

Name: _____



The Canadian *Lord's Day* Association

Advanced Bible Correspondence Course Lesson 23: Justification

LORD'S DAY 23

Q.59. BUT WHAT DOTTH IT PROFIT THEE NOW THAT THOU BELIEVEST ALL THIS?

ANSWER: THAT I AM RIGHTEOUS IN CHRIST, BEFORE GOD, AND AN HEIR OF ETERNAL LIFE (A).

(A) HABAKKUK 2:4, ROMANS 1:17, JOHN 3:36

The profit of faith

What benefit does it give that one believes all this? "All this" means the twelve articles of the Apostles' Creed. What is the fruit, the profit, the gain of believing all this? The answer is short and powerful: "That I am righteous in Christ, before God." The words "justification" and "justify" in the Bible always lead us into the atmosphere of the administration of justice at the courts. There is a defendant who deserves the death penalty. But the Judge acquits him of each sin and all guilt. It is this acquittal which is dealt with here. In justification, God, as Judge, acquits the sinner worthy of damnation. God can do this on the basis of the righteousness of Christ, by which all the sins of the elect are satisfied for. This is the heart of the gospel of free grace: "*Being justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 3:24). "To be righteous in Christ, before God" means: acquitted by God in Him. In Christ, the acquitted sinner becomes an heir of eternal life. Instead of everlasting death, the sinner receives eternal life. John wrote: "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (John 3:36).

JUSTIFICATION:

Judge:	God
Defendant:	the sinner
Punishment deserved:	eternal condemnation
Prosecutor:	Satan/the law/the conscience
Advocate:	Jesus Christ

Acquittal: Jesus pleads for the sinner by pointing to His satisfaction. He desires to take the place of the sinner. The sinner is acquitted by God the Father on the basis of Christ's satisfaction and therefore receives eternal life.

The Holy Ghost causes the believer to be aware of this acquittal in his conscience. He gives testimony in his heart.

Q.60. HOW ART THOU RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD?

ANSWER: ONLY BY A TRUE FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST (A); SO THAT, THOUGH MY CONSCIENCE ACCUSE ME, THAT I HAVE GROSSLY TRANSGRESSED ALL THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, AND KEPT NONE OF THEM (B), AND AM STILL INCLINED TO ALL EVIL (C); NOTWITHSTANDING, GOD, WITHOUT ANY MERIT OF MINE (D), BUT ONLY OF MERE GRACE (E), GRANTS AND IMPUTES TO ME (F), THE PERFECT SATISFACTION (G), RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND HOLINESS OF CHRIST (H); EVEN SO, AS IF I NEVER HAD HAD, NOR COMMITTED ANY SIN; YEA, AS IF I HAD FULLY ACCOMPLISHED ALL THAT OBEDIENCE WHICH CHRIST HAS ACCOMPLISHED FOR ME (I), INASMUCH AS I EMBRACE SUCH BENEFIT WITH A BELIEVING HEART (J).

(A)ROMANS 3:21,22&24, 5:1-2, GALATIANS 2:16, EPHESIANS 2:8&9, PHILIPPIANS 3:9; (B)ROMANS 3:9; (C)ROMANS 7:23; (D)TITUS 3:5, DEUTERONOMY 9:6, EZEKIEL 36:22; (E)ROMANS 3:24, EPHESIANS 2:8; (F)ROMANS 4:4, II CORINTHIANS 5:19; (G)I JOHN 2:2; (H)I JOHN 2:1; (I)II CORINTHIANS 5:21; (J)ROMANS 3:22, JOHN 3:18

Righteous by faith

How do we become righteous before God? Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ. *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).*

The catechism teaches us here who the man or woman is who is justified by faith in Christ. It is a sinner whose conscience accuses him and who feels that he has transgressed all God's commandments. He experiences that he is lost. We have sinned against God and He has not been anything but good to us. The sin of the sinner arouses God's wrath. The experience of the sinner is that he stands condemned before God's judgment. He cannot deliver himself from this. Nor can anybody else that is no more than a mere creature help him (see Lord's Day 5).

Nevertheless, God, the same God who condemns, is also the God who acquits. Through the benefits merited on the cross by Jesus Christ, the guilt is atoned and judgment borne. A wondrous exchange takes place. Jesus died instead of sinners worthy of condemnation, and God, of mere grace, acquitted them. It is as Paul wrote: *"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).*

Only because of Christ's merits

The perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ are granted and imputed to the acquitted ones by God. Granted and imputed mean that nothing of man is included. There is satisfaction because Christ perfectly satisfied God's demand by bearing the punishment. He obtained righteousness because He fulfilled the law by perfectly obeying His Father. God imputes the perfect, holy work of Christ. It is then as if the sinner never had or committed any sin.

Receiving with a believing heart

The comfort of the acquittal is made known to the heart by the Holy Ghost through the Word and is received by faith. That faith can be weak or strong. God's child is so dependent on the work of the Holy Ghost. Therefore there can be so much struggle in the heart. However, the Lord does not forget even one of His children. Isaiah prophesied to the people of Israel living in captivity: "*Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God*" (Isaiah 40:1). God makes known their acquittal of guilt and punishment through His Word and Spirit. The Holy Ghost powerfully gives a promise from the Bible in their heart, which they may embrace by faith. By this promise the accusing conscience is quieted, and everything is good between God and the sinner.

Q.61. WHY SAYEST THOU THAT THOU ARE RIGHTEOUS BY FAITH ONLY?

ANSWER: NOT THAT I AM ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, ON ACCOUNT OF THE WORTHINESS OF MY FAITH; BUT BECAUSE ONLY THE SATISFACTION, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND HOLINESS OF CHRIST, IS MY RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD (A); AND THAT I CANNOT RECEIVE AND APPLY THE SAME TO MYSELF ANY OTHER WAY THAN BY FAITH ONLY (B).

(A)I CORINTHIANS 1:30, 2:2; (B)I JOHN 5:10

Not because of faith

It is only by faith, without the deeds of the law, that we are righteous before God. Paul said: "*Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law*" (Romans 3:28).

We are not acquitted and accepted as children of God on the basis of our belief. Believing is not our merit. Therefore, faith is not the basis of our justification. We are justified owing to the mediatorial work of Christ. Faith is the hand by which we receive the merits of Christ, not the reason why the Lord forgives our sins and accepts us. Faith is a gift given to us by the Lord Himself. That which is a gift can never be a merit. Faith is only the instrument by which we receive Christ's merits and God's acquittal. Therefore, faith is certainly essential to be saved, but not the reason why we are saved.

Believing in Christ is an activity, but not a work by which we earn something. God's child is justified solely by faith, not by faith and works together, and not *because* of faith. We are justified by Christ, who is taken hold of by faith.

"That I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:8&9).

Questions:

1. *In justification the sinner is acquitted. By whom? (Romans 8:33)*

2. *What was the punishment deserved?*

3. *What does the acquitted sinner become an heir of? What is this?*

4. *Can man himself restore the relationship with God? In which Lord's Day have we read about this already?*

5. *Try to summarize Romans 3:24 and Ephesians 2:8 in one sentence.*

6. *What does the "satisfaction of Christ" mean?*

7. *Can you say that faith is the basis on which God's children are saved?*

Evaluator: _____

Meditation: "Faith"

The moment a soul closes with Christ, that moment is this word of God true of him: "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins." "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Taken from "Gems of Robert Murray McCheyne"