

INTERESTING QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

Question. – In what condition will those be who have been justified by faith in this age, and who yet refuse to consecrate because they think restitution blessings good enough for them, who feel afraid that they could not carry out their consecration vows, and, therefore, hold back and do not make them? Is it possible for a person to be justified in this age and then be justified again in the next age? Or does justification count only when it is used as a stepping stone to consecration?

Answer. – We are to remember the meaning of the word justification; it signifies a righteous condition, acceptable to God. God's provision for the world through Christ is justification – that so many as desire may come back to righteousness, – to harmony with the Creator. The time for this return to divine favor, as respects the world in general, will be the Millennial age; and the way of return will be through restitution processes, physical, mental and moral, up to perfection. Meantime, before the Millennial age, God designs the selection of a Church to be associated with Jesus in the work of restitution; and wishing to deal with these before the restitution times, he grants them a faith-justification, or *reckoned* righteousness, a [R3245 : page 367] reckoned reconciliation and harmony with God, based upon their exercise of faith in him, and in his arrangements and promises. Thus we read in the New Testament that we who believe in Jesus are justified *by faith* – justified freely from all things – treated as though we were all right, in full accord with God, although really we are physically, mentally and morally unright, in that we are not absolutely perfect.

God's object in providing this reckoned, or faith-justification during this Gospel age is to permit the justified ones to present themselves living sacrifices, holy (justified) and acceptable. Whoever

fails to take this step of consecration – sacrifice – fails to use his faith-justification in the manner and for the purpose intended. He receives that much of the grace of God in vain, as respects God's intention and the only use for this justification in the present time. Failing to use this justification now within a reasonable time would, we understand, vitiate it, and the person would cease to maintain his justified standing before God; – but just at what juncture of his Christian experience he might be thus set aside, we will not always be able to judge. We would understand that those who thus receive God's favor in vain are not necessarily debarred from all opportunities for the future, though we may be sure that the failure to use privileges seen and enjoyed, will not work any special advantage to such, but rather probably the reverse.

Question. – Could Adam have developed a character without the knowledge of good and evil? What kind of character did he have prior to the disobedience and fall?

Answer. – A participation in sin is not essential to the development of character; otherwise God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ and the holy angels would have to be classed as amongst those destitute of character. Surely God himself is to be considered as possessing character of the very highest class, and hence, his creature Adam, made in his own likeness, must have possessed a good character. So must a faultless character belong to all the angelic sons of God, and to his first-begotten. Character may be tested and buttressed and supported by experience or by observation. The holy angels who kept their first estate have evidently strengthened their characters by observation. Seeing sin in others and noting its evil fruit, they have doubtless been made the more strong in their determination for that holiness in which they were created and which they have maintained. But had sin never been permitted, this buttressing of character by the holy angels through observation would have been impossible.

Adam, in the divine image, and, therefore, of excellent character, was subjected to a peculiar temptation, to which probably he would not have yielded had he been granted the same acquaintance with righteousness and with his Creator that the holy angels enjoyed. God left him in this condition, knowing in advance how it would result, and prepared for the rescue of the race in advance, in that feature of his plan which foresaw "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." God chose to give Adam and his race an experience in character-development through *contact* with sin and in overcoming it by the assistance he renders through the Redeemer. While, therefore, a certain degree of strong and good character may be created, the testing and proving and buttressing of that character and its everlasting insurance could not be accomplished without some lesson of either experience or observation. It pleased God to give man his lesson and testing through experience, and the angels the same lesson and testing through observation, and all his ways are perfect.

Question. – Were the ancient worthies begotten to life by the heavenly Father or our Lord Jesus? and if by the latter, how could it be, since he had not yet come, in their day, and had not yet offered the sacrifice for sins, nor taken any of the steps seemingly necessary to his assuming to them the relationship of "the everlasting Father"?

Answer. – The words "beget" and "born," as used in the Scriptures, apply specially to the Gospel Church, to illustrate the small beginning of the new life, its gradual development and its final birth in the resurrection to the full perfection of the heavenly nature. This figure would not apply to the ancient worthies, for the reasons you have mentioned and for other reasons. They were inspired with hopes toward God respecting future life, but had no promises of, and, therefore, could not properly have any hopes respecting a change to spiritual nature in the resurrection, or at any time. They could not, therefore, be said to have been begotten to any such spiritual hopes, nor ultimately to such condition.

The fact that Christ had not yet paid the penalty for sin precluded not only the possibility of his being their life-giver, but likewise precluded the possibility of anyone being their life-giver up to that time. They are not, therefore, spoken of as having a new life begun in them, but merely as having discerned the new life in the distance, "having seen the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them," by faith; but they had the new life neither actually nor reckonedly; they must wait for Messiah, because in him all the promises centered. They hoped for his birth of their lineage according to the flesh, and yet had they understood the divine Word and plan, they must have known that, instead of being the fathers of Messiah, they must in due time, in order to have life at all, become his children – receive life from him as the Everlasting Father. – Psa. 45:16.

Instead of its being said of them that they were begotten to the future life, it is said that they were justified to a future life through faith in the divine promises.

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