

# Sola fides - justification by faith in Christ alone

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[0:00] So what we're trying to do in these sermons is recapture something of the significance and importance of that of the Reformation which was triggered on October 31st 1517 when Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses the 95 topics to the door of the chapel in Wittenberg.

This huge revolution that came into Europe and beyond Europe to America and Africa and we still reap today the benefits of that great movement that started all those years ago.

So Martin Luther was challenging the Roman Catholic Church that had been in existence as it were for one and a half thousand years. He said it had become corrupt. He said it had gone wrong and he disagreed with the Pope the leader of the Roman Catholic Church and all the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church of those days.

And he said or he gradually came to the discovery that there was a better and a different way. And we looked last time at the basis on which he said that.

He found the answers in the Bible and that was a revolutionary step to take to say this book is the one on which we stand.

[1:37] We don't rely on traditions or authorities or we don't listen to what the world around us tells us is absolute truth. But the Bible gives us that sure foundation.

And the foundation is for something and the foundation is for the way of salvation and that's what I'm going to look at a little bit this morning.

He came to a revolutionary realization that his understanding of the way of salvation was completely wrong and a new understanding came in.

And that's what we're going to look at. How can I be right with God? That's the question. The way of salvation. This is an important matter for the church.

Because it is the church's duty. It's the church's calling and responsibility on earth that if people say what is the way of salvation?

[2:43] People can go to a church and expect to hear a true answer. If the church was a legal firm and didn't give correct legal advice, we would be sued for negligence.

If you go to a church and they cannot give you an answer to the question, what is the way of salvation? Then it's much worse than being sued for negligence.

What will God say to such a church on the last day? The church in those days was not telling people the way of salvation.

And sadly, churches today still don't always tell people the right way of salvation. So it's a church matter. And it's also a personal matter.

Because it was born of Martin Luther's own heart cry. How can I be saved?

[3:49] How can I be right with Almighty God? And I dare say many of you have asked the same question. I hope you've asked the same question.

Because it is the most important question of all. And of all the years we are given on earth, if we haven't used those years to answer that question, we've wasted those years.

That's what he's given us time for, to find the answer to that question. How can I be right with Almighty God? Remember a friend of mine saying, oh, sometimes people say, I haven't got time to answer that question.

Well, that's what God's given us time for. How can I find peace with God? How can God have anything to do with a sinner like me?

Those are the questions that are not simply to do with the writings of the church, but to do with the soul and the heart of us as individuals.

[4:59] And I want to say to you before I go on, I hope you have asked that question. If you haven't, please ask it. That's the most important question you could ever ask.

And to get the answer to that is the most important thing. Don't be satisfied until God has given you an answer to that question. Now, Martin Luther was particularly troubled.

And you might say he was a particularly sensitive individual. And I'm sure there's things about his own character and makeup. But he was right to be concerned about that.

He said, I think this is an American translation of what must have been a Greek, German text. I was a devout monk and wanted to force God to justify me because of my works and the severity of my life.

I was a good monk and kept the rule of my order so strictly that I might say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, I would have gotten there as well.

[6:06] All my brothers in the monastery who knew me will bear me out. If I had kept on any longer, I would have killed myself with vigils and prayers and readings and other works.

So he was trying as hard, as hard as he could to make himself right with God so that God would say to him, well done, Martin Luther, you're with me.

And he tried and tried and what does he say? He says vigils. So staying up late at night, praying and praying and praying, reading and reading and reading and doing all sorts of other things.

I put another list of things that he might have been involved with or things that the church would have encouraged. Pilgrimages, go on a long, long journey, put yourself out.

Maybe that will make you right with God. Treat your body very severely. If you go to Canterbury as a tourist, you get told about who was the guy who was killed there?

[7:10] Thomas? Thomas Becket. And their estimate of him went up when on his death they found that he'd worn a very uncomfortable set of clothes that constantly rubbed and chafed against his skin.

So he's in a constant state of extreme discomfort. And they thought, well, that must be a very holy man. Look at all he's trying to do to himself to get right with God. Severe treatment of the body.

I told you last time about indulgences. Pay money and the church will make sure that your loved ones get forgiven. And all of these things. Turning over a new leaf.

Ridding myself of sin. Punishing myself enough. Hurting myself. Trying to get right with God.

And I don't think I've got the powers of description to communicate just what a tortured situation this is.

[8:18] Of somebody wanting to be right with God. Trying and trying and trying. But knowing that God is so big. So great. So holy. That none of my trying is enough.

I don't know whether you've ever thought along those lines. Nothing I can do. Even if I try and try and try. It's never sufficient. Maybe I thought I had a good day yesterday.

But just one thing spoiled it. Or whatever it is. And I'm back in despair. Was it sufficient to be accepted? Answer. No.

Poor man. So let's think a little bit on his thinking.

Why was he thinking like this? What does the Bible say about it? And I want to try and explain it in that sort of way. So let's first of all look at I think the way his mind was working.

[9:18] I think it starts with this. Number one. There is an almighty God. And I need to be in a right relationship with him. Second thing.

My conscience tells me. So my conscience. My inner. You know I feel bad about things. My conscience tells me that something is deeply wrong. And this that I'm conscious of is moral failure. So it's not so much that I haven't got the right degrees. Or passed my exams intellectually. But it's morally. And the sort of moral things that he would notice I guess would be envy.

I find myself envying people. Lust. I find unclean thoughts in my head. Anger. I get angry about things that I should take in my stride.

Cruelty. I don't think kindly towards people. I have cruel thoughts towards people. Criticism. Instead of appreciating encouraging people. I find hard and bitter thoughts in my head about them.

[10:26] Pride. Instead of knowing that I am a lowly person. Because that's all I could ever claim to be. I feel myself proud and looking down on other people. And all these sorts of things.

He says. This is what I find going inside me. And it's wrong. Can you identify with any of that? Do you find the same sort of things that Martin Luther found?

These things are inside me. And my conscience tells me. That's not right. I'm not responding rightly. I'm not thinking rightly.

I'm not feeling rightly. There's a moral problem within me. So I think that's the second thing. Second stage of that.

And the third thing that I think he was thinking was this. It's up to me to put this right. Surely it must be in my power.

[11:24] To make myself a better person. Surely if I try hard enough. Then I can get rid of envy and lust. And anger and cruelty.

And criticism and pride. And selfishness. And all these other things. If I work at that. I can do that. And then I can come to God and say. Look I'm okay now. And God will say.

Yeah. It's up to me. In my power to mend this. In the sight of God. God. So that makes sense of what he was thinking.

There is a God. My conscience tells me. I'm not right. I need to fix it. I think that's the sort of thing he was thinking. So I'm just saying.

Okay. Now what does the Bible say about that? Does the Bible say. Martin Luther. You got that absolutely right. And as a tortured soul.

[12:21] You're right to be a tortured soul. Just sort yourself out. Is that the way the Bible sees this whole issue? So let's take those. And those three thoughts.

And analyze them a little bit. So number one. About the existence of God. Yes there is a God. There is one God. Who is the creator.

Of everything. And being the creator. He is the judge. Of everything. You might remember. That when God made everything. He said he saw what he had made.

And it was good. You see that's creation. And judgment. He's judging isn't it? What is this? Is it good? Very good?

Not too bad? On the scale of one to five. You know. And God saw it. And it was good. And it says of some place. It was very good. So God the creator.

[13:21] Has the right. And the activity. Of judging. The things that he's made. And God the creator. Has authority. Because he's made everything.

He's Lord of everything. And he has the right. To put order. And pattern. And structure. Into the world. That he's made. And that includes.

Order. And pattern. And structure. Into the human society. That he's made. So he can say things like. You've got parents. You've got children. Here's some structure.

Children. Honor your father and mother. Can say. You're created beings. I'm your creator. You will have no other gods.

But me. He can say these things. Into our world. He can say. There's. Speaking to one another. And he can say. You shall not bear false witness.

[14:20] When you speak. In other words. Speak truth. And don't lie. These are the sort of order. That God has the right. To put into his universe. And these are moral.

And relational things. And God is a God of. Moral being. And relational being. And the. And then. The Old Testament uses. Some very specific words. About God's moral quality. It uses words.

Which we would translate. Justice. He is a God of justice.

And he is a God of righteousness. Which is. Moral. Perfection. Moral. Excellence. It also uses the word. Holiness.

Which is. I think. A difficult word. To define. But it's. It's meaning. That. Degree. Of moral. Purity. Which comes across to us.

[15:15] As almost aggressive. And almost. Confrontational. Because God's holiness. Is so. Excessive. That for us. As. As.

As. Sinners. It. It. It. Sort of. Dazzles us. And. Frightens us. God's holiness. And. God is. Most certainly.

Luther is absolutely right in this. That one of. The. Capacities. One of the functions. That God has. Is that of judge. And here is a text.

Christ. From back. In the beginning. Of the Bible. This is to do with. I think. The wicked towns. Of Sodom and Gomorrah. I think. And it says. I can't.

Stand and read it. I'll read it from here. It says. I think it's Abraham. Speaking to God. Far be it from you. To do such a thing. To kill the righteous.

[16:09] With the wicked. Treating the righteous. And the wicked. Alike. Far be it from you. Will not the judge. Of all the earth. Do right.

And. It's Abraham speaking. And I think he's got a very. True. And profound. Understanding. Of God. As judge. Do you notice how he says. Far be it from you.

He says. That's. That's the sort of thing. You would never do. Is to mix up. The righteous. And the wicked. And treat them both alike. Far be it from you.

To kill the righteous. With the wicked. Treating the righteous. And the wicked alike. Far be it from you. That's just not. The sort of thing. You would do. Surely. The judge.

Of all the earth. Will do right. So there's another. Right. Thing going on there. And Martin Luther. Would have understood this. Yeah. God is.

[17:05] Judge. And he doesn't mix up. The righteous. And the wicked. He judges. As we shall see. And.

So. Martin Luther's got the right idea. About. God. And he's also got the right idea. About. Human beings. There's something.

Wrong. With. Our. Race. I don't. Care. What. Ethnicity. You are. All human beings. Since. Our first parents.

Have gone wrong. And have something wrong with them. Inside. Now. What is it that's wrong? Is it that we are finite? So. You.

Have sometimes. In your diary. Booked to go to the dentist. And to go and have coffee. And you find that you can't be in two places at once. Well. That's a mistake.

[18:07] Is it a sin to be finite? That you can't be in two places at once? Answer. No. That's not sinful. That's just. We're just. Limited. That's not the problem. Now.

You will have. Are you probably. Some of you will have watched these. Marvel. Superman. My mind's just suddenly gone a blank.

Give me some other superheroes. Iron Man. Is he really a superhero? Is he just clever? Well. He's the other. So. He counts as superhero. He doesn't have to do. He counts as superhero.

Okay. We're getting into a slight conversation here. Thor. Thor. Okay. But people who can jump and fly. And fling things.

And have x-ray vision. And all that sort of thing. Now. We don't have that. We are. Within certain limits. And we are weak. If a ton weight.

[19:04] Lands on top of us. Unlike Superman. We couldn't just go like that. It squashes. Is that sin? And the answer is no. That's not sin. It's not sin to be weak. We are.

Sort of. Very soft software. Aren't we? We are. We can easily be squashed. What is the problem with this? The problem with us.

Is. In terms of relationship. With God. We are. Resistant. Independent.

And rebellious. And what I mean by that. Is this. That God. Is our judge. He's put pattern and order in this world.

He is. The Lord of everything. And yet. Instinctively. We say. When God says. Honor your father and mother.

[20:01] Children. You might have noticed this. Children say. No. Ever. Seen children do that. Mummy or daddy says. Come and sit down. A child says. No. Well that's.

Actually. Resistance. And rebellion. And in a child. A child. Doesn't have the sophistication. To cover it up. With. Polite words. So you and I.

Now we're grown up. We think the same thing. But we cover it up with. With polite words. This resistance. And rebellion. Against. The things that God has instituted. And we. Have in our minds. We don't want a God. To rule over us. And tell us how to live. We'll do it. In Frank Sinatra's words. I'll do it.

My way. And we take pride in that. So that's what. Being human is. It's. Doing it your own. Yourself. Your way. And being your own boss.

[21:00] And this is. This is where the problem lies. Resistance. Independence. Rebellion. It's sort of subtle. I will do what God says sometimes.

If it suits me. We definitely. By nature. Will not put God first. We've got our own agenda. And we see God as a bit of an interference. We take. We take. We take. The patterns. And the words. That he's given about these.

Patterns. And order. And we. Break them. You shall not covet. That's what Black Friday is all about. Isn't it? Getting us to want things. That we didn't realize we wanted. And to say. Yeah. I can never be happy. Until I've got. That freezer. That's got a hundred pounds.

[21:59] Knocked off it. Isn't that what Black Friday is about? Everybody looks really blank. Black Friday. Well. I break law.

And I make law. I say. This is what God says the way to do it. But this is what I say is the way to do it. And in all these ways. We show that we have a big problem.

Before God. And the big problem. Is. Is not that we can't make life work. To a certain extent. But what God thinks about it. And the biggest problem.

Is God's justice. What does the judge. Say. About law breakers. People who make their own law. People who won't submit to him.

People who will do it. Their own way. What does God think now. And. Even more acutely. What will God say. On the day that he judges everything.

[22:58] So there will be such a day. And that's. Our big problem. How will he assess me. And how will he then.

Treat me. So putting it. In another way. Our problem is not so much. Indwelling sin. As future judgment. Now that's a problem.

We're only. Aware of. And. If God makes us. More aware. And more concerned. How will I escape. The wrath to come. That's a good thing. To be concerned about. So there is something. Deeply wrong with human beings. And Martin Luther. Was right about that.

Now. What about the solution. Now this is. Where. Martin Luther. Had a lot to learn. Because. He was.

[23:57] Convinced. He had to sort this out. Himself. So if he was. Today. He would probably. Or. He would have.

Other ways. Of doing this. It wouldn't be sort of. On wearing. Uncomfortable clothing. But. But there's many ways. In which. Human beings. Try to sort.

This problem out. Themselves. But what. The heart of this. Is. The question of.

How can. I get to the point. Where the judge. Says. You're righteous. It's in this. Area. Of. Judgment. Righteousness.

And so on. What. The judge. Decides. Is the key. What the judge. Decides.

[24:50] Is the key. So. We need to do. A little bit of. Work. On. Words. So. We have.

In English. A set of words. Righteous. Which is an. Adjective. It describes. Something. Righteousness.

Which is a noun. The thing. Righteousness. And then. For a verb. In English. We get stuck. Because we don't have a verb. Righteousness.

If I. Which would make nice sense. In the other languages. They do. But in English. We have. We have to bring in another word. And the other word is. That we would use.

Is justify. And that is the activity. That the verb is the doing word. To do with righteousness. Now the whole thing. Really hangs on.

[25:44] What is the nature. Of this. Righteousness. If I. The activity. Of the judge. To justify.

And that is what we need. To think about. So I have got a text. Coming up here. And it is in. Deuteronomy 25. One. No need to look it up. Because I have quoted it in full. So have this thought. So here it is. Here we are. In Old Testament. Israel. And it says. If there is a controversy. Between men. Oh I quoted it from the authorised version.

Here we go. And they come unto judgment. That the judges. May judge them. They shall justify. The righteous.

And condemn. The wicked. Now that is a very interesting use. Of the verb. To righteousnessify. The righteous. And wickedify. The wicked.

[26:43] Except it doesn't work at all in English. Does it? Justify the righteous. Condemn. This is the activity. Of a judge. Now notice what it is saying. The judge. Has the.

People in front of them. The judge listens to the evidence. And then the judge decides. I have heard the evidence. You are a wicked person. I condemn you.

I have heard the evidence. You are a. A righteous person. I justify you. I declare you righteous. And I have got a little picture of that. So there is a box.

To put the righteous people in. And the judge will justify the righteous. And pop them into that box. And there is a box. For the wicked to go in.

And the judge will condemn the wicked. And he will put people into the appropriate box. Justifying the righteous. And condemning the wicked. Get the idea?

[27:39] So this is the. The judge says. You are righteous. He's justified this person. He's declared them righteous.

And from the judge's declaration. Comes the treatment. So the righteous people are congratulated. They go out of court. Going whoopee. And everything like that.

And the condemned people. And the condemned people. Are perhaps go to prison. Or whatever the punishment is. Okay. The judges justify the righteous.

And condemn the wicked. Please notice. That the justifying activity of the judge. Does not change anything inside the person.

He changes the status. The person. The person. And then. How the person is treated.

[28:39] Here's the person who comes before the judge. The judge assesses. He does not change the person. He just says. You're condemned.

Or you're justified. That's very important. Keep that little picture there. Now let's ask the question. On what basis. Do judges. Make such judgments. And the first answer is. Because if looked at the evidence.

So and so was. Found. Writing graffiti. On a wall or something. And somebody says. I saw them do that.

Somebody else says. Yes. I saw them do that. And. That's a good. Sound judgment. You've got two or three witnesses. You're guilty. Condemn. The wicked. How could you justify somebody.

[29:36] Well if the evidence said. I was watching them. They didn't do it. That would be a good reason. To justify. The righteous.

Now are there any other possibilities. Because if that's the only possibility. Then we're going to be with Martin Luther. All the way. Are there any other possibilities.

Well there are some other possibilities. And I think you'll find. That they're all. Rather unsatisfactory. In one way or another. Rather troublesome. So one way.

In which. The wicked. Would not be condemned. The wicked would end up being justified. If there wasn't enough evidence. And you see this sort of thing.

In the paper. Don't you. You see. A family has been waiting. To. For. For. For a court case. Somebody has. Let's say.

[30:38] Ill used their. Child or something. And the family are waiting. For justice. And it comes to court. And they say. Well. There isn't enough evidence. And everybody is very. Very. Unsatisfied.

About that. It's very unsatisfactory. People say. There's no closure. Until. If it's. If it's. If it's like that. Now. Here's another possibility.

The person. Being accused. Is a gangster. And. He. Has got some other gangster friends. And they've got. The judge. Threatened his family.

Offered him some money. And the judge. Knows perfectly well. That this person is. Guilty. But. He justifies them. Not guilty.

And that's very unsatisfactory. Isn't it? You say. How dare he do that? That's not his job to do that. That's corruption. I'm still thinking.

[31:37] How can God. Justify. The guilty. Here's a third.

Possibility. That I. I. Pondered. And I think it's a very. Strange one. It's a very. Mind-boggling.

Possibility. Of generosity. By a third person.

So you've got the judge. You've got the accused. And a third person. Comes in. Somehow. And says. There's a fine to be paid. Okay.

I'll pay the fine. And. What does the judge do? Does the judge say. Okay. Well. They've paid the fine.

You can go. You're. Now declared innocent. So that's possibility. Isn't it? Another bizarre.

[32:30] Thing would be. If. If the judge said. Okay. You're guilty. It's a. Five year prison sentence. And that the. A. Another person. Another person. Comes. Says. Judge. I'll serve that sentence.

For. The accused. Let the accused go. I don't think. I don't think. Any legal system. In the world. Would. Would cope with that. Would it?

It's. It's. It's. It's. It's. It's a strange thought. Or even stranger. If. There is the death penalty. You've done something. So terrible.

You deserve to die. And some other person. Comes and says. Judge. Excuse me. I'll die. Instead of that person. You let that person. Go free. That'd be a very strange.

Thing. Wouldn't it? Mind you. When Jesus. Was crucified. The crowd. Was asked. Which.

[33:30] Of these. Two. Should be. Killed. Remember. They had a terrorist. Barabbas. And. The judge. Pilate. Was saying. I do.

Have this. Within. My capacity. To. To let. Somebody. Go free. Now. Who shall I let go free. The terrorist. Or Jesus. And.

Remember. They. They said. What shall I do with Jesus. And they said. Crucify him. And.

Barabbas. Went free. Sorry. I'm saying the right name. Aren't I? Yeah. That was a weird thing.

Wasn't it? So it does happen. And if. And as you think about it. You think. Well. How could anything like that happen? If you were the guilty person.

You'd be. Looking through Google. And. You know. How could that possibly. Because I'd love that to happen. If it was me. If it was me. I'd love that to happen. But who would do such a thing?

[34:30] By what right. Would he do such a thing? Who could just come into a courtroom. And say. Sorry. I'll pay the fine. Let him go. Who could do that? It's. I mean. The more you think about it. The more. Strange it is.

It would be very wonderful. This. Person. Who did this. Would have to be very generous. Wouldn't they? And they'd have to.

There'd have to be something. With the judge. Why would the judge agree to that? I mean. Would he say. Ah. Such a long time since we met. Yeah. Oh yeah.

We go back. Way back. Yeah. Definitely. We'll sort something out. Seeing as it's you. And. Could. If you were.

If you were on trial. Could you even bring yourself to believe. That. That might be an outcome. You know. Sitting there. Could anybody even do that?

[35:29] You know. I'm guilty. I'm going up before the judge. In a couple of days. I know I'm going to be. Condemned. Because that's what. I'm. I'm wrong. I'm going to be condemned.

I mean. Could anybody even do that? It's even worth pondering. Even worth having. The slightest. Little bit of hope. That. Another person. Could come in. And say.

Set him free. That'd be brilliant. Wouldn't it? Now. Of course. That's exactly. What the good news. Of the Bible says.

And it says. No. You see. It's a sort of. Can you believe this? Because it's so brilliant. What it says is that. There is. Such a person.

Who has come in. Who doesn't. A judge. Very well indeed. Actually. And. He has been able. Marvelously. Amazingly.

[36:24] Wonderfully. To come to some. Arrangement. With the judge. Whereby. He does something. So that the guilty. Person. Goes free.

Wouldn't that be brilliant? What reason. Could possibly persuade. A just.

Judge. Now. Just get me right here. God is not a corrupt judge. Far be it from you. To treat. What is it?

What was it? The righteous and the wicked alike. God is not. A corrupt judge. And God is not an incompetent judge. He's a fair judge.

So we ask the question. What could possibly. Persuade. A fair judge. To let guilty people go free. What could provide.

[37:22] The closure. To know that justice. Had been satisfied. What is a way. That's right. And fair. And not corrupt. And what is a way. That this.

Other person can have enough. Clout. Yes sir. Is that a. What does the word clout mean? Like authority. It's an unusual word.

Isn't it? Clout. That a person could have this authority. To step into this situation. And. Rosemary. Read for us. The sentence. That answers all of that. And it's there. In Romans. Chapter 3. Verse 25. And it says. So let me read it to you.

All. That's to say. Both Jew and Gentile. Have sinned. And fall short. Of the glory of God. And Jew and Gentile. This is chapter 3. Verse 24. Are justified.

[38:21] Freely. By his grace. Through the redemption. That came by Christ Jesus. God presented him.

As a sacrifice of atonement. Through faith. In his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice. Because he had left sins unpunished.

So that he could be just. And the justifier. Of those who have faith in Jesus. So. The center of that is.

Jesus. Is such a great person. And did something. So mind-blowingly great. That God could say. That's fine.

I can. I can. Quite justly. Let off those people. That you're asking me about. Because of what you did. What did he do?

[39:19] He died on the cross. It says. He was presented. As a sacrifice of atonement. And what it's saying is. That I think.

Beyond the power of words. To tell. I mean. Our words can take us so far. But they can't take us all the way. But what Jesus did. When he died on the cross. Is he. He didn't just go to prison.

For us. He didn't just pay the debt for us. He didn't even just die for us. He died. Under. The enormous. Anger.

And wrath of God. Against sin. And he bore it all himself. So brilliantly. That. After. However many hours it was.

He said. It is finished. And he rested. And he rested in the tomb. And because he had done so well. God raised him from the dead. And overturned the guilty verdict.

[40:16] And gave him a massive. Not guilty verdict. He justified Jesus. If you like. And he raised him. And that was so brilliant.

So powerful. So right. That God will say. When Jesus brings a sinner. And says. Father. Can you forgive this.

This poor wretch. They're as guilty as anything. But they've come to me. And. Will you. Declare them. Not guilty.

Not because of what they've done. But because of what I've done for them. And God says. Absolutely. Isn't that a brilliant thing. You'd hardly believe.

That such a thing could happen. But it's. That's why. That's why it's called. Good news. It's not good news. To know that God. Is a. Is a.

[41:10] A just judge. That's bad news. Isn't it. In a way it is. For us. It's. For us. It's bad news. For sinners. It's bad news. For God. It's good news. Because it glorifies him.

For us. It's not so good. But to know. That there's a way. In which God. Can say. Not guilty. And put us into the box. Mark. Not guilty. Not because of what we've done.

But because of what Jesus. Has done for us. That's just. Amazing. Could you trust that? Could you believe that? Because you've got to believe it. You see. It's. It's a received by faith.

Thing. It's so great. That the judge. Is ready. And willing. To be moved. By this. It's a strange. Strange thing.

It's a strange thing. Isn't it? That the son of God. Should come to earth. And if you were to survey the earth. At the time of Jesus. Arrest. And say. Where's. Where's. Where's the son of God?

[42:06] Is he in a palace here? Is he being acclaimed here? Where is he? And. And somebody says. Look. There's somebody there. Dying on a cross. And bleeding. And suffering.

That's where the son of God is. You think. Could that possibly be right? And yet it is. This is a strange. Strange thing. And it's offered to us.

In the form of a promise. To be received by faith. And Jesus says. Are you going to trust me on this? God says. I send you my son. Clothed in these promises.

Are you going to trust him on this? It's quite something. Isn't it? It's. Wonderful. Prepare to believe that. Strange work.

Offered. To us. To receive by faith. Would you accept that. As an answer to the question. How can I be saved?

[43:00] Would you see. Jesus Christ. As it were. Almost. Publicly. Placarded. As crucified. And say. Do you know. I can believe that. That's a good enough reason.

For me to be. For me to be. Received by God. I believe that. That's what Christian faith is. Saying yes. Yes to that. So when.

Martin Luther said. The answer lies within me. And my efforts. That's where he was wrong. And it. Was a sort of. What do you call it? A. Eureka moment.

For him to say. Actually. It's not. Me being righteous. It's receiving a gift. Of righteousness. Is it me and my efforts? No it isn't.

Shall I keep on trying to be. Right with God. By my efforts. And Luther came to the point. No. That's not how it is. Just making.

[43:59] A lot of pain for myself. And aggravation. And prayers. And everything. Is that how I get right with God? Answer. No. And it came to Luther.

Just huge. Sort of. Almost revelation. The righteousness. That I need. Is not what I work up. It comes to me. From outside.

As a gift. It's a free gift. Of righteousness. I'm justified. As it said. Freely. Meaning. Gratuitously. Meaning. I never deserved it. But he does it anyway.

And the reason he does it. Is because of Jesus. This righteousness. From Jesus Christ. Is a gift. It gets translated. Into English. I don't know what it is. In German. As an alien righteousness.

So not alien. As in. Martian. But alien. As in. From outside. Myself. Something I never expected.

[44:58] Something I. It's not homegrown. The righteousness. That God gives me. Is grown. By Jesus. If you like. And he. He gives it to me. The righteousness. I have. Is an alien. Righteousness.

From another person. From outside me. Isn't that brilliant? So let me. Because you. You might be thinking. Well that does. Does that mean.

That. If I were to take this on board. Does that mean. I could just be freely forgiven. And then. I could just carry on. Any old how. And actually. I'll just say a little word. About. About that.

Justification. Justified by faith. Through faith. In Jesus Christ. Is how I come. To be put in the box. Marked. Righteous. And God treats me. As righteous. And that. And I live. From that basis. The life. I now live in. The flesh. I live by faith.

[45:54] In the son of God. Who loved me. And gave himself. For me. But it would not be true. To say that my life. Is untransformed. So let's. Say that again.

Justification. Declares something about me. It doesn't change me. But the same Jesus. Who justifies me. Does actually. Begin a work. Which transforms me.

So. There is a transformation. And. Theologians. Use these two words. Justification. To mean. How I get. To. To be in that box.

Be looked at by God. As righteous. And sanctification. As being a process. Of transformation. That the same Jesus. Does. Within me.

So let's just have a little look. About that. I am not. Saved. By my good works. I am not justified. By my good works. But the Jesus. Who steps in.

[46:48] For me. Is a complete. Savior. And he has. A complete. Agenda for me. So. Think about. Justification. And sanctification. And both of these.

Come from the one. Jesus Christ. So let's not try. And separate them. They are to do. With belonging. To this Jesus. Who stepped in. Died for me. Interceded for me.

Brought me to his. Father. So. Let's just go through. A few of these. Justification. Justification. Justification is what. God declares. About me. Sanctification is what. God does.

Within me. Oh. Should have. Shouldn't have clicked too many. Justification is complete. From the first moment. I come. To the Lord Jesus. You can't improve.

On justification. I'm as justified. As I ever have been. Ever will be. But sanctification. Is a lifelong. Process. Of change. And we can.

[47:46] Go a bit. Up and down. In sanctification. Justification. Means. I belong to Christ. And I belong to his people. I'm put in that box.

If you like. Sanctification. Is to do with. Whether I am becoming. Like. Jesus Christ. And that's a process. Justification. Justification. Is the first.

Root. Sanctification. Is the developing. Fruit. And. Somewhere. Yep. In justification.

Sanctification. My good works. Are excluded. It's all to do. With what Jesus has done. I try and bring. Anything else in. I'm.

Eventually. Saying. Jesus hasn't done enough. Jesus has done enough. In sanctification. If there is no.

[48:40] Fruit. It shows. That the faith. Was. Duff. If I am truly. Justified. In Jesus Christ.

There will be. Fruit. In due course. In my life. So those. Good works. That flow. From that. Are actually. Indispensable. We're not.

He talks. About holiness. Without which. No one. Will see the Lord. So there's a. There has to be a change. But we're not. Basing. On. The change.

We're based on. What Christ. Has done for us. I hope that's reasonably clear. Justification. By faith alone.

In Christ alone. Sola fide. Is the. Faith alone. Sola gratia. Is grace alone. Sola Christo.

[49:35] Is by Christ alone. And this. Is such. A crucial. Doctrine. Luther said. A church. Stands or falls. On this. There's truth in that.

Isn't there. If we have that. Doctrine. We have the right. Basis. If we don't have it. We. Are. Near. To being sued. For negligence. What do we tell people. If we haven't got this doctrine. People say. How do I be saved. And you can't say. We're justified. By faith alone.

In Christ alone. By grace alone. He's done it all. Put your trust in it. If we can't tell them that. What we got to say. Go home and try harder. Rubbish.

It's a dazzling doctrine. Isn't it. It's fantastic. When you think about it. Amazing. It's a liberating doctrine. I don't. We don't have to live like.

[50:34] Martin Luther. Wearing uncomfortable clothes. And. Nearly killing ourselves. It's all been given to us. As a gift. The. The.

The song says. My chains fell off. My heart was free. Or new version. My heart was new. Sets us free. And it's a daily doctrine.

Right. Ladies and gentlemen. How many of you have made a will? Will. Hands down. How many of you have got your will up to date?

How many of you do that every day? It's the sort of thing you probably do once. Or twice. And you think.

I've done that. You made a will. Well. The sort of thing you do once or twice.

[51:35] Put it in a drawer. Maybe send a copy to the solicitor. Forget it. Okay. How many people eat breakfast cereal every morning?

Or equivalent? Oh dear. I was hoping for a wider show of hands than that. Please imagine for the sake of this illustration. That you. That you eat breakfast cereal.

So I'm going to say Weetabix. You know what I mean. Eating Weetabix. Sort of thing you do every day. Now the justification by faith.

Is not a doctrine. Like you have your will. You think about it. Once or twice. In your life. Justification by faith.

Is like Weetabix. We need to remind ourselves. Of it every day. We need to remind ourselves of it every day. Because that is how the Christian lives.

[52:33] Not because of the things we've achieved. But because Christ died for us. That is how we live. Okay.

It is a Weetabix doctrine. And it is a hopeful doctrine. Because it says. When I look forward. To seeing the Lord Jesus.

I won't. See an angry judge. Who will point out to me all my sins. And condemn me.

Which would be an awful thing. If only one could avoid that. But the doctrine of justification. Says Jesus has already said. We've sorted that. Your sins are covered.

Blessed is the one whose sins are covered. That's what we started with. What a blessing that is. And on that day. When we see him face to face. It won't be an angry judge that we see.

[53:34] But the Savior who died for us. Won't that be something to look forward to? We shall see him face to face. It's a hopeful doctrine.

And it's a personal doctrine. Because that is between me and the Lord. How can I call God my heavenly father? How can I call Jesus my savior?

Because he did that for me. He promised to me. If I trust him. I'm right with God.

What more could we want? So splendid isn't it? Yeah.