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Eternal Justification Unmasked;

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF

A SERMON

Preached, April 18th, 1790,

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BLANKET - ROW CHAPEL,

B Y

Anthony
A. DIXON, MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

“ And they shall turn away their Ears from the Truth,
“ and shall be turned unto Fables.”

PAUL!

KINGSTON-upon-HULL:

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P R E F A C E.

IF thou hast imbibed errors, it is no wonder if thou art intoxicated with them, and art wiser in thine own conciet than seven men who can render a reason; for *Ignorance*, *Pride*, and *Boasting*, usually centre in the same Persons. To hold the light of Truth before thine eyes, would be as offensive to thee, as the sun's meridian blaze to that bird of night, which with an air of triumph loves to flutter in the blackest shades.

The light shines, but thou canst not comprehend it, and the reason is, the god of this world hath blinded thine eyes, and thou lovest Darknes rather than Light because thy deeds are evil. It may be that thou art afraid to come to the light, lest thy deeds should be made manifest. But know vain man, thou must spread all thy vileness before the LORD; thou must confess it, thou must forsake thy sinful practices, or they will all be exposed to the gazing nations, at the great day of the LORD.

Nothing is more common with those, who embrace tenets that they are ashamed of, than to extol their own leaders, and to heap odiums upon the servants of Christ, that their darling notions may spread rappidly; and like our Lord's open enemies of old, who would encompass sea and land to make one profelyte, and when they had made him, he was twice more a child of the Devil than he was before: They dissuade their credulous and ignorant hearers to keep from every faithful minister; lest they should see the truth with their eyes, hear it with their ears, understand it with their hearts, and should be converted and healed. Could Hell itself act in so barefaced a manner?

When

With regard to the following discourse, whether I have done it justice or not, I leave my Readers to judge. I wish, I heartily desire, that what I have been aiming at, may be done in a more masterly manner by some of our excellent Ministers, for they are wise to discern the dreadful effects of Antinomianism, and are able to confute doctrines, so repugnant to Scripture and reason.

The reason of the publication of this, was a desire of some of my best Friends to see it in print. It always was averse to me, to speak to the world in this very public manner, never having a thought that any performance of mine could be perfect enough.

For such as I write to at this day, is like lighting up a taper in the sun's meridian blaze to augment its splendour. However, such as it is I give it thee, and that it may help thee Heaven ward, by the Lord's blessing upon it, is the hearty desire, and sincere prayer of,

Thy ready Servant in the Gospel of Christ,

ANTHONY DIXON.

Eternal Justification Unmasked.

JAMES II. 21.

Was not Abraham our Father Justified by Works, when he had offered Isaac his Son upon the Altar ?

THE Apostle is here speaking to vain empty persons, who imagined themselves to be Believers, but were not. And knowing that their notion was founded in ignorance, he seems to question their willingness to be set right: 'Wilt thou know O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Art thou so enchanted with the fond delusion, that no one can convince thee that thou art in an error? Errors are pleasant dainties, on which ignorance delights to feed; And you might as well persuade an avaricious man to part with his golden god, as make a fool leave his folly. There are many vain boasters, that make a great noise about Grace, free Grace; boast of their superior knowledge; talk aloud, and glory in their Faith; when at the same time, they are of a windy, vain, frothy spirit, that are ALL tongue, and an empty profession. A vain man, and a vain faith, are never far alunder.

James, in his manner of speaking, seems to hint, that in our addresses to hypocrites, we should speak with sharpness and asperity, and not to flatter a vain man in his vanity. This was the method of John the Baptist, when he addressed the formalists of his time, who came to be baptized of him: And when he saw many of the Pharisees, and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" We must not whisper to such as these are, but cry aloud, and spare not; because they are inconsiderate, and their consciences are fast asleep.

A person

A person openly prophane, is convinced that he is not what he ought to be, in some degree; but a man who has only a name to live, and is dead while he lives, is hard to be convinced that HE is a sinner: He thinks, and flatters himself that he is rich, and increased with goods, and has need of nothing; and knows not that he is wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

The people referred to in our text, fondly imagined themselves to be in a justified state, when in reality they were in a state of condemnation, as appears from their faith being dead, being found alone: They believed there is one God, as the Devils do: and they were disobedient to the commands of God, as the Devils are; little dreaming that they were under the power and dominion of him, who ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

There is no doubt, these people held that Jesus was the Saviour of men; but it seems they did not think that he was to save them FROM their sins, but to save them IN their sins; and so made the HOLY ONE of God the minister of sin. They held the truth; but then they held it in unrighteousness.

To fancy that our sins are pardoned, and our persons accepted as righteous, when we know that our lives do not accord with our Lord's commandments, is a strong proof that we are ignorant of the scriptures, that we never have seen the evil of sin, that our own hearts are deceiving us, and that we are in the high way to everlasting ruin. In order then to do what in me lies, towards the conviction of such vain men, as the Apostle is speaking to in our text, I shall shew you

I. What justification is, or what it is for a sinner to be justified before God. And

II. Whether justification be an eternity, or a time act. And

III. In what sense works may be said to justify a Believer.

I. I am to shew you what justification is, or what it is for a sinner to be justified before God.

May the spirit of God assist me with clearness of argument, and send conviction of the truth to every man's conscience, giving you understanding to know the scriptures, and yourselves.

1. Justification is not an holy and heavenly disposition of mind wrought in the soul, inclining it to delight in spiritual and divine things. It is not a work of the holy spirit in our hearts, erasing the image of Satan, and sealing the likeness of Christ. But it is an act of Grace TOWARDS a believing sinner, by which his sins are not imputed to him, and he becomes as though he had never sinned, and nothing can be laid to his charge, as appears from Romans viii. 33. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

In this act of divine goodness sin is put out of sight: Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. The sins of a justified person shall never be inspected by that God, in whom, the believer trusts. In those days, and at that time saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: For I will pardon them whom I reserve. Balaam tells us, "God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: The LORD his GOD is with him, and the shout of a King is among them" Numbers xxiii. 21. I think from the fore-cited texts, and many others that might be brought, that pardon, is not separate from, but is a branch of our justification; for I cannot conceive but God must be reconciled to, be well pleased with, highly approve of, and most cordially accept, the man whose sins are done away, and cast as lead into the deepest waters. It was our sins that separated us from him. Isaiah lix. 2. "Your sins have separated between you and your God" Now when the cause of separation is done away, must not a reconciliation take place of course? I cannot help believing but a pardoned sinner is not only delivered from wrath to come, but is also in God's
favour

favour: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin: Romans iv. 8. But writers on this subject for the most part make a distinction between pardon and justification, they tell us the former saves us from hell, the latter gives us a title to, and puts us into the possession of the kingdom of Heaven. Hence say they, a man may be brought in not guilty at the king's bar, without being advanced at the king's court: A prince may pardon a traitor, without conferring on him any further favours. God's justified people then, are not only pardoned, and delivered from eternal torment; but they are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. He is the Lord our righteousness, who has obtained for us, a most glorious inheritance, which we can never waste, which we can never lose. O happy state! In which the justified are not barely to live, but to reign in life by Christ Jesus.

2. It may not be amiss to observe, that in the word of God we read of a two-fold justification, neither of which I am now speaking. We read of a comparative justification in Jer. iii. 11. The Lord said unto me backsliding Israel hath justified herself, more than treacherous Judah. In Luke xviii. 14. we also read of another instance:—I tell you that this man went down to house justified, rather than the other.

We may observe secondly that there is a declarative justification spoken of. Matt. xii. 39. By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. This is the justification spoken of in my text, which I shall speak of in its proper place. But justification strictly and properly, is an act of divine favour, whereby our sins are pardoned, and our persons accepted as righteous, only on account of the righteousness of Christ imputed to us: Who was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. —I shall now hasten

II. To consider, whether justification be an eternity, or a time act.

As there are some that maintain justification to be an immanent and eternal act of God, and affirm that the elect were justified before themselves, or the world were brought into being; it may not be amiss to try this notion by the word of God; and if it be revealed let us embrace it, but if not, it ought to be treated as a spurious, unsound doctrine: To the Law and to the Testimony: If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Isaiah viii. 20.

As the notion of eternal justification appears to me a *most dangerous* one, it would be unpardonable in me, were I not to point out to you its dreadful tendency to ruin the souls of my fellow sinners. Permit me then in the

I. Place to observe, that it is a doctrine not founded on the word of God, which is the ground and pillar of truth. In scripture we read of justification as something to be done in future, which is a fault, if justification was from eternity; for it should have been spoken of, as being done before time began. To suppose that mistakes are made by the holy penman of the sacred scriptures, is to take away the authority of them at once; and so we are left without any rule, either for faith or practice. When Paul was speaking to the Romans on the subject in hand, he told them "That it was not written for Abraham's sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it *shall* be imputed, if we *believe* on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." We find the same Apostle treating the same subject in the same manner before the Galatians: "And the scriptures *foreseeing* that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying in thee shall all the nations be blessed." The gospel was preached many years before the Gentiles were justified; therefore it was impossible for the believing Gentiles to be justified from eternity. Should any be so weak as to affirm that the gospel was preached from eternity, such would gratify the curious, by informing them, who the persons were, who
were

were favoured with it. Was it preached to Adam's ancestors? Was it preached to Adam's children that are to be born next year?

2. The scriptures never speak of men, in a state of nature, as being in a justified state; but always in a state of condemnation. The Ephesians were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ;—were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world;—were predestinated to the adoption of children by Christ;—were redeemed thro' his blood;—received the forgiveness of their sins;—obtained the inheritance.—Yet notwithstanding, the Apostle tells them they were without Christ. Now if they had been justified from eternity, they never could have been without Christ: For if a justified person is not in him, none are in him; so we are yet in our sins, and Christ is no longer a Saviour, as the scriptures report he is.

3. It is evident from God's word, that *unbelievers* are condemned, and it is equally evident, that the elect of God were unbelievers, before they were brought to know the truth as it is in Jesus. "For God has concluded all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all, Romans xi. 32.

That an unbeliever is condemned before God, is apparent from, (1.) The complaints and denunciations of the most high God on the account of unbelief. "Hear, O Heavens, and give hear, O Earth; for the Lord hath spoken.—The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider.—They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not harken to the voice of the charmer, charming never so wisely.—They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.—Yea they made their hearts as hard as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the word which the Lord of Hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets.—Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they refused to hear; so they cried and I would
not

not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.—Because I have called, and ye refused to hear;—I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded;—but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof;—I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear comes upon you;—when your fear comes as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind;—when distress and anguish comes upon you.—Then they shall call upon me, but I will not answer;—they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me;—For they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord.”

How clear is it from the foregoing testimony of scripture, that the unbelieving and disobedient are not approved in his sight; therefore while the elect remain in unbelief they are condemned. “For he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.” John iii. 18.

(2.) An unbeliever cannot be in a state of special favour with God, or justified; for unbelievers are in the most dreadful state in the world. “He that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark xvi. 16. Without faith we cannot attain righteousness: Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith;—for they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written “Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and a rock of offence; and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Without faith the wonder-working God will not be regarded, as may be gathered from Acts xiii. 40. 41.--- “Behold ye despisers and wonder and perish! For I work a work in your days, which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it to you. The hearts of unbelievers are waxed gross, their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them.” The unbelief of Israel of old, sorely grieved the Lord, and made

made him angry with them, so angry "that he swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest." So we see they could not enter in because of unbelief. Thus it appears from God's own word, that no unbeliever can be in a justified state. Therefore we must be justified when we believe, and not before: See Romans x. 4. 10. v. 1.

O B J E C T I O N.

Nothing can be laid to the charge of God's elect; therefore they must have been justified from eternity, as they were elected from eternity.

A N S W E R.

The Apostle does not say that nothing can be laid to their charge because they are elect; both nothing can be laid to their charge because they are *justified*: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that *justifieth*." Romans viii. 33. Now when God justifies the elect nothing can be laid to their charge: "For he who believeth is justified from all things, from which he could not be by the law of Moses" Acts xiii. 39. It is no where said that he who is elected is justified; but he who *believeth*.

4. In scripture, vocation is placed before justification: Romans viii. 30. "Moreover whom he did predestinate them he called; and whom he called them he justified, and whom he justified them he glorified." Surely the spirit of wisdom would never have lead the Apostle to place vocation before justification if it were not before it. Would it not appear strange if he had said whom God foreknew, them he called, whom he called them he predestinated; and whom he glorified, them he justified? It would have been absurd also to have put justification before vocation. It has been too common for the enemies of the gospel of Christ for these
seventeen

seventeen hundred years past, to make the sacred scriptures a nose of wax, that they might twist and wrest it to answer their several purposes. Little do such persons think that they wrest it to their own destruction: 2 Peter iii. 16.

2. Eternal justification is not only contrary to scripture; but to reason also. In the balances of reason let it be weighed, and if it prove wanting, let TEKEL be written upon it: See Daniel v. 27.

(1) Before we are brought into being, we could neither be justified nor condemned; for nothing can be predicted of that which is not. To say that we were justified from eternity, is just as good sense as to say we were black, brown, or fair from eternity: And how any can be so weak, as to make their boast of such right down nonsense must be very surprising to every man of common understanding.

(2) As justification is a law-term, it supposes (1.) A law-giver. (2.) A law. (3.) A court of judicature; but there could be no law-giver before the law was given; nor could there be a law given before there was any person to give it to, neither can a person be brought before the judge prior to his existence; therefore justification is not from eternity. Where there is no law there can be no transgression, and where there is no transgression there needs no justification; but there was, nay, there could no law be given to us before time, nor could we transgress it before it was given to us; hence I infer that justification is not an eternity but a time act. God justifies none but *sinners*; but none could sin before time began; then justification must be in TIME, not from ETERNITY. In election men are not considered either as good or evil; Romans ix. 11. The children being not yet born, nor having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand; but in justification they are considered as *evil*, as appears from Romans iv. 5. "But to him that worketh not, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the *ungodly*, his faith is counted for righteousness; now if it be the ungodly

godly, that God justifieth, the date of their justification must be in time. We may observe

3. That in Justification there is a change of state in the persons justified. Romans v. 8. 9. "But God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Much more then being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. When it pleases the Lord to justify a sinner, a believing sinner; then he is brought from a state of death into a state of life. John v. 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he who heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death into life. You see then before we believe we are condemned; but when we do believe, we enter into everlasting life. This change of state could not take place, before the world began, for before we were created we could not sin, and so could not be condemned; and before we were made there was no man to be justified, therefore justification cannot be from eternity. It is granted that the ever blessed God, did intend from all eternity to justify the elect, and from all eternity he intended to glorify them also; but who in the name of common sense would infer from thence, that they were justified and glorified from eternity? Besides every person who is justified, enters into union with Christ, for Christ dwells in their hearts by faith; but there could be no union before creation; the branch must be made before it can be grafted on that fruitful vine Christ Jesus.

While we were unbelievers we were condemned, and if so, we could not be united to Christ, nor bring forth the fruits of the spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long sufferings, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

4. The notion of eternal justification has something in it like blasphemy, as it makes our blessed Lord and Saviour a deceiver. For if the elect were justified from eternity they never could fall, nor be in a lost condition, as our Lord supposes them to be, where he says I am sent to the lost
sheep

sheep of the house of Israel. And, Luke xix. 10. he further adds; The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Now, if nothing can be laid to the charge of those whom God justifies, and they justified from eternity; how can they be said to be lost? If a man may be said to be lost before he believes in, and is united to Christ; then what our Lord says is true; but if a man be justified before he believes as the Antinomians say he is; was not that a true charge "Nay, but he deceiveth the people?" Whoever fell from the favour of God being justified? Speak ye that meditate in the law of God day and night; and are wiser than the aged! Speak ye men of reason and tell who they were! Is there an idiot, who more than the rest is a grief and heaviness to her that bore him, that has not one grain of sense to discern that it is impossible for any one to be justified from eternity, and yet to be lost in time? O blasphemy! Would to God that I could raise a blush in thy hydra face, but I despair. Thou art enthroned on ignorance, and to thee the ignorant bend their knee, to thee their tongues confess that art thou worthy to be praised, by all Thrones, Principalities, and Powers, that love darkness rather than light.

O thou Saviour of sinners forgive their blasphemies! O thou divine prophet teach them that wisdom which cometh down from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy, and good fruits, without wrangling and without hypocrisy: James iii. 17. O thou good Shepherd take care of thy simple sheep, watch over them day and night, that nothing may hurt nor destroy in all thy holy mountain."

If men were justified from eternity, nothing could be laid to their charge, if so where is the justice of God the Father, in causing the sword to awake against the man that was his fellow? How comes the sword to be sheathed in the bosom of his innocent, his well beloved son? Did the blessed Jesus groan, bleed, and die upon the cross, for a people against whom no charge could be brought? Could infinite wisdom

wisdom err? Would inflexible justice punish without a cause? Will a righteous God do wrong? Where is the holiness of God, if Christ dies for a people who cannot be charged with sin; being justified? Thus the Antinomian undies God, or rather demonstrates that he thinks in his heart that there is no God, though he is ashamed to own it with his tongue:

3. The third person in the Godhead is injured by this notion. What use can it be for the spirit to convince the elect-world of sin, if they were pardoned from eternity? What need is there for him to apply that blood which cleanseth us from all sin, when sin was done away from eternity? Can the spirit of wisdom and might, be supposed to come on a useless errand? No verily; men are sinners, and on that account, separate from God, fast bound as in a prison, shut up in the darkness of ignorance; till the Holy Spirit lets the guilty wretch see sin as the most loathsome thing, makes him willing to wash in the fountain opened, and heal him with the balsamic blood of Christ, brings him out of the prison-house, and leads him to the church and palace of God;—where God manifests himself unto him, as he doth not unto the world, and enables him to say—“Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ. Thus you see, that eternal justification, is repugnant to reason, and casts odious reflections on God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. It is founded on, and supported by ignorance. But lest I should be thought to be tedious, I will hasten to the

III. Thing proposed, *viz.* to shew in what sense a believer is justified by works.

But before I enter on this part of the subject, it may not be amiss to observe, that there is a seeming contradiction between St. James and St. Paul: Paul says “a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ;—that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Whereas St. James

says, "that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." In order to reconcile them, it will be needful to observe, that Paul is speaking of a believer's justification before God, but James is speaking of our justification before men, and in our own consciences; in the former God sustains them perfectly righteous in his sight, as their judge, freed from the guilt of sin, accepted into his favour, and entitled to everlasting felicity, Romans, iii. 24. 28. 30. and viii. 33. notwithstanding they are considered as ungodly. This justification is not founded on any works done, or to be done by us; none of these can satisfy that law, which is holy, just, and good, and all of them are, in every shape, excluded from the matter of our justifying righteousness before God, Gal. iii. 10. 12. Romans iii. 20. 24.. Gal. ii. 16. The latter speaks of good works, as being the infallible fruits of justification, justifying the saints; they manifest to their own consciences and to the world, that they are justified before God. Thus it is that the hearers of the law are not justified before God, but the doers of it are justified before him. The justification Paul speaks of, springs from the free grace of God, like a healing stream.

"And mercy like an healing stream,

"O'er all their sins divinely roll."

No: It is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy, he saves us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus iii. 5. 7. We should not forget that St. Paul speaks of a people who were ignorant of the righteousness of God, who went about to establish their own righteousness, and would not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God, and therefore he labours to convince them, that by the works of the law they could not be justified; for says he—"Christ is the
end

end of the law, for righteousness to every one that *believeth*. Romans x. 4. But James is speaking to a people, called in our day Antinomians, who set aside the law of God, at least in their practice, and thought they were justified, because they fancied they were believers; but did not consider that faith without works is dead, being alone. Therefore I infer that a man is justified before God by faith; but in his conscience, and before men he is justified by works, as Abraham was, when he offered up Isaac his Son upon the altar. A man is justified by works, when his works declare him to be a just man.

1. When God called Abraham from his native land, he obeyed, not knowing whither he went. When he was commanded to take his son, his only son Isaac, and get to the land of Moriah; and to offer him there for a burnt-offering, reasoned not with flesh and blood, but did as the Lord commanded him: He rose early in the morning, he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and went with his son to the place of which God told him. On the third day he lifts up his venerable head, and sees afar off the place where his faith is to be tried; and his obedience proved. Then said Abraham unto his servants—"Stay here, while the lad and I, go and worship yonder, and then we will come again." They come to the spot of ground of which God told him; the Altar is raised, the wood is laid in order, the pious child is laid upon it, the knife is drawn, the arm is stretched out, the mind is resolute, it is God's commandment; but O the wisdom and goodness of God! An angel's arm wards off the fatal blow, and Isaac, that child of slaughter, lives. Now faith and obedience are tried in the balances; but are they found wanting? "Now I know that thou fearest God (said the ANGEL of the everlasting covenant, *seeing* that thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son from me. Turn thy joyful eyes and see that ram entangled in the thicket, and offer him up in Isaac's room." And Abraham did so, and told us for our comfort, God will provide. Now, let me ask thee

thee sinner, was not Abraham justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son upon the Altar?

2. A man may be said to be justified by works, when in his family he appears to be a just and righteous man. A believing master will not tyrannize over, nor oppress his servants; but he will govern with meekness, and be reasonable in his demands; and not only give him an equivalent for, but comfort him in his labour. If a servant, honest and just. If a husband, he governs with wisdom and love. If a wife she has a reverence for, and yields obedience to her husband. If a father, he considers himself as in the double capacity of king and priest in his own house; and will act according to the directory of God's word. Thus Joshua and his house served the Lord: Thus Zacharias and Elizabeth both walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless: And hence it is said of them, that they were both righteousness, Luke 1. 6. "And the Lord said concerning Abraham, I know that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham, that which he spoken of him." Genesis xix. 19.

3. A man may be said to be justified by works, when he does unto others as he wishes they should do unto him. When Abraham wanted to make a purchase, he had not the least desire to out-reach the man he had to deal with: Grace taught him not to covet: When he wanted a burial place for Sarah, and one offered by Ephron, gratis, he could not be happy without giving an equivalent for it: "And so Abraham weighed four hundred shekels of silver, which was the exact value." Genesis xxiii. 15.

4. A man may be said to be justified by works, and not by faith only, when he shews mercy, and lends aid to an injured neighbour. This was exemplified by Abraham's conduct towards Lot. When he heard that Lot was taken prisoner and plundered, as also were his towns folks; he

he mustered his trained servants, pursued the enemy, overcame them, brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and all the people. As a reward for his bravery and good will, the king of Sodom offers him the spoils he had taken in the war ; but Abraham was fonder of doing good, than enriching himself, and so did not accept them : “ I have lift up my hand to the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even unto a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, &c.” Genesis xiv. Thus it appears, that a man cannot be justified for his works, yet he cannot be justified without them : “ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” From what has been said I would infer,

1. Than if eternal justification is not founded on scripture nor reason, it cannot be a truth :—“ To the word and to the testimony, if any man doth not speak according thereto, it is because there is no light in him.” In Galatians i. 7. 8. 9. we are told,—“ There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But tho’ *we*, or *an Angel* from heaven, preach any other doctrine unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” And lest any one should think that he is speaking of legal minister only, he adds verse the 9. “ If any man preach ANY other gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

2. To drink in unsound doctrines is an awful sign of reprobation. When people have been intrusted with the precious talent of the gospel, and have buried it in the earth, it is just and right in God to give such up to reprobate minds, and send them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned, “ who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”—2 Theff. ii. 11. 12.

3. If the notion of eternal justification be an error, boast no more about thy sublime knowledge. Be humble, and

and mind not things too high for thee; but acknowledge with a wise author on this subject "That God's immanent acts are surrounded with light inaccessible, and full of glory; and are as far, nay infinitely farther out of the reach of our minds, than the highest star in the heavens is beyond the reach of our arms. Nothing below a man, can comprehend the immanent acts of a man; nothing inferior to an angel, can tell what is in the mind of an angel; and nothing less than a God, can comprehend or know the immanent acts in the mind of God—" My thoughts (says God) are not as your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways faith the Lord; for as the heavens are higher than the earth; so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." If. lv. 8. "Secret things belong to God; but those that are revealed, to us, and our children."

II. And is faith needful in order to justification? It is; for he who believeth not shall be damned. Then let us humbly beseech God to grant us this grace; let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace, while he is seated thereon; that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in every time of need; for *this* is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.

Without faith, we are told, it is impossible to please God. What ever is not of faith is sin. Faith is the most immanent grace of the spirit; it purifies the heart—removes fear—makes the weak strong and valiant, so that they fight against the world, sin, and death, and gives them a compleat victory over them all: "This is the victory that overcometh the world even our *faith*: O "Death where is thy sting? O Grave where is thy victory?" Do you ask what is faith? The answer is, faith is something more than a bare owning or a profession of the religion of our blessed Lord and Saviour; for there are many who believe in this sense for a season, but when persecution ariseth they fall away. Many people make a fair show in the flesh for a time, who afterward appear
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to be in the gaul of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Such are like some trees that are most beautifully adorned with blossom in the spring: But in autumn, appear both unpleasent, and unprofitable to their owners. What a splended profession did Judas make for a time! Till the love of money proved him to be a Devil. What a promising begining did he make! And how dreadful was his end! So true is it that those who begin religious in hypocracy, mostly end in apostacy; barely assenting to the truth will never save us, We may observe, it is one thing to know the revelation of God, and another thing to do the will of God: "If ye know these things happy are ye, if ye do them." Faith without works, is dead. Tell a drunkard, that sobriety, and temperance, are excellent virtues; he will believe you, and say they are so of a truth; but then, notwithstanding, he will not embrace those virtues. So also a man who has a mortified limb, knows that the surgeon speaks a real truth when he tells him, that his life is in danger, and certain death will ensue unless the limb be cut off; yet he may not yield to the operation. There is many a man believes, that if he would forsake his evil ways, and seek the favour of God, that God would have mercy on him, and would abundantly pardon him; but then, he will not leave sin, nor will he seek the favour of God. The truth must not only be known, but received in the love thereof.

Faith is an apprehension of the love of God, and of the rich blessings that are so freely offered in the gospel. When these are apprehended by us we are delighted with them: Christ appears to us—"the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely:" And nothing appears so worthy of our pursuit, as what is offered to us in the gospel. For them, the truly religious, would forsake the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world; and if called thereto, even life itself. "For Christ's sake Moses rather chose to suffer with the people of God, than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than
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the treasures of Egypt: For he looked to the recompence of reward." Christ and gospel blessing always have, and ever will, wonderfully influence those who apprehend them, to love the Lord above all things, and to prefer his service to their own temporal interest. When we apprehend the love of God in Christ, our first inquiry is, to know what we shall do for him, or render to him; and whatever the Lord commands, is not grievous, but pleasant;—"Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace."



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