

Jesus' death is your justification

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[0 : 00] Father, we just want to know you. And I just ask, Lord, that your word, as we look at it, as we hear it read, and as we go off and reflect on it later in the week, that you would just minister to our hearts and our minds.

In Jesus' name, amen. Now, there's this new show on Amazon Prime that me and Amy, my wife, have been getting into lately.

And it's called The World's Toughest Race. And this one, I don't know if they always have it in Fiji, but this one is based in Fiji this year, or whenever they recorded it.

And what this race is, is basically an Ironman on steroids, if you know what an Ironman is. It, like, pushes the human body to, like, the max physical limit.

And it also pushes the human body to the max mental limit. And the course that they're going through in Fiji is the most intense course you'll ever see in a race.

[1 : 12] It involves going through into the ocean, way off, like, 100 kilometers, and then back. And then it also involves going into the Fiji Mountains, into the jungle, and working through it to get to these checkpoints.

And at the same time, they have to get these medallions. And these medallions signify your progress through the race. But another thing in this race is you have to hit certain checkpoints, or as they call them, camps, to get, at a certain time, to continue on in the race.

And if you don't, you're disqualified. So it's constant pushing people. You barely get to sleep. You barely get to eat. But they have to keep going. And I just want to, I bring this up, because I want to focus in on this one scene that's a couple episodes in.

It's not a spoiler, because a lot of teams lose in this. There's only one winner. What happens is this team is so far behind. They're in last place.

They're stuck on the island that they had to take these boats to by paddling, and then they get back. But they decided to camp there for a night, because they felt wary.

[2 : 19] And in the morning, they had to start going across. And they're like 100 kilometers behind. And as they kept going, they kept pushing it, saying they're going to get there, they're going to get there.

And then when they get onto the main island of Fiji, one of the race officials comes up to them and tells them that it is mathematically impossible for you to make it to the camp in time to continue on in the race.

And I say this, I bring this up, because the text that we're going to look at kind of says that to us in the Romans epistle. It says that even though you can do all these things, you still fall short of the glory of God.

All have sinned. All fall short. And as we continue on through this summer sermon series called The Crucified Messiah, this week we're looking at, it's called Jesus' Death is Your Justification.

And I admit, this is a hard thing to hear, that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. It seems like, how can then, how does the Christian walk so good if all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God?

[3 : 39] How can we do this? Is it even possible? But there's this other truth in the text which surrounds that one verse that says that, which is a great truth.

It is a truth that we should meditate on every day in our Christian walk. It is like the foundation of Christianity and that is justification. So if you haven't already, turn with me to Romans chapter 3, verses 21 to 25.

And we'll take a look at it. And as you're turning there, or looking up in your phone, I'll just give a bit of context. Paul is writing to the church in Rome. This church is made up of Jewish people, Jewish

Christians, and Gentile Christians.

And he's writing to them because there's this conflict between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians. There's this conflict that the Jewish people think they know the right way, how to do things, and they're better than the Gentiles.

But the Gentiles think they know what they're doing better than the Jewish Christians, and they think they're better higher up. So Paul is trying to show them that no matter how high you feel or how low you feel, that is not what matters.

[4 : 53] That is not what matters. So let's take a look. Let's look at this. And beginning at verse 21. Now some of you could be asking, what is the righteousness of God?

The righteousness of God, what Paul is talking about here, how he talks about it always in all his epistles, is the justifying act of God.

And what he's talking about here, he's talking about the cross. He's talking about that moment in history when Jesus went to the cross to die for sinners, to die for people.

And then he rose from the dead. So he's talking about that. It has been manifested apart from the law and apart from the prophets. Now, what he means by apart from the law, we will look at in the couple of verses following.

So I'm just going to mention what he means about the prophets. The prophets talk about, all through them, they prophesy, they speak about a future event.

[6 : 13] And that event is the cross. And I'll just look at one of them that Paul is referring to right now. And that is found, I'll just read it, you don't have to turn there. That is found in Isaiah 53, verse 5.

There's also many others in Isaiah. But I'm just going to highlight this one. Isaiah 53, verse 5. But he was pierced for our transgressions.

He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace. And with his wounds, we are healed.

That is a great text. That text speaks of a future event in that time. And that future event was the cross. And that's what Paul is trying to get the two sides, even though there's no two sides.

It's just one Christian body. But unfortunately, there seems to be distinctions that happen. So the Old Testament points to an historical event, the cross. So we're going to continue in verse 22, the second half, going into verse 23.

[7 : 25] Now this, some of you could be saying, it seems very harsh.

It seems like this is the great leveler. This means that no one is greater. No one is lower.

No one measures up. All have sinned. But some of you could be thinking, well, like, surely I'm better than that person.

That's a very common human thing that we do. We end up always measuring ourselves against other people. And Paul here is trying to show that no one is better.

No one can achieve what he's talking about here over some other person who they deem is not as good. But surely I have some leg up on people, on those kinds of people, you could be thinking.

[8 : 33] You see, we all fall short. All have sinned. Your sins merit ultimate penal suffering and rejection of God's presence.

And there's nothing you can do to change it. Now, why am I guilty? It doesn't seem fair. It seems like there's no evidence against me.

But Paul, Paul here is talking about how there is evidence. And that evidence is found in Genesis, when Adam and Eve ate the apple, when they decided they want to become more like God.

They want to become all-knowing. And because of that, God had to curse humanity because of that moment. It's called the fall. Because of that.

Because of that moment, no one measures up now. It's very similar, if you think about it, to the cancel culture that's happening right now in our culture.

[9 : 40] The cancel culture basically is if someone does something that they consider wrong or if they do something that they consider, it could be the slightest thing. They decide to cancel them and just say, you're canceled.

And basically, they boycott. Either they boycott businesses or they boycott people. And they try to ruin the person's image. Even if there's no evidence that happens.

They try to force people to submit to them of fear being canceled. But if you look at this, the Bible has canceled us all out.

All the evidence is stacked against us. And there's nothing you can do about it. When you read through the Bible, the evidence becomes more and more stacked against us.

By the time you get home from the church service today, there will be more evidence stacked against you. It's just, we are lost in our own selves.

[10:45] All evidence is against you and me. The case has been laid out. The jury has read the verdict in a sense. And they read out guilty.

We find the accused guilty on all accounts against them. The text says, all are guilty. All have sinned.

No one is righteous. Now, if I was to stop here, this would seem like the harshest church service you've ever been to. It would, it would be very, it's very depressing if that's where I stop.

But there's a great truth in this text. There's a great truth when you continue on. It is the most uplifting thing that you can, like, grasp.

And I'll continue. And I just want to mention, we all know what it's like to fail and fall short. So I'll continue and I'll read the second half of verse 22 again.

[11:42] For there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. See, this is a beautiful thing. Everything is stacked against us.

But Paul here shows that Christ came into the world to take our place. To, in a sense, you can visualize a courtroom that we are standing in the docket before the judge and the jury has just read out the statement that we are guilty and the judge is about to give the sentence and the sentence is death.

But Jesus comes and He says, hold on. I am going to take their place. I am going to take their place and take on the judgment, the verdict that they deserve so they can be justified and it is a free gift. He did it freely as when we were lost in ourselves, He came. He took on the criminal's sentence and He died on the cross and rose again.

[13:07] It's kind of like this. There's this story. I don't know the big details or where exactly it was, but the story is there is these prisoners in Japan during the time of a war and they are forced to build a road with shovels.

They have to shovel, they have to chug out all the dirt, all the rocks and then put new gravel down. And then one night, after every night they would count the shovels to make sure nothing has gone missing or anything like that.

And one night when they are counting the shovels, one of the shovels is missing and they searched and they searched and they couldn't find it and they were furious and they lined up all the prisoners and they said that we will kill all of you if no one comes forward.

And then right before when they are counting down to execute the prisoners, one of them steps forward and says, I did it. I lost the shovel.

And they killed him right there in front of everyone else and they sent the rest away back to the camp. And then the next day, after the work day, they count the shovels and all the shovels are there.

[14:19] you see, that man took the place of everyone else. He didn't have to, but he did.

Jesus came forward even though he was innocent. And you see, when you put your faith and trust in Jesus, you are justified. God, some of you could be looking at the text and be like, well, Matt, that sounds nice.

But this blood, this blood seems so barbaric. Why blood and not just a handshake? Well, as I mentioned before, earlier in the text, he talks about the law.

And this right here is what he's talking about. He's talking about the Mosaic law. You see, God made a covenant. He gave a law and this law was a guide to holiness.

It was a guide to holiness for the Israel people. But the people of Israel always failed. They always failed no matter how hard they tried.

[15:25] They always failed. So they had to have sacrifices. And they used animals. They used, for the sin sacrifice, a perfect lamb. But that still didn't cover all the sins.

It still, it always required a sacrifice constantly. It never fully did the job in a sense. You see, in North America, the culture talks sin down.

It seems like such a faux pas. It says, just live a good life. Live your best life now and you'll be fine. You'll go to heaven. But sin is serious. And the Bible, all through the Bible, it is talked about and it's very serious.

It goes against God's plan. It goes against His very nature. And only something as serious as sin had to happen to break the judgment that was against us.

See, God sent His Son because He had to send His Son. Jesus came into the world, lived a perfect life. He willingly came forward to be the sacrifice for you and me.

[16:36] And He died the criminal's death on the cross to save us from eternal judgment. He took on the judgment so we could be justified before God.

It had to be something final. And that was death. It basically, it had to be so final, it had to be death. It is like when the casket is lowered into the ground. There's that moment when you're there and it just seems like this is the most final thing that you'll ever experience in this life.

It seems like the most final, like, it almost seems like time stops. But the world keeps going around you. Jesus had to come to die for us.

But that wasn't the final thing. You see, Jesus rose from the dead three days later. He ascended into heaven, as we said in the Creed. Jesus' death justifies all who put their faith and trust in Him.

[17:44] Soon as you put your faith and trust, and that faith is a gift. That is a God-given gift. You are justified. Just to drive home more of the illustration of the casket.

Just over a month ago, one of my friends and my wife's Amy, dear friend, passed away. It was very sudden. And when we were at the funeral, it seemed like that was it.

That was the end. But that was not the end. She had her faith and trust in Jesus. And she is with Jesus right now in heaven. You see, when you put your faith and trust in Christ, you are justified instantly.

There's nothing after that that you have to do. You are justified by faith, not by works. And I'll just read the text again, beginning at the second part of verse 22.

For there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

[19:07] This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. The penalty due to you for your sins and my sins, whatever they were, was paid for, paid for you by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in his death on the cross.

See, the life where you live can feel like the toughest race, the hardest race in the world. It could be at times that you feel so lost or so bogged down of something you've done and you feel ashamed or you could be going through a high time feeling like you're just doing a great job in the race.

Nothing can hold you back. But you see, regardless of your situation, you are justified by faith, not by works. John Bunyan, in his allegorical book called *The Pilgrim's Progress*, I don't know if people here have read that, but it is a great book.

It is a great book to read and reflect on. And I'm just going to say one of the scenes. The main character is called Christian. He just uses these very defined titles. There's Christian and there's other ones.

And he's with his companion, Hopeful. And he comes to this river. And this river, the only way to cross it is by faith. And they start going through the river and he begins to sink because his focus, he was focused on, for some reason, he just starts getting bogged down like, I can't, I will never make it in this river.

[20:39] I will never get through because of the things I've committed. And then his companion, Hopeful, cries out to him as he's sinking, saying, Be of good cheer.

Jesus makes you whole. And then Christian, the main character, cries out the beautiful verse that's in Isaiah. He cries out, and this is God talking through Isaiah.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.

And the flame shall not consume you. See, if you're here and you haven't put your faith and trust in Jesus, now is the time. Now is the time to just call out to him.

It doesn't have to be a big fancy prayer. It just has to be, Lord, help me. And if you are here and you have your faith and trust in Jesus, know that you are justified.

[21 : 37] And as we come in a few moments to the table and we reflect on the bread, Jesus' broken body for us, and as we reflect on the wine or the grape juice, Jesus' blood, know that you are justified and you can come to this table just filled with joy regardless of what situation you feel like you're in right now.

Let us pray. Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you. I thank you that sometimes your text is hard, but there's great truths in it regardless.

Father, thank you for Jesus. Thank you for the cross. Thank you that we are justified on faith and not by works. Thank you, Lord. It doesn't matter where we stand.

Jesus paid it all. Jesus paved the way. And I just pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.