

Robert Purnell

{1606-1666}

Robert Purnell {1606-1666} was a carpet weaver by trade, an early Baptist, probably a native of Bristol, England. Purnell attended the Broadmead Church in Bristol {established in 1640,} of which church he was a member for many years. It is clear from the Church Records that the question of believer's baptism did not become an issue until 1653, when he, along with others, established the Broadmead Church along Baptist principles. The pastor of Broadmead, Thomas Ewins, {Note: Thomas Ewins, who became the pastor at Broadmead in 1651 was later imprisoned for his preaching; and according to Edmund Calamy he was "No scholar, and yet . . . a judicious methodical preacher. He was remarkable for having but one eye." A political opponent said "Ewins is the most dangerous Anabaptist that ever lived, and has seduced thousands by his seditious teaching."} and Purnell were both baptized in London by Henry Jessey, and Purnell became a ruling elder of the congregation. According to the official Church Record of Broadmead, we find the following entry, dated 1654, "our pastor, or teacher, Mr. Ewins, and the ruling elder that then was, namely, brother Robert Purnell - who, before that apostasy, {speaking of Quakers that had infiltrated their assembly, and were taking un-established 'members' of the church captive; a thing not uncommon at this period. Interestingly Cromwell, in his speech to Parliament in 1654 declared "that emissaries of the Jesuits never came in these swarms, - referring to the Quakers - as they have done since these things were set on foot."} was a deacon, but after was chosen an elder, and brother Moone chosen a deacon; I say, those two were pressed in their spirits to take up the ordinance of baptism, of which they were before enlightened; especially brother Purnell, for several years, had been convinced of his duty therein, but omitted the practice thereof. Thus, they being now stirred up to their duty, to glorify God in their day, in owning his commands in the gospel, and in laying aside the traditions of man in worship, these two, namely Mr. Ewins and Mr. Purnell, went to London, and took up the ordinance of baptism. And they were accordingly baptized by brother Mr. Henry Jessey, after which they came down, and proceeded in the church and work of the Lord. Thus there seemed to be hinted why the great breach was made, because they had not walked faithful to their light in the ordinances of God {such kind of fear was upon their spirits;} and that they had not kept close to the Holy Scriptures for the rule of worship, and to the footsteps of the flock, the example or path of the primitive saints, recorded in holy writ; and they blamed themselves in that they had not rejected all notions of men whatsoever for matters of worship, than what is plainly laid down in the written word." Purnell wrote a number of books, his largest work entitled, A Little Cabinet Richly Stored, {1657,} is a large volume of 467 pages, and is in itself a small 'body of divinity,' which in effect also became a catechism for the congregation at Broadmead. He wrote: 1. 'Good Tidings for Sinners,' London, 1649. 2. 'No Power but of God,' London, 1652. 3. 'England's Remonstrance, or a Word in the Ear to the scattered discontented Members of the late Parliament ... likewise a Word to the present Assembly at Westminster and the Council of State,' 1653. 4. 'The Way to Heaven discovered,' Bristol, {in favor of the doctrine of grace and the true love of God,} 1653. 5. 'The Church of Christ in Bristol recovering her Vail out of the Hands of Them that have smitten and wounded Her, and taken it away,' London, 1657. 6. 'A little Cabinet richly stored with all Sorts of Heavenly Varieties,' London, 1657. 7. 'The Way Step by Step to sound and saving Conversion,' London, 1659. Purnell died in 1666; and we find the following entry in the Church Record book, in reference to the selection of an elder upon the death of their beloved friend and brother in Christ, "Before this time, our brother Purnell, the eldest ruling elder, being in the ninth month last deceased, the church had several times under consideration, whom to choose and make a ruling elder in his stead. At last, upon the third of the twelfth month, being the Lord's day, anno 1666, two of the brethren were proposed, that one of them might be chosen, namely, brother Richard White, and brother Edward Terrill, which were desired to depart; and accordingly they went to their homes. Then

it being put to the vote, all the brethren were for brother Terrill, except the two principal, viz., Mr. Ewins, pastor, and brother Ellis, the only ruling elder left." Though Purnell was unquestionably firm in his attachments to the Gospel of God's Free & Sovereign Grace in Christ; nevertheless there is in his writings a subtle drifting away from the high-grace sentiments of a few of the earlier Baptists; namely the signers of the First London Confession, men like Kiffin, Spilsbury & Richardson ... as a subtle Conditionalism, flawed Christology...in line with men of mixed notions like Keach, Bunyan... began to rear their ugly head. MPJ

Unconditional & Everlasting Covenant of Grace

It is an Everlasting Covenant, {Jer.32:40,} "And I will make an everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." The motives that did move God to make this Covenant, was his everlasting love; and the Righteousness upon which it is grounded, is everlasting Righteousness. In this Covenant is presented to us everlasting pardon, everlasting kindness, everlasting mercy, everlasting joy and consolation, and everlasting life and salvation. - In the Covenant of Grace we may find the mouth of the Law stopped, and all the accusations of Satan answered, and the justice of God fully satisfied. God will have all blessings and happiness to flow to us, through and by the Covenant of Grace. 1. That the worst of sinners may have strong ground of hope. 2. For the praise of his own glory. 3. That vain man may not boast. 4. That our mercies and blessings may be sure to us, our salvation is by grace, saith Paul; {Rom.4:16;} that the promises might be sure to us; for if it in any sense depended upon works, we could not be sure thereof. Reader, understand these four choice things, viz. 1. That Christ by the will of God gave himself a Ransom and Sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor unto God, in behalf of the Elect. {Jn.6:27, Heb.5:10, 10:9,10, Eph.5:2} 2. That this ransom was alone, and by itself a perfect satisfaction to Divine Justice for all their sin, {Heb.1:3,} "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," {Heb.10:10,} "by the which will we are sanctified, by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," {vs.14,} "for by one offering he hath perfected forever, them that are sanctified," {I Jn.1:7,} "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin." 3. That God accepted it, and declared himself well pleased, and fully satisfied therewith, {Mt.3:17,} "and lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased," {Isa.42:1-8} "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house. I am the LORD; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another," {Is.43:25,} "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." 4. That by this ransom of Christ we are delivered from the curse of the Law, {Gal.3:13,} "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." To close up all as to the nature of this Covenant; let me tell thee the main substance of the Covenant is in these words, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people," sprinkling them with clean water, taking away the stony heart, and giving a heart of flesh, all these are nothing but the fruits of the Covenant. So Christ is given for a Covenant to the people; that is the Covenant of Grace takes its being from Christ to us. Adam was all mankind, as all mankind was in Adam, in the loins of Adam; so

Christ is the Covenant, and all the Covenant is as it were in the loins of Christ, and springs to us out of him. - This Covenant was not made with us, but with Christ for us; God did not make this Covenant with us, we were children of disobedience and of wrath, who were not capable of any such Covenant and Conditions, but it was made with Christ for us, that upon the making of his soul an offering for sin, he would give unto his seed eternal life, {Zech.9:11,} "As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." - The Covenant made with Christ, hath these promises, {Gen.12:3,} "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," {II Cor.1:20,} "all the promises of God, are Yea and Amen in him;" so then this Covenant was made with him actively, as a person that performed all the conditions upon which the promises were grounded; but with us passively, as the persons to whom the benefits of these promises do belong. If Christ merited nothing for himself, but wholly for the Elect of God, then all the promises made to him do belong to them; or the Covenant which was made with him as Mediator, doth belong to us, for whom he doth mediate. Now the parties concerned in this Covenant, are first God the Father, and Jesus Christ the Mediator, and the Church or body of Christ, for whom he was to mediate. Now this Covenant being made with Christ, he as a Surety is bound to perform and see performed all the duties that God requires of believers; so he was arrested, and brought to the bar of God's justice, where he is convicted, adjudged, and arraigned as a sinful transgressor, so he suffered the uttermost rigor of the Law, and not one grain of justice abated him, nor a farthing of the debt forgiven him, no nor so much as one sin unaccounted for or not blotted out, till satisfaction was first made and given. - Now if we would yet farther know when this Covenant was made with Christ for us, let us weigh that text, {Eph.1:4,} "we are chosen in him, before the foundation of the world." Now if Election be before the foundation of the world, {as most certainly it is,} then also by the same ground the Covenant or Promise was made before the foundation of the world, for the word doth prove the one as well as the other; these promises were made first to Christ on our behalf, before they are made to us, because the whole work of our redemption and salvation, was transacted between the Father and the Son, before the foundation of the world, and is afterwards revealed to us in due time, as is evident. "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." {Tit.1:2} "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." {II Tim.1:9} In this Covenant the Lord doth bequeath grace and glory on no other condition, but the death of the Testator, that is, Christ Jesus; and it will plainly appear in this Covenant of grace, that there is no condition on our part to entitle us to the blessing of it; it is true, to our Head Christ, this Covenant was conditional, though to us it is free; to him it was a Covenant of works, hence Christ is called the Mediator, Witness and Surety of this New Covenant, and that this Covenant is without conditions on our part, will appear more fully by these ensuing reasons. 1. Because a Covenant of Free Grace cannot stand with conditions, for if it had conditions it would not be of grace, for grace is not grace, if it be not every way free, {Rom.11:6,} "and if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace, &c." 2. Because to give a thing freely and conditionally are contradictions; and to say there is conditions as to us, is to eclipse the grace of God, and to open a door for vain man to boast. So that the whole glory of our justification and salvation ought to be given to the grace of God, and to the merits of Christ. If either of them did depend, and were obtained by works and conditions performed by us, it would not be of

grace. 3. Because that justification by grace, without conditions on our part, is the life and soul of the Gospel, {Gal.1:6,7,} "I marvel that you are moved from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel, which is not another, but there be some that would pervert the Gospel;" how can there be another Gospel, and yet not another Gospel? First it is not another, because it is not possible there should be two Gospels; yet another Gospel, because men did turn it aside in point of justification. 4. Because if any qualification or grace in us be a condition, Faith must needs be the condition, or one of the conditions; but if faith should be the condition of the Covenant of Grace, then it differs nothing from a Covenant of Works, for it is as impossible a thing for a man to believe, as it is to keep the whole Law. Again, Faith cannot be the condition of the Covenant, because we obtain it by the same means we obtain all other good things else, to wit by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. "Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." {II Pet.1:1} Again, Faith and Repentance, Justification and Sanctification, are things purchased by Christ for us, and freely given to us, and are the effects and consequences of the Covenant, as doth appear. "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." {Ez.36:27} "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them; and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." {Jer.32:38-40} "I will make them to lie down safely; and I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the LORD." {Hos.2:18-20} It is true, Faith and Repentance are means of our enjoying the comforts of the Covenant, but not the conditions flowing out of the nature of the Covenant. So that all the blessings of the New Covenant are called gifts, not conditions, {Rom.5:17,18 compared with Rom.6:23,} and these are gifts that are given freely. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." {I Cor.2:12} We choose him, because he first chose us; and we love him, because he first loveth us; we cannot say God is our God, till he doth first say, we are his people; we cannot say we will run after him, till he doth first draw us; neither can we bring forth fruit, unless we abide in the Vine; nor purify ourselves as he is pure, unless we have this hope in us; so that we may not expect the effects before the cause, nor the light before the sun, or heat before the fire. There be no conditions in this Covenant, because it works and effects in us all things required of us. Now faith, repentance and obedience doth indeed describe the Persons that are saved, but not the terms or conditions upon which they do obtain salvation; that interpretation of any Scripture, that doth involve a contradiction, is not to be admitted; but to say faith is the condition of the Covenant, is an express contradiction. – Therefore, it is impossible that any soul should enjoy a firm and settled peace, whose confidence towards God is grounded upon conditional promises, or his own best and choicest performances. For the wanting in himself, the condition of the one, and not yielding a perfect, exact, universal, perpetual obedience to the other, the Law will be condemning, conscience accusing, and the heart misgiving, and all proclaiming that there is still in all thy duties imperfection, something polluted, and something defective, so that thy most spiritual duties are not wound up to command, they are all tainted with

disproportion to rule, and polluted with spots, so that it is in vain to expect a bed of rest in the barren wilderness of our own performances, for that bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and the covering is narrower than that a man can wrap himself in it. Oh the spots, the blots, the blemishes that are to be seen upon the face of our fairest duties; so that we may say with the Church, {Isa.64:6,} that all our righteousness are as filthy rags, which if rested upon will as certainly undo us, and everlastingly destroy us, as the greatest evil that can be committed by us; the consideration of this was the cause of those words, {Hos.14:3,} "neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy;" and {Jer.3:23,} "truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains; truly in the LORD our God is the salvation of Israel." by Robert Purnell {A Little Cabinet Richly Stored, 1657}

Justification by Grace in Christ

The question is not so much about the time, and terms, and matter of our Justification, but how we are made righteous in the sight of God, which the Scriptures do affirm, to be by the perfect righteousness of Christ alone, which God doth impute to all his seed freely, without works and conditions performed by us. 1. Consider if the righteousness by which we are justified, be a perfect righteousness, then we are not justified by our obedience to Gospel precepts, but the righteousness whereby we are justified is a perfect righteousness, which is the righteousness of Christ alone, {Heb.1:8, Mt.6:33, Rom.4:6,} an everlasting righteousness, {Psal.119:142, 22:31, 35:28,} that righteousness which justifieth us before God, as it is not ours, so it is not in us. But as it is Christ's righteousness, so it is in him, "In me you shall have righteousness and strength," {Ps.71:15,16,19,24,} "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Justice and mercy do both meet in this Justification. Justice, in that he will not justify a sinner without a perfect righteousness; and yet mercy, in that he will accept him for such a righteousness; that is, neither in him, nor done by him, but by his Surety for him. {The joy of a Believer would always be unspeakable, did he always apprehend his happiness in and by Christ alone. In a word, the pure, glorious, matchless and spotless righteousness of Christ is a souls righteousness and resting place. "I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only," for thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness." - Jer.33:16 - the perfection of Christ's righteousness is held forth unto us, and always lieth before us, that we may be thankful for it, and peaceable with it, and rejoice in the Bestower of it.} 2. Consider the Apostles all along were very careful to keep this Doctrine of Justification by grace distinct from all other things, they all along do oppose the Law and grace, works and faith, our righteousness and Christ's righteousness, teaching us thereby how needful it is they should be kept asunder. Justification by grace hath been and will be the bone of contention till the next coming of Christ. Why so? Because learning cannot reach it, natural wisdom is confounded at it, evil spirits do not know it, most men do persecute it, as being bereaved of the knowledge of it, or else corrupt it in the simplicity of it. Consider we should not be justified by grace, if any condition were required of us, in order to our justification; for the condition whatsoever performed, makes the Covenant a due debt; then justification should not be of grace, but of debt, contrary to the express words of Scripture. - This Doctrine is as the foundation and basis of all Christian Religion. This Doctrine is the inlet of all spiritual divine peace and consolation. This is the root and

spring of all Gospel obedience. This Doctrine is the great stop and bar to keep out all floods of error. This Doctrine is the main support of a soul under all trials. This is the great Doctrine by which Satan's kingdom is undermined and overthrown. This is the Doctrine that Satan doth most war against, either to pervert or corrupt. This Doctrine is the most hardest piece to be learned, it being wholly supernatural in every part of it, above the reach of nature, and all things in us do oppose it. This Doctrine is the Root and Spring of all Gospel obedience, whatsoever men call obedience, if it ariseth not from hence, it is but forced and legal; for we must get up Gospel principles, if we would keep up Gospel practices. This Doctrine received, and the heart therein established, will be a stop and bar to keep out all floods of error. The floods of all error flow in at the pipe of ignorance, and especially ignorance of this very thing; namely, the Doctrine of Grace. The error of the Papists {the Papists hold that we are not justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed, but by the righteousness of Christ inherent in us, and righteous actions done by us} of building and resting upon works, springs from their ignorance of this blessed Doctrine; the error of the Quaker springs purely from hence; the error of the Arminian springs in at the same pipe, partly by works, and partly by grace; they not seeking salvation by grace, but as it were by the works of the Law, they stumbled and fell. {Rom.9:32} And all the instability, formality, legality that there is at this day appearing amongst the Presbyterian, Independent and Baptist, or any other people professing godliness, doth arise from their ignorance or their little knowledge in this great mystery; nay farther, did you ever read, or from any true Christian hear, that any man or woman that was acquainted with, and in some good measure established in this Doctrine of grace {by the Spirit's direct infusion of this truth into the heart, thereby generating a deep love to the same - "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved"} infected with, and overcome by these floods of error, that doth now swarm among us? Oh how doth Satan pollute and defile the souls and judgments of men, with Christ-dishonoring and soul undoing opinions. Robert Purnell {A Little Cabinet Richly Stored, 1657}