

LECTURE LII.

JUSTIFICATION.

SYLLABUS.

1. What is the importance of correct views on this doctrine ?
Dick, Lect. 69. Turretin, Loc. xvi, Qu. 1. Owen on Justification, (Assembly's Edit.), p. 76-82.
2. What is the scriptural idea or meaning of God's acts of justification ? State and refute Popish view, and establish the true view.
Turretin, Loc. xv, Qu. 1. Owen, cb. 4. Dick, Lect. 69. Hill, bk. v, ch. 2. Ridgley, Qu. 70. Knapp, § 109. Watson's Theol. Inst., ch. 23, § 1. Bellarmine's Controversia. Liber de Justificatione. Council of Trent. Ses. 6, ch. 7. Calvin's Inst., bk. iii, ch. 11. Dr. W. Cunningham, ch. 21.
3. Does the inherent grace wrought by God in the believer's soul or good works proceeding therefrom, merit anything towards justification ?
Calvin's Inst., bk. iii, chs. 15, 17. Turretin, Qu. 2. Owen, chs. 5, 6. Council of Trent, Ses. 6, cbs. 7 to 10, and Canons 11, &c., de Justi. Bellarmine, as above. Dr. A. Alexander's Tract on Justification.
4. Is justification mere remission of sins ; or does it include the bestowal of a title to favour and reward ? And is Christ's active, as well as His passive obedience, imputed to believers therefore ?
Turretin, Qu. 3, 4. Owen, ch. 12. Dick, Lect. 69, 70. Hill, as above. Knapp, § 115. Watson, as above, § 2. Dr. A. Alexander, as above.
5. What is adoption ?
Turretin, Loc. xvi, Qu. 6. Dick, Lect. 73. Ridgley, Qu. 74. See on whole, Conf. of Faith, ch. 11 ; and Catechisms, on Qu. 4. Dorner's Hist. Prot. Theol. Vol. i, § 3, of Div. 3.

IT is obvious to the first glance, that It is a question of the first importance to sinners, "How shall man be just with God?" The doctrine of justification was the radical principle, as we have seen, out of which grew the Reformation from Popery. It was by adopting this, that the Reformers were led out of darkness into light. Indeed, when we consider how many of the fundamental points of theology are connected with justification, we can hardly assign it too important a place. Our view of this doctrine must determine, or be determined by, our view of Christ's satisfaction ; and this, again, carries along with it the whole doctrine concerning the natures and person of Christ. And if the proper deity of Him be denied, that of the Holy Ghost will very certainly fall along with it ; so that the very doctrine of the Trinity is destroyed by extreme views concerning justification. Again: "It is God that justifieth." How evident, then, that our views of justification will involve those of God's law and moral attributes? The doctrine of original sin is also brought in question, when we assert the impossibility of man's so keeping the law of God, as to justify himself. It is a more familiar remark, that the introduction of the true doctrine of justification excludes that whole brood of Popish inventions, purgatory and penance, works of supererogation, indulgences,

sacrifice of the mass, and merit of congruity acquired by alms and mortifications.

Not to go again into these subjects at large, which are illustrated in your history of the Reformation, it may be briefly repeated, that as is our **Justification as its Ground.** conception of the meritorious ground of justification, such will be our conception of its nature. This proposition will be found necessarily decisive of every man's scheme of justification, be it what it may. If its ground is absolute, complete and infinite, the righteousness of Jesus Christ, it also will be an act complete, final and absolute, equal in all justified persons, admitting no increment, and leaving neither need nor room for any sacramental merit or penitential atonement. Once more: The blessed doctrine of an assurance of hope is intimately dependent on justification. If the latter is grounded on infused grace, and admits of loss and increment, the Christian's opinion concerning the certainty of his own justification can never become an assurance, this side the grave; for the very sufficient reason, that the fact itself is still suspended. If he were assured of it, he would believe an untruth; for the thing itself is not yet sure. Hence, the propriety of Luther's decision, when, taught by his personal, as well as his theological, experience, he declared justification to be the cardinal doctrine of the Church's creed.

The question concerning the true nature of justification should be strictly one of exegesis. All are **2. Etymology of Term.** agreed that it is God's act. Hence, the opinions of men, or the human meanings of words by which men have expressed God's descriptions of it in Scripture, are not worth one particle, in determining its nature. It may, however, be remarked, that all English theologians have adopted the Latin word justify (*justifico*) from the *Vetus Itala*, Latin Fathers and Latin Vulgate, an unclassical word, which would mean, etymologically, to make righteous. I may also remind you, that Augustine, and a few of the other fathers, misled by this etymology, and their ignorance of Greek, conceived and spoke of justification as a change of moral state, as well as of legal condition. Here is the poisonous germ of the erroneous doctrine of the Scholastics and of Trent concerning it; a striking illustration of the high necessity of Hebrew and Greek literature, in the teachers of the Church.

When we pass to the original Scriptures, we find the act of justification described by a Hebrew and **Bible Terms. Rom- ish Definition. Our Definition.** Greek verb, **קִיְּוֶה**, (hiphil) and *δικαιώω*, with their derivatives. Now, the Romish Church asserts, that the Scriptural idea of the act is not only God's accounting, but also making the sinner righteous, by both infusing the divine righteousness, and declaring it acceptable, in

the sinner. We believe that the true meaning is not to make righteous in that sense, but only to declare righteous or make righteous in the forensic sense; and that the act of justification does not change the moral state, but only declares, in the forum of heaven, the legal state of the sinner. The soundest reasons for this, we shall give, without any claim whatever to originality, merely aiming to present them in a brief, lucid, and logical order. The Holy Ghost, then, by justification, intends a forensic act, and not a moral change.

(a) Because, in a number of cases, He expresses a justification of objects incapable of being made righteous by a moral change, by the justifying agents, in the given cases. Thus, Wisdom: Matt. xi: 19. God: Ps. li: 4; Job xxxii: 2; Luke vii: 29.

(b) Because, in a multitude of cases, to justify is the contrast of condemning; e. g., Job. ix: 20; Deut. xxv: 1; Rom. viii: 33, 34, &c. Now, to condemn does not change, but only declares the culprit's moral condition; it merely fixes or apportions the legal consequence of his faults. Therefore, to justify does not make holy, but only announces and determines the legal relation.

(c) In some places, the act of a magistrate in justifying the wicked is pronounced very sinful. Prov. xvii: 15; Is. v: 23. Now, if to justify were to make righteous, to justify the wicked would be a most praiseworthy and benevolent act on the magistrate's part. From this very argument, indeed, some have raised a captious objection; saying, if it is so iniquitous in the human magistrate to pronounce righteous him who is personally unrighteous, it must be wrong for God to justify in this (Calvinistic) sense, the sinner. The answer is, that God, unlike the magistrate, is able to impute to the justified ungodly, a vicarious satisfaction for his guilt, and to accompany this justification with sanctifying grace, ensuring his future obedience.

(d) The adjuncts of the act of justification are all such as would indicate a forensic character for it. Rom. iii: 19, 20: the objects of the act are men who are *ὑπόδοχοι*. See also Job ix: 2, 3; Ps. cxliii: 2. There is a bar at which the act is performed. Luke xvi: 15; Rom. iv: 2; Is. xliii: 26. There is an advocate, pleading our cause. I Jno. ii: 1.

e.) Finally, the equivalent expressions all point to a forensic act. Thus, in Rom. iv: 4-6, justification is explained by the forgiveness of iniquity, and covering of sin. In Rom. v: 9, we are justified by His blood and saved from wrath through Him; and v: 10, it is farther explained by reconciliation. In Jno. iii: 18; v: 24, &c., it is being not condemned, and passing from death to life. In a word, the only sense of the word which makes Paul's argument in Romans, ch. ii: 5, intelligible, is the forensic sense; for the whole question there is concerning the way of acquittal for a sinner before God.

Papists, therefore, admit that the original words often carry a forensic sense, even an exclusive one; and that in the justification of the sinner the forensic idea is also present; but they claim that, in addition, a production of inherent righteousness in the justified person is intended by the word; so that the believer is accounted, because made personally righteous in justification. And in support of this, they quote Is. liii : 11; Dan. xii : 3, from the Old Testament, and in the New, Rom. iii : 24; iv : 22; vi : 4, 5; viii : 10, 30; I Cor. vi : 11; Heb. xi : 4; Titus iii : 5-7; Rev. xxii : 11. Of the first two texts it is enough to say, that the forensic sense of the verb is perfectly tenable, when we assign only an instrumental agency to the gospel, or minister mentioned; and that sort of agency the Papist himself is compelled to give them. Of I Cor. vi : 11, it should be said that it is a case of introverted parallelism, in which the "washing" is general; and the sanctifying and justifying the two branches thereof. Can they be identical: tautological? "Ye are sanctified by the Spirit of our God, and justified in the name of Christ." Rev. xxii : 11, only has a seeming relation to the subject, in consequence of the Vulgate's mistranslation from an erroneous reading. The other passages scarcely require notice.

The Protestant view of justification as to its nature, and meritorious cause may be seen in Shorter Catechism, que 33.

The doctrine of Rome is a masterpiece of cunning and plausible error. According to this doctrine, justification is rather to be conceived of as a process, than an absolute and complete act.

The initiation of this process is due to the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, (bestowed first in Baptism,) infusing and inworking a *fides formata* in the soul. Free will is by itself inadequate for such an exercise, but yet neither doth the Holy Ghost produce it, without the concurrence of the contingent will of the believer. So that Rome's doctrine herein is synergistic. Moreover, the meritorious cause which purchases for the believer, this grace of a *fides formata*, is Christ's righteousness and intercession. But now, the ἀγάπη, with resultant good works, thus inwrought by grace, is the righteousness which is imputed to the believer, for his justification—i. e., to entitle him to life and adoption; so that the work of justification not only accounts, but makes the sinner personally righteous. It will be seen how cunningly this doctrine, by mixing justification with sanctification, avails itself of the seeming support of such passages as Rom. iv : 22, 24; x : 10; Acts x : 35; Gal. v : 6; Jas. ii : 26, how plausibly it evades those peculiar texts, as Rom. i : 17; Phil. iii : 9, which say that the righteousness which justifies us is God's; and how "it keeps the word of promise to the ear, and breaks it to the sense," in seeming to ascribe something

to the merit of Christ, while yet it is practically justification by works.

According to the Council of Trent then, the final cause of justification is (correctly), God's glory in the bestowal of eternal life. The efficient cause, God's grace; the meritorious cause, the righteousness of Jesus Christ; (i. e., of His passion); the instrumental cause, baptism; the formal cause, the infused righteousness of God, dwelling in the believer. Justification will consequently be imperfect in all, different in degree in different ones, capable of increment and diminution, and liable to entire loss, in case of backsliding; nor can its continuance unto glory be certainly ascertained by the believer (except in case of inspiration), inasmuch as its continuance is not itself certain.

Now all sound Protestants assert, on the contrary, that there is no other justification than that which Romanists describe as the initiation thereof, which is a complete and absolute act; done for the believer once for all, perfect and complete in all, needing and admitting no increment; and above all, that God is not moved in any sort, to bestow this grace of justification by the congruous merit of our inwrought holiness; but that this latter is, on the contrary, one of the fruits of our justification. We utterly exclude our own inherent holiness.

(a.) Because, however gracious, it is always imperfect. But the Law of God (Gal. iii : 10; Jas. ii : 10,) can accept nothing but a perfect righteousness. Nor is it worth the Papist's while to say, that the believer's holiness is perfect *in habitu*, but imperfect *in actu*. They also plead, since conversion is God's work, the godliness infused must be perfect in principle, because "the work of our Rock is perfect." Deut. xxxii : 4. I reply, His own works are, of course, perfect; but it may be far otherwise with those in which imperfect man is recipient, and his feeble faculties means. I urge, farther, that it is a fiction to represent that godliness as perfect in disposition and principle, which is imperfect in act. For the act expresses the principle. Said our Saviour: "Make the tree good, and the fruit good." It is a favorite claim of unbelievers and Socinians, to say that their intentions and hearts are better than their conduct: whereas, Bible-saints always confess the human heart worse than its outward developments. And last: the plea would not avail the Papist, if granted; because God says that when man is judged on his merits, it is the overt act by which he is especially tried. Matt. xii : 37.

(b.) The Apostle sternly excludes works from the ground of justification. Rom. iii : 20, 28, &c., &c. And it is no adequate answer to say: he means only to exclude ceremonial works. For besides that, it is improbable the Apostle would ever have thought

Causes of Justification according to Rome.

Justification not by Inherent Grace and its Works.

Evasion of Rom. iii : 20, &c.

it worth his while to argue against a justification by ceremonial works alone, inasmuch as we have no proof any Jew of that day held such a theory; we know that the Hebrew mind was not accustomed to make the distinction between ceremonial and moral, positive and natural precepts. Moreover, the law whose works are excluded is, evidently from the context, the law whose works might prompt boasting; the law which was over Jew and Gentile alike, the law which was the term of the Covenant of works, and from whose curse Christ delivers us.

Another evasion is attempted, by saying the Apostle only excludes the works of the unrenewed heart.

Another Evasion. We reply: Was it worth his while to argue their exclusion, when nobody was so impudent as to assert their value? Again, his language is general. He excludes all works which stand opposed to faith; but there is as much contrast between working and believing, after, as before conversion. Then, the illustrations which the Apostle uses, are David and Abraham, all of whose works he excludes from their justification. Surely the Hebrew would not naturally refer to their good works, as those of an unsanctified man! In fine, the manner in which, in Rom. vi, the Apostle answers the charge of "making void the law through faith," proves that he meant to exclude all works.

(c.) Our justification is asserted, in many forms, to be all of grace, to exclude boasting, to be by Christ's righteousness, as contrasted with ours. We assert that the freedom of grace, and the honour of Christ in our salvation are grievously marred by the Popish doctrine. Human merit is foisted in.

(d.) No holy exercises, nor gracious acts, whatever their source, have any relevancy to atone for past guilt. But remission of this is the more essential part of the justification, if either is.

(e.) When once the righteousness of Christ, which the Council of Trent allows to be the meritorious cause for initiating a justified state, is applied, we assert that the whole change of legal attitude is effected; and nothing remains that can be done more. The man "is passed from death unto life," and hath eternal life," Jno. v : 24; iii : 36. There is no condemnation to him. Rom. viii : 1. He "hath peace" with God. Rom. v : 1. He "is reconciled," v ; 10, and has acquired a vicarious merit, which *a fortiori* assures all subsequent gifts of grace without any additional purchase. He is adopted. Jno. i : 12. In a word, the righteousness imputed being infinite, the justification grounded on it is at once complete, if it exists at all.

(f.) The Popish idea that justification can be matured and carried on by inherent grace is inconsistent with God's nature and law. Suppose the believer reinstated in acceptance, and left to continue and complete it by his imperfect graces; why should not his first shortcoming hurl him down into a state of

condemnation and spiritual death, just as Adam's first did him? Then his justification would have to be initiated over again. The only thing which prevents this, is the perpetual presentation of Christ's merit on the believer's behalf. So that there is no room for the deservings of inherent grace.

The Catechism defines justification as a pardoning of all our sins, and an acceptance of us as righteous in God's sight. It is more than remission, bestowing also a title to God's favour, and adoption to that grace and glory which would have been won had we perfectly kept the Covenant of Works. On the contrary, the Arminian declares justification to be nothing but simple forgiveness, asserting that, as absence of life is death, cessation of motion is rest, so absence of guilt is justification. The Scriptural ground on which they rely is that class of passages represented by Rom. iv : 4-8, where Paul defines, for instance, justification as that pardon of iniquities and covering of sin which David sung in Ps. xxxii. See also Acts v : 31 ; Eph. i : 7 ; Rom. v : 16, &c. We reply: We admit that forgiveness is the first element, and a very important element of justification; and that wherever bestowed, it always infallibly draws after it the whole act and grace. In passages where it was not the immediate scope of the sacred writer, therefore, to define the whole extent of justification, what more natural than that it should be denominated by this characteristic element, in which a guilty conscience will naturally feel itself more immediately interested? Surely, if in other places we find the act described as containing more, we should complete our definition of it, by taking in all the elements which are embraced in all the places. We argue, then:

(a) That the use of the words and their meaning would indicate that remission is not the whole idea of justification. Surely, to declare righteous is another thing than a mere declaration of exemption from penalty, even as righteousness is another state, than that of mere exemption from suffering. This leads us to remark:

(b) That the law contains a two-fold sanction. If its terms be perfectly kept, the reward will be eternal life; if they be broken in any respect, the punishment will be death. Pardon alone would release from the punishment of its breach, but would not entitle to the reward of its performance. In other words, he who broke it, and has suffered the penalty, therefore does not stand on the same platform with him who has kept it. Suppose, for instance, I promise to my servants a reward for keeping my commands, and threaten punishment for breaking them. At the end of the appointed time, one of them has kept them, and receives the reward. A second one has broken them, and is chastised. Suppose this second should then arise and claim

4. Justification is both Pardon and Adoption.

Righteousness more than Guiltlessness.

his reward also, on the ground that suffering the full penalty of the breach was an entire equivalent for perfect obedience? Common sense would pronounce it absurd. Hence, the Arminian logic, that remission is justification, is seen to be erroneous. Since Christ steps into the sinner's stead, to fulfil in his place the whole Covenant of Works, He must, in order to procure to us full salvation, both purchase pardon for guilt, and a positive title to favour and life. The sinner needs both. Arminians have sometimes argued that the one necessarily implies the latter; because a moral *tertium quid* is inconceivable; there is no place between heaven and hell to which this person, guiltless and yet not righteous, could be consigned. We reply, the two elements are indeed practically inseparable; but yet they are distinguishable. And, while there can be no moral neutrality, yet, in the sense of this argument, guiltlessness is not equal to righteousness; e. g., Adam, the moment he entered into the Covenant of Works, was guiltless, (and in one sense righteous). God could not justly have visited him with inflictions, nor taken away from his present natural happiness. But did Adam, therefore, have a title to that assured eternal life, including all the blessings of perseverance, infallible rectitude, and sustaining grace, which was held out in the Covenant, as the reward to be earned by obedience? Surely not. Now this is what the sinner needs to make a complete justification—what Christ gives therein: The Arminian's error is betrayed by another of his own positions. He insists that the believer's faith is imputed to him for righteousness: i. e., as a putative righteousness graciously accepted for his justification. But he will not deny that pardon is for the merit of Christ's sacrifice. For what justification then is this imputation of faith made? His own dogma is only rescued from absurdity, by having in the mind that very element of justification which he denies: an acceptance or adoption into life which is more than mere pardon.

(c) To this agree the Scriptures. Zech. iii : 4, 5, justification is not only the stripping off of the filthy garment, but the putting on of the fair mitre and clean robe. Acts xxvi : 18, faith obtains forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among the saints. Rom. v : 1, 2, justification by faith brings us not only peace with God, but access to a state of grace, and joy and glory. Gal. iv : 5, Christ's coming under the curse for us, results in a redemption, which includes adoption. Jno. i : 12, believing is the immediate instrument of adoption, &c., &c.

Second: Those who admit this definition of justification, will, of course, admit that the righteousness by which the sinner is justified must include a full obedience to the preceptive, as well as the penal part of the law. And as that righteousness, (to an-

2. Christ's Active Obedience Imputed.

ticipate a point of future discussion) is Christ's, hence, the merit of His obedience to the precepts, as well as of His atoning sufferings, must be imputed to us for justification. [It is common for theologians to say: "both His active and passive obedience" are imputed. The phrase is clumsy. In truth, Christ's sufferings contained an active obedience; and it is this which made them a righteousness: for mere pain, irrespective of the motive of voluntary endurance, is not meritorious. And Christ's obedience to precepts was accompanied with endurance.]

(a) All the arguments then, by which the last head was supported, also go to prove that both parts of Christ's righteousness are imputed for justification, (if either is). He undertook to stand in our stead; and do for us, what the Covenant of Works demanded of us for our eternal life. We have seen that after we sinned, it required an obedience penal and preceptive.

(b) It is most scriptural to suppose that all Christ did as a mediatorial person, was for us, and in our stead. Did Christ then, obey the preceptive law, as one of His official functions? The answer is, there was no other reason why He should do it — of which more anon. See Matt. iii : 15 ; v : 17.

(c) In many places, Christ's bearing the preceptive law is clearly implied to be for our redemption. See for instance, Gal. iv : 4. By what fair interpretation can it be shown that the law under which He was made, to redeem us, included nothing but the penal threatenings? "To redeem us who were under the law." Were we under no part of it but the threats? See, also, Rom. v : 18, 19, "By the obedience of Christ, many are made righteous." The antithesis and whole context show that obedience to precepts is meant. Rom. viii : 3, 4. What the law failed to do, through our moral impotency, that Christ has done for us. What was that? Rather our obedience than our suffering. See, also, Heb. x : 5-7.

In the days of the Reformation, Andr. Osiander vitiated the doctrine of justification by urging, that if Christ was under a moral obligation to keep the preceptive law, (as who can doubt?) then He owed all the obedience of which He was capable on His own account, and therefore could not render it as our surety. Hence, he supposed that the righteousness imputed to us is not that of the God-man on earth, but the inherent or natural righteousness of the Deity. The Socinians and others have adopted this cavil, making it the staple of one of their objections to imputation. The answer is threefold. 1st. Christ did, indeed, owe complete obedience to law, after assuming His vicarious task. But for what purpose was the obligation assumed? For what purpose was the very humanity assumed, by which He came under the obligation? To redeem man. The argument is, therefore, as

preposterous as though, when a surety comes forward, and gives his own bond, to release his bankrupt friend, the creditor should refuse to cancel the bankrupt man's bond, saying to the surety: "Now, you owe me the money for yourself, for I hold your bond!" The security would speedily raise the question: "What was the value received, for which I, who otherwise owed nothing, gave this bond? It was nothing else than the promised release of this bankrupt's bond." Thus every lawyer would scout the argument of the Socinian, as profligate trifling. See Witsius, bk. ii: chap. 3, § 14, &c. But second: Christ, as God-man, was not obliged to render any obedience to the law, to secure the justification of His own mediatorial person: because He was personally accepted and justified from the beginning. See Matt. iii: 17; Heb. i: 6. For whom, then, was this obedience rendered, if not for His people? And third: The obedience, though rendered in the human nature, was the obedience of the divine person. That person, as divine, could not be subject, on His own personal behalf, to law, being the sovereign. Hence, it must be vicarious obedience, and being of infinite dignity, is sufficient to justify not one believer only, but all.

Adoption cannot be said to be a different act or grace from justification. Turretin devotes only a brief separate discussion to it, and introduces it in the thesis in which he proves that justification is both pardon and acceptance. Owen says that adoption is but a presentation of the blessings bestowed in justification in new phases and relations. And this is evidently correct; because adoption performs the same act for us, in Bible representations, which justification does: translates us from under God's curse into His fatherly favour. Because its instrument is the same: faith. Gal. iii: 26, with iv: 6, 7; Titus iii: 7; Heb. xi: 7; Jno. i: 12. And because the meritorious ground of adoption is the same with that of justification, viz: the righteousness of Christ. See Heb. xi: 7; Eph. i: 6; and texts above. The chief doctrinal importance of this idea then is, that we have here, the strongest proof of the correctness of our definition of justification, and of the imputed righteousness upon which it is based, in the fact that it is both a pardon and an adoption.

The representation of our adoption given in Scripture, with its glorious privileges, is full of consoling and encouraging practical instructions. The student may see these well set forth in Dick's 73d Lecture.

5. Adoption.
What?