

# **Justification of the Ungodly in Christ Alone**

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## **{Notes on Scripture Texts Concerning the Imputation of Sin & Righteousness, 1748}**

The sinner that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, even him that raised Christ from the dead, finds nothing about himself that can encourage him to expect Justification, but everything serving to lead him to despair. If justifying Grace were dispensed according to any fitness whereby one man may be differenced from another as better qualified for it; he could find no such fitness, no such qualification in him to encourage him to look for that Grace, but rather the contrary; as Paul says of himself, "Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am chief." If his acceptance with God should go upon any terms which he must fulfill, he finds himself as much without strength to fulfill them, {and especially that of sincerity, for the "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it,"} as Abraham found himself for becoming a father when his body was now dead. In a word, he views himself in that same point of light wherein the Divine Mercy held men in sending the Son of God to die for them, and wherein his death respected them; namely, as sinners, and enemies to God; as ungodly, and without strength; {Rom.5:6,8,10;} and so he works not to make himself righteous, but, seeing all his works against the hope of his Justification, prays, as the Publican, "God be propitious to me, a sinner." For in believing, or giving credit to the testimony of the Gospel concerning the resurrection of the Son of God, who, when we were yet without strength, in due time died for the ungodly, and rose again for their Justification, he finds good ground for the hope of being justified by that revealed Righteousness which is unto all and upon all that believe, without difference. He sees good ground to hope for the blessedness of the man to whom God Imputeth Righteousness without works. So his hope of being justified is against his feeling and experience; but it is according to his Faith; for there is a glorious ground of hope in that which he believes; and so he walks in this step of Abraham's Faith, "believing in hope against hope." There was such a certainty in Abraham's Faith, such a firm persuasion of that which was spoken, that no objection could stand in his mind against the Truth of it, and no room was left there for a thought of the possibility of its being false. He was very certain, that what was spoken was indeed the Faithful Word of God, and so assent to it as his Testimony, for whom it is impossible to lie; for he believed God; he gave credit to him, who calleth those things which be not as though they were; and such was his confidence in the Word of God, that the consideration of his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, and of the deadness of Sarah's womb, was not able to shake it. His Faith did not admit this to consideration as an objection against the Word of God; so he "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, - being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able to perform." {Rom.5:19-21} And such a certainty there is in the Faith of Abraham's children believing on

Him that justifieth the ungodly; as we may see from such texts as these: "A declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us." {Lk.1:1} "And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." {Jn.6:69} "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." {Jn.17:8} "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." {Heb.11:1} "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." {Heb.3:14} "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." {I Thes.1:5} "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." {I Thes.2:13} "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." {I Jn.5:9,10} "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." {Heb.10:22} "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." {Js.1:6} He that believes on him that justifies the ungodly cannot be doubting of that which he hears God saying; and the consideration of his own unfitness to be justified, even the impossibility of his being justified in the natural way, cannot make him stagger at the Word of God; cannot shake his persuasion, that God, who raised Christ from the dead, for the Justification of sinners is able to make him, a sinner, blessed by the Imputation of Righteousness without works; for he looks on the Word of God which he believes, as of the same power with that by which the worlds were framed, calling the things that be not as though they were, even as did Abraham; and so the Faith of God's Word has a certainty in it. When we believe on him that raised up Christ for the Justification of the ungodly, we believe that we may be justified by this; and the hope that arises from this Faith or Belief, is the hope of being made just, or of becoming just, by the Imputation of this Righteousness alone. And so the certainty or assurance that is in this Faith, is the assurance of this, that the Righteousness of the Son of God raised for the Justification of the ungodly for whom he died, is enough to justify us ungodly sinners; is sufficient, without anything added, to make us just in the sight of God. - The doubting that is opposed to Faith in the blood of the Son of God for Justification by the remission of sins, must be our hesitating about the sufficiency of that blood alone to justify us, and our not being fully persuaded by the Testimony of God that it is able to make us just, when we can find nothing about ourselves to contribute to our Justification, but everything making against it.

Abraham gave glory to God when he believed in hope against hope, according to what was spoken, and was strong in that Faith. If he could have contributed anything toward the making good of that which was spoken, he had then something to glory in before another not so fit as he. But when it was quite otherwise, he gave God the whole glory of that which he believed God alone was able to perform. His Faith glorified him as God who raises the dead and calls those things that be not as though they were. Even so, when we work not to make ourselves just, but believe on him that raised Jesus for the Justification of the ungodly, we give him the whole glory of our Justification, as not pretending to

contribute anything toward it ourselves, but acknowledging him who distinguishes himself as God, and manifests his glory in this Justification.

A sinner that studies to be made fitter than another for being justified, cannot be believing the sufficiency of Christ's Righteousness to justify him, nor glorifying God who justifies the ungodly by that Righteousness. He that would work to make himself righteous, must suppose to himself a God that will not punish every transgression, nor curse everyone that continues not in all things commanded. He must suppose to himself a God that will justify by an imperfect Righteousness; and so loves not Righteousness, nor hates iniquity as God, but as he would pretend to do himself. But he that believes on him that raised Jesus from the dead for the Justification of sinners respects him as God, showing the infinite opposition of his goodness unto all iniquity in the death of Christ delivered for the offenses of sinners and showing his love to Righteousness, as justifying by a perfect Righteousness in raising him from the dead; even that Righteousness which the Son of God finished on the cross; and so not being ignorant of the justice of God, he goes not about to establish his own Righteousness, but glorifies the name of the righteous Father, whom the world knew not, as that name is manifested by Jesus Christ.

Again, the sinner that works to make himself just, must suppose to himself a God that has no mercy to show to the worthless and miserable, {the only proper objects of mercy,} nor any Grace to manifest but unto those who differ from others by some excelling qualifications. He must suppose to himself a God who cannot show mercy to whom he will, but according to those differences whereby sinners may glory over one another, saying, as the Pharisee, "God, I think thee I am not as other men, or as this publican;" but he that believes on him that raised Christ for the Justification of sinners acknowledges the glory of the Divine Mercy and Grace in sending the Son of God, substituting him in the room of the ungodly to whom God would show mercy, delivering him for their offenses and raising him for their Justification, without respect to any difference wherein one man can find himself excelled by another. And he that works not, but believes to be justified by Grace freely through the redemption that is in Christ's blood, gives God the glory of his mercy; saying, as the publican, "God be propitious to me, a sinner."

{Note this observation by Mr. Glas in another work entitled, The Scheme of Justification, regarding the manner of setting forth this truth, and the shift of emphasis between the Reformers, and those who pretended to follow in their footsteps: In the place of Free Justification by God's Grace through the Redemption that is in Christ's blood, much insisted on by the Reformers against the Romish Church, even as it had been before by the Apostles against the Jews and Judaizing Christians, laboring more in setting forth the revealed righteousness to be believed, against everything opposed to it, than in any descriptions of the exercise of the mind and heart in believing; they now began to insist much more in their sermons on free electing grace, but especially on the efficacious power of that grace in the conversion of the elect, working unfeigned faith in them, and turning them to God in a sincere repentance. And when this took the place of the answer of a good conscience toward God by Christ's resurrection, as the spring of Christian religion; it was attended with large descriptions on how a man should find himself under the operation of that free and efficacious grace, calling him effectually, regenerating and converting him to receive Christ by a true faith, and to repentance unto life;

and whilst the things set forth in these descriptions were things accompanying salvation, like the work and labor of love, the fruit of faith in the blood of the Son of God shed for the remission of sins; the effect of this strain of doctrine upon them that hearkened to it, was in fact their seeking peace with God and rest to their consciences by what they might feel in themselves, the motions of their hearts, and the exercises of their souls, in compliance with the call to faith and repentance, under that efficacious operation of grace, which they hoped to find in using those means whereby they supposed it to be conveyed. Or if they could persuade themselves that they had found it, then they looked on themselves as already converted, and in a state of favor with God; comforting themselves against the fears of losing the divine favor again, by the inadmissibility of grace, or the perseverance of the saints. But however different this be from the doctrine of Arminius concerning electing and converting grace, and perseverance; yet it comes to the very same thing with him at last, as to the grand point of the justification of a sinner before God. For, whether the Pharisee, in the parable, proposing himself to the publican, as more fit for acceptance, did thank God in whole or in part for what he was, in distinction from him and other sinners; yet his confidence, in coming before him for acceptance, was in what he found himself to be, and in what he did, either by the general assistance of God's grace, or by the efficacious operation of his special grace, working all in him irresistibly. How opposite to this is the publican's way of coming before God; finding nothing about himself but what makes him the object of the Divine abhorrence, and having no better thing to say of himself than that he is a sinner, and so a meet object for the Divine mercy and grace justifying freely through the propitiation for sin, set forth to declare the Divine justice in justifying the ungodly; he has no other ground of confidence but that in appearing before God, nor anything else to encourage him to hope for his favor and acceptance with him; and so his address to God is in these words, God be propitious to me a sinner. Now "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."}

Thus we have seen the steps of Abraham's Faith wherein they walk who believe in Christ for Righteousness, and we may be encouraged to walk in them by these words of the prophet. "Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD; look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the LORD shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody." {Is.51:1-3}