

## **Justification & Sanctification by Grace without Works**

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### **I. Human conduct or "works" plays no part in the Justification of the sinner - and for these reasons:**

1. The Scriptures categorically teach us that "works" are excluded therefrom. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." That is a square denial that "deeds" can be employed in justification. But not only this negative; we are told pointblank that we are "justified by grace." This is clear : we are not justified by "works"—we are justified by "grace."...

2. All human "works" are excluded from justification because that transaction is distinctly said to be based upon the "works" of Christ. We are justified either upon the ground of our own righteousness; or upon the ground of somebody else's righteousness. These alternatives are exhaustive; no other supposition can be made. We are not justified upon the ground of our own 'works" because we are pointedly told that we are justified upon the ground of the "works" of Christ...

3. The "works" of man are entirely shut out from justification because they are always and inevitably more or less imperfect. That conduct which can be said to entitle a man to justification in a court of absolute intelligence and justice must be entirely free of the least flaw...There is no absolutely sinless human being, other than Jesus of Nazareth.

4. But grant, for argument's sake, the existence of an absolutely sinless man, still there is no promise of his justification...

5. There is another idea that is effective in excluding "works" from all place and all influence in the justification of sinners. Before a man can earn wages ex labore he must have right to work. It is not every laborer in the country who is permitted at his own option to become a workman upon any "job."...The right to "work" is not one which every man possesses ex natura, by virtue of his creaturehood. He has forfeited that right by sinning—his infidelity to trust, his

incompetency, his bad-heartedness have caused his discharge from his Master's service. He stands before God a dishonored, a discredited, a dismissed servant. He can get employment only at the Master's will. He is out of favor with that Employer. Justification reinstates him in the good-will of God as his Lord and Master. It must precede and condition "works."

These arguments are adequate to support the proposition that human "works," whatever their nature or quality, have absolutely no place in a scheme of justification by "grace." Consequently, God, in justifying sinners, completely ignores human character and conduct. The record neither of the best nor of the worst of men receives as much as a passing notice. His justification of sinners is purely and solely *ex gratia*. In his Court the most moral and the most debased are on an equal footing where all are guilty sinners.

## **II. "Works are as rigidly excluded from sanctification as they are from justification. Whatever may be their office in a system of "grace", they do not sanctify sinful life."**

...to realize a human conduct which shall be perfectly satisfactory to the Deity—there are two pre-conditions which are indispensably necessary: **(1)** a right to "work" and **(2)** a heart to "work." A workman who has not been authorized to do what he does is an **offensive intruder**; and a workman who has been formally engaged, but is bad-spirited—having no sympathy with his Master, no appreciation of his purposes and aims, no zeal for success, no devotion to the enterprise, no congeniality with the task—who finds his duties to be drudgeries, his orders irksome, his position galling, his appetencies aversions, his heart bitter and antagonistic—such a workman would be a **nuisance**...

**Justification** gives the sinner the **right** to "work"; **Sanctification** gives him the **heart** to "work." As a sinner he is a discharged servant and an ill-natured creature, possessing neither the privileges nor the fitness for service in the employment of God. **Justification** gives him a new status; **Sanctification** gives him a new habitus. Legal right is the grant of one; moral character is the benediction of the other. One defines a title to service; the other the quality of service. Both are indispensably necessary. Neither is *ex labore* [by works]; both are *ex gratia* [by grace]. Neither the right nor the spirit of a satisfactory workman is communicated by "works"; both are imparted by "grace."

### **A. That Sanctification is *ex gratia* [by grace] and not *ex labore* [by works] is proved by the following arguments:**

1. The Scriptures explicitly so teach. One group of texts represent the **FATHER** as the author of sanctification. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly"... (1 Thess. 5:23). "The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."

(Heb. 13 :20, 21). According to these statements, the worker in sanctification is God, and the subject worked upon is man. Another group of texts teach us that it is the **SON OF GOD** who is the efficient cause of the purification of the Christian heart. "That he (Christ) might sanctify and cleanse it (the Church) with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it unto himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" ....(Eph. 5:26, 27). "Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:13, '4). A third group of passages represent the **HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD** as the sanctifying efficient. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God(I Cor. 6:11). "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2 Thess. 2 :13). There is not a fourth group predicating of man that he is the efficient agent of his own sanctification. Instead, therefore, of working himself into a good character-instead of "living down" the bad reputation he has made before God, men and angels-this character and good name are wrought in him by the Triune God.

2. Instead of character being the product of conduct, conduct is the product of character—character is cause and conduct is effect. This is Scripture and common sense. The vine makes the grapes; not the grapes the vine...

3. But if good character were producible by good behaviour as an original proposition, such a method would not be available for sinners. All their "works" are more or less bad; and if character must be generated by "works," then we would have the illogical process of producing a perfect effect by an imperfect cause. The effect can never be greater or better than the cause. An eternal series of imperfect acts could not issue in a perfect character. If a thorn-bush should bear figs for a hundred centuries, it would still be a thorn-bush...The sinner cannot be transformed into a saint ex labore; because the imperfect could not, in an eternity of effort, evolve the perfect...No bad man can ever make himself a good man by practising religious duties.

4. That character cannot be produced by conduct—that sanctification cannot be by "works"—is further proved by the fact that, if it were so originated, it would be intrinsically meritorious and bring God under obligation to man...

I am logically obliged to combat the popular **ERROR** which prescribes a system of spiritual gymnastics as a ritual for sanctification—that magnifies the reflex influence of the exercise of the virtues of religion into transformations of subjective character that recommends to the world to make itself better by doing better. The end proposed can never be achieved in this manner. The exercise of godliness is right and proper, but it is at once grossly misleading and humiliating to give a utilitarian basis to the entire precept of gracious religion. Sinners ought to obey God, but not for the sake of the dowry of a good character supposed to

result therefrom. The center—the heart—can never be reached from the circumference—the conduct. The inside of the platter cannot be cleansed by washing the outside of the vessel. The dead in the sepulchre can never be quickened by whitewashing the outside of the tomb. The whole process is wrong. God works from the center towards the circumference, from the inside to the outside of life. Hence a ritual of "good works" as a prescription for a sanctified life is preposterous.

That, too, is an **ERROR** which grounds justification in the federal righteousness of Christ and sanctification in the personal righteousness of the believer. This is using the "work" of Christ to account for man's title to be a servant of God, but the believer's "work" to account for the origin of his fitness to be the servant of God. His right to serve God rises out of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, and his fitness to serve his Master springs out of the infusion of that righteousness. That is, the disciple is Christianized both externally and internally—both legally and morally. Christ does something for him—places in his hand the warrant to "work" in God's vineyard. He also does something in him—puts into his heart the spirit to "work" in God's vineyard. It is incorrect, therefore, to represent justification as a federal benefit and sanctification as a personal blessing. Both are from Christ; both are ex gratia [by grace].

**MY CONCLUSIONS**, down to this point in the reasoning is that sinners are justified and sanctified ex gratia [by grace] in order that they may perform "good works." Faultless Christian conduct is the end, the goal, of all God's gracious operations upon the relations and upon the hearts of men. Justification and sanctification are preparatory to obedience—the one conveying to the sinner the legal right to obey and the other conveying to him the spirit and the temper of obedience. Hence "grace" is in order to "works." "Grace" is means; "works" the end. "Grace" is cause; "works" are effect. This is precisely the conclusion of James: "A man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works . show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works." (James 2:18). It is also the conclusion of Paul when he contracts "the works of the flesh with "the fruits of the Spirit," (Gal. 5:19-22). It is also the doctrine of our Saviour when he says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that heareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15 :2). "Grace" precedes "works" as the "vine" precedes the "branch." "Grace" causes the "works" as the vine causes the grapes. The purpose of "grace" is to give the tree the right to bear good fruit and the power to bear good fruit. "Grace" restores the dismissed servant to the employment of the divine Master, and creates within him a heart fully congenial with his employment. The religion of "grace" is in order to a religion of "works." It is ex gratia [by grace] that it may become ex labore [by works]. In heaven, "his servants shall serve him"—this is the Apocalyptic vision of the consummation of the scheme of "grace."

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