

2. 'Leaning my whole weight on Him', (*Sola Fide*)

Introduction

1. Justification – What does it mean?

- a legal declaration of righteousness
- Romans 4:5, Romans 8:33-34, Deuteronomy 25:1

2. Justification – How can it be?

'since the judgement of God is according to truth, he cannot pronounce anyone just who is not really just.' (Turretin)

We must now examine this question. How do we receive those benefits which the Father bestowed on his only-begotten Son—not for Christ's own private use, but that He might enrich poor and needy men? First, we must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from Him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what He has received from the Father, He had to become ours and to dwell within us. For this reason, He is called 'our Head' (Eph. 4:15), and 'the first-born among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). We also, in turn, are said to be 'engrafted into Him' (Rom. 11:17), and to 'put on Christ' (Gal. 3:27). For, as I have said, all that He possesses is nothing to us until we grow into one body with Him. It is true that we obtain this by faith. (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.1.1)

- Jesus: our big brother (Rom. 8:29)
- 2 Cor. 5:21
- 1 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 1:4; Rom. 4:25
- Jesus: our perfect husband (Eph. 5:31-32)

The third incomparable benefit of faith is that it unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul become one flesh [Eph. 5:31-32]. And if they are one flesh and there is between them a true marriage indeed the most perfect of all marriages, since human marriages are but poor examples of this one true marriage it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil. Accordingly the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own. Let us compare these and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers?

Here we have a most pleasing vision not only of communion but of a blessed struggle and victory and salvation and redemption. Christ is God and man in one person. He has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent. **By the wedding ring of faith** he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all. Now since it was such a one who did all this, and death and hell could not swallow him up, these were necessarily swallowed up by him in a mighty duel; for his righteousness is greater than the sins of all men, his life stronger than death, his salvation more invincible than hell. Thus the believing soul by means of the pledge of its faith is free in Christ, its bridegroom, free from all sins, secure against death and hell, and is endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of Christ its bridegroom. So he takes to himself a glorious bride, "without spot or wrinkle, cleansing her by the washing of water with the word" [Cf. Eph. 5:26-27] of life, that is, by faith in the Word of life, righteousness, and salvation. In this way he marries her in faith, steadfast love, and in mercies, righteousness, and justice, as Hos. 2 [:19-20] says.

Who then can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of his grace? Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ marries this poor wicked harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, "If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and all mine his", as the bride in the Song of Solomon says (2:16) says, "My beloved is mine and I am his". This is what Paul means when he says in 1 Corinthians 15, "Thanks be to God, who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," that is, the victory over sin and death, as he also says there, "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law". (Martin Luther *The Freedom of a Christian*)

3. Faith Alone in Christ Alone

- What saving faith is:
 - Knowledge
 - Conviction
 - Trust
- What saving faith is not:
 - Our faith is not a work

Faith is not something that merits the favour of God. All the efficacy of salvation resides in the Saviour. As one has aptly put it and truly stated the case, it is not faith that saves but Christ that saves through faith; strictly speaking, it is not even faith in Christ that saves but Christ that saves through faith. Faith unites us to Christ in the bonds of abiding attachment and entrustment and it is this union which insures that the saving power, grace and virtue of the Saviour becomes operative in the believer. The specific character of faith is that it looks away from itself and finds its whole interest and object in Christ. He is the absorbing preoccupation of faith.” (John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, 112.)

➤ So it's not about how much

➤ Our faith always works

“Faith justifies alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone.”

Christ was given to us by God's generosity, to be grasped and possessed by us in faith. By partaking of him, we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a judge a gracious Faith; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life. (Calvin, *Institutes*, 3.11.1)

4. So What?

🗣️ Faith comes from hearing (Rom. 10:17)

So GO!

🗣️ Are you united to Christ by faith alone?

So COME!

“But when we rise to the heavenly tribunal and place before our eyes that supreme Judge . . . then in an instant the vain confidence of men perishes and falls and conscience is compelled . . . to confess that it has nothing upon which it can rely before God.” (Francis Turretin, *Institutes*, 639)