

Sailing With Paul

Simple Papers for Young Christians

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Chapter 3

Justification From All Things

Of the treasure committed to Paul, the blessedness of which GOD would have all who sail with him enjoy while upon their voyage, no truth is of more importance to the peace of the believer than that of justification. This is pre-eminently what Paul calls, "**my gospel,**" and "**my doctrine.**" It will be observed by the thoughtful reader of the word of GOD that while the question "**How can man be just with God?**" was twice asked in the book of Job, and to Habakkuk it was revealed that "**The just shall live by his faith**"; it remained for the apostle of the Gentiles to fully develop and widely proclaim the great doctrine of justification by faith. It is the corner-stone of "**the mystery of the gospel.**" No other apostle or apostolic writer so much as mentions it, save that Luke as the inspired historian tells us how Paul preached it. But Peter and John never get beyond forgiveness of sins - nor, in one sense, shall any of us; for our song in Heaven shall be of divine forgiveness. Still there is an aspect of forgiveness far higher than that of mere pardon, and it is of this that Paul delighted to treat.

To unfold his special instruction on this soul-stirring theme would be to expound the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, which has most appropriately been called "The Epistle of the Forum, or the Law-court." But others have done this most ably and the young believer can here only be referred to their excellent writings (The best book on Romans for young Christians that I have seen is John Fort's "*God's Salvation*" After reading that I would urge the perusal of C. Crain's "*Readings on Romans.*") I simply desire, as briefly and clearly as possible, to outline the subject of Justification as treated in Romans and defended in Galatians.

When I think of forgiveness, as the word is ordinarily used among men, I think of a man proven

to be guilty but pardoned through the clemency of another. But when I think of justification I think of a man charged with guilt, but, upon being brought into court, cleared on every count. And this is exactly what scriptural justification means. It is "the sentence of the judge in favor of the prisoner." And yet it is the ungodly who are justified by a holy GOD on the principle of absolute righteousness. How can such an event be brought about?

In the first recorded sermon by the apostle Paul he tells us in what name it is done; he strikes the key-note of the theme so fully developed in the Roman Epistle: "**be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man (CHRIST JESUS) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things by which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses**" (Acts 13:38, 39). Moses' law indeed could but condemn. Through the name of JESUS GOD can proclaim justification for every believer. And why? For the simplest of all possible reasons. The Lord JESUS Himself had taken the place of the guilty, borne the judgment due to sin, and having fully glorified GOD in this respect had been raised from the dead and seated in highest glory as Man, in token of GOD's full satisfaction in His finished work: "**Who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**" (Romans 4:25; 5:1).

It is the very simplicity of it over which men stumble.

That He, the Holy One, should have been made a sin-offering that we might become the righteousness of GOD in Him, is something mere human reason would never have conceived. Yet this is the pith and marrow of the Gospel.

If sin be high treason against the Majesty in the heavens - and it is - CHRIST has died in the traitor's stead.

If sin be a capital crime against the moral government of GOD - and it is - CHRIST has borne the full punishment deserved by the offender.

If sin be a debt which man could never meet - and it - CHRIST has paid the uttermost farthing, and the debtor may now go free.

Look at it in what aspect you may, and you will find the Word of GOD reveals that all that He had against the sinner was more than met in the Cross of CHRIST; and thus GOD can now be "**just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**" (Romans 3:26).

Sin is not merely pardoned. It is atoned for.

Guilt is not simply overlooked. It is gone forever from the eye of GOD in the Cross of His Son.

Iniquity is not only forgiven, it is purged by the blood of the Son of the Highest, and the transgressor is justified from all things.

It is after fully establishing all this, that the apostle triumphantly asks: "**Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is**

Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33, 34).

All the value of the finished work of CHRIST - ever before GOD - stands over against all that I was as a one-time sinful, guilty man. This is justification, and this is my standing in the presence of the infinitely Holy and Righteous One.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). And the reason is this; He Himself took the condemnation, endured the wrath of GOD, and has made full satisfaction for all the believer's sin. Faith rests on this and fears no more.

~ end of chapter 3 ~
