

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNITED WORK OF GRACE

The action of Divine Grace occurs within the complete internal and external life of the Regenerated man. Because the movement and consolidation from the condition of sin to the newness of Life in Christ is achieved progressively, the united Work of Divine Grace and its undivided action can only be separated so as to enable us to understand the different stages through which we progress during this Renewal of Life.

Thus the first strike Awakens the sinner from his lethargic sleep of wickedness. To begin with, God offers His Saving Hand to the sinner as the starting point of his Regeneration. This is His Divine Grace. This period, from the first strike that causes the sinner who accepts it to be led to the realisation of his enslaving misery and consequently to seek his freedom, until the final Calling when he turns with faith to Jesus Christ as his Saviour,¹ is the preparation stage of Divine Grace. The external Calling at this stage becomes an internal Calling. It consists of movement and the Enlightenment of Divine Grace upon the hearts of those who are Called whereby the redeeming attention to the Holy Gospel and the willingness to conform daily life according to its Teachings arises within them. This final Calling and the Return to Christ through Repentance and Faith follows the stage of Justification.

Justification must be not understood as some kind of external accusation of Justice that simply covers the guilt of the sinner who is being Justified. It is the complete removal of all his sins that makes Justification inseparably united with Sanctification, being two undivided sides of one and same meaning and condition. In other words, Justification according to its negative meaning is the real wiping out of the sins of the Justified man, whereas according to its positive meaning it is the Regeneration and Rebirth into the condition of Holiness. However, those whom God Justifies, He Glorifies, which confirms the Perfection within the Justification and the inseparability of the Perfected Glory and Blessedness, which the Justified experience even during this lifetime. Thus, there are two stages that follow: the preparation of Justification and the exact Justification.

1. The Unity of the Work of Grace

Divine Grace creates the Gladsome Radiance of Christian Life in man, which is none other than the Life of Christ within his life. The Regeneration and the newness of Life in Christ depends upon this action because the human will is too weak to even begin putting to death its own sinful passions by itself.² It is impossible for man alone to progress or gain knowledge of the Salvation in Christ through his own justification and sanctification. Divine Grace, although consisting of many "...diversities of Gifts..." "...differences of Ministries..." and "...diversities of Activities..." "... is the same."³ Thus Divine Grace is one and its Works are united, undivided and inseparable. If we distinguish the Action of Divine Grace by means of its different stages through which the Called enter and progress in the Newness of Life, we do this in order to clarify the various manifestations of the one action, not because it is possible to separate one from another or that they clash. The Unapproachable and dazzling

¹ Cf. Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, pp. 135-138.

² Cf. Dositheus of Jerusalem, *Confession*, ch. 3, p. 29.

³ 1 Corinth. 12:4, 5, 6.

Light of the absolutely infinite Perfection of God falls upon our limited **sight** as different **but** distinguishable colours, **while** Divine Perfection is undivided and simple. He Who sends His Radiance to us is the Eternal Sun of the Divine Essence, which is absolutely simple. Divine Grace **that is constantly** working in man, remains one and the same although it manifests itself **at** various levels and stages **of** human and Christian Life. The **different manifestations** of Divine Grace **necessitate the separate examination of** the riches of these Divine and Life-giving Gifts.

2. The Work of Preparation

The Awakening of man from **the lethargic sleep of sin**, which is the beginning of Spiritual Life, is **due to** the Grace of the Holy Spirit, **which** cannot be explained other than as being the direct and Saving Action of God. Man became so slothful and even **spiritually dead because of sin** that it is impossible for him to wake up, to turn to God and to ask **Him for Redemption and Justification**. To begin with, God, through the Grace of the Holy Spirit, moves towards sinful **man**. **From** this **Divine** Grace, after the proper preparation, **the Calling is heard from** within the depths of the sinner who is Predestined to be Saved: “*Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you Light.*”⁴ **Furthermore** in **the Book of Revelation** we read: “*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My Voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*”⁵

The Work of Grace is extended right from the first blow, which is for the Awakening of the one who is Predestined for Salvation **until** his final Calling. It appears to consist of many stages like many **links** of a chain, **whereby** the first **link** is the Awakening and the last is the final Calling. This is the Work of the “*preparation Grace*” (“*gratia praeveniens*”). It consists of everything and whatever Awakens the sinner, **bringing** him onto the Path of the Newness of Life in Christ, for our Lord assured us that “*...no one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him.*”⁶

The Work of Preparation Grace is the final Calling of **those who are** Predestined for Salvation. It **is different to** the general and external Calling addressed to all mankind.⁷ Justly Holy Scripture projects **it** as one of the greatest Gifts **that aims for** *...the Fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord...*⁸ being Called “*...by glory and virtue...*” and making it possible to be accepted by those who “*...become partakers of Divine Nature.*”⁹ This Work can be described as **a** transmission from the stage of Preparation to the stage of the Grace of Sanctification and Salvation. Man’s heart has been properly prepared and becomes able to accept the Divine Seed from Above. The Heavenly Lord, through His Calling, begins to spread His Saving Seed **so** that when it springs up in the soul of mankind, it may bring forth Fruit “*...a hundredfold and inherit Eternal Life.*”¹⁰ He who accepts the inner Calling and the influence of Preparation Grace is Enlightened by it. He **has** complete trust in the Truth of the **Holy** Gospel and is led to **the realisation of** his sinful condition. He seeks to be **freed** from sin and turns to Jesus Christ, as his Saviour and Redeemer from Whom alone he awaits his

⁴ Ephes. 5:14.

⁵ Rev. 3:20.

⁶ John 6:44.

⁷ Damalas, *Catechesis*, pp. 52-54. Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 292-293.

⁸ 1 Corinth. 1:9. 2 Corinth. 13:13. 1 John 1:7.

⁹ 2 Peter 3:3-4.

¹⁰ Matth. 19:29.

Salvation. **The words of St Paul are Justified** through his Calling and Return: “...Whom He Predestined, these He also Called; whom He Called, these He also Justified; and whom He Justified, these He also Glorified.”¹¹ God has Called them not only through the external Calling of the Gospel but internally **as well** through the Enlightenment of Divine Grace **that** is sent upon the hearts of those who are Called. In the case of Lydia, “...the Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.”¹² This was the Work of Preparation Grace acting in her heart **and** through which she accepted the Word of Truth, **recognised** her Saviour and turned to Him.

3. Justification and Its Meaning

St Paul taught that “...whom He Called, these He also Justified.”¹³ Through the Calling and Return, which is the Act of the Preparation Work of Divine Grace, Justification follows, which is the condition in which the believer in Christ enters and receives his Salvation.

Justification is in full agreement with God’s Holiness, Kindness and Almightyness. The judges of men cannot influence their inner world and can only justify them externally as being innocent. **However**, Holy God cannot proclaim anyone innocent who has not become such within his heart, neither can He communicate with or have a close relationship with him who is unclean in his heart, since Divine Holiness despises sin and nothing can escape His **Sight**. God has the Power to wipe out the old man of sin and recreate him, **making** him a new creation. Even those who depart from the right of Sanctification confess that God has wiped out the sins of the **Regenerated** man. Since we accept that God has the **Power** to forgive the sins of those who are **Justified** by Him, it is obvious that if He has not forgiven them, it is not because He does not want to forgive but because the **unrepentant sinner does not want to be forgiven**.

According to the above, the only True Teaching about Justification is that which is inseparable from Sanctification. Justification and Sanctification are two inseparable **aspects of one** and same meaning and condition. Justification is not simply a covering **over** of previous sins. It is God Who **Justifies** us. **He** “...has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love, in Whom we have our Redemption through His Blood, the forgiveness of sins.”¹⁴ Thus Justification in its negative **perspective** is the true and real forgiveness of our sins and not just a covering **over** of them, whereas **from a positive aspect**, it is the Renewal and the Regeneration of mankind in this condition **whereby he progresses** “...to the unity of the Faith and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”¹⁵

Only this opinion corresponds completely with the Teachings of St Paul who **emphasised** the parallel between Adam and Christ, according to which “...just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned ... Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him **Who** was to come. **But the free Gift is not like the Offence. For if by the one man’s Offence many died,**

¹¹ Rom. 8:30.

¹² Acts 16:14.

¹³ Rom. 8:30.

¹⁴ Col. 1:13-14.

¹⁵ Ephes. 4:13.

much more the **Grace of God and the Gift by the Grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the Gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the Judgement which came from one Offence resulted in Condemnation, but the free Gift which came from many offences resulted in Justification. For if by the one man's Offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of Grace and of the Gift of Righteousness will reign in Life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man's Offence Judgement came to all men, resulting in Condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous Act the free Gift came to all men, resulting in Justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's Obedience many will be made Righteous.**"¹⁶ Whereas, if one accepts that sins are simply covered **over** and not completely forgiven, then the above parallel **collapses, especially** at the expense of Jesus Christ because, although through the first Adam we became sinners, through the Second Adam of Grace **we become Righteous even though** only externally **and** not in reality **or** depth. **However,** our sins are completely forgiven through the **Blood of our Lord and Saviour, especially by means of our regular** participation in the Holy **Sacraments of Repentance-Confession and Communion.**

4. The Condition of Glory

St Paul the Apostle teaches us that *"...whom He Justified, these He also Glorified..."*¹⁷ **This** refers, on the one hand, to the future glory **that** is **accomplished** according to the Will and Predestination of God, **while** on the other hand, the Head of the Church **having already been Glorified, the members of His Church are** Called and Justified. *"But God, Who is rich in Mercy, because of His great Love with which He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by Grace you have been Saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His Grace in His Kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."*¹⁸

Glorification is the Justification and Perfection within the Blessedness of **God, which** the Justified experience during this life but will enjoy in its fullness in the life to come.

In conclusion, the metastasis from the condition of sin to that of Regeneration and newness of Life in Christ **occurs in** two stages. First, the *"...Preparation of Justification..."* which also includes the stages of *"Calling"* and *"Return."*¹⁹ Second is the exact *"Justification"* **that** also includes *"regeneration"* and *"Sanctification."*²⁰

¹⁶ Rom. 5:12, 14-19.

¹⁷ Rom. 8:30.

¹⁸ Ephes. 2:4-7.

¹⁹ Androutsos, *Dogmatique*, p. 229. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 170-171.

²⁰ Mitsopoulos, *Themata*, pp. 295-296.