The Pilgrim’s Progress

Chapter 20: Ignorance
In our last chapter, we discovered that Christian became curious about Hopeful’s conversion at Vanity Fair and asked him how he first became interested in his own spiritual condition. After Hopeful’s initial response, Christian followed with 23 questions which opened the door for Hopeful to give us one of the clearest and most engaging presentations of the gospel ever seen in English literature.
When Hopeful came to the end of his story, he made it clear to Christian that thoughts had come into his heart that “clearly showed me the beauty of Jesus Christ.” It also made him want “to live a holy life and to do something for the honor and glory of the name of the Lord Jesus.” And, finally, he admitted that “if I had a thousand gallons of blood in my body, I would sacrifice it all for the sake of the Lord Jesus.”
Just as Christian and Hopeful had finished their conversation, Hopeful looked back and saw Ignorance coming towards them. They waited for him to join them, even though Christian believed (correctly) that he did not care for their company. Throughout this chapter, these three men engage in a vital theological discussion that goes right to the heart of the gospel.
Reintroducing Ignorance

You will recall that right after Christian and Hopeful left the Shepherds, they traveled down the mountain and discovered a crooked lane that came from the town of Conceit and merged with the Way. Here they met an energetic young man named Ignorance.
Ignorance’s Worldview (Lens)

• “I was born in Conceit and am going to the Celestial City.”
• “I know my Lord’s will and have lived a good life.”
• “I repay every man I owe, pray, fast, tithe, and give other offerings.”
• “I have left my country for the place I am going.”
• “No one knows the way to the Celestial Gate.”
In every religion, the basic religious question is about our relationship with God. How can a sinful person be justified before a holy God? How can anyone enter into a personal relationship with God?

Stated another way: “How can God forgive man’s sin and still remain righteous himself?”
Our Problem

• “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18).

• The essence of sin is to be against God, and the person who is against God cannot be right with God. Since God is perfectly righteous, he recoils at man’s sin. That is his wrath.
A Common Story

• For many, the reality of their sin and the reality of the wrath of God upon them never crosses their minds.

• This explains why the doctrine of justification is never given a moment’s thought in the world or (sadly) in too many churches.

• Sin has become little more than a mistake, a misfortune, or some kind of maladjustment.
Images of Salvation

• **Redemption**: the language of the marketplace; buy or buy back; ransom. Bears witness to our radical deliverance from sin as well as guilt by the blood of Christ.

• **Re-creation**: “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (II Cor. 5:17).

• **Regeneration**: the new birth, the inward work of the Holy Spirit.
• **Propitiation:** to propitiate somebody means to appease or pacify his anger. “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins” (1 John 4:10). “It is God himself who in holy wrath needs to be propitiated, God himself who in holy love undertook to do the propitiating and God himself who in the person of his Son died for the propitiation of our sins” (Stott).
Images of Salvation

• **Justification:** bestows on us a righteous standing before God.

• **Forgiveness:** remits our debts and cancels our liability to punishment.

• **Expiation:** deals with our sin and guilt; our sin is expiated, or covered.

• **Reconciliation:** to restore a relationship, to renew a friendship. Our broken relationship has been recovered by Christ.
“Moved by the perfection of his holy love, God in Christ substituted himself for us sinners. That is the heart of the cross of Christ.”
What Justification is Not

• It is not our apology to God for our sins.
• It is not the result of our excusing ourselves for our sins.
• It is not the good feeling that comes after we confess our sins.
• It is not any religious exercise in which we engage.
• “It is God who justifies” (Rom. 8:33).
“Justification does not mean to make righteous, or good, or holy, or upright. It is perfectly true that in the application of redemption God makes people holy and upright...But justification does not refer to this renewing and sanctifying grace of God.”
“Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which he pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in his sight; not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.”

- Westminster Larger Catechism, Q. 70
Justification

- Justification is the opposite of condemnation. “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men; even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men” (Rom. 5:18).

- Both justification and condemnation are acts of a judge who pronounces the accused either guilty or not guilty.
• We become immediately, wholly, and completely what God declares us to be; we enjoy the righteous status he has conferred on us.

• It does not imply that we immediately become righteous; that is sanctification and is a life-long process of growing in holiness and becoming Christlike.
Justification

• Condemn never means to make wicked, and so justify cannot mean to make good or upright.

• Justification is an external, legal declaration that the sinner has been put right with God, forgiven and reinstated.

• The word justify means to declare to be righteous.
Justification

• Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgment of God with respect to us.

• Justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone.
1. **Source:** the source of our justification is God’s grace. “No sin, no need for justification: no grace, no possibility of it” (N.T. Wright). “Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24).

2. **Ground:** we are justified by his blood. “Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through him” (Rom. 5:9).
3. **Means:** we are justified by faith. “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law” (Rom. 3:28). “Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 2:16).
4. **Effects**: we are justified in Christ. To say that we are justified “through Christ” points to his historical death; to say that we are justified “in Christ” points to the personal relationship with him which by faith we now enjoy. Paul stresses the faith that issues in works while James stresses the works that issue from faith.
“Faith has absolutely no value in itself; its value lies solely in its object. Faith is the eye that looks to Christ, the hand that lays hold of him, the mouth that drinks the water of life. And the more clearly we see the absolute adequacy of Jesus Christ’s divine-human person and sin-bearing death, the more incongruous does it appear that anybody could suppose that we have anything to offer.”
The Scriptures “speaks always of our being justified by faith, or through faith, or upon faith, but never speaks of our being justified on account of faith or because of faith.”

- John Murray
Justification & Good Works

• “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” (Rom. 6:1-2).

• “The tree must be first, and then the fruit. For the apples make not the tree, but the tree makes the apples. So faith first makes the person, who afterwards brings forth works” (Martin Luther).
Understanding Righteousness

- The Greek word in the New Testament means *righteousness, uprightness*.
- It is used 92 times in the New Testament, 36 times in Romans.
- The word can be used in a moral and religious sense as a characteristic required of men by God.
- Our study, however, will focus on the righteousness that is bestowed by God.
Understanding Righteousness

• God *constitutes* the ungodly righteous, and consequently can *declare* them to be righteous. “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19).

• The righteousness we receive is the righteousness of Jesus’ obedience.
The righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account and we are accordingly accepted as righteous in God’s sight. “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10).
Understanding Righteousness

• Christ righteousness takes care of our past sins as well as provides for the future.
• Righteousness does not come through the Law. “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly” (Gal. 2:21).
“I believe that Christ died for sinners and that I will be justified before God from the curse through his gracious acceptance of my obedience to his law. Christ makes my good works that are religious acceptable to his Father by virtue of what he has done. So, I will be justified.”
Well Ignorance, wilt thou yet foolish be,
To slight good Counsel, ten times given thee?
And if thou yet refuse it, thou shalt know
Ere long the evil of thy doing so;
Remember man in time, stoop, do not fear,
Good Counsel taken well, saves; therefore hear:
But if thou yet shalt slight it, thou wilt be
The loser (Ignorance) I’ll warrant thee.