

195. Forgiveness of Sins, or Justification.

To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Rom. 4, 5.

Forgiveness, or justification, is a judicial act in the court of heaven. The sinner is the accused, God is the Judge. He alone can forgive sins, for against Him all have sinned and constantly do sin. To be forgiven, or to be justified, means to be declared "not guilty." When a person has been brought to trial for any offense and has been found guilty, he must make satisfaction for his offense. If he is able to make sufficient satisfaction, either through his own ability or that of a friend, the law accepts it, and the criminal leaves the court-room justified.

Whenever God justifies us, whenever He forgives our sins, He does not look upon our work and worthiness. Forgiveness is an act of divine love and mercy, having its source in divine grace, which is favor towards the undeserving. We are justified freely by His grace, *not by our works*. Justification is a free gift. There is nothing in us that could move God to forgive sins; for there is nothing in us but sin and misery, and when He beholds man in his misery, struggling for life and sinking to hell, His love is kindled, His heart is moved, and He forgives us and saves us *by the riches of His grace*. But has not God said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"? How can He be gracious, having threatened to punish the sinners? Does He, in violation of His divine justice, condone our guilt? Indeed not. God forgives sins *for Christ's sake*.

We have no ability of our own to make satisfaction to God. But an almighty Friend has died to make satisfaction for us. He was nailed to the cross; there He died between two malefactors. We hear the great word from His lips: "It is finished." Finished! is the work of appeasing the wrath of Divine Majesty; finished is the task of giving full satisfaction to the immutable justice of God; finished is the redemption of the world. For every sinner forgiveness has been earned by the death of our Surety. And the hand that takes it is *faith*.

Prayer.

We humbly beseech Thee, O heavenly Father, to do away as the night all our transgressions and to scatter our sins as the morning cloud. Lord, forgive whatever is amiss in us, cleanse us from our sins, and let Thy Holy Spirit so go before and accompany and follow us day by day that we may believe in Thee and love Thee. O God of our salvation, who hast so loved the world as to send Thine only-begotten Son, who reconciled the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, we pray Thee, enter not into judgment with us, but look upon us mercifully in Christ, who is the propitiation for our sins, and in whom Thou hast declared Thyself to be ever well pleased. Amen.

Thou alone art all my Treasure,
Who hast died that I may live;
Thou conferrest noblest pleasure,
Who dost all my sins forgive.

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