

MABEL CLEMENT

by

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CHAPTER NINE

Believer has eternal life - Not condemned -Baptism not a part of faith - Justified

On Friday evening the crowd was larger than ever, the large parlor and hall being filled to their utmost capacity. There was an eager, nervous anxiety that produced silence.

"I believe we are still to inquire into the condition of a penitent believer," said Arthur. "Is this correct, Miss Clement?"

"Yes, there are other things to be said," replied Mabel.

"Proceed then," said the Doctor. "I am anxious to get to the design of baptism."

This produced a ripple of pleasantness and relieved the sense of oppression on the little assembly.

"I hope, Doctor," said Mabel, "when we get to that we will have things in such a shape there will be scarcely anything to say."

"I will risk having much to say on that fruitful theme," he replied. "So go ahead with your fixing up your candidate for baptism. I must say it takes a sight of fixing."

"It is our purpose," said Mabel, "to see how the Bible, how, JESUS and the Apostles, have fixed him up. I have shown he is pardoned and saved. The next thing I have to say about the penitent believer in JESUS is this:

"3. He has eternal life. If this cannot be proven by the Bible it should not be believed. But if the Word of GOD teaches it, we dare not reject it. In John 3:14,15 is the language of JESUS to Nicodemus: "**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.**"

The serpent was lifted up in the wilderness when the Israelites were bitten and dying. GOD's plan was for the bitten Jews to look and be healed. Every one that looked, lived; all who refused, died. So JESUS, GOD's remedy for sin, was lifted upon the cross. And GOD's plan is for sinners to believe on Him (i.e., look by faith), and have eternal life.

According to the text all who believe, live - have eternal life. This is true to the illustration. The Jews did not have to look and then do something else ere they were healed. No overt act came in

between the looking and being healed; they were healed the moment they looked.

So it is not, believe and do something else. All who believe have eternal life - have it the moment they believe. He who says that the believer has aught to do ere he has eternal life, adds to what the Saviour says. The same truth is taught in the next verse: "**For GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**"

Here JESUS avers the same great truth, that the believer is the character upon whom GOD is pleased to bestow the gift of eternal life. GOD declares that believers shall not perish, but shall have eternal life. This is as plain as infinite love can make it. It is plain enough; we do not wish it plainer. John the Baptist in his notable testimony to his Master declares: "**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life**" (John 3:36).

John does not say *he will have*, but he hath - he already has life. JESUS also solemnly says: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24).

Where is Campbellism in the face of such Scriptures as these? It vanishes like darkness before the rising sun. JESUS again avers in one of His most important discourses: "**This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life**" (John 6:40). Our Heavenly FATHER deliberately willed that the believer should have everlasting life. Can we say he shall not have it till he has done something we fancy is necessary?"

"Not what we fancy is necessary," said the Doctor, "but what GOD's Word says is necessary,"

"Where does it say one cannot have life till he is baptized?" inquired Mabel. "Nowhere. The idea of baptizing a dead man to bring him to life is as unscriptural and ridiculous as burying a dead man to make him alive. He must have life before he is baptized. Now, let me show the design of John in writing his gospel:

"**These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name**" (John 20:31). This is too plain for comment. The best comment is simply to repeat the text. There is no room for doubt after this. But before I close I must pass beyond Pentecost and record the testimony of Luke and Paul.

Luke says: "**As many as were ordained to eternal life believed,**" simply because this was the one thing necessary. Paul says: "**For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting.**" See Acts 13:48 and I Timothy 1:16.

Thus Luke and Paul, as well as John, remember the words of JESUS: "**Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life**" (John 6:47). Here now I rest my argument. My position is impregnable. If anyone thinks I have not proven fairly by the Bible that the believer has eternal life already begun in his soul, I shall be glad for him to show it."

There was a hush for a quarter of a minute. Mabel had gained her point. Her position was so strongly bulwarked with glittering passages of Scripture, not even the Doctor had courage to attack it. The painful stillness was relieved by the spectacled man, who performed his odd maneuvers, as usual, looking at the Doctor as if he felt that he was vanquished irrecoverably. Brother Jones spoke first:

"It seems you've proved it mighty plain; and I don't think anyone can disprove it: so I accept it, sure."

"I believe," said Arthur, "you have proven that the penitent believer has pardon, salvation and eternal life. Do you propose to prove him in possession of other blessings?"

"Oh, yes," responded Mabel, "there are several other blessings that belong to the believer that I wish to mention. It is true they differ but little from those already named; but as there is a shade of difference, or a different way of expressing the same great fact, I want the matter so developed. Now to proceed. The penitent believer is:

"4. Not condemned. The whole world is guilty before GOD, and hence the world is condemned. But as soon as one believes in JESUS he is pardoned and hence not condemned."

"I will not allow that bold assertion to be true," said the Doctor. "I admit it seems the believer has life before baptism; but he is not justified; he is still in a state of condemnation. Baptism in obedience to the Saviour's command is the door through which we pass out of the state of the condemned into that of the uncondemned. Hence all that are unbaptized are in a state of condemnation. The assertion you make is wholly unwarranted by the Bible."

"I shall prove what I have affirmed by the Bible," Mabel confidently responded. "I shall not put my word, Doctor, against yours, but the Saviour's word, which is backed by and clothed with all the authority Heaven can give. Pardon me, Dr. Stanly; but if you have contradicted the Saviour, His words are true and you are mistaken."

Hear these words of JESUS: "**For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God** (John 3:17, 18).

Excuse me, Doctor, but you have flatly contradicted what the Saviour has here said. You say the believer is condemned; JESUS says he is not condemned! Whom shall we believe? This is why I left the Campbellites and joined the Baptists, friends. Consider whether I quoted wisely or not. Believing is not only the door, but it is going out the door - passing out of condemnation into justification."

"Parson," said Brother Jones, "the Baptists are right in this particular also, and we are wrong, sure."

"Nonsense," said the Doctor, not noticing Brother Jones; "every one not warped and twisted out

of shape by prejudice knows you not only acted prematurely, but without judgment or reason - in fact, foolishly. Let me give you a key for Scripture interpretation that will knock your favorite theory of salvation by faith into flinders."

"Give it, Doctor," said Mabel curiously.

"Well, here it is," replied the Doctor. "Faith includes baptism. Baptism is a part of our faith, and no man has faith without baptism. Here is the disentanglement of this problem, which seems so difficult of solution to many. As men cannot have faith without baptism, so they cannot have pardon without baptism."

The Doctor looked triumphant, as if he felt he had scored a good point, and the people of his persuasion began to breathe more easily, but were shaky with trepidation lest this apparently strong argument should be rebutted and blown away.

"I thought, Doctor," said Mabel, "that we had agreed that one must be a believer before baptism; that none are Scripturally qualified for baptism who do not believe in CHRIST? This was your position as well as mine. Now you controvert your own position - contradict not only me and the Saviour, but yourself as well."

The Doctor flushed; his hand shook; the question was a poser.

"The Doctor's theory," said Mr. Tibbs, "requires considerable turning and twisting to keep the kinks out of it. It is like the Dutchman's snake that

'Wired in and wired out,
And left the mind still in doubt
Whether the ugly crooked track
Was going in or coming back.'"

This amused the assembly and added to the distress of the confused Doctor.

"Let us see," said Mabel, "if faith includes baptism. JESUS says: "**He that believeth and is baptized.**" Now, according to JESUS, faith is one thing and baptism is another. They are not the same as you contend. You and the Saviour for it, Doctor."

"If faith includes baptism," said Mr. Tibbs, "then the commission requires two baptisms; we are required to believe (that means faith and baptism); then we are required to be baptized. There are two baptisms. This is puerile, a subterfuge, an artful dodge, more jugglery! Let us deal honestly in discussing GOD's Word."

The Doctor moved uneasily in his chair, revealing a puzzled and perplexed mind, while a cloud of disappointment gathered on the faces of his leading members. By and by the Doctor brightened up, and it was obvious he was coming again. He tossed his hand to one side, assumed an air of cool indifference, and replied:

"But the Word of GOD says the Gospel was made known to the nations for the obedience of

faith - that is, the obedience that faith leads to; but faith is here called obedience. Faith is obedience, obedience is baptism, therefore faith is baptism, or is vitally connected with it. This agrees with what James says:

'Faith without works is dead.' There can be no faith without work."

"That is a mistake," said Mabel. "Faith does lead to obedience and to work. But there can be faith without work, true and saving faith. Paul says: **"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"** (Romans 4:5). To him that worketh not but believeth! Thus Paul says a man can believe without any work."

It would be hard to paint the many conflicting hopes and fears that expressed themselves on the faces of the almost breathless auditors. The spectacled man turned to the wall, put his elbows on his knees, his chin into the palms of his hands and had a silent but hearty laugh all to himself. All felt that the fair fabric of Campbellism was being steadily demolished. Mr. and Mrs. Clement sat in silent wonder and amazement at the doctrine - and their daughter.

"If he is not condemned he must be justified," said Arthur.

"Yes," responded Mabel, "in both the Old and New Testaments the terms 'condemn' and 'justify' are used as opposite to each other.

Thus Solomon says: **"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD"** (Proverbs 17:15). And Paul declares: **"It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"** (Romans 8:33, 34). Thus if the believer is not condemned he is justified. But I am invading my next argument.

The penitent believer is

"5. Justified. Of course this means virtually the same as not condemned; but it presents the affirmative side of the mooted question. The Bible unmistakably teaches that we are justified by faith."

"That is very true," interrupted the Doctor; "but it is just as unmistakably taught that we are justified by other things. We are said to be justified by blood, Romans 5:9; in the name of the Lord JESUS, I Corinthians 6:11; by CHRIST, Galatians 2:17; by knowledge, Isaiah 53:11; by works, James 2:24. and by grace, Romans 3:24, as well as by faith. Now what right have you to utterly ignore all these other things by which we are said to be justified in order to sustain your pet theory of justification by faith, thus exalting faith to an office GOD never intended it should fill? The fact is you deify faith. You rob knowledge and Christian works and the grace of GOD and the blood of CHRIST of honor, in order to put a crown of refulgent glory on the head of faith. Let us render unto each their due and not try to prop up effete theories by distorted interpretations of Scripture."

"Amen!" said Mabel, "so let it be. Persons are said to be justified by the things you have mentioned. So let us search to learn the mind of the Spirit."

"The Spirit has expressed His mind in these passages," replied the Doctor. "He affirms persons are justified in all these ways. Do you dispute it?"

"No! Of course not. But what does He mean?"

"Does justified by knowledge mean the same as justified by blood? Or justified by grace the same as by faith? Answer me, Doctor."

"No - no," said he hesitatingly.

"Well, tell us what the Spirit means," said Mabel.

"Let me see if you can do it," he replied.

"Very well," Mabel replied. "Persons are justified by grace; that is, grace was the moving or providing cause. Grace provided salvation; moved GOD to give His Son to die for sinners, that thereby they might be justified. Thus men may be said to be justified by grace. Is this correct, Doctor?"

"Yes, that is about right," he replied.

"Then," continued Mabel, "we are justified by blood, by CHRIST, in the name of the Lord JESUS. These sayings are synonymous - may be used interchangeably. So I take them together.

Justified by CHRIST means the same thing as by His blood or in His name. Here is the procuring cause, the only ground of justification. We must be justified by blood, by CHRIST, in His name or never! This is the only name given whereby we can be saved. Pardon, salvation, justification must come through that name alone. Am I correct, Doctor?"

"Go on," he said, "I endorse that."

"Next," continued Mabel, "we are justified by knowledge. Now, no one can be justified without a knowledge of JESUS and the plan of salvation. We say the heathen are dying for a knowledge of CHRIST. We send them the knowledge and by it they are led to CHRIST as their Saviour. Thus they are justified by knowledge. Am I right or wrong, Doctor?"

"Right again," replied. "Now, advance and give us a correct explanation of justification by faith and works."

"It is not enough," she continued, "that grace gave JESUS to die, that sinners might be justified, and that JESUS shed His blood for the justification of sinners, and that sinners have the knowledge requisite to justification - all this does not actually justify a sinner in GOD's sight. The justifying merits of JESUS must in some way be received by us, must by some means be appropriated to ourselves. Here is the office, not of blood, not of grace, not of knowledge, but of faith. Faith takes what grace offers through CHRIST. Faith is the great main through which the water of life flows to thirsty souls, the divinely chosen channel through which GOD's pardoning, saving, justifying grace flows to the penitent, sorrow-stricken sinner. Faith is the rope that connects the drowning man in the water with the Saviour on the shore and by which the Saviour

saves the sinner. Thus we are justified by faith. Am I correct, Doctor?"

"No, Mabel," he replied, "you are wrong this time, and I can prove it in half a minute."

"Prove it, then, without fail," said Mabel.

"Well, you will find the proof," he replied, "in James 2:24:

"Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

"It is very true," responded Mabel; "there is a sense in which we are not justified by faith alone, for we are justified by grace and blood, etc. But a sinner is justified before GOD by faith alone by faith without any works."

"It is a flat contradiction of the Word of GOD," said the Doctor with considerable excitement, "and I reject it. You have come to the end of your rope and may as well stop."

"Not so fast and so positive, Doctor," replied Mabel firmly.

"I will show you that a sinner is justified by faith without works.

Turn to Romans 4:4,5: '**Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**' Paul is speaking here of justifying the sinner; and he says: '**To him that worketh not**' - that is, does not work at all, does not strike one lick of work, but simply believes without any work, his faith is counted for righteousness. Paul adds, '**David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works**' (Romans 4:6). Notice - without works. Again, '**If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.**'

James says Abraham and Rahab were justified by works; but he did not mean they were justified from their sins by works. This would be James versus Paul, Bible versus Bible, and it would make GOD contradict Himself. Paul declares again and again that men are not justified (that is, as sinners) by works. Galatians 2:16. And he solemnly avers men are justified by faith without works. Romans 3:28.

Works are lopped off and separated and faith stands alone as the means of justification. Thus I have made my point clear to all - sinners are justified by faith without works."

"But you have Paul contradicting James," said the Doctor, emphatically.

"No, no," said Mabel; "rather you have James contradicting Paul. In your great zeal for the doctrines you advocate, you have misinterpreted James. Paul deals with the question: How an unsaved sinner is justified before GOD, and says it is by faith without works. James contemplates the subject of justification after one professes conversion with reference to the inquiry: What kind of faith justifies, and how may we show that we have genuine faith.

James 2:14 asks, '**Can faith save him?**' Yes, faith can save him; every one that has ever been saved since the fall (infants and idiots excepted) has been saved by faith. No one was ever saved in any other way. We put the question thus: 'Can that faith save him?' Not that faith - the faith that does not work - cannot save anyone; it is not the right kind of faith. James maintains that works are the fruit of faith; that saving faith always produces works and the faith that does not produce works is a dead faith: '**Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works**' (James 2:18)."

"I wish to remind you," said the Doctor, "that Paul and James both refer to the same case to prove the doctrines they advocate. Paul refers to Abraham to show justification by faith; James refers to Abraham to show justification by works. Now, I am willing to divide the matter between them and say sinners are justified by faith and works. This is evidently the very best disposal we can make of the case, and I am sure it is the most common sense view."

"I am not willing," replied Mabel, "to leave Paul and James crossing swords and goring each other at all. They do not contradict each other; it is your unscriptural theory that puts them both to the worse and makes their testimony conflict and the one overthrow the other. It is true they both refer to Abraham; but they do not refer to the same act of Abraham.

Paul refers to Abraham's believing, and says when he believed he was justified, just as Moses had said he believed in the Lord and it was counted unto him for righteousness. James refers to another act of Abraham which took place forty years after Abraham believed. He refers to the offering of Isaac, by which he showed he feared GOD and had faith in Him.

Now, according to Moses and Paul, Abraham was a justified servant of GOD for forty years, following where the Lord led and doing what the Lord bade for forty years, before he did that by which James says he was justified by works, or by which he showed he had genuine, justifying faith. James' argument shows Abraham made his faith appear, showed he had a live, active, working faith by offering Isaac. So James quotes the very passage Paul relies on as expressing his views: 'And Abraham believed GOD and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.'

The Doctor would make James, not only contradict Paul, but James also - almost in the same breath - declaring that Abraham was justified by faith and then bearing witness against his own statement. A dilemma surely for an inspired Apostle to fall into. So there is no discrepancy between Paul and James. When properly understood, they perfectly agree. Doctor, you dare not say that Abraham would not have gone to Heaven if he had died during any of those forty years before he offered up his son Isaac?"

The Doctor was disconcerted. He forgot where he was, put a quid of tobacco into his mouth and began chewing vigorously and squirting the juice madly into the polished grate. The spectacled man took occasion, during the momentary lull in the discussion, to whisk his chair and evidence ecstatic delight.

"I see," said Arthur, holding the Greek lexicon in hand, "that justification and righteousness mean the same thing."

"That is true," replied Mabel; "and I would like all to notice it. The word that in the New Testament is translated justification is the same word that is translated righteousness. So in New Testament language, if a man is righteous, he is justified; if he is justified, he is righteous. Let this fact be kept in mind, for there are a score of passages that represent the believer as righteous, and that means he is justified."

"Another strong point scored," said Mr. Tibbs.

"Now, I am ready," continued Mabel, "to prove by passage after passage that the penitent believer is justified:

'Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified' (Acts 13:38, 39).

'Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe' (Romans 3:22).

'That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus' (Romans 3:26).

'Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by, faith and the uncircumcision through faith' (Romans 3:30).

'Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law' (Romans 3:28).

'But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness' (Romans 4:5).

These passages are too plain for comment. Read also the following like passages: Romans 4:3,23,24-5:1; 10:4; Galatians 2:16; 3:24; Philippians 3:9. These passages are all very explicit and prove conclusively that faith in CHRIST is the hinge on which turns the justification of a sinner. No one can read these passages, with an unbiased mind, and not believe that the believer in CHRIST is a pardoned, justified, righteous man. I have noted some twelve or fifteen texts and might find many more. In fact, there are whole chapters that I might read as confirming this doctrine. But, perhaps, no corroboration would more firmly establish my position; it is a point clearly, indisputably made out. I do not see how any candid man who has read these passages and many others similar to them can doubt that the one who believes in JESUS is justified!

The plain truth is he cannot doubt without making GOD a liar."

"That's so," said Brother Jones, "that's so, sure. I never saw anything plainer. I'm a-thinkin' you'll be the death of the Christian church here, if you keep on, for it's mighty plain you are right."

Though the Scriptures read by Mabel had a crushing effect, the climax was not reached till this blunt speech of the Campbellite brother. Dr. Stanly was so thoroughly disconcerted that he could not rally his failing courage to an effort to hold up his sinking cause. It was amusing at this point to see the triumphant air of the spectacled man, with what sovereign contempt he regarded the

tumbling fabric of Campbellism, and the ungovernable joy he exhibited.

"You decide then," inquired an auditor, "that baptism has nothing to do with justification?"

"Nothing whatever," replied Mabel, "except to formally declare one justified."

"Even Mr. Campbell does not put baptism among the things by which sinners are justified," said Arthur. "I am perfectly convinced by the Word of GOD that persons are justified by faith before, and hence without, baptism."

The Campbellite fraternity were shocked to hear one of their own members speak as did Arthur Manly; but they could not say aught against it, seeing it was sustained by the Bible. It was all very strange. They had been tutored to believe that they themselves were the only people under the sun that were governed by the Bible and the Bible alone. But lo! Baptist sentiments were being sustained by the Bible and the Bible alone. What a surprise! The Baptists, forsooth, were governed by the Bible as well as themselves! It was stunning to think Baptist doctrines are in the Bible.

The meeting adjourned till 8 the next evening. Although this was Saturday the people were eager to go on with the discussion which was now at white heat. And the town was all agog with the matter. Many felt that their religious foothold was crumbling from beneath them, but were loath to admit it.

Mr. and Mrs. Clement slept little, ate little, talked little; but thought a great deal. The Scripture was being fulfilled which says "**God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.**"

Arthur Manly had about concluded that, while there are real Christian people in the Campbellite Church, yet real Campbellism is a set of external rules without spiritual life or power. Mr. Morgan in heart was shaky, but he preserved a bold front.

The more his faith was shaken, the more positive were his asseverations.

~ end of chapter 9 ~
