

JUSTIFICATION BY AN IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

CHAPTER 1

MEN ARE JUSTIFIED WITH IN THEMSELVES SINNERS

JUSTIFICATION is to be diversely taken in the scripture.

1. Sometimes it is taken for the justification of persons.
2. Sometimes for the justification of actions.
3. And sometimes for the justification of the person and action too.

It is taken for the justification of persons, and that,

- (1.) As to justification with God; or,
- (2.) As to justification with men.

As to justification with God — that is, when a man stands clear, quit, free, or, in a saved condition before him, in the approbation of his holy law.

As to justification with men — that is, when a man stands clear and quit from just ground of reprehension with them. Justification also is to be taken with reference to actions; and that may be when they are considered,

1. As flowing from true faith; or,
2. Because the act done fulfils some transient law.

(1.) As actions flow from faith, so they are justified, because done before God in, and made complete through, the perfections of Jesus Christ, ^{}1 Peter 2:5; ^{}Hebrews 13:15; ^{}Revelation 8:1-4.

(2.) As by the doing of the act some transient law is fulfilled; as when Jehu executed judgment upon the house of Ahab — “Thou hast done well,” said God to him, in executing that which is righteous in mine eyes, and hast done to the house of Ahab all that was in mine heart,” ^{}2 Kings 10:30.

As to such acts, God may or may not look at the qualification of those that do them; and it is clear that he had not respect to any good that was in Jehu, in the justifying of this action; nor could he, for Jehu stuck close yet to the sins of Jeroboam, but

“took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel,”
^{}2 Kings 10:29, 31.

I might hence also shew you, that a man may be justified even then when his action is condemned; also that a man may be in a state of condemnation, when his action may be justified. But with these distinctions I will not take up time, my intention being to treat of justification, as it sets a man free or quit from sin, the curse and condemnation of the law in the sight of God, in order to eternal salvation.

And that I may with the more clearness handle this point before you, I will lay down and speak to this proposition —

That there is no other way for sinners to be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God, than by the imputation of that righteousness long ago performed by, and still residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.

The terms of this proposition are easy; yet if it will help, I will speak a word or two for explication.

(1.) By a sinner, I mean one that has transgressed the law; for “sin is the transgression of the law,” ^{}1 John 3:4.

(2.) By the curse of the law, I mean that sentence, judgment, or condemnation which the law pronounceth against the transgressor, ^{}Galatians 3:10.

- (3.) By justifying righteousness, I mean that which stands in the doing and suffering of Christ when he was in the world; ^{<B5B>}Romans 5:19.
- (4.) By the residing of this righteousness in Christ's person, I mean, it still abides with him as to the action, though the benefit is bestowed upon those that are his.
- (5.) By the imputation of it to us, I mean God's making of it ours by an act of his grace, that we by it might be secured from the curse of the law.
- (6.) When I say there is no other way to be justified, I cast away to that end the law, and all the works of the law as done by us.

Thus I have opened the terms of the proposition.

Now the two first — to wit, What sin and the curse is, stand clear in all men's sight, unless they be atheists, or desperately heretical. I shall therefore in few words, clear the other four.

First, Therefore justifying righteousness is the doing and suffering of Christ when he was in the world. This is clear, because we are said to be "justified by his obedience," ^{<B5B>}Romans 5:19; by his obedience to the law. Hence he is said again to be the end of the law for that very thing — "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness," etc., ^{<B5D>}Romans 10:4. The end, what is that? Why, the requirement or demand of the law. But what is it? Why, righteousness, perfect righteousness, ^{<B5D>}Galatians 3:10. Perfect righteousness, what to do? That the soul concerned might stand spotless in the sight of God, ^{<B5D>}Revelation 1:5. Now this lies only in the doings and sufferings of Christ; for "by his obedience many are made righteous;" wherefore as to this Christ is the end of the law, that being found in that obedience, that becomes to us sufficient for our justification. Hence, we are said to be made righteous by his obedience; yea, and to be washed, purged, and justified by his blood, ^{<B5D>}Hebrews 9:14; ^{<B5B>}Romans 5:18, 19.

Secondly, That this righteousness still resides in and with the person of Christ, even then when we stand just before God thereby, is clear, for that we are said when justified to be justified "in him" — "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified." And again; "Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness," etc. And again; "For him are ye in Christ

Jesus, who is made unto us of God righteousness,” ²³⁶²Isaiah 45:24, 25; ⁴⁰³¹1 Corinthians 1:30.

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

For as my doings, though my children are fed and clothed thereby, are still my doings, not theirs, so the righteousness wherewith we stand just before God from the curse still resides in Christ, not in us. Our sins when laid upon Christ were yet personally ours, not his; so his righteousness when put upon us is yet personally his, not ours. What is it, then? Why,

“he was made to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might
be made the righteousness of God in him,”

⁴¹⁵¹2 Corinthians 5:21.

Thirdly, It is therefore of a justifying virtue only by imputation, or as God reckoneth it to us; even as our sins made the Lord Jesus a sinner — nay, sin, by God’s reckoning of them to him.

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

The apostle, who was his craftsman as to this, was always “looking to Jesus,” that he “might be found in him” (³¹⁸¹⁶Philippians 3:6-8), knowing that nowhere else could peace or safety be had.

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

Fourthly, Therefore the law and the works thereof, as to this must by us be cast away; not only because they here are useless, but also they being retained are a hindrance. That they are useless is evident, for that salvation comes by another name, ⁴⁴¹²Acts 4:12. And that they are a hindrance, it is clear, for the very adhering to the law, though it be but a little, or in a little

part, prevents justification by the righteousness of Christ, ~~AND~~ Romans 9:31, 32.

What shall I say? As to this, the moral law is rejected, the ceremonial law is rejected, and man's righteousness is rejected, for that they are here both weak and unprofitable, ~~AND~~ Romans 8:2, 3; ~~AND~~ Galatians 3:21; ~~AND~~ Hebrews 10:1-12.

Now if all these and their works as to our justification are rejected, where but in Christ is righteousness to be found?

Thus much, therefore, for the explication of the proposition — namely, that there is no other way for sinners to be justified from the curse of the law in the sight of God than by the imputation of that righteousness long ago performed by, and still residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.

Now, from this proposition I draw these two positions —

First, That men are justified from the curse of the law before God while sinners in themselves.

Secondly, That this can be done by no other righteousness than that long ago performed by, and residing with, the person of Jesus Christ.

Let us, then, now enter into the consideration of the first of these — namely, That men are justified from the curse of the law before God while sinners in themselves.

This I shall manifest,

1. By touching upon the mysterious acts of our redemption.
2. By giving of you plain texts which discover it; and,
3. By reasons drawn from the texts.

For the first of these; to wit, the mysterious act of our redemption: and that I shall speak to under these two heads —

1. I shall shew you *what* that is; and,
2. *How* we are concerned therein.

That which I call, and that rightly, the mysterious act of our redemption, is Christ's sufferings as a common, though a particular person and as a sinner, though always completely righteous.

That he suffered as a common person is true. By common, I mean a public person, or one that presents the body of mankind in himself. This a multitude of scriptures bear witness to, especially that fifth chapter to the Romans, where by the apostle he is set before us as the head of all the elect, even as Adam was once head of all the world. Thus he lived, and thus he died; and this was a mysterious act.

And that he should die as a sinner, when yet himself did "no sin, nor had any guile found in his mouth," made this act more mysterious, ^{<4019>}1 Peter 1:19; ^{<4022>}1 Peter 2:22; ^{<4033>}1 Peter 3:18. That he died as a sinner is plain — "He hath made him to be sin. And the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all," ^{<2530>}Isaiah 53. That, then, as to his own person he was completely sinless is also as truly manifest, and that by a multitude of scriptures.

Now, I say, that Christ Jesus should be thus considered, and thus die, was the great mystery of God. Hence Paul tells us, that when he preached "Christ crucified," he preached not only the "wisdom of God," but the "wisdom of God in a mystery," even his "hidden wisdom," for, indeed, this wisdom is hidden, and kept close from the "fowls of the air," ^{<4023>}1 Corinthians 1:23; ^{<4027>}1 Corinthians 2:7, 8; ^{<3320>}Job 28:20, 21.

It is also so mysterious, that it goes beyond the reach of all men, except those to whom an understanding is given of God to apprehend it, ^{<3150>}1 John 5:20.

That one particular man should represent all the elect in himself, and that the most righteous should die as a sinner, yea, as a sinner by the hand of a just and holy God, is a mystery of the greatest depth.

Secondly, And now I come to shew you how the elect are concerned therein; that is, in this mysterious act of this most blessed One; and this will make this act yet more mysterious to you.

Now, then, we will speak of this first, as to how Christ prepared himself thus mysteriously to act.

1. He took hold of our nature. I say, he took hold of *us*, by taking upon him flesh and blood. The Son of God therefore, took not upon him a particular person, though he took to him a human body and soul; but that which he took was, as I may call it, a lump of the common nature of man, and by that, hold of the whole elect seed of Abraham; ^{<3026}Hebrews 2:16,

“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels,
but he took on him the seed of Abraham.”

Hence he, in a mystery, became us, and was counted as all the men that were or should be saved. And this is the reason why we are said to *do*, when only Jesus Christ did *do*. As for instance —

First, When Jesus Christ fulfilled the righteousness of the law, it is said it was fulfilled in us, because indeed fulfilled in our nature: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,” etc. But because none should appropriate this unto themselves that have not had passed upon them a work of conversion, therefore he adds, “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” For there being a union between head and members, though things may be done by the head, and that for the members, the things are counted to the members, as if not done only by the head. The “righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us;” and that truly, because fulfilled in that common nature which the Son of God took of the Virgin. Wherefore, in this sense we are said to *do* what only was done by him; even as the client doth by his lawyer, when his lawyer personates him; the client is said to do, when it is the lawyer only that does; and to overcome by doing, when it is the lawyer that overcomes; the reason is, because the lawyer does in the client’s name. How much more then may it be said *we* do, when only Christ does; since he does what he does, not in our name only, but in our nature too;

“for the law of the spirit of life in Christ (not in me)
has set me free from the law of sin and death,”

^{<400}Romans 8:1-3;

he doing in his common flesh what could not be done in my particular person, that so I might have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in me,

my flesh assumed by Christ; though impossible to be done, because of the weakness of my person.

The reason of all this is, because we are said to be in him in his doing, in him by our flesh, and also by the election of God. So, then, as all men sinned when Adam fell, so all the elect did righteousness when Christ wrought and fulfilled the law; for “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

Secondly, As we are said to *do* by Christ, so we are said to suffer *by* him, to suffer *with* him. “I am crucified with Christ,” said Paul. And again;

“Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin,” ⁴⁰⁰¹1 Peter 4:1, 2.

Mark how the apostle seems to change the person. First he says, it is Christ that suffered; and that is true; but then he insinuates that it is us that suffered, for the exhortation is to believers, “to walk in newness of life;” and the argument is, because they have suffered in the flesh:

“For he that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God,” ⁴⁰²²Galatians 2:20.

We *then* suffered when Christ suffered; we then suffered in his flesh and also our “old man was crucified with him,” ⁴⁰⁰⁶Romans 6:6; that is, in his crucifixion; for when he hanged on the cross, all the elect hanged there in their common flesh which he assumed, and because he suffered there as a public man.

Thirdly, As we are said to suffer with him, so we are said to die, to be dead with him; with *him*, that is, by the dying of his body:

“Now, if we be dead with Christ,
we believe that we shall also live with him,” ⁴⁰⁰⁸Romans 6:8.

Wherefore he saith in other places, “Brethren, ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;” for indeed we died then to it by him. To the law — that is, the law now has nothing to do with us; for that it has already executed its curse to the full upon us by its slaying of the body of

Christ; for the body of Christ was our flesh, upon it also was laid our sin. The law, too, spent that curse that was due to us upon him when it condemned, killed, and cast him into the grave. Wherefore, it having thus spent its whole curse upon him as standing in our stead, we are exempted from its curse for ever; we are become dead to it by that body, ^{<B104>}Romans 7:4; it has done with us as to justifying righteousness. Nor need we fear its damning threats any more; for by the death of this body we are freed from it, and are for ever now coupled to a living Christ.

Fourthly, As we are said thus to be *dead*, so we are said also to *rise again* by him — “Thy dead men” (saith he to the Father) “shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.” And again; “After two days he will revive us, and in the third day we shall live in his sight,” ^{<B309>}Isaiah 26:19; ^{<B102>}Hosea 6:2.

Both these scriptures speak of the resurrection of Christ, of the resurrection of his body on the third day; but behold, as we were said before to suffer and be dead with him, so now we are said also to rise and live in God’s sight by the resurrection of his body; for, as was said, the flesh was ours; he took part of our flesh when he came into the world; and in it he “suffered, died, and rose again,” ^{<B124>}Hebrews 2:14. We also were therefore counted by God in that God-man when he did this; yea, he suffered, died, and rose as a common head.

Hence also the New Testament is full of this, saying, “If ye be dead with Christ.” “If ye be risen with Christ.” And again; “He hath quickened us together with him,” ^{<B122>}Colossians 2:20; ^{<B101>}Colossians 3:1; and ^{<B103>}Colossians 2:13.

“We are quickened together with him.” “Quickened,” and “quickened together with him.” The apostle hath words that cannot easily be shifted or evaded. Christ then was quickened when he was raised from the dead. Nor is it proper to say that he was ever quickened either before or since. This text also concludes that we — to wit, the whole body of God’s elect, were also quickened then, and made to live with him together. True, we also are quickened personally by grace the day in the which we are born unto God by the gospel; yet before that we are quickened in our head; quickened when he was raised from the dead; quickened together with him.

Fifthly, Nor are we thus considered — to wit, as dying and rising, and so left. But the apostle pursues his argument, and tells us that we also reap by him, as being considered in him, the benefit which Christ received, both in order to his resurrection, and the blessed effect thereof.

1. We received, by our thus being counted in him, that benefit which did precede his rising from the dead; and what was that but the forgiveness of sins? For this stands clear to reason, that if Christ had our sins charged upon him at his death, he then must be discharged of them in order to his resurrection. Now, though it is not proper to say they were forgiven to him, because they were purged from him by merit, yet they may be said to be forgiven us, because we receive this benefit by grace.

And this, I say, was done precedent to his resurrection from the dead: “He hath quickened us together with him, *having* forgiven us all trespasses.” He could not be “quickened” till we were “discharged;” because it was not for himself, but for us, that he died. Hence we are said to be at that time, as to our own personal estate, dead in our sins, even when we are “quickened together with him,” <SIDES> Colossians 2:13.

Therefore both the “quickening” and “forgiveness” too, so far as we are in this text concerned, is to him, as we are considered in him or to him, with respect to us.

Having forgiven you *all* trespasses. For necessity so required; because else how was it possible that the pains of death should be loosed in order to his rising, so long as one sin stood still charged to him, as that for the commission of which God had not received a plenary satisfaction? As therefore we suffered, died, and rose again by him; so, in order to his so rising, he, as presenting of us in his person and suffering, received for us remission of all our trespasses. A full discharge therefore was, in and by Christ, received of God of all our sins before he arose from the dead; as his resurrection truly declared; for

“he was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our
justification,” <RUAS> Romans 4:25.

This therefore is one of the privileges we receive by the rising again of our Lord; for that we were in his flesh considered, yea, and in his death and suffering too.

2. By this means also we have now escaped death.

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto (or, for) sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God,”
~~410~~Romans 6:9, 10.

Now in all this, considering what has been said before, we that are of the elect are privileged, for that we also are raised up by the rising of the body of Christ from the dead. And thus the apostle bids us reckon —

“Likewise reckon also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ,” ~~411~~Romans 6:11.

Hence Christ says, “he is the resurrection and the life,” for that all his are safe in him, suffering, dying, and rising. He is the life, our life; yea, so our life that by him the elect do live before God, even then when as to themselves they yet are dead in their sins. Wherefore, hence it is that in time they partake of quickening grace from this their head, to the making of them also live by faith, in order to their living hereafter with him in glory; for if Christ lives, they cannot die that were sharers with him in his resurrection. Hence they are said to “live,” being “quickened together with him.” Also, as sure as at his resurrection they lived “*by him*,” so sure at his coming shall they be gathered “to him;” nay, from that day to this all that, as aforesaid, were in him at his death and resurrection, are already, in the “fullness of the dispensation of time,” daily “gathering to him.” For this he hath purposed, wherefore none can disannul it —

“In the fullness of the dispensation of time, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him,” ~~412~~Ephesians 1:9, 10.

3. To secure this the more to our faith that believe, as we are said to be “raised up together with him,” so we are said “to be made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus;” ~~413~~Ephesians 2:6. We died by him, we rose by him, and are together, even all the elect set down together in “heavenly places in Christ Jesus;” for still even now he is on the right hand of God; he is to be considered as our public man, our head, and so one in whom is concluded all the elect of God. We then are by him already in heaven; in heaven, I say, by him; yea, set down there in our places of

glory by him. Hence the apostle, speaking of us again, saith, that as we are predestinate, we are called, justified, and glorified; called, justified, glorified, all is done, already done, as thus considered in Christ, ^{<488>}Romans 8:30. For that in his public work there is nothing yet to do as to this. Is not he called? Is not he justified? Is not he glorified? And are we not in him, in him, even as so considered?

Nor doth this doctrine hinder or forestal the doctrine of regeneration or conversion; nay, it lays a foundation for it; for by this doctrine we gather assurance that Christ will have his own; for if already they live in their head, what is that but a pledge that they shall live in their persons with him? and, consequently, that to that end they shall, in the times allotted for that end, be called to a state of faith, which God has ordained shall precede and go before their personal enjoyment of glory.

Nor doth this hinder their partaking of the symbol of regeneration, and of their other privileges to which they are called in the day of grace; yea, it lays a foundation for all these things; for if I am dead with Christ, let me be like one dead with him, even to all things to which Christ died when he hanged on the tree; and then he died to sin, to the law, and to the rudiments of this world, ^{<486>}Romans 6:10; ^{<487>}Romans 7:4; ^{<502>}Colossians 2:20.

And if I be risen with Christ, let me live, like one born from the dead, in newness of life, and having my mind and affections on the things where Christ now sitteth on the right hand of God. And indeed he professes in vain that talketh of these things, and careth not to have them also answered in himself. This was the apostle's way — namely, “To covet to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death,” ^{<509>}Philippians 3:9-13.

And when we are thus, that thing is true both in him and us. Then as is the heavenly, such are they that are heavenly; for he that saith he is in him, and by being in him a partaker of these privileges by him, “ought himself so to walk, even as he walked,” ^{<454>}1 Corinthians 15:48; ^{<606>}1 John 2:6, 8.