

GOD THE JUSTIFIER.

ONE great object of the Gospel is to enlighten men as to the true character of God, as He has been revealed in Christ, and this in order that men may be encouraged *to turn to God*. The Apostle Paul preached everywhere that men should *repent and turn to God*. Conversion means turning to God. In turning to God men receive grace and blessing because He is the God of all grace, and One who delights to bless.' There is no blessing for men apart from God. God is the source of all good. The work of the devil has been to deceive man, to instil into his mind evil thoughts about God, and thus to alienate him from God. His great object is to keep man away from God, and in order to this, he uses all kinds of means to keep him in the dark. He blinds the minds of those who do not believe. In Christ God has been pleased to reveal Himself : the light of the glory of God shines in the face of Jesus Christ. He is the image of God, that is, He represents God to us. In the ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation

of Jesus to glory, everything of God has been revealed, and is now presented to men in the preaching of the Gospel. Paul was told to open the eyes of men, that is to enlighten them as to the true character of God, in order that they might turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Whoever turns to God, receives forgiveness of his sins, and an inheritance, a heavenly and eternal one (Acts xxvi. 18). The effect of his preaching was seen in the Thessalonians, of whom it is said they “*turned to God* from idols, to serve the living and true God,” instead of serving dead idols.

There is nothing now to hinder a sinful man turning to God, because He has appointed a *Mediator*, One who gave Himself a ransom for all. In Christ Jesus God can meet man as a sinner, and in Him the sinner can meet God. The blood has been sprinkled on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. In virtue of the blood of Jesus, God’s throne has become a mercy seat ; nothing but mercy issues from it at the present time. The way is open, and God is saying “Come.”

Now one character in which God is now revealed is that of a *Justifier*, the One who

justifies the ungodly. On the ground of the death of Jesus, God is able to present Himself in this character to all men. Redemption has been accomplished, the death of Jesus has displayed and vindicated God's righteousness. In Jesus dying for us, God has judged sin as it deserved to be judged. He has not winked at it ; not overlooked it ; He has righteously judged it. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him ; He hath put Him to grief : when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, etc." (Isa. liii. 10). All that the righteousness of God required has been accomplished in the death of Jesus. All the claims of His glory have been perfectly satisfied ; and God has given proof of this, in that He has raised up Jesus from the dead and given Him glory.

The consequence of this is that God can now proclaim Himself as a just God, and the *Justifier* of him that believeth in Jesus. He can justify the ungodly, and in doing so is not only merciful but *just*. It is a *righteous* act on the part of God to justify the one who comes to Him by Jesus. The one who thus comes, instead of seeking to be justified in his own righteousness, is justified *in God's righteousness*. This righteousness of God is *toward all* ; that is,

it is presented to all men as the only possible ground on which sinful men can be justified. It is *upon* all who *believe* ; that is, every true believer *is* justified in God's righteousness, "In Him everyone who believes *is* justified " (Acts xiii. 39, N.T.). Thus it is on the ground of GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS that the believer stands. What solid ground this is ! It is surely a rock which nothing can shake.

This makes it perfectly clear that in the present day, save for the rejectors of His grace, God is not presented to men in the character of a Judge, but as a *Justifier*. Therefore whoever turns to God meets a *Justifier*, not a Judge. This we see illustrated in the case of the publican (Luke xviii. 13, 14) ; in turning to God he met the Justifier and was justified. The common and erroneous thought in men's minds is that God is *now* acting as a judge. While this thought remains in the mind, no man would think of turning to God. How could a guilty sinner turn to a *judge* ? To do so would be only to receive the judgment he so well deserves. Satan is ever seeking to keep up this thought in the mind of man, to prevent him turning to God. Through the Gospel God has given the lie to the devil, by presenting

Himself as a Justifier, thus seeking to encourage men to turn to Him. If, after this proclamation, He refused to justify a sinner who turns to Him, He would deny Himself, which is impossible. "He cannot deny Himself." His word is "Come!" "Look to Me" (Isa. i. 18; xlv. 22). He welcomes, receives with open arms, every one who does come (Luke xv. 20).

JUSTIFICATION IN CHRIST.

TO justify is to declare or establish the *righteousness* of a person. God only can justify the guilty. In human affairs it is impossible to justify a guilty person. A man who has committed an offence may be pardoned and freed from punishment, but that does not justify him. If a man incurs a debt with me which he cannot meet, I may remit the debt, but that does not justify the debtor. If a man has been found guilty of murder and condemned to death, the king may grant him a pardon and free him from the penalty of death, but that does not justify the man. In the eyes of men the stain of the crime still attaches to the man; he is a pardoned murderer, he is not a righteous man.

It is the prerogative of God to justify the ungodly, and He exercises this prerogative through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus (Rom. iii. 24). "It is God that justifieth" (Rom. viii. 33). It is an act of grace on the part of God, but exercised in virtue of the death of Christ: "Being justified by His

blood " (Rom. v. 9). It is on the principle of faith, not on the ground of works of law. The one who believes on God Who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, is accounted righteous by God.

But there is more than this. In Rom. v. 18, 19, the apostle speaks of "Justification of life," and of being "made (or *constituted*) righteous." This is more than being reckoned righteous. We were constituted sinners as born of Adam. "By the disobedience of the one man (Adam) the many (that is all the race of Adam) were constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the One (that is Christ) the many (that is all who stand in relation to Christ) will be constituted righteous" (Rom. v. 19, N.T.). As born of Adam we inherited a *state of sin*, we were sinners by nature. How can one who is a sinner by nature and practice, become righteous? Only through the death of Christ; His obedience was unto death. The condition in which we were born and lived must be *terminated by death*. It could not be improved or mended, hence it must be ended. "He that *has died* is justified from sin" (Rom. vi. 7, N.T.). Mark, it does not say from sins, but from *sin*. Hence we must die to be jus-

tified, "We who have died to sin, etc." (Rom. vi. 2). Death is not ceasing to exist. It is the *termination of a previous condition of existence*. If a man dies, he does not cease to exist, but his present *condition* of existence is ended; the condition in which we exist after death may be better or worse, but it is different from what it was before death.

God sent His own Son to be a sacrifice for sin, and in Him, dying for us, God has condemned sin in the flesh, and thus He has judicially terminated the old state in which we lived as born of Adam. Our old man has been crucified with Him (Rom. vi. 6). In Christ dying for us it is not only that our sins have been expiated and removed from God's sight, but moreover *the man* who sinned has been condemned and thus removed from God's sight. If Jesus died for me, as representing me, then in the sight of God *I have died*. Hence it is my privilege to take account of myself as having died. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi. 11). If I have died, then there is an end of me *in the condition* in which I died. If then I live, it must be in a *new condition*. So that instead of being alive in

the life and condition of Adam, I am alive in the life and condition of Christ. In this new life I am clear of all that attached to me in the old condition. That is, I am justified in the life of the Righteous Man, viz., *in Christ*. In Adam I was a sinner, in Christ I am righteous. I have died, and yet I live. I am the same individual, but formerly my individuality was connected with Adam, now it is connected with Christ (see Gal. ii. 20). Though I am still conscious that sin is in me, and the flesh is unchanged, yet I can take account of these as of our "*old man*," which has been crucified with Christ, not the present "I" (Rom. vi. 6.) The true "I" is *Christ in me*.

In the sight of God the believer is an entirely *new man in Christ*. God does not identify the believer with that which He has condemned, but with Christ and what is of Christ. The believer is as truly of Christ as formerly he was of Adam. By receiving the Spirit of Christ, he comes to derive from Christ; Christ is in him (Rom. viii. 9-10). A man in Adam is a sinner, a man in Christ is a saint. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Before God it is the privilege of the believer to take account of himself as *a man*

in Christ, and thus free from all that belongs to a man in Adam. It would be impossible to stand before God as a man in Adam. We are justified *in Christ*, become God's righteousness *in Him*. On this ground we can take up the challenge in Rom. viii. 33, and say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He does not see iniquity in those whom He has justified (see Num. xxiii. 21, 23). There is no question as to how *God* views His people; but *our* liberty and happiness in the presence of God very much depend upon how we take account of ourselves, whether as in the flesh, or in Christ. We have to learn to take account of ourselves *apart from our experimental condition*, i.e., in the light in which God sees us in Christ. When Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. ii. 20), it was not only that God so took account of him, but that he so took account of himself. And when he said, "I know a man in Christ" (2 Cor. xii. 2), it was not only that he was such a man in the sight of God, but that he could so take account of himself by the grace of God. If all this was not true of us in the sight of God, we could not so take account of ourselves. The question

for us is, Do we reckon with God, and see ourselves in His light ?

It is in Christ that we have meetness for the glory of God, and are able to enjoy present access to God, with boldness and liberty.

If we are able to take this ground, then the reckoning has to be kept up, and this involves the continual judgment in ourselves of that which God has judged in Christ dying for us, otherwise the Spirit would be grieved, and we should not be free to take up our privileges in Christ.

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