

## 197. Justification, Not by Our Works, But by Grace, the Chief Article of the Christian Faith.

**Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases. Ps.103, 2. 3.**

How is a man justified before God? This is a question involving life and death, damnation and eternal salvation. "The just shall live by faith," these words are simple enough for a child to understand; yet they puzzled Luther more than anything he had ever read. They seemed to him the darkest passage in all the Scriptures. But on his way back from Rome the thought suddenly flashed through his mind: Is not this passage as clear as the light of the sun? Has not Christ suffered and died for you? Your debts are paid, heaven is yours! When this great truth dawned upon his mind, it was, he said, as though heaven had been opened to him, so much was he overcome with the thought that heaven was to be his, not by his own exertion and works, but solely by faith; for there it was in the Bible: "The just shall live by faith"; and again: "In Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

This doctrine of justification, of forgiveness of sins, by faith in Christ Jesus is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity. Justification, not by our works, but *by grace*, is the chief article of our Christian faith. This article of faith Luther preached in all its beauty and purity as no other man had done since the time of the apostles. It soon dispelled the spiritual darkness in which the Pope had enveloped the world, and it dealt the death-blow to papacy in the hearts of the people. Justification by faith alone this is the very doctrine that mankind stands so sorely in need of to-day. No matter how little else our minds may be capable of grasping, if we know how to obtain forgiveness, the greatest blessing is ours; for where there is forgiveness, there is also life and salvation. Who can enumerate the blessings that came to us through this doctrine? It is the great central doctrine of the Bible.

## Prayer.

O God of our salvation, who hast so loved the world as to make Thine only-begotten Son to be sin for us that we might in Him be made the righteousness which is pleasing to Thee, vouchsafe unto us the aid of Thy Holy Spirit that we may be firmly assured of this *mystery of grace* and, cleaving to it always with true faith, be enabled also to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, following those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Let us ever hold in the highest regard this most precious doctrine of salvation by grace, through which alone we can be saved. Amen.

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless!  
My heart, believ'st thou this or not?  
Why tremblest thou with terror groundless?  
Has Scripture e'er a falsehood taught?  
Then this word also true must be:  
By grace there is a crown for thee.

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