

The Doctrine of Justification

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[0 : 00] If you would open up your pew Bible to page 1119, I am eventually going to get there. Well, have you ever changed your mind about someone?

Let's say you met someone initially and you were not impressed. You're kind of like, who is this person? Kind of turned off, you're guarded, not thinking you're going to spend much time with it. Then something happens. And you have a change of heart towards that person. You've heard about this in some marriages. Like the wife is initially turned off by her to-be husband back in the early days.

And then something dramatic happens. And all of a sudden, the wife changes her heart towards this young man and they get married. Change of heart. Or maybe someone has changed their mind about you.

You started out out of favor with someone. And for whatever reason, that person changed their mind about you. You went from being out of favor to being in favor with them.

[1 : 12] Last week's sermon, I made the case from Romans 1, 2, and 3, that all of us, all of us are unrighteous in God's sight.

Whether we are unrighteous hedonists or unrighteous moralists, we're all without excuse before God. We can't excuse ourselves.

And we are justly under His wrath because of that. In Romans 5, 10, we read, We were enemies of God.

Out of favor. Enemies. Let me ask you, what would it take For God to change His mind about an unrighteous sinner who is without excuse and under His wrath?

What would it take for God to change His mind towards you and towards me? If we are all justly without excuse?

[2 : 19] If we are all justly under God's wrath, what would need to change the mind of a just God towards us? God would need to change us.

God would need to change us. Justly. And here we have the doctrine of justification. Last week, I shared with you from Romans 1 that the gospel of Jesus Christ, this message from God to an unrighteous humanity, it is historic and powerful.

Christ's life, death, and resurrection happened in real space and time. And that event of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, according to our Bibles, is the source of God's power to people of salvation.

I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is God's power for salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God has been revealed from faith to faith.

For it is by faith. The righteous shall live. The righteous shall live by faith. The gospel solves our terrible unrighteousness problem by making us right in the eyes of God.

[3 : 48] It is extraordinary. At the end of the sermon, I circled back to Romans 3.21 because Paul circles back to the gospel. And I introduced three words to you.

Do you remember those three words if you're here? The first one was propitiation in 3.25. It comes from the realm of animal sacrifice. And animal is sacrificed. Its blood would shed.

And it would satisfy God's wrath. Back in the Old Testament, it was only temporary. But Jesus is our propitiation now. And his blood shed for us satisfies all of God's wrath that was hanging over us for our unrighteousness.

Then there's another word, redemption. It's the language of the slave market. And Jesus ransomed his life to deliver you out of slavery to sin.

And then we came across that word justification, which is in the domain of the law court. It's legal ease. By believing in Jesus and his finished work, God declares an unrighteous sinner righteous in

his sight.

[4 : 58] You go from being out of favor with God, in wrong standing with God, to by this declaration of God, you are in right standing with God.

So this morning, I'm going to devote the whole sermon to the doctrine of justification. And here's how we're going to do it. Doctrine defined, doctrine supported, doctrine applied. The doctrine of justification explained.

That's why we have this in front of us. Doctrine supported. We're going to do a tour de force of Romans 4 and 5. And then doctrine applied. There are a number of ways that the doctrine of justification will bring health to your soul, Christian.

And if you're a non-Christian, this is one of the best things you're going to hear in your whole life. If you're a Christian, God has changed his mind towards you once for all.

You were once under wrath, but now you are under his grace because he changed you. So let's look at this doctrine defined.

[6 : 08] Now I know, some of you in the room, I hear the word doctrine, and you're like, honey, wake me up in about 30 minutes. When you hear the word doctrine, you think academy.

You think sleep time. You think boredom. You think of the Peanuts cartoon where Charlie Brown's sitting and his teacher's going, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah, wah.

When you begin to the New Testament, especially in the past orals, the first, second Timothy, Titus, whenever that word doctrine shows up, there's usually an adjective in front of it. Translated healthy, sound.

Doctrine simply means teaching what the Bible teaches about something. And biblical doctrine, Bible teaching is healthy for the Christian.

It brings soundness to the Christian. And so when we talk about the doctrine of justification, oh, it will bring health to your soul.

[7 : 14] In this little book, Concise Theology by J.I. Packer, this is an introduction to Christian doctrine. And about halfway through the book, he talks about justification and he defines it.

Let me define it for you, according to J.I. Packer. Justification is a judicial act of God pardoning sinners, accepting them as just, and so putting permanently right their previously estranged relationship with him.

This justifying sentence or declaration is God's gift of righteousness. It's bestowal of a status of acceptance for Jesus' sake. When God justifies an unrighteous sinner, God changes that unrighteous sinner's legal standing before him.

It's a legal change of status. And he changes his mind about us. Now, right out of the gate, I want to help you understand how God did that.

The inner workings of how the God of the universe can change his mind about an unrighteous sinner. Would you turn in your Bibles, if you have a pew Bible, it will be to page 1143.

[8 : 34] It's in the book of 2 Corinthians 524. And Paul's been talking about reconciliation. We're going to come back to that later in the sermon. But in 521, he says this.

For our sake, he, God, made him, Jesus, to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him, Jesus, we might become the righteousness of God. So right out of the gate, I want to help you understand what theologians call double imputation or the great exchange.

So in light of 2 Corinthians 521, in our conversation about justification to God, God making just right an unrighteous sinner, there are two things I want you to see.

Here you are. And before you believed in Jesus, you were justly under God's wrath. And so all of God's wrath was storing up over you and would have poured out on you for eternity.

Now the reason for that is, dun, dun, dun, dun. Can you read this? This is a binder of your unrighteousness. A list of offenses in great detail about your life.

[9 : 50] Your thought life, your actions, sins of commissions, sins of omissions. All right here. And this was the data God needed to pour out his wrath on you.

Justly. Now over here, we have Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ, totally God, totally man, lived on this planet.

And his binder is of perfect righteousness. Christ's righteousness. Every day of his life, 24-7, 365.

He pleased God. He did what none of us can do just in a single day. He did it his whole life. So here you have it. Jesus Christ, Christ's righteousness.

You, under God's wrath because of your unrighteousness. By the way, Jesus was beloved by the Father. Accepted fully. So here is what the doctrine of double imputation is.

[10:51] When a sinner like you and me believes, God now responds to that faith by thinking differently. He now thinks of your righteousness being placed on Jesus.

And that wrath that was over you, he pours out on full. Poured. Out on full on Jesus Christ on Good Friday for you.

On all of your sin. So much so, all of God's wrath for all of your sin was poured out in full. So there's no more wrath.

He satisfied it. Propitiated your wrath. That's the first part of double imputation. And it gets better. Because God in that single response, His justifying grace and mercy, not only considered your unrighteousness placed on Christ and all of His wrath poured out on it, He now thinks of Christ's righteousness as being imputed to you.

Legally. A new legal status for the Christian. And instead of God's fury being poured out, Oh, there's nothing but favor and mercy and grace, beloved child that you are.

[12:17] Do you hear what's going on here? Now the question is, when did that happen? The moment you believed that Jesus died for you for the very first time.

That moment, God changed His mind about you. Because He justified you on the basis of imputing your unrighteousness to Christ and Christ's righteousness to you.

Can anybody give me an amen? Amen. Let me drill down on this a little bit more. So when we talk about the doctrine of justification, we're talking about a change of legal status.

There's five things you need to know about the doctrine of justification. It is a legal declaration. It's not necessarily experiential. God changes your legal status.

We've got a couple, James and Joelle, they're going to be married this Saturday. I think they're over there. Give me, hoorah! They're going to have a legal marital status change. Done.

[13:25] When God justifies an unrighteous sinner, they have a change of legal status before God. Now that legal declaration is a declaration of God alone.

An unrighteous sinner has nothing to contribute to it. If you want to say we can contribute to it, it would be just simply our faith of receiving God's grace.

It's not a work, it's a response. And even that originates from God's work in you. So justification is a legal declaration. It is God alone.

We don't play a role in that other than receive the gift. It's immediate. Instantaneous. The moment you believe, you are justified in God's sight.

And it's complete. When you believe for the first time, and God justifies you, it's not like God's like, hey, I'm going to put 10% of your justification down, and follow up 90% with the rest when you're dead.

[14:31] No, no. It's all of Christ's righteousness imputed to you the moment you believe. It's complete. It's full. That's why the fifth one is, it's unchanging.

You can have the worst day of your life, Christian, but you're still completely justified in God's sight. Isn't that good news? It's a legal declaration.

It's by God alone. It's immediate. It's complete. It's unchanging. And you know what? We can walk away by saying, you're as justified follower of Jesus as the apostle Paul is justified.

Because you both share the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Christ, it's not going to change. You can't earn this. You can't work, put this on layaway and work to it.

It's only received as a gift. That's why Romans 3.24 says that we're justified by His grace as a gift.

[15:38] So the one time and forever legal judgment of God in which He justly declares an unrighteous sinner to be righteous in His sight on the basis of Jesus Christ's finished work, that's what justification is.

You can do it shorthand. You can say, God's declaration of an unrighteous sinner righteous in His sight. It's legal. And so once you've been justified, you're totally forgiven, totally accepted.

The great exchange has taken place. It doesn't get revoked. It's yours forever. What has God done to change His mind about you? He's changed you.

You see? That's doctrine defined. Let's look at doctrine supported. Now you may be sitting in your seat and you're like, somebody, this is just too good to be true.

Are you sure Paul didn't make that up? How do you know that's true? When Paul and Silas were on their second missionary journey in Acts 17, they showed up in this town called Berea, shared the

gospel, and the Bereans, they examined the scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

[17:00] So for us, when we hear something as amazing as this doctrine of justification, it is good and right for us to say, is this biblical? And for what we see in Romans 4 and 5, the Apostle Paul lays out four lines of support for the doctrine of justification, for a righteousness that's by faith.

You ready? Tour de force. We're going to blaze through it. First line of support, we read in Romans 4, 1-12.

Precedent. Old Testament precedent. He's laying out a case. In Romans 4, 1-12, the Apostle Paul starts by talking about Abraham and how Abraham was justified not by his works but by his faith. So in verses 1-5, 1-4, Paul points to Abraham and says, Abraham was justified, made righteous by faith in God's grace.

And he quotes Genesis 15-6. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness. And then in verse 6, verse 5 and 6, 7 and 8, he moves from Abraham then talking about David.

[18:31] And he quotes Psalm 32, 1 and 2, Blessed are those whose lawless needs are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin. And so, right out of the gate, Paul is supporting this righteousness by faith, this alien righteousness imputed to sinners, the righteousness of Christ, by pointing to Genesis 15 and by Psalm 32.

And he's already showed his cards. Because back in Romans 1, 16 and 17, this righteousness from God, this is how it's always been, Habakkuk 2-4, the righteous shall live by faith.

So I hope you see what Paul's doing here. He's setting the precedent. Now, there is a word that gets repeated in this section. It's the word count.

In verse 3, Abraham believed God and it was counted. Verse 4, his wages are not counted as a gift, but as his due. Verse 5, his faith is counted as righteousness. Verse 6, of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from the work.

Verse 8, the Lord will not count his sin. Verse 9, that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. Verse 10, how then was it counted to him?

[19:52] Verse 11, righteousness would be counted to them as well. And if you go all the way down to verses 22-23, you've got three more counted. What's all this counting? This is Paul talking about God's thinking.

God's change of mind. God's reckoning a righteousness, not your own to you. He's again and again saying it.

That's what happened to Abraham. That's what happened to David. That's what Habakkuk was talking about. And when you get into Hebrews 11 and the Hall of Fame, all those men and women of faith made righteous in God's sight by faith in God's grace.

In fact, in verses 9 and 12, Abraham was justified. Paul makes this point clear. Before he was circumcised. By faith, not by works. Here's the point.

Justification by faith, not works, is what the Bible has always taught. So here's what that means. Maybe you grew up in the church and you're like, oh yeah, the Old Testament.

[21:06] The Old Testament teaches a salvation by works of the law. And the New Testament teaches a salvation by faith in God's grace. You're mistaken. It's always been God's grace receiving righteousness by faith.

That's the point Paul's making here in Romans 4. Isn't that good news? Now you may be asking, hold on a second. So, alright, okay, alright, I'm justified by trusting in the past finished work of Jesus.

Okay, how about, like, how is Abraham justified if Jesus hadn't died yet? How's David justified if Jesus hasn't died yet? God justified Abraham, David, and these Old Testament saints based on their faith in the future finished work of Jesus.

It's always been by faith. Line one, Old Testament precedent.

Line two, why justification is the real deal. We see this in chapter 4 verses 13 through 25 in Romans and it has to do with this word promise.

[22:33] If you look through this part you will see the word promise showing up a number of times. In verse 13 we see the word promise. For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would bear be the heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

Verse 14 and the promise is void. Verse 16 in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring. You scroll down to verse 20 no unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God but he grew strong in the faith as he gave glory to God.

Fully convinced verse 21 that God was able to do what he had promised. But you know what? There's more. Because in verse 17 the word promise isn't used but there's an actual promise. As it is written I have made you Abraham the father of many nations. Promise. That's Genesis 17.5 And then at the end of verse 18 God says so shall your offspring be.

Genesis 15.5 Promise. What's this promise? It's God's promise to Abraham that through one of his offspring he will bless all the nations of the world.

[23 : 51] That Abraham will be the father of many nations. Not just Israel the circumcised folk but everybody. He will make him the father of many nations. His heirs will number as the stars of the heavens.

That promise. And the point Paul is making here is that God's plan for the very fullness of time from the very beginning was to save to bless people from all nations through Jesus Christ.

Paul in Galatians 3 makes the case grammatically that Jesus Christ is the offspring of Abraham through whom God will bless the nation.

So what does this have to do with justification by faith? This promise rests on grace received by faith not the law. So that you can have people coming into the kingdom who aren't Jews but Gentiles too.

The heirs of this promise are made righteous by God's grace received by faith. God's promise to bless the nations to Abraham was a promise of grace to all people through Jesus Christ.

[25 : 20] God's promise plan is a plan of grace in which he would change his mind towards unrighteous sinners by changing them by his grace.

God's promise to Abraham So when we sing Father Abraham had many sons and many sons had Father Abraham I am one of them and so are you so let's just praise the Lord.

Do you know how you can be a son or daughter of Abraham? It's not by being circumcised it's not by obedience to Jewish dietary laws it comes through a righteousness by faith based on grace it's the promise Do I have an amen?

Come on I'm so thrilled all week long man you should think I'm like lying on my back can't we preach this? Alright third line of support I'm going to have to speed this up a little bit this next section is chapter 5 1 through 11 Tour de force and in this section we go from talking about promise to talking about a very important word in your Bible let me see if I can emphasize it by reading it therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ peace shalom and the peace that's being talked about is the satisfaction of all of God's wrath for your sin in the propitiating work of Jesus and you being made righteous in his sight by being imputed the righteousness of Christ so there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus that's the peace so now you turn to the end of this section and you're like okay where's the peace verse 10 salvation where's the peace no peace verse 11 no peace there's a different word reconciled for if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son made peace with much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life more than that we also rejoice in God through our Lord

Jesus Christ whom we have now received reconciliation peace this passage is about peace this is what the justifying grace of God does for sinners it results in peace real peace not fake peace real peace it is the only means given by God in which a sinner can be at peace with God Paul is arguing here there's no other peace with God outside of this justification by grace through faith God has changed his mind by changing you now there's something you just gotta see just gotta see it in the middle of this passage about peace something else comes up what would compel a just and holy God to go to such lengths to send his one and only son to live a perfect life to die in the place of sinners to be raised from the dead reigning on high and offer salvation to the nations what would compel

[29 : 04] God to go to such extreme lengths for sinners check out verse 6 chapter 5 for while we were still weak at the right time Christ died for the ungodly for one will scarcely die for a righteous person though perhaps for a good person one dare even to die but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us since therefore we have now been justified by his blood much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God you see what drove our just and holy God to go to such lengths to make you righteous in his sight was his love for you he wanted to be reconciled with you he needed to make peace with you he knew you couldn't make peace with him your unrighteous deeds stood against you so he made a way through

Jesus the peacemaker all throughout this passage you have Christ died for the unrighteous godly Christ died for us justified by his blood we are enemies reconciled to God by the death of his son the death of Jesus is God's love for sinners to make peace with us to justify us it's beautiful so by believing in the gospel a sinner is not just justified in God's sight he is she is reconciled to God and there is peace between the sinner and God and what drove that is love perfect love casts out fear what a God what peace okay the fourth line of support is in 5 12 through 21 we've looked at precedent we've looked at promise we've looked at peace and now the fourth p word proxy in chapter 5 12 through 21 one of the other results of God's grace in our life is that we've got a new proxy in 12 to 21

Paul contrasts two men Adam and Jesus Christ and think of these two men as the proxies for all mankind you're you're either represented by Adam or you're represented by Jesus all human beings are either in Adam or in Jesus and by proxy as a representative head and throughout this passage Paul lumps all people as either being in Adam or being in Christ Jesus notice he doesn't lump all people as either Jew or Gentile what he's talking about is how God sees all people as either being in Adam or being in Jesus and if you're in Adam you're experiencing a life marked by sin death judgment condemnation the reign of sin but if you're in Christ Jesus your life is marked by ongoing righteousness it's life not death grace as a free gift you're made righteous legally and now you're under the reign of grace who's your proxy how does

God change his mind about you he gives you a new proxy Jesus his justifying grace moves you from Adam to Jesus you know I know not everybody is a what's his name I forget his name Harry Potter fan I've read the books seen some of the movies I know it's about wizards going to wizard school apparently when first year wizards go to the wizard school of Hogwarts they're eating in this big banquet hall and there's this talking hat that goes on their head and the talking hat decides which house for them to go to and there are four houses in Hogwarts but there's really two that matter most Slytherin and

Gryffindorff and this hat decides which house you're in God's word here we're learning that God sees all humanity in one of two houses house of Adam sin reigning to death or the house of Jesus grace reigning in life and the way you move from one house to the other is not by working your way there it's by trusting in Jesus finished work there and so God now declares a sinner righteous in his sight in the house of Jesus solely based on that sinner's trusting in God's promise is that amazing Christian you're in the house of Jesus now non

[34 : 49] Christian it's time to go from the house of Adam to the house of Jesus all right let's do doctrine applied we've defined justification God declaring an unrighteous sinner righteous in his sight based on the finished work of Jesus we've looked at the support there is biblical precedent there is the promise to Abraham there is this peace and now Jesus is our proxy doctrine applied I actually have five B's but I'm getting hot up here is anybody hot out there I'm about to wilt but man I'll name the B's and I'm going to pick just two to hit doctrine applied for Christians the doctrine of justification is your bely one the doctrine of justification is your ballast two the doctrine of justification is your boldness three the doctrine of justification is your battle cry four and the doctrine of justification is your boast five let's talk bely ballast battle cry when I was a youth pastor

I'd bring youth all around Wisconsin and we would do a lot of rock climbing it was great for young people to get stretched team building is wonderful but what would happen is a student would wear a girdle and there's this rope that goes down they would click in with a carabiner and that rope would go all the way to the top of the cliff that's anchored up there and they would come down and behind them was a person called a belyer and that belyer was actually kind of anchoring the rope and so this climber's health and well being actually depended on the belyer and so when a student was about to climb they would look back at the belyer and they would say belyer on question mark and the belyer would say back belyer on I got you the doctrine of justification is like this inseparable rope between you and

Jesus in which you every morning can you imagine you are turning to the God of the universe and you're like belyer on am I justified and then the God of the universe says belyer on baby if God is for you who can be against you the thing is if you're a believed in Jesus the belyer is on whether you think it's on or not he's got you regardless of how you feel you're justified it is a legal declaration if you were American living in Iran chances are you're not going to be feeling too American but you are a U.S.

citizen you if you're justified you are justified and belayed in regardless of how you feel ballast anybody know the song the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald that would have been awesome if that was actually the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald well on Lake Michigan you can get some crazy seas crazy lake waves and obviously on the Atlantic Pacific too and back in the day I think they still do this they would put ballast at the very bottom the hull of a boat and ballast would be rocks metal things like that and so what happens is the center of gravity for a boat it actually then resides underneath the water line you know what that does it keeps a boat from being overturned it can get hit by a rogue wave and it doesn't overturn the doctrine of justification is ballast for a Christian soul because if you're like me usually a few times a week maybe a few times a day you get accused you get a fiery dark shot at you trying to make you think that you should be afraid of God I did some things in high school that I have such deep regrets over and to this day I know I'm 51 I look like I'm 23 but to this day to this day those things can haunt me and you know what I have to say to them I'm belayed in and Jesus is my ballast you can throw anything at me but everything that I've done has been paid in full by Jesus doesn't stick I'm going to keep chugging by God's grace the doctrine of justification is your ballast we need to help each other there remind each other the ballast in us through

[40 : 35] Christ boldness hey confess your sins you've got nothing to be ashamed of battle cry the doctrine of justification you know what it does it makes you come out swinging instead of letting your sin rule over you like you're still under your old proxy Adam you've been shifted to a new house you're not under sin anymore at the reign of sin has been destroyed that dominion has been crushed by Jesus and now we are under the reign of grace and so when I think of being justified and I belay in in the morning and when you think about that too that is your battle cry to fight the sin that remains within because the reality is you're simultaneously justified and sinful this side of glory justification when

I encounter a brother who's struggling with pornography do you know what I set out to do to convince him of his justification that's what I set out to do and that's what Paul does in Romans 3 4 and 5 justifications laid out and then Romans 6 he starts going after sanctification and that's where we're going to go for for for for for the next two weeks I needed to help you understand what we can pursue sanctification justification is the one time act of God in which we're made legally righteous in his sight sanctification is the day in day out street fight of living out that righteousness come for the next two weeks we're going to be in Romans chapter 6 alright doctrine defined doctrine supported doctrine applied somewhat

Christian on the basis of Christ's finished work God has changed his mind towards you because he changed you belay on belay on you're justified the doctrine of justification is health to your soul non Christian if you still fear God has yet to change his mind about you that you're still without excuse you're still under his wrath that you think it up to you to fix your life he loves you so much that he sent his son to die for you to change you so he could change his mind about you too he offers you full forgiveness and acceptance today and you too can belay in if you're a non Christian it's time to leave the house of Adam and come into the house of Jesus by faith if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you'll be saved or you will be justified pray with me

God in heaven would you use my little fish and loaves to do big work in people's lives for the glory of your name amen