

Present Truth

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

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

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THE REFORMATION DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

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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.

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And, as he read, he burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?"



Letters

Address Letters to *Present Truth*,
P.O. Box 1311, Fallbrook,
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Mysticism or New Testament Inspiration?

Sir / I have always been a Christian, but it has been 16 years since I fully committed my life to Christ. Since then I have had heartaches, frustrations, disappointments and failures of all kinds, but have trusted in God through Christ implicitly for *all* things. He has been with me through them all and given me strength and courage to go on when many times I just wanted to lie down and give up. I've shed many tears.

Quite suddenly, on an impulse, I decided to go to a charismatic meeting. I prayed before I went because I wasn't sure what I was getting into, and I was frightened. I asked God not to let anything happen He didn't want to happen. Shortly after arriving I wanted to just get up and leave, but didn't. I decided to just kind of go along with whatever I saw, no matter what, participating in nearly everything. When they spoke in tongues, all I could think of was, God, what is a dyed-in-the-wool-Lutheran-lately-turned-Methodist like me doing in a place like this, and if my friends could see me now! At the close of the service we all joined hands in front of the altar to sing the Lord's prayer, and it was the most beautiful thing I've ever heard in my life—all faces turned up to God in prayer and praise. It was *very* touching. I trembled all the way home. I trembled a lot the next two weeks.

The meetings were scheduled for two full weeks. By the third night I became disillusioned and told myself, I am never going back. But I did, night after night, for 11 nights out of 12. There followed a series of events which I'll not bore you with. Toward the end of the first week I very timidly outstretched a hand when we were singing, and it wasn't so bad. I began to join in most of the singing, liking it. You know the kind—the old-time religion, hand clapping, toe tapping sort. By the end of two weeks both hands were reaching to God higher and higher, and I couldn't believe it. I began to feel that the words I'd been singing in church all these years were no longer just words—they took on a new meaning of praise and

love. God's presence was very strong to me, and particularly that of Jesus Himself. I really was in a state of complete euphoria and just bubbled over with joy, daytime, nighttime. It's enough to sing praise all day, but when you wake up nights singing it too, for half the night—well, that's going a bit far. During this period I was particularly showered with blessings of all kinds, including for the persons in my life for whom I pray in their needs—the outreach to everyone with whom I came in contact with, the pleasant encounters in conversation with people everywhere. What the world needs now is "gobbledygook," sweet "gobbledygook." I thought, Is this me? Joy just radiated from me. I could feel it, and knew everyone that I came in contact with felt it.

Three nights before the close of the crusade, astonished at what I was seeing, I turned away and slowly left the room. I did not leave the church, however, but stood by the door feeling very alone. Oh God, I thought, is this Your way? Do You really want people to worship like this? I waited for things to quiet down and could see the reflection in the door. Suddenly a beautiful voice sang, "He touched me," and suddenly I knew—although their ways were not my ways and my ways were not their ways—I had found something here, something real and warm and wonderful. I quickly left the church.

Something very strange happened the next evening. The lights were completely out in the church with the exception of those on the platform. People with different needs were praying, repeating after the evangelist. I followed the prayer of a single person, a career person and one with fears. We stood there silently a few moments. Suddenly I felt a strange crackling sensation inside my head and as though I received a blow on the left side of my head. I felt myself growing very faint, and suddenly I felt myself falling over to my right, the only direction I could safely fall, and crumpled right across the middle aisle. I lay there stunned, not knowing what had happened. All I could think of was, No one will see me

here, and they'll trip into me, and I sensed some walking around me. Suddenly strong hands pulled me up. I later asked the evangelist what happened, and said I was bound and determined nothing would happen to me. He said very gently, "You had nothing to do with it." The healing had started, but the real test for me came on the last night. For a whole week, every time they asked for testimonies of anything really special that happened because of the crusade, I wanted to get up and tell of God's love, but fear kept interfering and I could not. The minister said, "We have time for one more testimony." The moment of truth had arrived. I slowly and deliberately stood up and said I wanted to say something from the platform and the microphone (no one else had). Then I slowly and deliberately made my way up and spoke for five minutes, telling of God's great love to me and the ability of extending it to others, and of the great joy that had come into my heart. I received a tremendous ovation. I waited, and then said, "Now I know that with God all things are possible," and very slowly and deliberately made my way back to my seat, with no trembling. If you only knew how I've been plagued nearly all my life with my abnormal fear of speaking in public! I could scarcely even give my name at times. I had many people come up to me later and say they enjoyed my testimony, including a former Lutheran.

Although my state of euphoria has since diminished, I am still very happy and still bursting with joy at times, and just maybe you can see why I want to go around shouting, It's working! My job is going especially well, and I have a very difficult job. I really am reaching out to people in a way I never did before. I would come to Australia, I think, and speak from your microphone of God's great love and what Jesus means to me. The next time I hear you speak of those "charismatics," I will just smile. Don't worry, I haven't gone into speaking in tongues and shouting Hallelujah, praise God; but I am inwardly singing, Thank God for Jesus.

I am *so* happy. None of my present

circumstances have changed, but I have changed toward my circumstances, and that is important. You recognize the Spirit-filled life, yet you condemn receiving that if it has anything to do with charismatics. Are you going to tell me, "Well, there goes another one"? I don't understand you.

Mary Ann Buchanan
Colorado

**We have read your letter with interest, but it really illustrates what we have been saying all along. You describe an experience; I am not against an experience as such — even float up to high heaven, and we are not against that — or dance in the Spirit too, for that matter. We are not against good Christian enthusiasm. You can wave your hands around and do anything you like. The point we want to make is that your spiritual euphoria did not come to you through a revelation of the Word of God to your mind. If you had a high experience that came to you through the revelation of the Word of God and a revelation of the Person and work of Jesus Christ, then your letter would be full of your desire to share that revelation with us also.*

The only thing you speak about is your experience. We submit that one who has been touched by the revelation of divine love through the Word of God is anxious only to share that revelation of the Word and not to make prominent his experience.

Your whole experience is one of the mystic, but the mystic is always burdened to describe what he felt. One who is touched with the Spirit of God in the New Testament way is burdened only to open his mouth and declare the Word of God. In mysticism something is felt; in New Testament inspiration something is said.

Please ponder these things.—Ed.

The Dynamic, Ongoing Nature of Justification

Sir / Concerning your article on "The Dynamic, Ongoing Nature of Justification by Faith" in your June issue, I find great fault. Your true colors are now finally revealing themselves. Your great fault is that you, like the Corinthians, are carnal. "I'm of Paul," "I'm of Apollos," "I'm of Christ," "I'm of Luther," "I'm of Calvin," "I'm of Spurgeon," etc. Why don't you just read the whole New Testament and find out what it says and not what man says. Please discontinue all correspondence immediately. I don't have the time to read such poor exegesis.

Mark S. Hodges, Pastor
Illinois

Sir / A hasty reading of Romans 8:30 sometimes leads people to regard justification as something that occurs once and then is to be forgotten. Such hasty readers assume that the text of the golden chain of salvation reads, "Those whom God did foreknow, He also did predestinate; whom He did predestinate, them He also called; whom He called, them He also justified; whom He justified, them He also sanctified; whom He sanctified, them He also glorified." But this is not the accurate reading. Rather, it declares that "whom He called, them He also justified, whom He justified, them He also glorified." This makes justification reach all the way from calling, or conversion, to glorification—that is, it covers the life of the believer. Daily I need forgiveness, justification, for a right standing before God.

Sanctification is not mentioned in Romans 8:30 because it has just been mentioned in the previous verse. There we are told that those whom God foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son. Thus justification and sanctification are contemporaneous. Daily—yes, and hourly—I need forgiveness, justification by the righteousness of Christ, that I may stand accepted by God. And daily I need the power of the Holy Spirit to live more in accord with the standing He has given me in Christ. This is confirmed in 1 Corinthians 1:30, where by God's act we are in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us from God wisdom, righteousness (justification), sanctification and final redemption.

Wm. Childs Robinson, Emeritus
Seminary Professor
Georgia

Evangelical Subjectivism

Sir / I have appreciated your comments on evangelical subjectivism. I do believe that many Christians have made their faith "I" oriented. Often salvation is based upon how much faith "I" can muster rather than on the finished work of Christ. However, I see a danger in only stressing doctrine and not my personal relationship with Christ. In the past this has led to dry formalism.

K. Duncan, Baptist Pastor
Canada

Sir / Ever since the first issue of *Present Truth* came to my home, I have enjoyed every issue, have filed each, and intend to refer to statements made relative to texts from which I shall be preaching in the future. Your clear exposition of the teaching of justification by faith clears the air of much subjectivism and "be good, do good" sermons that are

rife in our denomination. I only hope and pray that your influence will spread quickly before it is too late for many to lose their confusion and save their life in Christ alone.

Wilmer R. Witte, Christian
Reformed Pastor
Illinois

Four Great Certainties

Sir / I think your brochure, *Four Great Certainties*, is terrific. As one who enjoys sharing faith in Christ, I enjoy its straightforward, God-centered approach. It's nice to offer people something other than a "wonderful life"—which is what Buddha and other satanic cults can offer as well.

James Stastny
California

Law and Gospel

Sir / Your magazine continues to be a great source of knowledge and inspiration. I have gained a new respect for God's law and His righteousness.

Ron Thompson
Louisiana

Filling a Need

Sir / Although I do not fully agree with many of the articles you publish, and this would be true of any publication, I must say in all fairness that I am enjoying each issue of *Present Truth* immensely and have not discarded a single issue since I began receiving the magazine several months ago. I constantly use them for reference. You are filling a need that is long overdue.

Eugene Holder, Pastor
Georgia

Unbiased

Sir / I appreciate your unbiased presentation, uncoated with denominational prejudices and true to the Word of God.

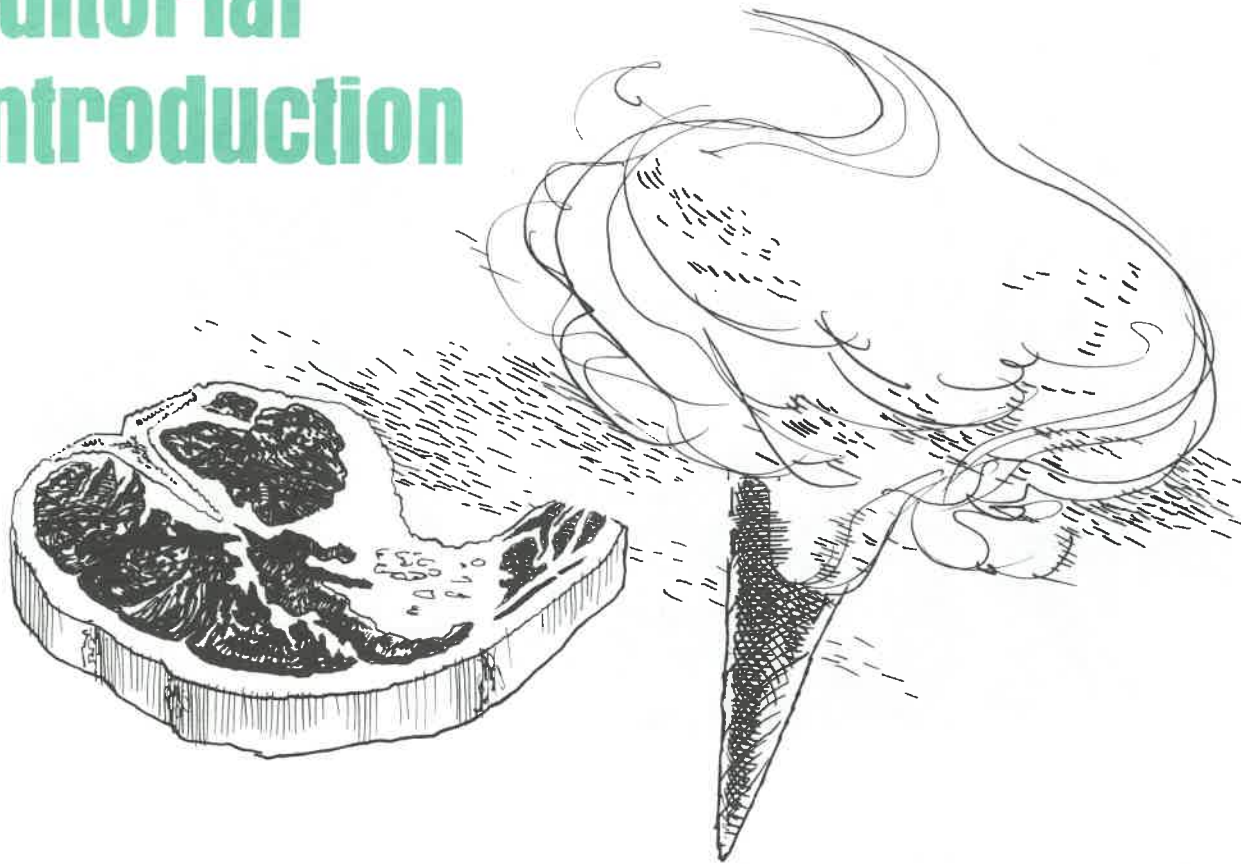
Pio R. Occeno, Baptist Pastor
Philippines

Finding Answers

Sir / I am young in Christ, and the Lord knows how I've cherished the guidance of your witness in finding answers to some of the basic questions that all young Christians have — i.e., subjectivism versus objectivism, the Pentecostal movement, and justification by faith, to name but a few. I thank God that He has given a witness in this modern world which takes a mature, careful, sincere approach to the Word.

Chuck Blakeman
Ohio

Editorial Introduction



Someone has well said that God's people have nothing to fear for the future except as they forget how God has led them in their past history. This was true in the case of ancient Israel. God wrought marvelously for their deliverance from Egypt. But they erred because "they remembered not. . . they soon forgot" (Ps. 106:7, 13, 21). We too need to remember what has happened and what has been given to us. The revival of the evangelical faith in the sixteenth century, and with it the birth of Protestantism, was a mighty deliverance for the church of God. We need to keep it in memory.

In this issue of *Present Truth* we have reproduced material from two great documents of the Reformation era—the Lutheran Formula of Concord and Calvin's *Institutes*. The subject matter is *the righteousness which is by faith*—the very heart of Reformation theology.

A number of our readers will be well acquainted with both articles. In such cases we trust that this issue of our magazine will serve as a convenient documentation of these great Reformation statements. But we also know that a vast number of people, even among preach-

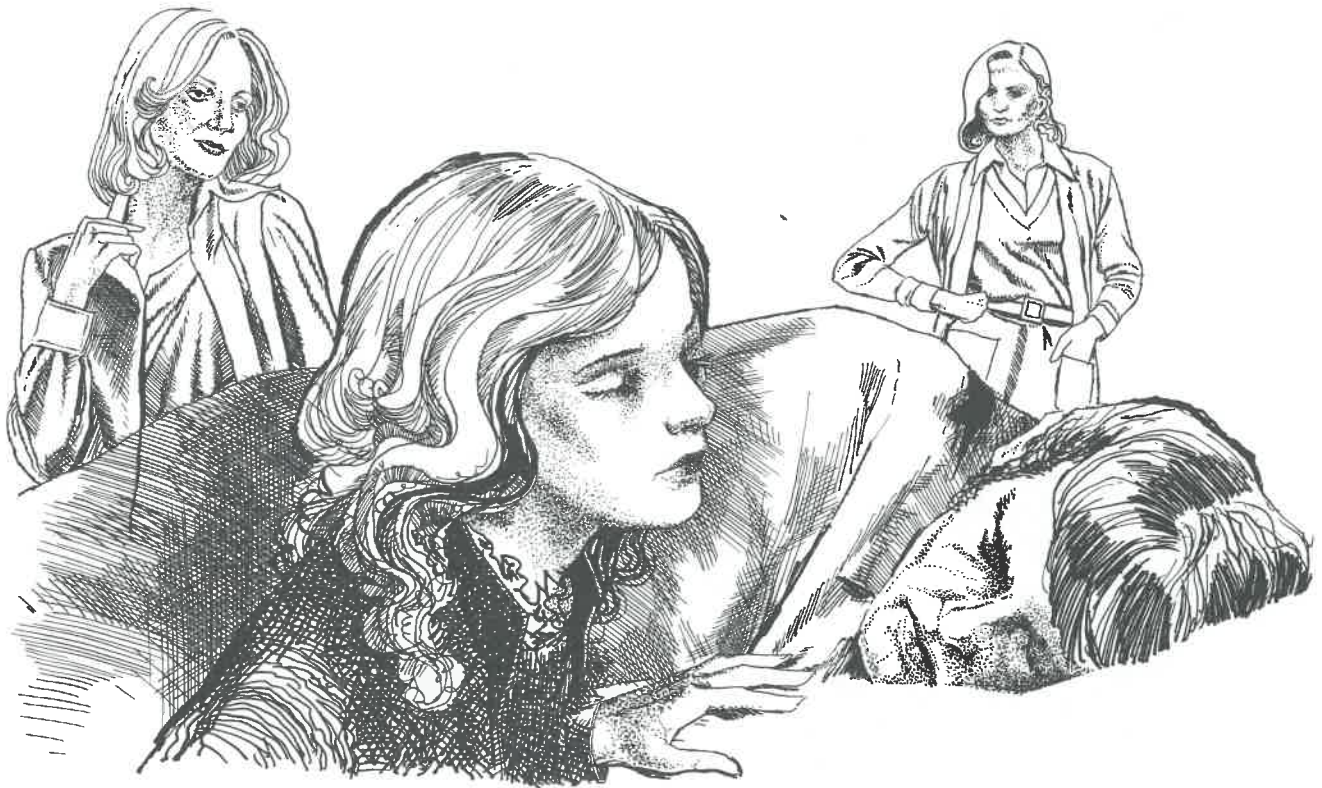
ers, are very poorly—if at all—versed in this literature. Far too many are taking it for granted that they know what the Reformation stood for, when in reality they are abysmally ignorant of the vital issues.

Persons accustomed to a diet of theological fairy floss¹ may break a couple of sets of dentures on this strong meat, but they will be well rewarded. Those who have written these great documents have done so only after taking pains to attain theological accuracy. The reader also needs to be reminded that "there are no gains without pains." And he may be surprised to see how some popular ideas among evangelical Christians of today are soundly refuted by our spiritual forefathers. (For example, the idea that *faith* is the *basis* of acceptance with God is soundly rejected by the Reformers.)

We do not subscribe, however, to the notion that theology has to be heavy to be good. So we have included a couple of lighter articles. The story of Ben Trying illustrates the true doctrine of righteousness by faith. We hope that our readers will enjoy it as much as we did. Perhaps ministers may see their own style of preaching reflected in this story.

R.D.B.

¹ Australian expression for cotton candy.



The Everlasting Gospel and Ben Trying

Bill Gravestock

This story is of one who realized his lost and hopeless condition. He knew that he was without God and without hope in the world. He knew that he needed help. As he reviewed his past life, there was nothing upon which he could have confidence—nothing upon which he could have assurance or boldness to know and be certain that his acceptance was sure.

His story begins and ends in Mercy Hospital—in the intensive care ward. The patient's name is Ben Trying. He'd been trying to be a Christian. He'd been trying to be good. He'd been trying to believe, to have faith, to break through—but it seemed useless, hopeless. And now he lay flat on his back with but a few brief hours to live. To him time was very precious. He knew that he was breathing on borrowed time. He had no one to help him prepare for eternity except his three religious sisters. Each were professed Christians. Each had come to comfort and console their dear brother in this tragic moment of crisis and grief. Maybe they could help him break through and believe before it was too late. Even

now they waited in the lobby of the intensive care ward to see their dying brother.

The nurse whispered to one of the sisters, Miss Nebulous N. Tangible. She quietly followed and was told that she had three minutes. As she sat by the bedside of her despairing dear brother and looked into his eyes, she knew that he was without God and without hope. He clutched her hand and moaned, "Please, sis, help me to break through. . . . I don't . . . have much time. . . . Help me to believe. . . . Please help me." How could he be helped? What could she say? She took a deep breath and began to speak. "Ben, Ben, listen to me. You must give your heart to Jesus, quickly." Ben stared at her in disbelief. He moved his hand over his heart and looked puzzled. "You must reach out your hand and take His, then invite Him into your heart. You must behold the Lamb and turn away from sin and surrender all." Ben's expression conveyed confusion, so she continued. "You must fall on the Rock. You must rely on His merits and repent of your

sins, then accept freely of His unconquerable robe of righteousness. This is your covering—your wedding garment. It is yours, Ben, when you repent and believe.” Beads of sweat rolled off his tired, worn face. His head lay back on the pillow as he stared hopelessly at the ceiling. A mournful sigh escaped his lips as he trembled in despair. The nurse came in and whispered, “Miss Nebulous, your time is up.”

The second sister, Miss Solid Ann Concrete, made her way into her brother’s room and sat at his bedside. Before she could say anything, Ben looked frantically at her and with great effort forced out these words: “Oh, sis, please help me. . . . Help me to believe. . . . I’m trying . . . to break through, . . . but I can’t. . . . I can’t.” She leaned over and looked into his face. It portrayed the anxiousness of his heart. She then took his trembling hand and said, “Ben, I can only tell you what the Bible says about the kind of people that will go to heaven. Their behavior will be in distinct contrast to that of the world. If you want to be there . . . well, it’s up to you. But in order for you to have hope and in order for you to be a Christian, you must first renounce your old life of sin—your life of wickedness and selfishness. Your social habits—your behavior and conversation—must be drastically changed. Everything you do has got to go. It’s evil. It’s no good. I have to tell you the truth. You must give up your gambling. Stop smoking. Stop drinking. Quit going to those terrible bars and nightclubs. Change your habit patterns. Don’t associate with your old friends. Make new ones. Lose all that weight. Quit being a glutton. Make your body a fit place for the Lord to dwell. Allow only good and uplifting and ennobling thoughts to enter your mind. Stop reading those vile magazines and dirty stories. Instead, read the Bible. Fill your mind with things that are pure and lovely. Dwell on things in heaven. Love the Lord and hate evil with perfect hatred and . . . and . . . Ben! . . . Ben! . . . Are you listening? . . . Ben? . . . Are you all right? Nurse! Nurse!” Ben gasped for breath. He choked and gagged. The nurse quickly took his pulse. “He’s . . . almost . . . gone. Could you wait outside, please?”

Moments later the nurse beckoned to the last sister. “Are you Ben’s other sister?” she asked. “Yes, I am.” “You don’t have much time.” The nurse paused, then added, “And neither does he.” “I understand, nurse. Thank you so very much.” Sitting beside her precious brother, Miss Faith N. Christ took his hand and prayed silently that her words would be a savor of life unto life to poor Ben, her wandering, lost baby brother. She looked into his eyes with hope and courage, and said, “Ben, are you ready to die?” “No . . . I’m not ready . . . sis, . . . but I’m trying to be ready. . . . I’m . . . trying to break through. . . . I’m trying to believe, . . . sis.” He wrung his hands, and he wept as he sighed and shook his head. “But it’s no use. . . . I just can’t believe. . . . I just

can’t break through. I’ve tried as hard as I can—but it’s no use . . . no use. . . .”

Faith leaned toward his ear as he lay there motionless. “My dear brother Ben, I understand your predicament. Would you just be still for a few minutes? Just be very quiet and listen. That’s all I ask for you to do—just *listen*.” As soon as he was calm, Faith began to speak. She did not urge him to try harder to believe, but instead she gave him the assurance of how God the Father had loved him in Jesus Christ. She began to tell him the good news—the glad tidings. “Ben,” she said, “while you were His enemy, the Father loved you and chose you to be with Him where He is. He spared not His only Son *for you*. All of heaven was emptied and went bankrupt for you. He’s given all of the accumulated and hoarded love and wealth of eternity in the gift of Jesus, His Son. You have been redeemed, forgiven and accepted *in Jesus*. Yes, God the Father has done all this for you by His grace, Ben. It is God’s riches, at Christ’s expense, by grace alone. The Father saves you by His grace.

“Two thousand years ago, when the fulness of the time had come, God the Son, your Saviour Jesus, left heaven because all of its stupendous glory was not a place to be desired while you were lost. He whom angels loved and worshiped stepped down from His exalted throne and position, and condescended to come to this dark planet earth. And at Heaven’s appointed hour He was born in a lowly stable for you, Ben. He grew up, lived, and suffered shame and humiliation as the rejected One in order that you might be the accepted one. For your sake He became poor that through His poverty you might be rich. He was treated the way you deserve that you might be treated the way He deserves. He wore the crown of thorns that you might wear the crown of life. The vinegar and gall were His that the honey and sweet might be yours. He paid the price that you might enjoy the inheritance. And by His crucifixion and death He has taken your sins and put them in the tomb, burying the old life of failure forever. He’s destroyed death, defeated the devil in your behalf, shut the gates of hell, and opened paradise. We’re saved by His work and not our own. He rose again the third day, and by the power of His resurrection and ascension, He’s taken that perfect, flawless Life and Righteousness to the throne of God. The Father has received Him back—honored, embraced and accepted Him as our Representative, as our Substitute in the place of our failure. And Ben, when the Father received, honored, embraced and accepted Jesus back, it was the same as if *you* were received, honored, embraced and accepted, because your humanity was constituted in Him. Faith says, ‘Mine are Christ’s living, doing, and speaking, His suffering and dying; mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, and suffered, and died as He did.’ All things necessary for your salvation have been

done, Ben, through the doing and dying of Jesus. The warfare has been fought—the victory is accomplished. God the Son has reconciled you to the Father. By His death on the cross you are pardoned. By His resurrection and life you are promoted. It is by Christ alone. The Son saves you by His life and death.

“And that’s not all, my precious brother. Even now, God the Holy Spirit is present to give you faith through the hearing of the gospel. It is His work to convict us of sin, righteousness and judgment. It is His work to create faith in our hearts as the gospel is heard. He too loves you and will comfort you. He will illuminate your mind, show you the cross, draw you to Christ, and give you the blessed hope and joy of acceptance in loving fellowship with the Father and with the Son. He causes us to see the goodness of the Father in giving His Son, which leads us to repentance and gives us rich faith in His unspeakable love and mercy. Because only *by love* is love awakened.

“God the Father loves you and saves you by His grace in giving you His only Son. God the Son loves you and saves you by giving you His life, His death—His doing, His dying. God the Holy Spirit loves you and saves you by giving you faith to accept your acceptance and to believe on the name of the Son of God so that you may know, Ben, that you have eternal life, ‘and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life.’ ”

Ben’s ear had heard the everlasting gospel. Faith was kindled in his heart. He saw through the illumination of the Holy Spirit that he was accepted because Jesus was acceptable. He saw that he was pleasing in God’s sight because Jesus was altogether pleasing. (“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”) He grasped the simple truth that Jesus was His personal Representative and Substitute Righteousness at the Father’s right hand. He realized now that the question was not, “Will God accept me?” but in the light of the gospel, “Will I accept the fact that I’ve been accepted?” He comprehended the amazing discovery that the very fact he was a sinner entitled him to come to Jesus. There was no question now. There were no doubts. The Holy Spirit illuminated his mind, and little by little the chain of evidence was joined together. In Jesus—bruised, mocked, and hanging upon the cross—he saw the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. Hope flooded his soul. Now he knew and had the assurance and confidence and boldness that Jesus’ life was *his life*. He knew now that his acceptance was sure because he was accepted *in the Beloved*. Gratitude swelled in his heart for Jesus. Tears rolled down his cheeks. Joy filled his soul. Melted and subdued, a smile broke upon his face as he said, “I see it. . . . I see . . . that . . . it . . . was . . . for me. I accept it. I believe.”

That was Ben’s last message of mercy. He never lived another day. That night Ben passed away. Faith in Christ through the everlasting gospel was his only hope.

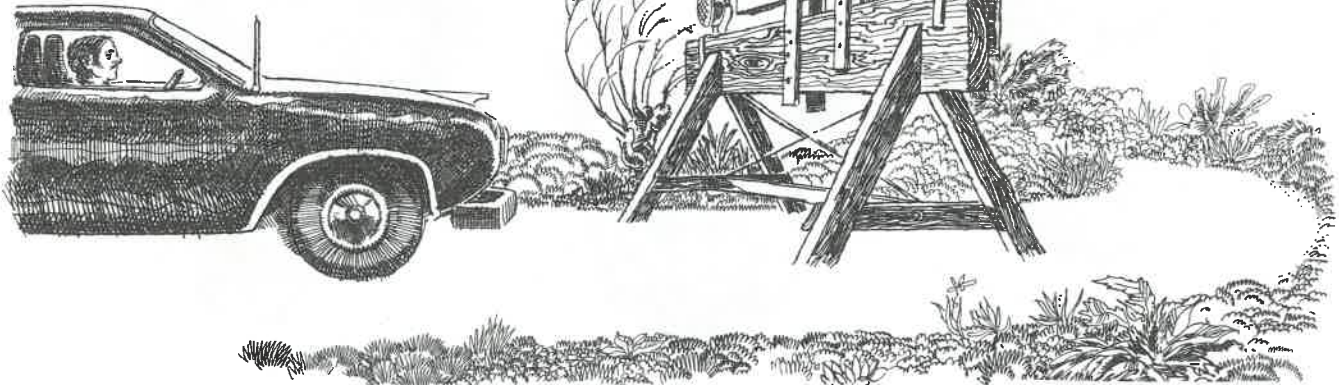
My Life

When I contemplate this Life of mine—
This one faultless Life, the Man divine
Who lived in my stead—by faith I see
This Life has fulfilled the law for me.
This history—pure, without a spot—
Was wrought out for me, oh blessed thought!
And when on the cross my Saviour died,
In Him sinful flesh was crucified.
In Him guilt was buried, put away.
In Him I was raised one glorious day.
In Him I sat down at God’s right hand.
Now perfect and pure *in Christ* I stand.
Now all things are ready—“It is done.”
I come to the marriage through the Son—
Come boldly without the fear of shame,
For I may draw near in Jesus’ name.
His righteousness meets the law’s demands.
My Saviour holds out His wounded hands.
Though I may be wretched, poor, and blind,
In Christ not a stain the law can find;
So I need not fear how God views me,
For Christ’s life is all that He can see.
Christ’s birth, life, and death stand in my place.
I witness in awe such boundless grace.
Above human thought, my Father’s plan
That He should accept me in this Man.
My Substitute, Surety, Lord is He;
Amazing His love beyond degree!



Justification by Faith— Out of Date?

Benjamin B. Warfield



Sometimes we are told that Justification by Faith is "out of date." That would be a pity, if it were true. What it would mean would be that the way of salvation was closed and "no thoroughfare" nailed up over the barriers. There is no justification for sinful men except by faith. The works of a sinful man will, of course, be as sinful as he is, and nothing but condemnation can be built on them. Where can he get works upon which he can found his hope of justification, except from Another? His hope of *Justification*, remember—that is, of being pronounced righteous by God. Can God pronounce him righteous except on the ground of works that are righteous? Where can a sinful man get works that are righteous? Surely, not from himself; for, is he not a sinner, and all his works as sinful as he is? He must go out of himself, then, to find works which he can offer to God as righteous. And where will he find such works except in Christ? Or how will he make them his own except by faith in Christ?

Justification by Faith, we see, is not to be set in contradiction to justification by Works. It is set in contradiction only to justification by our Own Works. It is justification by Christ's Works. The whole question, accordingly, is whether we can hope to be received into God's favor on the ground of what we do ourselves, or only on the ground of what Christ does for us. If we expect to be received on the ground of what we do ourselves—that is what is called Justification by Works. If on the ground of what Christ has done for us—that is what is meant by Justification by Faith. Justification by Faith means, that is to say, that we look to Christ and to him alone for salvation, and come to God pleading Christ's death and righteousness as the

ground of our hope to be received into his favor. If Justification by Faith is out of date, that means, then, that salvation by Christ is out of date. There is nothing, in that case, left to us but that each man must just do the best he can to save himself.

Justification by Faith does not mean, then, salvation by believing things instead of doing right. It means pleading the merits of Christ before the throne of grace instead of our own merits. It may be doing right to believe things, and doing right is certainly right. The trouble with pleading our own merits before God is not that merits of our own would not be acceptable to God. The trouble is that we haven't any merits of our own to plead before God. Adam, before his fall, had merits of his own, and because he had merits of his own he was, in his own person, acceptable to God. He didn't need Another to stand between him and God, whose merits he could plead. And, therefore, there was no talk of his being Justified by Faith. But we are not like Adam before the fall; we are sinners and have no merits of our own. If we are to be justified at all, it must be on the ground of the merits of Another, whose merits can be made ours by faith. And that is the reason why God sent His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. If we do not believe in him, obviously we must perish. But if we believe in him, we shall not perish but have everlasting life. That is Justification by Faith. Justification by Faith is nothing other than obtaining everlasting life by believing in Christ. If Justification by Faith is out of date, then is salvation through Christ out of date. And as there is none other name under heaven, given among men, wherein we must be saved, if salvation through Christ is out of date then is salvation itself out of date. Surely, in a world of sinful men, needing salvation, this would be a great pity.



Mr. Legalist

Performance

“Do like Jesus”—my Example.

External works

Mr. Higher Experience

Radiance

“Be like Jesus”—my motto.

Internal holiness

Mr. Faithful

Mercy

“Behold Christ Jesus”—my Substitute.

Contemplation of Jesus’ works and His holiness

Chart by Bill Gravestock

What is the motivational key text?

"... the doers of the law shall be justified." Rom. 2:13.

I must do as He did.

"... be not drunk with wine, ... but be filled with the Spirit. ..." Eph. 5:18.

I must be filled with the Spirit as He was filled.

"... [Christ] loved me, and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

"... He was wounded for [my] transgressions, He was bruised for [my] iniquities: ... with His stripes [I am] healed." Is. 53:5.

Where is the focus of attention directed?

On outward standards, performance, deeds, behavior patterns.

On inward impressions, emotions, feelings, and flights of ecstasy.

On blessing others for whom Christ died.

Does it matter *how* we press on the upward way? Does it make a difference which pair of glasses we wear (legalism, mysticism, or gospel glasses)? Does our concept bring us into bondage, or does it make us free?

A prisoner of self because of always toiling under the burden of fulfilling the law for his acceptance.

A prisoner of himself because unless he bubbles, radiates, glows, and has a high and mighty experience, he must doubt whether he is born again.

Free to serve others and love Jesus even though he daily mourns that he falls so far short of what is expected of him. Also free to be himself and never afraid to confess the very worst thing about himself.

How will our "gospel" cause us to regard our brethren?

"... I thank Thee, that I am not as other men. ..." Luke 18:11.

"... that no one of you be puffed up for one against another." 1 Cor. 4:6 (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12).

Acceptance and fellowship are based on, rooted and grounded in Christ's performance and experience of doing and dying—His life and death.

Superior

Others inferior

Others precious

No hope

False hope

Blessed hope

The religion that comes from God is the only religion that will lead to God.

Of the Righteousness of Faith Before God

Editorial Note

The following article is taken from the Lutheran Book of Concord, first published in 1580. Three years earlier the leading theologians of Lutheranism drew up the Formula of Concord to settle and clarify a number of controverted points that had arisen after the death of Luther. At the heart of the discussions was the central issue of the Reformation—righteousness by faith.

This statement on righteousness by faith is one of the great classics in the history of the Christian church. We would like to draw attention to a number of very significant points made in the presentation—namely:

- 1. Faith is never the ground of our acceptance with God. The ground of justification and salvation is obedience, or righteousness.*
- 2. We must not transfer the honor and glory of our justification before God from the obedience of Jesus Christ to our experience of rebirth.*
- 3. Renewal, sanctification, or in modern parlance, the Spirit-filled life, is no part of our righteousness before God.*
- 4. The indwelling of Christ in the heart is not the righteousness of faith.*
- 5. Faith cannot rest on our contrition, renewal, sanctification, or any experience within the believer. It must always rest on something outside the believer—the complete satisfaction that Christ gave to the divine law on our behalf.*
- 6. Neither faith nor salvation can exist where there is any wicked intention to sin.*

To our readers who are unfamiliar with this statement on righteousness by faith, we earnestly commend this Christian classic to your thoughtful attention. To those who may feel flattered by our commendation of their own special heritage, we would say, "Unto whom much has been given, much shall be required."

The third controversy which has arisen among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession is concerning the righteousness of Christ or of faith, which God imputes by grace, through faith, to poor sinners for righteousness.

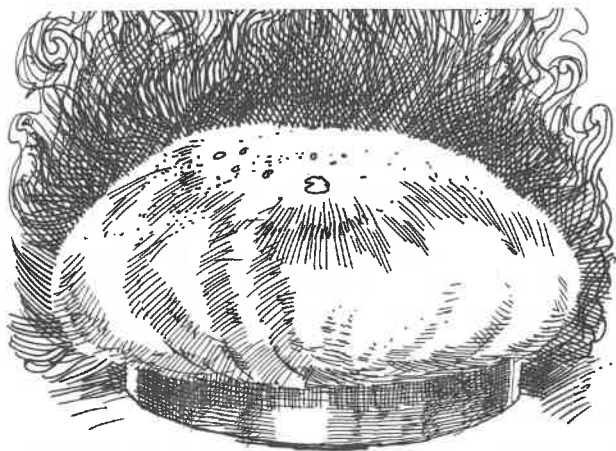
For one side has contended that the righteousness of faith, which the apostle calls the righteousness of God, is God's essential righteousness, which is Christ Himself as the true, natural, and essential Son of God, who dwells in the elect by faith and impels them to do right, and thus is their righteousness, compared with which righteousness the sins of all men are as a drop of water compared with the great ocean.

Over against this, others have held and taught that Christ is our righteousness according to His human nature alone.

In opposition to both these parties it has been unanimously taught by the other teachers of the Augsburg Confession that Christ is our righteousness not according to His divine nature alone, nor according to His human nature alone, but according to both natures; for He has redeemed, justified, and saved us from our sins as God and man, through His complete obedience; that therefore the righteousness of faith is the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and our adoption as God's children only on account of the obedience of Christ, which through faith alone, out of pure grace, is imputed for righteousness to all true believers, and on account of it they are absolved from all their unrighteousness.

Besides this [controversy] there have been still other disputes caused and excited on account of the Interim [on occasion of the formula of the Interim or of Interreligion], and otherwise, concerning the article of justification, which will hereafter be explained *in antithesi*, that is, in the enumeration of those errors which are contrary to the pure doctrine in this article.

This article concerning justification by faith (as the *Apology* says) is the chief article in the entire Christian doctrine, without which no poor conscience can have any firm consolation, or can truly know the riches of



the grace of Christ, as Dr. Luther also has written: *If this only article remains pure on the battlefield, the Christian Church also remains pure, and in goodly harmony and without any sects; but if it does not remain pure, it is not possible that any error or fanatical spirit can be resisted.* (Tom. 5, Jena, p. 159.) And concerning this article especially Paul says that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.* Therefore, in this article he urges with so much zeal and earnestness the *particulas exclusivas*, that is, the words whereby the works of men are excluded (namely, *without Law, without works, by grace [freely]*, Rom. 3,28; 4, 5; Eph. 2, 8. 9), in order to indicate how highly necessary it is that in this article, aside from [the presentation of] the pure doctrine, the antithesis, that is, all contrary dogmas, be stated separately, exposed, and rejected by this means.

Therefore, in order to explain this controversy in a Christian way by means of God's Word, and, by His grace, to settle it, our doctrine, faith, and confession are as follows:

Concerning the righteousness of faith before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above, that poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness.

These treasures are offered us by the Holy Ghost in the promise of the holy Gospel; and faith alone is the only means by which we lay hold upon, accept, and apply, and appropriate them to ourselves. This faith is a gift of God, by which we truly learn to know Christ, our Redeemer, in the Word of the Gospel, and trust in Him, that for the sake of His obedience alone we have

the forgiveness of sins by grace, are regarded as godly and righteous by God the Father, and are eternally saved. Therefore it is considered and understood to be the same thing when Paul says that we are *justified by faith*, Rom. 3, 28, or that *faith is counted to us for righteousness*, Rom. 4, 5, and when he says that we are *made righteous by the obedience of One*, Rom. 5, 19, or that *by the righteousness of One justification of faith came to all men*, Rom. 5, 18. For faith justifies,

not for this cause and reason that it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel; for this must be applied and appropriated to us by faith, if we are to be justified thereby. Therefore the righteousness which is imputed to faith or to the believer out of pure grace is the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, since He has made satisfaction for us to the Law, and paid for [expiated] our sins. For since Christ is not man alone, but God and man in one undivided person, He was as little subject to the Law, because He is the Lord of the Law, as He had to suffer and die as far as His person is concerned. For this reason, then, His obedience, not only in suffering and dying, but also in this, that He in our stead was voluntarily made under the Law, and fulfilled it by this obedience, is imputed to us for righteousness, so that, on account of this complete obedience, which He rendered His heavenly Father for us, by doing and suffering, in living and dying, God forgives our sins, regards us as godly and righteous, and eternally saves us. This righteousness is offered us by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel and in the Sacraments, and is applied, appropriated, and received through faith, whence believers have reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, sonship, and heirship of eternal life.

Accordingly, the word *justify* here means to declare righteous and free from sins, and to absolve one from eternal punishment for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is imputed by God to faith, Phil. 3, 9. For this use and understanding of this word is common in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. Prov. 17, 15: *He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.* Is. 5, 23: *Woe unto them which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!* Rom. 8, 33: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, that is, absolves from sins and acquits.*

However, since the word *regeneratio*, regeneration, is sometimes employed for the word *iustificatio*, justification, it is necessary that this word be properly explained, in order that the renewal which follows justification of faith may not be confounded with the justification of faith, but that they may be properly distinguished from one another.

For, in the first place, the word *regeneratio*, that is, regeneration, is used so as to comprise at the same time the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake alone, and the succeeding renewal which the Holy Ghost works in those who are justified by faith. Then, again, it is [sometimes] used *pro remissione peccatorum et adoptione in filios Dei*, that is, so as to mean only the remission of sins, and that we are adopted as sons of God. And in this latter sense the word is much and often used in the *Apology*, where it is written: *Iustificatio est regeneratio*, that is, Justification before God is regeneration. St. Paul, too, has employed these words as distinct from one another, Titus 3, 5: *He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost*. As also the word *vivificatio*, that is, *making alive*, has sometimes been used in a like sense. For when man is justified through faith (which the Holy Ghost alone works), this is truly a regeneration, because from a child of wrath he becomes a child of God, and thus is transferred from death to life, as it is written: *When we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ*, Eph. 2, 5. Likewise: *The just shall live by faith*, Rom. 1, 17; Hab. 2, 4. In this sense the word is much and often used in the *Apology*.

But again, it is often taken also for sanctification and renewal, which succeeds the righteousness of faith, as Dr. Luther has thus used it in his book concerning the Church and the Councils, and elsewhere.

But when we teach that through the operation of the Holy Ghost we are born anew and justified, the sense is not that after regeneration no unrighteousness clings any more to the justified and regenerate in their being and life, but that Christ covers all their sins which nevertheless in this life still inhere in nature with His complete obedience (which Christ rendered the Father for us from His birth to His most ignominious death upon the cross), although, on account of their corrupt nature, they still are and remain sinners to the grave [while they bear about this mortal body]. Nor, on the other hand, is this the meaning, that without repentance, conversion, and renewal we might or should yield to sins, and remain and continue in them.

For true [and not feigned] contrition must precede; and to those who, in the manner stated, out of pure grace, for the sake of the only Mediator, Christ, without any works and merit, are righteous before God, that is, are received into grace, the Holy Ghost is also given, who renews and sanctifies them, and works in them love to God and to their neighbor. But since the incipient renewal is imperfect in this life, and sin still dwells in the flesh, even in the regenerate, the righteousness of faith before God consists in the gracious imputation of the righteousness of Christ without the addition of our works, so that our sins are forgiven us and covered, and are not imputed, Rom. 4, 6 ff.

But here very good attention must be given with

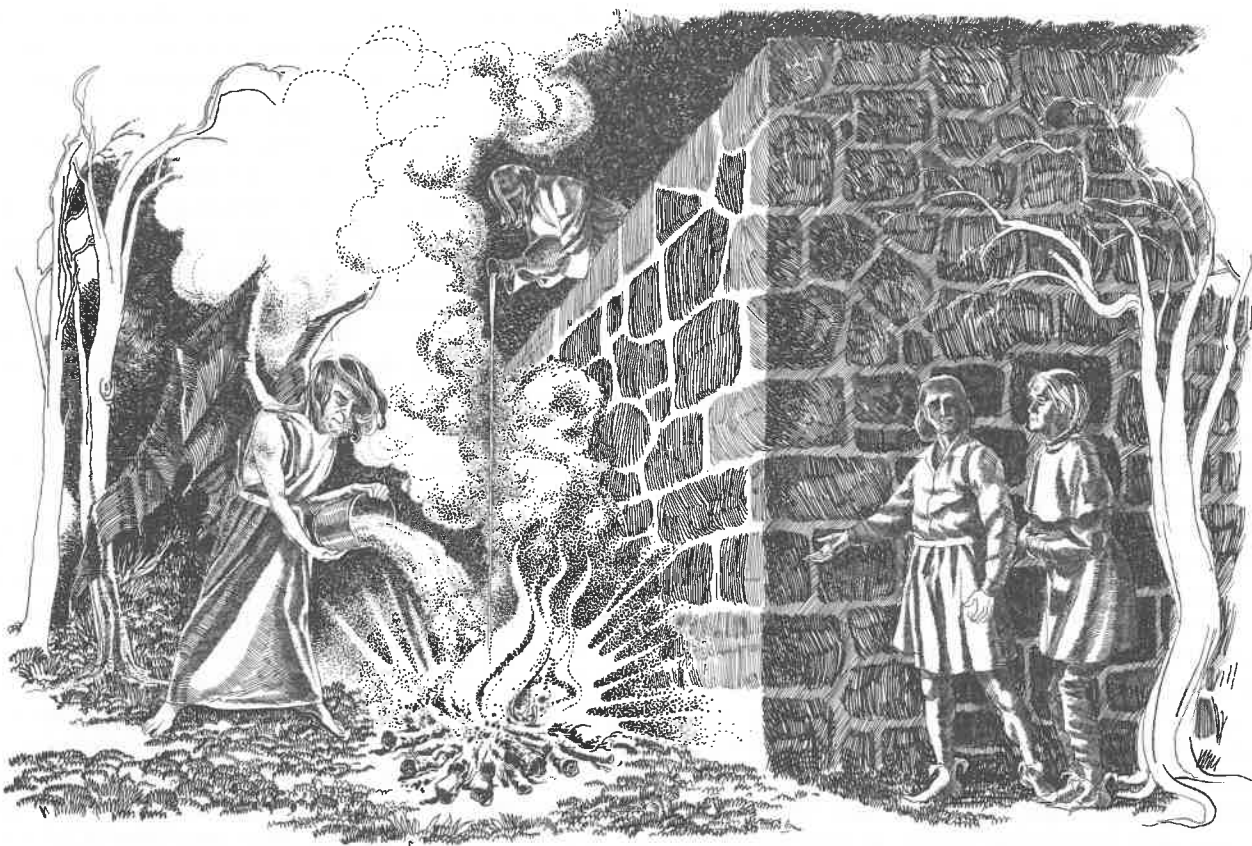
especial diligence, if the article of justification is to remain pure, lest that which precedes faith, and that which follows after it, be mingled together or inserted into the article of justification as necessary and belonging to it, because it is not one or the same thing to speak of conversion and of justification.

For not everything that belongs to conversion belongs likewise to the article of justification, in and to which belong and are necessary only the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and faith, which receives this in the promise of the Gospel, whereby the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, whence we receive and have forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, sonship, and heirship of eternal life.

Therefore true, saving faith is not in those who are without contrition and sorrow, and have a wicked purpose to remain and persevere in sins; but true contrition precedes, and genuine faith is in or with true repentance [justifying faith is in those who repent truly, not feignedly].

Love is also a fruit which surely and necessarily follows true faith. For the fact that one does not love is a sure indication that he is not justified, but is still in death, or has lost the righteousness of faith again, as John says, 1 John 3, 14. But when Paul says, Rom. 3, 28: *We are justified by faith without works*, he indicates thereby that neither the contrition that precedes, nor the works that follow, belong in the article or transaction of justification by faith. For good works do not precede justification, but follow it, and the person must first be justified before he can do good works.

In like manner also renewal and sanctification, although it is also a benefit of the Mediator, Christ, and a work of the Holy Ghost, does not belong in the article or affair of justification before God, but follows the same, since, on account of our corrupt flesh, it is not entirely perfect and complete in this life, as Dr. Luther writes well concerning this in his beautiful and large exposition of the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he says as follows: *We concede indeed that instruction should be given also concerning love and good works, yet in such a way that this be done when and where it is necessary, namely, when otherwise and outside of this matter of justification we have to do with works. But here the chief matter dealt with is the question, not whether we should also do good works and exercise love, but by what means we can be justified before God, and saved. And here we answer thus with St. Paul: that we are justified by faith in Christ alone, and not by the deeds of the Law or by love. Not that we hereby entirely reject works and love, as the adversaries falsely slander and accuse us, but that we do not allow ourselves to be led away, as Satan desires, from the chief matter with which we have to do here to another and foreign affair which does not at all belong to this matter. Therefore, whereas, and as long as we are*



The maintenance of the fire of Grace in the soul, from *Pilgrim's Progress*.

occupied with this article of justification, we reject and condemn works, since this article is so constituted that it can admit of no disputation or treatment whatever regarding works; therefore in this matter we cut short all Law and works of the Law. So far Luther.

In order, therefore, that troubled hearts may have a firm, sure consolation, also, that due honor be given to the merit of Christ and the grace of God, the Scriptures teach that the righteousness of faith before God consists alone in the gracious [gratuitous] reconciliation or the forgiveness of sins, which is presented to us out of pure grace, for the sake of the only merit of the Mediator, Christ, and is received through faith alone in the promise of the Gospel. In like manner, too, in justification before God faith relies neither upon contrition nor upon love or other virtues, but upon Christ alone, and in Him upon His complete obedience by which He has fulfilled the Law for us, which [obedience] is imputed to believers for righteousness.

Moreover, neither contrition nor love or any other virtue, but faith alone is the sole means and instrument by which and through which we can receive and accept the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and the forgiveness of sins, which are offered us in the promise of the Gospel.

It is also correctly said that believers who in Christ through faith have been justified, have in this life first

the imputed righteousness of faith, and then also the incipient righteousness of the new obedience or of good works. But these two must not be mingled with one another or be both injected at the same time into the article of justification by faith before God. For since this incipient righteousness or renewal in us is incomplete and impure in this life because of the flesh, the person cannot stand with and by it [on the ground of this righteousness] before God's tribunal, but before God's tribunal only the righteousness of the obedience, suffering, and death of Christ, which is imputed to faith, can stand, so that only for the sake of this obedience is the person (even after his renewal, when he has already many good works and lives the best [upright and blameless] life) pleasing and acceptable to God, and is received into adoption and heirship of eternal life.

Here belongs also what St. Paul writes Rom. 4, 3, that Abraham was justified before God by faith alone, for the sake of the Mediator, without the cooperation of his works, not only when he was first converted from idolatry and had no good works, but also afterwards, when he had been renewed by the Holy Ghost, and adorned with many excellent good works, Gen. 15, 6; Heb. 11, 8. And Paul puts the following question, Rom. 4, 1 ff.: On what did Abraham's righteousness before God for everlasting life, by which he had a gracious

God, and was pleasing and acceptable to Him, rest at that time?

This he answers: *To him who worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness; as David also, Ps. 32, 1, speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works.* Hence, even though the converted and believing [in Christ] have incipient renewal, sanctification, love, virtue, and good works, yet these neither can nor should be drawn into, or mingled with, the article of justification before God, in order that the honor due Him may remain with Christ the Redeemer, and tempted consciences may have a sure consolation, since our new obedience is incomplete and impure.

And this is the meaning of the Apostle Paul when in this article he urges so diligently and zealously the *particulas exclusivas*, that is, the words by which works are excluded from the article of justification: *absque operibus, sine lege, gratis, non ex operibus*, that is, *by grace, without merit, without works, not of works.* These *exclusivae* are all comprised in the expression: *By faith alone in Christ we are justified before God and saved.* For thereby works are excluded, not in the sense that a true faith can exist without contrition, or that good works should, must, and dare not follow true faith as sure and indubitable fruits, or that believers dare not nor must do anything good: but good works are excluded from the article of justification before God, so that they must not be drawn into, woven into, or mingled with the transaction of the justification of the poor sinner before God as necessary or belonging thereto. And the true sense of the *particulae exclusivae in articulo iustificationis*, that is, of the aforementioned terms, in the article of justification, consists in the following, and they should also be urged in this article with all diligence and earnestness [on account of these reasons]:

1. That thereby [through these particles] all our own works, merit, worthiness, glory, and confidence in all our works are entirely excluded in the article of justification so that our works shall not be constituted or regarded as either the cause or the merit of justification, neither entirely, nor half, nor in the least part, upon which God could or ought to look, or we to rely in this article and action.

2. That this remain the office and property of faith alone, that it alone, and nothing else whatever, is the means or instrument by and through which God's grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel are received, apprehended, accepted, applied to us, and appropriated; and that from this office and property of such application or appropriation love and all other virtues or works are excluded.

3. That neither renewal, sanctification, virtues nor good works are *tamquam forma aut pars aut causa*

iustificationis, that is, our righteousness before God, nor are they to be constituted and set up as a part or cause of our righteousness, or otherwise under any pretext, title, or name whatever to be mingled in the article of justification as necessary and belonging thereto; but that the righteousness of faith consists alone in the forgiveness of sins out of pure grace, for the sake of Christ's merit alone; which blessings are offered us in the promise of the Gospel, and are received, accepted, applied, and appropriated by faith alone.

In the same manner the order also between faith and good works must abide and be maintained, and likewise between justification and renewal, or sanctification.

For good works do not precede faith, neither does sanctification precede justification. But first faith is kindled in us in conversion by the Holy Ghost from the hearing of the Gospel. This lays hold of God's grace in Christ, by which the person is justified. Then, when the person is justified, he is also renewed and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, from which renewal and sanctification the fruits of good works then follow. *Et haec non ita divelluntur, quasi vera fides aliquando et aliquamdiu stare possit cum malo proposito, sed ordine causarum et effectuum, antecedentium et consequentium, ita distribuuntur. Manet enim, quod Lutherus recte dicit: Bene conveniunt et sunt connexa inseparabiliter fides et opera; sed sola fides est, quae apprehendit benedictionem sine operibus, et tamen nunquam est sola.* That is: This should not be understood as though justification and renewal were sundered from one another in such a manner that a genuine faith sometimes could exist and continue for a time together with a wicked intention, but hereby only the order [of causes and effects, of antecedents and consequents] is indicated, how one precedes or succeeds the other. For what Luther has correctly said remains true nevertheless: *Faith and good works well agree and fit together [are inseparably connected]; but it is faith alone, without works, which lays hold of the blessing; and yet it is never and at no time alone.* This has been set forth above.

Many disputations also are usefully and well explained by means of this true distinction, of which the *Apology* treats in reference to the passage James 2, 20. For when we speak of faith, how it justifies, the doctrine of St. Paul is that faith alone, without works, justifies, Rom. 3, 28, inasmuch as it applies and appropriates to us the merit of Christ, as has been said. But if the question is, wherein and whereby a Christian can perceive and distinguish, either in himself or in others, a true living faith from a feigned and dead faith, (since many idle, secure Christians imagine for themselves a delusion in place of faith, while they nevertheless have no true faith,) the *Apology* gives this answer: *James calls that dead faith where good works and fruits of the Spirit of every kind do not follow.* And to this effect



The death of Faithful, from *Pilgrim's Progress*.

the Latin edition of the *Apology* says: *Iacobus recte negat, nos tali fide iustificari, quae est sine operibus, hoc est, quae mortua est.* That is: St. James teaches correctly when he denies that we are justified by such a faith as is without works, which is dead faith.

But James speaks, as the *Apology* says, concerning the works of those who have already been justified through Christ, reconciled with God, and obtained forgiveness of sins through Christ. But if the question is, whereby and whence faith has this, and what appertains to this that it justifies and saves, it is false and incorrect to say: *Fidem non posse iustificare sine operibus; vel fidem, quatenus caritatem, qua formatur, coniunctam habet, iustificare; vel fidei, ut iustificet, necessariam esse praesentiam bonorum operum; vel bona opera esse causam sine qua non, quae per particulas exclusivas ex articulo iustificationis non exclu-*

dantur. That is: That faith cannot justify without works; or that faith justifies or makes righteous, inasmuch as it has love with it, for the sake of which love this is ascribed to faith [it has love with it, by which it is formed]; or that the presence of works with faith is necessary if otherwise man is to be justified thereby before God; or that the presence of good works in the article of justification, or for justification, is needful, so that good works are a cause without which man cannot be justified, and that they are not excluded from the article of justification by the *particulae exclusivae: absque operibus* etc., that is, when St. Paul says: *without works.* For faith makes righteous only inasmuch as and because, as a means and instrument, it lays hold of, and accepts, the grace of God and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel.

Let this suffice, according to the plan of this document, as a summary explanation of the doctrine of justification by faith, which is treated more at length in the above-mentioned writings. From these, the antithesis also, that is, the false contrary dogmas, are manifest, namely, that in addition to the errors recounted above also the following and similar ones, which conflict with the explanation now published, must be censured, exposed, and rejected, as when it is taught:

1. That our love or good works are a merit or cause of justification before God, either entirely or at least in part.
2. Or that by good works man must render himself worthy and fit that the merit of Christ may be imparted to him.
3. *Vel formalem nostram iustitiam coram Deo esse inhaerentem nostram novitatem seu caritatem;* that is, that our real righteousness before God is the love or renewal which the Holy Ghost works in us, and which is in us.
4. Or that two things or parts belong to the righteousness of faith before God in which it consists, namely, the gracious forgiveness of sins, and then, secondly, also renewal or sanctification.
5. *Item, fidem iustificare tantum initialiter, vel partialiter, vel principaliter; et novitatem vel caritatem nostram iustificare etiam coram Deo vel complete, vel minus principaliter* (that is, that faith justifies only initially, either in part or primarily, and that our newness or love justifies even before God, either completely or secondarily).
6. *Item, credentes coram Deo iustificari vel coram Deo iustos esse simul et imputatione et inchoatione, vel partim imputatione, partim inchoatione novae obedientiae* (that is, also that believers are justified before God, or are righteous before God, both by imputation and by inchoation at the same time, or partly by the imputation of Christ's righteousness and partly by the beginning of new obedience).

7. *Item, applicationem promissionis gratiae fieri et fide cordis et confessione oris ae reliquis virtutibus* (that is, also that the application of the promise of grace occurs both by faith of the heart and confession of the mouth, and by other virtues). That is: Faith makes righteous for this reason alone, that righteousness is begun in us by faith, or in this way, that faith takes the precedence in justification; nevertheless, renewal and love also belong to our righteousness before God, however, in such a way that it is not the chief cause of our righteousness, but that our righteousness before God is not entire and complete without such love and renewal. Likewise, that believers are justified and righteous before God at the same time by the imputed righteousness of Christ and the incipient new obedience. Likewise, that the promise of grace is appropriated to us by faith in the heart, and confession which is made with the mouth, and by other virtues.

Also this is incorrect, when it is taught that man must be saved in some other way or through something else than as he is justified before God, so that we are indeed justified before God by faith alone, without works, but that it is impossible to be saved without works or obtain salvation without works.

This is false, for the reason that it is directly opposed to the declaration of Paul, Rom. 4, 6; *The blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works*. And Paul's reason [the basis of Paul's argument] is that we obtain both, salvation as well as righteousness, in one and the same way; yea, that by this very means, when we are justified by faith, we receive at the same time adoption and heirship of eternal life and salvation; and on this account Paul employs and emphasizes the *particulas exclusivas*, that is, those words by which works and our own merits are entirely excluded, namely, *by grace, without works*, as forcibly in the article concerning salvation as in the article concerning righteousness.

Likewise also the disputation concerning the in-

dwelling in us of the essential righteousness of God must be correctly explained. For although in the elect, who are justified by Christ and reconciled with God, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who is the eternal and essential righteousness, dwells by faith (for all Christians are temples of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who also impels them to do right), yet this indwelling of God is not the righteousness of faith of which St. Paul treats and which he calls *iustitiam Dei*, that is, the righteousness of God, for the sake of which we are declared righteous before God; but it follows the preceding righteousness of faith, which is nothing else than the forgiveness of sins and the gracious adoption of the poor sinner, for the sake of Christ's obedience and merit alone.

Accordingly, since in our churches it is acknowledged [established beyond controversy] among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession that all our righteousness is to be sought outside the merits, works, virtues, and worthiness of ourselves and of all men, and rests alone upon Christ the Lord, it must be carefully considered in what respect Christ is called our Righteousness in this affair of justification, namely, that our righteousness rests not upon one or the other nature, but upon the entire person of Christ, who as God and man is our Righteousness in His only, entire, and complete obedience.

For even though Christ had been conceived and born without sin by the Holy Ghost, and had fulfilled all righteousness in His human nature alone, and yet had not been true and eternal God, this obedience and suffering of His human nature could not be imputed to us for righteousness. As also, if the Son of God had not become man, the divine nature alone could not be our righteousness. Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that the entire obedience of the entire person of Christ, which He has rendered the Father for us even to His most ignominious death upon the cross, is imputed to us for righteousness. For the human nature alone,

without the divine, could neither by obedience nor suffering render satisfaction to eternal almighty God for the sins of all the world; however, the divinity alone, without humanity, could not mediate between God and us.

But, since it is the obedience as above mentioned [not only of one nature, but] of the entire person, it is a complete satisfaction and expiation for the human race, by which the eternal, immutable righteousness of God, revealed in the Law, has been satisfied, and is thus our righteousness, which avails before God and is revealed in the Gospel, and upon which faith relies before God, which God imputes to faith, as it is written, Rom. 5, 19: *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous;* and 1 John 1, 7: *The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth us from all sin.* Likewise: *The just shall live by his faith,* Hab. 2, 4; Rom. 1, 17.

Thus neither the divine nor the human nature of Christ by itself is imputed to us for righteousness, but only the obedience of the person who is at the same time God and man. And faith thus regards the person of Christ as it was made under the Law for us, bore our sins, and in His going to the Father offered to His heavenly Father for us poor sinners His entire, complete obedience, from His holy birth even unto death, and has thereby covered all our disobedience which inheres in our nature, and its thoughts, words, and works, so that it is not imputed to us for condemnation, but is pardoned and forgiven out of pure grace, alone for Christ's sake.

Therefore we unanimously reject and condemn, besides the above-mentioned, also the following and all similar errors, as contrary to God's Word, the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, and our Christian faith:

1. When it is taught that Christ is our righteousness before God according to His divine nature alone.

2. That Christ is our righteousness according to His human nature alone.

3. That in the passages from the prophets and apostles, when the righteousness of faith is spoken of, the words *justify* and *to be justified* are not to signify to declare free from sins and to obtain the forgiveness of sins, but to be made actually and really righteous because of love infused by the Holy Ghost, virtues, and the works following from it.

4. That faith looks not only to the obedience of Christ, but to His divine nature as it dwells and works in us, and that by this indwelling our sins are covered before God.

5. That faith is such a trust in the obedience of Christ as can be and remain in a person notwithstanding he has no genuine repentance, in whom also no love follows, but who persists in sins against his conscience.

6. That not God dwells in the believers, but only the gifts of God.

These and like errors, one and all, we unanimously reject as contrary to the clear Word of God, and by God's grace abide firmly and constantly in the doctrine of the righteousness of faith before God, as it is embodied, expounded, and proved from God's Word in the *Augsburg Confession*, and the *Apology* issued after it.

Concerning what is needful furthermore for the proper explanation of this profound and chief article of justification before God, upon which depends the salvation of our souls, we direct, and for the sake of brevity herewith refer, every one to Dr. Luther's beautiful and glorious exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians.



Justification by Faith

John Calvin

Editorial Note

Of all the statements on justification by faith made throughout the history of the Christian church, it is doubtful whether Calvin's treatment in his Institutes of the Christian Religion has ever been surpassed. Calvin combines thoroughness with precision, definitive genius with remarkable brevity. In about one hundred pages he investigates every nook and cranny, and chases out practically every error and deviation from the truth of justification by faith that men have been able to dream up. It would be hard to devise a new heresy concerning justification which Calvin has not already ruthlessly refuted with the straight edge of truth.

We here present an extract from Calvin's immortal classic on "Justification by Faith." Most of his article is not dealing with justification at the point of Christian initiation. Calvin declares that this was not the core of the argument between the better Roman Catholic scholars and the Reformers. The real argument is about the basis of acceptance with God by those who are renewed, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Calvin very effectively shows how indwelling sin must be taken into consideration when considering the value of renewal and good works. These points are very relevant today in view of the widespread interest in the Pentecostal experience.

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life. . . . The theme of justification . . . is the main hinge on which religion turns, so that we devote the greater attention and care to it. For unless you first of all grasp what your relationship to God is, and the nature of his judgment concerning you, you have neither a foundation on which to establish your salvation nor one on which to build piety toward God. . . .

The Concept of Justification

But that we may not stumble on the very threshold—and this would happen if we should enter upon a discussion of a thing unknown—first let us explain what these expressions mean: that man is justified in God's sight, and that he is justified by faith or works. . . . If an innocent accused person be summoned before the judgment seat of a fair judge, where he will be judged according to his innocence, he is said to be "justified" before the judge. Thus, justified before God is the man who, freed from the company of sinners, has God to witness and affirm his righteousness. In the same way, therefore, he in whose life that purity and holiness will be found which deserves a testimony of righteousness before God's throne will be said to be justified by works, or else he who, by the wholeness of his works, can meet and satisfy God's judgment. On the contrary, justified by faith is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith, and clothed in it, appears in God's sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man.

Therefore we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the

remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness. . . .

. . . when Paul says that Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith [Gal. 3:8], what else may you understand but that God imputes righteousness by faith? Again, when he says that God justifies the impious person who has faith in Christ [Rom. 3:26 p.], what can his meaning be except that men are freed by the benefit of faith from that condemnation which their impiety deserved? This appears even more clearly in his conclusion, when he exclaims: "Who will accuse God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who will condemn? It is Christ who died, yes, who rose again . . . and now intercedes for us" [Rom. 8:33-34 p.]. For it is as if he had said: "Who will accuse those whom God has absolved? Who will condemn those whom Christ defends with his protection?" Therefore, "to justify" means nothing else than to acquit of guilt him who was accused, as if his innocence were confirmed. Therefore, since God justifies us by the intercession of Christ, he absolves us not by the confirmation of our own innocence but by the imputation of righteousness, so that we who are not righteous in ourselves may be reckoned as such in Christ. . . .

And to avoid contention over a word, if we look upon the thing itself as described to us, no misgiving will remain. For Paul surely refers to justification by the word "acceptance" when in Eph. 1:5-6 he says: "We are destined for adoption through Christ according to God's good pleasure, to the praise of his glorious grace by which he has accounted us acceptable and beloved" [Eph. 1:5-6 p.]. That means the very thing that he commonly says elsewhere, that "God justifies us freely" [Rom. 3:24]. . . .

Osiander Erroneously Mixes Forgiveness of Sins with Rebirth

Suppose he [Osiander] had only said that Christ, in justifying us, by conjunction of essence becomes ours, not only in that in so far as he is man is he our Head, but also in that the essence of the divine nature is poured into us. Then he would have fed on these delights with less harm, and perhaps such a great quarrel on account of this delusion would not have had to arise. But inasmuch as this principle is like the cuttlefish, which by voiding its black and turbid blood hides its many tails, unless we would knowingly and willingly allow that righteousness to be snatched from us which alone gives us the confidence to glory in our salvation, we must bitterly resist. For in this whole disputation the noun "righteousness" and the verb "to justify" are extended in two directions; so that to be justified is not only to be reconciled to God through free pardon but also to be made righteous, and righteousness is not a free imputation but the holiness and uprightness that

the essence of God, dwelling in us, inspires. Secondly, he sharply states that Christ is himself our righteousness, not in so far as he, by expiating our sins as Priest, appeased the Father on our behalf, but as he is eternal God and life.

To prove the first point—that God justifies not only by pardoning but by regenerating—he asks whether God leaves as they were by nature those whom he justifies, changing none of their vices. This is exceedingly easy to answer: as Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in him together and conjointly are inseparable—namely, righteousness and sanctification. Whomever, therefore, God receives into grace, on them he at the same time bestows the spirit of adoption [Rom. 8:15], by whose power he remakes them to his own image. But if the brightness of the sun cannot be separated from its heat, shall we therefore say that the earth is warmed by its light, or lighted by its heat? Is there anything more applicable to the present matter than this comparison? The sun, by its heat, quickens and fructifies the earth, by its beams brightens and illumines it. Here is a mutual and indivisible connection. Yet reason itself forbids us to transfer the peculiar qualities of the one to the other. In this confusion of the two kinds of grace that Osiander forces upon us there is a like absurdity. For since God, for the preservation of righteousness, renews those whom he freely reckons as righteous, Osiander mixes that gift of regeneration with this free acceptance and contends that they are one and the same. Yet Scripture, even though it joins them, still lists them separately in order that God's manifold grace may better appear to us. For Paul's statement is not redundant: that Christ was given to us for our righteousness and sanctification [1 Cor. 1:30]. And whenever he reasons—from the salvation purchased for us, from God's fatherly love, and from Christ's grace—that we are called to holiness and cleanness, he clearly indicates that to be justified means something different from being made new creatures.

When it comes to Scripture, Osiander completely corrupts every passage he cites. In Paul's statement that "faith is reckoned as righteousness" not for the "one who works" but for the "one who believes in him who justifies the ungodly" [Rom. 4:4-5 p.], Osiander explains "justify" as "to make righteous." With the same rashness he corrupts that whole fourth chapter of Romans. And he does not hesitate to tinge with the same deceit a passage that we have recently cited: "Who will accuse God's elect? It is God who justifies" [Rom. 8:33]. There it is plain that the question is simply one of guilt and acquittal, and the meaning of the apostle depends on this antithesis. Therefore, both in that reason and in citing Scriptural evidence, Osiander proves himself an incompetent interpreter. . . .



The Significance of Faith for Justification

... faith of itself does not possess the power of justifying, but only in so far as it receives Christ. For if faith justified of itself or through some intrinsic power, so to speak, as it is always weak and imperfect it would effect this only in part; thus the righteousness that conferred a fragment of salvation upon us would be defective. Now we imagine no such thing, but we say that, properly speaking, God alone justifies; then we transfer this same function to Christ because he was given to us for righteousness. We compare faith to a kind of vessel; for unless we come empty and with the mouth of our soul open to seek Christ's grace, we are not capable of receiving Christ. . . .

Justification as the Work of the Mediator

... even though Christ if he had not been true God could not cleanse our souls by his blood, nor appease his Father by his sacrifice, nor absolve us from guilt, nor, in sum, fulfill the office of priest, because the power of the flesh is unequal to so great a burden, yet it is certain that he carried out all these acts according to his human nature. For if we ask how we have been justified, Paul answers, "By Christ's obedience" [Rom. 5:19 p.]. But did he obey in any other way than in taking the form of a servant [Phil. 2:7]? From this we conclude that in his flesh, righteousness has been manifested to us. . . .

Osiander's Doctrine of the Essential Righteousness Nullifies the Certainty of Salvation

... Osiander laughs at those men who teach that "to be justified" is a legal term; because we must actually be righteous. Also, he despises nothing more than that we are justified by free imputation. Well then, if God does not justify us by acquittal and pardon, what does Paul's statement mean: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing men's trespasses against them" [II Cor. 5:19]? "For our sake he made him to be sin who had done no sin so that we might be the righteousness of God in him." [V. 21, p.] First, I conclude that they are accounted righteous who are reconciled to God. Included is the means: that God justifies by pardoning, just as in another passage justification is contrasted with accusation. This antithesis clearly shows that the expression was taken from legal usage. Anyone moderately versed in the Hebrew language, provided he has a sober brain, is not ignorant of the fact that the phrase arose from this source, and drew from it its tendency and implication. Where Paul says that righteousness without works is described by David in these words, "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven" [Ps. 32:1; 31:1, Vg.; Rom. 4:7], let Osiander answer me whether this be a full or half definition. Surely, Paul does not make the prophet bear witness to the doctrine that pardon of sins is part of righteousness, or merely a concomitant toward the justifying of man; on the contrary, he includes the whole of righteousness in free remission, declaring that man blessed whose sins are covered, whose iniquities God has forgiven, and whose transgressions God does not charge to his account. Thence, he judges and reckons his happiness because in this way he is righteous, not intrinsically but by imputation.

Osiander objects that it would be insulting to God and contrary to his nature that he should justify those who actually remain wicked. Yet we must bear in mind what I have already said, that the grace of justification is not separated from regeneration, although they are things distinct. But because it is very well known by experience that the traces of sin always remain in the righteous, their justification must be very different from reformation into newness of life [cf. Rom. 6:4]. For God so begins this second point in his elect, and progresses in it gradually, and sometimes slowly, throughout life, that they are always liable to the judgment of death before his tribunal. But he does not justify in part but liberally, so that they may appear in heaven as if endowed with the purity of Christ. No portion of righteousness sets our consciences at peace until it has been determined that we are pleasing to God, because we are entirely righteous before him. From this it follows that the doctrine of justification is perverted and utterly overthrown when doubt is thrust

into men's minds, when the assurance of salvation is shaken and the free and fearless calling upon God suffers hindrance—nay, when peace and tranquillity with spiritual joy are not established. Thence Paul argues from contraries that the inheritance does not come from the law [Gal. 3:18], for in this way "faith would be nullified" [Rom. 4:14, cf. Vg.]. For faith totters if it pays attention to works, since no one, even of the most holy, will find there anything on which to rely.

This distinction between justification and regeneration, which two things Oslander confuses under the term "double righteousness," is beautifully expressed by Paul. Speaking of his own real righteousness, or of the uprightness that had been given him, which Oslander labels "essential righteousness," he mournfully exclaims: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" [Rom. 7:24]. But fleeing to that righteousness which is founded solely upon God's mercy he gloriously triumphs over both life and death, reproaches and hunger, the sword and all other adverse things. "Who will make accusation against God's elect," whom he justifies [Rom. 8:33 p.]? For I am surely convinced that nothing "will separate us from his love in Christ" [Rom. 8:38-39 p.]. He clearly proclaims that he has a righteousness which alone entirely suffices for salvation before God, so that he does not diminish his confidence in glorying, and no hindrance arises from the miserable bondage, consciousness of which had a moment before caused him to bemoan his lot. This diversity is sufficiently known, and so familiar to all the saints who groan under the burden of iniquities and yet with victorious confidence surmount all fear. . . .

This is a wonderful plan of justification that, covered by the righteousness of Christ, they should not tremble at the judgment they deserve, and that while they rightly condemn themselves, they should be accounted righteous outside themselves. . . .

Righteousness by Faith and Righteousness by Works

But a great part of mankind imagine that righteousness is composed of faith and works. Let us also, to begin with, show that faith righteousness so differs from works righteousness that when one is established the other has to be overthrown. The apostle says that he "counts everything as dross" that he "may gain Christ and be found in him, . . . not having a righteousness of [his] own, based on law, but one that is through faith in Jesus Christ, the righteousness from God through faith" [Phil. 3:8-9 p.]. You see here both a comparison of opposites and an indication that a man who wishes to obtain Christ's righteousness must abandon his own righteousness. Therefore, he states elsewhere that this was the cause of the Jews' downfall:



"Wishing to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness" [Rom. 10:3 p.]. If by establishing our own righteousness we shake off the righteousness of God, to attain the latter we must indeed completely do away with the former. He also shows this very thing when he states that our boasting is not excluded by law but by faith [Rom. 3:27]. From this it follows that so long as any particle of works righteousness remains some occasion for boasting remains with us. Now, if faith excludes all boasting, works righteousness can in no way be associated with faith righteousness. In this sense he speaks so clearly in the fourth chapter of Romans that no place is left for cavils or shifts: "If Abraham," says Paul, "was justified by works, he has something to boast about." He adds, "Yet he has no reason to boast before God" [Rom. 4:2]. It follows, therefore, that he was not justified by works. Then Paul sets forth another argument from contraries. When reward is made for works it is done out of debt, not of grace [Rom. 4:4]. But righteousness according to grace is owed to faith. Therefore it does not arise from the merits of works. Farewell, then, to the dream of those who think up a righteousness flowing together out of faith and works.

Likewise, the Works of the Regenerated Can Procure No Justification

The Sophists, who make game and sport in their corrupting of Scripture and their empty caviling, think

they have a subtle evasion. For they explain "works" as meaning those which men not yet reborn do only according to the letter by the effort of their own free will, apart from Christ's grace. But they deny that these refer to spiritual works. For, according to them, man is justified by both faith and works provided they are not his own works but the gifts of Christ and the fruit of regeneration. For they say that Paul so spoke for no other reason than to convince the Jews, who were relying upon their own strength, that they were foolish to arrogate righteousness to themselves, since the Spirit of Christ alone bestows it upon us not through any effort arising from our own nature. Still they do not observe that in the contrast between the righteousness of the law and of the gospel, which Paul elsewhere introduces, all works are excluded, whatever title may grace them [Gal. 3:11-12]. For he teaches that this is the righteousness of the law, that he who has fulfilled what the law commands should obtain salvation; but this is the righteousness of faith, to believe that Christ died and rose again [Rom. 10:5, 9] . . .

Augustine's view, or at any rate his manner of stating it, we must not entirely accept. For even though he admirably deprives man of all credit for righteousness and transfers it to God's grace, he still subsumes grace under sanctification by which we are reborn in newness of life through the Spirit.

Our Justification According to the Judgment of Scripture

But Scripture, when it speaks of faith righteousness, leads us to something far different: namely, to turn aside from the contemplation of our own works and look solely upon God's mercy and Christ's perfection. Indeed, it presents this order of justification: to begin with, God deigns to embrace the sinner with his pure and freely given goodness, finding nothing in him except his miserable condition to prompt Him to mercy, since he sees man utterly void and bare of good works; and so he seeks in himself the reason to benefit man. Then God touches the sinner with a sense of his goodness in order that he, despairing of his own works, may ground the whole of his salvation in God's mercy. This is the experience of faith through which the sinner comes into possession of his salvation when from the teaching of the gospel he acknowledges that he has been reconciled to God: that with Christ's righteousness interceding and forgiveness of sins accomplished he is justified. And although regenerated by the Spirit of God, he ponders the everlasting righteousness laid up for him not in the good works to which he inclines but in the sole righteousness of Christ. . . .

Through "Faith Alone"

Now the reader sees how fairly the Sophists today cavil against our doctrine when we say that man is justified by faith alone [Rom. 3:28]. They dare not deny that man is justified by faith because it recurs so often in Scripture. But since the word "alone" is nowhere expressed, they do not allow this addition to be made. Is it so? But what will they reply to these words of Paul where he contends that righteousness cannot be of faith unless it be free [Rom. 4:2 ff.]? How will a free gift agree with works? With what chicaneries will they elude what he says in another passage, that God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel [Rom. 1:17]? If righteousness is revealed in the gospel, surely no mutilated or half righteousness but a full and perfect righteousness is contained there. The law therefore has no place in it. Not only by a false but by an obviously ridiculous shift they insist upon excluding this adjective. Does not he who takes everything from works firmly enough ascribe everything to faith alone? What, I pray, do these expressions mean: "His righteousness has been manifested apart from the law" [Rom. 3:21 p.]; and, "Man is freely justified" [Rom. 3:24 p.]; and, "Apart from the works of the law" [Rom. 3:28]?

Here they have an ingenious subterfuge: even though they have not devised it themselves but have borrowed it from Origen and certain other ancient writers, it is still utterly silly. They prate that the ceremonial works of the law are excluded, not the moral works. They become so proficient by continual wrangling that they do not even grasp the first elements of logic. Do they think that the apostle was raving when he brought forward these passages to prove his opinion? "The man who does these things will live in them" [Gal. 3:12], and, "Cursed be every one who does not fulfill all things written in the book of the law" [Gal. 3:10 p.]. Unless they have gone mad they will not say that life was promised to keepers of ceremonies or the curse announced only to those who transgress the ceremonies. If these passages are to be understood of the moral law, there is no doubt that moral works are also excluded from the power of justifying. These arguments which Paul uses look to the same end: "Since through the law comes knowledge of sin" [Rom. 3:20], therefore not righteousness. Because "the law works wrath" [Rom. 4:15], hence not righteousness. Because the law does not make conscience certain, it cannot confer righteousness either. Because faith is imputed as righteousness, righteousness is therefore not the reward of works but is given unearned [Rom. 4:4-5]. Because we are justified by faith, our boasting is cut off [Rom. 3:27 p.]. "If a law had been given that could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But God consigned all things to sin that the promise might be given to those who believe." [Gal.

3:21-22 p.] Let them now babble, if they dare, that these statements apply to ceremonies, not to morals. Even schoolboys would hoot at such impudence. Therefore, let us hold as certain that when the ability to justify is denied to the law, these words refer to the whole law. . . .

Also, they pointlessly strive after the foolish subtlety that we are justified by faith alone, which acts through love, so that righteousness depends upon love. Indeed, we confess with Paul that no other faith justifies "but faith working through love" [Gal. 5:6]. But it does not take its power to justify from that working of love. Indeed, it justifies in no other way but in that it leads us into fellowship with the righteousness of Christ. . . .

Righteous—Not in Ourselves but in Christ

From this it is also evident that we are justified before God solely by the intercession of Christ's righteousness. This is equivalent to saying that man is not righteous in himself but because the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation—something worth carefully noting. Indeed, that frivolous notion disappears, that man is justified by faith because by Christ's righteousness he shares the Spirit of God, by whom he is rendered righteous. This is too contrary to the above doctrine ever to be reconciled to it. And there is no doubt that he who is taught to seek righteousness outside himself is destitute of righteousness in himself. Moreover, the apostle most clearly asserts this when he writes: "He who knew not sin was made the atoning sacrifice of sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" [11 Cor. 5:21 p.].

You see that our righteousness is not in us but in Christ, that we possess it only because we are partakers in Christ; indeed, with him we possess all its riches. . . . "As we were made sinners by one man's disobedience, so we have been justified by one man's obedience" [Rom. 5:19 p.]. To declare that by him alone we are accounted righteous, what else is this but to lodge our righteousness in Christ's obedience, because the obedience of Christ is reckoned to us as if it were our own?

For this reason, it seems to me that Ambrose beautifully stated an example of this righteousness in the blessing of Jacob: noting that, as he did not of himself deserve the right of the first-born, concealed in his brother's clothing and wearing his brother's coat, which gave out an agreeable odor [Gen. 27:27], he ingratiated himself with his father, so that to his own benefit he received the blessing while impersonating another. And we in like manner hide under the precious purity of our first-born brother, Christ, so that we may be attested righteous in God's sight. Here are the words of Ambrose: "That Isaac smelled the odor of the

garments perhaps means that we are justified not by works, but by faith, since the weakness of the flesh is a hindrance to works, but the brightness of faith, which merits the pardon of sins, overshadows the error of deeds."

And this is indeed the truth, for in order that we may appear before God's face unto salvation we must smell sweetly with his odor, and our vices must be covered and buried by his perfection.

We Must Lift Up Our Minds to God's Judgement Seat that We May Be Firmly Convinced of His Free Justification

No One Is Righteous Before God's Judgment Seat

. . . In the shady cloisters of the schools anyone can easily and readily prattle about the value of works in justifying men. But when we come before the presence of God we must put away such amusements. For there we deal with a serious matter, and do not engage in frivolous word battles. To this question, I insist, we must apply our mind if we would profitably inquire concerning true righteousness: How shall we reply to the Heavenly Judge when he calls us to account? Let us envisage for ourselves that Judge, not as our minds naturally imagine him, but as he is depicted for us in Scripture: by whose brightness the stars are darkened [Job 3:9]; by whose strength the mountains are melted; by whose wrath the earth is shaken [cf. Job 9:5-6]; whose wisdom catches the wise in their craftiness [Job 5:13]; beside whose purity all things are defiled [cf. Job 25:5]; whose righteousness not even the angels can bear [cf. Job 4:18]; who makes not the guilty man innocent [cf. Job 9:20]; whose vengeance when once kindled penetrates to the depths of hell [Deut. 32:22; cf. Job 26:6]. Let us behold him, I say, sitting in judgment to examine the deeds of men: Who will stand confident before his throne? "Who . . . can dwell with the devouring fire?" asks the prophet. "Who . . . can dwell with everlasting burnings? He who walks righteously and speaks the truth" [Isa. 33:14-15 p.], etc. But let such a one, whoever he is, come forward. Nay, that response causes no one to come forward. For, on the contrary, a terrible voice resounds: "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?" [Ps. 130:3; 129:3, Vg.]. Indeed, all must soon perish, as it is written in another place: "Shall a man be justified in comparison with God, or shall he be purer than his maker? Behold, they that serve him are not faithful, and in his angels he found wickedness. How much more shall those who dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation, be consumed before the moth. From morn to eve they shall be cut down" [Job 4:17-20]. Likewise:



“Behold, among his saints none is faithful, and the heavens are not pure in his sight. How much more abominable and unprofitable is man, who drinks iniquity like water?” [Job 15: 15-16, cf. Vg.]

Indeed, I admit that in The Book of Job mention is made of a righteousness higher than the observance of the law, and it is worth-while to maintain this distinction. For even if someone satisfied the law, not even then could he stand the test of that righteousness which surpasses all understanding. Therefore, even though Job has a good conscience, he is stricken dumb with astonishment, for he sees that not even the holiness of angels can please God if he should weigh their works in his heavenly scales. Therefore, I now pass over that righteousness which I have mentioned, for it is incomprehensible. I only say that if our life is examined according to the standard of the written law, we are sluggish indeed if we are not tormented with the horrid fear at those many maledictions with which God willed to cleanse us—among others this general curse: “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by everything written in this book” [Gal. 3:10, Vg.; cf. Deut. 27:26]. In short, this whole discussion will be foolish and weak unless every man admit his guilt before the Heavenly

Judge, and concerned about his own acquittal, willingly cast himself down and confess his nothingness.

Righteousness Before Men and Righteousness Before God

Hither, hither we ought to have raised up our eyes to learn how to tremble rather than vainly to exult. Indeed, it is easy, so long as the comparison stops with men, for anyone to think of himself as having something that his fellows ought not to despise. But when we rise up toward God, that assurance of ours vanishes in a flash and dies. And exactly the same thing happens to our souls with respect to God as happens to our bodies with respect to the visible heavens. For keenness of sight, so long as it confines itself to examining nearby objects, is convinced of its discernment. But directed toward the sun, stricken and numbed by excessive brightness, our vision feels as weak as it did strong in gazing at objects below. Let us, then, not be deceived by empty confidence. Even though we consider ourselves either equal or superior to other men, that is nothing to God, to whose judgment the decision

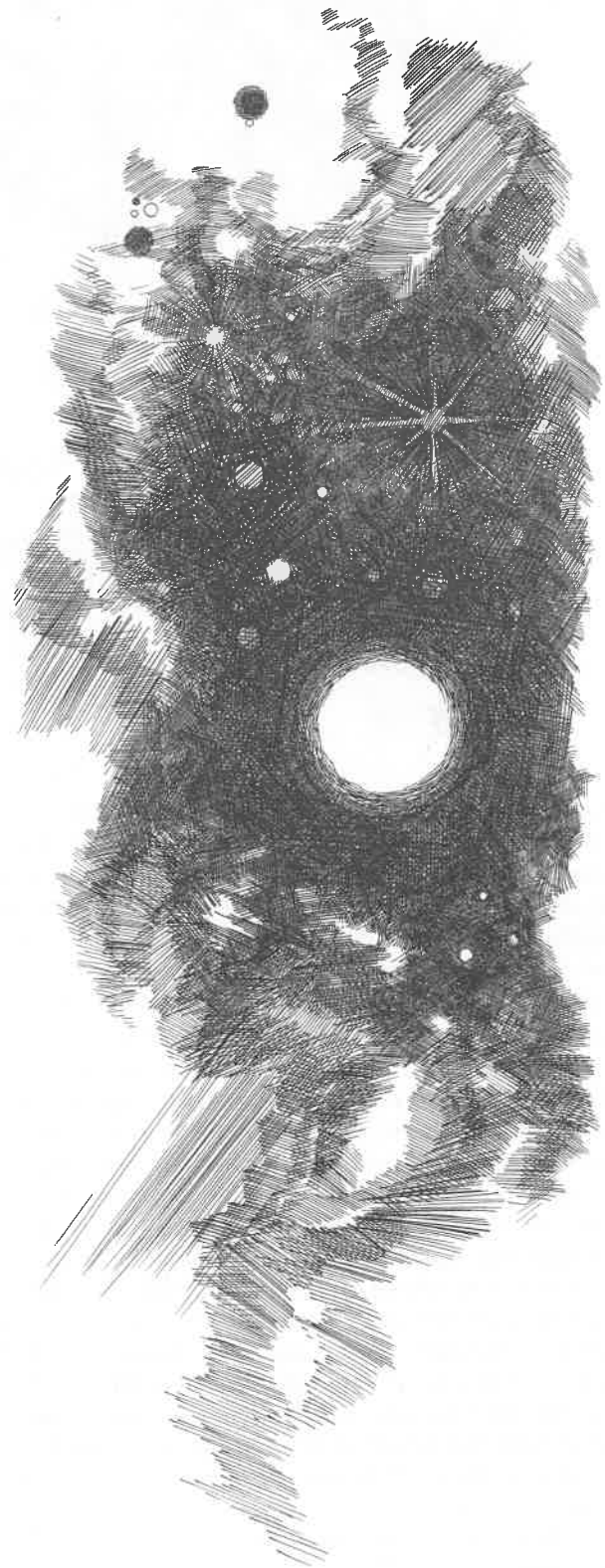
of the matter must be brought. But if our wildness cannot be tamed by these warnings, he will answer us as he spoke to the Pharisees: "Ye are they that justify yourselves before men; but . . . what is exalted among men is an abomination to God" [Luke 16:15, cf. Vg.]. Go now and haughtily boast of your righteousness among men, while God from heaven abominates it!

But what say God's servants, truly instructed by his Spirit? "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for no man living is righteous in thy sight." [Ps. 143:2; cf. Comm. and Ps. 142:2, Vg.] Another servant speaks, although in a slightly different sense: "A man cannot be righteous before God. If he wished to contend with him, he could not answer him once in a thousand times" [Job 9:2-3; cf. v. 3, Vg.]. Here, then, we are clearly told the nature of God's righteousness, which will indeed not be satisfied by any works of man. When it examines our thousand sins, we cannot be cleansed of even one. Surely that chosen instrument of God, Paul, had sincerely conceived such a righteousness when he confessed that he was not aware of anything against himself but that he was not thereby justified [1 Cor. 4:4]. . . .

For if the stars, which seem so very bright at night, lose their brilliance in the sight of the sun, what do we think will happen even to the rarest innocence of man when it is compared with God's purity? . . .

A Glance at One's Own Righteousness Provides No Peace for the Conscience

Now if we ask in what way the conscience can be made quiet before God, we shall find the only way to be that unmerited righteousness be conferred upon us as a gift of God. Let us ever bear in mind Solomon's question: "Who will say, 'I have made my heart clean; I am pure from my sin?'" [Prov. 20:9]. Surely there is no one who is not sunken in infinite filth! Let even the most perfect man descend into his conscience and call his deeds to account, what then will be the outcome for him? Will he sweetly rest as if all things were well composed between him and God and not, rather, be torn by dire torments, since if he be judged by works, he will feel grounds for condemnation within himself?





The Delectable Hills, from *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The conscience, if it looks to God, must either have sure peace with his judgment or be besieged by the terrors of hell. Therefore we profit nothing in discussing righteousness unless we establish a righteousness so steadfast that it can support our soul in the judgment of God. When our souls possess that by which they may present themselves fearless before God's face and receive his judgment undismayed, then only may we know that we have found no counterfeit righteousness. The apostle, then, with good reason strongly insists on this point. I prefer to express it in his words rather than mine. "If the promise of the inheritance comes from the law, faith is nullified and the promise is void." [Rom. 4:14, cf. Vg.] He first infers that faith has been nullified and canceled if the promise of righteousness looks to the merits of our works, or depends upon the observance of the law. For no one can ever confidently trust in it because no one will ever come to be really convinced in his own mind that he has satisfied the law, as surely no one ever fully satisfies it through works. Not to seek the proof of this too far afield, every man willing to look upon himself with an honest eye can be his own witness. . . .

. . . Christ is called "King of peace" [Isa. 9:6] and "our peace" [Eph. 2:14] because he quiets all agitations of conscience. If we ask the means, we must come to the sacrifice by which God has been appeased. For anyone unconvinced that God is appeased by that one

atonement in which Christ endured his wrath will never cease to tremble. In short, we must seek peace for ourselves solely in the anguish of Christ our Redeemer. . . .

Paul consistently denies that peace or quiet joy are retained in consciences unless we are convinced that we are "justified by faith" [Rom. 5:1]. At the same time he declares the source of this assurance: it is when "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" [Rom. 5:5]. It is as if he had said that our souls cannot be quieted unless we are surely persuaded that we are pleasing to God. Hence also in another passage he exclaims on behalf of all the godly, "Who will separate us from the love of God which is in Christ?" [Rom. 8:35, 39, conflated]. For we shall tremble even at the slightest breath until we arrive at that haven, but we shall be secure even in the darkness of death so long as the Lord shows himself our shepherd [cf. Ps. 23:1, 4]. Therefore, those who prate that we are justified by faith because, being reborn, we are righteous by living spiritually have never tasted the sweetness of grace, so as to consider that God will be favorable to them. Hence, it also follows that they no more know the right way to pray than do the Turks and other profane nations. For, as Paul attests, faith is not true unless it asserts and brings to mind that sweetest name of Father—nay, unless it opens our mouths freely to cry, "Abba, Father" [Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15]. He



The By-way to Hell, from *Pilgrim's Progress*.

expresses this more clearly elsewhere: "In Christ we have boldness and access with confidence through . . . faith in him" [Eph. 3:12 p.]. This surely does not take place through the gift of regeneration, which, as it is always imperfect in this flesh, so contains in itself manifold grounds for doubt. Therefore, we must come to this remedy: that believers should be convinced that their only ground of hope for the inheritance of a Heavenly Kingdom lies in the fact that, being engrafted in the body of Christ, they are freely accounted righteous. For, as regards justification, faith is something merely passive, bringing nothing of ours to the recovering of God's favor but receiving from Christ that which we lack.

The Beginning of Justification and Its Continual Progress

. . . let us not suppose that we bring anything to the Lord but the sheer disgrace of need and emptiness. . . .

Person and Work

. . . they have spoken very truly who have taught that favor with God is not obtained by anyone through works, but on the contrary works please him only when the person has previously found favor in his sight. And

here we must faithfully keep the order to which Scripture leads us by the hand. Moses writes: "The Lord had regard for Abel and his works" [Gen. 4:4 p.]. Do you see that he points out how the Lord is favorable to men before he has regard for their works? Therefore, purification of heart must precede, in order that those works which come forth from us may be favorably received by God. For the statement of Jeremiah is always in force, that the eyes of God have regard for truth [Jer. 5:3]. That it is faith alone, moreover, by which men's hearts are purified, the Holy Spirit has declared through the mouth of Peter [Acts 15:9]. From this it is evident that the first foundation lies in true and living faith.

Also, True Believers Do No Good Works of Themselves

Now let us examine what righteousness is possessed by those whom we have placed in the fourth class [i.e., those who are "regenerated by God's Spirit," who "make true holiness their concern"]. We confess that while through the intercession of Christ's righteousness God reconciles us to himself, and by free remission of sins accounts us righteous, his beneficence is at the same time joined with such a mercy that through His Holy Spirit he dwells in us and by his power the lusts of our flesh are each day more and more mortified; we are indeed sanctified, that is, consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life, with our hearts formed to obedience to the law. The end is that our especial will may be to serve his will and by every means to advance his glory alone.

But even while by the leading of the Holy Spirit we walk in the ways of the Lord, to keep us from forgetting ourselves and becoming puffed up, traces of our imperfection remain to give us occasion for humility. Scripture says: There is no righteous man, no man who will do good and not sin [Eccl. 7:21, Vg.; cf. 1 Kings 8:46]. What sort of righteousness will they obtain, then, from their works? First, I say that the best work that can be brought forward from them is still always spotted and corrupted with some impurity of the flesh, and has, so to speak, some dregs mixed with it. Let a holy servant of God, I say, choose from the whole course of his life what of an especially noteworthy character he thinks he has done. Let him well turn over in his mind its several parts. Undoubtedly he will somewhere perceive that it savors of the rottenness of the flesh, since our eagerness for well-doing is never what it ought to be but our great weakness slows down our running in the race. Although we see that the stains that bespatter the works of the saints are plainly visible, though we admit that they are only the slightest spots, will they not offend God's eyes, before which not even the stars are pure [Job 25:5]? We have not a single work going forth from the saints that if it be judged in itself deserves not shame as its just reward.

He Who Thinks He Has His Own Righteousness Misunderstands the Severity of the Law

Next, even if it were possible for us to have some wholly pure and perfect works, yet, as the prophet says, one sin is enough to wipe out and extinguish every memory of that previous righteousness [Ezek. 18:24]. James agrees with him: "Whoever," he says, "fails in one point, has become guilty of all" [James 2:10 p.]. Now since this mortal life is never pure or devoid of sin, whatever righteousness we might attain, when it is corrupted, oppressed, and destroyed, by the sins that repeatedly follow, could not come into God's sight or be reckoned to us as righteousness.

In short, when it is a question of the righteousness of works, we must have regard not for the work of the law but for the commandment. Therefore, if righteousness is sought from the law we will in vain bring forward one work or another, but unceasing obedience to the law is necessary. Therefore, God does not, as many stupidly believe, once for all reckon to us as righteousness that forgiveness of sins concerning which we have spoken in order that, having obtained pardon for our past life, we may afterward seek righteousness in the law; this would be only to lead us into false hope, to laugh at us, and mock us. For since no perfection can come to us so long as we are clothed in this flesh, and the law moreover announces death and judgment to all who do not maintain perfect righteousness in works, it will always have grounds for accusing and condemning us unless, on the contrary, God's mercy counters it, and by continual forgiveness of sins repeatedly acquits us. Therefore, what I said at the beginning always holds good: if we are judged by our own worth, whatever we plan or undertake, with all our efforts and labors we still deserve death and destruction.

Believers' Righteousness Is Always Faith Righteousness

We must strongly insist upon these two points: first, that there never existed any work of a godly man which, if examined by God's stern judgment, would not deserve condemnation; secondly, if such a work were found (something not possible for man), it would still lose favor—weakened and stained as it is by the sins with which its author himself is surely burdened.

This is the pivotal point of our disputation. For on the beginning of justification there is no quarrel between us and the sounder Schoolmen: that a sinner freely liberated from condemnation may obtain righteousness, and that through the forgiveness of sins; except that they include under the term "justification" a renewal, by which through the Spirit of God we are remade to obedience to the law. Indeed, they so describe the righteousness of the regenerated man that

a man once for all reconciled to God through faith in Christ may be reckoned righteous before God by good works and be accepted by the merit of them. But on the contrary, the Lord declares that for Abraham he reckoned faith as righteousness [Rom. 4:3], not at the time when Abraham was as yet serving idols but after he had for many years excelled in holiness of life. Therefore, Abraham had long worshiped God with a pure heart, and kept such obedience to the law as can be kept by mortal man. Yet he still had a righteousness set in faith. . . .

For Christ's righteousness, which as it alone is perfect alone can bear the sight of God, must appear in court on our behalf, and stand surety in judgment. Furnished with this righteousness, we obtain continual forgiveness of sins in faith. . . .

No Trust in Works and No Glory in Works!

. . . In teaching that all our righteous deeds are foul in God's sight unless these derive a good odor from Christ's innocence, Scripture consistently dissuades us from confidence. Works can only arouse God's vengeance unless they be sustained by his merciful pardon. Thus they leave us nothing but to implore our Judge for mercy with that confession of David's: that no one will be justified before him if he demands a reckoning from his servants [Ps. 143:2 p.]. But when Job says: "If I have acted wickedly, woe to me! but if justly, I will not lift up my head" [Job 10:15 p.], although he is concerned with that highest righteousness of God, to which not even the angels answer, he at the same time shows that when it comes to God's judgment, nothing remains to all mortals but to keep silence. For it not only concerns the fact that Job prefers to yield willingly rather than to struggle perilously against God's severity but signifies that he did not experience any other righteousness in himself than what at the first moment would wither before God's face. . . .

In No Respect Can Works Serve as the Cause of Our Holiness

The philosophers postulate four kinds of causes to be observed in the outworking of things. If we look at these, however, we will find that, as far as the establishment of our salvation is concerned, none of them has anything to do with works. For Scripture everywhere proclaims that the efficient cause of our obtaining eternal life is the mercy of the Heavenly Father and his freely given love toward us. Surely the material cause is Christ, with his obedience, through which he acquired righteousness for us. What shall we say is the formal or instrumental cause but faith? And John includes these three in one sentence when he says: "God so loved the

world that he gave his only begotten Son that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life" [John 3:16]. As for the final cause, the apostle testifies that it consists both in the proof of divine justice and in the praise of God's goodness, and in the same place he expressly mentions three others. For so he speaks to the Romans: "All have sinned and lack the glory of God; moreover, they are justified freely by his grace" [Rom. 3:23-24; cf. Eph. 1:6, cf. Vg.]. Here you have the head and primal source: that God embraced us with his free mercy. There follows: "Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" [Rom. 3:24]. Here you have, as it were, the material cause by which righteousness is brought about for us. In the words "through faith in his blood" [Rom. 3:25 p.], is shown the instrumental cause whereby the righteousness of Christ is applied to us. Lastly, he adds the final cause when, to demonstrate his righteousness, he says, "In order that he himself may be righteous, and the justifier of him who has faith in Christ" [Rom. 3:26, Vg.]. And to note also, by the way, that this righteousness stands upon reconciliation, he expressly states that Christ was given as reconciliation. Thus also in the first chapter of Ephesians he teaches that we are received into grace by God out of sheer mercy, that this comes about by Christ's intercession and is apprehended by faith, and that all things exist to the end that the glory of divine goodness may fully shine forth [Eph. 1:3-14]. Since we see that every particle of our salvation stands thus outside of us, why is it that we still trust or glory in works? The most avowed enemies of divine grace cannot stir up any controversy with us concerning either the efficient or the final cause, unless they would deny the whole of Scripture. They falsely represent the material and the formal cause, as if our works held half the place along with faith and Christ's righteousness. But Scripture cries out against this also, simply affirming that Christ is for us both righteousness and life, and that this benefit of righteousness is possessed by faith alone.

The Sight of Good Works, However, Can Strengthen Faith

Now the saints quite often strengthen themselves and are comforted by remembering their own innocence and uprightness, and they do not even refrain at times from proclaiming it. This is done in two ways: either comparing their good cause with the evil cause of the wicked, they thence derive confidence of victory, not so much by the commendation of their own righteousness as by the just and deserved condemnation of their adversaries. Or, without comparison with others, while they examine themselves before God, the purity of their own conscience brings them some comfort and confidence. . . .



. . . works . . . are testimonies of God dwelling and ruling in us. Inasmuch, therefore, as this reliance upon works has no place unless you first cast the whole confidence of your mind upon God's mercy, it ought not to seem contrary to that upon which it depends. Therefore, when we rule out reliance upon works, we mean only this: that the Christian mind may not be turned back to the merit of works as to a help toward salvation but should rely wholly on the free promise of righteousness. But we do not forbid him from undergirding and strengthening this faith by signs of the divine benevolence toward him. For if, when all the gifts God has bestowed upon us are called to mind, they are like rays of the divine countenance by which we are illumined to contemplate that supreme light of goodness; much more is this true of the grace of good works, which shows that the Spirit of adoption has been given to us [cf. Rom. 8:15]

The Whole Value of Good Works Comes from God's Grace

. . . There is no doubt that whatever is praiseworthy in works is God's grace; there is not a drop that we ought by rights to ascribe to ourselves. . . . To man we assign only this: that he pollutes and contaminates by his impurity those very things which were good. For nothing proceeds from a man, however perfect he be, that is not defiled by some spot. Let the Lord, then, call to judgment the best in human works; he will indeed recognize in them his own righteousness but man's dishonor and shame! Good works, then, are pleasing to God and are not unfruitful for their doers. But they receive by way of reward the most ample benefits of God, not because they so deserve but because God's kindness has of itself set this value on them. . . .

Christ as the Sole Foundation, as Beginner and Perfecter

. . . Paul says that in the upbuilding of Christian teaching we must keep the foundation that he had laid among the Corinthians [cf. 1 Cor. 3:10], "beside which no other can be laid; which is Jesus Christ" [1 Cor. 3:11]. What sort of foundation have we in Christ? Was he the beginning of our salvation in order that its fulfillment might follow from ourselves? Did he only open the way by which we might proceed under our own power? Certainly not. But, as Paul had set forth a little before, Christ, when we acknowledge him, is given us to be our righteousness [1 Cor. 1:30]. He alone is well founded in Christ who has perfect righteousness in himself: since the apostle does not say that He was sent to help us attain righteousness but himself to be our righteousness [1 Cor. 1:30]. Indeed, he states that "he has chosen us in him" from eternity "before the foundation of the world," through no merit of our own "but according to the purpose of divine good pleasure" [Eph. 1:4-5, cf. Vg.]; that by his death we are redeemed from the condemnation of death and freed from ruin [cf. Col. 1:14, 20]; that we have been adopted unto him as sons and heirs by our Heavenly Father [cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:5-7]; that we have been reconciled through his blood [Rom. 5:9-10]; that, given into his protection, we are released from the danger of perishing and falling [John 10:28]; that thus ingrafted into him [cf. Rom. 11:19] we are already, in a manner, partakers of eternal life, having entered in the Kingdom of God through hope. Yet more: we experience such participation in him that, although we are still foolish in ourselves, he is our wisdom before God; while we are sinners, he is our righteousness; while we are unclean, he is our purity; while we are weak, while we are unarmed and exposed to Satan, yet ours is that power which has been given him in heaven and on

earth [Matt. 28:18], by which to crush Satan for us and shatter the gates of hell; while we still bear about with us the body of death, he is yet our life. In brief, because all his things are ours and we have all things in him, in us there is nothing. Upon this foundation, I say, we must be built if we would grow into a holy temple to the Lord [cf. Eph. 2:21]. . . .

Does the Doctrine of Justification Do Away with Good Works?

. . . Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we grasp Christ's righteousness, by which alone we are reconciled to God. Yet you could not grasp this without at the same time grasping sanctification also. For he "is given unto us for righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption" [1 Cor. 1:30]. Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom he illumines by his wisdom, he redeems; those whom he redeems, he justifies; those whom he justifies, he sanctifies. . . .

Does the Doctrine of Justification Stifle Zeal for Good Works?

. . . For first, in saying men will take no care to regulate their lives aright unless hope of reward is held out to them, they [our opponents] are completely in error. For if it is only a matter of men looking for reward when they serve God, and hiring or selling their labor to him, it is of little profit. God wills to be freely worshiped, freely loved. That worshiper, I say, he approves who, when all hope of receiving reward has been cut off, still ceases not to serve him.

Indeed, if men have to be aroused, no one can put sharper spurs to them than those derived from the end of our redemption and calling. Such spurs the Word of the Lord employs when it teaches that it would bespeak our too impious ingratitude for us not to reciprocate the love of him "who first loved us" [1 John 4:19; cf. v. 10]; that by Christ's blood our consciences are cleansed from dead works, that we should serve the living God [Heb. 9:14]; that it is an unworthy, unholy act for us, once cleansed, to contaminate ourselves with new filth, and to profane that sacred blood [Heb. 10:29]; that "we have been delivered from the hand of our enemies in order that we may serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days" [Luke 1:74-75 p.]; that we have been freed from sin to cultivate righteousness with a free spirit [Rom. 6:18]; that "our old man was crucified" [Rom. 6:6], that "we . . . may arise to newness of life" [Rom. 6:4 p.]. Likewise, if we be dead with Christ, as befits his



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members, we must seek the things that are above, and be pilgrims on earth, so that we may aspire to heaven where our treasure is [cf. Col. 3:1-3; also Matt. 6:20]. In this "the grace of the Lord has appeared, that, having renounced all irreligion and worldly desires, we may live sober, holy, and godly lives in this age, awaiting our blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior." [Titus 2:11-13 p.] Therefore we were not appointed to rouse wrath against ourselves but to obtain salvation through Christ [I Thess. 5:9]. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, which it is unlawful to profane [I Cor. 3:16-17; II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21]. We are not darkness but light in the Lord, and must walk as children of light [Eph. 5:8-9; cf. I Thess.

5:4-5]. We have not been called to uncleanness but to holiness [I Thess. 4:7], for this is the will of God, our sanctification, that we abstain from unlawful desires [I Thess. 4:3]. Ours is a holy calling [II Tim. 1:9]. It demands purity of life and nothing less; we have been freed from sin to this end, that we may obey righteousness [Rom. 6:18]. Could we be aroused to love by any livelier argument than that of John's: that "we love one another as God has loved us" [I John 4:11; cf. John 13:34]? that herein his children differ from the devil's children as children of light from children of darkness, because they abide in love [I John 3:10; 2:10-11]? Again, with that argument of Paul's: that we, if we cleave to Christ, are members of one body [I Cor. 6:15,

17; 12:12], who must help one another in our mutual tasks [cf. I Cor. 12:25]? Can we be more forcefully summoned to holiness than when we hear again from John that "all who have this hope . . . sanctify themselves" because their God is holy [I John 3:3]? Likewise, from Paul's lips: since we rely on the promise of adoption, "let us cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit" [II Cor. 7:1, Vg.]? Or again, than when we hear Christ putting himself forward as our example in order that we may follow his footsteps [I Peter 2:21; cf. John 15:10; 13:15]?

God's Honor and God's Mercy as Motives for Action: Subordination of Works

These few Scriptural proofs, indeed, I have set forth as a mere taste. For if it were my purpose to go through every one, a large volume would have to be compiled. All the apostles are full of exhortations, urgings, and reproofs with which to instruct the man of God in every good work [cf. II Tim. 3:16-17], and that without mention of merit. Rather, they derive their most powerful exhortations from the thought that our salvation stands upon no merit of ours but solely upon God's mercy. Accordingly, Paul, when he devoted an entire letter to showing that we have no hope of life save in Christ's righteousness, when he gets down to exhortations, implores us by that mercy of God which he has deigned to give us [Rom. 12:1] . . .

The Agreement of the Promises of the Law and of the Gospel

. . . We have already shown above how, if we cleave to the law, we are bereft of all blessing and a curse hangs over us, one ordained for all transgressors [cf. Deut. 27:26]. For the Lord promises nothing except to perfect keepers of his law, and no one of the kind is to be found. The fact, then, remains that through the law the whole human race is proved subject to God's curse and wrath, and in order to be freed from these, it is necessary to depart from the power of the law and, as it were, to be released from its bondage into freedom. This is no carnal freedom, which would draw us away from the observance of the law, incite us to license in all things, and let our concupiscence play the wanton as if locks were broken or reins slackened. Rather, it is spiritual freedom, which would comfort and raise up the stricken and prostrate conscience, showing it to be free from the curse and condemnation with which the law pressed it down, bound and fettered. When through faith we lay hold on the mercy of God in Christ, we attain this liberation and, so to speak, manumission from subjection to the law, for it is by faith we are

made sure and certain of forgiveness of sins, the law having pricked and stung our conscience to the awareness of them. . . .

Does Not Scripture Speak of the "Righteousness" of the Works of the Law?

. . . Indeed, we do not deny that the law of God contains perfect righteousness. For even though, because we are bound to perform everything it requires, we should have yielded full obedience to it, still "we are unprofitable servants" [Luke 17:10]. Yet because the Lord deigns to accord to it the honor of righteousness, we do not take away what he has given. We therefore willingly confess that perfect obedience to the law is righteousness, and that the keeping of each commandment is a part of righteousness; provided that in the remaining parts the whole sum of righteousness is contained. But we deny that such a form of righteousness exists anywhere. And we cast off law righteousness, not because it is defective and mutilated of itself, but because, due to the weakness of our flesh, it is nowhere visible. . . .

For those things which are contained in the law, God commended as righteousness; but we do not attain that righteousness save by observing the whole law, and it is broken by every transgression. Since the law enjoins only righteousness, therefore, if we have regard to it, all its commandments are righteousnesses; if we have in view the men by whom they are kept, they win no praise for righteousness from one work, as they are transgressors in many—that one work being always in some part faulty because of its imperfection. . . .

If we are to determine a price for works according to their worth, we say that they are unworthy to come before God's sight; that man, accordingly, has no works in which to glory before God; that hence, stripped of all help from works, he is justified by faith alone. But we define justification as follows: the sinner, received into communion with Christ, is reconciled to God by his grace, while, cleansed by Christ's blood, he obtains forgiveness of sins, and clothed with Christ's righteousness as if it were his own, he stands confident before the heavenly judgment seat.

After forgiveness of sins is set forth, the good works that now follow are appraised otherwise than on their own merit. For everything imperfect in them is covered by Christ's perfection, every blemish or spot is cleansed away by his purity in order not to be brought in question at the divine judgment. Therefore, after the guilt of all transgressions that hinder man from bringing forth anything pleasing to God has been blotted out,

and after the fault of imperfection, which habitually defiles even good works, is buried, the good works done by believers are accounted righteous, or, what is the same thing, are reckoned as righteousness [Rom. 4:22] . . .

For unless the justification of faith remains whole and unbroken, the uncleanness of works will be uncovered. Moreover, it is no absurdity that man is so justified by faith that not only is he himself righteous but his works are also accounted righteous above their worth. . . .

Therefore, as we ourselves, when we have been engrafted in Christ, are righteous in God's sight because our iniquities are covered by Christ's sinlessness, so our works are righteous and are thus regarded because whatever fault is otherwise in them is buried in Christ's purity, and is not charged to our account. Accordingly, we can deservedly say that by faith alone not only we ourselves but our works as well are justified. . . .

The Word "Justify" Used by James in a Sense Different from Paul's

. . . It is as if he [James] said: "Those who by true faith are righteous prove their righteousness by obedience and good works, not by a bare and imaginary mask of faith." To sum up, he is not discussing in what manner we are justified but demanding of believers a righteousness fruitful in good works. And as Paul contends that we are justified apart from the help of works,

so James does not allow those who lack good works to be reckoned righteous. . . .

. . . an empty show of faith does not justify, and a believer, not content with such an image, declares his righteousness by good works. . . .

The Purpose of the Promise of Reward

. . . Nothing is clearer than that a reward is promised for good works to relieve the weakness of our flesh by some comfort but not to puff up our hearts with vainglory. Whoever, then, deduces merit of works from this, or weighs works and reward together, wanders very far from God's own plan. . . .

. . . How could he impute righteousness to our works unless his compassion covered over whatever unrighteousness was in them? And how could he judge them worthy of reward save that he wiped out by his boundless kindness what in them deserves punishment? . . . For besides forbidding us to glory in works, because they are God's free gifts, it teaches us at the same time that they are ever defiled with some foul dregs so that if they are weighed according to the standard of his judgment they cannot satisfy God; but lest we become discouraged, Scripture teaches that our works are pleasing only through pardon. . . .

To quicken us to well-doing, although the services we offer him are unworthy even of his glance, he permits none of them to be lost.

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