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SERMON XII.

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THE OBLIGATION TO REPENT AND BELIEVE.

MARK 1:15. *The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent ye and believe the gospel.*

WHEN Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, he well knew what would be the melancholy issue. That his ministry and his life were soon to close by the cruelty and injustice of the effeminate Herod. The ministry of John being now closed, Christ enters into Galilee and upon his office. Galilee, as it seems, was a place of thickest moral darkness. Of this place the prophet spoke, in special reference to the light that now shone upon it, saying: "*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, and they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*" Isa. 9:2. Matt. 4: 15,16. The time of accomplishing this prediction is now fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, says Christ, and believe the gospel.

Μεταμελομι and Μετανοεω are the only two words used in the New Testament for repentance. The former is never, that I know of, used to signify gospel repentance. It is used in its appropriate sense, Matthew 21:29. "A father said to his elder son, Go work to-day in my vineyard, and he answered and said I will not; but afterwards Μεταμεληθεις, he repented and went; or, he became concerned about his contempt of his father's order and went." Judas when he saw the innocent Jesus, whom he had betrayed, condemned, repented, (μεταμεληθεις) became deeply concerned, &c. Μετανοεω signifies a change of mind and behavior under a sense of past wrong. So it is used Matt. 11:21. "Wo unto you Corāzin; wo unto you Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which have been done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented (μετνοησαν) long ago in dust and in ashes." In this sense its use is frequent. The exhortation before us is to repentance,

SERMON XIII.

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JUSTIFICATION.

ROM. 3:24,25,26. *Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

THE leading doctrine in the text, is free justification through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

I. Justification supposes condemnation, and it is of vast importance to know the nature and the extent of this state of condemnation. "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they used deceit, the poisons of asps ~~is~~ under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Rom. 3:9—18.

We are not by these or similar declarations to understand that there is nothing good or amiable in man, while in a state of condemnation. Men have been condemned, and condemned and suffered justly under human law, who were yet possessed of many amiable and useful qualities. So, also, under God's government. Men in a state of condemnation may know the truth, and they may approve of the truth to a great extent. They may have a strong sense of their obligation to God. They may, in the ordinary sense of the phrase, be good fathers, and good mothers, and

good neighbors, and may even be good and useful members of the church, and yet be under a sentence of condemnation.

The law under which man is, both as a creature and a sinner, is holy, and just, and good. It is spiritual and exceeding broad. It requires perfect, and universal, and perpetual obedience. And it denounces death,—even eternal death, for the very least transgression. It particularly requires supreme and unceasing love to God. “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Rom. 3: 19, 20.

Dost thou then ground thy hope of pardon and acceptance upon the law? Thy works must be perfect,—and thy obedience must be universal and perpetual,—or all will be of no avail. The law under which thou art, still thunders, “As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are witten in the book of the law to do them.” Gal. 3: 10.

II. The only ground of a sinner’s pardon and acceptance before God, is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference.” Rom. 3: 21, 22. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” ver. 24, 25.

To understand this righteousness we may take the following facts,

1. Christ as man and mediator was made under the law, and made under it in the form of a broken covenant of works. “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4: 4, 5. “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Rom. 8: 3.

2. Whatever divine justice demanded of man as a sinner, was fulfilled by Christ in the character of a surety. He assumed human nature in all its purity, Luke 1: 35. “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” Heb. 7: 26, 27. He fulfilled all righteousness,—was always doing good,—was literally without guile,—without fault of any kind.

He bore, also, the curse or the penalty of that law, whatever it was. Nor can we have any adequate conception of the nature and extent of either his obedience or sufferings. "He made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5:21. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." 1 Pet. 2:24.

This righteousness is called the righteousness of God. It is eminently and exclusively so. It is God's contrivance. It is God's appointed mode of saving lost sinners of the human family. It was wrought out by God. God was manifested in the flesh. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. It is **THE ONLY** righteousness on account of which God can pardon and accept a sinner. From the giving of the first promise till the consummation of all things in the song of the redeemed, there is not a ray of hope to any of our race, but through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth for ever and ever." Rev. 5:9—14.

We may reason about the matter as we please, but there is no getting over the stubborn fact. Not another name given under heaven whereby we must be saved.

III. Sinners are interested in this righteousness and in all the blessings connected with it, by faith. Rom. 3:22,25,26. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:16.

What then is justifying faith? Strictly speaking, it is resting upon the satisfaction of the Redeemer alone, for pardon and acceptance. Hence it is said to be faith in his blood. Hence it is also said, "he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2:2.

More largely, faith is taking God at his word, and making the right use of all that he has been pleased to reveal. God has said to the gospel hearer,—“thou art a sinner,—a lost sinner,—dead in trespasses and sins.” He has said in plain terms, “the wages of sin is death,—he who believeth not is condemned.” He has further said, that he has not left thee to perish in this state of condemnation. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” John 3: 16,17.

God has again and again said, that the righteousness of the surety is complete. He was well pleased for his righteousness' sake, for he magnified the law and made it honorable. The surety was raised from the dead,—was received into glory,—and seated at God's right hand,—and the Holy Ghost has been promised, and has been given as the fruits of his death and intercession. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Gal. 3: 13,14.

God is this moment “in Christ reconciling the world unto himself,”—and he is praying and beseeching you, a lost sinner, to be reconciled to him. And he tenders to you pardon, and peace, and eternal glory, through the atonement. The Redeemer, himself, “is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.” “He is able to save to the very uttermost, all who come unto God by him.” He is now saying, “Come now and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He encourages you to ask the great and inestimable gift of the Holy Ghost. “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke 11: 13.

Now, sinner, believest thou these declarations? Canst thou take God at his word,—and take home to thyself these and similar declarations of Him who cannot lie? He who thus believeth shall be saved. He who thus believeth passeth from death unto life. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already,

because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:14—18.

IV. Union to our Lord Jesus Christ is the great fact upon which our personal justification rests. And this union is exactly of the same kind with that which existed betwixt Adam as a covenant head, and the person who is justified. See Rom. 5:12—19. It is evident that in this passage as well as in the parallel passage, 1 Cor. 15:18, that the apostle speaks of the whole human family, as connected with one or other of these two: Adam and Jesus Christ. It is equally evident that God deals with all the human family, and with every individual of it as connected with one or other of these men.

Hence also the importance and peculiar meaning of the phrase, so often used in the New Testament, *IN CHRIST*. See Rom. 8:1. Gal. 3:28. 1 Cor. 15:18. 2 Cor. 5:17. Rom. 16:7.

INFERENCES.

1. The doctrine of eternal justification is not supported by scripture. If any thing is clear in the bible, it is that all men are divided into two grand classes,—believers and unbelievers,—sons of God and children of the devil. There is no middle state,—no third class. Nor can any man be in both these states at one and the same time. See John 3:36. 5:24. Rom. 8:1,9.

2. From the same facts it is evident that the doctrine of initial justification, or incomplete salvation, cannot be supported by scripture. No man can be partially in a state of condemnation, and partially in a state of salvation. There is no half way, or middle ground betwixt being in a state of condemnation and acceptance.

3. A person may have very imperfect views of God's plan of salvation, and yet be in a justified state. And the converse is true. A man may be very well informed in theology, and be very orthodox in his creed, and yet be in a state of condemnation. Justifying faith is unconditional submission to the righteousness of God, or in other words, submission to God's plan of salvation. See Rom. 10:3—12. See also the case of the Pharisee and publican. Luke 18:9—14.

The only satisfactory evidence which any man can have of his being in a justified state is a holy life. When a man's state is changed, his nature is also changed. "Jesus gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity." The spirit of adoption is a spirit of holiness. Consult the reasoning of the apostle. Rom. 8:9—14.

You are, my friend, a lost sinner, and you despair of salvation from every other quarter. And you submit yourself unreservedly to God's mercy as he has been pleased to reveal it. This is enough. It was thus with Abraham and all the Old Testament saints. They rested their salvation upon God's bare word, without having any

adequate conception of the manner in which that salvation was to be procured. It was thus with the disciples previous to the day of Pentecost. It has been thus with the most distinguished of God's people in every age. God's mercy, tendered to them in a full and free promise, has been their only ground of hope. In the great and important matter of personal justification, extensive theological knowledge, any more than extensive literary and scientific attainments, has not been of much use. When all comes to all, the man who is to be saved must bow to God's sovereignty and account it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom he is one of the chief.

4. A sinner is not justified because he is holy, or because he has in him some good dispositions; but he becomes holy and acquires good dispositions, and has these good dispositions cherished and strengthened, because his state is changed and he is accepted in the Beloved. See Luke 1:74. Rom. 8:15, and Gal. 4:4,5,6. The right knowledge, and the right application of this fact is that which chiefly distinguishes evangelical from legal preaching.

We close. The gospel is God's proclamation of a full and a free pardon to men under a sentence of condemnation. And to preach the gospel is not to amuse the imagination with metaphysical discussions, or with criticisms on words and phrases in this and the other language, or as used in this and the other department of social intercourse. To preach the gospel is in God's name to declare the fact that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;" that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." It was in this manner that the apostle preached the gospel in the passage before us. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned; and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:21—26.

END OF VOLUME I.