

The Righteousness of God

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Date: 02 November 2025

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[0 : 00] All right, if you would, go ahead and open your Bibles to Romans chapter 3. Clinton, Chelsea, thank you all. Choir, thank you for leading us in time of worship. That song, Cornerstone, beautiful introduction to our topic of the righteousness of God.

Oh, may I then in him be found. Wow, clothed in his righteousness. All right. Well, let me pray for us, and we will go to the text.

Lord Jesus, thank you for who you are. Thank you that you offer to us your righteousness. God, I pray that as we study this passage today, as we look in your word, that you would open our hearts, enlighten our hearts to see your truth, to apply it to our lives.

We love you. We praise you. We pray your blessings now in Jesus' name. Amen. So we are, like I said, we're starting a new series. We're going to take a look at a handful of words.

Most of the words we're going to be looking at are actually found here in Romans chapter 3, verses 21 through 26. We'll also look at Ephesians chapter 1 and assorted passages throughout. But the idea here, like I said, is to look at the important words for our faith.

[1 : 20] So the first word that we're looking at is righteousness. And as I mentioned before, you'll hear me use the words righteousness and justification interchangeably or justified.

The reason for that is because they both mean the same thing. They both come from the same Greek word, dikaiosune. And so the words justified and righteous, justification and righteousness, these are the same words.

Justification is what is bestowed or granted to a person so that we can be counted as righteous before God.

So just so you know, that's why you'll hear me use these words interchangeably. But before we go any further, I want to ask you guys a question. Have you ever heard someone say, or maybe you've said, or maybe you are at a place right now in your life where you are saying that one day I'll get right with God?

Have you ever heard anybody say that? One day I'll get right with God. Right? Not today, but one day I'll get right with God. I know I will. I know I will. Yeah, I've heard that a handful. That's like a pretty common theme in country songs, right?

[2 : 29] Like, I'm going to live for myself right now. And then one day my dog will die. I'll get sad. And then I'll live for God then kind of thing, you know? It's a silly way of thinking though.

This idea that one day I'll get right with God. Because here's the question. What does that even mean? How can a person get right with God? How can I say one day I'll get right with God? How do I know? How do I know what to do? How do I know where to go? How do I know what good with God looks like? Do I have to base it on what it feels like? If it feels like I'm good with God, then I'm good with God.

How do we know what it means to get right with God? This question was at the heart of the issue that launched what is now known as the Protestant Reformation in the history of the church.

So we celebrated Halloween on October 31st. Or some celebrated Halloween. Some celebrated another night. You know, my father-in-law celebrated his birthday on October 31st. So everybody has different ways of thinking about that day.

[3 : 32] But if you saw things on social media or maybe you know about this anyways, October 31st is called Reformation Day. And the reason that it's called Reformation Day is because on October 31st of 1517, Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses asking for debate on the church doors in Wittenberg in Germany.

These 95 theses, these questions that he asked, these topics that he wanted to debate sparked what is now called, again, the Protestant Reformation. Reformation.

So here's a little church history for you. If you are not Catholic, you are a Protestant. Did you know that? Okay, we knew that. Good. Have you ever been to Chewy's?

You know the Tex-Mex Chewy's? If you look on the back of their silverware, they have prayers. They have a Catholic prayer. They have a Jewish prayer before your meal. They have a Protestant prayer on there. One time when my sister was younger, we went to Chewy's and she said, Daddy, what's a Protestant?

Protestant. That was classic. But here, I was watching a sermon this week and I thought this was a good question.

[4 : 45] The preacher is R.C. Sproul and he asked the question, we know that we're Protestants, but do you know what we're protesting? Do you know what we're protesting? Why are we Protestants?

What are we protesting against? Any ideas? What did you say? Do what? The Catholic Church. Protesting against, but not just the Catholic Church, right?

What specific teachings? Like what are the things that make us Protestant? What are the doctrines that we hold to that we say this is distinct enough that there needs to be a separation between Protestant believers and the Catholic Church?

Like what are those important doctrines? Well, the major one for Martin Luther and other reformers of his day was the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

So there were five solas of the Reformation. You get way more church history than you wanted today, but you got an extra hour of sleep, so you're good. Okay? Five solas of the Reformation.

[5 : 46] Sola Scriptura. Scripture alone. Meaning the church is not the final voice of authority. God's word is the final voice of authority for the believer. Sola Fide, which is by faith alone.

This is the question of justification. We're justified by faith alone. You have sola Christus, which is Christ alone. Sola de la Gloria, which is for the glory of God alone.

And sola gratia, which is by grace alone. So that's the five solas of the Reformation. The major, major hinge point for Martin Luther and for other people in the church was this question of justification.

And the reason was because the Catholic Church had attempted to answer this question, how does a person become right with God? And the way that they answered that question was in a manner that Martin Luther was distraught with.

He was overcome with personal grief and sorrow and pain because he was unable to feel as if he was right with God. See, the Catholic Church in their day and Rome still today holds to this.

[6 : 58] This is not probably true for all Catholics or all priests or, you know, every Catholic Church in terms of teaching. But from Rome, they still hold to a different view of justification than we hold to as Protestants.

Okay, and the view is pretty simply that an individual can be made righteous over the course of their life, made justified, made justified, over the course of their life through various acts of merit.

So they're not absent of faith. Just so you know, if you hear somebody make a caricature of the Catholic Church, like, they believe in works and not faith, that's not entirely true. It certainly is faith and works, though.

And so a person can be made righteous through a lifetime of cooperating with God's grace by performing acts of merit. So these included the sacraments like baptism, communion, Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, and confession.

It also included things like penance and good deeds. So the idea was that if you lived well, God would infuse justification into you over the course of your life so that you can become gradually right with God.

[8 : 14] Now, here's the real struggle. I don't know if you can catch it here, if you caught it, maybe you know. The real struggle is how do I know that I'm right with God? How do I know that I've done enough?

So that if I die, I have enough good stuff in the bank that God will allow me to come into heaven and be with Him for eternity. How do I know that I'm justified? If I'm constantly being made justified and I can go back and become less justified, then how do I know that I've done enough good things?

And so Martin Luther was, he was torn up. He took issue with this because he saw that this concept of justification was easily manipulated and abused in the church.

So the church would sell indulgences, indulgences which were basically access to a treasury of good works, a treasury of merits that had been stored up by the really, really good Christians of old, the saints, so that if you buy these indulgences or if you receive them through another act of penance, maybe a certain number of Hail Marys or something like that, then these saints of old who did enough good deeds will actually give you some of their righteousness so that you can make up for some of the things that you've done.

And so the church was out selling this idea. Literally, there was a person who walked through the street there where Luther was in Wittenberg. His name was Tetzel, and Tetzel would come through town.

[9 : 35] He was a pretty good salesman. He had a nice jingle that he used. So he'd walk around and he said, every time a coin in the copper rings, a soul from purgatory springs.

So the idea from Tetzel was, if you pay the church enough money, you can get your loved ones out of purgatory and into heaven. And if you pay them even enough, you can pay for yourself so that you can skip purgatory and go straight to heaven.

And so Luther saw this, and he was like, this is an abuse of grace. This is an abuse of justification. This is stealing. This is wrong. And he was torn up. And so he took issue with this idea.

And so he, as he studied God's word and studied specifically the book of Romans, developed a really strong theology on what is now known as the doctrine of justification by faith alone. We don't need faith and the treasury of merits or faith and a bunch of good deeds or faith and confession or faith and baptism.

We need faith in Jesus Christ and him alone in order to be justified or made right with God. So when we hear people say, I'll get right with God one day, typically what they mean is, I'll go to church one day.

[10 : 40] I'll start reading my Bible more one day. I might even raise my kids in church one day. They aren't typically intending by that. I will be granted righteousness from God so that I can be right with him for eternity.

And that's the issue. We have a misunderstanding, I think, in our church, not just our church, but in the church, of what exactly we mean by justification or by righteousness.

I don't think it's quite as dramatic as it was in the 1500s when Martin Luther sparked the Protestant Reformation, but I'm thankful for the Protestant Reformation. I'm thankful that we're here today because we're going to look here at the book of Romans, Romans chapter 3, verses 21 through 26, which in the margin of his Bible, Martin Luther wrote, this is the center point of the book, Paul's main argument, and probably the whole Bible.

Martin Luther wrote that when he read Romans 3, 21 through 26. This is a very important passage. It encapsulates the entire argument from Paul for the book of Romans, and it teaches us what the righteousness of God is.

Let's read together Romans chapter 3, verses 21 through 26. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the law and the prophets.

[12 : 04] The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ. To all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood through faith to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint, God passed over the sins previously committed.

God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be just and justify the one who has faith in Jesus.

We're going to look here, and we're going to identify how God's righteousness has been revealed to us, how God's righteousness is received by us, and then finally, how God's righteousness changes us, how it's reflected in us, the work of God in righteousness.

Verse 21, the first thing we're looking at is God's righteousness revealed. Verse 21, but now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the law and the prophets.

[13 : 20] I know we're jumping into Romans chapter 3 without any context, so let me give you just a quick flyover overview of what is going on at this point in the book of Romans. Okay?

Romans chapter 1, Paul says, Romans chapter 1, verse 16 and 17, I read it earlier, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew and also to the Greek, for in it, in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from

faith to faith, just as it is written, the righteous will live by faith.

Okay, so the church at Rome is a really unique church. In AD 49, the emperor, the Roman emperor Claudius, he expelled the Jews from Rome. Okay? There were Jewish Christians in Rome, and there were arguments over someone named Christ.

I wonder who that could be. And so, Claudius, because of all this arguing that was going on, said, okay, fine, all of the Jews get out of Rome. So, kicked him out. Okay? So, then in about AD 54 or 55, when Claudius died, the Jews were allowed to come back into Rome.

Well, at that point, the church in Rome had also expanded to Gentile believers. So, there were Gentile Christians in Rome, and they were worshipping together. And then when the Jews came back, they had some ethnic disagreements.

[14:37] They had some troubles. There was discord. There was disunity. They didn't like each other. The Jews thought that they were better because they were ethnically Jews. The Gentiles thought, hey, that's stupid. We're Christians too, right?

So, they had this argument. It's a good thing we are 2,000 years removed from that, and we would never have any struggles like that in the church today, right? That's good, right?

Well, Paul writes this letter to explain to the entire church, both Jews and Greeks, Gentiles, that everyone is sinful. So, Romans 1, 18 through 32, Paul explains how the Gentile world is fallen and is unrighteous before God.

For God's wrath, verse 18, For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. In other words, you guys are unrighteous, and because you're so unrighteous, you suppress the truth from yourself so much that you don't even recognize the truth anymore.

You're living for yourself. He goes on to describe their debased, reckless, sinful living, their complete idol worship, where they're worshipping created things instead of the creator God. He says that God gave them up.

[15:52] He gave them up to their sinful passions and desires, which was the wrath of God in their case. God poured out his wrath by essentially telling them, Okay, you don't want a relationship with me.

You will not have a relationship with me. So, live the way that you please. That's how God gave up the Gentiles to their fleshly desires, to their sinful living.

And as this was read in the church, all of the Jews in the congregation said, Amen. Those Gentiles are nasty, man. They're messed up people. And then Paul says, chapter 2, verse 1, Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse.

So, he turns now to the Jews, and he explains through Romans chapter 2 how the Jews are also sinful. You guys teach one thing, you do another. You guys teach legalism, and you follow whatever impulse you have.

You guys are just as sinful. And his whole point is, all of creation, all of humanity is unrighteous before God. All of humanity does not have a relationship with God and can't stand in God's presence.

[16:56] All of humanity is sinful and separated from God. Jew, Gentile, it doesn't matter. Then he goes on to explain, in Romans chapter 3, he says, What then? Are we any better off?

Not at all, for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin. Then, as it is written, he quotes the Old Testament, There is no one righteous, not even one. Miss Carol knows this because of my joke, right?

Miss Carol, how you doing? She says, good. Nobody's good. All right. There is no one who understands. There is no one who seeks God. All have turned away.

All alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They deceive with their tongues. Vipers' venom is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.

Their feet are swift to shed blood. Ruin and wretchedness are in their paths. And the path of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Look, Paul's point is, you guys are unrighteous.

[17:52] And just because you're Jewish doesn't mean you're any more righteous. Just because you have access to the law, the law doesn't justify you. It doesn't make you right with God. Keeping the law doesn't make you right with God.

He says, everyone is sinful. We're all on a level playing field. And he says that the law is given to shut the mouths of the entire earth. He says, now we know, verse 19, that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are subject to the law so that every mouth may be shut and the whole world may become subject to God's judgment.

So the idea here is that everyone is sinful. No one is righteous. And now we have to find out how do we get there? How do we become right with God? So the word righteousness, the word justification, it is a legal term.

Okay? It's a legal term. This means that a judge is able to grant a person in front of him as innocent according to the law.

So if a person lives right under the law, then a judge can look at that person and say, you haven't broken the law, so you're innocent. God is the judge of all creation.

[18:57] God is the judge of every human being. And what Paul explains to the Jews and to the Gentiles in Rome and what God is explaining to us through his word is that in the divine cosmic courtroom, we stand before the divine judge guilty and condemned.

We cannot stand before him innocent on our own because we've broken his law. Gentiles broke his law. They broke the natural law. Jews broke his law.

They broke the law that he had given. If we work through the Ten Commandments very quickly, we'd find that we've all broken the law. James says that if you've broken one command, you're guilty of breaking them all. We are lawbreakers.

So we cannot stand in the presence of the divine judge and say to him that we're innocent. We have no defense for our case. We have no cause to plead. We couldn't even plead guilty.

The judgment would be given. We are guilty in his presence. So when people say, I'm going to get right with God, and they're going to do enough things, I'm going to go to church enough, I'm going to read the Bible enough, I'm going to get baptized again, I'm going to get right with God.

[20:09] If you don't believe in Jesus, if you don't have faith in him, the Son of God, then all of the other things, it's worthless. You still would stand condemned in the presence of God.

We are unrighteous by nature. So we need righteousness. We need righteousness. And he says that it has been revealed.

Verse 21, again, now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, attested by the law and the prophets. So it's not the law that reveals God's righteousness.

We see God's standard in the law. God demands perfection. He demands innocence. But the law itself does not provide us with the cure.

It diagnoses the symptoms. Verse 20 says, for no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law because the knowledge of sin comes through the law. The law teaches us what sin is.

[21:12] But now righteousness has been revealed. And he says in verse 16 of chapter one that the gospel, which is the power of God for salvation, is what reveals to us the righteousness of God.

In other words, Jesus Christ, his life, his sinless ministry, his sinless life, his perfect atoning work on the cross, this shows us, this reveals to us the righteousness of God.

Christ Jesus is the righteousness of God. And Jesus also shows us, like the law, how far we are from God's perfect standard because Jesus kept the law perfectly.

Jesus lived without sin. He was tempted in every way, Hebrews says, but without sin. Jesus was perfect. He shows us again. He diagnoses that we have a sin problem. So how do we get righteousness?

The answer from the Catholic church, again, the answer from the Catholic church, the Council of Trent, this was a response to the Protestant Reformation. It was this idea of infused grace, of infused justification, that over the time of your life, you do enough good things, you do enough good deeds, that you are made righteous over time.

[22:20] What Paul says here in Romans and what the Bible teaches consistently is not that we are to be infused with justification, but that justification is a declaration by God on behalf of those who believe.

So if we want to receive righteousness, we have to be declared righteous by God. And the only way to do that is through faith.

Through faith. Verse 22, the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood through faith to demonstrate his righteousness because in his restraint, God passed over the sins previously committed.

The only way to receive the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ. He has revealed his righteousness. It's Jesus. And now he tells us how to receive his righteousness.

[23 : 30] And how do we do it? Favorite church answer? Jesus, right? Faith in Jesus. That's the only answer. It's the only way that we can be made righteous before God.

Martin Luther said, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is the article on which the church stands or falls. It's that serious. Now I want you to understand, this is not, I'm not telling you that you need to have faith in the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

That would be counterintuitive to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, right? You have to have faith in Jesus Christ alone. And in faith, by faith, you are granted, you are declared righteous by God.

Romans 10, 9 and 10 says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. In verse 10, for with the heart, one believes resulting in righteousness.

And with the mouth, one confesses resulting in salvation. salvation, justification, being right with God is received through faith in Jesus Christ and only by faith in Jesus Christ.

[24 : 47] In Romans chapter 4, Paul expands his argument. He talks about Abraham. Abraham from the Old Testament. He says, look, Abraham wasn't justified by anything he did.

He says, in fact, if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? And he quotes Genesis 15, 6.

Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness. Now to the one who works, pay is not credited as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited for righteousness.

Abraham is an example for all of us that the only way to receive the righteousness of God is by faith in God. Abraham trusted God with the impossible. He was almost 100 years old.

His wife was 90 years old. They were way too old to be having babies. Like physically, it was impossible. Didn't make any sense. I see some of y'all amen back there.

[25 : 49] Yeah, the old Baptist silent amen. He was way too old, but he trusted the Lord. He believed that God would be good on his word.

And that was credited to him as righteousness by faith alone. That was it. So God's gift of grace, his gift of righteousness is received only by faith alone.

In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 21, Paul explains this reality, I think in an even more beautiful way, where he talks about the work of Jesus.

He says in 2 Corinthians 5, 21, he made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him, by faith in Christ, we might become the righteousness of God.

So faith is how we receive the righteousness of God. But I gotta take this a step further and explain a little bit more. Here's another big church word for you. Are you ready? Imputation.

[26 : 56] Imputation. What that means is, it's a bookkeeping term, okay? It is taking from one account and giving it to another, okay?

In bookkeeping, you know, like finances. Taking from one, giving to another. God's righteousness is imputed to us by Christ himself.

This is called imputation. Of justification by faith, it's imputed to us, not infused into us through our good works, but it is imputed. It is given to us by God through faith in Jesus Christ.

So, there's this other theory here. It's not theory. It's this other reality, which is, it's actually a two-way street. Double imputation, okay? And what that means is, Jesus on the cross took our sin from our account and placed it on himself.

And because he took our sin from our account and placed it on himself, when God punished sin, when he poured out his wrath on sin in Christ on the cross, he was able to actually, actually sufficiently punish the sin that deserves the punishment.

[28 : 09] So, Jesus took our sin from himself and placed it in his account. That's why it says in 2 Corinthians 5 that he became sin. First time I read that, I was like, whoa, hey, I'm not sure, actually, what to think about that.

But I've caught up. I know what it means. He became sin. He took our sin on himself. God punished, poured out his wrath on our sin. And because of his sufficient sacrifice, Jesus, by faith, gives us his righteousness.

This is called the great exchange. He took our sin and he gives us his righteousness. That is a sweet deal, okay? We don't have to do anything else to receive it. He just, he gives it to you by faith in him, believing in him.

That's how we are made righteous. That's how we are declared justified. So, there's a couple of realities here. In the righteousness of God that is given to us, we have forgiveness of sins.

Actual, trustworthy, lasting, true forgiveness. forgiveness. This is how the righteousness of God is seen.

[29 : 22] This is the result of the righteousness of God or how it's reflected in us. The immediate reality, the immediate result of justification is forgiveness of sins.

That's why we say to pray to receive Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Repent, believe in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Because in the moment that a person gets declared righteous by God, the sins are forgiven.

David explained this really beautifully. Paul quotes from Psalms here in Romans chapter 4, verse 6 through 8. It says, Likewise, David also speaks of the blessing of a person to whom God credits righteousness apart from the works.

Blessed are those whose lawless acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the person the Lord will never charge with sin. I want you to catch that because it's really powerful. You will not be charged with sin. In the divine courtroom, you stand before God and he declares you innocent because the blood of Jesus covers your sin. When God looks at you, he doesn't see the bad things you've done.

[30 : 26] Even if, catch this, even if you sin after you're justified, his grace is sufficient. His justification is sufficient. The righteousness that God has given you is sufficient to cover a multitude of sins.

That means the sins you committed before you received Christ and because you're in the flesh and the reality of sin exists, the sins that you commit after you believe in Jesus, all forgiven.

The slate is clean. You stand innocent before God because of the work of Jesus. That is an already, current reality. You don't have to wait until the end of your life to die and wake up and see, oh, did I make it?

Did I do enough? Because Jesus secured your pardon by his death and resurrection. By his shed blood, by receiving the punishment that you deserve, Jesus secured your pardon.

And so that's why David was able to say, how blessed is the person whose sins are forgiven who is not counted with sin. Like you don't, it's not even on your record anymore. Have you ever gotten a speeding ticket and then gone to traffic school and it takes the speeding ticket off your record?

[31 : 29] You know what I'm saying? Twice. Maybe take a lesson here. No, I'm just kidding. It's like, it's not on your record at all.

Like if you stand before the judge, like he can't see that you had a speeding ticket on your record. It's completely removed. It's white plain. I was in the truck with a friend of mine when I was in high school. Buddy's name's Oliver.

I'll tell you that. So Oliver, if you're watching, I'm throwing you out, calling you out, man. Oliver was speeding down Pleasant View Road in Pleasant View, Tennessee. That's a 30 mile an hour road and he was pulled over going like 55.

I don't know. It was pretty quick. And officer came up to the window and he asked him, have you been pulled over before? And he said, no, sir. He walked, officer walked, okay.

He walks back, comes back up. He says, all right, well, you're right. You hadn't been pulled over before. I'm going to give you a warning. You boys, slow down. Be safe tonight. Oliver looks at me and I'll never forget. He says, I was pulled over last week but they said it was off my record and I wanted to test it out.

[32 : 31] Like, what are you doing? He lied to the police, man. But it was actually off his record. I mean, it was gone, right? It was completely gone. And that's the reality we have in Christ.

Our sin is gone, absolved, washed away, forgotten. That's the grace of God. We don't have to work for it. We don't have to earn it. Like, the work is done.

It's done for you. And if you want to receive that freedom, that forgiveness, the righteousness of God, it is available to you.

It's available to all of us by faith in Jesus Christ. So, in salvation, in being justified, we immediately have a right standing with God so we can approach his throne with boldness.

We can stand before him and plead our cause. He will hear us. We can worship him. We don't have to go through a priest. We don't have to go through anybody. You don't have to pray through me. We can go boldly to his throne.

[33 : 34] We have right standing. We have total forgiveness. But then there's also, there's this ongoing process that occurs because of justification. And this is called sanctification.

Sanctification and justification, I want to be clear, are two different realities for the believer.

Justification is an immediate declaration by God of right standing. Sanctification is the result of justification, but it is an ongoing process that for the rest of your life you become more holy, more Christ-like.

You live more for God. You reflect the justification that has been granted to you for the rest of your days. So, this is the ongoing work of justification, and it's through the process of sanctification, of growing in your walk with Christ.

I want to be really clear on this because what happens when people, the fear, I think, especially that the Catholic Church had, or at least purported, back in the 1500s, and the fear that we have today whenever we, you know, we try to shy away from legalism.

Well, we want to be careful because then what if people start living really bad lives? Like, there is a risk there, right? That you would take advantage of the grace of God and say, well, I'm forgiven so I can do whatever I want.

[34 : 49] I'm free to live. That's called antinomianism. There's another church word. Lawlessness. That's a life of lawlessness. And that is definitively, without a doubt, refuted throughout Scripture, especially in the book of Romans.

Paul says, should we continue in sin so that grace may abound? Absolutely not. And he goes on to say that we've died to sin. If we've died to sin, how can we live in it? If you have been made righteous by Jesus, then you are dead to sin.

So the result of justification is a right standing with God, and the fruit of justification is an ongoing sanctifying process where you live for Him for the rest of your days.

That shows itself, of course, in the fruit of the Spirit, right? That you live a sanctified life, a pure, pious life, not for the sake of legalism, but for the glory of God. But it also shows itself in good works.

This is why James, in James chapter 2, talks about that righteousness is given by faith and works.

Paul is talking about righteousness as the declaration of innocence, the declaration of pardon.

[35 : 58] But James is talking about the fruit of righteousness, which is good works. Like, you don't have faith in Jesus that guarantees your pardon, that where God declares you innocent, without also doing good works, without also living for Him.

Ephesians 2, 8 through 10 says, for you have been saved by grace through your faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is God's gift, not the result of works, so that no one can boast, for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

The ongoing work of justification is sanctification and good works, living for the glory of God. God's righteousness, because it's imputed to our account, it's actually given to us, we are made righteous, makes us new creations.

That is the New Testament terminology for a believer, that we are new creations. 2 Corinthians 5, 17 says, for if anyone believes in Christ, he is a new creation.

Behold, the old has passed away, the new has come. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus, justified, freed from your sin, and freed to live for Him forever.

[37 : 20] So that does away with the idea of lawlessness, of sinning, like, you know, living like the rest of the world, doing whatever you want. That's not how Christians are called to live. In fact, you might even say that that shows that you have not been justified, you have not been made right with God.

If you're willing to freely flaunt sin, you have to be cautious. We live as a reflection of His righteousness. We live to reflect His righteousness.

So, that is the righteousness of God in a nutshell, okay? That it is unique. It is not from us. Luther called it an alien righteousness. And it's only available to us by faith in Jesus Christ. And if we are granted righteousness, if we are declared righteous by God, then we are called to live for Him.

So, I'm going to close. We'll have a song. We'll have a time of reflection. We're going to take the Lord's Supper. I want you to understand, we practice the Lord's Supper to remember and celebrate the work of Jesus.

[38 : 29] Taking the Lord's Supper does not save you. Taking the Lord's Supper doesn't keep you saved. If you want to be baptized, baptism does not save you.

It doesn't keep you saved. I'd argue that baptism and the Lord's Supper are incredibly important. They're signs of obedience. They're fruit of the work of Christ, the justification that Christ has done in your life.

But they don't save you. There's no good work that you can do. There's no church attendance that you can keep. There's no kindness you can show.

If you fill up the blessing box that we're going to build, thank you, that's awesome. That doesn't save you. The only hope of salvation that we have is in Jesus Christ. And if you are saved, if you are justified by Jesus, then the call is to live for Him.

That means that you might fill up the blessing box. That means that you'll be baptized. That means that you'll take communion. That means that you'll serve the people of God in church, right? Like those things happen as a result of the justification that God has granted, not to get it, not to receive it.

[39 : 41] And if you're here today and you're one of those people who's in that place, you're like, hey, one day I'll get right with God. I don't know when, but whenever I'm done living, you know, how I want to live, I'm going to get right with God. I know I am.

Listen, if God is calling you to be right with Him, then repent of your sin and believe in Jesus today because the life that God has for you, the freedom from sin that God has for you, the justification that God declares on you is far greater than any life of indulgence that you want to live prior to getting your life right.

You also can't get your life right with God, not in your own strength. It's only through faith in Jesus Christ. So before the day comes where, like in Romans chapter one, God hands you over to your own passions and separates you from Himself in that way, before that day comes, repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

Let me pray for us and we'll close. Lord, you are good. Lord, you offer us your own grace and we do not deserve it. Your own justification, your own righteousness.

You make us right with you. God, we know, we confess, we can't make ourselves right with you. In various ways, we've tried, but all of that, all of those attempts, that's just rejection of your truth.

[41 : 10] Lord, you alone, through grace alone, by faith alone, you grant us your righteousness.

You make us right with yourself. You reconcile us to yourself. So Lord, I pray that as we close now, that your word would sink deeply into our hearts, that we would grow in our knowledge of you.

And Lord, that we would remember that we bring nothing to the table. We have nothing to boast about. Anything good that we offer is the righteousness that you've given us. We love you and praise you.

It's in Jesus' name. Amen.