

HOME TRUTHS.

BY THE LATE

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JUSTIFIED!

THE word which forms the title of this paper is one of deep importance in religion. It has within it the foundation of sound soul-saving Christianity. It contains the true secret of inward and spiritual comfort. Happy is the man who can use the language of St. Paul, and say from his heart, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ."

I wish to set before every reader of these pages a few thoughts about justification and peace with God. It is a subject we can never understand too well. Before we leave this world let us take care that we see clearly what it is to be "justified." To die ignorant about this is to be ruined to all eternity. We had better never have been born.

There are four things which I propose to bring before you, in order to throw light on the whole subject.

I. Let me show you the chief privilege of a true Christian: "He has peace with God."

II. Let me show you the fountain from which that privilege flows: "He is justified."

III. Let me show you the rock from which that fountain springs: "Jesus Christ."

IV. Let me show you the hand by which the privilege is made our own: "Faith."

Upon each of these four points I have something to say. May the Holy Ghost make the whole subject peace-giving to some souls?

I. First of all, let me show the chief privilege of a true Christian: *He has peace with God.*

When the apostle St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he used five words which the wisest of the heathen could never have used. Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Cicero, and Seneca were wise men. On many subjects they saw more clearly than most people in the present day. They were men of mighty minds, and of a vast range of intellect. But not one of them could have said as the Jewish apostle did, "We have peace with God" (Rom. v. 1).

When St. Paul used these words, he spoke not for himself only, but for all true Christians. Some of them no doubt have a greater sense of this privilege than others. All of them find an evil principle within, warring against their spiritual welfare day by day. All of them find their adversary, the devil, waging an endless battle with their souls. All of them find that they must endure the enmity of the world. But all, notwithstanding, to a greater or less extent, "have peace with God."

This peace with God is a calm, intelligent sense of friendship with the Almighty Lord of heaven and earth. He that has it, feels as if there was no barrier and separation between himself and his holy Maker. He can think of himself as under the eye of an all-seeing Being, and yet not feel afraid. He can believe that this all-seeing Being beholds him, and yet is not displeased.

Such a man can see death waiting for him, and yet not be greatly moved. He can look back on the many sins of a misspent life and not feel afraid. He can go down into the cold river—close his eyes on all he has on earth—launch forth into a world unknown, and take up his abode in the silent grave—and yet feel peace. Reader, can you?

Such a man can look forward to the resurrection and the judgment, and yet not be greatly moved. He can see with his mind's eye the great white throne—the assembled world—the open books—the listening angels—the Judge Himself, and yet feel peace. Reader, can you?

Such a man can think of eternity, and yet not be greatly moved. He can imagine a never-ending existence in the presence of God, and of the Lamb—an everlasting Sunday—a perpetual communion, and yet feel peace. Reader, can you?

I know of no happiness compared to that which this peace affords. A calm sea after a storm—a blue sky after a black thunder-cloud—health after sickness—light after darkness—rest after toil—all, all are beautiful and pleasant things. But none, none of them all can give more than a feeble idea of the comfort which those enjoy who have been brought into the state of peace with God. It is “a peace which passeth all understanding” (Phil. iv. 7).

It is the want of this very peace which makes many in the world unhappy. Thousands have everything that is thought able to give pleasure, and yet are never satisfied. Their hearts are always aching. There is a constant sense of emptiness within. And what is the secret of all this? They have no peace with God.

It is the desire of this very peace which makes many a heathen do much in his idolatrous religion. Hundreds have been seen to mortify their bodies, and vex their own flesh in the service of some wretched image which their own hands had made. And why? Because they hungered after peace with God.

It is the possession of this very peace on which the value of a man's religion depends. Without it there may be everything to please the eye, and gratify the ear—forms, ceremonies, services, and sacraments—and yet no good done to the soul. The grand question that should try all is the state of a man's conscience. Is it peace? Has he peace with God?

This is the very peace about which I address you this day. Have you got it? Do you feel it? Is it your own?

If you have it, you are truly rich. You have that which will endure for ever. You have treasure which you will not lose when you die and leave the world. You will carry it with you beyond the grave. You will have it and enjoy it to

all eternity. Silver and gold you may have none. The praise of man you may never enjoy. But you have that which is far better than either, if you have peace with God.

If you have it not, you are truly poor. You have nothing which will last—nothing which will wear nothing—which you can carry with you when your turn comes to die. Naked you came into this world, and naked in every sense you will go forth. Your body may be carried to the grave with pomp and ceremony. A solemn service may be read over your coffin. A marble monument may be put up in your honour. But after all it will be a pauper's funeral, if you die without peace with God.

Remember my warning. Number up your possessions. Take account of all your property. Consider what you have. You may have youth, and health, and riches, and rank; you may have money, and lands, and houses, and horses, and carriages; you may have honour, love, obedience, troops of friends. It is well. Be thankful for it all. But have you peace? I ask again, Have you peace? Let conscience speak, and give an answer.

II. Let me show you, in the next place, the fountain from which true peace is drawn. That fountain is justification.

The peace of the true Christian is not a vague, dreamy feeling, without reason and without foundation. He can show cause for it. He builds upon solid ground. He has peace with God, because he is justified.

Without justification it is impossible to have real peace. Conscience forbids it. Sin is a mountain between a man and God, and must be taken away. The sense of guilt lies heavy on the heart, and must be removed. Unpardoned sin will murder peace. The true Christian knows all this well. His peace arises from a consciousness of his sins being forgiven, and his guilt being put away. His house is not built on sandy ground. His well is not a broken cistern, which can hold no water. He has peace with God, because he is justified.

He is justified, and his sins are forgiven. However many, and however great, they are cleansed away, pardoned, and wiped out. They are blotted out of the book of God's remembrance. They are sunk into the depths of the sea. They are cast behind God's back. They are searched for and not found. They are remembered no more. Though they may have been like scarlet, they are become as white as snow; though they may have been red like crimson, they are as wool. And so he has peace.

He is justified and counted righteous in God's sight. The Father sees no spot in him, and reckons him innocent. He is clothed in a robe of perfect righteousness, and may sit down by the side of angels without feeling ashamed. The holy law of God, which touches the thoughts and intents of men's hearts, cannot condemn him. The devil, the accuser of the brethren, can lay nothing to his charge, to prevent his full acquittal. And so he has peace.

Is he not naturally a poor, weak, erring, defective sinner? He is. None knows that better than he does himself. But notwithstanding this, he is reckoned complete, perfect, and faultless before God, for he is justified.

Is he not naturally a debtor? He is. None feels that more deeply than he does himself. He owes ten thousand talents, and has nothing of his own to pay. But his debts are all paid, settled, and crossed out for ever, for he is justified.

Is he not naturally liable to the curse of a broken law? He is. None would confess that more readily than he would himself. But the demands of the law have been fully satisfied, the claims of justice have been met to the last tittle, and he is justified.

Does he not naturally deserve punishment? He does. None would acknowledge that more fully than he would himself. But the punishment has been borne. The wrath of God against sin has been made manifest. Yet he has escaped, and is justified.

Do you know anything of all this? Are you justified? Do you feel as if you were pardoned, forgiven, and accepted before God? Can you draw near to Him with boldness and say, "Thou art my Father and my Friend, and I am Thy reconciled child?" Oh, believe me, you will never taste true peace until you are justified.

Where are your sins? Are they removed and taken away from off your soul? Have they been reckoned for, and accounted for, in God's presence? Oh, be very sure these questions are of the most solemn importance! A peace of conscience not built on justification is a perilous dream. From such a peace the Lord deliver you!

Go with me in imagination to some of our great London hospitals. Stand with me there by the bedside of some poor creature in the last stage of an incurable disease. He lies quiet perhaps, and makes no struggle. He does not complain of pain perhaps, and does not appear to feel it. He sleeps, and is still. His eyes are closed. His head reclines on his pillow. He smiles faintly, and mutters something. He is dreaming of home, and his mother, and his youth. His thoughts are far away.—But is this health? Oh, no, no! It is only the effect of opiates. Nothing can be done for him. He is dying daily. The only object is to lessen his pain. His quiet is an unnatural quiet. His sleep is an unhealthy sleep. Reader, you see in that man's case a vivid likeness of peace without justification. It is a hollow, deceptive, unhealthy thing. Its end is death.

Go with me in imagination to some lunatic asylum. Let us visit some case of incurable delusion. We shall probably find someone who fancies that he is rich and noble, or a king. See how he will take the straw from off the ground, twist it round his head, and call it a crown. Mark how he will pick up stones and gravel, and call them diamonds and pearls. Hear how he will laugh, and sing, and appear to be happy in his delusions.—But is this happiness? Oh, no! We know it is only the result of ignorant insanity. Reader, you see in that

man's case another likeness of peace built on fancy, and not on justification. It is a senseless, baseless thing. It has neither root nor life.

Settle it in your mind that there can be no peace with God, unless we feel that we are justified. We must know what is become of our sins. We must have a reasonable hope that they are forgiven, and put away. We must have the witness of our conscience that we are reckoned not guilty before God. Without this it is vain to talk of peace. We have nothing but the shadow and imitation of it. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. lvii. 21).

Did you ever hear the sound of the trumpets which are blown before the judges, as they come into the city to open the assize? Did you ever reflect how different are the feelings which these trumpets awaken in the minds of different men? The innocent man, who has no cause to be tried, hears them unmoved. They proclaim no terrors to him. He listens and looks on quietly, and is not afraid. But often there is some poor wretch waiting his trial in a silent cell, to whom those trumpets are a knell of despair. They tell him that the day of trial is at hand. Yet a little time and he will stand at the bar of justice, and hear witness after witness telling the story of his misdeeds. Yet a little time, and all will be over—the trial, the verdict, and the sentence—and there will remain nothing for him but punishment and disgrace. No wonder the prisoner's heart beats when he hears that trumpet's sound!

There is a day fast coming when all who are not justified shall despair in like manner. The voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall scatter to the winds the false peace which now buoys up many a soul. The day of judgment shall convince thousands of self-willed people, too late, that it needs something more than a few beautiful ideas about God's love and mercy to reconcile a man to his Maker, and to deliver his guilty soul from hell. No hope shall stand in that awful day but the hope of the justified man. No peace shall prove solid, substantial, and unbroken, but the peace which is built on justification.

Is this peace your own? Rest not, rest not, if you love life, till you know and feel that you are a justified man. Think not that this is a mere matter of names and words. Flatter not yourself with the idea that justification is an "abstruse and difficult subject," and that you may get to heaven well enough without knowing anything about it. Make up your mind to the great truth that there can be no heaven without peace with God, and no peace with God without justification. And then give your soul no rest till you are a justified man.

III. Let me show you, in the third place, the rock from which justification and peace with God flow. That rock is Christ.

The true Christian is not justified because of any goodness of his own. His peace is not to be traced up to any work that he has done. It is not purchased by his prayers and regularity, his repentance and his amendment, his morality and his charity. All these are utterly unable to justify him. In themselves they

are defective in many things, and need a large forgiveness. And as to justifying him, such a thing is not to be named. Tried by the perfect standard of God's law the best of Christians is nothing better than a justified sinner, a pardoned criminal. As to merit, worthiness, desert, or claim upon God's mercy, he has none. Peace built on any such foundations as these is utterly worthless. The man who rests upon them is miserably deceived.

Never were truer words put on paper than those which Richard Hooker penned on this subject years ago. Let those who would like to know what English clergymen thought in olden times, mark well what he says: "If God would make us an offer thus large, 'Search all the generation of men since the fall of your father, Adam, and find one man that hath done any one action which hath past from him pure, without any stain or blemish at all—and for that one man's one only action, neither man nor angel shall find the torments which are prepared for both;' do you think this ransom, to deliver man and angels, would be found among the sons of men? The best things we do have somewhat in them to be pardoned. How then can we do anything meritorious and worthy to be rewarded?" To these words I desire entirely to subscribe. I believe that no man can be justified by his works before God in the slightest possible degree. Before man he may be justified. His works may evidence his Christianity. Before God he cannot be justified by anything that he can do. He will be always defective, always imperfect, always shortcoming, always far below the mark, so long as he lives. It is not by works of his own that anyone ever has peace and is a justified man.

But how then is a true Christian justified? What is the secret of that peace and sense of pardon which he enjoys? How can we understand a holy God dealing with a sinful man as with one innocent, and reckoning him righteous notwithstanding his many sins?

The answer to all these questions is short and simple. The true Christian is counted righteous for the sake of a Divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is justified because of the death and atonement of Christ. He has peace because Christ died for his sins according to the Scripture. This is the key that unlocks the mighty mystery. Here the great problem is solved, how God can be just and yet justify the ungodly. The life and death of the Lord Jesus explain all. "He is our peace" (Ephes. ii. 14).

Christ has stood in the place of the true Christian. He has become his surety and his substitute. He has undertaken to bear all that was to be borne, and to do all that was to be done. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ has suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. He has endured our punishment in His own body on the cross. He has allowed the wrath of God, which we deserved, to fall on His own head. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ has paid the debt the Christian owed, by His own blood. He has reckoned for it, and discharged it to the uttermost farthing by His own precious

death. God is a just God, and will not require His debts to be paid twice over. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ has obeyed the law of God perfectly. The prince of this world could find no fault in Him. By so fulfilling it He brought in an everlasting righteousness, in which all His people are clothed in the sight of God. Hence the true Christian is a justified man.

Christ, in one word, has lived for the true Christian. Christ has died for him. Christ has gone to the grave for him. Christ has risen again for him. Christ has ascended up on high for him, and gone into heaven to intercede for his soul. Christ has done all, paid all, and suffered all that was needful for his redemption. Hence arises the true Christian's justification—hence his peace. In himself there is nothing, but in Christ he has all things that his soul can require.

Who can tell the blessedness of the exchange that takes place between the true Christian and the Lord Jesus Christ! Christ's righteousness is placed upon him, and his sins are placed upon Christ. Christ has been reckoned a sinner for his sake, and now he is reckoned innocent for Christ's sake. Christ has been condemned for his sake, though there was no fault in Him—and now he is acquitted for Christ's sake, though he is covered with sins, faults, and shortcomings. Here is wisdom indeed! God can now be just and yet pardon the ungodly. Man can feel that he is a prisoner, and yet have a good hope of heaven and feel peace within. Who among men could have imagined such a thing? Who ought not to admire it when he hears it?

We read in British history of a Lord Nithsdale, who was sentenced to death for a great political crime. He was closely confined in prison after his trial. The day of his execution was fixed. There seemed no chance of escape. And yet before the sentence was carried into effect he contrived to escape through the skill and affection of his wife. She brought him a woman's clothes into the cell where he lay. She disguised him in them and made him appear like her own maidservant. She then went out of the prison with him following as her attendant, and though he passed through guards and keepers, none detected him. Who would not admire the skill and the love of such a wife as this?

But we read in Gospel history of a display of love, compared to which the love of Lady Nithsdale is nothing. We read of Jesus the Son of God coming down to a world of sinners, who neither cared for Him before He came, nor honoured Him when He appeared. We read of Him going down to the prison-house, and submitting to be bound, that we, the poor prisoners, might be able to go free. We read of Him becoming obedient to death—and that the death of the cross that we, the unworthy children of Adam, might have a door opened to life everlasting. We read of Him being content to bear our sins and carry our transgressions, that we might wear His righteousness, and walk in the light and liberty of the sons of God.

This may well be called a “love that passeth knowledge!” In no way could free grace ever have shown so brightly as in the way of justification by Christ (Ephes. iii. 19).

This is the old way by which alone the children of Adam, who have been justified from the beginning of the world, have found their peace. From Abel downwards, no man or woman has ever had one drop of mercy, excepting through Christ. To Him every altar that was raised before the time of Moses was intended to point. To Him every sacrifice and ordinance of the Jewish law was meant to direct the children of Israel. Of Him all the prophets testified. In a word, if you lose sight of justification by Christ, a large part of the Old Testament Scripture will become a tangled maze.

This, above all, is the way of justification which exactly meets the wants and requirements of human nature. There is a conscience left in man, although he is a fallen being. There is a dim sense of his own need, which in his better moments will make itself heard, and which nothing but Christ can satisfy. So long as his conscience is not hungry, any religious toy will satisfy a man’s soul and keep him quiet. But once let his conscience become hungry, and nothing will quiet him but food, and no food but Christ.

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “there must be a price paid for my soul, or no peace.” At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ has already paid a ransom for his redemption. Christ has given Himself for him. Christ has redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him (Gal. ii. 20; iii. 13).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “I must have some righteousness or title to heaven, or no peace. At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. He has brought in an everlasting righteousness. He is the end of the law for righteousness. His name is called, The Lord our Righteousness. God has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. v. 21; Rom. x. 4; Jer. xxiii. 6).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “there must be punishment and suffering because of my sins, or no peace.” At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ hath suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, to bring him to God. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes we are healed (1 Peter ii. 24).

There is something within a man, when his conscience is really awake, which whispers, “I must have a priest for my soul, or no peace.” At once the Gospel meets him with Christ. Christ is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be the Mediator between Himself and man. He is the ordained Advocate for sinners. He is the accredited Counsellor and Physician of sick souls. He is the Great High Priest, the Almighty Absolver, the Gracious Confessor of heavy-laden sinners (1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. viii. 1).

This is the one true way of peace—justification by Christ. Beware lest any turn you out of this way and lead you into any of the false doctrines of the Church of Rome. Alas, it is wonderful to see how that unhappy Church has built a house of error hard by the house of truth! Hold fast the truth of God about justification, and be not deceived. Listen not to anything you may hear about other mediators and helpers to peace. Remember there is no mediator but one—Jesus Christ; no purgatory for sinners but one—the blood of Christ; no sacrifice for sin but one—the sacrifice once made on the cross; no works that can merit anything—but the work of Christ; no priest that can truly absolve—but Christ. Stand fast here, and be on your guard. Give not the glory due to Christ to another.

What do you know of Christ? I doubt not you have heard of Him by the hearing of the ear. You know His name. You are acquainted, perhaps, with the story of His life and death. But what experimental knowledge have you of Him? What practical use do you make of Him? What dealings and transactions have there been between your soul and Him?

Oh, believe me, there is no peace with God excepting through Christ! Peace is His peculiar gift. Peace is that legacy which he alone had power to leave behind Him when He left the world. All other peace besides this is a mockery and a delusion. When hunger can be relieved without food, and thirst quenched without drink, and weariness removed without rest, then, and not till then, will men find peace without Christ.

Is this peace your own? Bought by Christ with His own blood, offered by Christ freely to all who are willing to receive it—is this peace your own? Oh, rest not rest not till you can give a satisfactory answer to my question—Have you peace? Are you justified?

IV. Let me show you, in the last place, the hand by which the privilege of peace is received.

I ask your special attention to this part of our subject. There is scarcely any point in Christianity so important as the means by which Christ, justification, and peace, become the property of a man's soul. Many, I fear, would go with me so far as I have gone in this paper, but here would part company. Let us endeavour to lay hold firmly on the truth.

The means, by which a man obtains an interest in Christ and all His benefits, is simple faith. There is but one thing needful in order to be justified by His blood, and have peace with God. That one thing is to believe on Him. This is the peculiar mark of a true Christian. He believes on the Lord Jesus for His salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Who-soever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Acts xvi. 31; John iii. 16).

Without this faith it is impossible to be saved. A man may be moral, amiable, good-natured, and respectable. But if he does not believe on Christ, he has

no pardon, no justification, no title to heaven. "He that believeth not is condemned already." "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life: but the wrath of God abideth on him." "He that believeth not, shall be damned" (John iii. 18, 36; Mark xvi. 16).

Beside this faith nothing whatever is needed for a man's justification. Beyond doubt, repentance, holiness, love, humility, prayerfulness, will always be seen in the justified man. But they do not in the smallest degree justify him in the sight of God. Nothing joins a man to Christ, nothing justifies, but simple faith. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. iv. 5; iii. 28).

Having this faith, a man is at once completely justified. His sins are at once removed. His iniquities are at once put away. The very hour that he believes he is reckoned by God entirely pardoned, forgiven, and a righteous man. His justification is not a future privilege, to be obtained after a long time and great pains. It is an immediate present possession. Jesus says, "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life." Paul says, "By Him all that, believeth are justified from all things" (John vi. 47; Acts xiii. 39).

I need hardly say that it is of the utmost importance to have clear views about the nature of true saving faith. It is constantly spoken of as the distinguishing characteristic of New Testament Christians. They are called "believers." In the single Gospel of John, "believing" is mentioned eighty or ninety times. There is hardly any subject about which so many mistakes are made. There is none about which mistakes are so injurious to the soul. The darkness of many a sincere inquirer may be traced up to confused views about faith. Let us try to get a distinct idea of its real nature.

True saving faith is not the possession of everybody. The opinion that all who are called Christians are, as a matter of course, believers, is a most mischievous delusion. A man may be baptized, like Simon Magus, and yet have no part or lot in Christ. The visible Church contains unbelievers as well as believers. "All men have not faith" (2 Thess. iii. 2).

True saving faith is not a mere matter of feeling. A man may have many good feelings and desires in his mind towards Christ, and yet they may all prove as temporary and short-lived as the morning cloud and the early dew. Many are like the stony-ground hearers, and "hear the word with joy." Many will say under momentary excitement, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest" (Matt. viii. 19).

True saving faith is not a bare assent of the intellect to the fact that Christ died for sinners. This is not a whit better than the faith of devils. They know who Jesus is. They believe, and they do more, they tremble (James ii. 19).

True saving faith is an act of the whole inner man. It is an act of the head, heart, and will, all united and combined. It is an act of the soul, in which, seeing his own guilt, danger, and helplessness—and seeing at the same time

Christ offering to save him—a man ventures on Christ—flees to Christ—receives Christ as his only hope—and becomes a willing dependent on Him for salvation. It is an act which becomes at once the parent of a habit. He that has it may not always be equally sensible of his own faith, but in the main he lives by faith, and walks by faith.

True faith has nothing whatever of merit about it, and in the highest sense cannot be called a work. It is but laying hold of a Saviour's hand, leaning on a husband's arm, and receiving a physician's medicine. It brings with it nothing to Christ but a sinful man's soul. It gives nothing, contributes nothing, pays nothing, performs nothing. It only receives, takes, accepts, grasps, and embraces the glorious gift of justification which Christ bestows, and by renewed daily acts enjoys that gift.

Of all Christian graces, faith is the most important. Of all it is the simplest in reality. Of all it is the most difficult to make men understand in practice. The mistakes into which men fall about it are endless. Some who have no faith never doubt for a moment that they are believers. Others, who have faith, can never be persuaded that they are believers at all. But nearly every mistake about faith may be traced up to the old root of natural pride. Men will persist in sticking to the idea that they are to pay something of their own in order to be saved. As to a faith which consists in receiving only, and paying nothing at all, it seems as if they could not understand it.

Saving faith is the hand of the soul. The sinner is like a drowning man at the point of sinking. He sees the Lord Jesus Christ holding out help to him. He grasps it and is saved. This is faith.

Saving faith is the eye of the soul. The sinner is like the Israelite bitten by the fiery serpent in the wilderness, and at the point of death. The Lord Jesus Christ is offered to him as the brazen serpent, set up for his cure. He looks and is healed. This is faith.

Saving faith is the mouth of the soul. The sinner is starving for want of food, and sick of a sore disease. The Lord Jesus Christ is set before him as the bread of life, and the universal medicine. He receives it, and is made well and strong. This is faith.

Saving faith is the foot of the soul. The sinner is pursued by a deadly enemy, and is in fear of being overtaken. The Lord Jesus Christ is put before him as a strong tower, a hiding place, and a refuge. He runs into it and is safe. This is faith.

If you love life, cling fast hold to the doctrine of justification by faith. If you love inward peace, let your views of faith be very simple. Honour every part of the Christian religion. Contend to the death for the necessity of holiness. Use diligently and reverently every appointed means of grace; but do not give to these things the office of justifying your soul in the slightest degree. If you would have peace, remember that faith alone justifies, and that not as a merito-

rious work, but as the act that joins the soul to Christ. Believe me, the crown and glory of the Gospel is “justification by faith without the deeds of the law.”

No doctrine can be imagined so beautifully simple as justification by faith. It is not a dark mysterious truth, intelligible to none but the great, the rich, and the learned. It places eternal life within the reach of the most unlearned, and the poorest in the land. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so glorifying to God. It honours all His attributes, justice, mercy, and holiness. It gives the whole credit of the sinner’s salvation to the Saviour He has appointed. It honours the Son, and so honours the Father that sent Him. It gives man no partnership in his redemption, but makes salvation to be wholly of the Lord. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so calculated to put man in his right place. It shows him his own sinfulness, and weakness, and inability to save his soul by his own works. It leaves him without excuse if he is not saved at last. It offers to him peace and pardon without money and without price. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so comforting to a broken-hearted and penitent sinner. It brings to such an one glad tidings. It shows him that there is hope even for him. It tells him though he is a great sinner, there is ready for him a great Saviour; and though he cannot justify himself, God can and will justify him for the sake of Christ. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so satisfying to a true Christian. It supplies him with a solid ground of comfort—the finished work of Christ. If anything was left for the Christian to do, where would his comfort be? He would never know that he had done enough, and was really safe. But the doctrine that Christ undertakes all, and that we have only to believe and receive peace, meets every fear. It must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so sanctifying. It draws men by the strongest of all cords, the cord of love. It makes them feel they are debtors, and in gratitude bound to love much, when much has been forgiven. Preaching up works never produces such fruit as preaching them down. Exalting man’s goodness and merits never makes men so holy as exalting Christ. The fiercest lunatics at Paris became gentle, mild, and obedient, when Abby Pinel gave them liberty and hope. The free grace of Christ will produce far greater effects on men’s lives than the sternest commands of law. Surely the doctrine must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined so strengthening to the hands of a minister. It enables him to come to the vilest of men and say, “There is a door of hope even for you.” It enables him to feel, “While life lasts there are no incurable cases among the souls under my charge.” Many a minister by the use of this doctrine can say of souls, “I found them in the state of nature. I beheld them pass into the state of grace. I watched them moving into the state of glory.” Truly this doctrine must be of God.

No doctrine can be imagined that wears so well. It suits men when they first begin, like the Philippian jailer, crying, “What shall I do to be saved?” It suits

them when they fight in the forefront of the battle. Like the apostle Paul, they say, "The life that I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God." It suits them when they die, as it did Stephen when he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Yes: many an one has opposed the doctrine fiercely while he lived, and yet on his death-bed has gladly embraced justification by faith, and departed saying that "he trusted in nothing but Christ." It must be of God.

Have you this faith? Do you know anything of simple child-like confidence in Jesus? Do you know what it is to rest your soul's hopes wholly on Christ? Oh, remember that where there is no faith, there is no interest in Christ; where there is no interest in Christ, there is no justification; where there is no justification, there can be no peace with God; where there is no peace with God, there is no heaven! And what then? There remains nothing but hell.

And now let me commend the solemn matters we have been considering to your serious and prayerful attention. I invite you to begin by meditating calmly on peace with God—on justification—on Christ—on faith. These are not mere speculative subjects, fit for none but retired students. They lie at the very root of Christianity. They are bound up with life eternal. Bear with me for a few moments, while I add a few words in order to bring them home more closely to your heart and conscience.

1. Let me, then, for one thing, request every reader of this paper to remember its title.

Are you justified? Have you peace with God? You have heard of it. You have read of it. You know there is such a thing. You know where it is to be found. But do you possess it yourself? Is it yet your own? Oh, deal honestly with yourself, and do not evade my question! Are you justified? Have you peace with God?

I do not ask whether you think it an excellent thing, and hope to procure it at some future time before you die. I want to know about your state now. To-day, while it is called to-day, I ask you to deal honestly with my question. Are you justified? Have you peace with God?

May the question ring in your ears, and never leave you till you can give it a satisfactory answer! May the Holy Spirit of God so apply it to your heart that you may be able to say boldly before you die, "Being justified by faith, I have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

2. In the next place, let me offer a solemn warning to every reader of this paper who knows that he has not peace with God.

You are not justified! You have not peace! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your danger! You and God are not friends. The wrath of God abideth on you. God is angry with you every day. Your ways, your words, your thoughts, your actions, are a continual offence to Him. They are all unpardoned and unforgiven. They cover you from head to foot. They provoke

Him every day to cut you off. The sword that the reveller of old saw hanging over his head by a single hair is but a faint emblem of the danger of your soul. There is but a step between you and hell.

You are not justified! You have not peace! Consider for a moment how fearfully great is your folly! There sits at the right hand of God a mighty Saviour, able and willing to give you peace, and you do not seek Him. For ten, twenty, thirty, and perhaps forty years He has called to you, and you have refused His counsel. He has cried, "Come to Me," and you have practically replied, "I will not." He has said, "My ways are ways of pleasantness," and you have constantly said, "I like my own sinful ways far better."

And after all, for what have you refused Christ? For worldly riches, which cannot heal a broken heart; for worldly business, which you must one day leave; for worldly pleasures, which do not really satisfy; for these things, and such as these, you have refused Christ. Is this wisdom, is this fairness, is this kindness to your soul?

I do beseech you to consider your ways. I mourn over your present condition with especial sorrow. I grieve to think how many are within a hair's breadth of some crushing affliction, and yet utterly unprepared to meet it. Fain would I draw near to everyone, and cry in his ear, "Seek Christ! Seek Christ, that you may have peace within and a present help in trouble." Fain would I persuade every anxious parent and wife and child to become acquainted with Him, who is a brother born for adversity, and the Prince of Peace a friend that never fails nor forsakes, and a husband that never dies.

May God the Spirit apply this warning to some reader's soul! May some who began to read this paper in thoughtlessness find it a word in season, and be led into the way of peace!

3. Let me, in the next place, offer an affectionate entreaty to all who want peace and know not where to find it.

You want peace! Then seek it without delay from Him who alone is able to give it—Christ Jesus the Lord. Go to Him in humble prayer, and ask Him to fulfil His own promises and look graciously on your soul. Tell Him you have read His compassionate invitation to the labouring and heavy-laden. Tell Him that this is the plight of your soul, and implore Him to give you rest. Do this, and do it without delay.

Seek Christ Himself, and do not stop short of personal dealings with Him. Rest not in regular attendance on Christ's ordinances. Be not content with becoming a communicant and receiving the Lord's Supper. Think not to find solid peace in this way. You must see the King's face, and be touched by the golden sceptre. You must speak to the Physician, and open your whole case to Him. You must be closeted with the Advocate, and keep nothing back from Him. Oh, reader, remember this. Many are shipwrecked just outside the harbour. They stop short in means and ordinances, and never go straight and di-

rect to Christ. "He that drinks of this water shall thirst again." Christ Himself can alone satisfy the soul.

Seek Christ, and wait for nothing. Wait not till you feel you have repented enough. Wait not till your knowledge is increased. Wait not till you have been sufficiently humbled because of your sins. Wait not till you have no ravelled tangle of doubts and darkness and unbelief all over your heart. Seek Christ just as you are. You will never be better by keeping away from Him. From the bottom of my heart I subscribe to old Traill's opinion, "It is impossible that people should believe in Christ too soon." Alas! it is not humility, but pride and ignorance that make so many anxious souls hang back from closing with Jesus. They forget that the more sick a man is the more need he has of the physician. The more bad a man feels his heart, the more readily and speedily ought he to flee to Christ.

Seek Christ, and do not fancy you must sit still. Let not Satan tempt you to suppose that you must wait in a state of passive inaction, and not strive to lay hold upon Jesus. How you can lay hold upon Him I do not pretend to explain. But I am certain it is better to struggle towards Christ and strive to lay hold, than to sit still with our arms folded in sin and unbelief. Better perish striving to lay hold on Jesus, than perish in indolence and sin. Well says old Traill, of those who tell us they are anxious but cannot believe in Christ: "This pretence is as inexcusable as if a man wearied with a journey, and not able to go one step further, should argue, 'I am so tired that I am not able to lie down,' when indeed he can neither stand nor go."

May God the Spirit apply this invitation to some reader's soul! May it be the means of leading some weary soul into the way of peace.

4. Let me, in the next place, offer some encouragement to those who have good reason to hope they have peace with God, but are troubled by doubts and fears.

You have doubts and fears! But what do you expect? What would you have? Your soul is married to a body full of weakness, passions, and infirmities. You live in a world that lies in wickedness, a world in which the great majority do not love Christ. You are constantly liable to the temptations of the devil. That busy enemy, if he cannot shut you out of heaven, will try hard to make your journey uncomfortable. Surely these things ought all to be considered.

Believing reader, so far from being surprised that you have doubts and fears, I should suspect the reality of your peace if you had none. I think little of that grace which is accompanied by no inward conflict. There is seldom life in the heart when all is still, quiet, and one way of thinking. Believe me, a true Christian may be known by his warfare as well as by his peace. These very doubts and fears which now distress you are tokens of good. They satisfy me that you have really got something which you are afraid to lose.

Believing reader, I advise you to beware that you do not help Satan by becoming an unjust accuser of yourself, and an unbeliever in the reality of God's work of grace. I advise you to pray for more knowledge of your own heart, of the fulness of Jesus, and of the devices of the devil. Let doubts and fears drive you to the throne of grace, stir you up to more prayer, send you more frequently to Christ. But do not let doubts and fears rob you of your peace. Believe me, you must be content to go to heaven as a sinner saved by grace. And you must not be surprised to find daily proof that you really are a sinner so long as you live.

May the Holy Spirit apply this word of encouragement to some reader's soul! May it be the means of establishing the feet of some doubting brother in the way of peace.

5. Let me, in the last place, offer some counsel to all who have peace with God, and desire to keep up a lively sense of it.

It must never be forgotten that a believer's sense of his own justification and acceptance with God admits of many degrees and variations. At one time it may be bright and clear; at another dull and dim. At one time it may be high and full, like the flood-tide; at another low, like the ebb. Our justification is a fixed, changeless, immovable thing. But our sense of justification is liable to many changes.

What, then, are the best means of preserving in a believer's heart the lively sense of justification which is so precious to the soul that knows it? I offer a few hints to believers. But such as they are I offer them, though I lay no claim to infallibility.

To keep up a lively sense of peace, there must be constant looking to Jesus. As the pilot keeps his eye on the mark by which he steers, so must we keep our eye on Christ.

There must be constant communion with Jesus. We must use Him daily as our soul's Physician and High Priest. There must be daily conference, daily confession, and daily absolution.

There must be constant watchfulness against the enemies of your soul. He that would have peace must be always prepared for war.

There must be a constant following after holiness in every relation of life—in our tempers, in our tongues, abroad and at home. A small speck on the lens of a telescope is enough to prevent our seeing distant objects clearly. A little dust will soon make a watch go incorrectly.

There must be a constant labouring after humility. Pride goes before a fall. Self-confidence is often the mother of sloth, of hurried Bible-reading, and sleepy prayers. Peter first said he would never forsake his Lord, though all others did; then he slept when he should have prayed; then He denied Him three times, and only found wisdom after bitter weeping.

There must be constant boldness in confessing our Lord before men. Them that honour Christ, Christ will honour with much of His company. When the disciples forsook our Lord they were wretched and miserable. When they confessed Him before the Council, they were filled with “joy and the Holy Ghost.”

There must be constant diligence about means of grace, and good works. Here are the ways in which Jesus loves to walk. No disciple must expect to see much of his Master, who does not delight in public worship, Bible-reading, private prayer, and constant efforts to mend the world.

Lastly, there must be constant jealousy over our own souls, and frequent self-examination. We must be careful to distinguish between justification and sanctification. We must beware that we do not make a Christ of holiness.

I lay these hints before you. I might easily add to them. But I am sure they are among the first things to be attended to by believers, if they wish to keep up a lively sense of their own justification and acceptance with God.

Reader, I conclude all by expressing my heart’s desire and prayer that you may know what it is to have true peace in your soul.

If you never had peace yet, may it be recorded in the book of God that this year you sought peace in Christ and found it!

If you have tasted peace already, may your sense of peace mightily increase!

The following passage from a direction for the visitation of the sick, composed by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, about the year 1093, will probably be interesting to many readers, “Dost thou believe that thou canst not be saved but by the death of Christ? The sick man answereth, Yes. Then let it be said unto him, Go to then, and whilst thy soul abideth in thee, put all thy confidence in this death alone. Place thy trust in no other thing. Commit thyself wholly to this death. Cover thyself wholly with this alone. Cast thyself wholly on this death. Wrap thyself wholly in this death. And if God would judge thee, say, ‘Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy judgment; and otherwise I will not contend with Thee.’ And if He shall say unto thee that thou art a sinner, say, ‘I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sins.’ If He shall say unto thee that thou hast deserved damnation, say, ‘Lord, I put the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between Thee and all my sins; and I offer His merits for my own, which I should have, and have not.’ If He say that He is angry with thee, say, ‘Lord, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and Thy anger.’”—Quoted by Owen in his *Treatise on Justification*.—JOHNSTONE’S EDITION OF OWEN’S WORK. Vol. v. p. 37.

PEACE, perfect peace? in this dark world of sin!
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace? by thronging duties pressed!
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace? with sorrows surging round!
On Jesus' bosom nought but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace? with loved ones far away!
In Jesus' keeping we are safe, and they.

Peace, perfect peace? our future all unknown!
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace? death shadowing us and ours!
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace.

E. H. Bickersteth.