

So Great Salvation

by J.F. Strombeck

~ 1940 ~

Second Edition

Strombeck Agency, Inc.

Moline Illinois

~ out of print and in the public domain ~

Chapter Eight

CLOTHED IN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

In **VII. GOD's Justice Satisfied** it was seen that because JESUS CHRIST was set forth as a propitiation for sin GOD can be just and justify the one who believes in JESUS. It is important then to consider what it is that GOD does in justifying man.

The word, "justify" is also used at times as "righteousness." Justification must therefore be related to righteousness and so it is. Justification is the act - Righteousness is the result.

In order that man may come into the presence of GOD he must have an absolutely righteous standing in His sight. Any unrighteousness that is charged against a man will keep him from seeing GOD. When GOD justifies a person He provides that person with the necessary righteous standing before Himself.

Justification is more than pardon and forgiveness of sin. Pardon is negative. It considers the penalty due to transgression. Justification is positive. It give to man a meritorious standing.

The difference between pardon and justification is excellently illustrated by the events connected with a racial and military plot which stirred the whole world a few decades ago. This illustration has been used by others, but is well worth repeating.

A Jewish soldier named Alfred Dreyfus (BBB Note: American actor Richard

Dreyfus is related to this man) showed such marked ability that in 1891 he was appointed to the general staff of the French Army. Three years later he was arrested, being charged with selling military information to Germany. His trial resulted in dismissal from the army, public degradation and commitment to the French penal colony on Devil's Island (in Guyana). Due to popular demand Dreyfus was retried in 1899, but was again declared guilty. Because of public dissatisfaction with the result of the trial the President of France pardoned Dreyfus. But the friends of Dreyfus were not satisfied with a mere pardon and in 1906 in a third trial Dreyfus was completely vindicated. He was given the more advanced rank of major and enrolled in the Legion of Honor.

When Alfred Dreyfus was pardoned after the second trial the penalty of the crime of which he was accused was remitted. He was taken from the penal colony on Devil's Island. He came back to his family and friends, but the stigma of being a traitor rested upon him. But when, through the third trial he became vindicated and was promoted to the rank of major and enrolled in the Legion of Honor, he was justified before the whole world. He had a standing of perfect righteousness and in addition thereto was given recognition that comes only to those who have served and brought honor to their country.

This is exactly what happens when GOD justifies the one who believes in JESUS. The only difference is that Alfred Dreyfus, an innocent man, was falsely accused and convicted, while the one whom GOD justifies is a truly guilty sinner, and deserves the penalty that the law imposes.

All Trespasses Forgiven

Because man is a sinner and is guilty, it is necessary for GOD, in justifying a person; first to pardon and forgive his sins.

GOD's forgiveness in saving a person is said to be the forgiveness of "**all trespasses**" (Colossians 2:13). This forgiveness of trespasses is not the same as GOD's forgiveness of the child's sins against Himself as the FATHER, "**But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**" (I John 1:7-9). It is a judicial forgiveness by which the sinner is declared to be free from all trespasses. It is done once and for all when the sinner comes to the Cross.

GOD never treats sin lightly. His forgiveness is not a mere leniency in remitting or setting aside the penalty as when one man forgives another. GOD forgives only because the penalty has been paid by Another, even by JESUS CHRIST. **"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God"** (I Peter 3:18). Because ". . . **without the shedding of blood is no remission**", GOD's forgiveness demands redemption.

For CHRIST's Sake

Forgiveness by GOD is said to be **"For Christ's sake"** (Ephesians 4:32). It involves therefore the justice of GOD. Because CHRIST died and thereby paid the penalty for sin, it would be unrighteous of GOD not to forgive the one who accepts JESUS CHRIST as the propitiation for his sins. If an earthly judge imposed a prison term or an alternate fine and a third party paid that fine, it would be unjust after the penalty had been paid, to imprison the one who had been found guilty.

According to Riches of His Grace

Though GOD's forgiveness involves His justice it is also said to be according to the riches of His grace **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"** (Ephesians 1:7). This is so because it was the love of GOD that sent His Son into the world **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16) and it was by the grace of GOD that He tasted death for every man **"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man"** (Hebrews 2:9). Notice, it is not only according to grace but the **"riches of His grace."** There is no stinted forgiveness by GOD. It is both free and full.

The completeness of the forgiveness in this age is seen in comparison with the forgiveness of the sins of the Old Testament saints. In the Old Testament days forgiveness was accomplished by removing the sin from the sinner **"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us"** (Psalm 103:12). The sacrifices of the Old Testament were for an *atonement* for sin. To atone for sin means to cover, but not to entirely do away with it. By those sacrifices, they that brought them could not be made perfect. By them was a yearly reminder of sin. **"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin"** (Hebrews 10:4). But the Lamb of GOD takes away sin **"The next day**

John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) and those who are sanctified once for all by that sacrifice are perfected forever "**By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all . . . For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified"** (Hebrews 10:10, 14). This is a complete and unalterable judicial forgiveness of sin which gives to the believer a standing before GOD as perfect as though he had never sinned.

This is beautifully illustrated by an incident that happened many years ago. A newly married couple had invited members of their two families to a Sunday dinner. The guests were seated around the table. All desired to be at their best. As the rich brown gravy was being passed one young lady accidentally tipped the bowl with a resultant large brown spot on the immaculately clean and shining linen tablecloth. The hostess quickly and skillfully scraped up the gravy and spread a napkin over the spot and the meal went on. The napkin did not take away the spot; it merely covered it so that the dinner could go on. To the unfortunate young woman who had spilled the gravy the white napkin was a constant reminder of her accident. So the Old Testament sacrifices covered the sins of the Israelites but were a constant reminder of sin. The day after the dinner the tablecloth was washed and the spot taken away. So by the sacrifice of CHRIST, believers are washed from their sins in His blood "**And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood"** (Revelation 1:5). There is no napkin to remind of sin.

From this it is clear that when GOD deals with the sin problem of the unsaved one He does not ask him to put away his sins and live right in the future. That is impossible for anyone to do and besides that there would still be unsolved the whole problem of past sins. No, GOD judicially and completely forgives every sin because CHRIST has paid the penalty for those sins. What GOD asks the unsaved to do is to confess that he is a sinner and accept JESUS CHRIST as having borne the penalty for his sins. That is all anyone can do to receive GOD's judicial forgiveness.

Man's Effort to Justify Himself

In all ages man has tried to justify himself before GOD. He has tried to produce a righteousness which is acceptable to GOD. When man does so it becomes self-righteousness and not a GOD-provided righteousness. Self-righteousness does not, in fact cannot, save any man. The Israelites of Paul's time went about to "**establish their own righteousness.**" They

even had "**zeal for God**" (Romans 10:1-3) but they were not saved because of that. These people were very religious. They fasted and said long prayers. They observed all religious holidays and carried on the temple worship. The reason they were not saved was that in all they did, they were trying to establish their own righteousness and that was not acceptable to GOD.

So today man tries to establish a righteousness that he thinks should be acceptable to GOD. He tries to follow JESUS' example and to obey the Sermon on the Mount. He does the best he can to live up to the dictates of his own conscience. Some join the church, become baptized, say prayers and take part in all kinds of religious and philanthropic work. While these things do have their place, the doing of them can in no way add to the righteousness demanded by GOD of man in order to come into His presence.

Some seem to think that GOD keeps books with them, charging them with all evil deeds and crediting all good deeds to their account. If the good deeds outweigh the evil ones they think that they will be acceptable to GOD. This cannot be GOD's method because He demands perfection in all deeds. It is not a question of a high batting average. It means striking the first pitched ball every time one comes up to bat each day of one's life from the cradle to the grave.

Concerning all self-righteousness the prophet Isaiah said; ". . . **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**" (Isaiah 64:6). It has been said that the "**filthy rags**" here referred to were those worn by lepers and therefore full of leprosy. As leprosy is typical of sin, the picture is perfect, for all of man's self-righteousness is contaminated by sin. All is done in dependence upon self instead of upon GOD and that, as has been seen, is the essence of sin.

There are some who think that because the law, especially the Ten Commandments, was given by GOD, the observance of it will give to man a righteous standing before GOD. That is impossible because GOD requires absolute obedience and perfection and man cannot render such obedience. "**For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one point*, he is guilty of all**" (Jas. 2:10). Because of this ". . . **by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his [GOD's] sight**" (Romans 3:20) and "**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**" (Galatians 2:16).

For four thousand years man had proved himself incapable of being

righteous. Both Jews and Gentiles had been proved to be under sin. There was none righteous to be found, no not one. **"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one"** (Romans 3:9-10). By the law every mouth was stopped before GOD: **"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God"** (Romans 3:19). GOD's law demanded righteousness by man, but man had failed.

The Righteousness That GOD Demands He Also Provides

No man begotten of Adam has lived a perfectly righteous life; one that will for him gain admission into the presence of GOD. **"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God"** (Romans 3:23). But that perfect righteousness that GOD demands of those who are to come into His presence He also provides. He will Himself clothe with righteousness as a free gift.

While none of Adam's seed has been able to live a life of righteousness acceptable to GOD, when the Son of GOD came to this earth and became a true man and so lived, He fulfilled every jot and tittle of GOD's law, **"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"** (Matthew 5:17-18), and thus revealed a righteousness acceptable to GOD.

That the earthly life of JESUS was acceptable to GOD cannot be questioned. Near the close of it, JESUS took three of His disciples with Him up into a high mountain and was transfigured before them. Moses appeared also with Him as the representative of the law, and Elias as that of the prophets. With these two as witnesses, GOD spoke out of the cloud saying, **"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"** (Matthew 17:1-5). This was a clear declaration of GOD's acceptance of the earthly life of JESUS. Here was One Who had not sinned and come short of the glory of GOD. He was altogether righteous and was so witnessed by the law and by the prophets.

When the whole world stood guilty before GOD and it had been demonstrated that no man could be justified by his own good works, then GOD, in the person of His Son living on this earth as a man, revealed a righteousness acceptable to Himself. This righteousness is now offered unto all as a gift and it is clothed upon all that believe. **"I will greatly rejoice in**

the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Isaiah 61:10). This is the message of Romans 3:19-22, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 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."

By Grace and Not of Works

The Bible expressly declares that no man can earn this righteousness by anything whatsoever that he might do. It is said that it is reckoned to the account of all that believe in JESUS CHRIST and that only because of their faith. **"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law"** (Romans 3:28). **"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"** (Romans 4:5). (See also Galatians 2:16, 3:8, 24 and Read Romans, chapter 4). Man is therefore justified freely by the grace of GOD **"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"** (Romans 3:24).

Through Redemption in CHRIST JESUS

Justification is made possible through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS. It is because He was set forth as a propitiation for sin, already explained, that GOD can righteously forgive the sinner and reckon unto him CHRIST's perfect righteousness. When GOD counted man's sin to JESUS CHRIST, He became so thoroughly identified therewith that He was actually made sin and died as a sinner. When GOD counts righteousness to the believer he becomes so thoroughly identified therewith that he actually becomes the righteousness of GOD and lives **"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"** (I Corinthians 5:21). Only a divinely prepared and perfect righteousness will admit man into the presence of GOD. No faulty man-made righteousness will do. Therefore it is only because GOD counts the righteousness of CHRIST to the one who believes that any man can gain entrance into heaven.

There is no St. Peter at the gate of heaven asking people what good they have done to enter therein. The righteousness of GOD, which is CHRIST, is man's only passport to heaven but one who has received that passport is certain to enter therein because nothing can ever be charged against such a one "**Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth**" (Romans 8: 33).

Justification, then, is the imputation of the righteousness of CHRIST to the one who believes on Him. It is counting to him the merits of CHRIST. It gives to the believer a perfectly righteous standing before GOD as perfect as that of JESUS CHRIST and is apart from any merit on man's part. Justification is demanded by GOD's holiness and supplied by His love.

The Bible gives a perfect illustration of justification. It is recorded in Genesis 3:21 in these words, "**Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.**" Adam and his wife had sinned. They stood naked before GOD and under the judgment of the broken law. By slaying innocent animals, GOD prepared coats of skins and these He put upon Adam and his wife. By these garments they were made fit for the presence of GOD. Notice that GOD made the coats. Adam and his wife did not help in any way. GOD clothed them. They did not even put the coats on. They gave nothing to GOD for the coats. The provision of the coats necessitated the death of an innocent third party.

These coats were provided only after Adam had named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. By so doing, Adam (under the judgment of death) showed his faith in GOD's promise that the woman's seed (JESUS) should destroy the head, or power, of the serpent which is Satan: "**And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel . . . And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living**" (Genesis 3: 15, 20).

Herein are all the elements of justification. GOD prepares a garment of righteousness and in it He clothes all who believe in JESUS CHRIST as the One who delivers from sin. Man can give nothing in return for this garment nor can he put it on himself. The provision of righteousness is made possible only by the death of an innocent, sinless, third Person, JESUS CHRIST.

~ end of chapter 8 ~
