which the Spirit of God convinces the conscience of a sinner, that term must be understood in an enlarged sense, as including under it every principle which has any relation or affinity to the conscience, and every fact in which any such principle is involved. It is not the bare law, as it stands declared in the Ten Commandments, that is the sole instrument of conviction, but the moral principle of that law, whether as it is displayed in the retributions of a righteous Providence, or illustrated by the afflictions of human life, or exemplified in the conduct of believers and the perfect pattern of Christ, or as unfolded in the parables, or as embodied in the Gospel and shining forth in the cross. The law is a schoolmaster that brings the sinner to Christ; but Christ is a teacher that brings the sinner to know the law as he never knew it before. The law points the eye of a convinced sinner to the cross; but the cross throws in upon his conscience a flood of light which sheds a reflex lustre on the law. Hence we believe that the Gospel of Christ, and especially the doctrine of the cross of Christ, is the most powerful instrument for impressing

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the conscience of a sinner, and for turning his convictions into genuine contrition of heart. And this because the Gospel, and especially the doctrine of the cross, contains in it the spirit and essence of the law; it recognizes and proceeds upon the moral principles of God's government, and affords a new and most impressive manifestation of the holiness of the Lawgiver, and the turpitude of sin; while, at the same time, it unfolds such a proof of the compassion and love of God as is peculiarly fitted to melt and subdue the heart, which the mere terrors of the law might only turn into a more hardened and unrelenting obduracy. Let the sinner who makes light of sin turn his eye to the cross of Christ, and he will see *there,* as well as amidst the thunderings and the lightnings of Sinai, that the Lord is a jealous God, that sin is the abominable thing which he hates, and that he is resolved, at all hazards, and notwithstanding whatever suffering it may occasion, to visit it with condign punishment; let him look to the cross, and behold there, suspended on that accursed tree, the Son of God himself; let him listen to the words which fell from that illustrious sufferer in the midst of his agony and passion, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and let him then inquire, why was it that he, of whom it had been once and again proclaimed from the highest heavens, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' and of whom it is recorded, that once and again, on his bended knees, and with all the earnestness of importunate supplication, he had prayed in the garden, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me'—why was it that he, who was thus affectionately spoken of as God's beloved Son, and who, as a Son, so submissively poured out his heart into a Father's ear, was nevertheless subjected to the agony and death of the cross? And when, in reply to all his inquiries, the Bible declares, that the Son of God suffered because he had consented to become chargeable with sin, that he 'who knew no sin was made sin for us,' and that, therefore, 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief;' that 'he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities;' and that *he* died, because the wages of sin is death:—oh! does not the sinner now feel in his inmost soul, that if Sinai be dreadful, Calvary has its terrors too; that if 'by the law is the knowledge of sin,' the Gospel adds its sublime and harmonious commentary; that the cross of Christ is the most awful monument of Heaven's justice, the most solemn memorial of the sinner's danger; and does he not infer, with all the quickness of intuition, that if sin was not *spared,* nor left *unpunished,* but visited with condemnation and death, when it was imputed to his own, his only, his well-beloved Son, much less will sin, unexpiated and unforgiven, be spared, or left unpunished, when, after this solemn work of atonement, God will arise to plead with those who cleave to that accursed thing which nailed the Saviour to the tree? The cross,—the cross of a crucified Saviour—is the most powerful, the most impressive demonstration of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. The cross may well alarm every sleeping sinner, and awaken every slumbering conscience, and stir into agitation and tumult every listless and impenitent heart. It is the law by which we obtain the knowledge of sin; but the law is magnified in the cross; and it is the *law in the cross* that carries home to every awakened conscience the most alarming convictions of guilt. Can I hope to be spared, may one say, when 'God *spared not* his own Son?' Are my sins venial, or light? These sins of mine were enough, when transferred to the Son of God, to nail him to the tree! May I venture into eternity in the hope that my sins may be forgotten there? And why were they remembered here, when God's Son ascended the hill of Calvary? May not the strictness of God's law be relaxed in my favour? But why, oh! why was it not relaxed in favour of Christ? No; that *one* fact, that awful cross which was erected on the hill beside Jerusalem, annihilates every ground of careless security, tears from me every rag by which I would seek to cover my shame, drives me from every refuge to which I would repair;—that one fact, that Christ died for sin, shuts me up to the conviction, that as a sinner I stand exposed to the wrath and curse of an offended God, and that the outraged law must receive a full and final vindication. But must it be by my personal and everlasting punishment? Yes, assuredly, if I stand on the footing of law; for 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die.' But look again to that mysterious cross: amidst the darkness which surrounds it, and the awful manifestations of God's wrath which the sufferer felt, there breaks forth a light, glorious as the sun shining in its strength, unlike the lightnings which flashed around Sinai; this is the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in its beams, the effulgent light of God's love, the glorious manifestation of God's grace and mercy; for 'God *so loved* the world as to give his Son.' Look once more; for the same cross which wounds will also heal; the same conscience which is pierced by the arrows of conviction may be pacified by the Gospel of peace; and thus all that is terrible in the cross, when combined with the tenderness of God's mercy, and the amazing, the self-denying, the self-sacrificing love of the Saviour, will then only awaken convictions in the conscience, to melt and change them into sweet contrition of heart.

It is thus that, under the Gospel dispensation, the Spirit of God convinces the conscience by pressing home the eternal and unchangeable principles of the law, as these are embodied, illustrated, and displayed in a new and better dispensation. It is not the naked law, but the law in all its forms and manifestations, and especially the law in the facts and truths of the Gospel, which is thus used. For the Spirit reproves *the world of sin*—why? because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged—all having reference to Christ and his cross.

On the Third Use of the Law

Are Christians Freed From the Moral Law as a Rule of Life?

Samuel Bolton

Editorial Note: Samuel Bolton was Master of Christ's College and Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University (1606-1654). The following material is from his book, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom,* published by The Banner of Truth Trust, P.O. Box 652, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013.

Are Christians Freed From the Moral Law As a Rule of Obedience?

And so we come to speak of the moral law which is scattered throughout the whole Bible, and summed up in the Decalogue. For substance, it contains such things as are good and holy, and agreeable to the will of God, being the image of the divine will, a beam of His holiness, the sum of which is love to God and love to man . . .

Indeed, the law, as it is considered as a rule, can no more be abolished or changed than the nature of good and evil can be abolished and changed. The substance of the law is the sum of doctrine concerning piety towards God, charity towards our neighbours, temperance and sobriety towards ourselves. And for the substance of it, it is moral and eternal, and cannot be abrogated. We grant that the circumstances under which the moral law was originally given were temporary and changeable, and we have now nothing to do with the promulgator, Moses, nor with the place where it was given, Mount Sinai, nor with the time when it was given, fifty days after the people came out of Egypt, nor yet as it was written in tables of stone, delivered with thunderings and lightnings. We look not to Sinai, the hill of bondage, but to Sion, the mountain of grace. We take the law as the image of the will of God which we desire to obey, but from which we do not expect life and favour, neither do we fear death and rigour. This, I conceive, is the concurrent opinion of all divines. For believers, the law is abrogated in respect of its power to

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justify or condemn; but it remains full of force to direct us in our lives. It condemns sin in the faithful, though it cannot condemn the faithful for sin. Says Zanchius: 'The observance of the law is necessary for a Christian man, and it is not possible to separate such observance from faith.' And as Calvin says: 'Let us put far from us the ungodly notion that the law is not to be our rule, for it is our changeless rule of life.' The moral law, by its teaching, admonishing, chiding, and reproving, prepares us for every good work. The law is void in respect of its power to condemn us, but it still has power to direct us; we are not under its curse, but yet under its commands.

Again, the moral law is perpetual and immutable. This is an everlasting truth, that the creature is bound to worship and obey his Creator, and so much the more bound as he has received the greater benefits. If we claim to be free from obedience, we make ourselves the servants of sin. But these matters I shall speak more largely upon in the discourse that follows.

Therefore, against that opinion which holds forth the abrogation of the law, and says that we are freed from obedience to it, I shall state and endeavour to make good two propositions which will serve fully to answer the query, and to refute the false notions. The propositions are these:

(1) That the law, for the substance of it (for we speak not of the circumstances and accessories of it), remains as a rule of walking to the people of God.

(2) That there was no end or use for which the law was originally given but is consistent with grace, and serviceable to the advancement of the covenant of grace.

If these two propositions are made good, the doctrines of the abrogation of the law and of freedom from the law will both fall to the ground.

Proposition 1: The Law Remains As a Rule of Walking for the People of God

We shall begin with the first proposition, namely, that the law, in the substance of it, remains in force as a rule of walking to the people of God. I shall not need to stay long over this, for when the second proposition is made good it will be seen that it establishes this also. By the law is meant the moral law comprehended in the Decalogue or ten commandments. By the substance of it, I mean the things commanded or forbidden which are morally good or evil, and cannot be changed or abolished. For what is the law in the substance of it but that law of nature engraven in the heart of man in innocency? and what was that but the express idea or representation of God's own image, even a beam of His own holiness, which cannot be changed or abolished any more than the nature of good and evil can be changed? And that the law thus considered remains as an unchangeable rule of walking to believers I am now to prove.

The Testimony of the Reformed Confessions

For this proof, not to mention individuals whose testimony might be produced, even as many almost as men, we have a cloud of witnesses if we look upon the Confessions of Christian and Reformed Churches in their agreement together. The Helvetian (Swiss) Church has this confession: 'Thus far is the law of God abrogated, in that it has no power to condemn believers . . . Notwithstanding, we do not disdainfully reject the law, but condemn them as heresies which are taught against the law, that it is not a rule of walking.' The French Church has this: 'We believe all the figures of the law to be taken away by the coming of Christ, although the truth and substance of them continue to us in Him, and are fulfilled to us in Him. But the doctrine of the law is used in them both to confirm our life and that we may be the more established in the promises of the Gospel.' Agreeable to this is the Belgic Confession.

The Wittenberg Confession includes this: 'We acknowledge the law of God, whose abridgment is in the Decalogue, to command the best, the most just and perfect works, and we hold that man is bound to obey the moral precepts of the Decalogue. Neither are these precepts which are contained in the apostles' writings a new law, but are branches of the old law.' And again, 'It is needful to teach men that they must not only obey the law, but also how this obedience pleases God.'

The Scottish Church confesses: 'We do not think we are so freed by liberty as if we owed no obedience to the law; we confess the contrary.' The Church of England holds a similar doctrine: 'Although the law given of God to Moses in regard of the rites and ceremonies does not bind Christians, neither is any, although a Christian, loosed from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.' To these testimonies might be added many more.

But it may be that some men regard these Confessions as of no authority and therefore they have no power with them. And indeed, if these things are not proved from the Word of God, they have no power with us. We respect good men and their writings, but we must not build our faith upon them as a sure foundation. This is against our Christian liberty; we cannot be enslaved to the judgments of any. 'To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.' We shall therefore give some proofs out of the Word itself, and then draw arguments from them.

The Testimony of the New Testament

We read in Matt. 5.17-18: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil; for verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.' This seems to be very full and very plain for the continuance of and obligation to the law. And yet there are corrupt readings of these words, and as sinister interpretations. Some would have it to be understood that Christ would not abolish the law until He had fulfilled it. Indeed, He was 'the end of the law', as the apostle speaks in Rom. 10.4, but we must understand this to mean 'the perfecting and consummating end', not 'the destroying and abolishing end' of the law. In Christ the law had an end of perfection and consummation, not of destruction and abolition. It is to be noted that in this verse Christ gives a stricter exposition of the law, and vindicates it from the corrupt glosses of the Pharisees, which surely speaks the continuance, not the abrogation, of the law. And agreeable to this is the language of the apostle in Rom. 3.31: 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.' How? Not for justification, for in this respect faith makes it void, but as a rule of obedience, and in this respect faith establishes it. Further, the apostle tells us 'that the law is holy, just and good' and that 'he delighted in the law of God after the inward man' and also that 'with the mind I myself serve the law of God' (Rom. 7.12, 22, 25). With this agrees James 2.8: 'If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture . . . ye do well'. What law this was, he shows in the eleventh verse to be the Decalogue or moral law. Likewise: 'He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar' (1 John 2.4); also: 'Sin is the transgression of the law' (1 John 3.4).

Therefore, since Christ, who is the best expounder of the law, so largely strengthens and confirms the law (witness the Sermon on the Mount, and also Mark 10.19); since faith does not supplant, but strengthens the law; since the apostle so often presses and urges the duties commanded in the law; since Paul acknowledges that he served the law of God in his mind, and that he was under the law to Christ (1 Cor. 9.21); I may rightly conclude that the law, for the substance of it, still remains a rule of life to the people of God.

But I would add further arguments, beginning with this: If ever the law was a rule of walking, then it is still a rule of walking: this is clear. Either it is still such a rule, or we must shew the time when, as such, it was abrogated. But no such time can be shewed. If it is said that it was abrogated in the time of the Gospel by Christ and His apostles, we reply that no such thing can be proved. It was not so abrogated at that time. If Christ and His apostles commanded the same things which the law required, and forbade and condemned the same things which the law forbade and condemned, then they did not abrogate it but strengthened and confirmed it. And this is what they did: see Matt. 5.19: 'He that breaketh one of the least of these commandments, and teacheth men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but he that shall teach and observe them shall be called (not legal preachers, but) great in the kingdom of heaven.'

Therefore, in that Christ Himself expounded and established the law, by His word and authority, as shown in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew, it shows us the continuance of it; for had it been His will utterly to abolish it, He would rather have declared against it, or have suffered it to die of itself; and would not have vindicated it, and restored it to its purity from the glosses of the Pharisees. All this clearly speaks to us of the continuance of, and obligation to, the law.

As with Christ, so with the apostles: instead of abolishing, in their doctrine they establish it, frequently urging the duties of the law upon the churches and people of God: 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves' (Rom. 12.19). Why? 'For it is written, Vengeance is mine'. Likewise, in Rom. 13.8-10. There the apostle repeats the commandments of the second table, not to repeal or reverse any of them, but to confirm them as a rule of walking for the saints. He comprehends them all in this: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, for love is the fulfilling of the law.' As Beza writes: 'Love is not perfected except as the fulfilling of the law.' See also 1 Thess. 4.3, 4, 7: 'This is the will of God . . . that ye should abstain from fornication . . . that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such.' See also Eph. 6.1: 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord.' The apostle here presses this duty from the authority of the precept, and persuades to it from the graciousness of the promise, 'for this is the first commandment with promise'—a conditional promise (as Beza says), as are all such promises as are found in the law. As full and plain are the words of the apostle in Rom. 3.31: 'Do we abrogate the law? No, we establish it by faith.' Though it carries another sense, it bears this sense also, that though we disown the law in respect to justification, yet we establish it as a rule of Christian living.

Again, in Matt. 3.10 we read: 'The axe is laid to the root of the tree; every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire'; and in Matt. 5.22: 'Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.' In these and sundry other places, so some learned and holy divines tell us, the comminations and threatenings of the New Testament are not of the nature of the Gospel, but are confirmation of the law, and plainly demonstrate to us the continuance of the law under grace. Thus Daniel Chamier[1] distinguishes in the Gospel between the doctrine of the Gospel and the grace of the Gospel, between the preaching of the Gospel by Christ and the apostles and the law of faith or spirit of life in Christ. The preaching or doctrine of the Gospel, he tells

[1]Chamier (1566-1621) served various Reformed congregations in France. He was killed by a cannon-ball during the siege of Montauban.

us, contains two things, first the promise of grace, and second, the confirmation of the law. And he shows that all those comminations and threats which we read in the Scriptures of the New Testament in no way belong to the nature of the Gospel properly so called, but are the confirmation of the law, and declare the continuation of it now under the Gospel as an exact rule to direct Christians in their walk and obedience . . .

Application Against Papists

The foregoing will serve to show the error of the Papists in their unjust charge against us that we make it a part of our Christian liberty to be exempted from all law and to live as we list, and that we are not bound to the obedience of any law in conscience before God. We appeal to all the Reformed Churches in the Christian world, whether ever any of them did put forth such an opinion as this. It is the concurrent opinion of all Reformed Churches that Christians are subject to the rule, the direction, and the authority of the moral law, as says Chamier: 'Believers are free from the curses, not from the obligations of the law.' We preach obedience to the law, but not as the Papists do. They preach obedience as a means to justification; we preach justification as a means to obedience. We cry down works in opposition to grace in justification, and we cry up obedience as the fruits of grace in sanctification. He that does not walk in obedience is a stranger yet to Christ; and he that rests in his obedience does not know Christ. Indeed, many are too much like the Jews still. God set up a law as a rule of walking, and they look for justification by it. These poor men are like oxen in the yoke; they draw and toil and spend their strength (for who do more than those who think to earn merit thereby?), and when they have performed their labour, they are fatted up for slaughter. So it is with these: when they have endeavoured hard after their own righteousness, they perish in their just condemnation. These men Luther fitly calls 'the devil's martyrs': they suffer much, and take much pains to go to hell. The apostle tells them what they are to expect: 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse' (Gal. 3.10), that is, those who are under the works of the law for justification; and the apostle gives the reason, 'for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them'. These men seek life in death, righteousness in sin. And, alas, we are all too apt to follow this line; it is hard to perform all righteousness and rest in none; hard to be in duties in respect of performance, and out of duties in respect of dependence. We are apt to weave a web of righteousness of our own, to spin a thread of our own by which we may climb up to heaven. Were it not so, what is the need for so many exhortations and admonitions to perform all righteousness but to rest in none? The Scripture does not make a practice of killing flies with beetles,[2] or cleaving straws with wedges of iron; nor does it spend many admonitions and exhortations where there is no need.

Alas, there are multitudes in the world who make a Christ of their own works, and this is their undoing. They look for righteousness and acceptance more in the precept than in the promise, in the law rather than in the Gospel, more in working than in believing; and so they miscarry. There is something of this spirit in us all; other-

[2]A long-handled, heavy-headed hammer.

wise we should not be up and down so much in respect of our comforts and our faith, as is still so often the case. We become cast down with every weakness in ourselves. But we should be *all* in Christ in weak performance, and *nothing* in ourselves in strong performances.

Application Against Antinomians

We look next at the case of those who are called Antinomians.[3] Just as the Papists set up the law for justification, so the Antinomians decry the law for sanctification. We claim to be free from the curses of the law; they would have us free from the guidance, from the commands of the law. We say we are free from the penalties, but they would abolish the precepts of the law. They tell us that we make a false mixture together of Christ and Moses, and that we mingle law and Gospel together. How unjustly they lay this charge against us let men of understanding judge. We cry down the law in respect of justification, but we set it up as a rule of sanctification. The law sends us to the Gospel that we may be justified; and the Gospel sends us to the law again to inquire what is our duty as those who are justified. Whatever they say of the law, though they cast contempt and disgrace upon it, and upon those who preach it, yet we know that, for the substance of it, it is the image of God, a beam of His holiness. The things therein commanded and forbidden are things morally, and therefore eternally, good and evil; nothing can alter the nature of them. Things not by nature either good or evil are alterable by him that commanded them. But those things which are morally good or evil, God can no more alter them than make evil good, or good evil. That which was morally good formerly is morally good now, and is to be pursued and practised. That which was formerly morally evil is morally evil now, and is to be shunned and avoided. We have a Gospel rule which turns us to obedience to the law. We find it in Phil. 4.8: 'Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.' And I hope the law is of this number. The apostle tells us that the law is 'holy and just and good'; certainly in it there is nothing commanded but what is good. If we are to learn of the ant, and from brute beasts, certainly are we much more to learn from the law, which is the image of God in man and the will of God to man. We have nothing to do with Moses, nor do we look to Sinai, the hill of bondage, but we look to Zion, the mountain of grace. We take the law as the eternal rule of God's will, and we desire to conform ourselves to it, and to breathe out with David, 'O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!' Certainly the law and the Gospel help one another; they lend one another the hand, as says Peter Martyr.

The law is subservient to the Gospel. Its purpose is to convince and humble us, and the Gospel is to enable us to fulfill the obedience of the law. The law sends us to the Gospel for our justification; the Gospel sends us to the law to frame our way of life. Our obedience to the law is nothing else but the expression of our thankfulness to God who has freely justified us, that 'being redeemed, we might serve Him without fear' (Luke 1.74). Though our service is not the motive or impelling cause of God's redeeming of us, yet it is the purpose of our redemption. The apostle shows this at length in the sixth chapter of Romans; it is the application he makes of the doctrine of free justification. He continues: 'Therefore, brethren, we are debtors' (Rom. 8.12). If Christ has freed us from the penalties, how ought we to subject ourselves to the precepts! If He has delivered us from the curses, how ought we to study the commands! If He paid our debt of sin, certainly we owe a debt of service.

This was the great end of our redemption; He redeemed us from bondage and brought us into freedom, from slavery to service. That which Christ has redeemed us *to,* He cannot be said to redeem us *from;* but He has redeemed us unto service, and therefore cannot be said to redeem us from service. Indeed, He has freed us from the *manner* of our obedience, but not from the *matter* of our obedience. We now obey, but it is from other principles, by other strength, unto other ends, than we did before.

Previously, the principles of obedience were legal and servile, now they are filial and evangelical. As the law was given with evangelical purposes, so it is now kept from evangelical principles, principles of faith, love, and delight, which causes the soul to obey, and facilitates the whole of obedience. The love of Christ constrains (2 Cor. 5.14), yet is the obedience free. Love knows no difficulties; things impossible to others are easy to them that love. The grounds of obedience differ: heretofore, fear, now love. Previously the strength was our own; now we have fellowship with the strength of Christ. Our works are said to be wrought in God, by union with Him (John 3.21), and by fellowship with Him. As we can do nothing without Him, so we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. And this strength He has promised: 'The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments' (Deut. 26.18). He tells us that He works all our works of grace in us, and of duty for us.

The ends before were for justification and life; now they are for other ends — to glorify God, to dignify the Gospel, to declare our sincerity, to express our thankfulness. Before, we obeyed, but out of compulsion of conscience; now we obey out of the promptings of nature, which, so far as it works, works to God, as naturally as stones move downward or sparks fly upward. Thus, then,

[3]The term may have been coined by Luther, but its use in England appears to date from 1644. Literally, it means 'against law', and was used to describe professing Christians who claimed that the moral law was not binding upon them. Hence with many it came to signify a person holding loose moral standards, a loose-liver.

it is that we preach the law, not in opposition to, but in subordination to the Gospel, as we shall show at length later.

Application to All Believers

Lastly, under this head, let me exhort you all to judge of the law aright, and then let it be your care to maintain it. Let not Moses take the place of Christ; but, at the same time, make a right use of Moses. When works and obedience take their right place, when the law is rightly used, then it is holy, just and good. But if we use it as our life, then we trample the blood of Christ underfoot, and make His life and death in vain. Let the servant follow the Master; let Moses follow Christ; the law, grace; obedience, faith; and then all act their proper and designed parts. Remember what Zacharias said: 'You were redeemed that you might serve' (Luke 1.74), that you might live unto Him that died for you. Reason from mercy to duty, not from mercy to liberty. O beware that the great things of Christ do not make you more careless! Take heed not to abuse mercy. It is a sad thing when Christians abuse the grace of Christ. The justice of God prevails with others; oh, but God would have His tender mercies prevail with you: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice' (Rom. 12.1). The reasonings of saints are to be from engagements of mercy to enlargements in duty (2 Cor. 5.14 and 7.1). Having such precious promises, let us purge ourselves from all corruptions of the flesh and spirit. None but venomous spirits will, spider-like, suck poison from such sweets, or draw such inferences from mercy as may be encouragements to sin.

It would be a sad matter if believers should grow more slack and sluggish; if that which should quicken them slackens their hands; if a man should say in his heart, Christ died, I need not pray so much; Christ has done all, therefore I need do nothing. The doctrine we advance should strengthen and not weaken your engagement to duty, should heighten and not lessen your engagement to duty; it should quicken and not deaden your hearts' affections; it should inflame and not cool your spirits.

Worse still would it be if we should draw arguments to sin from mercy received. Should that become a spur which should be the greatest curb? 'Shall we sin because grace abounds?' (Rom. 6.1).'There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared', says the Psalmist (130.4), not that I may sin, but that I may serve. You whom the law has sent to the Gospel, let the Gospel again send you to the law; study now your duty; abundance of mercy calls for abundance of duty. If God had not abounded in mercy, what would have become of us? And has He abounded in mercy? Oh, then, let us abound in duty; let us obey for God's sake who gives us His Son; for Christ's sake who has given Himself that we might give ourselves to God; for faith's sake which is dead without obedience. It is the cry of faith, Give me children, else I die. Obey for the sake of your profession of His Name. Adorn the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. What a shame if it should be said of us that faith cannot do that which unbelief is able to do! What will Turks and Mohammedans say—'Look, these are the people who reverence Christ! These are the servants of the crucified God! They profess Christ and yet will forswear and will sin against Christ!' What will Papists say? 'These are they who preach faith, and yet are strangers to obedience, and live in sin.'

No, let the righteousness of the law be fulfilled in us; let us walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (Rom. 8.4). The law is a royal law: 'If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture', says James, 'ye do well' (2.8). It is a royal law, that we might live royally above the ordinary rank of men in obedience. 'Receive not the grace of God in vain' (2 Cor. 6.1). If you receive it not in vain, you will have power to will, and power to do; you will prize grace and walk thankfully. It was wittily spoken by one —and there is some truth in the saying—'Live as though there were no Gospel; die as though there were no law. Pass the time of this life in the wilderness of this world under the conduct of Moses; but let none but Joshua bring you over into Canaan, the promised land.'

The saying agrees thus far with Scripture. Moses was a man of the law; he gave the law and he is often taken as representing the law: 'They have Moses and the prophets' (Luke 16.29); 'There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust' (John 5.45). Joshua was a type of Christ; his name signifies so much; he was Jesus, so called in Heb. 4.8: 'If Jesus', that is, Joshua, 'could have given them rest'. Moses must lead the children of Israel through the wilderness, but Joshua must bring them into Canaan. So while you are in the wilderness of this world, you must walk under the conduct of Moses; you must live in obedience to the law. But it is not Moses but Joshua, not works but faith, not obedience but Christ, who must bring you into Canaan. Do what you can while you live; but be sure to die resting on Christ's merits.

This must suffice under our first main proposition; that the substance of the law is a rule of obedience to the people of God, and that to which they are to conform their lives and their walk now under the Gospel. This we have proved by the Scriptures, by a cloud of witnesses, by the concordant testimony of the Reformed Churches. We have strengthened this by many arguments, and given some applications of the doctrine.

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