

THE INQUIRING PARISHIONER;
OR,
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH
Church Association Tract 174

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Inquirer. I do not understand how it is that “Works done *for* us, and not by us, are the works that save.”

Clergyman. The “works done *for* us” are the works performed by our Redeemer during the thirty-three years in which He dwelt among men. The Lord Jesus did not come into this world *only to die*. It is a mistake to imagine that this was the whole object of His taking to His Divine person the nature of man. He came into this world *to live* for man, as well as *to die* for man; and this was needful, because God requires perfect righteousness from man before he can obtain eternal life; but “all have sinned” (Rom. iii. 23), so that every man, woman, and child has lost all title to eternal life, and deserves eternal death. Christ came, then, not only to suffer punishment in the sinner’s stead, He came also to lead a lifetime of sinless obedience in the sinner’s stead, that *His life*, as well as *His death*; might be put down to the sinner’s account. Hence the Apostle tells us, “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, *made under the law*” (Gal. iv. 4), that He might, *as a man*, submit to that law which was given to man, and which man never obeyed. Our Lord’s human nature was pure and free from sin; in this respect it was the very opposite of our nature, which is full of impurity and corruption: our Lord had perfect purity of nature, and perfect righteousness of life, thus He became “The Lord Our Righteousness.” He did not take our nature merely to set us *an example to imitate*; He came to lead the life of an unfallen man, that fallen man might plead that life—even Christ’s—as his title to glory.

Take as an illustration a sculptor who carves on wood or stone. He cannot bring his work to perfection if the wood and stone are rotten, and tumble to pieces at every touch of his tools: the defect is in the materials and not in the sculptor nor in his tools. What does he do? He throws away the decayed wood and stone, and sets to work on the solid heart of oak, or on the sound flawless marble, and then he perfects his work. This is what God has done (see Rom. viii. 3, 4). “What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh,” God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh condemned sin in the flesh, that the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” God placed us aside and substituted for us Christ, the Root of David, the tried Stone, the Rock of Ages, and “what the Law could not do” in us, it has perfected in Him, who was by nature and in His life without spot and blameless, and now we may plead that life, in which Christ lived our substitute, as our title to glory.

Inquirer. Then what about the death of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Clergyman. By the offering upon the cross, Jesus endured the punishment the law required, and justice having no further claims, a just God can pardon the guilty. (Rom. iii. 26.) The sacrifice of the death of Christ was not in order to *induce* the Father to love us, but to render it *a righteous thing* in Him to act upon the love *He already felt*. (John iii. 16.) But Christ’s obedience for us, which was finished in His death, procures not only the sinner’s pardon, but *his title to glory*. As the death of Christ was necessary in order to the forgiveness of sins, so His obedience, from Bethlehem to Calvary, was alike needful to merit heaven for us. This obedience was the first part of Christ’s entire righteousness, which was finished by His death. He was our Surety, *in obeying* as well as *in suffering*; He fulfilled every duty to which man as a creature is called, and endured every penalty to which man as a sinner is exposed; He “took upon Him the form of a servant” (Philip. ii. 7), and served in the stead of sinners, obeying the law for us; He suffered in the stead of sinners, bearing

the curse for us; His death plucks us as brands from the burning; His obedience unto death (Philip. ii. 8) entitles us to exaltation in glory. (See Zech. iii. 2-5.)

Is not God's plan for saving us as just as it is loving and merciful? In Romans v. 19, we read, "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" we are here taught, that in the very same way "as" we were made sinners, "so" we may be made righteous. There is a parallel here—"as," "so"—the comparison is between the work of the First Adam, which ruined us, and the work of the Second Adam, which saved us. We were in the First Adam as the oak is in the acorn, or the flower in the bud, or the stream in the fountain, or as the leaves are in the tree: we were not in Adam as corn is in the field, each ear on its own stalk: but when the First Adam fell, *we all* fell in him; in like manner, when the Second Adam obeyed, *we* obeyed in Him. "As" in Adam we were made sinners by imputation all at once—all guilty through the offence of one, "so" in Christ we are made righteous by imputation all at once—all holy through the obedience of one. "As" Adam was the head, and root, and stock of all his natural seed, "so" is Christ the head, and root, and stock of all His spiritual seed. "As" once we were made sinners by a sin which we did not actually commit, "so" now we are made righteous by an obedience which we have not actually performed. "As" Adam disobeyed, and we are lost, "so" Jesus obeyed, and we are saved. "As" the disobedience which ruined us was not our own, but another's, even Adam's, "so" the obedience which saves us is not our own, but another's, even Christ's. "As," in justice, God drove man out of Paradise, for the sin of one man, "so," in justice, as well as in mercy, God will admit man into Paradise for the obedience of one man. "As" sin, committed nearly six thousand years ago, ruined us, "so" righteousness, performed nearly two thousand years ago, justifies us; that is, in it God pronounces the sinner righteous. Therefore we are by God reckoned righteous; as righteous as if we had ourselves in unfallen nature fulfilled the law in every one point. I might say, *more* righteous. Christ's righteousness is laid upon us, as our sins were laid upon Christ—we are "made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) Thus we see, the law found the sinner without righteousness, and *left him without it*; the Gospel finds the sinner without righteousness, and *provides him with it*, by giving him a righteousness *infinitely* perfect and *Divinely* glorious; for Jesus, whose righteousness is ours, was *God* as well as man.

Ignorance of the righteousness of Jesus Christ is the great occasion of self-righteousness in man. A person does not like to throw away an old garment until he is first supplied with one that is new and clean: even so, a sinner, who is in ignorance of the meaning of Christ's merits, will, even on his death-bed, retain his own so-called "good works," and urge them as a part of his plea for glory; he does not like to throw them away. But if you or I were to go to such an one, and assure him from God's Word—"Here are two garments for your soul; you may and *must* choose one of them; one is made of the works of your own life, the other of the works done for you in the life of Jesus Christ; the one is made of the works of *sinful* nature, the other of the works of *sinless* nature: in the one, you will appear before God in all your own shortcomings and sinfulness, for even the works you may have done by the Holy Spirit's assistance are polluted, because of the depravity that remains in even the best of God's people; in the other, God will behold you covered with the perfect obedience of His 'beloved Son, with whom He is well pleased,' and on whose account He will be well pleased with you:" with God's blessing upon this statement of truth, would the man not be constrained to exclaim, "Oh, let me die covered with the merits of my Saviour! let not even my best deeds be seen! Let me appear before God not in my own works, but in my Saviour's *only*. 'I desire to be found *in Him*, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.'" (Philip. iii. 9)

Inquirer. Thank you, I understand. Will you now explain to me the meaning of "Coming to Jesus"?

Clergyman. It means a coming *of the soul*, a willingness to receive Him as Saviour and Master. By "coming to Jesus," and "believing in Jesus," and "faith in Jesus," we understand the same thing. A man is not justified *for* faith but *by* faith; and when we say "saved *by faith only*," or "justified by faith," we do not mean that there is any merit in faith, or that faith is any more than the instrument

which *conveys* salvation to us. The virtue that healed the woman did not come out of the hand that touched Christ's garments (Luke viii. 43, 44, 46), but out of Christ who was touched; and thus it is "in believing," or "through faith," as the channel of conveyance, that the work of Christ's life and death is received by the believer. Justifying faith believes all truth in Holy Scripture, and therefore we must not separate faith in the Word of God from faith in Jesus Christ. To believe in Christ and in His Word, is to believe in pardon and in the perfection of His righteousness; and let me add, faith in Christ is not a dead faith, it is *a living and a working faith*, for it is wrought in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. It overcomes the world (1 John v. 4); it enlightens the mind; it is a faith which produces repentance unto life. It is not satisfied with a mere salvation from the punishment of sin, it is always attended with an earnest desire to be saved from *the love* as well as from *the guilt* of sin: it confesses that God is not "unrighteous who taketh vengeance." It sends the sinner to his Bible and to his knees (Acts xvii. 11, 12; ix. 11); he becomes not *another*, but a *new man* (2 Cor. v. 17); it is a faith which produces a change in the man, he becomes prayerful, watchful, humble; it purifies his heart and "worketh by love" (Gal. v. 6); it takes hold of the pardon bestowed and of the righteousness conferred, and at the same time of the promise, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." (Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27.) Hence it is that believers are holy, "a peculiar people, *zealous of good works*;" "they have a *hand* as well as a *heart* for God; being saved by grace, they make known to perishing sinners the blessedness of being united to Christ by a living faith. The sinner being in a state of salvation, *then it is* that he *begins* to do good works which God will be pleased to accept and to reward; "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (not in good works unto Christ Jesus) "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.)

Inquirer. Is there then any difference between the works which God rewards, and the works in which we are made righteous and saved?

Clergyman. The works of the Christian which God accepts and rewards are quite distinct from the works (Christ's works) in which we are made righteous. An illustration will make this plain. Let us suppose the case of a vessel wrecked off some foreign coast. The night is dark and stormy; the crew are in imminent peril of a watery grave. The first who discovers their distress is the king of the country, and he, with heroic daring, at once attempts their rescue, and brings them safe to shore; the saved mariners, overpowered by the loving compassion of their royal deliverer, resolve to become his devoted subjects. They cannot endure the thought of separation, and they determine never again to return to their native land. The king carefully observes their conduct, and in course of time bountifully rewards their services. Would it not be absurd in these men, because they are thus rewarded, therefore to conclude that their services saved them from shipwreck? Would not this be the basest ingratitude? And would they not deserve to lose their reward? They were *first* saved by their Prince, and *then, from a principle of gratitude*, they did the works which He approved. Now, my friend, apply this illustration: Ours was a lost condition; we were nigh sinking in the abyss of woe; and when the Lord Jesus "saw that there was no man," He Himself came to our dark, sin-stricken world, that we, abandoning the wreck of human merit, might confide in the lifeboat that conducts to glory. He braved the surges and billows of offended justice, and has brought us into a condition of safety. He who is our Saviour is henceforth our Lord; we are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Ephes. ii. 19.) "The love of Christ"—*His love to us*—see 2 Cor. v. 14—"constrains us." "We love Him, because He first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) Our great Deliverer observes our services, and is graciously pleased to reward His saved people according to their works; and shall we, therefore, with ingratitude more than base, make mention of our works, which are but the *consequence*, and not the *cause*, of our salvation? The works that save us are eighteen hundred years old and upwards, and so were performed centuries before we were born! We work because we *are* saved, and not that we *may* be saved; not *for* salvation, but *from* salvation. (Ephes. ii. 10.) We work not *for* life, but *from* life. Never again let us entertain a thought so dishonouring to our merciful Deliverer, who not only risked His life, but laid it down, that He might reconcile us to Divine favour, and bring us back to paradise. "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory." (Psalm cxv.

1.) "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. xv. 10); and while I believe that to my every attainment in piety there will be a corresponding point in glory, "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, *even of Thine only.*" (Psalm lxxi. 16.)

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