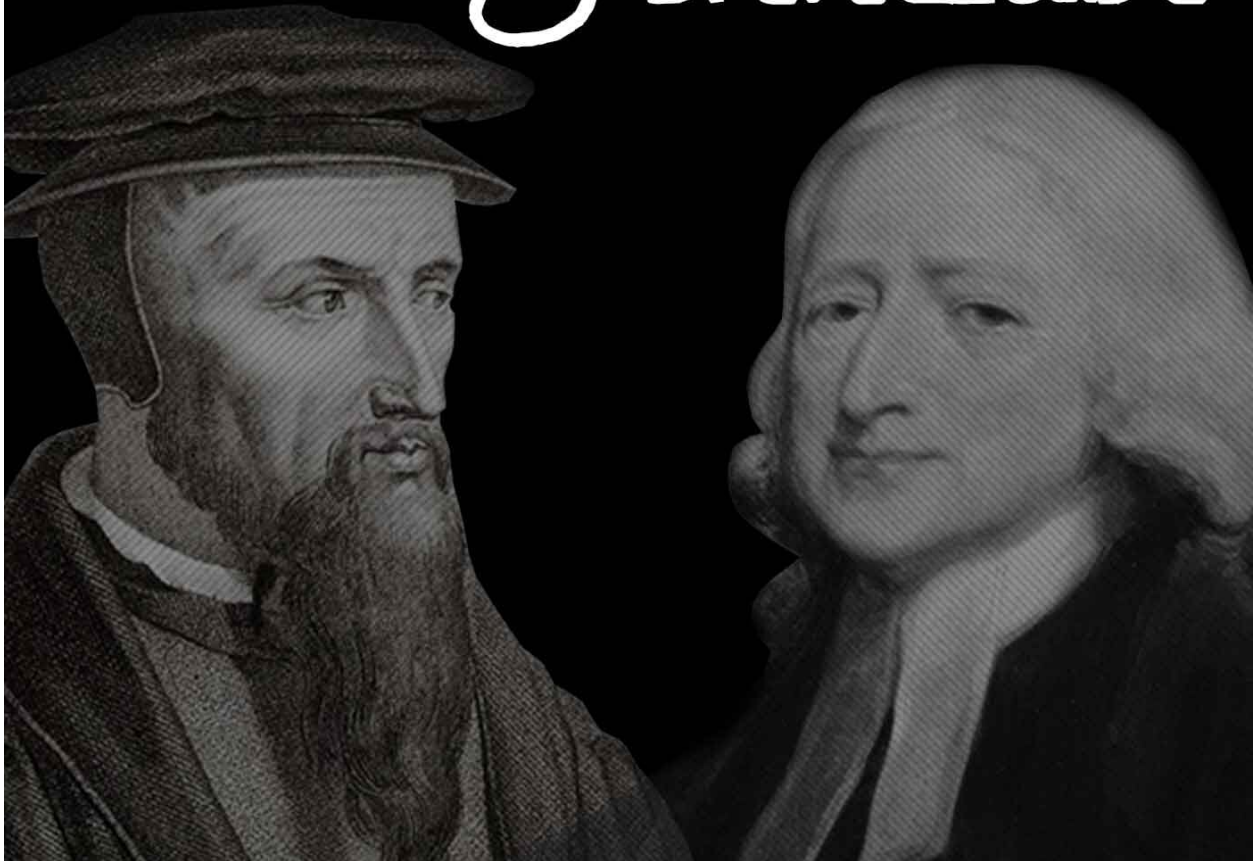


The

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Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

FROM THE WESLEYAN PERSPECTIVE

Compiled and commented on by Rev. Todd R. Lattig

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

Table of Contents

<i>From the Wesleyan Perspective</i>	3
1. DEFINING OF TERMS:	3
2. WHY THE NEED TO BE JUSTIFIED?.....	3
3. FAITH IS REQUIRED.....	5
4. FAITH IS THE ONLY NECESSARY CONDITION FOR JUSTIFICATION	6
5. GOD IS RIGHTEOUS IN CHOOSING THE CONDITION OF FAITH	7
6. FAITH AS THE CONDITION TO HIDE PRIDE FROM PEOPLE.....	8
7. CONCLUSION.....	9
<i>Bibliography</i>	11

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

From the Wesleyan Perspective

1. DEFINING OF TERMS:

- a. In his sermon, “Justification by Faith”, Wesley wrote: “But what is it to be ‘justified’? What is ‘justification’? This was the second thing which I proposed to show. And it is evident from what has been already observed that it is not the being made actually just and righteous. This is *sanctification*; which is indeed in some degree the immediate *fruit* of justification, but nevertheless is a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. The one implies what God *does for us* through his Son; the other what he *works in us* by his Spirit. So that although some rare instances may be found wherein the term ‘justified’ or ‘justification’ is used in so wide a sense as to include sanctification also, yet in general use they are sufficiently distinguished from each other both by St. Paul and the other inspired writers.”¹
- b. By this, Wesley distinguishes between God’s Justifying Grace from Sanctifying Grace...through which Justification and Sanctification are possible.
 - i. Again, God’s grace is God’s grace. There aren’t 2 or 3 or more types of Grace...
 - ii. But Wesley is breaking God’s grace down to the different phases or stages within God’s grace.

2. WHY THE NEED TO BE JUSTIFIED?

- a. Why Christ? People do “good all the time” even if they are not Christian.

¹ Wesley, John. “Sermon 5. Justification by Faith.” In *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler, The Bicentennial Edition. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 187.

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

- b. Wesley answered that: “Yes they do.” But good deeds that are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done are not TRULY GOOD.
 - i. They’re only good in a sense...insomuch as they are good and profitable for people...
 - 1. But the people doing such good are still in the state of sin and therefore NOT GOOD.
 - 2. And the works they do, therefore, are actually not overall good...in the Christian understanding.
- c. The logic behind this:
 - i. “No works are good which are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done:
 - ii. “But not works done before justification are done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done:
 - iii. Therefore no works done before justification are good.”²
- d. What this amounts to is that no one, by merely doing good works, can EARN God’s justification...
 - i. JUSTIFICATION COMES by FAITH in Jesus Christ ONLY through THE GRACE OF GOD!
 - ii. We cannot earn salvation...we do not deserve it...it is GIVEN to those God Justifies.
 - iii. None of us, on the day of judgment, can say to God, “Hey God, you have to let me enter your Kingdom...because I did really good deeds while I was alive.”
 - 1. While that may be true...apart from Grace, God is going to judge us on whether or not we were OVERALL good...And none of us are!

² Wesley, John. “Sermon 5. Justification by Faith.” In *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler, The Bicentennial Edition. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 193.

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

- e. Wesley writes: “Faith in general is a divine, Supernatural ‘evidence’ or conviction, ‘of things not seen,’ not discoverable by our bodily senses as being either past, future, or spiritual. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction that ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself’, but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for *my* sins, and that He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. And at whatever time soever sinner thus believes, whether in early childhood, in the strength of his years, or when he is old and hoary-haired, God justifieth that ungodly one. God, for the sake of His Son, pardoneth and absolveth him who had in him till then no good thing. Repentance, indeed, God had given him before. But that repentance was neither more nor less than a deep sense of the want of all good and the presence of all evil. And whatever good he hath or doth from that hour when he first believes in God through Christ, faith does not *find* but *bring*. This is the fruit of faith. First the tree is good, and then the fruit is good also.”³

3. FAITH IS REQUIRED

- a. Wesley writes, “By affirming that this faith is the term of *condition of justification*, I mean, first, that there is no justification without it. ‘He that believeth not is condemned already’ (John 3:18), and so long as he believeth not, that condemnation cannot be removed, ‘but the wrath of God abideth on him’ (3:36). As ‘there is no other name under heaven given than that of Jesus of Nazareth,’ no other merit by which a condemned sinner can ever be saved from the guilt of sin, so there is no other way of obtaining a share in His merit than *by faith in His name*...Whatsoever virtues (so called) a man may have—I speak of those unto whom the gospel is preached ‘for what have I to do to judge them that are without?’—whatsoever good works (so

³ Wesley, John. “Sermon 5. Justification by Faith.” In *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler, The Bicentennial Edition. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), q94.

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

accounted) he may do, it profiteth not: he is still a ‘child of wrath’, still under the curse till, he believes in Jesus.”⁴

4. FAITH IS THE ONLY NECESSARY CONDITION FOR JUSTIFICATION

- a. “Faith therefore is the necessary condition of justification. Yea, and the *only necessary* condition thereof. This is the second point carefully to be observed: that the very moment God giveth faith (for ‘it is the gift of God’) to the ‘ungodly’, ‘that worketh not’, that ‘faith is counted to him for righteousness’. He hat no righteousness or innocence. But ‘faith is imputed to him for righteousness’ the very moment that he believeth. Not that God (as we observed before) thinketh him to be what he is not. But as ‘he made Christ to be sin for us’ (that is, treated him as a sinner, punished him for our sins), os he counteth us righteous from the time we believe in him (that is, he doth not punish us for our sins, yea, treats us as though we were guiltless and righteous).”⁵
- b. “As on the one hand, though a man should have everything else, without faith, yet he cannot be justified; so on the other, though he be supposed to [lack] everything else, yet if he hath faith he cannot but be justified. For suppose a sinner of any kind of degree, in a full snese of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and his absolute [fitness] for hell-fire—suppose, I say, this sinner, helpless and hopeless, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ (which indeed he cannot do but by the grace of God)—who can doubt but he is forgiven in that moment? Who will affirm that any more is *indispensably required* before that sinner can be justified?”⁶

⁴ Ibid., 195.

⁵ Wesley, John. “Sermon 5. Justification by Faith.” In *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler, The Bicentennial Edition. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 196.

⁶ Ibid., 196.

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

5. GOD IS RIGHTEOUS IN CHOOSING THE CONDITION OF FAITH

- a. As St. Paul strongly states in the ninth chapter of Romans: “God chooses people according to his purposes” (vs. 11).
 - i. Thus, God is righteous in choosing his own terms...pardon and acceptance must depend on God, not on us who NEED salvation.
 - ii. ‘So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth’, to choose the condition on which he shall find acceptance, ‘but of God that showeth mercy,’ that accepteth none at all but of his own free love, his unmerited goodness. ‘Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy,’ viz. on those who believe on the Son of his love; ‘an whom he will’, that is, those who believe not, ‘he hardeneth’—leaves at last to the hardness of their hearts.
 1. John Wesley is drawing here on Romans 9:11, 14-16, 18.
 2. While, Calvinists would interpret that to mean that God saves some and chooses to damn others...
 - a. Wesley sees this verse to mean that God “leaves them at last to the hardness of their hearts.”
 - b. And in Romans 9:22, Paul writes: "In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction." (Romans 9:22, NLT)
 - c. The Greek word for “destined” is [καταρτίζω \(katartizō\)](#), which literally means prepared or fitted.
 - d. The NLT translates this as “destined” which is not necessarily the same thing as “predestined” ...my hardness of heart will destine me toward separation from God.

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

- e. While this has been interpreted as supporting double predestination, Paul does not explicitly say that. He is merely asking the question.
 - i. The passage is passive...not assertive.
- f. While Paul does talk about predestination...as in God's plan of Salvation for those who are chosen to be saved (aka those who have received God's gift of Justifying Grace)...
 - i. He does not state that God chose people to be damned.
- g. His patience in verse 22 indicates that he is waiting...for what? For the sake of it...just waiting to prolong the inevitable?
- h. Or, as the surrounding context (and Romans 11) indicates...God's patience reveals God's GLORY through those who are justified.
- i. His patience is in waiting for as many people as possible to accept his Justifying Grace.
 - i. As is affirmed in 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent." (2 Peter 3:9, NLT)

6. FAITH AS THE CONDITION TO HIDE PRIDE FROM PEOPLE

- a. Wesley argued that "Pride had already destroyed the very angels of God, had cast down a 'third part of the stars of heaven' (Rev. 8:12; 12:4). It was likewise in great measure owing to this, when the tempter said, 'Ye shall be as gods,' (Genesis 3:5) that Adam fell from his own steadfastness and brought sin and death into the world. It was therefore an instance of wisdom worth of God to appoint such a

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

condition of reconciliation for him and all his posterity as might effectually humble, might abase them to the dust. And such is faith. It is peculiarly fitted for this end. For he that cometh unto God by this faith must fix his eye singly on his own wickedness, on his guilt and helplessness, without having the least regard to any supposed good in himself, to any virtue or righteousness whatsoever. He must come as a *mere sinner* inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness only, pleading nothing of his own but sin and misery. Thus it is, and thus alone, when his 'mouth is stopped' (Romans 3:19), and he stands utterly 'guilty before God', that he can 'look unto Jesus' (Cf. Hebrews 12:2) as the whole and sole 'propitiation for his sins' (Cf. 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Thus only can he be 'found in him' (Philippians 3:9) and receive the 'righteousness which is of God by faith' (Cf. Romans 3:22)."⁷

7. CONCLUSION

- a. "You ungodly one, who hears or reads these words! You vile, helpless, miserable sinner! I charge you before God, the Judge of all: Go straight to Him with all your ungodliness. Take heed you do not destroy your own soul by pleading your righteousness, more or less. Go as altogether ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving and dropping into hell; and you shall then find favor in His sight and know that He justifies the ungodly. As such you shall be brought to the blood of sprinkling as an undone, helpless, damned sinner. Thus look to Jesus! There is the *Lamb of God* who *takes away* your *sins*! Plead no works, not righteousness of your own! No humility, contrition, sincerity! By no means. That were to deny in very deed the Lord who bought you. No: plead singly, the blood of the covenant, the ransom paid for your proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who are you who now sees and feels both your inward and outward ungodliness? You are

⁷ Wesley, John. "Sermon 5. Justification by Faith." In *The Works of John Wesley*, edited by Albert C. Outler, The Bicentennial Edition. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 197-98.

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

the one! I want you for my Lord! I challenge *you* for a child of God by faith! The Lord has need of you. You who feel you are just fit for hell are just fit to advance [God's] glory—the glory of his free grace, justifying the ungodly and the one who 'works not.' O come quickly! Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you, even you, are reconciled to God."⁸

⁸ Wesley, John. "Sermon V. Justification by Faith." In *The Essential Works of John Wesley: Updated in Today's Language*, edited by Alice Russie. (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 2011), 293.

The Party On JohnCast

Episode 11 | A Justifying Gift

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