

# Justification by Faith

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Review and Herald Publishing Association

Battle Creek, Michigan 1882

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### I

Text.-"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5:1.

No apology could be in place for writing or speaking on the subject of justification by faith. Lying at the very foundation of Christian experience-the substratum of the work of the gospel on the human heart-it can never be dwelt upon too much. And when all has been said that human tongues can say, or that human minds can conceive, the whole truth on this great theme will not have been told.

Justice, as defined by Webster, is the quality of being just; rendering to every man his due; conformity to right and obligation. Righteousness has the same signification; for the quality of being right, is Tightness or righteousness.

And these words have two applications; or, justification, or righteousness, is of two kinds. One, the righteousness which is by complete obedience. This is referred to by Paul in Rom. 2:13, "The doors of the law shall be justified." Unfortunately for man, as the apostle proceeds to prove, there are no doers of right, and "therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified." Chap. 3:20. But this does not

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destroy the principle that complete obedience to the law would result in justification. The Scriptures say, "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." No one would for a moment deny that if man had done his whole duty he would have stood justified before God; for there would

have existed no ground for his condemnation. This would have been justification, by works, which it is now impossible for man to reach, as all have gone, and in our fallen condition, all do go astray.

The other kind of justification, or righteousness, and that which is the subject of the apostle's argument in this letter to the Romans, is "the treating of sinful man as though he were righteous;" vindicating or defending. This form of justification is, as is well stated by Hooker, "without us, which we have by imputation." This, again, is identical with the righteousness of faith; that is, we are accounted righteous by reason of what some one does *for us*, and not by reason of our works or obedience.

A question has been raised on Rom. 4:5. "Does God justify the ungodly? And if so, is not Universalism true?" A little consideration of the subject of the argument is sufficient to solve this apparent difficulty. It is an argument based upon the fact that all have sinned; that all are ungodly. The subject is, justification by faith, not of works. This kind of justification is for the ungodly alone; the righteous would not need it. So Jesus said he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to

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repentance; the righteous would need no repentance. But the object or condition of this justification must not be lost sight of. It is not that the ungodly may remain ungodly, or be saved in their ungodliness, but that they may be saved from their sins, or be made the righteousness of God in Christ. Matt. 1:21; 2 Cor. 5:21.

Another question naturally arises on verse 7, regarding the distinction between righteousness and goodness. It has mostly been supposed to refer to some distinctions, somewhat fanciful, held by the Jews. But the distinction is real, and is often recognized. Dr. Clarke mentions four classes into which the Jews divided mankind. The just were those who render to every man his due; the good, those who are magnanimous or benevolent. Probably "the young man" who came to Christ, see Matt. 19:16-22, was a just man in this sense; certainly he was not good in the sense of being benevolent. Scott, on this text, says the just man is one of strict integrity; the good, one of extensive philanthropy; which amounts to the same thing. Chalmers says the righteous or just man is one who is simply in a state of innocence; the good, one who is engaged in benevolence. The same idea runs through all.

Doubtless we have all seen illustrations of this distinction in actual life. We have seen men of integrity, just in the payment of every demand, even to a farthing. They would pay every cent and exact every cent. They would boast that they had never wronged any man, but rendered

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to every man his full due. As far as the calls of the needy and the suffering were concerned, it was enough for them to know that they had not caused any one to suffer, and they felt no responsibility in their behalf. Disinterested benevolence was a quality to which they were utter strangers. In one sense their characters were commendable; in another sense they were detestable.

Or we may instance the judge who has the highest regard for justice; he will mete it to the evil-doer to the fullest extent of the law. To maintain the law and to

defend the Government is the ruling motive of his life. But of mercy he knows nothing; the kindlier feelings of his nature have never been developed. On the bench, all are ready to commend his justice; in every-day life, no one calls him good.

We have now brought to notice these two kinds of justification. One of one's self, by obedience. This we should term justification in fact, or justification absolute. With this we have nothing to do in this examination; man has effectually and entirely forfeited it. The other, justification by faith; effected for the transgressor of law by one who does *for him* what he cannot do for himself. This is not absolute in the sense in which the other kind is, for it is a righteousness (1) by imputation, not by desert; (2) it is conditional.

This brings us to notice a most important truth; to consider a most important relation. Justification by faith is not a *final procedure*; it looks to something beyond itself to be accomplished in

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the future. And it is an important factor in the accomplishment of that something. To demonstrate this we must notice another distinction, to wit; that justification is to be distinguished from salvation. Many seem to lose sight of this distinction, and thereby fall into grievous and very dangerous errors.

"I am saved," is a common expression with a certain class of professed Christians. While there is a sense in which it ought to be true, and we would charitably hope it is true in many cases, we confidently say it is not true in the sense intended by many who use it. It is frequently used by those who make it a shield from exhortations to further examination of the truth of God and of their own hope of eternal life. In such cases it is sadly abused. We may be saved from sin here. And the sufficiency of this salvation is based, very often, on the purity of our intentions; for no one is completely and perfectly saved from sin unless he is fully acquainted with the will of God, and completely and perfectly fulfills it. Every one must admit that we are absolutely saved from sin just as far as we have light on the truth of God's word in regard to our duty, and follow it, and no farther. To say that we are absolutely and completely saved from sin because we have no consciousness of sin would be to deny the existence of sins of ignorance, of which the Scriptures so largely speak. See Lev. 4, entire, and Num. 15:22-29. Sins of ignorance are not so heinous in the sight of the Lord as sins of

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presumption; but they are sins, of which the Lord requires repentance and of which we need forgiveness.

When once urging upon an intelligent lady, and we believe an honest one, the necessity of examining a question of duty, a truth of the Bible with which she was not acquainted, and enforcing the duty by the solemnity of the coming Judgment and the necessity of a thorough preparation for that day, she made but one answer, and persisted in it: "I *am* saved; I have given my case to Jesus and he has saved me." We could awaken her from her delusion, for such we held it to be, only by asking her if she thought her probation was ended. This aroused her to a new train of thought and to a reconsideration of her position.

Salvation is two-fold. 1. Salvation from sin. This is a progressive work of Christian life. Some mistake and think the work is finished because they feel that they love the way of truth, and have no desire or disposition to sin. But, as before noticed, they may sin ignorantly, and do things which are offensive to God because they are not fully instructed in the right. When these sins come to their knowledge they must repent; and if they refuse or neglect to repent of them, they stand as indorsing thorn, and then their relation is changed and they must be counted sins of presumption. And there is place for continuance of this work of increasing in knowledge and reforming in life until we become as perfect in

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knowledge as our circumstances will permit. This is *growth in grace*, without which the believer either remains a babe in the Christian life, or degenerates into a fixed state of formality; for no one has a complete knowledge of truth and duty when first he submits himself to God. It is incumbent upon him to grow up into it.

2. There is a final salvation which is brought unto us at the appearing of Christ; of which, salvation from sin (or justification and growth in grace) is the necessary prerequisite. Of this salvation the Scriptures make very frequent mention. The Saviour said: "He that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved." Matt. 24:13; the same in chap. 10:22, and Mark 13:13. This salvation comes after that which is called "the end." Paul said to his brethren; "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Rom 13:11. Waiving all question as to "the time" to which he referred, we notice that this salvation did not come to them when they believed. It is a future salvation to the believer.

And Peter speaks to those who were "begotten again unto a lively hope," and who "are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Peter 1:5. The time of the revelation of this salvation is so clearly brought to view in verses 9-13 that we copy them in full:-

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation

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of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which "are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

## II

Some have thought, and Luther was among them, that there is a conflict between Paul and James on the subject of justification. But that is not the case. It is true that Paul says, in Rom. 3:28, that we are justified by faith without the

deeds of the law, that is, without works. But that is altogether "for the remission of sins that are past." See verses 23-26. Over the past, or for remission of past sins, our actions or obedience can have no influence whatever. Justification for sins past leaves the individual *passively just* before God; as Adam was just before God at his creation. He had not sinned; neither had he done any good.

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He had yet to form a character for himself. The God of love had created him with capacities, and given him opportunities, for the formation of a character. The past was all of the free act and gift of God. The future rested with himself.

James (chap. 2) is not speaking of the past-of that over which our actions have no control. He is speaking of the formation of character by our own actions. This is all accomplished *after* we are justified by faith. And when Paul speaks of the future-of the formation of character-he exalts works as highly as James does. Thus, in Phil. 2:12, he writes:-

"My beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

And this, again, shows the distinction between justification for past offenses, and salvation. Paul would never write, Work out your own justification, using the term as it is used in Rom. 3, for it is impossible to do it. Such justification is by faith alone. But salvation is not by faith alone; it is by patient continuance in well-doing, seeking for glory, honor, and immortality, that we obtain eternal life. That this plan is perfectly consistent with free grace will be shown hereafter.

But we must notice more fully the question, What does, and what does not save us? And,

1. We have seen that justification will not save us. By this we mean justification without any further work. He that is justified will be saved

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only if he endures to the end; if he patiently continues in well-doing; if he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling; if he adds to his faith, virtue, and all the Christian graces. Therefore the fact that he is or has been justified by faith is not a sufficient ground of assurance that he will be finally saved. Paul took this same view. Of his being, or having been, justified by faith no one could have a better assurance; yet he said; "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. 9:27. The Revised Version of this text reads; "But I buffet [Gr. *bruise*] my body, and bring it into bondage; lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected."

2. The death of Christ does not save us. Let not the reader think that we undervalue the death of Christ; we fully believe that there is no remission without the shedding of blood, and that the precious blood of Christ alone cleanses from all unrighteousness. But we wish to correct an error into which very many have fallen; an error which, we doubt not, has proved fatal to thousands. We say on this point, as we said of justification, the fact that Christ died for man is no ground for assurance that he will be saved. If it is, then it gives assurance that all will be saved, for he died for all. "How can I be lost," inquires one, "since Christ has died to redeem my soul?" But he surely "tasted death for every man."

Heb. 2:9. How, then, can any man be lost? That position is the very corner-stone of Universalism; an error full of deadly evils. Peter says of some that they deny the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 Pet. 2:1. No, we do not undervalue the death of Christ. But we would prevent or correct a perversion of an important truth by which the truth is made the ground of a false hope.

But the hymn is triumphantly quoted; "Jesus paid it all." And then again the question is asked: "How can I be condemned, or lost, if Jesus paid all my debt? I must be free, for God is not so unjust as to demand a second payment of the same debt." We are not surprised when a Universalist asks this question, and makes this statement. It is quite appropriate to his position, and very necessary to his conclusion. And we must add, that, if the premise be correct, then his conclusion is unavoidable. But neither premise nor conclusion is correct.

The error of that position lies in the fact that it makes no distinction between *debt* and *crime*. One may be compared to the other; and a case of debt may be used to illustrate (in part) criminal relations. But they are not the same. A crime is not of the nature of a debt; is no evidence of the existence of a crime.

It is true that a debt cannot be justly collected a second time. And it matters not whether it be paid by the debtor himself or by his friend; the principle holds good in either case. When the

debt is paid he is no longer a debtor; no claim stands against him. But when a man commits a crime—a murder, for instance—and another volunteers to suffer the penalty, and lays down his life for that crime, the perpetrator of the crime is no less a criminal than he was before. His guilt remains; and if the declaration be strictly carried out, "He will by no means clear the guilty," Ex. 34:8, such an one would surely fall in the Judgment. If a debt be paid the debtor *must* go clear. But Christ did not die for man so that all *must be* saved for whom he died; but that they *may be* saved. The error which we would expose and correct really leaves no room for pardon. If my friend pays my debt, then my creditor does not forgive me the debt. Now if, in like manner, Christ pays our debt; if our sins are simply debts which may be and are paid by our substitute, then there can be no forgiveness. But the death of Christ answered no such purpose. As before said, his death makes our salvation *possible* but not *necessary*. Because he died for us God can *forgive* us without infringing on his infinite justice. It must appear evident to every one that if we are pardoned with, out a substitute, without any infliction of the penalty of our past sins, then justice is robbed of its due; for *sin ought to be punished*. That there is forgiveness in the gospel cannot be denied; and that the death of Christ was to answer the demand of infinite justice is plainly stated; "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption

that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; *that he might be just*, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom.

3:24-26. It is in this manner that the justice of God is vindicated, and we may be pardoned for the sake of our Surety. It is by such means that "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness [justice] and peace have kissed each other." Ps. 85:10.

But, while the apostle states very emphatically that it is through faith in his blood that remission is given, he, with equal clearness, shows that the death of Christ does not save the sinner. In Rom. 5:10, in this same argument on justification, he says; "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, *we shall be saved by his life.*" As we said before, the fact that Christ died for man does not at all insure his salvation. He must be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, and if thus reconciled (which is a voluntary work), and not otherwise, he may be saved by his life; that is, by the intercession of Christ as a priest.

The main ground of this error, that the debt is so paid that the work of salvation is already completed, lies in the statement, now so generally believed, that the atonement was made on the cross

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of Christ. The proof in the Scriptures is abundant that the slaying of the offering, or sacrifice, did not make atonement. It was preparatory to making the atonement. After the offering was slain the priest took the blood into the sanctuary, and there made the atonement. See Lev. 4, and others, for special atonements, and Lev. 16 for the general atonement, on the "day of atonement" for all the people. It may indeed be affirmed that Christ is both the sacrifice and the priest. This we admit; but he is not both at the same time. That is, he was not acting as a priest when he died on the cross. We have not space here to enlarge on this subject, but will notice a few points in Paul's masterly argument to the Hebrews:-

1. The sanctuary of the new covenant is in Heaven.

2. The priesthood of Christ is in Heaven-not on the earth. Please read Heb. 8:1-5.

3. Christ entered into Heaven by his own blood to appear before God for us. Heb. 9:24, 25. We remark that the atonement was *always* made in the sanctuary, the offering was *never* slain in the sanctuary.

4. The offering of Christ conformed strictly to the types in this respect. "For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Heb. 13:11, 12. He shed his blood without the gate, but as a priest he

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is set down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. It is the blood that atones; the blood cleanses; but it is the priest who presents that blood before the shekinah who makes the atonement. In this is seen the harmony of the divine plan according to Paul's words in Rom. 5:10; reconciled to God by the death of his Son, which death makes salvation possible to the applicant; saved by his life, or priesthood, whereby the atonement is made,

by which salvation is positive, fixed, certain. Not all for whom Christ died will be saved; but all for whom atonement is made, whose sins are blotted out, will be saved.

There are so many errors extant on this subject that we need to guard against misapprehension on every point. It may be supposed that, in distinguishing between justification and salvation, we hold that even though a man be justified, if he dies in that state he may not be saved. But we hold to no such thing. A state of justification is a state of salvation, as far as *present salvation* is concerned, of which we have spoken. And if this justification *be retained* to the end of one's probation, it results in his *final salvation*. But "patient continuance in well-doing" is necessary to retain it. The fact that those who have obtained the precious faith are exhorted to make their calling and election sure, is evidence that it *may be* lost. Of this, however, we shall speak more at length.

### III

The statement that justification by faith is counting one just, not by virtue of his own obedience, but by what another does for him, is strictly correct as far as it goes, but was not offered as giving a full and complete idea of the effects of justification in the gospel. It has been noticed that a guilty person may be guilty still, notwithstanding another may suffer because of his violation of the law. This is and has been the condition of the great majority of those for whom Christ died. Now if a person were set free merely on the ground that the penalty had been executed on a substitute, though the authority and integrity of the law would be vindicated, the Government would have no security against his resuming a course of lawlessness; and the community would have no assurance that he would not again trample upon their rights. It is therefore evident that before a pardon can safely be granted to the transgressor, there must be given some guarantee in regard to his future conduct. To guard all interests; with mercy to unite justice to all parties, we shall need to inquire for a broader definition of justification by faith than that which we have considered. We should then define it as follows:-

It is that change both in man's relations and condition by virtue of which (1) He is counted just as regards his past life, though his life has not been just; (2) The Government and its subjects are guaranteed against future depredations; and (3) God may consistently accept his service as that of a loyal subject.

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By this it will be seen that it is necessary, not only to do a work *for man* but, also, *in him*, in order to his complete justification. While the act of laying the penalty upon a substitute vindicates the majesty of the law, a *change of heart* or of disposition, a thorough amendment of life, can only give that guarantee which is demanded for the future. And this is called *conversion*. Justification by faith embraces all this. With anything less than this we cannot imagine that any one would stand justified before God.

The first point in the above list has been considered. The second needs no argument to sustain it; every one can see at a glance the reasonableness of the

statement that both the Government and the subjects are entitled to guarantees against future acts of lawlessness. But the third point will not be so apparent to every one, and will therefore need to be examined; for some may think it is consistent for God to accept the service of any one, at any time it may be offered, no matter what his past life may have been. We must differ with them. It would be a reproach to God and to his Government to accept the service of any one except under proper conditions.

Suppose a person who was born in a foreign land comes to the United States and proposes to take part in the execution of our laws. Of course his proposal is promptly rejected. But he urges his case in the following manner:-

"In my native land I carefully examined the principles of your Government, and admire them;

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therefore I am come to this country. I have read your laws; I think they are just. I am anxious to bear a part in executing them. I have an education superior to that of many who hold office in this country. I claim to have as good ability as they, and to love your Government as well as they. "Why, then, am I rejected from holding an office?"

The answer is readily given, thus:-

"By birth you are a citizen of another Government which is entirely different from this; and as such you are held under obligation to seek its welfare and to further its interests. We cannot know but you are even now acting under instructions from your sovereign. You must publicly renounce allegiance to him, and declare your allegiance to this Government. *You must be naturalized.* Then you will no longer be regarded as an alien, but as an American citizen, and be entitled to all the privileges of one born in this country."

This all can understand; its reasonableness all can see. Without such a safeguard as this enemies might come in and undermine our Government by abusing and perverting its laws under pretense of executing them. And it is truly strange that any who love justice and good government, and who know that evil is in the world, and in the hearts of men, should stand in doubt as to the necessity of the gospel, to bring us into acceptance with God, and to fit us by a transformation of heart and life for a place in his service and at last in his kingdom.

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In the above illustration, so striking in every feature, we have only used the ideas given to us by the apostle Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians. He had before said to the Romans that of all the world, Jew and Gentile, there is none righteous, no, not one. Destruction and misery are in their ways. All stand guilty before God. In harmony with this he speaks of himself and of his brethren as being "by nature the children of wrath, even as others." Eph. 2. And of the brethren, Gentiles in the flesh, he says: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." They

who were the children of wrath, aliens and strangers, have their condition entirely changed through faith in Christ and by his blood. "Now therefore," continues the apostle, "ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The gospel of Christ is *the law of naturalization*, by means of which aliens or foreigners are inducted into the household of God, and are made citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, the Israel of God.

In illustrations it is permitted us to represent spiritual things by those which are natural; we have no other means of making comparisons which our minds can appreciate. But we must always remember that there is a depth to spiritual

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things which the natural cannot reach. A foreigner, dwelling in his native land, may have a high regard for the principles and the rulers of our Government without disparagement to his loyalty to his own; because the two Governments maintain friendly relations with each other. Each has its own territory, and each has paramount right and jurisdiction in its own dominion. But the very nature of the Government of God forbids that there shall, in it, be any parallel to this condition.

1. His dominion, his right of jurisdiction, is universal. No contrary Government has any right to exist.

2. His law, the rule of his Government, is a moral law. It takes cognizance, not of actions alone, but of motives and intentions.

3. As no contrary rule has any right to exist, there can be no neutrality in case of usurpation or rebellion. When war is waged against a Government, every good and loyal citizen is bound to support the Government. A refusal to do so is equivalent to giving aid to the enemy.

Now inasmuch as all have gone astray—all have departed from God—the world is in the condition of a mighty rebellion against its rightful ruler. There is a general disregard of his authority and of the rights of his subjects. And no one is on neutral ground; says the Governor: "He that is not for me is against me." And so far has man fallen from his "first estate," that it is declared that "the carnal mind," the natural, unchanged

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heart, "is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. 8:7. Hence, all are by nature the children of wrath, because all are aliens, or more properly, in a state of rebellion against the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Can any doubt the necessity of naturalization, or of the acceptance of the amnesty offered, that we may be brought into friendly and loyal relations to the one Lawgiver? Can any deny the reasonableness of the declaration, "Ye must be born again"?

No one, we think, can now fail to see the correctness of our proposition that God cannot consistently accept or approve of the action of any one in his natural state, or in carnal mindedness. Such a state being one of enmity against God, every action springing from the carnal or natural heart is an act of rebellion, because it is done in utter disregard of the authority of our rightful Sovereign. Every act has its spring in self-will; it proceeds from a spirit which, if it could have

undisputed sway, would dethrone Jehovah and substitute its own will for his. If any one has a remaining doubt of the truthfulness of this statement, let him look abroad upon the earth, and see its millions sunken to every depth of iniquity, "hateful, and hating one another." In truth, "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." We might heighten the darkness of the picture should we stop to consider the infinite holiness of the character of God, and of the purity and spirituality of the divine law, of which we are

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all transgressors. But even with a very partial view the scene is dark enough to cause us to wonder at the forbearance of God, that he does not blot this rebellious province, made filthy by the evil practices of its inhabitants, out of existence.

#### IV

There are two questions which here call for notice: one, which has greatly agitated the theological world; the other, which may not be often asked (though it has been), but is often woven into the thoughts of a certain class of professors concerning the future.

1. Is justification by faith of such a nature that we necessarily remain justified, or may we lose it by unfaithfulness?

The points involved in this question are quite too numerous to be noticed in all their bearings in this brief examination; and yet we believe we may arrive at a satisfactory solution of the subject. On all questions of doctrine there may be found some positive declarations of Scripture, which cannot easily be misunderstood; these are decisive, and must control us in our investigations. If we disregard these, and rest our judgment on inferences drawn from texts not so decisive, we can hardly fail to go astray. Inferences may be found on both sides of any question, but positive declarations cannot be found on both sides of any Bible doctrine.

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Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." This is a figure, it is true, but it is one which cannot be misunderstood; one which is often used in the Scriptures. We cannot say that all mankind are branches of this vine; all do not bear this relation to Jesus. In Rev. 14:18, 19, we read of "the vine of the earth," whose clusters are to be cast into the wine-press of the wrath of God. Inasmuch as it is said to all, "Ye must be born again," and all are alike "by nature the children of wrath," it is only by being grafted that any of the sons of Adam can become connected with the heavenly vine. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.*" What can this mean? There are no branches in him by nature. Can and will unfruitful branches be removed from their connection with this vine? Hear the Saviour again: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

We cannot mistake the import of this language. Paul said: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The same necessity rests upon all, to be baptized into Christ, to put him on, by repentance, faith, and obedience. Will any affirm that we are in Christ, that we have put on Christ before, or without, repentance, faith, and obedience to him? Can we be Christ's, be in him, and be the children of wrath at the same time? We surely cannot,

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We are not in him by nature. Justification by faith brings us into him. And he says that he who is in him, if he bear not fruit, will be taken away. If a man abide not in him, he is cast forth as a withered branch, to be burned.

But, it is objected, Jesus said his sheep shall not perish, nor shall any pluck them out of his hand. That is beyond all doubt. He will surely save his faithful ones. But the promise of their salvation is not without a condition. They must continue patient in well-doing; they must abide in him and bear fruit. There is no power in the universe, *outside of ourselves*, that can separate us from Christ, or pluck us out of his hand. Here again we ask the question, Are we on probation, or are we not? Paul says we are the house of Christ, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." Heb. 3:6. And Peter exhorts us to make our calling and election sure. 2 Peter 1:10. On this text we shall speak hereafter.

All are yet on probation; the present is a state of trial. The decision of the coming Judgment depends upon our manner of life; our diligence or our neglect; our bringing forth fruit or our being unfruitful. Paul warns the converts from the Gentiles by the example of the Jews who were rejected. He says: "Because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee." Rom. 11:20, 21.

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Is this inconsistent with grace? No; it is free grace that has opened the way for our escape from eternal ruin. Grace has made our salvation possible. Grace guides and assists us every step on the way. Grace opens the way and assists us, but grace does not insure our salvation without our availing ourselves of its provisions, any more than favor and good will would prevent a man starving if he refused to eat the food which was freely provided for him, and freely offered to him. Grace does not destroy the power of choice, nor release us from the duty and necessity of choosing. Grace will assist us in the work of overcoming, but grace will not release us from the necessity of overcoming. Grace will clothe us with an invincible armor; but grace will not fight our battles for us if we sit still and do nothing. It is now as of old: "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon." Grace threw down the walls of Jericho; but they would not have fallen if the children of Israel had neglected to compass the city as they were commanded to do. Grace saved Noah from the flood but it would not if he had not built an ark. God has done and will do all that is necessary to make full provision for our salvation. He will fulfill all his promises, *if we will fulfill their conditions*. But he will never do for us that which he has commanded us to do. Grace encourages *trust*; it does not tolerate *presumption*.

When the Lord sent Moses to the children of Israel, it was with this message: "Say unto them, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham,

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of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which was done to you in Egypt; and I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Ex. 3:16, 17. Again he said to them: "And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burden of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for an heritage; I am the Lord." Ex. 6:7, 8. Yet, direct and positive as this promise was, the Lord did *not* bring them into that land, but destroyed them for their disobedience.

Again, it was said to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me; and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." Ex. 4:22, 23. The first-born was the highly-prized and beloved. Yet on the institution of the Passover they would have been destroyed with the firstborn of Egypt, if they had not remained in their houses and sprinkled the blood on their doorposts; and were afterwards destroyed as noticed above. This teaches us that God's chosen, his first-born, will continue to enjoy his favor *only on*

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*condition of continued obedience.* The conditional nature of his gracious promises is shown by his word through Jeremiah, wherein he commanded Israel to obey him, saying: "*That I may perform the oath which I have sworn* unto your fathers." Jer. 11:3-5. And again, where he has shown the fixed principle upon which he fulfills his promises and threatenings: "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy; if that nation against whom I have pronounced turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." Jer. 18:7-10. And this is true not only of nations, but of individuals. Thus the Lord said to Eli: "*I said indeed* that thy house and the house of thy father should walk before me forever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honor me I will honor, and they that dispise me shall be lightly esteemed." 1 Sam. 2:30.

The Jews had the same false confidence that many Christians now entertain. God had said, "Israel is my son, even my first-born." They were the children of the covenants, and theirs were the promises. Rom. 9:4, 5. They were the especial subjects of God's grace, and they, too, thought, "Once in grace, always in grace." But

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the very ones of whom he said they were his first-born, whom he promised to bring into the land of promise, fell in the wilderness because of their unfaithfulness. We need to consider well these facts in order to appreciate the apostle's warning in Rom. 11:20, 21.

## V

The other question to which we referred is this:-

2. If we lose our justification by unfaithfulness, do we then derive any benefit from our past Christian life?

This question ought to be examined in this connection, for we have heard the belief expressed that if a Christian falls from grace and shall be finally lost, his lot will be better for his having been a Christian; because all the sins of his previous life were forgiven when the Lord accepted him, and those into which he fell during his Christian life would not be counted against him because of his relation to Christ during that time. This is a delusion of the worst kind. It lulls the conscience and leads to complacent feelings even under the thought of the possibility of apostasy and final and eternal ruin. It springs from erroneous ideas concerning the nature of our service to God. It assumes that justification by faith is a final procedure, when it is not; that the life of the Christian is a life of *merit*, instead of a life of *favor*, that forgiveness in probation is *absolute*, without

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the possibility of reversal, whereas it is conditional, and the benefit of it may be lost by neglect or rebellion.

The following illustration presents a striking parallel to the case of the sinner: A boy is found in the streets, without home and friends, in abject poverty. A benevolent man of vast wealth takes him up, brings him to his own home, clothes him, with the prospect of making him his heir. He is in the enjoyment of all the privileges of the home and wealth of his benefactor. He is beloved and treated as an own child. For a time he rejoices in the happy change in his fortune, and is thankful and obedient to his new-found father. But after a time he becomes proud in his privileges; he considers them his just due, and becomes haughty and arrogant. At length he shows himself unthankful and disobedient. He carries his rebellion so far that the generous man can no longer tolerate him, as he is abusing his house and demoralizing his household. He is compelled to turn him from his house, and he returns to the degradation from which he was so graciously rescued. After a time he is detected, with others, his evil companions, in robbing the house of his generous benefactor. Now the question arises, Shall this young man be treated more leniently than his fellows because of the kindness which he has received from the man whom he has robbed? Not at all. In addition to the crime of robbery, which he bears in common with the others, he is guilty of the basest ingratitude, and deserving of sorer punishment than the others.

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Take another illustration. We have likened justification by faith to the process of naturalization, and the sinner converted, to a man of foreign birth who has

been admitted to the privileges of citizenship. After the foreign-born citizen has enjoyed his privileges a number of years, a war breaks out between our Government and that of the land of his birth, and he enters the army of the latter and fights against his adopted country. In company with others he is taken prisoner, and then claims that he shall be treated with more favor than the other prisoners, because of his former relation to our Government, and of his having served as an officer in it. But the officer in command takes another view of the matter. He treats his captives as prisoners of war-as men engaged in honorable warfare,-except him who had once sworn allegiance to the Government, and he orders that he be promptly executed as a traitor. And all Governments assent to the justice of the proceeding, because the oath of allegiance imposes the most solemn obligation of loyalty, and because the privilege of citizenship is counted one of great favor to the individual. His former position does not serve to mitigate the rigor of his punishment, but to the contrary, increases it.

And if this be true in the case of human Governments, how much more is it true under the Divine Government, where all is of favor or grace to the subject, and where his action cannot possibly be counted as meritorious. Without any merit, by grace alone, is the sinner accepted of God;

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not for what he has done, or may do, but for what Christ has suffered for him. Grace upholds him in the Christian life; and without this grace he can do nothing. The gift of grace increases his responsibility and obligation. To turn away from this grace, once received, is reckoned as treading underfoot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace. Heb. 10:29. Or as crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame. Heb. 6:6. The renegade, the apostate, dishonors the gospel of Christ far more than the infidel who has never known the joy of the gift of the Spirit of his grace.

By the prophet Ezekiel the Lord said: "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, *all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered*; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it." Ezc. 33:13.

Now no person has a righteousness by reason of which the Lord says he shall live, except it be the righteousness of faith, received through the Lord Jesus Christ. If such an one turn away and commit iniquity "all his righteousness shall not be remembered:" and if so, he will stand before the Judge as if he had never had faith; as if he had not received favor through Christ. As we have remarked, justification by faith is not a final procedure; it is conditional. If the one so justified turns away from the Saviour, he is counted as

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never having been justified. Not fulfilling the conditions-not enduring to the end-his former justification avails him nothing; it shall not be remembered. But if his past sins were obliterated in justification by faith, then it would avail him much,-it would be remembered to excellent account. It would then, as a matter of fact, take the place of the Judgment and entirely supersede it.

But the most emphatic negative to the position assumed by the questioner is given by the apostle Peter, as follows:-

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For *it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness*, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." 2 Peter 2:20, 21.

This, as far as any supposed benefit is to be derived from a former religious experience, is conclusive and decisive. Like the naturalized citizen taken in warfare against the land which has adopted him, the sinner who has been accepted through Christ to the service of God, is guilty of the highest treason; he has no cloak for his sin; he can plead no mitigating circumstances in his course; he crucifies to himself the Son of God afresh, and puts him to an open shame; he has received the assistance of grace, with the promise continued assistance, but he tramples upon

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it and does despite to the Holy Spirit. Surely it had been better for him never to have been the special subject of divine favor than thus to abuse it. Having had such opportunities of knowing his Master's will, he shall be beaten with many stripes.

The position of an individual justified by faith may be further illustrated thus: A owes B a sum which he is not able to pay, and C engages to take the responsibility of the debt on certain conditions; and in order to make it sure, C deposits with B sufficient to cover the amount. Now it is stipulated that if A fulfills the conditions, B shall cancel the debt from the deposit made by C. And as long as A is faithfully fulfilling the conditions, so long is B satisfied in regard to the debt; and of course he will not trouble A for it, knowing it is secure. Thus A is accounted just, in the sight of B, though not really just himself, because he fails to pay a just debt. He is considered as just, or justified through obedience to the conditions of C, who is his surety. But if A refuses or neglects to fulfill the conditions, the deposit of C no longer avails for him; he falls from the favor of B, which he had enjoyed through this arrangement, and the debt stands against him as fully as though C had never engaged to pay it on any condition.

That we have herein presented the true Scriptural view of the subject, that justification by faith, or the pardon we receive while on probation, is a *conditional pardon*, is proved by our Saviour's words in Matt. 18:23-35, Here is presented the

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case of a servant who owed his lord ten thousand talents; hut having nothing to pay, and manifesting honesty of intention, "the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, *and forgave him the debt.*"But this servant met his fellow-servant, who owed him the trifling sum of two hundred pence, and who plead for mercy in the same terms in which the first had so successfully plead before his lord. But this servant would not show mercy; he thrust his fellow-servant into prison till he should pay the debt. Hearing of this, his lord called him,

and said unto him, "O thou wicked servant, *I forgave thee all that debt*, because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, *till he should pay all that was due unto him.*" This we say is the Bible view of forgiveness in the gospel, or justification by faith, while we are waiting for the decisions of the Judgment. And on this plain case we are not left to merely draw a conclusion; the Saviour has made the application for us, and from this application there can be no appeal. He says: "*So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do unto you*, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

That this is a true representation of the position of the penitent, is evident from the declarations that "the that endureth unto the end"-he that is "faithful unto death"-shall be saved; while he

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that is justified by faith, may, by disobedience, lose that justification, and his righteousness will not be remembered. The blood of Jesus is the bounteous supply-the rich deposit where all may find a covering for their sins; but whether their sins are actually atoned for and removed by that blood, depends upon their acceptance of it and their faithfulness to the conditions of acceptance.

## VI

What bearing has the doctrine of election on the position we have taken on justification by faith? Can our position be shown to be in harmony with the declarations of Scripture concerning election? This is an interesting point, and we will try to show that there is harmony between the two.

We think that there is existing great misapprehension as to the nature of election as it is taught in the Scriptures. It is certainly different from election as it is usually considered in civil, and especially republican, Governments. Offices are obtained in earthly Governments in different manners, usually by election or by inheritance. Victoria holds her position of Queen of England by inheritance; she was not elected to it. Mr. Arthur holds his office of President by election; he did not inherit it. And so it is in all manner of tenures. But these unite in the gospel system. The saints are elected to eternal life; they are also heirs of life. They are elected to salvation;

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they are also heirs of salvation-it is their inheritance. *They are elected unto an inheritance.*

A friend with whom we used to hold converse was in the practice of quoting to us Eph. 1:4; "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." This he constantly repeated as a certain off-set to any argument which might be produced to show that we had control of our own destiny.

And have we any control of our final destiny? What does the term *probation* imply but a trial of our faith, our patience, our endurance? But if we were chosen, elected, *personally and unconditionally* before the foundation of the world, then we cannot possibly have any control of our own destiny. As far as our final

salvation is concerned we are not free agents in any sense of the term; we are not on probation in fact; we can have no power of choice in the matter. And then if any can discover any sense in Peter's injunction to "make your calling and election sure," they have discernment far beyond ours, for we cannot. Our idea of Eph. 1:4 is this; We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. In our natural state we are carnally minded-in a state of enmity to God. Naturally we are not Christians, not in Christ; we become his only by repentance and faith. But we are chosen *in Christ*; not *out of Christ*; and not *in ourselves*. If we are chosen while we are children of wrath, in a state of enmity against God, we are not chosen *in him* in the sense which is usually attached

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to that expression. How, then, shall it be understood? Let us use an illustration on this point also.

Suppose our Constitution had provided that the first President of the United States should be elected, and that the office should thenceforward descend to the son of the one who was elected, and so on by succession to the legal heir of each President. George Washington was elected, but having no son to succeed him he adopts the son of Richard Roe, whose final succession, however, is upon the condition of his faithfully discharging certain specified duties. At the death of George Washington he comes to take the oath of office; but his claim is disputed. Certain electors say:-

"We did not vote for you. By what authority do you assert a right to the office?"

"According to a provision in the Constitution. *I was elected* in the election of George Washington. Being his adopted son *I inherited* the office from him. When you voted, you voted for George Washington and through him for his legal successor. I am his legal successor, and therefore I was *elected in him*, when I was yet unknown to you. When he adopted me he made me an heir to the highest place in the Government, and *I made my election sure* by faithfully discharging the duties imposed upon me."

Such a case as this is *possible* in every particular, in an earthly Government. And this meets the requirements of the Scriptures in every particular. Of Christ, the Father says; "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; *mine elect*, in whom my soul delighteth." Isa. 42:1. And again:

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"Behold, I lay in Sion, a chief corner-stone, *elect*, precious." 1 Pet. 2:6. His election was a *personal* election. Ours is through his; and his avails us personally when we are "in him," and it is *made sure if we abide in him*; otherwise we are taken away; cast forth as fruitless, withered branches. They who are lost "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." While they who are saved, the Lord's elect, are "from the beginning chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. 2:10, 13. Without belief of the truth we are without hope and without Christ. In such a condition we are not the chosen or elect of God.

But it may be claimed that there must be exceptions to these declarations concerning methods of bestowing grace in the Divine Government. We might

admit the claim without detriment to the argument, as there are exceptions to some of the most general statements of the Scriptures. Nothing appears more evident than that "it is appointed unto *man* once to die," yet two men have already been excepted, and the entire last generation of Christians will be excepted. 1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:15-17. We have a few instances on record of God having shown special favor to individuals who were possessed of great integrity, even before they came to the knowledge of the faith. Such a man was Saul of Tarsus. We learn that he had never seen the Lord previous to his ascending to be a Prince and a

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Saviour. From the highest officials of the church he had imbibed prejudices against what was considered a profane innovation. His unselfish zeal well fitted him for the position unto which he was chosen. And so with Cornelius. It was because of his faithfulness in walking in all the light that he had, that special steps were taken to lead him in the way of salvation.

And yet even such cases are not as really exceptions to the principles we have laid down as may at first appear. It is of the Lord's mercy alone that any fire saved. While we were blind and willful he gave his Son to die for us. And in the cases cited, their ultimate salvation depended entirely on their acceptance of, and obedience to, the truth. Paul, notwithstanding the grace bestowed upon him, well understood the necessity of "patient continuance in well doing" in order to inherit eternal life; he knew that faithfulness was necessary on his part lest, while he preached to others, he himself should be a castaway. 1 Cor. 9:27. There is no hint that the case of any will finally be decided without regard to their own choice and action.

To prove that even declarations concerning men's actions are made contingent and in reference to their power of choice, we quote David's inquiry of the Lord, with the answer, and the subsequent event:-

"And David knew that Saul secretly practiced mischief against him; and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. Then said

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David, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, He will come down. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up.

"Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forebore to go forth." 1 Sam. 23:9-13.

The meaning is evident. If David had remained Saul would have gone down; and if Saul had gone down, the men of Keilah would have delivered David into his hand. The condition was implied when the Lord said, He will come down, and, They will deliver thee up. For the answer was positive in its terms; but Saul did not go down. The Lord does not so determine events that man has not the power of choice and control of his own destiny. He leaves him free to choose, and justly

holds him responsible for his use of this freedom. Happy are all they who make his will their choice!

\* \* \*This tract was prepared in compliance with a vote of the ministers and others at the General Conference in Rome, N. Y., 1882; also a vote of the meeting of the Michigan State Missionary Society held in Greenville.

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