

Samuel Barnard

Eternal Justification

It gives me no small degree of pleasure, to find that I have another opportunity of addressing you in the defense of those truths which I have preached to you, since God in his providence cast my lot among you. I write not now to maintain a mere logical point, but to vindicate the truth, as it is in Jesus; which ought not to be palliated in order to accommodate it to the vicious and corrupt inclinations of any man; but faithfully and fully decked, whatever be the event; for the soul that is born of God, will not be satisfied without the living bread; and the carnal mind will not be satisfied, so long as one spiritual truth remains. So that either the children will cry because their food is taken away, or the enemies of Christ will hiss at the bread of life. A few days ago a Sermon was put into my hands, which the writer thereof calls Eternal Justification Unmasked, and as the scope of it {I find} tends to subvert some of the fundamental truths of the Gospel, and perplex the minds of the readers; I therefore thought it my duty to fortify your minds against those errors and absurdities which so manifestly abound therein. The author you may observe, begins his preface with a great deal of bustle and noise about ignorance, pride, boasting, &c., so that one is almost led to think, that he is one of those windy, vain, frothy, all-tongued, boastful and empty professors which he makes mention of in his next page. He then produces a great number of heavy charges against some person or persons, such as "being afraid to come to the light - their being ashamed of their tenets - heaping odiums upon the servants of Christ - dissuading their credulous and ignorant hearers to keep from every faithful minister, &c.," but as every discerning person who is acquainted with the author, will be able to see what all this rancor springs from; and knowing that the truth wants nothing of this kind for its support, I shall pass it by and not render railing for railing. But we must hasten now to consider the subject matter. Our author informs us, "that the notion of eternal justification appears to him a most dangerous one" and professes to "point out to us its dreadful tendency, to ruin the souls of his fellow sinners," and no doubt but he would inform us also, that the notion of eternal election is just as dangerous, and has the same tendency to ruin their souls as Eternal Justification; since they are both immanent acts of God, and this I have reason to believe, on reading his 15th page, on which I shall shortly make some remarks. He then proceeds to inform us, that "in the Scripture, we read of justification as something to be done in future; {which he tells us} would be a fault, if Justification was from eternity." Now in order to harmonize the Scriptures on this subject, you have to keep in mind, that very necessary distinction, between our justification, or freedom from condemnation before God and our Justification, or freedom from condemnation in our own consciences; the former is through the redemption that is in Christ, {Rom.3:24,} and the latter is enjoyed by faith, by which alone, we have peace with God. It is a pity, the author cannot make a proper distinction between Christ's putting away sin before God, and the Spirit's putting away the guilt thereof out of the believer's conscience. Having made this remark, let us proceed now to examine those Scriptures which he brings to prove, that "Justification is something to be done in future," one of which reads thus. "Now it was not written for his {Abraham} sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe &c.," {Rom.4:23,24,} from which passage he undoubtedly means to suggest, that Christ's righteousness is not imputed

to God's people until they believe. Now our Lord uses the very same form of speech to his disciples, as is used by the Apostle in the above mentioned passage. "Herein {says Christ} is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." {Jn.15:8, see also Jn.14:21} Now, as it is evident that they were his disciples at this time, our Lord could only mean that their bearing fruit would make it manifest. So here also, in the passage quoted by the author of JUSTIFICATION MASKED, when the Apostle says, "to whom it shall be imputed," he only means; that such as believe as Abraham did, it is manifest that they have the same righteousness imputed to them as he had. Besides, the persons among whom the Apostle includes himself, must be supposed to be real believers, by which it was manifest that the righteousness of Christ was imputed to them already. Now, if righteousness be not imputed until we believe, then it is not till then accepted of the Father; but if it be accepted of the Father at all, it is accepted on the behalf of all his people; and if accepted, it must be imputed, and if imputed, all those to whom it is imputed, must be justified before God. The next passage of Scripture which he produces to prove that "Justification is something to be done in the future" is, where the Apostle addresses the Galatians saying, "the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham &c.," {Gal.3:8,} by which we may learn, that the same righteousness which justified Abraham before God, justifies his people among the Gentiles before him. That this same doctrine of Christ's righteousness imputed for Justification before God is preached also among the Gentiles, to whom faith would be given to lay hold of and receive this righteousness, whereupon God would pronounce the sentence of Justification in their consciences, and from whence follow peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And here my brethren, I would wish you to remember, that whenever Faith is connected with Justification, it either relates to Christ and his Righteousness the Object of Faith; or has respect to Justification, in the conscience of the believer, in which sense it is that Justification is spoken of as something to be done in future. He tells us likewise, "that the Gospel was preached many years before the Gentiles were justified." Now if he mean before the Gentiles were justified in their own consciences, we grant it, but if he mean before God, we deny it; for in that sense they were justified as elect, {Rom.8:33,} and not as believing sinners or saints, {Rom.4:5,} and therefore must be justified, or freed from condemnation before God from eternity; {based upon Christ's accomplished work on the cross;} and for my part I cannot see how they that hold the one, can deny the other. This author of JUSTIFICATION MASKED; tells us in page the 11th, that "the Scriptures never speak of men in a state of nature as being in a justified state," to which I reply, that the Scripture speaks of men as Elect, while they are in a state of nature; and as nothing can be laid to their charge the Scripture must speak of men in a state of nature as being justified before God; because our calling has no influence on our Justification before God, for Justification is not a work of the Holy Spirit within us; though till he does so work, no man can know himself to be in a justified state. He tells us moreover in the same page, that "if they {the Ephesians} had been justified from eternity, they never could have been without Christ." It is a pity he did not give this sentence a little more thought before he wrote it; because then he might have been able to have made a distinction between a man's being out of Christ and without Christ; for even the elect themselves while they are in a state of nature are without Christ, that is Christ does not dwell in their hearts by faith; but there never was a moment in which they were out of Him, because they were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and preserved in Him and called. He tells us also in the

above mentioned page, that "it is evident from God's Word that unbelievers are condemned." Now we would be at a loss to know, whether he means that unbelievers are condemned before God, or in their own consciences; whether as considered in Adam, or as considered in Christ; had he not explained his meaning a little lower down, by telling us, that "an unbeliever is condemned before God." Poor man, he little thinks what would follow as consequences if his doctrine were true; but it will become us however painful, to enquire into them. "An unbeliever is condemned before God," and as he rightly observes, if the elect of God were unbelievers before they were brought to know the Truth as it is in Jesus, therefore the elect are condemned before God. He then jumbles together a number of Scriptures to amuse the readers, and tells them in page 12th, that "while the elect remain in unbelief, they are condemned, {namely, before God as he thinks,} for he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." {Jn.3:18} Now had he said that the elect as viewed in Adam are condemned; we should have agreed with him, because "by the offence of one, {Adam} judgment came upon all men to condemnation." But the elect must be considered in Christ, because chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and therefore if the elect be condemned before God, Christ must be condemned before God, because he is the Head, and they the members, and if this do not border upon blasphemy I know not what does? Again this notion, that "the elect are condemned before God" overturns the doctrine of the atonement, for if the elect be condemned before God, their sin must be charged before him, for sin and condemnation are inseparable; and if the sins of the elect stand charged before God, then God cannot be reconciled, and if God be not reconciled, the author has no Gospel to preach, for can it be Good News for a poor sinner to be informed that notwithstanding Christ hath died for sin, yet that very sin for which Christ died stands charged before God, and the persons who committed it condemned before him? Surely not, and yet this is the author's opinion if his words have any meaning; so that at the most he can only represent in his preaching, that God is reconcilable, and that he will be quite reconciled upon our believing. I am sorry to find him among such company! Again if this doctrine were true; namely, that "the elect are condemned before God," it would be no hard matter to prove that he and all to whom he preaches must go to Hell; for if the sins of God's people stand charged before Him, they must remain charged, for if Christ has not put away sin from before God by the sacrifice of Himself, he never will do it; and it is in vain for the author to say that it is put away on our believing, for though faith receives, yet it does not make the atonement; and if sin be charged before God before we believe, it must remain charged after we have believed for all that faith can do for us. So that every soul, upon this plan must go to Hell, for who can go to Heaven with his sins charged, and he condemned before God? Now the passage which he brings to prove that "while the elect remain in unbelief they are condemned before God" reads thus, "he that believeth not is condemned already, &c.," and so he is as viewed in Adam, as he is also in his own conscience, but not before God as considered in Christ, for in that sense there is no condemnation to such. He proceeds to inform us, that an unbeliever cannot be in a state of special favor with God; that is, if I understand him right, God has no particular regard for, or love to an unbeliever. Now as he rightly observes the elect are unbelievers by nature, therefore the import of his reasoning is to show that God has no special love towards his elect until they believe. I would ask then, was it no mark of love or special favor towards the elect for God to give his Son to die for them? Was it no mark of God's special favor for him to send his Spirit into their hearts to quicken,

regenerate them? Though perhaps the author thinks that we believe first, and then God gives us his Son, and sends his Spirit into our hearts, and if so, I wish him all the comfort that such a tenet can afford him. Here we may observe my brethren, that he has put faith as the matter of a sinners justification before God instead of the obedience of Christ, or the redemption that is in Him; although the Apostle tells us, that we are justified {before God} freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and that by the Obedience of One, shall many be made righteous. And if this have not a tendency to embarrass the minds of his hearers and to mislead them, I know not what has. Paul tells us, that there is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," {Rom.8:1,} and as we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, {Eph.1:4} then we must be justified before God as early. Again, as nothing can be laid to the charge of God's elect, {Rom.8:33,} then all God's elect must be justified before him in Christ's Righteousness, which Righteousness is called an everlasting righteousness; {Dan.9:24;} a Righteousness everlastingly accepted of God, on the behalf of his people. But let us attend now to the text which the author brings to prove that "unbelievers cannot be in a state of special favor with God." It reads thus, "he that believeth not shall be damned." {Mk.16:16} Now here you have to remark, brethren, that our Lord cannot mean that he that believeth not {now this moment} shall be damned, because many who are now in unbelief may hereafter have faith given them, and they brought to believe to the saving of their souls. It can only mean then, that he that lives and dies in a state of unbelief shall be damned. And this we acknowledge, which we may do, without saying with the author of JUSTIFICATION MASKED; that "the elect while unbelievers, cannot be in a state of special favor with God." Now had he said that the elect while in a state of unbelief are not known to be in a state of special favor with God; we would have agreed with him, for although God loves his people with an everlasting love, yet it cannot be known to themselves nor others until they are called by grace. He then proceeds to close the 12th page by telling us, that "the unbelief of Israel of old sorely grieved the Lord and made him angry, that he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest, so that we see they could not enter in because of unbelief. Thus it appears from God's own Word, that no unbeliever can be in a justified state." {page 13th} Now the scope of the author's reasoning is as follows; namely, because Israel entered not into the land of Canaan on account of their unbelief, therefore the elect while in a state of unbelief cannot be justified before God in the Righteousness of Christ. What reasoning! For although unbelief kept Israel out of the land of Canaan, unbelief will never keep the elect out of Heaven, for faith is one of those spiritual blessings which is treasured up in Christ for them; they are chosen to and through it to salvation, and {all the spiritual Israel} shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. Beside the rest spoken of in the above mentioned passage is not a type of Heaven, but of the spiritual rest of the saints which they that believe enter into. So that this passage is nothing at all to his purpose. He closes the paragraph by saying, "therefore we must be justified when we believe and not before." Now if he mean in our own consciences we grant it, but if he mean before God we deny it; till he can prove that the Righteousness of Christ is not accepted in the behalf of his people till they believe. Now be it remembered, that although God's elect have not an actual being from eternity, yet it was certain with God that they should have one; for known unto him are all his works from the beginning, or from eternity. {Acts 15:18} Beside it should be remembered also, that the elect have a Representative being in Christ, even such a being as makes them capable of being blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings, and why not

capable of being justified in Him, since justification is not a work that is wrought in them, but an act of grace towards them, as election is. To me it appears plain from the Word of God that the faith of God's elect is a Divine Grace, and believing is the immediate effect thereof. Faith is not a grace of union, but of communion; and the essence of faith is not merely an act of the mind giving credit to the Divine Testimony; but a Grace of the Spirit in the heart maintained by Christ its Author and Finisher. This idea of a time union made by faith supposes a time when we were out of Christ, or there could be no occasion for grafting us in, and then instead of the Apostle saying, "he hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world," he should have said, he hath chosen us out of Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be grafted into Him in time, for the author tells us, "the branch must be made before it can be grafted on that fruitful Vine Christ Jesus." So he seems, to have no idea of anything but a time election or union, therefore we find that his election and justification before God bear the same date. The idea of grafting into Christ in time, has not the least foundation in the Word of God; and neither the author, nor any other person can bring us one passage of Scripture to prove a union to Christ by grafting. The word occurs nowhere in the Bible that I know of, but in the 11th of Romans, and whoever reads the 17th verse of that chapter, must see that the Apostle has no such thing as grafting into Christ in view, for it is a grafting in among them which he there speaks of; so that the whole scheme of grafting into Christ by faith is a mere fiction; and without foundation in the Word of God; therefore to be rejected as erroneous. The author informs us also that "while we were unbelievers we were condemned, and if so, we could not be united to Christ;" which implies if we be united to him, we are not condemned, but justified. Now Paul tells us, that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world; and Jude says, "preserved in Christ Jesus and called." So that if we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world then we could not be out of him; and if we were preserved in him, we were not preserved out of him; and if we were called in him, we were not out of him when called. Therefore as we were chosen in Christ, preserved in Christ, and called in Christ, then we must be justified in Christ; for as all that are out of Christ are condemned before God on account of their sins; all that are in Christ must be justified before God, from every charge that can be brought against them; for as out of him we cannot be justified, so in him we cannot be condemned before God. Thus it appears that according to our author's own reasoning, as it does also from the Word of God, that eternal election and eternal justification must stand or fall together. I very well know what puzzles the author and those of his sentiments; their not being able to account for a man's being justified and condemned at the same time. But this difficulty my brethren will soon be removed by considering that all God's people have relation to two heads; namely, Adam and Christ, and while they are condemned in the former, they are justified and complete in the righteousness of the latter. Besides, a man may be justified before God in the righteousness of Christ, as are all the elect; and yet condemned in his own conscience for want of knowing it. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified {manifestly and in his own conscience} by faith. At the bottom of the same 15th page the author says, "if the elect were justified from eternity, they never could fall nor be in a lost condition." What ignorance! Whereas God's choosing them to salvation implies, that he viewed them in that state in Adam before the choice was made and he did not choose them in Christ to prevent their falling by sin, but to prevent their falling into Hell for their sin, as before observed and therefore Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost, as were all his people as viewed in Adam; and the coming of Christ in the flesh was to fulfill

his Covenant Engagements with his Father, on the behalf of those his people. Though as considered in Adam we were condemned and lost; yet as considered in Christ, we were justified before God, and that too before we believed, though we were not justified in our own consciences until after we believed. Nor can the author of JUSTIFICATION MASKED overturn this truth, unless he can prove that we are not chosen in Christ till after we believed; for if the Head be justified before God, so must the members; and if the members be condemned, so must the Head. He tells us towards the close of the above mentioned page that "if men were justified from eternity, nothing could be laid to their charge; if so, where is the justice of God the Father in causing the sword to awake against the Man that was his fellow?" I answer because Christ in the Eternal Counsel of Peace became a Surety for his people, took their debt upon himself, and promised to pay it; to fulfill which promise, was the errand upon which he came in the flesh. Therefore if the author could but see it just of a creditor to demand the debt of a surety, which he has taken upon himself, when the time agreed upon between them is expired; he might then see the justice of God in punishing his own Son for his people's sins. Samuel Barnard {An Address to the Congregation at the New Chapel, Dagger-Lane, Kingston-Upon-Hull, in which is vindicated the Doctrine of Justification, 1790}