

JUSTIFICATION.

To be justified at the bar of an earthly judge is to be declared innocent or righteous as regards the charge in the indictment. A person's conduct is said to be justifiable, when it can be shown to be in conformity to the rule of right. But to be justified in the sight of God is not to be declared righteous. Those who are justified by God through the faith of the gospel are sinners, and deserving of God's wrath on account of their sins. At the time they are justified, they admit that they are sinners. The whole gospel proceeds on the assumption that man is a sinner. The man who will not admit that he is a sinner, can see no beauty in the gospel, no loveliness in Jesus that he should desire him as a Saviour. To be justified in the sight of God is to be *treated as righteous with reference to eternity*. The person justified at an earthly bar is not only declared righteous, but subsequently treated as righteous. But to be justified before God by faith in Jesus, is simply to be treated as righteous. We are not righteous. We are unrighteous and hell-worthy. O how wonderful that there is a plan of God's devising, whereby we may be treated as if we had never sinned. What wisdom, what love and mercy, must be manifested in that scheme!

It is, however, *with reference to eternity*, that God treats the justified by his grace as righteous. *Here* God's children are not treated as perfectly righteous, for they endure trials and afflictions and disappointments and bereavements, while they sojourn in this wilderness-world, which are the discipline by which their Father trains them for their heavenly home. It is with reference to their everlasting state that they are treated, as if they had never sinned. The believer in Jesus, provided he endures unto the end, shall not be hurt of the second death, but shall be raised to enjoy the felicities and sanctities and honours of the celestial state.

On what ground can God thus justify sinners? Not on the ground of anything done by them—not by the deeds of the law. Man is a sinner and can never give to the law what it requires—a perfect obedience. O sinner, look away from your own fancied