

Justification by Works

Key Text

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” (Jas 2:24 AV)

Introduction

AT Jones' Danger

I was attending a meeting, and a large congregation were present. In my dream you were presenting the subject of faith and the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith. You repeated several times that **works amounted to nothing, that there were no conditions.** The matter was presented in that light that I knew minds would be confused and would not receive the correct impression in reference to faith and works, and I decided to write to you. You state this matter too strongly. There are conditions to our receiving justification and sanctification, and the righteousness of Christ. I know your meaning, but you leave a wrong impression upon many minds. While good works will not save even one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works. God saves us under a law, that we must ask if we would receive, seek if we would find, and knock if we would have the door opened unto us. {FW 111.1}

Christ offers Himself as willing to save unto the uttermost all who come unto Him. He invites all to come to Him. "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). You look in reality upon these subjects as I do, yet you make these subjects, through your expressions, confusing to minds. And after you have expressed your mind radically in regard to works, when questions are asked you upon this very subject, it is not lying out in so very clear lines in your own mind, and you cannot define the correct principles to other minds, and you are yourself unable to make your statements harmonize with your own principles and faith. {FW 111.2}

The young man came to Jesus with the question, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" (Mark 10:17). And Christ saith unto him, "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." He said unto Him, "Which?" Jesus quoted several, and the young man said unto Him, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me." Here are conditions, and the Bible is full of conditions. "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:17, 20, 21, 22). {FW 112.1}

Points to Guard

Then when you say there are no conditions, and some expressions are made quite broad, you burden the minds, and some cannot see consistency in your expressions. They cannot see how they can harmonize these expressions with the plain statements of the Word of God. Please guard these points. These strong assertions in regard to works never make our position any stronger. The expressions weaken our position, for there are many who will consider you an extremist and will lose the rich lessons you have for them upon the very subjects they need to know. . . . My brother, it is hard for the mind to comprehend this point, and do not confuse any mind with ideas that will not harmonize with the Word. Please consider that under the teaching of Christ many of the disciples were lamentably

ignorant; but when the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised came upon them and made the vacillating Peter the champion of faith, what a transformation in his character! But do not lay one pebble, for a soul that is weak in the faith to stumble over, in overwrought presentations or expressions. Be ever consistent, calm, deep, and solid. Do not go to any extreme in anything, but keep your feet on solid rock. O precious, precious Saviour. "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). {FW 112.2}

This is the true test--the doing of the words of Christ. And it is the evidence of the human agent's love to Jesus, and he that doeth His will giveth to the world the practical evidence of the fruit he manifests in obedience, in purity, and in holiness of character. . . . {FW 113.1}

O my brother, walk carefully with God. But remember that there are some whose eyes are intently fixed upon you, expecting that you will overreach the mark and stumble and fall. But if you keep in humility close to Jesus, all is well. . . . {FW 113.2}

There is no place in the school of Christ where we graduate. We are to work on the plan of addition, and the Lord will work on the plan of multiplication. It is through constant diligence that we will, through the grace of Christ, live on the plan of addition, making our calling and election sure. . . . "For if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:10, 11). {FW 113.3}
PORTION OF A LETTER TO A. T. JONES, APRIL 9, 1893, LETTER 44, 1893. PUBLISHED IN
SELECTED MESSAGES, BOOK ONE, PP. 377-379.

Justification and Sanctification

Justification means the saving of a soul from perdition, that he may obtain sanctification, and through sanctification, the life of heaven. Justification means that the conscience, purged from dead works, is placed where it can receive the blessings of sanctification (MS 113, 1902). {7BC 908.15}

Sanctification the Work of a Lifetime

The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven. {FLB 116.2}

Many commit the error of trying to define minutely the fine points of distinction between justification and sanctification. Into the definitions of these two terms they often bring their own ideas and speculations. Why try to be more minute than is Inspiration on the vital question of righteousness by faith? {FLB 116.3}

As the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ's atonement in his behalf, and **accepts this atonement** as his only hope in this life and the future life, his **sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith.** {FLB 116.4}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome. {FLB 116.5}

It [sanctification] is not merely a theory, an emotion, or a form of words, but a living, active principle, entering into the everyday life. It requires that our habits of eating, drinking, and dressing be such as to secure the preservation of physical, mental, and moral health, that we may present to the

Lord our bodies--not an offering corrupted by wrong habits but--"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." {FLB 116.6}

The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character. . . . If studied and obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute. {FLB 116.7}

There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification. True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last. {FLB 116.8}

Sanctification is growth, it is not instantaneous

"The sanctification now gaining prominence in the religious world carries with it a spirit of self-exaltation and a disregard for the law of God that mark it as foreign to the religion of the Bible. Its advocates teach that **sanctification is an instantaneous work**, by which, through faith alone, they attain to perfect holiness. "Only believe," say they, "and the blessing is yours." No further effort on the part of the receiver is supposed to be required." GC 471

The germination of the seed represents the beginning of spiritual life, and the development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. As in nature, so in grace; there can be **no life without growth**. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be **continual advancement**. **Sanctification** is the work of a lifetime. As our opportunities multiply, our experience will enlarge, and our knowledge increase. We shall become strong to bear responsibility, and our maturity will be in proportion to our privileges. {COL 65.2}

The plant **grows by** receiving that which God has provided to sustain its life. It sends down its roots into the earth. It drinks in the sunshine, the dew, and the rain. It receives the life-giving properties from the air. So the Christian is to grow by co-operating with the divine agencies. Feeling our helplessness, we are to improve all the opportunities granted us to gain a fuller experience. As the plant takes root in the soil, so we are to take deep root in Christ. As the plant receives the sunshine, the dew, and the rain, we are to open our hearts to the Holy Spirit. The work is to be done "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. 4:6. If we keep our minds stayed upon Christ, He will come unto us "as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." Hosea 6:3. As the Sun of Righteousness, He will arise upon us "with healing in His wings." Mal. 4:2. We shall "grow as the lily." We shall "revive as the corn, and grow as the vine." Hosea 14:5, 7. By constantly relying upon Christ as our personal Saviour, we shall grow up into Him in all things who is our head. {COL 66.1}

Bible **sanctification does not consist in strong emotion**. Here is where many are led into error. They make feelings their criterion. When they feel elated or happy, they claim that they are sanctified. Happy feelings or the absence of joy is no evidence that a person is or is not sanctified. **There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification**. True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last. Those who are battling with daily temptations, overcoming their own sinful tendencies, and seeking for holiness of heart and life, make no boastful claims of holiness. They are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Sin appears to them exceedingly sinful. {SL 10.1}

Character is something that is formed through a process, a ripening. This does not happen

instantaneously

The wheat develops "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The object of the husbandman in the sowing of the seed and the culture of the growing plant is the production of grain. He desires bread for the hungry, and seed for future harvests. So the divine Husbandman looks for a harvest as the reward of His labor and sacrifice. **Christ is seeking to reproduce Himself** in the hearts of men; and He does this through those who believe in Him. The object of the Christian life is fruit bearing--the reproduction of Christ's character in the believer, that it may be reproduced in others. {COL 67.1}

The plant does not germinate, grow, or bring forth fruit for itself, but to "give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." Isa. 55:10. So no man is to live unto himself. The Christian is in the world as a representative of Christ, for the salvation of other souls. {COL 67.2}

There can be no growth or fruitfulness in the life that is centered in self. If you have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, you are to forget yourself, and try to help others. Talk of the love of Christ, tell of His goodness. Do every duty that presents itself. Carry the burden of souls upon your heart, and by every means in your power seek to save the lost. As you receive the Spirit of Christ--the Spirit of unselfish love and labor for others--you will grow and bring forth fruit. The graces of the Spirit will ripen in your character. Your faith will increase, your convictions deepen, your love be made perfect. **More and more** you will reflect the likeness of Christ in all that is pure, noble, and lovely. {COL 67.3}

When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Gal. 5:22, 23. This fruit can never perish, but will produce after its kind a harvest unto eternal life. {COL 68.1}

"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. {COL 69.1}

It is the privilege of every Christian not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, (2 Peter 3:12, margin). Were all who profess His name bearing fruit to His glory, how quickly the whole world would be sown with the seed of the gospel. Quickly the last great harvest would be ripened, and Christ would come to gather the precious grain. {COL 69.2}

It is character that decides destiny. {COL 74.4}

We must serve Him in human nature which we now have

The Lord now demands that every son and daughter of Adam, through faith in Jesus Christ, **serve Him in human nature which we now have**. The Lord Jesus has bridged the gulf that sin has made. He has connected earth with heaven, and finite man with the infinite God. Jesus, the world's Redeemer, could only keep the commandments of God in the same way that humanity can keep them (MS 1, 1892). {7BC 929.7}

Christ served God in His human nature

(Ch. 2:14.) Christ Kept the Level of Humanity.--Satan thought that by his temptations he could delude the world's Redeemer to make one bold move in manifesting His divine power. . . . {7BC 929.8}

It was a difficult task for the Prince of life to carry out the plan which He had undertaken for the salvation of man, in clothing His divinity with humanity. He had received honor in the heavenly courts, and was familiar with absolute power. **It was as difficult for Him to keep the level of humanity as for men to rise above the low level of their depraved natures, and be partakers of the divine nature.** {7BC 930.1}

Christ was put to the closest test, requiring the strength of all His faculties to resist the inclination when in danger, to use His power to deliver Himself from peril, and triumph over the power of the prince of darkness. Satan showed his knowledge of the weak points of the human heart, and put forth his utmost power to take advantage of the weakness of the humanity which Christ had assumed in order to overcome his temptations on man's account (RH April 1, 1875). {7BC 930.2}

Sanctification is not based on feelings

Many who profess sanctification are entirely ignorant of the work of grace upon the heart. When proved and tested, they are found to be like the self-righteous Pharisee. They will bear no contradiction. They lay aside reason and judgment, and depend wholly upon their feelings, basing their claims to sanctification upon emotions which they have at some time experienced. They are stubborn and perverse in urging their tenacious claims of holiness, giving many words, but bearing no precious fruit as proof. These professedly sanctified persons are not only deluding their own souls by their pretensions, but are exerting an influence to lead astray many who earnestly desire to conform to the will of God. They may be heard to reiterate again and again, "God leads me! God teaches me! I am living without sin!" Many who come in contact with this spirit encounter a dark, mysterious something which they cannot comprehend. But it is that which is altogether unlike Christ, the only true pattern. {SL 9.2}

Redemption is Education

But by disobedience this was forfeited. Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death. Yet the race was not left without hope. By infinite love and mercy the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized--this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life. {Ed 15.2}

We overcome by having His seed remain in us

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." (1 John 3:9 AV)

Seed is the word of God

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23 AV)

Man is elevated only through a knowledge of God

“It is he that abideth in Christ that is a Christian. . . . Unless the mind of God becomes the mind of men, every effort to purify himself will be useless; for it is impossible to elevate man except through a knowledge of God.” ((Letter 13, 1893). {7BC 951.2} (Bible Comments for 1Jn 3:3-6)

Sanctification involves growth. This is through the word

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:” (1 Peter 2:2 AV)

There is more than knowledge in God's word, there is a germinating principle

“The word of God is the seed. Every seed has in itself a germinating principle. In it the life of the plant is enfolded. So there is life in God's word. Christ says, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." John 6:63. "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life." John 5:24. In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God. {COL 38.1}

Natural law, the law of cause and effect, governs the spiritual life. Sowing the word will bring forth Christlike Character

“Every seed brings forth fruit after its kind. Sow the seed under right conditions, and it will develop its own life in the plant. Receive into the soul by faith the incorruptible seed of the word, and it will bring forth a character and a life after the similitude of the character and the life of God. {COL 38.2}

“...The subject of Christ's teaching and preaching was the word of God. He met questioners with a plain, "It is written." "What saith the Scriptures?" "How readest thou?" At every opportunity, when an interest was awakened by either friend or foe, He sowed the seed of the word. He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Himself the living Word, points to the Scriptures, saying, "They are they which testify of Me." And "beginning at Moses and all the prophets," He opened to His disciples "in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." John 5:39; Luke 24:27.” {COL 38.3}

Faith is the invisible union of the soul with Christ

“The roots of the plant strike down deep into the soil, and hidden from sight nourish the life of the plant. So with the Christian; it is by the invisible union of the soul with Christ, through faith, that the spiritual life is nourished. “{COL 47.1

Man has his part to act

“The parable of the seed reveals that God is at work in nature. The seed has in itself a germinating principle, a principle that God Himself has implanted; yet if left to itself the seed would have no power to spring up. **Man has his part to act** in promoting the growth of the

grain. He must prepare and enrich the soil and cast in the seed. He must till the fields. But there is a point beyond which he can accomplish nothing. No strength or wisdom of man can bring forth from the seed the living plant. Let man put forth his efforts to the utmost limit, he must still depend upon One who has connected the sowing and the reaping by wonderful links of His own omnipotent power.” {COL 63.1}}

We are transformed by holy thought and communion with God through the Scriptures.

“God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures.” {COL 60.1}

“...Eternal life is the receiving of the living elements in the Scriptures and doing the will of God. This is eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God. To those who do this, life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel, for God's Word is verity and truth, spirit and life. It is the privilege of all who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour to feed on the Word of God. The Holy Spirit's influence renders that Word, the Bible, an immortal truth, which to the prayerful searcher gives spiritual sinew and muscle.” {2SM 38.4}

“God Himself has spoken to the mind and heart, making the Word spirit and life.” {2SM 39.1}

His character will be reproduced in our nature.

“If a man love Me,” Christ said, “he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” John 14:23. The spell of a stronger, a perfect mind will be over us; for we have a living connection with the source of all-enduring strength. In our divine life we shall be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. We shall no longer live the common life of selfishness, but Christ will live in us. **His character will be reproduced in our nature.** Thus shall we bring forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit--"some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred." {COL 61.3}

A noble character is earned, formed through battles, through the exercise of the will.

“But Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-round character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected.” {COL 331.1}

“Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character. If you come to this decision, you will certainly fail of obtaining everlasting life. The impossibility lies in your own will. If you will not, then you can not overcome. The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart, and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God.” {COL 331.2}

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God works to answer our prayers by placing us in circumstances to develop these fruits

"The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." James 5:7. So the Christian is to wait with patience for the fruition in his life of the word of God. Often when we pray for the graces of the Spirit, God works to answer our prayers by placing us in circumstances to develop these fruits; but we do not understand His purpose, and wonder, and are dismayed. Yet none can develop these graces except through the process of growth and fruit bearing. Our part is to receive God's word and to hold it fast, yielding ourselves fully to its control, and its purpose in us will be accomplished. {COL 61.2}