

## Acts29 Jonathan Edwards Deep Day Lecture 2: Justification By Faith Alone

Introduction

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How can the life and death of Jesus Christ justify sinners in the sight of God?

### *1. Justification by Faith Alone: Basic Contours of the Edwards' Theology*

A person is said to be justified when he is approved of God as free from the guilt of sin, and its deserved punishment, and *as having that righteousness belonging to him that entitles to the reward of life*. That we should take the word in such a sense, and understand it as the judges accepting a person as having both a negative, and positive righteousness belonging to him, and looking on him therefore, as not only quit, or free from any obligation to punishment but also as just and righteous, and so entitled to a positive reward ...

**Some suppose that nothing more is intended in Scripture by justification than barely the remission of sins;** if it be so it is very strange, if we consider the nature of the case; for 'tis most evident, and none will deny, that it is with respect to the rule, or law of God that we are under, that we are said in Scripture to be either justified or condemned. Now what is it to justify a person, as the subject of a law or rule, but to judge him, or look upon him, and approve him as standing right with respect to that rule? To justify a person in a particular case, is to approve of him as standing right, as subject to the law or rule in that case; and to justify in general, is to pass him in judgment, as standing right, in a state correspondent to the law or rule in general. But certainly in order to a person's being looked on as standing right with respect to the rule in general, or in a state corresponding with the law of God, more is needful than what is negative, or a not having the guilt of sin; for whatever that law is, whether a new one, or an old one, yet doubtless something positive is needed in order to its being answered. We are no more justified by the voice of the law, or of him that judges according to it, by a mere pardon of sin, than Adam our first surety, was justified by the law, at the first point of his existence, before he had done the work, or fulfilled the obedience of the law, or had had so much as any trial whether he would fulfill it or no. If Adam had finished his course of perfect obedience, he would have been justified; and certainly his justification would have implied something more than what is merely negative; he would have been approved of, as having fulfilled the righteousness of the law, and accordingly would have been adjudged to the reward of it: so Christ our second surety (in whose justification all who believe in him, and whose surety he is, are virtually justified), was not justified till he had done the work the Father had appointed him, and kept the Father's commandments, **through all trials, and then in his resurrection he was justified: when he that had been put to death in the flesh was quickened by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18), then he that was manifest in the flesh was justified in the Spirit (1 Timothy 3:16)**. But God when he justified him in raising him from the dead, did not only release him from his humiliation for sin, and acquit him from any further suffering or abasement for it, but admitted him to that eternal and immortal life, and to the beginning of that exaltation, that was the reward of what he had done. *And indeed the justification of a believer is no other than his being admitted to communion in, or participation of the justification of this head and surety of all believers; for as Christ suffered the punishment of sin, not as a private person but as our surety, so when after this suffering he was raised from the dead, he was therein justified, not as a private person, but as the surety and representative of all that should believe in him; so that he was raised again not only for his own, but also for our justification, according to the Apostle. Romans 4:25* Works, 19, Justification By Faith Alone, 150-151.

## 2. *The Righteousness of Jesus Christ*

I would show what is here intended by Christ's purchasing of redemption. And there are two things that [are] intended by it, viz, his satisfaction and merit. All is done by the price that Christ laid down. But the price that Christ laid down<sup>8</sup> does two things: *it pays our debt and so it satisfies by its intrinsic value and agreement between the Father and Son; it procures a title for us to happiness and so it merits. The satisfaction of Christ is to free us from misery, and the merit of Christ is to purchase happiness for us. Works, 9, 304.*

I would observe that both Christ's satisfaction for sin and also his meriting happiness by his righteousness **were carried on through the whole time of his humiliation. Christ's satisfaction<sup>4</sup> for sin was not only by his last sufferings, though it was principally by them. But all his sufferings, and all the humiliation that he was subject to, from the first moment of his incarnation to his resurrection, were propitiatory or satisfactory. Christ's satisfaction was chiefly by his death, because his suffering and humiliation in that was greatest, but all his other suffering and all his other humiliation all along had the nature of satisfaction.** So had the mean circumstances in which he was born; his being born in such a low condition was to make satisfaction for sin. His being born of a poor virgin in a stable, and his being laid in a manger, his taking the human nature upon him in its low state, and under those infirmities brought upon it by the fall, his being born in the form of sinful flesh, had the nature of satisfaction. And so all his sufferings in his infancy and childhood, and all that labor, and contempt, and reproach, and temptation, and difficulty of some<sup>5</sup> kind other that he suffered through the whole course of his life, was of propitiatory and satisfactory nature. And so his purchase of happiness by his righteousness was also carried on through the whole time of his humiliation till his resurrection, not only in that obedience he performed through the course of his life, but also the obedience he performed in laying down his life.

It was by the same things that Christ both satisfied God's justice and also purchased eternal happiness; this satisfaction and purchase of Christ were not only both carried on through the whole time of Christ's humiliation, but they were both carried on by the same things. *He did not make satisfaction by some things that he did, and then work out righteousness by other different things; but in the same acts by which he wrought out righteousness he also made satisfaction, but only taken with a different relation. One and the same act of Christ, considered with respect to the obedience there was in it, was part of his righteousness and purchased heaven; but considered with respect to the self-denial, and difficulty, and humiliation with which he performed it, it had the nature of righteousness and merited happiness<sup>7</sup> for us.* Thus his going about doing good, preaching the gospel, and teaching disciples, was part of righteousness and purchase of heaven as it was done in obedience to the Father; and the same was part of his satisfaction as he did it with great labor, trouble, and weariness, and under great large labor, exposing himself thereby to reproach and contempt. So his laying down his life had the nature of satisfaction to God's offended justice considered as his bearing our punishment in our stead; but considered as an act of obedience to God who had given him this command that he should lay down his life for sinners it was part of his righteous purchase of heaven, and as much the principal part of his righteousness as it was the principal part of his satisfaction. And so to instance in his circumcision, what he suffered in that had the nature of satisfaction, **the blood that was shed in his circumcision was propitiatory blood. Works, 9, 306-307**

### *3. Faith in Jesus Christ*

God in requiring this in order to an union with Christ as one of his people, treats men as reasonable creatures, capable of act, and choice; and hence sees it fit that they only, that are one with Christ by their own act, should be looked upon as one in law: **what is real in the union between Christ and his people, is the foundation of what is legal; that is, it is something really in them, and between them, uniting them, that is the ground of the suitableness of their being accounted as one by the Judge:** and if there is any act, or qualification in believers, that is of that uniting nature, that it is meet on that account that the Judge should look upon 'em, and accept 'em as one, no wonder that upon the account of the same act or qualification, he should accept the satisfaction and merits of the one, for the other, as if it were their satisfaction and merits: it necessarily follows, or rather is implied.

*And thus it is that faith justifies, or gives an interest in Christ's satisfaction and merits, and a right to the benefits procured thereby, viz. as it thus makes Christ and the believer one in the acceptance of the Supreme Judge.* 'Tis by faith that we have a title to eternal life, because 'tis by faith that we have the Son of God, by whom life is. The apostle John in those words, *I John 5:12*, "He that hath the Son hath life," seems evidently to have respect to those words of Christ that he gives an account in his gospel.

## Lecture 3: The ‘Work of Grace Upon the Soul’

Introduction:

What is happening when someone puts their trust in Jesus Christ and walks with him?

### *1. The Work of Grace Upon the Soul*

Luke 22:32 *The Subjects of a First Work of Grace may need a new conversion.*

Doctrine ‘Those that have true grace in their hearts may yet stand in great need of being converted.’

Psalm 51:10 – ‘Create in me a clean heart O God; and renew a right spirit within me.’

If there be any remarkable work of God upon the soul long after its first conversion, whereby the heart is raised up to much higher degrees of grace, it goes by the same names as the first conversion. *Works, 22, 188*

Sermon 2 Peter 1:19 - *Light in a Dark World, A Dark Heart:*

As long as the saint lives in this world, the heart that this light shines in, continues in a great measure a dark place ... Though there be a great change, and it be far otherwise within the heart than it was before ... yet there is so little light in comparison of what is needed, and in comparison of what will be hereafter, and so much remaining darkness, that the heart may still be said to be in a dark place ... the light of the godly is an interrupted light, and a night of darkness sometimes comes upon them.

The saving grace of God in the heart, ... must doubtless be the greatest blessing that ever men receive in this world ... surely that [Mary’s carrying Christ in her womb] was not so great a privilege as it was to have the grace of God in the heart, to have Christ, as it were, born in the soul ...

### *2. The Immediate Work of Grace upon the soul.*

**There is such a thing, as a spiritual and divine light, immediately imparted to the soul by God, of a different nature from any that is obtained by natural means. *Works, 17, A Divine and Supernatural Light, 410***

### *3. What are the implications of this teaching?*

Hence we may learn a reason why faith is that by which we come to have an interest in this redemption. For there is included in the nature of faith, a sensible acknowledgment of *absolute dependence* on God in this affair. It is very fit that it should be required of all, in order to their having the benefit of this redemption, that they should be sensible of, and acknowledge, their dependence on God for it. It is by this means that God has contrived to glorify himself in redemption, and it is fit that he should at least have this glory of those that are the subjects of this redemption, and have the benefit of it. — Faith is a sensibility of what is real in the work of redemption, and the soul that believes does entirely depend on God for all salvation, in its own sense and act. Faith abases men, and exalts God. It gives all the glory

of redemption to him alone. It is necessary in order to saving faith, that man should be emptied of himself, be sensible that he is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Humility is a great ingredient of true faith: he that truly receives redemption, receives it as a little child, Mark 10:15, “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” It is the delight of a believing soul to abase itself and exalt God alone: that is the language of it, Psalm 115:1, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory.”

4. Let us be exhorted to exalt God alone, and ascribe to him all the glory of redemption. Let us endeavor to obtain, and increase in, a sensibility of our great dependence on God, to have our eye to him alone, to mortify a self-dependent and self-righteous disposition. Man is naturally exceeding prone to exalt himself, and depend on his own power or goodness, as though from himself he must expect happiness. He is prone to have respect to enjoyments alien from God and his Spirit, as those in which happiness is to be found. — But this doctrine should teach us to exalt God *alone*, as by trust and reliance, so by praise. *Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord. Works, 17, 213-214*