

Of the Salvation of Humanity.

Because we are all sinners and offenders against God, breakers of his law and commandments, no one can by their own acts, works and deeds (however good they may seem) can be justified, or made righteous before God. Everyone needs to seek for another righteousness or justification, to be received at God's own hand, that is to say, the forgiveness of his sins, in things as they have offended. And this justification or righteousness, which we so receive of God's mercy and Christ's merits is embraced by faith, is taken, accepted and allowed of God, for our full and perfect justification. To better understand this, it is our part and duty to ever remember the great mercy of God, how all the world being wrapped in sin by breaking the law, God sent his only son our Savior Christ into this world, to fulfill the law for us, and by shedding of his most precious blood, to make a sacrifice and satisfaction, or as it may be called, amends to his Father for our sins, to assuage his wrath and indignation against us for the same.

The efficacy of Christ's passion and oblation.

In so much that infants, being baptized and dying in their infancy, are by this sacrifice washed from their sins, brought to God's favor, and made his children, and inheritors of his kingdom of heaven. And they which in act or deed do sin after their baptism, when they turn again to God unfeignedly, they are likewise washed by this sacrifice from their sins, in such sort, that there remains not any spot of sin, that shall be imputed to their damnation. This is the justification or righteousness which St. Paul speaks of, when he says, "we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law" (Galatians 2:16). And although this justification is free to us, yet it comes not so freely to us that there is no ransom paid therefore at all.

Objection.

But here human reason may be astonished, reasoning this way. If a ransom be paid for our redemption, then is it not given to us freely. For a prisoner that paid a ransom, is not let go freely, for if they go freely, then they go without ransom: for what is it else to go freely, than to be set at liberty without paying a ransom?

Answer.

This reason is satisfied in this great wisdom. God, in the mystery of our redemption, has so tempered his justice and mercy together, that neither by his justice does he condemn us to the everlasting captivity of the devil and the prison of hell forever without help or mercy; nor by his mercy delivers us free without justice or payment of a just ransom. He has now joined his endless mercy with his most upright and equal justice. His great mercy showed in delivering us from our former captivity, without requiring any ransom to be paid or amends to be made by us, for that is impossible for us to do. And, where we could not, he provided a ransom for us, the most precious body and blood of his own most dear and best

beloved Son Jesus Christ, who besides this ransom, fulfilled the law for us perfectly. So the justice of God and his mercy are bound together, and fulfill the mystery of our redemption.

And of this justice and mercy of God knit together, St Paul in the third chapter to the letter to the Romans says, "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed" (Romans 3:23-25). And in the tenth chapter "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). And in the eighth Chapter "God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4).

Three things must go together in our justification. In these aforesaid places, the Apostle touches specially three things, which must go together in our justification.

1. On God's part, his great mercy and grace.
2. On Christ's part, justice, that is the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption by the offering of his body and shedding of his blood, with fulfilling the law perfectly and completely.
3. On our part a true and lively faith in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us.

So in our justification, is not only God's mercy and grace, but also his justice, which the Apostle calls the justice of God, and it consists in paying our ransom, and fulfilling of the law. So the grace of God does not shut out the justice of God in our justification, but only shuts out the justice of our works, being the merits of deserving our justification.

So St. Paul declares nothing upon the behalf of humanity concerning justification, but only a true and lively faith, which nevertheless is the gift of God, and not our work without God. Yet that faith does not shut out repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith in everyone justified, but it shuts them out from the reason of justifying.

This is understood as justification without works. So although they are all present together in him are justified, yet that is not the end of it. Faith does not shut out the justice of our good works, which need to be done as a duty towards God, for we are bound to serve God, in doing good deeds commanded by him in his Holy Scripture, all the days of our life. But it excludes them, so we may not do them with the intent to be made good by doing them. For all the good works that we do, are imperfect, and therefore not able to earn our justification. Our justification comes freely by the mercy of God, and of that great and free mercy, where all the world was not able of themselves to pay any part towards their ransom, it pleased our heavenly Father of his infinite mercy, without our deserving it, to prepare for us the most precious jewels of Christ's body and blood, whereby our ransom is fully paid, the law fulfilled, and his justice completely satisfied.

So that Christ is now the righteousness of all who truly believe in him. He paid for them their ransom by his death. He fulfilled, for them, the law in his life. So now, in him and by him, every true Christian, may be called a fulfiller of the Law, that which their infirmity lacked, Christ's justice hath supplied.

THE SECOND PART OF THE SERMON OF SALVATION.

Ye have heard of whom all ought to seek their justification and righteousness, and how also this righteousness comes to us by Christ's death and merits. You heard also how that three things are required to the obtaining of our righteousness, that is, God's mercy, Christ's justice, and a true and a lively faith, out of which faith springs good works. Also before was declared at large, that no one can be justified by their own good works, that no one fulfills the Law, according to the full requirements of the Law.

St Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians proves the same, saying "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing" (Galatians 2:21). And again he says, You who are justified by the law, have fallen away from grace. And further he writes to the Ephesians, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). And to be short, the sum of all Paul's arguments is this: that if justice comes of works, then it comes not of grace: and if it comes of grace, then it comes not of works. And to this end all the Prophets witness, as Saint Peter says in Acts, chapter 10 "All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43).

Faith only justifies, is the doctrine of old Doctors. And after this wise to be justified only by this true and lively faith in Christ, speaks all the old and ancient authors, both Greeks and Latins. Of whom I will specially rehearse three, Hilary, Basil, and Ambrose. Saint Hilary say these words plainly in the IX. Canon upon Matthew, 'Faith only justifies'. And Saint Basil a Greek author writes thus, 'This is a perfect and whole rejoicing in God when a man advances not himself for his own righteousness, but acknowledges himself to lack true justice and righteousness, and to be justified by the only faith in Christ'. And Paul says he is "found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith" (Philippians 3:9). These are the words of Saint Basil.

And Saint Ambrose, a Latin Author, says 'This is the ordinance of God, that they who believe in Christ, will be saved without works, by faith only, freely receiving remission of their sins'. Consider diligently these words, 'without works by faith only, freely we receive remission of our sins'. What can be spoken more plainly, than to say that freely without works but by faith only we obtain remission of our sins? These and other like sentences, that we are justified by faith only, freely, and without works, we read often in the most best and ancient writers. Beside Hilary, Basil, and St. Ambrose before quoted, we read the same in Origen, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyprian, St. Augustine, Prosper, Oecumenius, Photius, Bernhard, Anselm, and many other Authors, Greek, and Latin.

How do we understand faith alone? The words we are justified by faith only, does not mean the justifying faith is alone, without true repentance, hope, charity, dread, and the fear of God, at any time and season. Nor when they say, That we are justified freely, that does not mean we should or might then be idle, and that nothing is required on our part following. Neither do they mean to be justified without good works, that we should do no good works at all, and will be more expressed at large in what follows.

This saying, 'that we are justified by faith only, freely and without works', is said to take away clearly all merit of our works, as being unable to deserve our own justification at God's hands, and so most plainly to express the weakness of humanity and the goodness of God; the great infirmity of ourselves, and the might and power of God; the imperfection of our own works, and the most abundant grace of our Savior Christ; and so wholly to ascribe the merit and the deserving of our justification to Christ only, and his most precious blood which he shed.

What is the benefit of the doctrine of justification by faith alone? This is faith the Holy Scripture teaches, it is the strong rock and foundation of Christian religion, it is the doctrine that all the ancient authors of Christ's Church, this doctrine advances and sets forth the true glory of Christ, and beats down our mortal vanity. Whoever denies this, is to be counted not as Christian, nor as advancing Christ's glory, but as an adversary of Christ and his Gospel, and as a promoter of human vainglory.

What are they that dispute the doctrine of faith only justifies? Although this doctrine is ever so true, that we be justified freely without merit of our own good works, as Saint Paul expresses it, and freely by this lively and perfect faith in Christ only, as the ancient authors declared. This true doctrine must be also properly understood and plainly declared, lest carnal folk should use it as an excuse to live carnally, after the appetite and will of the world, the flesh and the devil.

The declaration of this doctrine of faith without works justifies matters because no one should be mistaken about this doctrine. I shall plainly and shortly so declare the right understanding of the same. No one shall justly think that they may take any occasion of carnal liberty, to follow the desires of the flesh, or that any kind of sin committed, or any ungodly living is acceptable.

First, you should understand that in our justification by Christ, it is not all one thing. It is not the work of God to humanity and the work of humanity to God. Justification is not a human action, but God's. We cannot make ourselves righteous by our own works, neither in part nor completely, for that would be the greatest arrogance and presumption on our part. An antichrist could set up against God, to affirm that we might by our own works, take away and purge our own sins, and so justify ourselves.

Justification is God's doing, only. Justification is God's doing, only, and is not a thing which we render to him, but which we receive from him. Not something we give to him, but

which we receive from him, by his free mercy, and by the only merits of his most dearly beloved Son, our only Redeemer, Savior, and Justifier, Jesus Christ.

So the true understanding of this doctrine, 'We are justified freely by faith without works', or 'we are justified by faith in Christ only'. It is not that this our own act, to believe in Christ, or this faith in Christ that is within us justifies us, or that we deserve justification, for that were to count ourselves to be justified by some act or virtue that is within us. The true understanding and meaning is, that although we hear God's word, and believe it, although we have faith, hope, charity, repentance, dread, and fear of God in us, and do ever so many works, yet we must renounce the merit of all our said virtues, of faith, hope, charity, and all other virtues and good deeds, which we either have done, shall do, or can do, as things that be far too weak and insufficient, and imperfect, to deserve remission of our sins, and our justification, and so we must trust only in God's mercy, and that sacrifice which our High Priest and Savior Christ Jesus the Son of God once offered for us on the Cross, to obtain God's grace and remission, as well of our original sin in baptism, as of all actual sin committed by us after our baptism, if we truly repent, and turn to him again.

So that as St. John Baptist, although he was very virtuous and a godly man, yet in the matter of forgiving sin, he pointed people to Christ, saying, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). As great and as godly a virtue as a lively faith is, it directs us away from itself, and points us to Christ, for only by him we have remission of our sins, or justification. So our faith in Christ, as it were, says this to us, 'It is not I that take away your sins, but it is Christ only, and to him only I send you for that purpose. Forsake all your good virtues, words, thoughts, and works. Put your trust in Christ only'.

THE THIRD PART OF THE SERMON OF SALVATION.

It has been declared to you, that no one can fulfill the Law of God, and so by the law all are condemned. So it follows, that something else is required for our salvation other than the law, and that is a true and a lively faith in Christ, bringing forth good works, and a life according to God's commandments. And you also heard the ancient authors minds of this saying, 'Faith in Christ only justifies', so plainly declared, that you see, that the very true meaning of this proposition or saying, 'We be justified by faith in Christ only', according to the meaning of the old ancient authors, is this, 'We put our faith in Christ, that we are justified by him only, that we are justified by God's free mercy, and the merits of our Savior Christ only, and by no virtue or good works of our own, that are in us, or that we are able to have or to do, to deserve the same. Christ himself is the only cause of any merit.

Here you see many words are used to avoid contention in words with those who delight in brawling about words, and also to show the true meaning to avoid evil and misunderstanding. Some of course will still want to argue, but contenders will always find matters to contend with, even when they have no occasion to do so.

Nonetheless, we will talk about it so that the rest may profit, who most desire to know the truth, as it is plain that those who contend about it with contentious and faultfinding arguments simply obscure and darken the matter.

The truth is our own works do not justify us. To speak properly of our justification, is to say our works do not merit or deserve the remission of our sins, and make us of unjust, before God who is just. God of his own mercy, only through the merits and of his son Jesus Christ, justifies us. Nevertheless, because faith does directly send us to Christ for remission of our sins, and that by faith given us of God, we embrace the promise of God's mercy, and of the remission of our sins, which thing none other of our virtues or works properly does, so scripture says, that faith without works doth justify.

And forasmuch that it is all one sentence in effect, to say, faith without works, and only faith justifies us, so the ancient Fathers of the Church from time to time, have spoken of our justification with this claim, 'only faith justifies us'. They mean what Saint Paul meant, when he said that faith without works justifies us. Because all this is brought to pass only through the merits of our Savior Christ, and not through our own merits, or through the merit of any virtue that we have, or of any work we have done. So in respect of merit and deserving, we abandon everything, faith, works, and all other virtues.

Our own imperfection is so great, through the corruption of original sin, that all is within us is imperfect, faith, charity, hope, dread, thoughts, words, and works, and so we are not worthy of merit on our part to be counted for our justification. Speaking this way, we humble ourselves to God, and give all the glory to our Savior Christ, who is most worthy of it.

So now you have heard the work of God in our justification, and how we receive it of him freely, by his mercy, without our deserving it, through a true and lively faith.

Those that preach faith only justifies, do not teach carnal liberty, or that we should not do good works. Now you will hear of the duty of a Christian to God, what we ought to render to God for his great mercy and goodness. Our task is not to pass the time of this present life by being unfruitful and idle. We that are baptized or justified, are to care about the good works we do, to the glory of God, and benefit of our neighbors. Much less is it our job, after we are made one of the members of Christ, to live contrary to Christ, making ourselves members of the devil, walking after his leading, and after the suggestions of the world and the flesh, so serving the world and the devil, and not serving God.

The devil has faith, but not true faith. For faith without repentance brings forth either evil works, or no good works, it is not a right, pure and lively faith, but a dead, devilish, counterfeit and feigned faith, as Saint Paul and Saint James call it. For even the devils know and believe that Christ was born of a virgin, that he fasted forty days and forty nights without meat and drink, that he wrought all kinds of miracles, declaring himself truly God. They believe also, that Christ for our sake suffered a most painful death, to redeem us from everlasting death, and that he rose again from death the third day. They believe that he ascended into heaven, and that he sits on the right hand of the Father, and at the last end of this world he shall come again, and judge both the living and the dead.

These articles of our faith the devils believe, and they believe all things that are written in the New and Old Testament to be true. For all this faith, they are but devils, remaining still in their damnable estate, lacking the very true and Christian Faith.

What is the true and justifying faith? For the right and true Christian Faith is, not only to believe that holy Scripture, and all the aforesaid articles of our faith are true, but also to have a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ and what follows is a loving heart to obey his commandments. And this true Christian Faith no devil has, nor any person, who in the outward profession of the lips, and in receiving the Sacraments, in coming to Church, and in other outward ways, seems to be a Christian, and yet in living and deeds the contrary shows.

Those who continue in evil living, do not have true faith. For how can one have this true faith, this sure trust and confidence in God, that by the merits of Christ, sins are forgiven, and be reconciled to the favor of God, and to be partaker of the Kingdom of Heaven by Christ, when they live ungodly lives, and deny Christ in their deeds? Surely no such ungodly person can have this faith and trust in God. For as they know Christ to be the only savior of the world: so they know also that wicked men shall not enjoy the kingdom of God. They know that God hates unrighteousness, "Those who speak lies you destroy you abhor the treacherous, O Lord, and those that are stained with blood" (Psalm 5:5-6), that those who have done good works, which cannot be done without a lively faith in Christ, shall come forth into the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, shall come to the resurrection of judgement. They know also very well that those who are contentious, and those who will not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall come to indignation, wrath, and affliction.

Therefore, to conclude, considering the infinite benefits of God, shown and given to us, mercifully without our deserving it, who has not only created us out of nothing; and from a piece of ordinary clay, of his infinite goodness, has exalted us, as touching our soul, to his own image and likeness: but also once we were condemned to hell, and death everlasting, has given his own Son, being God eternal, immortal, and equal to himself, in power and glory, to be incarnate, and to take our mortal nature, with the infirmities of the same, and in the same nature to suffer a most shameful and painful death for our offences, with his purpose to justify us, and to restore us to life everlasting, so making us also his dear children, brothers and sisters to his only Son our Savior Christ, and inheritors for ever with him of his eternal kingdom of heaven.

These great and merciful benefits of God, if they are well considered, do not encourage us to be idle, and to live without doing any good works, nor do they stir us up by any means to do evil things. To the contrary, if we are not desperate persons, and our hearts harder than stones, they move us to surrender ourselves to God wholly, with all our mind, heart, might, and power, to serve him in all good deeds, obeying his commandments during our lives, to seek in all things his glory and honor, and not our sensual pleasure and vainglory. In fact we dread to willingly offend such a merciful God and loving redeemer, in word, thought or deed.

And these benefits of God deeply considered, move us for his sake also to be ever ready to give ourselves to our neighbors, and as much as it lies in us to do so, to study with all our endeavor, to do good to everyone. These are the fruits of true faith, to do good as much as lies in us to everyone, and above all things, and in all things to advance the glory of God, of whom only we have our sanctification, justification, salvation, and redemption: to whom be all glory, honor and praise, world without end. **Amen.**