

# Justified by Faith in Christ

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 28 May 2017

Preacher: Cedric Moss

[ 0 : 00 ] I regularly stand here. I don't always say it, but I regularly stand here and literally feel hopelessly insufficient to bring God's word.

But for other reasons as well. So in a short while when I pray, I'm going to ask you to really just pray for me, that God would really grant me grace and help me to bring his word this morning.

And as they would say in some traditional churches, you pray my strength in the Lord this morning.

So please turn your Bibles to Galatians chapter 2.

While you're turning there, I heard Lyndon preach perhaps his best message ever. Someone told me that, and I think you'd be impressed if you knew who told me that.

But I won't tell you who told me that. I've started to listen to the message. I have not completed it yet, but I do want to listen to that message. And I just am so grateful for Lyndon's faithfulness and willingness to stand and bring God's word, especially on a morning like this morning when I know how difficult it is to bring God's word.

[ 1 : 34 ] For Galatians chapter 2. As many of you know, perhaps all of you know, Table Talk magazine is produced by Ligonier Ministries.

But beyond publishing great resources like Table Talk, Ligonier also engages in a lot of other activities to advance the gospel around the world.

And in 2014 and 2016, Ligonier teamed up with LifeWave Research. LifeWave Research is the research arm of the Southern Baptist Convention to conduct a poll to get to the heart of theological beliefs of Americans.

And the poll is called the State of American Theology Study. In 2013, they surveyed or polled 3,000 Americans, and they polled them on 47 statements in order to measure their beliefs about God and sin, salvation, heaven and hell, the church, and the Bible.

And the poll takers had five responses to each statement. They could have responded strongly agree, somewhat agree, not sure, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

[ 2 : 59 ] So five responses they were given to each of the poll statements. One of the statements that the 3,000 poll takers were asked to respond to is this.

This is the statement they were asked to respond to. An individual must contribute his or her own effort for personal salvation.

An individual must contribute his or her own effort for personal salvation. Or to put it another way, the poll takers were asked to state if they believe that people must contribute to their salvation through some personal effort, through what they do or through what they don't do.

Here's how people responded to this statement. 50% strongly agreed with that statement.

That an individual must contribute his or her own effort for personal salvation. And 28% somewhat agreed. So if you combine those two responses, 78% or 2,340 persons out of 3,000 believe that we must contribute our effort for personal salvation.

[ 4 : 29 ] 7% or 210 persons said they were not sure. 11% strongly disagreed with it. And 5% somewhat disagreed with the statement, which means they believe that an individual does not have to contribute anything to his or her personal salvation.

So if you combine those two, it means that a meager percentage, 16% or 480 people out of 3,000 believe that an individual does not have to contribute anything towards his or her salvation.

That's the biblical view. The unbiblical view is the view of the 78% who believe that a person must contribute some personal effort to his or her salvation.

Now I suspect if this poll was done in the Bahamas, the numbers would be pretty similar. Won't be much different from what they were in the U.S.

And I even suspect that if we did this poll in churches, we would get, if not similar, close to similar responses, saying that people must contribute something to their personal salvation.

[ 5 : 58 ] But from cover to cover, the Bible refutes this false belief. From cover to cover. And this morning, as we return to the sermon series in the letter of Galatians, we come face to face with the Bible's teaching against salvation by works.

Face to face with it in this letter. In many ways, we have come to the apex of this letter. We have come to the high point of the letter of Galatians.

This morning, we are going to be reading verses 15 through 21 of chapter 2. So please follow along as I read, and I'm reading from the English Standard Version.

If you have another translation, yours will read slightly differently. Galatians 2, starting in verse 15. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.

[ 7 : 20 ] Because by works of the law, no one will be justified. But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin?

Certainly not. For if I rebuild what I tore down, I proved myself to be a transgressor. For through the law, I died to the law so that I might live to God.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

I do not nullify the grace of God. For if righteousness was through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Let's pray together. And as we pause in this moment, I do ask that you'd pray for me. Father, we are so grateful that we are able to gather in this place.

[ 8 : 40 ] We thank you for your saving grace through Jesus Christ. We thank you for that saving grace through Jesus Christ that we have come face to face with in this passage before us.

Lord, I ask in the name of Jesus that you would grant me enabling grace to preach of your saving grace this morning. I pray, Lord, that you would prepare all of our hearts and create room and space in our hearts to receive the grand truth of salvation through faith in Christ.

Lord, we ask that you would superintend both your word and our hearts. And Lord, that you would cause all of our hearts to be fruitful soil to receive your word and to produce the intended fruit from your word.

Father, we commit this time into your hands. We commit ourselves into your hands. In Jesus' name. Amen. In this commentary on Galatians, this particular passage, verses 15 through 21 of chapter 2, deceased pastor and theologian John Stott wrote the following.

In these verses, an important word occurs for the first time in Galatians. It is central to the meaning of the epistle, central to the gospel preached by Paul, and indeed central to Christianity itself.

[ 10 : 35 ] It is the word justified. Nobody has understood Christianity who does not understand this word. It is the word justified.

justified. It is the word justified. It is the word justified. John Stott is absolutely right. Nobody has understood Christianity who does not understand the word justified.

justified. And you will notice that the apostle Paul uses the word justified three times in verse 16 and one time in verse 17.

And if you don't understand the word justified as taught in scripture, you run a good chance of being among the 78% majority in the Ligonier Lifeway poll who believe that we must contribute something for our personal salvation.

And so this morning in our remaining time, I want to consider this question. What does it mean to be justified by God? What does it mean to be justified by God?

[ 11 : 51 ] And this morning, I will seek to answer this question in two parts. And they are, number one, how God justifies us.

And number two, why God justifies us. So first, how God justifies us. Well, hopefully the word justified or justification is familiar to you.

And if you were here for the very first message in this Galatians series, you would probably recall that I took some time to define and explain the word justification.

And the definition I gave in that first sermon in this series is as follows. Justification is the immediate act by which God declares sinners righteous because of Christ's death in their place.

That's what justification means. Justification is the noun. Justify is the verb. It is what God does. God justifies us. The result is justification.

[ 13 : 05 ] So when a person is justified, that person is declared not guilty or righteous in God's sight. It is similar to the declaration that happens in a courtroom where a judge at the end of a trial is going to proclaim a verdict and he is going to say, you have been found not guilty or you have been found guilty.

And one of the things about that pronouncement of the judge, they're very careful how they say it because many times a judge can actually be declaring an innocent person, a person who's truly innocent, a judge may declare that person guilty based on the circumstances of the trial.

So it's a declaration. The person is declared to be whatever. And sometimes what happens is if you have a good lawyer or if the evidence is weak, a person may be guilty but the judge will declare the person innocent.

It doesn't mean the person is innocent. It means that the person has been declared to be innocent. And justification, the justification that God does is very similar.

It is a declaration. It is a declaration over a repentant sinner to say not guilty, righteous.

[ 14 : 31 ] And so what makes justification an amazing truth is that the person who is being declared not guilty is in himself, is in herself, in fact guilty.

And though declared righteous, the person is in himself, in herself, in fact, unrighteous. And so what it means is this.

It means that separate and apart from the declaration of God that one is justified, if we move away from that and we stand on our own, we will stand in our guilt, we will stand in our unrighteousness. We only have a guiltless stand before God and a righteous stand before God under that declaration, that declaration that he pronounces on repentant sinners.

And because this is so amazing, I think it's part of the reason why we set about to pursue some other kind of justification because it just doesn't seem like that would be sufficient.

[ 15 : 45 ] But, to put it simply, justification is the process by which sinners are made right with God. So, let's consider what the Apostle Paul says about justification in these verses.

First of all, remember that Paul is not speaking these words in verses 15 through 21 in a vacuum. They are in response to the Apostle Peter and his hypocritical conduct that Paul previously referred to in verses 11 through 14 of chapter 2.

And if you were here for the previous two messages in this series, you might recall that in chapter 2 the Apostle Paul was laboring to show the Galatians that the gospel that he preached to them, which they had turned away from, had been endorsed by Peter and the other apostles in Jerusalem.

But when a group of men came from James, from Jerusalem, Peter, who used to eat with the Gentiles, withdrew himself. And he ceased eating with the Gentiles and was actually requiring the Gentiles to follow the requirements of the law of Moses.

And so what we see is in verse 14, Paul told Peter, look at verse 14 for a moment because it bridges the passage that we are going to come to right now. Paul says to Peter in verse 14, if you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

[ 17 : 29 ] Now the passage we have come to this morning is a continuation of Peter's, of Paul's argument against Peter and his hypocritical conduct.

And what we see Paul saying is this, starting in verse 15. He says, Peter, you and I both know that even though we are Jews and not Gentiles, we both know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Christ Jesus.

So we ourselves also have believed in Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law because by the works of the law no one would be justified.

So Paul establishes this point. He says, come on Peter, we know this. Your conduct is not consistent, Peter, because we know this. You and I know this. And this is the reason we have come to Christ.

We have put our faith in Christ. Now in verse 16, it's a kind of long sentence but Paul is saying one thing three times.

[ 18 : 42 ] I mean, he is laboring the point so that you get he says one thing three times. And what he is doing is he is interacting with or he is talking about two approaches to justification.

The first is justification by works. By works of the law. And here works of the law refers to all of God's commandments. Certainly the Ten Commandments but not limited to the Ten Commandments.

And it means keeping them perfectly. And that's the point that Paul is first stating in verse 16 when he says we know a person is not justified by works of the law.

It's all the law. I mean, this is those first five books. This is everything God requires of people. It's the first approach to justification that Paul is interacting with.

Justification by works of the law. And the second approach to justification that Paul is talking about in verse 16.

[ 19 : 56 ] Notice what he says again. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ so that so we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law because by works of the law no one will be justified.

The second option is faith in Jesus Christ. justification through faith in Jesus Christ. That's the second approach that Paul is talking about.

Now Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law and all of its requirements. When he lived on this earth Jesus did not violate to the smallest degree.

He violated no law to any degree kept it both in act and in spirit. he lived a perfect life before the law of God.

Every single requirement of God's law Jesus fulfilled. And then at the end of his life though he had no sin Jesus went to the cross and he died in the place of sinners to pay the penalty for their sins those of us who can't keep the law didn't keep the law Jesus died a substitutionary death.

[ 21 : 23 ] That's the kind of death that he died because he took the place of those who deserve to die. And those who put their faith in Jesus Christ both in his living and in his dying.

Both in the perfect life that he lived and the substitutionary death that he died. God declares those people justified or righteous or not guilty in his sight or in right standing with him.

So those are the two options of justification. Self justification based on our merits and our ability to keep the law or God's justification to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ trusting him and his finished work his perfect life, his perfect obedience and then a substitutionary death on the cross. But notice Paul is very clear about the options. He tells us the first option doesn't work. He says the first option doesn't work.

He tells us that in the very last part of, he says it actually three times in this passage. But he says it a final time in verse 16 because by works of the law no one will be justified.

[ 22 : 56 ] The second option though he tells us works. God justifies sinners based on their faith in Christ. So when a repentant sinner looks to Jesus as his only hope of acceptance before God and places his trust in Jesus as a means by which God can and will receive him, God credits the perfect life of Jesus and the substitutionary death of Jesus to that repentant sinner.

So the life that we couldn't live, that Jesus lived, those of us who put our faith in Christ, God credits that to our account. He credits it to us. And the sins we committed and the death we deserve to die, when Jesus took our place and satisfied that before God, God takes that satisfaction and he credits it to those who put their trust in Jesus as their only hope for salvation.

salvation. He declares the sinner justified. Again, who in and of himself is guilty?

Guilty because he couldn't keep God's laws, guilty because he violated God's laws and God does it for one reason, faith in Jesus Christ.

The living Christ in all of his perfection and the dying Christ in the merits of his sacrifice. That's how God justifies us, on the basis of faith in Christ Jesus.

[ 24 : 46 ] Now, I went to the second part of the answer. Why God justifies us. Why does God justify us? Paul tells us in the last part of verse 16.

He justifies us because by the works of the law, no one will be justified. And why is this? Why is it that by the works of the law, no one will be justified?

Is there a problem with the law? Is the law imperfect and the law defective and therefore we run away from the law and we go to Christ?

No, that's not the witness of Scripture. The witness of Scripture is that the law is good and perfect. The witness of Scripture is that for the person who is able to perfectly obey all of God's requirements perfectly, that person will receive eternal life.

But there's only one person who ever did that, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the problem is not with the law, the problem is with us.

[ 26 : 06 ] We, because of our fallen sinful nature, cannot keep God's law. We can't keep it. Now this is jumping a bit ahead, but it helps us to see the point that Paul will later make in Galatians 3, starting in verse 10, verses 10 through 12, but this helps us to see what the issue really is.

Galatians 3, starting in verse 10, here's what Paul says, for all who rely, for all who rely on works of the law are under a curse.

Why? For it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law to do them.

He goes on and says, now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith.

For the law is not of faith, not of faith, rather, the one who does them shall live by them. So that's our problem. God must justify us if we are going to be justified because we can't keep God's law.

[ 27 : 37 ] And that's not, see, here's what, think about it this way. Let's think of the Ten Commandments. Every single one of us in this room, there's not one of us in this room who has been able to keep the Ten Commandments to God's satisfaction.

Now, I'm sure there are those of us, I mean, I could pick out one right away and pretty much say I am sure that none of us have broken the Ten Commandments in this aspect, this commandment in this aspect, and that is the commandment to murder.

I don't think anyone here has literally murdered a person physically. Now, before the law of the land and before one another, we're good with that, we're okay with that. But you know what, not before God.

Because we saw as we went through the Sermon on the Mount that when we become irrationally angry with our brother, when we have hatred in our heart towards our brother, which I'm sure all of us have had in different ways and to different degrees at different times, we've fallen short of the Ten Commandments.

Now, if God had limited knowledge and he didn't know our hearts, then maybe we could slide because we never shed anyone's blood. But no, God is all-knowing.

[ 29 : 03 ] God sees the deepest thoughts of our hearts. God knows our thoughts better than we know our thoughts. And so, the issue is that we could never fulfill the commandments of God to satisfy him.

Again, God is not interested in 99.999999% fulfillment of the law. It must be 100%. You know what the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 64 verse 6?

He tells us that our righteous deeds are filthy garments. They are polluted garments. meaning, when I pray a prayer, my prayer is not perfect before God.

When I repent of sin, my repentance of sin is not perfect before God. There's nothing righteous that we are able to do in and of ourselves that will satisfy a perfect holy God.

And so, our problem is that we may come close to fulfilling what God requires of us, but we will never fully fulfill what God requires of us.

[ 30 : 18 ] But we measure our fulfillment of the law from an outward perspective, and God measures that, but he also measures obedience from our hearts as well.

And here lies our dilemma. This is our dilemma. This is why God must justify us if we are going to be justified. Now, let's think about it another way.

There are some people who don't even try to fulfill God's law. They just take a different approach. They just try to be good people, so they do a lot of good, kind things, thoughtful things, and they try maybe not to harm people and so forth, but they have no real goal of trying to fulfill God's laws. But I think we would all agree that those kinds of noble, generous acts that people do, they are less rigorous and demanding than God's law. And so what we see Paul saying to us is that the most probable way that one could try to be justified before God by keeping the law, because again, though it is impossible for sinners like us, it was possible for Jesus.

Jesus did it as a perfect human being. But that is the greatest way to do it. So when you fall below that, it really matters not what you do.

[ 31 : 45 ] And there are many people who are just trying to do their own little good deeds and they really believe, there are people who really believe that when they stand before God, God is going to take their good deeds and weigh them against their bad deeds and if their good deeds are heavier than their bad deeds, then they are going to be accepted in God's sight.

Paul says no. Paul says if you raise it higher than you try to fulfill all that God requires of you, he said that won't be good enough.

Even if you come close because God is a perfect God who requires 100% perfection to satisfy him. That's the heart of Paul's argument. God justifies us through faith in Christ and the reason he does so is that he must do so if anyone is going to be saved and because we can do absolutely nothing to meet his requirements to justify ourselves.

Now in verses 17 through 21 the Apostle Paul engages in a further argument to answer what seems to be an objection to seeking justification through faith in Christ.

[ 33 : 17 ] And let me just say from the very outset that Bible scholars who are light years smarter than I acknowledge that Paul's argument in these two verses 17 through 19 three verses 17 through 19 it's difficult to follow.

But I've labored over it and I will try to do my best to share with you what I understand him to be saying.

Try to follow and I'll try to do my best to explain it. If it's confusing don't be discouraged.

Other people again much smarter than I say this is pretty difficult. Let's try to see what Paul says in these verses.

In verse 17 Jews saw Gentiles as sinners but they did not see themselves as sinners.

[ 34 : 36 ] So when Paul says in verse 15 we ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners he is actually stating the view of Jews.

They saw themselves not as sinners. They saw themselves as God's people. They were given the law and they could keep the law they felt and they can please God with it.

Because remember they were very outward in their performance of the law. And Jesus dealt with this in the Sermon on the Mount when he said no it's more than just this outward conformity. It's also this inward obedience.

But the Jewish view was we're not like those sinners we're not like those Gentiles. We belong to Abraham and we've been given the law so we don't see ourselves as sinners.

That's what Paul is referring to in verse 15. But notice in verse 16 that Paul says that he and Peter had come to the realization that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ so they themselves believed in Christ in order to be justified.

[ 35 : 53 ] So in essence Paul is saying this he's saying though the Jews believe that they're God's people and they're not sinners and they have the law unlike Gentiles Peter we know we know you and I we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ so we also have believed in Christ I'm sorry I'm in the wrong verse verse 17 but if I if I if I if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ we too are found to be sinners is Christ then a servant of sin and he says certainly not so here's here's what Peter is here's what Paul is saying at this particular point he's already established that Jews really are no different from Gentiles they're all sinners before

God and the Jews he is saying must come from the delusion come away from the delusion that they're okay and they can keep the law and they must recognize that they're no different from the Gentiles and they too need to be justified in Jesus Christ so now in verse 17 he picks up on what seems to be an objection and he is saying if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ we too were found to be sinners is Christ then a servant of sin there seems to be an objection that was raised by others where people seem to be saying that okay you're turning away from the law and you're turning to Christ so you're no longer under the command of the law to the duty of the law the responsibility to fulfill the law and it seemed to be a recipe for just just sinning because now you've moved away from that you're saying I'm going to be justified by faith in

Christ alone and not by the law and it seems to be saying that well you're going to just be giving yourself over to sin so the argument for some is then well are you saying then Christ is a servant of sin and Paul quickly refutes that he says no certainly not God forbid God forbid he doesn't leave it hanging he says God forbid certainly not and then in verse 18 essentially what he's really saying is no we own our own sins we own our own sins a person who recognizes that he is a sinner a Jew recognizes he's a sinner and comes to Christ recognizing his need for justification and is no longer

looking to the law for that justification if that person sins no Christ is not the servant of sin that person is responsible for his own sin and that seems to be the point that he makes in the very next verse when he says for if I rebuild what I tore down I prove myself to be a transgressor if I rebuild what I tore down I prove myself to be a transgressor in other words he's saying Christ is not responsible for our sins we are responsible for our own sins I tear something down and I rebuild it again I prove myself to be a transgressor that I should not have torn it down in the first place we are responsible for our own sins in verse 19 Paul says for through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God and then verse 20 he explains how he Paul died through the law to the law it happened through the death of Christ and Paul's crucifixion with Christ Paul is saying that he died to the condemnation of the law through the death of Christ and here Paul is talking about something that is seen in scripture which theologians call this union with Christ that those who God would save and justify they are united with Christ God God unites them with Christ they are connected to Christ in a saving way and if you think about it there's a there's a parallel to this in terms of original sin in terms of with Adam and every single one of us identifies with Adam and though we in and of ourselves did not sin actually [ 41 : 14 ] Adam's sin was imputed to us because he was our representative we're united with Adam in that particular way and scripture tells us that there are two Adams we're born into the first Adam and we're born again into the last Adam and so this union with Christ we were born with a union or connectedness to the first Adam and it's only through the gracious work of God that we are able to be in union with the last Adam who like the first Adam was the representative of all people the last Adam is the representative of God's people and we are in union with him so that you that uniting with him we are united with him in his perfect life God credits that to us and we are united with him in his substitutionary death

God credits that to us those of us who put our faith in Jesus Christ as the only way that God would accept us and God would receive! us as his children and that God would say over us you are righteous you are justified so Paul is talking about this union with Christ lived our life we couldn't live died our death we deserve to die as a substitute and when he talks about this in verse 20 he says I've been crucified with Christ it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me he is identifying with the resurrection of Christ because the Bible tells us that when we are in Christ if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation and that's why Paul is able to say it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the! Son of God who loves me and who loved me and gave himself for me and that's the truth of the gospel if anyone is in Christ the old is gone and the new has come it's a new creation that is what Paul is arguing in this particular passage in verse 20 I think it's important for us to see the personal way in which Paul interacts with the saving work of Jesus Christ and again when we think of the saving work of Jesus Christ we think not only of the death that he died we think of the life that he lived if all Jesus needed to do was to come to this earth and die on the cross as a substitute for sin God could have just let that happen when he was a baby boy he could have just allowed Herod to find him and to kill him as an infant no!

Jesus needed to live the perfect life he needed to keep God's law and keep God's requirement on behalf of those who couldn't keep it and then he would go and die in their stead Paul makes all that personal it is not in Paul's mind well he died for the world or he died for the people of God no that's not what Paul is saying look at what he says in verse 20 he says and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who loved me and who gave himself from me how many of you know that it would affect us probably maybe this is not a good illustration to give you but just imagine if [ 45 : 48 ] Bill Gates walked in the room and he gave us all a million dollars he just did it for all of us gave all of us a million dollars and maybe two million dollars how many know that it would have a different effect on most of us I think if he walked into the room and maybe gave!

three of us a million dollars he picked particular ones and gave those ones a million dollars that's very different from just seeing it in the group and somehow this is what the apostle Paul sees and I want to say to us this morning we need to see Christ saving work his life and his death in this way that he loved me and he gave himself for me and what this does is it enables us to see Christ in all of his life the life that he lived and the death that he died and it becomes personal he did it for me and one of the things that happens for us when we see this is we we take our sins personally as well we recognize that when Jesus went to the cross it was not just some mishmash of sins that he bore no he bore my sins he bore my particular sins he bore all of my specific sins that

I would ever commit he took them to the cross and he gave himself for me in verse 21 Paul ends his argument with a strong and clear summary and what he says is if we pursue most of your translations will have righteousness is there anyone whose translation has justification anyone if you have justification just raise your hand okay more than likely that's a 2001 either that's a revised standard version or it's a 2001 edition of the English standard version the English standard version the 2001 edition used justification there for the NIV and the King James and the NASB most of those translations they use the word righteousness but if you have either the like the 2011 or the 2007 version of the

ESV you would notice that the word righteousness in verse 21 has a footnote after it a footnote number three and down to the bottom it shows justification and really the words are interchangeable the words are one and the same so what Paul is saying in verse 21 is if we pursue justification if we pursue righteousness through the law he says we commit two fatal errors the two fatal errors and these are treasonous errors these are treasonous errors because what he says the first is when we do that when we pursue righteousness through the law we nullify the grace of God what we say to God in a sense is your grace the grace we sang about this morning that amazing grace we say that is worth zero to me it's a null effect on my life it's such a nullity that

I need to go about and create my own righteousness God that's what we do when we pursue righteousness apart from Christ when we try to pursue righteousness through the law or through whatever else we do any human endeavor we nullify the grace of God and we say to God your grace that amazing grace is of zero effect to me and the second fatal error that we commit when we do that is we reject the cross of Christ we nullify the grace of God but we also reject the cross of Christ what we say is God it was unnecessary that was a bloody unnecessary act that you committed it was actually cruel for you to send your son because it was not necessary I can go about and I can find righteousness

[ 50 : 33 ] I can satisfy you with human efforts keeping the law or through some other endeavor or means and the truth is if it were possible to be made right with God away from the death of Jesus Christ then God was indeed most cruel to send his son to this earth to know sin to bear sin and then to endure a sacrifice of himself on the cross if that was unnecessary if God was just a big drama queen to go through all of that and it was just unnecessary and what we are in essence saying is God you were cruel to send your son it was unnecessary to send your son but brothers and sisters and friends it was necessary

Christ's death was necessary because there's no other way that sinners can be justified in the sight of God there needed to be one who could satisfy what God requires in living a perfect life and fulfilling all of the law and then in order for God to be able to forgive us in order for God to be able to declare us righteous and just the punishment had to be taken the price had to be paid in order for him to do that but it all belongs to Jesus and so is a declaration over us and see this is where Protestant teaching deviates from Roman Catholic teaching what the Roman Catholics would teach is that we actually become righteous we become righteous in and of ourselves it's not just a declaration there's something inherent in us that we actually become righteous and they believe that over time we can become righteous and then if you die at the end of this life before you're and you stay there for as long as it takes to get you righteous and then you can go to heaven that is current

Roman Catholic teaching but the reformers the truth that we received from the Protestant Reformation the truth that they rediscovered!

in Scripture says no that's not what it is we don't become righteous in and of ourselves but a holy God on the merits of his son declares us righteous that's the gospel but we struggle with it and so we need to be reminded again and again that that is the gospel and we struggle with it in such subtle ways you know as wonderful as devotions are as wonderful as this gathering is and we should gather as wonderful as reading our Bible is as wonderful as praying is none of those things give us acceptance in God's sight we do them because God has called us to do them and we benefit from doing them and we draw near to God as we do them and we grow as we do them but they have zero meritorious effect in

God's sight when we forget it we go about just like the Galatians trying to justify ourselves by what we!

[ 54 : 36 ] approximately 500 years ago German theologian Martin Luther one of the great leaders of the Protestant Reformation that we will be celebrating in October this year 500th anniversary of

that when he wrote about the doctrine of justification by faith he wrote the following this is the truth of the gospel it is also the principal article of all Christian doctrine wherein the knowledge of all godliness consists!

most necessary it is therefore that we should know this article well teach it unto others and beat it into their heads continually this article of justification by faith is indeed important and we should know it well and we should teach it to others and we need to beat it into their heads and into our heads because we easily forget it like the Galatians Paul founded this church yet this church drifted and this church felt compelled to do something more to justify themselves before God and they didn't believe that faith in Jesus Christ and his life and death was enough and so they set about to add to it they set about to shore it up as it were brothers and sisters we're no different and it would be wonderful if we could just get this truth once and for all but we don't get it once and for all we don't get it once and for all as one theologian said we often find ourselves trying to smuggle in our works trying to smuggle in our works to be accepted before a holy

God so may God by his spirit beat this in our heads this morning and beat this in our heads when we want to try to find acceptance before God in some other way we beat it in our heads when we sin when we fall short and we believe that somehow we need some probationary period before God is able to accept us again I wonder this morning if you're convinced of this truth if you are convinced that your only hope for justification before God is faith in Christ alone by looking to him his sinless life and his substitutionary death on your behalf it sounds so simple because it doesn't require us to do all the things that we naturally want to do that we see so many people doing trying to earn their way to a holy

God who cannot be pleased by sinful human effort so my prayer for us this morning is that we would all put an end to self justification and we will look to Christ alone to be justified I invite the team to come back we're going to sing a song this morning as we close we're going to sing Rock of Ages I've heard some people say oh Rock of Ages that's a funeral song why do we sing that you know Rock of Ages is not a funeral song we sang a song earlier by a man by the name of Augustus Top Lady Doug Plank modernized some of the words it's a song now why this fear and unbelief and Augustus Top Lady God used him mightily to communicate this truth about salvation by grace alone through faith alone in

Christ alone in this song that we're going to sing this morning Augustus Top Lady wrote this song he believed in the sovereignty of God in all things and in particular in salvation and one of his opponents at the time was a well known preacher by the name of John Wesley but they held different theologies about how God saves people Top Lady like the reformers like us believed that God sovereignly saves whomever he will Wesley believed that salvation was based on human will and ability apart from the sovereignty of God and in 1776 two years before his death Top Lady wrote an article on

[ 59 : 55 ] God's forgiveness and the purpose of the publication was to rebut statements that Wesley had made and he concluded the article with a poem Rock of Ages which eventually became the song that we sing and this morning as we close I want to encourage you to think about the words of this hymn in particular the second and third verses which are these verse not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy laws commands could my zeal no respite no could my tears forever flow all for sin could not atone thou must save and thou alone and then the third verse nothing in my hand I bring simply to the cross

I bring naked come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace to thy fountain Lord I fly wash me savior or I die I sing that this morning and may God as we sing beat that into our heads that it is salvation through faith alone in Christ alone let's sing Rock of Ages Yes Yes