

Justification by Grace in Christ

by Robert Purnell

{A Little Cabinet Richly Stored, 1657}

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.