

THE GREAT QUESTION ANSWERED

“Then Job answered and said, I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God?” (Job 9:1-2)

The book of Job is one of the oldest books in the Bible. It was written before the law was given to Moses; before Abraham: at a time when dinosaurs still roamed the earth. Even then, men were asking the *great question*, “How should man be just with God?”

Surely Job’s concern to be accepted with God must tell us something: God was working in the hearts of His elect, and convincing them of their sin, before there was a Bible, a church, or an evangelist.

It is a *great question* because no greater question can come from the mouth of a sinner than to inquire how they will finally stand before God in the great day. It *must* be a *great question* because everyone does not ask it. Wise men ask wise questions. Job was a wise man. Yet, as wise as Job was, he could not answer the *great question*. He knew it was “so of a truth”, but he didn’t know how it would be accomplished. Only those who have been touched by the divine hand, and made conscience of their sin will ask the *great question*.

Job was also a *good* man. He feared God and eschewed evil. Yet as good as Job was he knew he was not good enough to make himself just with God.

So we go back to the question. What does it mean, anyway, to be just with God? Are you just with God? How would you answer the *great question*?

It simply means that a person stands before the throne of God as completely *innocent*. It means that there is no sin that can be laid to the charge of that person. It means they have been exonerated from the legal penalty of sin.

Paul describes these people in Romans 4:7,8: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” These are blessed people indeed. But how did they get there? Today, the *great question* has been answered: “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being **now justified by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”(Romans 5:6-9).

That is the answer: the elect are justified from the legal penalty of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. Not by keeping the law, not by personal faith, but by His blood. There is a song that echoes this truth: “What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus.” Those words are scriptural. Yet, some who sing it do not really

believe it. If they changed the words to match their theology it would go something like this: "What can wash away my sin, my works, my faith, along with the blood of Jesus."

The elect were justified from the legal penalty of sin by the blood of Jesus Christ plus nothing. Paul has made it sufficiently clear that when Christ justified His people on the cross they were "without strength", "ungodly", and "yet sinners". What can this person do to justify himself? Nothing! Someone must do it for him. This, our Lord Jesus Christ has done. Another song echoes this truth: "Jesus paid it all, All to Him I owe, Sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow."

Justification is like election. It was purposed in the eternal decrees of the Godhead before the world was ever created. It was the sum and substance of the eternal covenant made between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The elect were verily chosen to be justified at the coming of the Savior. God's people were never in danger of hell for it was God's purpose to justify them from all eternity. And if God purposed to justify them, they were as good as justified though the atonement was not yet made.

That is why David could write the same as Paul, even before the cross. In our text from Romans, Paul was quoting David from Psalms 32:1,2: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." David wrote looking forward to the cross, to a work not yet done. Paul wrote looking back upon it. Yet, they both saw the cross as the place of justification.

As John Gill wrote in his body of divinity, "It was the will of God, from everlasting, not to punish the elect for their sins, but to punish Christ, their surety, for their sins. This he did on the cross."

Since we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own. We must look to another source to obtain our righteousness. It is like a bank that has gone bankrupt. It must seek assets from a source that is wealthier. We were made bankrupt in Adam, and poorer yet by our own sins. Our debt was paid by Christ. Yet, ours is no temporary loan. It is eternal. Where is it from? The righteousness bank of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Some men try to avow that there are several ways that sinners are justified in the sight of God. The infant that dies in the womb, and the mentally challenged person is justified in the same way as the most aged saint, and the most brilliant scholar. They are all sinners before a Holy God. The only one thing can justify a sinner in the courtroom of God's justice is the blood of the Lamb.

There are two other courtrooms in which the justification of the elect will stand on trial. Let us briefly consider them both for this is where many get confused with the language of scripture. One is internal, in the courtroom of our own conscience. The

other is external, in the courtroom of the world. This has to do with our actions before the world.

The courtroom of the inner man is where a great conflict takes place. This is internal. In regeneration the Lord writes His law upon the heart. If there is no spiritual life, there is no spiritual conflict. But for those who have been called and regenerated, there is a convincing conviction that goes on concerning sin. This is exacerbated by the knowledge of the law for it resonates more clearly what has been written on the heart. The soul longs to be justified from the guilt and shame but does not know how. Though Job knew that is was “so of a truth”, he did not know how. This is where the gospel of Jesus Christ comes in, something Job did not have. Christ is preached as the substitute for our sins: By His blood we are justified eternally from the wrath to come. By faith (given in regeneration) we see Christ as the answer to the problem. He fulfilled the law for us. By faith, we lay hold upon Christ. The gavel goes down in the courtroom of the conscience with the final sentence: *innocent*. The conscience has been cleared and we find peace from the accusing demands of the law. Thus, we have justified our conscience by faith in Jesus Christ. This is referred to as justification by faith. Peace is the byproduct: “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1). But remember: The courtroom of our own conscience is experimental. It does not put away sin but rather delivers the soul from the *bondage* of sin. There is a difference.

Finally, there is justification outwardly. This is referred to as justification by works. We know these are different because sinners cannot justify themselves from their sin by their own works. A dirty hand can never make a platter clean. Thus, James writes: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?” By his outward actions, Abraham proved that he was a righteous man. In our common vernacular he talked the talk, and walked the walk. His outward performance proved his inward condition. His actions did not make him just, but rather proved that he was a just man. People may claim that they have faith, that they are just with God, but the only way they can prove it is by their actions. That is why some refer to this as the courtroom of the world.

Thus, the great question has a great answer: by our Lord Jesus Christ. By faith, let us walk accordingly!