

"LINE UPON LINE."

"Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1.)

Though a familiar text, we would that its full import were grasped more clearly by all God's children. It would be a source of pleasure and continual rejoicing to them all. It would be a firm foundation upon which the other teachings of God's Word would rest immovable, secure – a foundation which could not be moved, and from which our faith-building could not be shaken by every wind of doctrine.

What is a justified condition, but a condition of guiltlessness? The act of justifying is the clearing or purifying or cleansing from sin. Any one who is pure, clean, perfect, or righteous needs not a justifier, for such are just of themselves.

There has been but one "Just One" among men – our Lord Jesus. All others were sinners by nature, having inherited condemnation through Adam. All were unjust. Being unjust, they were all under condemnation to death. Being unclean, all are cut off from fellowship and communion with the holy and righteous God. The whole world lieth in condemnation – condemned to death. (Rom. 5:16,18.)

Christ died the just (one) for the unjust (many) that he might bring us to God. (1 Pet. 3:18.) He brings us into harmony and fellowship with God by restoring us to the just or sinless condition, which Adam, our representative, lost for himself and us. Thus, Jesus becomes our Justifier, and justifies us from all things. (Acts 13:39.) Thus "being made free from sin," we may have communion with God, and can do works acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:5.)

But it is objected – the text says we are justified by FAITH, and it does not say that our justification from sin required anything but FAITH. The text says nothing about the Just One, Jesus, dying to justify the unjust many.

We reply that if any single text contained all the truth, the balance of Scripture would be useless – that one text would contain all the value. No single text contains all the truth. It is one of the fruitful causes of grievous errors that the Bible is not read more as a connected whole. But you are mistaken, our text does teach the necessity of a Redeemer to justify the unjust. Read the last clause: "justified...through our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, we were all sinners – we could not justify ourselves. We could only be justified by one who would pay our penalty for us; then we might go free. It was for this cause that Jesus died, "the just for the unjust."

Do you inquire then, What has faith to do with the justification? We reply: Faith is the acceptance or belief of something. To be a proper faith, the thing believed must have proper and substantial reasons as a ground or basis of faith. A sound basis of faith is the Word of God. In our text, faith is the handle by which we accept of justification. We know that we are justified – or cleared from all Adamic condemnation – and reckoned of God as perfect, because he says so. He says, "There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There was, and still is, condemnation to death resting on all others. We escape the condemnation, by reason of Jesus having paid the penalty of sin; and his redemption becomes applicable to every man as he comes to a knowledge of it, and accepts of it. That is, as soon as we accept of Jesus' death as our ransom price, that soon we realize or believe ourselves "justified from all things"; that soon we may know ourselves as no longer condemned sinners and aliens from God, but as his children, freed from condemnation by the full and sufficient ransom.

Would to God, dear ones, that you all could realize yet more fully this "no condemnation," full "justification," this unblamable condition in which we stand who believe that Christ "was delivered (to death) for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25.)

The justified by faith are very few, because for various reasons few believe that they are justified. Some who believe in the reality of sin, that all are sinners, and that Christ died for our sins, and redeemed us from the condemned condition, cannot realize themselves as being now, on that account, free from sin having no condemnation, and as pure and spotless as the snow in God's estimation. The only thing these lack, and it is an important lack, without which they cannot have full peace with God, is faith to realize or accept of the righteousness of Christ as the covering of all sin. Let us remember that "without faith it is impossible to please God," (Heb. 11:6.) or to "have peace (rest) with God." (Rom. 5:1.)

Another class who are not treated of by our text, and who have no right to comfort from it, do not believe that the race is under condemnation, and regard sin as a myth. These cannot be justified, because they do not recognize themselves as unjust.

Another class to whom this text does not apply, includes those who admit that man is a sinner and needs to be justified, but who claim that sinners are justified unconditionally by the Father. That is, that God concluded that he would revoke his original sentence of death, and by his mighty power turn all sinners into saints. But if this were God's plan there would have been no necessity for the death of our Lord Jesus – the Just for the unjust. That this is an unscriptural faith, is readily seen, when we find that nowhere does God say that he will unconditionally pardon sin. Those who hold this view have no need of the last clause of our text – Justified...THROUGH Jesus Christ our Lord.

Another class to whose theory this text would not fit, claim, that while all are sinners, and need to be justified or cleared from their sin; yet that this is effected not by unconditional pardon by Jehovah, nor by a ransom for sin, and the payment of sin's penalty by Jesus, but that each man in the act of dying, will pay his own penalty, and therefore be free from sin. They who hold this view have no right to use our text, for it speaks of justification (cleansing from sin) "through Jesus Christ" – something Jesus has done for us, and not something for us to do for ourselves, is the basis of the hope and peace of our text.

Truly, it has been written that the wisdom of God is foolishness with men, and the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. (1 Cor. 2:14; and 3:19.) Thus it has ever been. Men have been searching for centuries to prove that man is susceptible of a moral training which would bring him into harmony with God; or that he could make satisfaction for his own sins by means of penance now, or by the act of dying, thus restoring himself to favor with his holy Maker who cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance. Others rely on the love of God, vainly hoping that his infinite love will override his infinite justice, causing him to revoke his own original decree.

All these, while they may lead astray good, candid minds, and, by their human sophistrising, may overthrow the faith of some in Jesus as the Redeemer, who "bought us with his own precious blood," they can never make void the testimony of God's Word, nor permanently lead astray those taught of God through his Word. These see in Jehovah a God infinite both in Justice and in Love – so just that he will "by no means clear (pardon) the guilty," (Exod. 34:7) yet so loving that he gave his only begotten son to die for our sins, and to redeem us from death, the sin penalty.

Let us hold fast to the blessed Bible doctrine of Justification (freeing from condemnation) through our Lord Jesus Christ,

accepting of it by faith. As it is written, so we believe that Jesus "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"; and "without shedding of blood there is no remission (no "putting away," or "justifying"). (Heb. 9:22,26.)

Thus upheld in our faith by Jehovah's Word, we will not be carried about by every wind of doctrine which Satan stirs in this "evil day" to lead us from our anchorage in Christ. Let us now look at the subject from another standpoint of view:

DID CHRIST DIE IN VAIN?

It is an indisputed fact that "the man, Christ Jesus," lived and died; but various are the views held as to why, and the value or utility of his life and death.

Of so-called Christendom, probably one-half believe that Jesus was merely an imperfect (sinful) man like other men, except that he had more than ordinary ability – a man superior to his day – a man who, as a teacher of morals, properly ranked with Confucius, Socrates, and Plato, though, they think, less philosophical than the two last. His death they regard as remarkable for cruelty and injustice, but aside from the fact that he was a martyr to principles of truth, they recognize no merit in it. He died, say they, as any other man dies, and for the same reason. As a member of the same human family, he would have died as any other man sooner or later, anyhow. They say, the value of Jesus' life and death consists entirely in the moral teaching, influence, and example which it affords mankind, showing to all men that they should lead pure, moral lives, and rather sacrifice life than principle. Of this view are almost all connected with the "Universalist" and "Unitarian" denominations, as well as a large proportion in all other denominations, sometimes called "Liberal" and "Independent" Christians – "advanced thinkers," etc.

These scout the idea that Christ died the just for the unjust; that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures"; that "with his stripes we are healed"; that "the Lord (Jehovah)...laid on him the iniquity of us all"; (Isa. 53:5,6.) that "he was delivered (to death) for our offences." They endeavor to explain away these and a hundred **[R392 : page 3]** other similar Scriptures. Failing in this, they give us plainly their idea; viz.: that such texts and such ideas of the object of Jesus' death, while good enough in past ages, will not stand the "light" and "thought" of this nineteenth century.

With claims of superior wisdom and benevolence, they give us three advanced views on the subject. First, God is too benevolent, too loving, to require a penalty for sin of his poor weak creatures. [They overlook the fact that the God of love has permitted the evils and miseries of the last six thousand years to come upon the race, as part of the "wages of sin."]

The second view is, that the act of dying and being entombed pays the sin penalty – that thus each pays for his own sin, and is then entitled to life, and needs no redeemer to die for his sins, or to ransom him from the power of the grave. (Hos. 13:14.) [An absolute proof of the falsity of this view is furnished in the case of Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:18,23-25), the widow's son, and Lazarus (Luke 7:11-15; John 11:44), all of whom having died, and thereby, according to this theory, paid their own penalty, should be free from death after Jesus had restored life to them. But they all died again. This is proof that the death of the condemned does not make reconciliation for sin, nor entitle to a release from its penalty. The just must die for the unjust; the Lamb of God must take away the sin of the world ere they can have a right to everlasting life.

The third view, though also incorrect, yet by far the most near to the Scriptural view, is, that the ills of the present life, coupled with

a sufficiency of punishment in a future life, to be just and effective, and to reward each, will be the wages of sin.

We wish every reader to note carefully that the "nineteenth century light," of which these so-called "advanced thinkers" boast, is an earthly light. It is such intellectual philosophy and science, falsely so called, against which we are warned. (1 Tim. 6:20.) It not only ignores, but opposes the heavenly light – THE WORD OF GOD. Among the strong advocates of this view are Henry Ward Beecher and many of the great; and adherents with these [R392 : page 4] are the rich and the wise, according to this world; but they cannot boast the words of Jesus, or Paul, or James, or Peter, as proving or harmonizing with their "light." No; but they are the ones to whom we refer for our faith. Their united testimony is, that "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" than the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:10-12.) How sad that some who once stood with us in full reliance on the ransom – the precious blood of Christ – as the basis of forgiveness of sins and future RESTITUTION from its penalty, have recently fallen into this grievous error.

The argument of this large class of "advanced thinkers" is completely overthrown by the legitimate conclusions of their own arguments. Assuming that Jesus died, not to pay a penalty for us, they say he simply became our leader and example. They all claim that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and others, who lived and died before Jesus' day, are saved in the same sense, in the same way, and receive as great blessings and rewards as saints who live since Jesus set the example. Do they not thus believe? You answer, yes. Then we inquire, what advantage resulted from Jesus' example? If they of preceding ages got along just as well without it as we who have it, and if his death did not satisfy any penalty or legal claims of justice against us as sinners, we should be forced to the conclusion that

Christ died in vain. If God had been as wise as these teachers, and had possessed some of the nineteenth century "light," the inference is that he would not have sent his only begotten Son to become a man, and to "taste death for every man."

The regular and attentive reader will notice that the foregoing is not our view of the teachings of Scripture. We believe that by the death of Christ the human nature of all before and since his day is justified to life; but that we living since his day, have the advantage, that by following his example in sacrificing the human nature, we may become partakers of a higher nature, viz.: a spiritual – even the divine nature. We merely used the argument of the opposition to overthrow their own theory.

But while we oppose, and always expect to oppose, above every other and minor heresy, the views which, as above mentioned, deny that our Lord bought us with his own precious blood (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2 Pet. 2:1,2), and every other theory which ascribes salvation from death to any other name than Jesus, and by any other means than that "he died for our sins – the Just for the unjust; yet for very many who hold these views, we have much sympathy; in fact, we admire many of them. Controlled by benevolent reasoning powers, and confronted by the unreasonable and unscriptural doctrines of so-called orthodoxy, they could scarcely avoid an opposite extreme. It is the inclination of our present demoralized human nature to fly from one extreme to another. We only get the golden mean of truth when we let the human will and human wisdom cease, and accept God's word as its own interpreter.

The views from which these generally fled, represent the faith of about the other half of Christendom, and are termed "Orthodox" views. The belief of this class, in a few words, is as follows: Sin is an awful reality, entailing upon all, through Adam, a penalty which must be paid, or not one of the race could ever be restored to life or

communion with God. God, foreseeing that none of us could pay the price of our own or of each other's sins (because all were condemned), provided a ransom or substitute (Both words have the same meaning.) in the person of "the man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all," and "redeemed us" by dying "for our sins" – "the Just for the unjust."

To all this we agree; thus far we have Scripture; but we can go no further with "Orthodoxy," for when they come to explain the nature of the penalty which Jesus paid for us, they leave both divine and human wisdom. They claim, unscripturally, that the wages of sin is everlasting torture and misery; some believing that it will be mental torture, and others that it will be physical – that God, before he had created man, had, in some distant locality, fitted up a place where the sinner may be tortured throughout eternity in surging billows of fire and flame.

Somewhat less awful is the view of Papacy – that purgatory is a place of dreadful torture, which will end when the culprit has had sufficient punishment. Papacy found it necessary to use strong and forcible arguments when she undertook to convert the whole world; and Protestantism sought to make the inducements of Christianity still more striking by preaching an endless torture.

Any benevolent mind, unbiased by prejudice, even though unenlightened by revelation, must see that there is something wrong in this theory; and positive proof of its falsity is furnished, when the fruitless attempt is made to harmonize this endless torture theory of men, with the substitution or ransom teaching of Scripture. By holding and mixing this truth (substitution) with this error (eternal torment), the truth is made to appear untrue. Thus, if the wages due to sinners was eternal torture in hell, and if Jesus became the sinners' substitute or ransom – then what? Then Christ is in hell suffering that

torture, and must forever thus suffer to all eternity. Then he is not in heaven, at the right hand of God. (Mark 16:19.)

This conclusion is, of course, preposterous and unscriptural; every logical mind sees this, and to escape the dilemma, some claim that Jesus suffered more agony in the few hours of his crucifixion than all men (over a hundred and forty billions) would be capable of suffering unitedly throughout eternity. Others seeing that this is as absurd as the former view, discard both the eternal torment and the substitution or ransom, and become disbelievers in the Bible as God's revelation.

Still others, to compromise with reason, discard substitution, but roll the human tradition of eternal torment and purgatory as a sweet morsel under their tongue, determined to hold it at all hazards. A few, of whom we thank our Father it is our privilege to be, let go of the human tradition of eternal torture, but hold fast to the Bible teaching of Substitution, viz.: That Jesus "gave himself a ransom (Greek – antilutron – an equivalent price. See also "Webster's Dictionary.") for all" mankind. (1 Tim. 2:6.)

Now, briefly, let us see why Christ died. We see that others either make out that his death was in vain, or, by tacking on eternal torment as the penalty he paid for us, they make void the Word of God by their traditions.

First, then, we accept of substitution in its fullest sense, and claim that when "Christ died for our sins" – "the Just for the unjust" – when "the chastisement of our peace was upon him" – when "he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," he took the place of the sinner before God, and suffered exactly the penalty of our Adamic sin – exactly what otherwise the entire race must have suffered. But now comes the question, What are the wages of sin which he must meet for us, in order to be our ransom or

substitute? The Scriptures reply, "The wages of sin is DEATH." (Rom. 6:23.) Not life in torment, but the extinction of life is death.

To this conclusion all Scripture harmonizes, viz.: that his death was the ransom which justifies all mankind to life, and makes possible (in God's due time) the resurrection of all that are in their graves. (John 5:28.) It was not the sufferings of Gethsemane, nor the weariness of his three-and-a-half years' ministry that [R393 : page 4] redeemed us – it was his death. "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28.)

The Just one might have suffered ten times as much as he did, yet had it not culminated in death, it all would not have redeemed the unjust. The wages of sin was not torture, but death; hence to be our substitute, he must die, thus paying exactly our penalty. For this cause Christ died, the just for the unjust.

The death of Jesus might have been accomplished in a less painful way, and it would have been equally our ransom price; but it pleased the Father that he should be not only the Redeemer, but also the Restorer of men. Hence, he must have an experience in our sufferings, in order to be able to sympathize with us, "For it became him (Jehovah)...in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation (Jesus) perfect (on the spiritual plane) through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10.)

Beloved, let no one take from you, by any means, this fundamental teaching of Scripture, this basis of all our hopes, as well as the basis of the world's hope of restitution. If Jesus did not become our ransom – our substitute – if the sacrifice of his humanity was not the "equivalent price" necessary to recover Adam and all who lost life through him as their representative head, none need expect to go free from death: Then our hope of a resurrection of the dead is vain. If the penalty of our sins is eternal torment, then Jesus did not pay it, and we must each expect to suffer it. But if, as the Scriptures teach,

though so few believe it, the wages of sin is death, then we know that Jesus did pay our penalty. He died, or was cut off from life, "not for himself," but for us, to give his life a ransom for many. (See Dan. 9:26.)

This is Paul's argument, and when he would mention the very fundamentals of Christian faith, he says: "I delivered unto you first of all... how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15:3.)

Referring to the preceding article, we would remark that no one can have a proper or full comprehension of Justification, unless he sees that as a race, we were in a condemned condition – condemned to death, not to torment; and now we are made happy by the Gospel (glad tidings) that Jesus was delivered (to death) for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25.) We now know that since our penalty has been paid by our Redeemer, "God (the Father) is just to forgive us." He will not be unjust to withhold that right to life which has been purchased for us according to his own plan.

Notice how firmly Paul stood on this doctrine of a full release or justification, and notice that he bases it, not on Jehovah's rescinding the penalty, but on the fact that Christ died. Paul's argument is that it is the same Jehovah who once condemned us, that now declares us freed from sin – justified – and he accomplished our justification by not sparing his own Son, but freely delivering him up for us all. He says "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. [Consequently, if God justifies, no one has a right to condemn us.] Who is he that condemneth? [Tell such an one that] It is Christ that died." Tell such that we are redeemed from death – the penalty of sin – because "Christ died for our sins." (Read Rom. 8:32-34,1.)