

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

THE doctrine of "JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH," is the very heart and core of Christianity, and justly called by Luther, the article which shows whether a church is standing or about to fall. As it is held clearly and experimentally, true religion is in lively exercise—as it is obscured, superstition or worldliness abounds.

It is proposed therefore briefly to explain THE SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH; AND TO SHOW ITS VAST IMPORTANCE.

The true meaning of the term JUSTIFICATION must first be cleared and established. Some consider it to be the same as to pardon and make holy; but, in fact, it is opposed to condemnation, and signifies to account and accept as righteous when called into judgment.

Thus in the case of controversy, by the law of Moses; when they came to judgment the judges were directed "to justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked." (Deut. xxv. 1.) Here justification is distinctly opposed to condemnation, and stated as the sentence founded on a judgment entered into. Thus David prays, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Psal. cxliii. 2.) Justification has here a clear reference to God's approval of the soul, as free from guilt. Thus, again, St. Paul asks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) Here justification is God's accounting us free from the charge of sin, and accepting us as righteous.

To imagine that the word "justify" signifies to make holy, would reduce many passages of Scripture to absurd conclusions. Thus it is said, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord." (Prov. xvii. 15.) But can it be an abomination to the Lord to make the wicked

holy? Isaiah says, "Woe unto them . . . that justify the wicked for reward." (Isa. v. 22, 23.) But does not God rather pronounce a blessing than a woe on him who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways? James v. 19, 20.

Hence we conclude that Justification is being accounted just, and not being made holy. In the case of fallen man, therefore, to be justified before Almighty God, is to be approved of him as free from the guilt of sin and its deserved punishment, and as having that righteousness which entitles to the reward of life.

But how can sinful man be just with the Holy God? He will "by no means acquit the guilty;" his "law is holy, just, and good;" it declares, "The soul that sinneth it shall die. Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." A law necessarily requires perfect conformity to it, in order to our being justified by it: a single failure forfeits the blessing, and incurs the curse. But we *have* sinned. We are, therefore, under sentence of death and the curse of the law. The wrath of Almighty God is impending over us; how shall we escape?

The convinced sinner says, "I feel this; I am in this tremendous condition. I am under the load of guilt, I am unable to fulfil even present duty, how, O how can I be justified?"—It is a heart-thrilling question. Eternity depends upon it. Shall I attain the life of eternal bliss and glory, or sink to be the companion of accursed spirits in the dread regions of eternal woe. It is not a mere topic of controversy, a subject only to manifest our skill and triumph over an adversary—it is our life or our death, —our eternal life or our eternal death.

And here we must have, not man's word to support us, but God's word; the word of our Creator, our Governor, and our final Judge; that word which will stand when heaven and earth pass away—we must have not man's devices, but God's own wisdom to help us, or we sink, and that for ever. Blessed be God, the Gospel reveals a satisfaction made to divine justice by the death of the only Son of God, and a righteousness for sinners reckoned theirs through faith in him. Thus all who believe the testimony of God concerning Christ Jesus, according to the sentence and infallible declaration of the Divine word, are already justified in the sight of God. The faith which justifies is our

believing, through the operation of the Holy Ghost, the divine record concerning Christ; (1 John v. 9—12.) a belief by which we trust in, and wholly rely upon him as the only and complete Saviour. It is a lively faith in Christ, trusting in his death; and is fruitful in love and good works. This faith is the gift of God, and the fruit of the quickening and regenerating Spirit of Christ Jesus. (John i. 12, 13; vi. 44. Eph. i. 19.) But, observe, it does not justify as a virtue, or as the parent of every virtue, but it justifies as it receives the only Saviour, and apprehends him who “ was made sin for us—that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;” (2 Cor. v. 21.) according to that declaration, “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”

We will now endeavour more fully to establish the doctrine of our justification before God by faith in Christ, from the Holy Scriptures.

In the epistle to the Romans, the apostle first proves the sinfulness of man—of every man without exception; for he asserts “ every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” The law of nature leaves the Gentile without excuse, the law given by Moses leaves the Jew condemned. Thus St. Paul says, “ By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” So far from the law justifying, it only discovers our sin.

The apostle then shows that divine method by which alone sinners can be justified. “ But now the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;” and observe his clear explanation of it, “ even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, (observe that the expression denoting the freedom of justification is twice repeated,) 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.” “ Where is boasting then?” “ It is excluded!” “ By what law? of works?” “ Nay

but by the law of faith." Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.

Can any thing be more explicit, full, and decisive? The whole train of argument centres in one point, and beautifully introduces and immovably establishes the final deduction. The concluding questions fix and confirm the meaning of Justification by faith alone, excluding boasting.

But the subject is so important, and the testimonies of Scripture are so decisive, that we will add some other passages to illustrate and confirm the doctrine.

Justification cannot be of works, for the apostle says, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. iv. 5.) So he tells the Ephesians, "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. ii. 8, 9.

It cannot be by our obedience, for it is attributed simply to the obedience of Christ. "By the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so, by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." Rom. v. 18, 19.

It cannot be by faith as a work, for St. Paul asserts; "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace: to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." (Rom. iv. 16.) And he shows that grace and works are in this matter quite opposite and inconsistent. Rom. xi. 6.

Justification cannot be attained by our own righteousness, for the apostle condemns the Jews for seeking it in this way, "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. x. 3, 4.

Nor can there be a second justification before God by works, after a first justification by faith. From first to last "the just live by faith." (Rom. i. 17. Heb. x. 38, 39.) The apostle tells the justified Roman, "thou standest by faith." The Scriptures know nothing of a double justification, and they so connect present justification by faith with eternal life and glory (Rom. v. 1, 2; viii. 30.) as to leave no room for a second justification by works.

Nor yet, (and weigh this well,) can you seek to be justified partly by obedience to the law, and partly by Christ, without forfeiting all hope in Christ. "I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law: ye are fallen from grace." Gal. v. 2—4.

Therefore if we seek righteousness by works, we shall be left without righteousness. St. Paul says, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." Rom. ix. 31.

Though Justification has an ultimate reference to the day of judgment and is to be then openly declared, and its fruits testified and exhibited, yet it is also a blessing conferred in the present life, and of which we may now enjoy the comfort, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. v. 1.

When we believe in Christ, we are then immediately justified: though sinful in ourselves, yet according to the revealed will of God, we are accounted and dealt with as righteous in his sight. His word pronounces on every true believer the sentence of justification, and they stand accepted before him as free from all guilt, and as if they were righteous, altogether righteous; according to the gracious declaration, "By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 39.

Faith however is not dead and vain, but true and living. St. James says, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith and have not works, can faith save him?" (James ii. 14.) Any man may profess to have faith, but real faith will be proved to be such by its fruits.

Justification is continued by the same means by which it was first received. It was founded on the mediation of Him of whom it was foretold, that he should come "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness:" who has declared that his "sheep shall never perish;" and "who ever liveth to make intercession for us." He maintains the faith which he gave; (Luke xxii. 32.) and thus, notwithstanding the daily

sinfulness of the believer, his justification, as to his enjoyment of the blessing, is renewed and confirmed from day to day by constantly recurring faith in Jesus—so the apostle describes his experience, “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live, by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Gal. ii. 20.

Such is the doctrine of our free justification before God by faith. It is our being accounted righteous in his sight in Christ Jesus. It springs from divine grace; it is founded on the satisfaction made to the divine justice and the fulfilling of the divine law, by the sufferings and obedience unto death of our Lord; it is the divine testimony, sentence, and declaration of the inspired word in favour of the believer; it is received by a lively faith in Christ, and it is manifested by a life of holy obedience. It will be evidenced in the day of judgment by all those fruits of a holy life which ever spring from genuine faith.

We proceed to show that this scriptural doctrine is held by the Protestant Churches.

The Helvetic Confession says, “We teach and believe with the apostle, that sinful man is justified only by faith in Christ, not by the law or by any works.—We do not part the benefit of justification; giving part to the grace of God, or to Christ, and a part to ourselves, our charity, works, or merit; but we do attribute it wholly to the praise of God in Christ, and that through faith.”

The French Confession says, “We do utterly reject all other means whereby men do think that they may be justified before God: and, casting away all opinion of virtues and merits, we do altogether rest in the only obedience of Jesus Christ; which is imputed to us both that all our sins may be covered, and also that we may obtain grace before God.”

The Augsburg Confession says, “Men cannot be justified before God by their own power, merits, or works; but are justified for Christ’s sake, through faith.”

The Wirtemberg Confession declares, “Man is made acceptable to God, and counted just before God, for the only Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, through faith.”

The English Articles assert “We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings: wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort.”

The Assembly's Catechism states, "Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone."

With one voice the whole Protestant Church bears witness to this scriptural doctrine.

But can it possibly be true? Is there really so great a blessing as free justification for sinners? Are there no opposing passages of Scripture? Are there no arguments urged in reply to such statements?

Certainly there is nothing against which the heart of man more contends than against this truth. It is so humbling to our pride, so far beyond our narrow and selfish conceptions, and so much above our corrupt and fallen nature, that even the believer himself has continually to struggle against unbelief and self-righteousness.

Let us consider some objections against this doctrine.

The first, and most plausible, is founded on the statement of St. James, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God. Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James ii. 21—24.) Many assert that this passage opposes justification by faith alone, and evidently proves the necessity, merit, and concurrence of good works. But a little examination of the passage will show that St. James does not contradict the other inspired writers, nor say one word against our justification before God by faith alone. Observe, he uses the very same example of faith that St. Paul does, that of Abraham; and asserts, with Moses and St. Paul, that "his faith was counted to him for righteousness."—But this act of Abraham's faith, by which he was thus justified, on the very statement of St. James, took place forty years before his offering up of Isaac. St. James, therefore, could not possibly design to assert, the fruit of his faith to be the cause of his justification before God, though it was the end to which his faith tended, and the proof of its reality and power. Good works are

not, therefore, mentioned by St. James as the cause of our justification, but as the effects invariably connected with it:—they prove that we are justified. St. James's object was to show the nature of true faith, as producing works; and, by "justified," he means being declared and manifested to be justified. This is perfectly consistent with our free justification by divine grace, without works as the preceding cause, and easily reconciles apparently contradictory, but really harmonious statements.

Another passage objected is, "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." (Rom. ii. 13.) Unquestionably. What Protestant denies that we shall be justified by the law, if we fulfil the law? A man who obeys the law, cannot be dealt with as a transgressor. But what human being dare rest for a moment on this ground? If in one tittle he has failed, his justification is lost, for ever lost, while it depends on his obedience. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." (James ii. 10.) This answer fully meets many similar objections. The giving of precepts, or directions, or exhortations with a promise, does not show that we have fulfilled, or can fulfil them. They have important uses: under divine teaching, they discover our sins and weakness, they guide to duty, they stir up to prayer, they point us to Christ; and, when justified by faith in him, the believer by his grace so obeys the precept as to do good works which shall be "acceptable to God by Christ Jesus;" but all this, though of the greatest importance, proves not that sinners can be justified before God by their obedience. The law tells us, not what we can do, but what we ought to do.

Others maintain that by "the deeds of the law" are only meant those of the ceremonial law. According to this opinion the apostle merely mentioned neglected rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices, as excluding us from justification, and proving his conclusion, that "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." (Rom. iii. 20.) But what are the transgressions which the apostle does mention, as thus precluding justification by works? He does not notice one violation of the ceremonial law, but brings forward "theft and adultery," (Rom. ii. 21, 22.) "lying, deceit, and cruelty;" (Rom. iii. 13—16.) these are obviously transgressions not of the ceremonial but of the moral law. It is manifest then, that he includes that

law in his meaning. He says, "I had not known sin but by the law. I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Rom. vii. 7.) I need not say that this is the last and most spiritual of the ten commands. The apostle also frequently excludes not merely "deeds of the law, and works of the law," but "works" simply, works in general, from the office of justification Rom. iv. 5, 6. xi. 6. ; Ephes. ii. 9.

It has been urged that the apostle only excludes justification by works done by the strength of nature, and not works done in faith and by grace. When after faith and by grace we obey the law, this, he says, is the righteousness of God and the righteousness by faith. But how strained this interpretation is—nay, how false it is, will be evident by a close inspection of the apostle's words. St. Paul opposes all obedience, and all doing, to the righteousness of faith. He says, as if he foresaw the subtle objection, "The righteousness of God without the law is manifested;" but a righteousness consisting in our obedience to the law, even by grace, is a righteousness with the law. Again, in the 10th chapter, he names the righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of faith, as two things quite opposite; and then establishes the glorious doctrine, that "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

Others imagine that the apostle only meant to exclude the merit of works from our justification, and not works. But we reply, St. Paul does not once mention the merit of works, as what he excludes, but excludes works altogether. This interpretation seems to have originated in a desire to guard against antinomianism; but, however well intended, it is not scriptural, and we may be quite sure that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men."

Again, many insist that faith is a virtue and work, and includes every other grace, and therefore justifies. We allow that faith is a Christian grace, the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. Though we deny that it includes other graces, we allow, that as connecting us with Christ, the fountain of all life and grace, it produces every other grace, just as the branch abiding in the good tree produces fruit.—"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." But faith in Christ, in its very nature, as it justifies, renounces, and annihilates all our own righteousness and goodness, and every thing else but Christ Jesus—it

forsakes every thing to trust in him, to depend wholly on him, and to lay hold simply on his salvation. As Hooker justly observes, "Faith is the only hand which putteth on Christ unto justification, and Christ the only garment, which being so put on covereth the shame of our defiled nature, hideth the imperfection of our works, preserveth us blameless in the sight of God, before whom otherwise the weakness of our faith were cause sufficient to make us culpable, yea to shut us from the kingdom of heaven, where nothing that is not absolute can enter." Its efficacy in justification arises from its reference to the Saviour. It brings us into union with him; and when thus united to him we are free from condemnation, (Rom. viii. 1.) we obtain a divine righteousness, (1 Cor. i. 30. Phil. iii. 9.) and we receive life and power to produce every good work, (Ephes. ii. 10.) and to be "filled with all the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God." (Phil. i. 11.) But it does not justify before God, either as including or producing every other grace, or as a part of our moral goodness or excellence; that were to bring in justification by works; but "it is of faith, that it may be by grace." No other act of the mind, or will, or affection, would justify us without our being justified by works; but, in being justified by faith, we are justified before God by grace, and not by works—for these two are quite inconsistent. "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Rom. xi. 6.

Some urge against this statement of justification by faith only, that the word "only" is not found in the Scriptures in this connection, and that St. James does not say, "by faith only." We have already noticed the objection from St. James. Every sound Protestant admits works as the evidence of justification; and in this respect, maintains strenuously, that we are justified by works, and not by faith alone: but we utterly and altogether exclude them as a preceding cause or part of justification; and in that respect, we as strenuously maintain, that we are justified by faith alone; by that faith which alone can unite us to Him, who is our righteousness before God. As early heretics compelled the primitive church to use the words substance, and Person, and Trinity, so have we been compelled by Romish corruptions to use the word

“only,” as a short and explicit way of showing our exact meaning, and distinguishing between their doctrine and ours. The use of this word is abundantly authorized by the scriptural exclusion of every thing else as a ground of justification. It is a brief way of expressing what St. Paul more fully states, when he says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law : for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Gal. ii. 16.

The grand objection, however, to this doctrine is, the mistaken idea that it tends to loosen the obligations of morality. As it is proved to be scriptural truth, we might well leave to God the consequences of his own doctrine. But we allow that at first sight, and to the natural man, the doctrine may have this appearance. We allow, that where this doctrine is only held as a theory, or only held partially, it may even be thus abused, as every other doctrine may ; but we maintain, that when really embraced as a vital principle of action, and held in its just connection with other truths, in proportion as it is thus embraced and thus held, it multiplies moral obligations, it increases and strengthens every restraint upon iniquity. We might fairly rebut the objection, and assert that every opposing doctrine really lowers the moral standard, allows not the just extent of the law, and renders it impossible for man to do works pleasing to God ; but the very objection tends to prove that our view of the doctrine is scriptural ; for it is the very objection which the holy apostle supposes will be made to it, and the contrary doctrines raise not the same objection, “What shall we say then, shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” He repels the inference, not by denying the doctrine, but by proving its holy tendency. Let facts also speak. Are papal countries more moral, do they observe the Sabbath more strictly, are they more alive to the religious instruction of the poor, are they more benevolent than protestant countries ? Or are such Protestants as hold this doctrine distinctly and prominently, on the whole and as a body, less holy, less chaste, less attentive to family instruction, less upright, less strict and religious than those Protestants who deny it. for, alas, it must not be concealed that there are

professing Protestants who have departed from the main principles of the Reformation. We appeal to facts and to history with the utmost confidence, and fearlessly assert that in every view, so far from making "void the law through faith—we establish the law."

Let no one, therefore, imagine that those who hold free justification therefore give encouragement to sin. We still distinctly hold, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We still maintain, and against Antinomianism vehemently insist on the all-important truth, that sanctification is an essential part of salvation, and invariably follows justification. "We conclude, therefore, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." And this doctrine is true, it is scriptural, it is divine. O blessed tidings! O good news of great joy! It opens to us wretched sinners the very gates of heaven, it discloses to us fallen creatures the very glory of the temple above. Weary and heavy laden sinner, go to Christ, and you shall find rest; burdened and afflicted conscience, let the sprinkling of the blood of Christ speak peace: fainting and despairing souls, look unto Jesus and you shall be saved.

Imagine the secret workings of the inner man in the retired hour, when we enter into solemn judgment of ourselves, our state before God, and our final prospects. Imagine the inward suit going on in the court of conscience—the law of God, seen to be reasonable and good, laying open our sin—the memory awake to its commission and its many aggravations—the charge proved—our guilt clear—a burden of sin that is intolerable weighing us down—the conscience itself accusing and condemning—the judgments of God impending—and the tremendous condemnation, nothing less than the wrath of God and eternal death. THEN, suppose that to such a soul is made, from the divine records, the first discovery of this blessed justification—this mediation of Christ, this redemption through his blood—this love of God in devising before time began, and giving his Son to accomplish this great salvation; and all this ours, ours for ever, simply on receiving it by faith in Jesus. Imagine this—and remember that it is no fancied picture—for many a heart, has gone through this experience—and then with what rapture does the soul join in the words of the apostle, and exclaim, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us who can be against us? He that spared not

his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Will God," (for it is better rendered by continued interrogatories,) "Will God, that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Will Christ that died? yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"

Let us now proceed to the second part of our subject.

THE VAST IMPORTANCE OF THIS SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE.

The difference between the Romanists and Protestants here is not a strife of words; it is not a question of vain curiosity, or of little moment. We differ so essentially, that we maintain their system subverts the whole scheme of the gospel; and, making sanctification the very nature of justification, instead of its evidence, brings in self-righteousness, boasting, distress of conscience, and despair. It obscures God's glory, lowers his holy law, and tends to destroy immortal souls.

It is not of little moment, for the Scriptures are full of the subject. It was the main principle of the holy lives of Abraham the father of the faithful, and David the man after God's own heart. Whole epistles are devoted to it in the New Testament. The last act of mercy in our Saviour's life was a triumphant display of it. It is a question of every day's use and experience. The error here is fatal: mistakes here lead to everlasting ruin.

Justification by faith is the only sure foundation for peace of conscience—peace with God, and peace in our own souls. God is unspeakably pure and holy; he searches the heart; all our thoughts are open to him; he is infinitely wise; he is almighty; he is our judge: sin is that which his soul hateth; who may stand before him when once he is angry? Where is the regenerate person that is wholly free from sin? "There is not," says Solomon, "a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "In many things we all offend," says St. James. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," says St. John. Right views of the doctrine of justification affect, then, our peace with God, and our comfort in walking with him, every hour and every moment. What work of devotion, what act of charity, will you venture to rely upon as unexceptionable in his sight? Your very tears of

repentance want to be repented of; your very prayers are defiled and polluted; your very charity needs his forgiveness—in the words of Isaiah, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf.” Nay, the heavens are not clean in God’s sight, and he charged his angels with folly. Nay more, if you had done all perfectly, you had then only done your duty, and were still an unprofitable servant. How then can you attain forgiveness and peace of conscience by such imperfect works of your own righteousness? The more you work to justify yourself, the more you are defiled before God. Nothing but a divine atonement and the righteousness of a divine Saviour can meet your wants. It is only “the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all sin—God was manifest in the flesh, He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” In such a stupendous miracle of mercy there is ample and satisfactory ground of hope, and thus “justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” O the littleness of our minds, that would attach the spotted and tattered rag of human righteousness to the glorious and splendid robe of our incarnate and divine Redeemer—that would cast in our miserable works, as a make-weight to turn the scale in our favour. Oh wretched infatuation, that would, for the sake of clinging to a straw, quit the life boat of the gospel. There must be misgivings in such a course even now, without this doctrine.—At times there must be agonizing distress, and horrors of conscience, and what will there be when every refuge of lies is swept away!

Justification by faith is connected with right views of every other truth. The false views of the Romanists on justification, gave rise to indulgences, masses for the dead, purgatory, the intercession of the saints, the merit of works, worship of images, relics, celibacy, pilgrimages, and the whole mass of the corruptions of popery. If I am to be saved by my own goodness, in whole or in part, well may every kind of superstition be multiplied to bolster up a false hope. The withholding, the corrupting, or the abandoning of this blessed truth also has called in and admitted vain philosophy, a lowered tone of morals, self-righteous notions, human doctrines, rationalism, falsely so called, infidelity, and that general decay of piety which real Christians mourn over in professedly Protestant churches. Vain, and inadequate, and pernicious are all the systems

that man has substituted for the divine plan of salvation ; nor can these be withstood by reasoning, and argument, and human wisdom alone. Let free justification be wisely, boldly, and fully proclaimed, and superstition and error shall fall before the life-giving doctrine ; and truth and righteousness shall spring forth before the nations. For from free justification proceeds every other scriptural doctrine, in just proportion and beauty. Though sinners are acquitted ; yet it is by such a stupendous sacrifice, that the honour of the divine government is not merely maintained, but advanced and illustrated. The law of God, in all its extent and spirituality, is established. The purity, justice, holiness, and love of God are brightly displayed ; the evil of sin, and its tremendous consequences are strongly exhibited—the most powerful motives to the fear and love of God are presented to the human mind. As men's minds become clear on this point, so will their views of other truths be distinct and evangelical. Confusion here makes all the rest of our sentiments obscure and unscriptural. This is one grand connecting link in that chain of doctrine which reaches from eternity to eternity : “ Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. . . . whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Rom. viii.

Justification by faith is the real spring of right obedience. We are “ created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” Separated from him we can do nothing. From our great Head the Holy Spirit flows to every member of his mystical body, and he bestows the gift in connection with this doctrine. Thus he bestowed the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, as the apostle appeals to the Galatians . “ This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?” (Gal. iii. 2.) and thus we “ receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Gal. iii. 14.) Besides, look at the obvious tendency of each doctrine. Evangelical motives are full of force. If I seek to be justified by works, gratitude and ardent love have not free scope, and what obedience which does not spring from love can be acceptable ? The law which I have broken, and obedience to which God cannot but require, and which ought to call forth my delight and admiration, through my corruption, stirs up

a constant enmity of heart against Him. But Christ "is our peace"—he has "abolished in his flesh the enmity"—God, who freely gave his only begotten Son, is reconciled to me—is my most bountiful benefactor, is my most loving friend: when I believe in Christ, and am thus justified through him, I am under increased obligations of the strongest force. If I were to be justified by works, my depravity would lead me to view God as an exactor, as an austere, hard master, as a severe judge,—to fear, but not to love him. Now "Love is the fulfilling of the law;" and love, under a divine influence, freely flows from the sense of boundless benefit and blessing. "We love Him because he first loved us." If we have much forgiven, we love much; if we have but little (in our own notion and foolish imagination,) if we have but little forgiven, we shall love little. Justification by faith shows God to be our tender and loving Father; and thus instead of the spirit of bondage, the spirit of adoption pervades the whole soul; instead of servile fear, filial confidence, holy reverence, and sweet affections take possession of the heart. The mercies of God become the animating motive to "present" our "bodies a living sacrifice" to his service. "The law being dead wherein we were held, we serve in newness of spirit; being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." How important then is a doctrine which thus affects all our springs of action, is thus connected with all our religious acts; for only as we are influenced by the spirit of this doctrine, can any part of our obedience be acceptable to God.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH will alone avail us in the day of judgment. The Romanists generally represent the day of judgment as a day of terror. This is not surprising. If the best human being is to be justified before God by his works, well may he, who at his best estate is still a sinful creature, tremble to appear before the pure, holy, and heart-searching Jehovah. But the Scriptures bid the righteous to look forward to it as a day of deliverance, of joy, and of triumph; (1 Cor. xv. 55—57; 1 Thess. iv. 13—18; 2 Thess. ii. 13, &c.) and faith in Christ, as our righteousness, enables us to look to it with calm and holy joy, and sweet assurance of a happy acceptance. (Luke ii. 29, 30. 2 Tim. iv. 6—8.) True, we shall be judged according to our works, and the works of the righteous will then be

declared to prove their faith in Christ Jesus, (Matt. xxv. 35—40.) and to proportion their reward; (Gal. vi. 6—10.) but the ground of acceptance then is faith in their Lord: “Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.” This made even the devoted St. Paul count all but loss that, as he says, “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.” (Phil. iii. 8—11.) Viewing the freedom of his justification, and the blessed effects of this doctrine already produced in his heart and life, by the power of the Spirit, in love to God and love to man, the Christian can, in his brighter moments, with a holy confidence and a joyful anticipation, look forward to that great day, and adopt every word of the apostle, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him; herein is our love made perfect, that WE MAY HAVE BOLDNESS IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, because as he is, so are we in this world.”

When the storm of divine wrath is ready to break forth and everlasting ruin impends over the wicked, how shall we shrink from standing in our own righteousness, how will all the vain schemes and devices of human wisdom utterly fail us, and how inexpressibly important will it be to have an interest in a method of salvation appointed by our Judge, who has already declared, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.”

And what is most important of all, this doctrine eminently glorifies God. It illustrates all his perfections. How wonderful is that wisdom which finds a method thus justly to absolve the unjust! How pure that justice which demands such a substitute as the only Son of God, and requires him to die an accursed death! How extensive that grace, which, moved by mercy alone, accepts not the just but the unjust; acquits them from all guilt, bestows on them all good here, and brings them safe to everlasting glory! How wonderful the manifestation, the union, the combination, and the harmony of all the divine attributes in the free justification of one sinner!—Here God is “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus;” He is a “just God” and yet “a Saviour.” And with this all

the glory of man's salvation belongs to God. Man does not assume to be a co-partner with God in the praise of achieving his own salvation. Every other system tends to rob God of his due honour in our salvation, and to bring in human boasting for some fancied goodness in man. But "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." Man fell by giving way to pride, and seeking self-exaltation; man is recovered by renouncing all his imagined excellences, and receiving every thing as a boon, an unmerited gift from divine mercy, that all may redound to "the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever."

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" How infinitely above all human contrivance is such a system—the whole scheme exhibits to us fallen men the riches of divine grace, and through eternity the corresponding song of the redeemed shall be, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."

O the blessedness of the justified man! Accepted in Christ, he may with humble and yet joyful confidence say, "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." He can without presumption affirm, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Accepted in Christ, he may even triumph in the assurance that the guilt of his person, (Rom. viii. 33, 34.) and the sin of his works (Ephes. i. 7.) are for ever done away. (John v. 24.) Bought with the price of the precious blood of his incarnate Lord, he has the strongest motives to "glorify God in his body and in his spirit, which are his:" and he enjoys the animating hope that his works of obedience, defective and defiled as they are, shall yet be acceptable to God through Christ Jesus, and even be rewarded by him. The Holy Ghost himself, in all his gracious operations, and especially in the sweet spirit of adoption, bears witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God. Thus, with a filial and happy mind, he walks with God, and he casts his every care upon Him. True it is he sees, he feels his own emptiness, his sinfulness, his many corruptions; and this very blessedness of his free justification allows him to admit all the charge; and thence he is filled with humility in the sight of his own infirmities, and

with tender sympathy and compassion for the failings of others. And now love to his heavenly Father has full and free scope, he receives every thing as from a Father's hand, a Father too wise to be mistaken, too powerful to be impeded, too compassionate and gracious to be unkind. He has a sweet hope that "all" is "working for his good," and that "he shall never perish;" "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We address a few parting words to different characters.

Roman catholics, we earnestly invite you to turn to the only refuge of fallen man. We entreat you, with tender feelings of compassion, with strong affection, as fellow countrymen, fellow sinners, having one God, and one Father, and one Saviour, and going with us to one bar of judgment, while yet the day of salvation continues,—we entreat you come out and be separate from that apostasy that you partake not of its plagues. The more you seek to be justified by your own righteousness, the farther you are from salvation. Your state is very perilous. Be not deceived by vain pretences of antiquity, unity, and universality; by the subtleties and sophistries of men. Your church, and your councils, and your priests, will not stand by you in the day of judgment. Each individual must give account of himself or herself before God. Build upon his word, or you have only a human faith. Man's word shall fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away God's word only shall stand. No longer then help to maintain even by your individual support the existence of a system which is the "mystery of iniquity."

Nominal protestants. Possibly this doctrine may appear new to you. The glory of the Protestant Church has been lost because many have fallen back to papal doctrines. Look again, then, to the first principles of your church. See how distinctly the whole body of the Reformers held this doctrine, and learn that, however you may value yourself on being a Protestant, you are holding the very root of popery while you are holding justification by works,—you are in tremendous danger of everlasting ruin. We would make great allowance for indistinctness of conception and different modes of expression, and believe that some hold the substance of the doctrine in their

own experience, and do cast themselves simply on Christ Jesus for their own salvation, who in words seem to contend for another doctrine. But all this makes it the more necessary for us clearly to exhibit the truth. The great current of human nature flows strongly to justification by our own righteousness : we must resist it with all our might, for the Scriptures show that it is of dangerous and fatal tendency. Nor think that you are at liberty to disregard the great truth on which we have been insisting. If there be a salvation thus free and complete, the contrivance of divine and infinite wisdom, accomplished in so marvellous a way, and procured at so vast and astonishing a sacrifice as the life and the death of the only Son of God, how extreme the danger of neglecting it ! how immense the guilt of despising it ! how inexpressible the folly of a worldly and thoughtless life ! Who can, when God has provided such a remedy, with impunity, act as if the passing concerns of this life were of more value than a part in this eternal redemption. Awake, then, to the tremendous peril of neglecting so great salvation. O turn to the Saviour ; flee from the wrath to come, to that Redeemer in whom alone you can be justified.

Real Christians who depend on Christ and seek salvation through Him, to you we look for the vindication of this doctrine from every reproach. You know the value of it by experience. You cannot live without it. Let your lives furnish an irresistible argument for your principles. Humility, meekness, patience, love, gentleness, and brotherly kindness, especially become those who themselves profess to owe every thing to divine forbearance, benignity, and compassion ; who consider themselves saved, only by sovereign and boundless grace, from justly deserved and endless ruin. Let us walk worthy of our vocation, and while filled with joy and peace in believing, let us pray to the Lord to enlarge the happy number, blessed in Christ now and through eternity.

[This Tract is extracted from a Sermon on Justification by Faith, published by Seeley and Son, Fleet-street.]

London: Printed for THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ; and sold at their Depository, 56, Paternoster-row ; by J. NISBET 21 Berners-street, Oxford-street ; and by other Booksellers.

[Price 5s. 10d. per 100.]