

LECTURE LIV.

JUSTIFICATION.—Concluded.

SYLLABUS.

11. Define and prove the Imputation of Christ's righteousness, and answer objections. Compare Adam's case, Rom. v.
See Turretin, Loc. xvi, Qu. 3. Owen on Justif., chs. 7, 8, 10. Dick, Lect. 70. Dr. A. Alexander, Tract. Dr. Wm. Cunningham, Hist. Theol. ch. 21, § 3. Watson's Theol. Inst., ch. 23.
12. Is Justification a single, complete, and absolute Act? How related to after sins, and to the general Judgment?
Turretin, Qu. 9, 10. Owen, ch. 6. Hill, bk. v, ch. 2. Knapp, § 113. Dr. Cunningham, as above, § 90. Turretin, Qu, 5.
13. Is Faith the sole instrumental condition of Justification, or also Repentance?
Turretin, Qu. 7, 8. Owen, ch. 2, 3. Breckinridge, Theol. Subjective, bk. i, ch. 4. Thornwell's Collected Works, Vol. ii, pp. 37-40. Dick, Lect., 71.
14. How are Justification and Sanctification distinguished? Are they inseparable? Why then discriminate?
Turretin, Loc. xvii, Qu. 1. Dick, Lect., 71. Hill, bk. v, ch. 3.
15. What the proper Place and Importance of Good Works, in the Believer's Salvation?
Turretin, Loc. xvii. Qu. 3. Dick, Lect. 71. Hill, as above. Knapp, § 116, 117.
16. "May we then sin, because we are not under the Law, but under Grace?"
Dr. Jno. Witherspoon on Justification. Southern Review, (edited by Bledsoe) Art. 1, April, 1874. Owen, ch. 19. Turretin, Loc. xvii, Qu. 1. Dick, Lect. 72. Watson, ch. 23. § 3.

OUR last attempt was to prove that the meritorious cause of the believer's justification is the righteousness of Christ.

11. Imputation. But how comes it that this righteousness avails for us, or that its justifying efficacy is made ours? The answer to this question leads us to the doctrine of imputation. The Catechism says that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. This Latin word, to reckon or account to any one, is sometimes employed in the English Scriptures as the translation of **יָצַד**, *λογίζομαι*, *ἐλλογέω*, and correctly. Of the former we have instances in Gen. xv : 6; xxxviii : 15; 2 Sam. xix : 19; of the next in Mark xv : 28; Rom. ii : 26; iv : 5, &c.; Gal. iii : 6, &c.; and of the last, in Rom. v : 13; Philem. 18.

It is evident that sometimes the thing imputed is what is actually done by, or belongs personally to, the person to whom it is reckoned, or set over. (This is what Turretin calls imputation loosely so called). Sometimes the thing imputed belonged to, or was done by another, as in Philem. 18; Rom. iv : 6. This is the imputation which takes place in the sinner's justification. It may be said, without affecting excessive subtlety of definition, that by imputation of Christ's righteousness, we only mean that Christ's righteousness is so accounted to the sinner, as that he receives thereupon the legal consequences to which it entitles. In accordance with 2 Cor. v : 21, as well as with the dictates of sound reason, we regard it as the exact counterpart of the imputation of our sins to Christ. Owen does, indeed, deny this: asserting that the latter only produced a temporary change in Christ's legal state, and that He was able speedily to extinguish the claims of law against our guilt, and return to His glory; while the former so imputes His very righteousness as to make a final and everlasting change in our legal relations. We reply: the difference is not in the kind of imputation, but in the persons. The mediatorial Person was so divine and infinite, that temporary sufferings and obedience met and extinguished all the legal claims upon Him. Again: Owen pleads that we must suppose Christ's very righteousness, imputed to us, in another sense than our sins are to Him; because, to talk of imputing to us the legal consequences of His righteousness, such as pardon, &c., is nonsensical, pardon being the result of the imputation. But would not the same reasoning prove as well, that not only our guilt, but our very sinfulness must have been imputed to Christ; because it is nonsensical to talk of imputing condemnation! The truth is, the thing set over to our account, in the former case, is in strictness of speech, the title to the consequences of pardon and acceptance, founded on Christ's righteousness, as in the latter case it was the guilt of our sins—i. e., the obligation to punishment founded on our sinfulness. All are agreed that, when the Bible says, "the iniquity of us all was laid on Christ," or that "He bare our sins," or "was made sin for us," it is only our guilt and not our moral attribute of sinfulness which was imputed. So it seems to me far more reasonable and scriptural to suppose that, in the imputation of Christ's righteousness, it is not the attribute of righteousness in Christ which is imputed, but that which is the exact counterpart of guilt—the title to acquittal. Owen, in proceeding to argue against objections, strongly states that imputation does not make the sinner personally and actually righteous with Christ's righteousness as a quality. We should like, then, to know what he means, when saying that this righteousness is really and truly imputed to us in a more literal sense than our sins were to Christ. A middle ground is to me invisible.

Defined.
Owen
Criticismed.

The basis on which this imputation proceeds, is our union to Christ. There is, first, our natural union constituting Him a member of our race; a man as truly as we are men. But this, though an essential prerequisite, is not by itself enough; for if so, mere humanity would constitute every sinner a sharer in His righteousness. There must be added our mystical union, in which a legal and spiritual connection are established by God's sovereign dispensation, making Him our legal and our spiritual Head. Thus imputation becomes proper.

When we attempt to prove this imputation, we are met with the assertion, by Arminians and theologians of the New England School, that there is no instance in the whole Bible of anything imputed, except that which the man personally does or possesses himself; so that there is no Scriptural warrant for this idea of transference of righteousness as to its legal consequences. We point, in reply, to Philem. 18, and to Rom. iv : 6. If God imputeth to a man righteousness without works, and his faith cannot literally be this imputed righteousness, as we have abundantly proved, we should like to know where that imputed righteousness comes from. Certainly it cannot come personally from the sinner who is without works. The whole context shows that it is Christ's. But how sorry an artifice is it to seize on the circumstances that the word *λογιζεσθαι* happens not to be immediately connected with Christ's name in the same sentence, when the idea is set forth in so many phrases? Moreover, as Turretin remarks, every case of pardoned guilt is a case (see 2 Sam. xix : 19), of this kind of imputation : for something is reckoned to the sinner — i. e., legal innocence, or title to immunity, which is not personally his own.

The direct arguments for the imputation of Christ's righteousness are : 1st. The counterpart imputation of our guilt to Him. (Proved by Is. liii : 5, 6, 12; Heb. ix : 28; 1 Pet. ii : 24, &c). For the principles involved are so obviously the same, and the one transaction so obviously the procurer of the other, that none who admit a proper imputation of human guilt to Christ, will readily deny an imputation of His righteousness to man. Indeed both are conclusively stated in 2 Cor. v : 21. The old Reformed exposition of this important passage, by some of our divines, was to read, "Christ was made a sin-offering for us." The objection is : that by this view no counterpart is presented in the counterpart proposition : "we are made the righteousness of God in Him." It is obvious that St. Paul uses the abstract for the concrete. Christ was made a sinner for us, that we might be made righteous persons in Him. The senses of the two members of the parallelism must correspond. There is no other tenable sense than this obvious one — that our guilt (obligation to pen-

Basis of Justification.

Is the Idea in Scripture ?

Proofs, Farther.

alty) was imputed to Christ, that His righteousness (title to reward) might be imputed to us. 2d. Christ is said to be our righteousness. Jer. xxiii : 6 ; 1 Cor. i : 30, &c., expressions which can only be honestly received, by admitting the idea of imputation. 3d. By "His obedience many are constituted righteous;" (*κατασταθῆσονται*). Here is imputation. So we might go through most of the passages cited to prove that we are justified on account of Christ's righteousness, and show that they all involve the idea of imputation. Indeed, how else can the legal consequences of His righteousness become ours? To see the force of all these, we have only to remember that all who deny imputation, also deny that Christ's righteousness is the sole meritorious ground, thus plainly implying that the latter necessarily involves the former. 4th. Imputation of Christ's righteousness to us is argued by Paul in Rom v, from imputation of Adam's sin to us.

Objections have been strenuously urged against this doctrine, of which the most grave is that it encourages licentiousness of living. This will be separately considered under § xv. It has again been urged that it is impious, in representing Christ as personally the worst Being in the universe as bearing all the sins of all believers; and false to fact, in representing His act in assuming our law place as the act which drew down God's wrath on Him; whereas it was an act of lovely benevolence, according to the Calvinistic view of it; and also false, as representing the sinner as personally holy at the very time his contrition avows him to be vilest. The answer is, that all these objections mistake the nature of imputation, which is not a transfer of moral character, but of legal relation. And Christ's act in taking our law place was a lovely act. In strictness of speech, it was not this act which drew down His Father's wrath, (but His love—Jno. x : 17), but the guilt so assumed. For the discussion of more subtle objection, that guilt must be as untransferable as personal demerit, because it is the consequence of demerit alone,—see Lect. xlv.

The important principle has already been stated, that justification must be as complete as its meritorious ground. Since faith is only the instrument of its reception, the comparative weakness or strength of faith will not determine any degrees of justification in different Christians. Feeble faith which is living truly leads to Christ, and Christ is our righteousness alone. Our justifying righteousness is in Christ. The office of faith, is simply to be the instrument for instituting the union of the believing soul to Him; so that it may "receive of His fullness grace for grace." Suppose in men's bodies a mortal disease, of which the perfect cure was a shock of electricity, received from some exhaustless "receiver," by contact. One man discover-

12. Justification Complete.

ing his mortal taint, but yet a little enfeebled, rushes to the electrical receiver and claps his hand swiftly upon it, with all the force of a violent blow. He receives his shock, and is saved. Another, almost fainting, can only creep along the floor with the greatest difficulty, and has barely strength to raise his languid hand and lay it on the "receiver." He also derives the same shock, and the same healing. The power is in the electricity, not in the impact of the two hands. Hence, also, it will follow that justification is an instantaneous act, making at once a complete change of legal condition. See Rom. iii: 22; Jno. iii: 36; v: 24; Rom. viii: 1, 32 and 34; Col. ii: 9, 10; Heb. x: 14; Micah. vii: 19; Jer. i: 20; Ps. ciii: 12, &c. And this legal completeness, it is too evident to need proof, begins when the sinner believes, and at no other time.

But here two distinctions must be taken—one between the completeness of title, and completeness of possession as to the benefits of our justification; the other between our justification in God's breast, and our own sense and consciousness thereof. On the latter distinction, we may remark: as our faith strengthens, so will the strength of our apprehension of a justified state grow with it. The former also may, to some extent, be affected by the increase of our faith. God may make that increase the occasion of manifesting to the soul larger measures of favour and grace. But the soul is not one whit more God's accepted child then, than when it first believed. We have seen that the thing which, strictly speaking, is imputed, is the title to all the legal consequences of Christ's righteousness—i. e., title to pardon and everlasting adoption, with all the included graces. Now, the acknowledged and legitimate son of a king is a prince, though an infant. His status and inheritance are royal, and sure; though he be for a time under tutors and governors, and though he may gradually be put into possession of one and another, of his privileges, till his complete majority. So the gradual possession of the benefits of justification does not imply that our acquisition of the title is gradual.

These views may assist us in the intricate subject of the relation which justification bears to the believer's future sins. On the one hand these things are evident; that there is not a man on the earth who does not offend, (Jas. iii: 2), that sin must always be sin in its nature, and as such, abhorrent to God, by whomsoever committed; and even more abhorrent in a believer, because committed against greater obligations and vows; and that sins committed after justification need expiation, just as truly as those before. On the other hand, the proofs above given clearly show, that the justified believer does not pass again under condemnation when betrayed into sin. Faith is the instrument for continuing, as it was for originating our justified

But Sense and Fruits
of it may Grow.

Does Justification
Remit Sins in Future?

state. This is clear from Rom. xi: 20; Heb. x: 38, as well as from the experience of all believers, who universally apply afresh to Christ for cleansing, when their consciences are oppressed with new sin. In strictness of speech, a man's sin must be forgiven after it is committed. Nothing can have a relation before it has existence, so that it is illogical to speak of sin as pardoned before it is committed. How, then, stands the sinning believer, between the time of a new sin and his new application to Christ's cleansing blood? We reply: Justification is the act of an immutable God, determining not to impute sin, through the believer's faith. This faith, though not in instant exercise at every moment, is an undying principle in the believer's heart, being rendered indefectible only by God's purpose of grace, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. So God determines, when the believer sins, not to impute guilt for Christ's sake, which determination also implies this other, to secure in the believer's heart, the unfailing actings of faith and repentance, as to all known sin. So that his justification from future sins is not so much a pardoning of them before they are committed, as an unfailing provision by God both of the meritorious and instrumental causes of their pardon, as they are committed.

There are two qualified senses, in which we are said to be justified at the judgment-day. See Acts iii: 19-21; Matt. xii: 36, 37. Indeed, a forensic act is implied somehow in the very notion of a judgment-day. First: Then, at length, the benefits of the believer's justification in Christ will be fully conferred, and he will, by the resurrection, be put into possession of the last of them, the redemption of his body. Second: There will be a declaration of the sentence of justification passed when each believer believed, which God will publish to His assembled creatures, for His declarative glory, and for their instruction. See Malachi iii: 17, 18. This last declarative justification will be grounded on believers' works, (Matt. xxv), and not on their faith, necessarily; because it will be addressed to the fellow-creatures of the saints, who cannot read the heart, and can only know the existence of faith by the fruits.

That faith alone is the instrument of justification, is asserted by the Catechism, que. 33. The proof is two-fold: First. That this is the only act of the soul which, in its character, is receptive of Christ's righteousness. Repentance and other graces are essential, and have their all important relations to other parts of our salvation; but faith alone is the embracing act, and this alone is the act which contributes nothing, which looks wholly out of self for its object and its efficacy, and thus is compatible with a righteousness without works. Second. All the benefits we receive in Christ are suspended on our union with Him. It is because we are united, and when we

How Related to Judgment-day?

13. Faith Only Instrument.

are united to Him, that we become interested in His blood and righteousness, and in His sanctifying Spirit. But, as we have seen, faith is the instrumental bond of that union. Hence it follows, that our standards are right in saying that justifying righteousness is received by faith alone. Third. It is said in so many forms, that righteousness is by faith; and especially is this said most frequently where the technical act of justification is formally discussed, as separated from the other parts of our salvation. Then there are passages in which this is held up singly, in answer to direct inquiries, as the sole instrumental act; which do not leave us at liberty to suppose that any other one would have been omitted, if there had been one; e. g., Jno. vi : 29; Acts xvi : 31.

Yet, it is strenuously objected by some, (even of sound divines), that in many places repentance is spoken of, along with faith, as a term of gospel salvation, and in some cases, even to the exclusion of faith. Mark i : 15; Luke xiii : 3; Acts xx : 21; and especially, Acts ii : 38; iii : 19. The chief force is in the last two. As to the previous ones, it is very obvious that to make repentance necessary to salvation, does not prove that it performs this particular work in our salvation, the instrumental acceptance of a justifying righteousness. We might even say that repentance is a necessary condition of final acceptance, and yet not make it the instrument; for there is a sense in which perseverance is such a condition. Heb. x : 38. But to make it the instrument is absurd; for then no one would be justified till death. But it may be urged, in Acts ii : 38, and iii : 19, repentance is explicitly proposed as in order to remission, which is an element of justification itself. We reply: this is not to be pressed; for thus we should equally prove, Acts ii : 38, that baptism is an instrument of justification; and, Rom. x : 9, 10, that profession is, equally with living faith, an instrument of justification. These passages are to be reconciled to our affirmative proof-texts, by remembering that repentance is used in Scripture much more comprehensively than saving faith. It is the whole conversion of the soul to God, the general acting in which faith is implicitly involved. When the Apostle calls for repentance, he virtually calls for faith; for as the actings of faith imply a penitent frame, so the exercise of repentance includes faith. It is therefore proper, that when a comprehensive answer is demanded to the question, "What must we do?" that answer should be generally, "Repent," and that when the instrument of justification is inquired after specially, the answer should be, "Believe."

The question once debated: whether faith or good works be most important to a believer? is as foolish as though one should debate, whether roots or fruits were most essential to a fruit-

14. Works do not justify, yet Necessary.

tree. If either be lacking, there is no fruit-tree at all. Good works, when comprehensively understood for all holy actings of heart and life, hold the place of supreme importance in our redemption, as the ulterior end, not indeed in any sense the procuring cause, but yet the grand object and purpose. And the dignity of the end is, in one sense, higher than that of the means.

The final cause of God, or ultimate highest end in His view in our justification, is His own glory. The chief means or next medium thereto, is our sanctification and good works; for God's nature is holy, and cannot be glorified by sin, except indirectly in its punishment. If we look, then, at His immutable will and glory, we find an imperative demand for holiness and works. If we look next at the interests of God's kingdom as affected by us, we find an equal necessity for our good works: for it is sin which originates all mischief and danger, and disorder to the subjects of God's government. And if we look, third, at our own personal interests and well-being, as promoted by our redemption, we see good works to be equally essential; because to be sinful is to be miserable; and true holiness alone is true happiness.

Hence, we find that God in many places mentions redemption from corruption, rather than redemption from guilt, as His prominent object in the Covenant of Grace. See Titus ii : 14; Eph. i : 4; v : 25-27; I Thess. iv : 3; I Jno. iii : 8; Matt. i : 21. And all the features of this plan of redemption, in its execution, show that God's prime object is the production of holiness—yea, of holiness in preference to present happiness, in His people. The first benefit bestowed, in our union to Christ, is a holy heart. The most constant and prominent gifts, ministered through Christ, are those of sanctification and spiritual strength to do good works. The designs of God's providence constantly postpone the believer's comfort to his sanctification by the means of afflictions. When the question is, to make one of God's children holier, at the expense of his present happiness, God never hesitates. Again, the whole gospel system is so constructed as to be not merely an expedient for introducing justification, but a system of moral motives for producing sanctification, and that of wondrous power. Let the student look up its elements. And last. This very gospel teems with most urgent injunctions on believers already justified to keep this law, in all its original strictness and spirituality. See, especially, Matt. v : 17-20; Gal. v : 13; Rom. vi : 6; vii : 6; Jno. xiii : 34; I Pet. i : 15, 16, &c.

The law is no longer our rule of justification, but it is still our rule of living.

We have reserved to the close the discussion of the objec-

15. Is Justification by Grace Licentious in Tendency? tion, that this doctrine of justification, by faith on Christ's righteousness, tends to loosen the bonds of the moral law. There are two parties who suggest this idea—the legalists, who urge it as an unavoidable objection to our doctrine; and the Antinomians, who accept it as a just consequence of the doctrine. Both classes may be dealt with together, except as to one point growing out of the assertion that Christ fulfilled the preceptive, as well as bore the penal law in our stead. If this be so, says the Antinomian, how can God exact obedience of the believer, as an essential of the Christian state, without committing the unrighteousness of demanding payment of the same debt twice over? I reply, that it is not a pecuniary, but a moral debt. In explaining the doctrine of substitution, I showed that God's acceptance of our Surety's work in our room was wholly an optional and gracious act with Him, because Christ's vicarious work, however well adapted to satisfy the law in our stead, did not necessarily and naturally extinguish the claims of the law on us; was not a "legal tender," in such sense that God was obliged either to take that, or lose all claims. Now, as God's accepting the substitutionary righteousness at all was an act of mere grace, the extent to which He shall accept it depends on His mere will. And it can release us no farther than He graciously pleases to allow. Hence, if He tells us, as He does, that He does not so accept it, as to release us from the law as a rule of living, there is no injustice.

We preface further, that the objection of the legalist proceeds upon the supposition, that if the motives of fear and self-interest for obeying God be removed, none will be left. But are these the only motives? God forbid.

Indeed, we assert that the plan of justification by faith leaves all the motives of self-interest and fear, which could legitimately and usefully operate on a soul under the Covenant of Works, in full force; and adds others, of vast superiority. Rom. iii: 31.

The motives of self-interest and fear remain, so far as they properly ought to operate on a renewed soul.

1. All Legitimate Self-Interest Remains. (a) While "eternal life is the gift of God," the measure of its glories is our works. See Luke xix: 17-19; Matt. x: 42; 2 Cor. ix: 6. Here is a motive to do as many good works as possible. (b) Works remain, although deposed from the meritorious place as our justification, of supreme importance as the object and end. Hence, (c) they are the only adequate test of a justified state, as proved above. Thus, the conscience of the backslider should be as much stimulated by the necessity of having them, as though they were to be his righteousness. It is as important to the gratuitous heir of an inheritance to preserve his evidence

of title, as it was to the purchaser, to be furnished with money enough to pay for the estate.

2. The gospel shows its superior efficiency over a system of legality, in producing holy living, in this respect; that its instrument in justification is a living faith. A dead faith does not justify. Now, it is the nature of a justifying faith to give an active response to the vitalizing energy of God's truth. It is granted that the truth, which is the immediate object of its actings unto justification, is Christ's redemption; but its nature ensures that it shall be vitally sensitive to all God's truth, as fast as apprehended. Now, the precepts are as really divine truth, the proper object of this vital action of a living faith, as the promises. Such is the teaching of our Confession in that instructive passage, ch. xiv, § 2. "By this faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein, and acteth differently, upon that which each passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the Covenant of Grace." The soul is not made alive in patches. It is alive all over. That principle of faith, therefore, which actively responds to the promise, responds just so, likewise, to the precepts: especially as precepts and promises are so intertwined, See Ps. xxxii: 1, 2; Rom. viii: 1.

(b). The gospel is efficient in producing holy living, because it gives the strongest possible picture of the evil of sin, of God's inflexible requisition of a perfect righteousness, and of His holiness.

(c). Above all, it generates a noble, pure and powerful motive for obedience, love begotten by God's goodness in redemption. And here, the peculiar glory of the gospel, as a religion for sinners, appears. I believe that the justified believer should have motives to holy living, which if their whole just force were felt, would be more operative than those which Adam in innocence could have felt under the Covenant of Works. See above. But when we consider that man is no longer innocent, but naturally condemned and depraved, under wrath, and fundamentally hostile to God, we see that a Covenant of Works would now be, for him, infinitely inferior in its sanctifying influences. For the only obedience it could evoke from such a heart, would be one slavish, selfish, and calculated — i. e., no true heart obedience at all — but a mere trafficking with God for self-interest. Now, contrast with this an obedience of love, and of gratitude, which expects to purchase nothing thereby from God, because all is already given, freely, graciously; and therefore obeys with ingenuous love and thankfulness. How

much more pleasing to God ! And last ; Love is a principle of action as permanent and energetic, as it is pure. Witness even the human examples of it. When we look to those social affections, which have retained their disinterestedness (towards man) through the corruptions of our fall, we see there the most influential, as well as the purest principles of human action, the springs of all that is most energetic, and persevering, as well as most generous.

We sometimes hear the legalists, of various schools, say :
 Love, the Most Operative.
 "A correct knowledge of human nature will warn us, that if the principles of fear and self-interest are removed from man's religious obedience, he will render none ; for these are the main springs of human action." We do not represent the gospel scheme as rejecting the legitimate action of those springs. But their view of human nature is false ; fear and self-interest are not its most energetic principles. Many a virtuous son and daughter render to an infirm parent, who has no ability or will to punish, and no means of rewarding save with his blessing, a service more devoted, painful, and continued, than the rod ever exacted from a slave. Indeed, slavery itself showed, by the occasional instances of tyranny, which occurred, that fear was an inadequate principle ; the rod by itself never secured industry and prosperity on a plantation ; but the best examples of success were always those, where kindness was chiefly relied on, (with a just and firm authority), to awaken in the slaves affection and cheerful devotion. The sick husband receives from his wife, without wages, nursing more assiduous than any hire can extort from the mercenary professional nurse. And above all, does the infant, helpless to reward or punish, exact from the mother's love and pity, a service more punctilious and toilsome, than was ever rendered to an eastern sultan by the slave with the scimitar over his head ?

Suppose, then, that the all-powerful Spirit of God, employing the delightful truths of gospel grace as His instrument, produces in believers a love and gratitude as genuine as these instinctive affections, and more sacred and strong, as directed towards a nobler object ; has He not here a spring of obedience as much more efficacious, as it is more generous, than the legalists ?

"Talk they of morals ? O Thou bleeding Love,
 The great morality is love to Thee !"

When, therefore, these heretics object, that justification by free grace will have licentious results ; God's answer is ; that He will provide against that, by making the faith which justifies also a principle of life, which "works by love."