

Justified by Faith

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[0 : 00] I'm going to sing now to God's praise from Psalm 65. Psalm 65 from the beginning of the psalm.

Praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord, to thee vows paid shall be. O thou that hear an art of prayer, all flesh shall come to thee.

Iniquities, I must confess, prevail against me too. But as for our transgressions, then purge away shalt thou. Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose, and mayst approach to thee, that he within thy courts, O Lord, may still a dweller be.

We surely shall be satisfied with thy abundant grace, and with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy place. O God of our salvation, thou in thy righteousness, by fearful works unto our prayers, thine answer dost express.

Therefore the ends of all the earth and those afar that be upon the sea, their confidence, O Lord, will place in thee. And so on.

[1 : 14] These verses, Psalm 65 from the beginning, Praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord, to thee vows paid shall be. Praise waits for thee in Zion, Lord, To thee vows paid shall be.

O thou that here and are of prayer, of prayer, O prayer shall come to thee.

Iniquities I must confess, Reveal against me through The just for earth and gracious, That first a wish of love.

Blessed is the man whom thou dost choose, Amidst the cross to thee, That he will live in thy course, O Lord, May still a dweller be, We surely shall be satisfied, With thy abundant grace, And with the goodness of thy hands,

In all thy holy place, O God of earth, Thy grace of the earth, And with the grace of the earth, And with the grace of the earth, By fearful words, And with the grace of the earth, And with the grace of the earth, And with the grace of the earth, If for the ends of all the earth, upon the earth and those upon the sea upon the sea and conquered days all I will place in thee

[5 : 11] We're going to turn now for a short while to the passage that we read Paul's epistle to the Romans chapter 4 We can read from the beginning What shall we say then that Abraham our father as pertaining to the flesh as found For if Abraham were justified by works he hath whereof to glory but not before God For what saith the scripture Abraham believed God and was counted unto him for righteousness Now to him that worketh is the reward not record of grace but of debt But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly His faith is counted for righteousness even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputed righteousness without works and so on

We know the importance of the doctrine of justification by faith It is a key doctrine for any believer and we need to remind ourselves occasionally of the place that it has within our lives as believers As we see here in the passage before us Paul's attention falls upon the Old Testament Saint Abraham and he refers to the words that we find in Genesis chapter 6 where it is written concerning Abraham that he believed in the Lord and it was counted to him for righteousness and Paul understands that to mean that the righteousness of which this passage speaks was the possession of Abraham as a free gift and God was the bestower of that gift

It speaks of that righteousness as a righteousness imputed to him or a righteousness that is reckoned to him and the reason for the reckoning is Abraham's faith and there is often a misunderstanding of what exactly that means Was Abraham was he righteous because he possessed such a faith or does it mean something else it is clear from the emphasis that the apostle places upon the relationship that Abraham had with God that it was a faith in Christ or a faith in God's provision

Abraham saw the day of Christ and the only way he could he could he have done that was with the eye of faith because clearly Christ was not born into the world many many years after Abraham had passed out of this world and yet he had faith and he had faith in God's provision of Christ I'm sure it's a point of debate to this day amongst many Christians what exactly did Abraham see how could he have seen what would have bolstered such a faith but it's well worth it while trying to get to grips with what the apostle is actually laying emphasis on in this passage because not only do we believe that the doctrine is essential for

Christian theology or theologians that is essential for the life of the believer as we endeavour to live out our faith in this world so where would we begin to lay hold of the principal elements that we find contained in this passage that would enable us to grasp the doctrine but be aware of it for ourselves as something that is relevant to living out this faith in Christ in a relevant way in a positive way one isn't of my conscience think many evangelical the famed theologians are aware of the neglect of this doctrine as being something that often leads to drift away from the gospel even though it might appear that the gospel is being preached and that the essence of the gospel is being maintained the neglect of what Paul is highlighting here and what he highlights throughout his writings in the epistles is something that needs to be grasped because it deals with the heart of the matter as far as our Christian faith is concerned and the first thing I suppose we need to understand is that and we do understand and I'm sure you do understand that as a sinner in need of salvation you believe that that salvation is in and through the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ and the reason why that salvation is important to us is because we understand the reality of what it means to be the focus of God's displeasure to be in need of salvation because

[13:10] God is our judge and God is to condemn us because of what we are by nature the beginning of this epistle the apostle reminds us of the extent of that displeasure in that it excludes none whether the person is a Jew or a Gentile in chapter 1 and verse 18 we read the wrath of God was revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth of God who hold the truth in unrighteousness because that which may be known of God is manifest in them for God hath showed it to him for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen being understood by the things that are made even his eternal power and God so that they are without excuse and so on

Paul is determined to establish the truth that all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God indeed he goes on in the previous chapter chapter 3 he emphasizes again the reality of that displeasure that is evidenced against the sin that is in the world and the sinner who is responsible for it in verse 10 of chapter 3 where he does it is written there is none righteous no not one there is none that understandeth there is none that seeketh after God they are all gone out of the way they are together become unprofitable there is none that doeth good no not one clearly the situation that man is in because of the fall because of sin in their experiences died and without a remedy being found that is how things will remain and the God who condemns the sinner is portrayed as the God who makes a provision for the sinner so that they are redeemed from their sin if you are familiar with the writings of the Puritans they are often concerned to highlight and emphasize the nature of sin and the extent to which it permeates the experience of mankind and in a in a work by Thomas Watson where he it's a commentary on the catechism and in that commentary

Watson argues for the nature of God or the essential character of God now the important thing about the argument that he makes at that point is that when he describes the character of God and the attributes that mark out the Godhead although they can be identified and marked out and not every believer not every theologian believes that this is a right way of studying God but that there are characteristics of God which can be isolated or emphasized individually but that they are all connected to the essence of God the illustration that Watson uses is the cedar tree which is a cedar tree which may have several branches and however many branches there are they are connected to the tree and they form part of that tree they are identifiable as individual branches but essentially they derive their life from tree tree now in the sense in which we think about the person of

God and the attributes that are identifiable as being godly attributes the holiness of god the justice of god the righteousness of god and so on are all part of the one one person and Watson says about god god dwells in justice and justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne referring to quotations from the old testament scriptures there but he says this in God power and justice meet power holds the scepter and justice holds the balance the reason why I think that's important when we think about the doctrine of the righteousness of faith it is it tells us that god cannot but dispense justice because he is just and because he is holy because he is righteous he must not only judge but condemn the sinner so if that must be understood where does that leave us and where does it leave the sinner more importantly it leaves the sinner condemned unless something else intervenes something else happens that removes the condemnation of god in some way doesn't did doubt it the■

DOWN and the apostle Paul is concerned is found in the person of Christ unless the sinner believes in Christ. If you go back again to Abraham and go back again to the argument that Paul is making here and he's concerned throughout this chapter to emphasise the need that there is for the righteousness of faith to be in possession of the sinner because without it that sinner will have to confront the righteousness of the just God condemning the sinner because of his sin.

[21 : 00] Go back again to chapter 3. If you read there, verse 23, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God.

To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness that he might be just and the justified of him that believeth in Jesus. So Paul is there making that emphasise.

God is just and would remain just even though he justifies the ungodly. Now what that tells us is that salvation and so therefore justification can only be possible by way of God's initiative.

This is God's doing. This is what he must do. And that is to be seen in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and what he does. We must appreciate maybe two or three things there that we can easily take with us that God provides righteousness.

He is the provider of this righteousness. He is the source of this righteousness. It doesn't come from any other source. It is his free gift to the sinner and it can only be received by faith.

[22 : 55] Now that seems simple enough. But we have found many ways by which we turn these truths upside down. Because it is so easy for us to, as we already alluded to, think that when we read of Abraham's faith, that it is the faith itself that is the cause of the righteousness.

Because Abraham believed God, that itself was a righteous act. And that is the basis for him being considered a righteous person.

But that is not what the doctrine is. Our natural instinct is for us all to look for the grounds of our righteousness in ourselves or in something that we are to do, or something that we are doing.

That is how we instinctively want to justify ourselves. So if we are to look for the grounds of Abraham's justification, we are to look at some righteous act that he performs, that God considers righteous and thereby meritorious.

But Paul says, the one being justified is ungodly. And much as it seems to the state's son to identify Abraham with that title, ungodly, to tarnish his reputation and number him with the ungodly, is going beyond the pale.

[24 : 53] But that is what the scripture is telling us. That we must consider Abraham and every other sinner in this category.

We are sinners who are saved by grace. We are sinners in need of salvation and only God's grace can bring that salvation to bear.

The well-known Highland theologian and preacher Dr. Kennedy makes a point that is worth noting.

He says, we must consider Abraham as every other, utterly incapable of meeting the claims of the law, capable only of transgressing, as one who is under the reigning power of sin.

Now that's, that's something that many people, especially the Jews, find so unacceptable that we could identify Abraham in that way.

[26 : 10] Kennedy continues, it represents him as a convicted transgressor lying under the law's curse, as a slave of sin. As a slave of sin, that will not cease from iniquity and that must therefore, if not renewed, continue as a lawbreaker and as one who is an enemy to God as well as one who deserves to be treated as an enemy.

Now if you're, if you're going back, as in the Apostle Paul is going here, to this prime example of this father of the faithful and identifying Abraham in the first instance as a transgressor, as someone who has no innate righteousness by which God is going to be impressed, you then understand how this is important for the believer to lay hold of the same righteousness in the same way that Abraham had to lay hold of it.

He is one that worketh not, that is, he has no meritorious acts of his own by which to make his plea before God by nature.

It is the case as it is for us all that we are condemned. We are, we are, before, if we stand at that moment before the assize of God or the judgment seat of God, there is nothing for us but to plead guilty.

And suppose, you know, there's a whole host of different things that open out to us there. for example, if you think about pre-fall Adam, Adam was created in the image of God.

[28 : 15] He was righteous by nature. He fulfilled all righteousness. He obeyed the law because the law of God was in his heart, in his soul, was in his mind.

He was, he was living a just and a holy life and his, all his actions were meritorious in that respect. If, if God had set before him the, the law as a meritorious life life that had to be fulfilled, not explaining that terribly well.

But, the creature, because of the relationship that existed between him and the creator, was under obligation to be obedient to his heavenly creator.

there was no merit attached to him doing that because it was what he was created for. God created us for his own glory and it was, he was obliged to fulfil that obligation.

There was no other, no other way for him to live except to live in conformity to the God who created him in his image.

[29 : 44] But God in his creative, in the created fiat, if you like, the way he created Adam, he, he made a promise to Adam and he gave him the, the opportunity to live in conformity to his revealed will with the understanding where he to do so that he would live forever.

If that isn't the case, the whole story of the Garden of Eden makes no sense. He set before him the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

He set before him the fruit that was forbidden and he told him, you shall not eat of that fruit. God now, there was an obligation placed upon him there, which if he broke the command of God, then he would, he would suffer because of it.

But by implication, if he obeyed, life would be his in perpetuity. You know the story. Adam broke the command and Adam sinned.

Adam was condemned and all mankind in him. Now that's important because when we think about how we live our lives before God, our instinct is to behave as our forefather, Adam.

[31 : 30] Our instinct is to believe that we are capable of fulfilling all righteousness and pleasing God in some way.

But the reality is that we are incapable of doing that. And there is no meritorious act that we can perform that will please God.

We will always come short of his glory. And because of that, there is never a possibility of us possessing the righteousness that we need.

And there is the grace of God in the gospel where it presents to us a way by which that righteousness can become ours.

That doesn't depend upon our obedience, but that depends upon the obedience of another. And that's what the gospel holds out to us.

[32 : 32] Charles Hodge, the theologian, says, perfect obedience and the promised reward due as a matter of justice and to withhold it on the part of God would be unjust.

but that could only possibly be true when it came to the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because the reward is never our but his. And because his obedience is perfect obedience and because his walk is a perfect walk and because God has placed him in the same position that Adam occupied as the covenant head of his people, the perfect obedience that the last Adam fulfilled results in the just God bestowing upon the sinner who deserves nothing but the wrath and curse of God the life that Christ has secured for us.

God and that's where faith comes in. This is however we come to understand it, however much we grasp the significance of what is going on in what Paul is saying here.

The believer has faith in the God who justifies the ungodly because he knows that the God who justifies is doing it by some other means that does not depend upon our broken relationship with himself or our feeble and infertile attempts to secure God's favour by our endeavours.

[34 : 47] church. It is through the message of the gospel that the sinner is made aware of God's provision in Christ Jesus.

When we were in college the systematic theologian Donald Macleod had to teach us about the nature of faith and how faith came how it operates in the experience of the believer and this is what he says we have he is talking about the believer he is talking about the Christian we have heard the message we have heard the report of the word of God we have heard that God is that God became incarnate in Christ that Christ is able to save us that Christ offers to save us that Christ pleads with us to come to him for salvation that he died for our sins that he rose again and that we are justified by his name and sacrifice we have heard in other words the message of the gospel we have heard these truths concerning who Christ is what he came to do what he did do but the information by itself is not enough we must believe the truth concerning

Christ it must lead us to the place where we have put our trust in him and that's what Abraham did he put his trust in God and when Abraham believed God it was imparted to him as righteousness it was imputed to him as righteousness the language as opposed to the theologians is all important because there's a division between the Roman Catholic doctrines and the Protestant doctrines when it comes to this the Christian believer looks at Christ all who bear that title Christian they look to Christ but the imputed righteousness of Christ is a righteousness that is his being imputed to you now the

Roman Catholic believes that the righteousness is not his that the believer becomes infused by it that it becomes part of them which is why the doctrine of baptism as far as they're concerned is so important when the infant is baptized they are infused with the righteousness of Christ further development of that is if it is possible for them to lose their faith and to lose their salvation but the Christian Protestant Reformed believer who looks at what the apostle is saying here his righteousness becomes ours it is imputed to us as is stated theologically his merit becomes ours what he has secured in order to save us becomes our possession when we put our trust in him by faith we lay hold of him and we rest upon what he has done not what we do now that doesn't mean that we are as a result of this that we do not become different or that we don't become in some way obedient to this new life that becomes ours through faith but it is not meritorious it's not salvific it is not something upon which our salvation depends on how much we do that notice the way that the apostle goes on here to lay stress on what to lay stress on the fact that what

Christ has done has dealt with our sin he refers to David he refers to the sins of David that's that we sang to begin with our sin he says David's sins covered our sin is covered our sin becomes something that is no more to be held against us to our condemnation we are blessed because our sins are forgiven and Christ has covered them it's an important doctrine it's an important word that we can go to again and again and in this short talk we don't really do anything other than remind you of the benefit that there is to reflect upon it and to ensure that when you're thinking about your faith and that your faith is something that you live out you put in practice and there are things that you do that arise out of the existence of such a saving faith in your life and these things are evidences of the reality of your faith but you can turn that on its head and say these things that are evidences are the basis of my salvation because they're not without them you could doubt and anybody could doubt and even well you could go so far as to say God could doubt whether your salvation is genuine if these things are not there if the works that are meant to accompany salvation are not there but they are not works that are saving in and of themselves well may God encourage us to look to what Christ has done for us that enables us to lay hold of this perfect righteousness of his where he where he died on the cross for our sins and where he satisfied the divine justice in a Roman place may God in his mercy bring these truths to bear upon our heart let us pray

[41 : 48] Lord help us to understand the place that Christ has in the life of the believer may we look to him may our faces be lightened may our heart rejoice at the finished work that assures us that those who are in Christ will never be found under the stain of sin in order to experience its guilt pardon us every transgression through him who has gone with forgiveness of sin in Christ amen we're going to conclude ourselves singing from psalm 130 we're going to sing in gaelic the last two verses of the psalm psalm 130 in gaelic bichtochis israeli die or har ho gud more san ag in hir de gup jach har fwos glug palt gud or sve dhe fe gul chester bita fop lus lus lan hir sh hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir hir

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[45 : 32] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.