

We Have Been Justified

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Date: 25 October 2015

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Let's turn now to Romans and chapter 5 and the first verse of this chapter is what we're going to look at for both of the services today.

So we're going to focus just on this one verse, although obviously there'll be other things related to that as well from Romans and other scriptures too. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in this great epistle, the Apostle Paul has been dealing up to now in the letter with the need for justification and also the way by which justification has come to be provided for us.

And obviously as you read through the early part of Romans, you come across the need for our justification from the fact of our sin. It is because of what we are as sinners in our guilt, in our defilement, and particularly as sinners we are under the wrath and the condemnation of God. It is that situation that shows our need for justification. We'll see hopefully from what we say this morning what's involved in our justification, such as forgiveness of sin and our being established as righteous in God's eyes.

[1 : 22] That's essentially what justification is. But the need for it is something that you see from what we are as sinners and our state, especially our relationship to God in that state of our sin.

And then he also goes on to show us how God has provided this justification for us, and in particular how that's come, as we've read in chapter 3, through the death of Christ.

We are justified freely by the grace of God, but it's this Christ he has set out or set up as a propitiation in his blood or by his blood, so that he might be just and a justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

In other words, we have come to have justification provided for us in Christ, and we receive that as we exercise faith.

Faith is our receiving of this Christ, and therefore justification, righteousness, forgiveness of sin in him. And now we see in chapter 5 here that Paul begins to deal with the blessings of justification.

[2 : 39] He's shown us the need for it. He's said a little bit about the way that God has provided it through Christ and his death, and now he comes to tell us something of the blessings of it. Not just the blessings that are in justification itself, but some of the things that it leads to or here that accompanies justification.

And here especially the focus is on having peace with God. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that's what we're going to focus on more this evening, the second part of it. So we're looking this morning at we have been justified, and this evening we'll look at we have peace with God.

The two things are inseparable and exist together. Where you have the justification, you have peace with God. Where you have peace with God, you have justification.

You have been justified. And what we're going to do this morning is look at something about justification, what it means. What does it mean to be justified?

[3 : 45] And then we'll look at three things that are related to being justified or justification. That's pardon, forgiveness of sin, or pardon.

Secondly, faith. And thirdly, grace. The grace of God. And how that relates to our justification. Now this is not just hopefully a study in theology.

It's not just so as to inform our minds, although that itself is very important. And nowhere better can you see that than through the writings of the Apostle Paul. Just look at the number of times that he mentions the mind as he brings out these great truths about our relationship to God in salvation.

The mind is so central to every other aspect of what we are and how we live and how we understand things and how we live accordingly. So it's important that we get that theological

information into our minds.

That our mind really does give an emphasis to this theology of salvation. And it's not just about that. [4 : 53] It's because we want to reach things the Bible tells us are important for Christians too. That is things like assurance. Assurance that we are indeed justified.

Joy. Rejoicing in Christ. Comfort. Comfort in our hearts that we are indeed right with God. That we are Christians. That certain things that we still find in our lives that have to do with sin and with sinful behavior and thought and action don't necessarily mean that we've never been justified. So really the end in view is that we apply this and practically then look in our lives as to how justification fits in with what we are as Christians practically and how it really is a basis for how we live as justified people of God.

What does justification mean? Well we're beginning first of all with condemnation. That's where you really have to begin if you want to understand what justification means you don't begin with that itself you go to its opposite.

You go to what you are naturally. You go to what you are as a sinner under the wrath of God under the condemnation of God. And as we said Paul is dealing with that in the early chapters of Romans. [6 : 18] He tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That we are all in that position as we are born into this world. Think of it in terms of a record.

A record in terms of what I mean by that is where things about you your character your way of life think of God if it simplifies things I think we can look at it this way think of God as having a record about you as an individual.

And think of that record in his presence as something where your character and your actions are actually set down by God. Where the ledger if you like has this page of your life along with many other millions of lives and your life is there amongst the rest and mine and in that ledger under your name are all of these details about your life about your actions your thoughts your words how you live what your character is.

And the conclusion that God comes to before we are justified is what you have summarized in the passage read in chapter 3 where you find at verse 23 for example where it says there that all the righteousness of God through faith has been is for all who believe there is no distinction for all sinned and falls short of the glory of God.

In other words we all come under this state of condemnation that's where we begin that's where you actually find yourself and that record that God has underneath which he writes the word condemned because that life that we have as sinners obviously cannot be pleasing to him.

[8 : 07] So he has to put at the bottom of the page what his assessment is what his conclusion is and that's what he writes on the record of every life.

And when you come to be justified that record is removed that record is taken away and replaced by another one.

Justification is the opposite of condemnation. That's why you begin with condemnation. You're under the condemnation of God. A lot of people don't like that theology.

They think it's just simply outdated and it's not the kind of thing you should emphasize nowadays. But you cannot understand forgiveness of sin and why you need forgiveness and justification and righteousness which really is a standard that God has for us that meets with himself and with his own standard of righteousness.

You can't understand why you need that and how you come about having that through faith in Christ and why Christ came to die if you just displace things like condemnation from your understanding of the gospel and of the teaching of the word of God.

[9 : 25] You have to begin with where God begins. You have to begin with what God says and move on to what he does in our justification.

So the opposite of justification is condemnation. The record of what we are as sinners as it's signed by God and stamped condemned is replaced by a record that he stamps as accounted righteous approved accepted right in my sight.

In other words you use justification is taking the record of condemnation and replacing it with the record of righteousness. You know what's happening?

It's not just that God is wiping clean your record that ends with condemnation that's stamped with condemnation. He is doing that but he's actually replacing it with another one with its opposite.

He's not wiping it clean and leaving it at that. He's wiping it clean but he's replacing it with righteousness. And where did it come from?

[10:41] Where does that righteousness come from? If we cannot produce it ourselves and if our own character and our actions are stamped on one side as God condemns us and are under his condemnation where does this righteousness come from by which we are accounted righteous in his presence?

Well if you go back to chapter 3 you can see again in verse 25 where it comes from. Being justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation in his blood to be received by faith.

so that the righteousness we come to have is the righteousness of Jesus himself. That's why God accepts of us and approves of us.

Not because of anything we've done ourselves. Not for any achievement. Not for the faith that we exercise when we come to embrace Christ.

None of these things. it is purely and simply the righteousness of Jesus that's put on our record. Isn't that amazing?

[12:02] And it's even more amazing when you think of it this way. That record that's stamped by God as condemned in order to take it away he put it onto the record of his son.

2 Corinthians 5.21 The one who knew no sin was made sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

You see what's happened? This record that's stamped by God condemned your record and my record. Here is Christ's record.

there is nothing there but perfect righteousness. He knew no sin. He never sinned. God has stamped the bottom of his record perfectly righteous.

What does God do? He takes our record and he puts it onto his and he treats him as if this had been his record all along.

[13:16] He made him to be sin for us. But then you see he bore that sin in a way that atoned for that sin.

He made up for all that we had done in our sin. he produced righteousness for us. And in his own life and through his own death that righteousness stands as a righteousness that's available to us and is preached to us in the gospel as Christ is preached as a savior.

That righteousness in him is what comes with him. Which is why when you receive him by faith you are taking that righteousness and God is putting it on your record instead of the one you had to begin with.

And now your record has approved stamped at the bottom of it because it's the righteousness of Christ. There's nothing else anywhere else that is anywhere near that in terms of an amazing exchange.

an exchange of one record for another the sinner for the son of God the sinner's record onto his record and his own righteous record onto ours.

[14:52] In other words you can say this when you are justified justified by God and we'll see that it is through faith. When you are justified and come to have that status and that standard of righteousness that is nothing less than the righteousness of Jesus himself you are as approved by God as Jesus himself is.

Does that not fill you with amazement? you are just as accepted by God. You are just as approved of by God.

You are approved of by God to the same extent and degree as his own perfect son is. Because you have his righteousness imputed to you as the usual word theologians use that means it's put onto your record.

It's stamped on your record and it remains on your record and it can never be wiped clean from your record. You are as acceptable to God as Jesus Christ himself is.

That's something to celebrate. If we don't sing hallelujah after that it hasn't really touched our hearts has it? That you and I should appear in the presence of God and he looks into his record book of our life and he sees at the bottom of it perfectly righteous as righteous as my son is.

[16:27] That's what it means to be a Christian. That's what's at the bottom of your being a Christian. You are righteous. As William Cunningham one of Scotland's great theologians put it.

You are righteous with the righteousness which the righteousness of God requires him to require. Let's say that again. you are righteous with the righteousness which the righteousness of God requires him to require.

The righteousness of Christ. That's why Christ is so precious to us. That's why the love of the Father is so precious to us because that's the love that sent his son to die this death of the cross so that we would come to be righteous in him.

To be approved of by God. And that's one of the great things that you need more and more to go back to again and again and again so that you will grow in your assurance.

If we lack assurance don't look into your own heart. Don't look into your way your faith works. Don't look into how much you love the Lord or don't. Don't look into how often you pray.

[17 : 40] Don't look to the fact you come to church or go to the prayer meeting or take communion. Go to the cross. Go to the justifying grace of God. And look at how complete that righteousness is.

Even if it's a feeble faith that reaches out to take him. Even if it's a faith that at times is accompanied by many doubts. Still if you say in your heart today I love him for what he is in himself.

I love him for everything that I know I have in him. I regret that my faith is not what it should be. That it's not as strong as I'd like to be. I regret that my love is so far far short of what it should be.

But it's not perfect faith or perfect love that God requires in order for us to be justified. It's real faith and real love.

that's what God himself is looking for. So that brings us secondly to justification and pardon. We said it's not just an exchange of records.

[18 : 49] So what is it if it's not just an exchange of records what else is there? Well there is particularly this there is forgiveness of sin. There is pardon of our sin. Catechism puts it wonderfully that justification is an act of God's grace wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

Wonderful summary of justification but that's the first point it makes. It's an act of God's grace in which he pardons all our sins. sins. You couldn't come to be right with God without having your sin forgiven.

God is not just going to overlook that as if it didn't matter and even when you come to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to you put onto your record it doesn't mean that you don't come personally individually to express your sin in repentance to God and confession to God.

And when God forgives sin he forgives it completely. Again that's one of the things important for our assurance when God pardons our sin as the catechism puts it wherein he pardons all our sins.

Past, present and future. In the act of justifying all your sins are forgiven. They're covered. They're out of sight. They're no longer before God to accuse you.

[20 : 19] The guilt of it is gone. Everything to do with your sin as far as being justified is concerned. They're all forgiven pardoned by God.

And that continues to be so. We all sin in practice every day. We all have thoughts and actions that we know.

We need to come before God with and say Lord I know that I've sinned in this please forgive me. Cleanse me from it. Help me through it. Don't let me go back to it again.

And yet it's true that a person that has faith in Christ is justified and in that justification all the sin that they have committed is forgiven.

You see your assurance doesn't come from looking at the fact that you still are conscious of sin and of sinning against God. Your assurance comes from what God has done in justifying.

[21 : 25] Justifying you as a sinner justified by his grace. You look to that justification. You look to the completeness of sin being forgiven there.

And it has its basis in Christ. In other words as long as God the Father is pleased with the work of his son Jesus Christ on the cross. That justification cannot possibly change.

It's absolutely secure on the basis on the foundation of what Christ has done. And that means your forgiveness is secure. God's not going to change his mind tomorrow and say well I shouldn't really have forgiven that person after all so I think I'll just adjust things.

and I'm still seeing that such and such a person is prone to such a sin. He's been justified. She's been justified. And yet look at these sins in their lives.

Let's just rearrange things. Let's just say they're not completely forgiven after all. That's not going to happen. It's just not going to happen because God forgives all your sins.

[22 : 34] And you know that's again something that has huge implications for our assurance and our joy and our comfort. Because the fact that we do sin and the fact we're conscious of sinning is something that disturbs our peace.

And in a way that's understandable and that's right. We shouldn't be at all happy about the fact that we know we've sinned and still do sin. But the point is this that as you go to what God has done in your justification as you go to the completeness of that forgiveness and pardon that you've received in Him what you really conclude is that although you still find sin in your life you can celebrate the fact that you're forgiven.

That's not going to change. That God's record of you is not going to be adjusted even despite the fact that you still sin.

And there's something else. The more you understand how completely you've forgiven the more impetus it gives the more energy as it like if you like it gives you the more determination it should give you that you sin less than you've ever done before that you pursue holiness.

Where does holiness of life actually how does it relate to the fact of your justification because wherever you find justification you also begin the work of sanctification begins in your heart the Holy Spirit begins that work.

[24 : 12] The two things relate like this the more you understand the justification the completeness of your acceptance the completeness of your forgiveness the pardon that's so complete the more it really adds to your mind this determination this resolve well if that's the case as it is I have to see to it that as far as possible I don't sin anymore that I put sin out of my life that I'm determined to be rid of it you'll still find yourself sinning tomorrow but you go back to this and you say Lord this is so wonderful that I'm really determined to put sin to death in my life practically sin justification and pardon and justification then and faith because that's also very important just in a word what it says is therefore since we have been justified by faith now it says by faith doesn't say because of faith it doesn't say it's due to faith that we've been justified or because of faith or on account of faith we are justified because of Christ we are justified because of what he has done that's the ground of our acceptance with God but we are justified by faith which means through the instrument of faith by faith as the means by which we take Christ as our savior it's faith if you like that reaches out to him sometimes perhaps we can illustrate it a bit like this it's not in every way a perfect illustration of course but it might help just to put it like this when you have a room with lights in it everything there is in place the circuitry is there the bulbs are in place whatever kind of bulb it is that's going to give out the light it's all fitted into the socket it's all wired up and it all goes through a very simple switch and when you come into the room everything's there in place but if the switch is off there's no light you put the switch on you switch it on and instantly the connection is made and the light comes on and faith is something like that in Jesus

Christ all the circuitry is there if you like of our salvation of our justification of what we need to be right with God God has provided that through Christ in his death everything is there already in himself perfectly set up but until you have the switch of faith you don't make the connection you're not justified until you believe and the moment you believe you're justified by faith through that faith by means of that faith it's the switch if you like that turns on the lights of justification in your life and we think of faith perhaps mostly to do with believing things that you can't see and that's undoubtedly true faith in part is that you believe what God has said you believe things that you cannot see with your eye but because

God has said they are true then you believe them and that's how a confession of faith defines faith the chapter dealing with faith in one of the the paragraphs that's what it says by this faith a believer believes to be true whatever God has revealed in his word but it says the primary actions of faith are accepting receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation for eternal life you see what it's saying the primary action of faith the main thing about faith is that it does these three things accepts receives rests upon Christ the three are important they're connected you accept him you receive him you rest upon him and that faith is the faith through which we're justified it doesn't mean it has to be powerful strong faith for you to be just it doesn't depend it doesn't depend upon the level of your faith if you like that way whether it's great faith strong faith it has to be faith faith that accepts and receives and rests upon Christ we all want our faith to be strong we all want to have faith stronger than it is the robust kind of faith that would really find it easier to put up with problems and to see the way through problems and to still keep on trusting in Christ when problems come we all want the kind of faith that Abraham had this strength of faith by which he believed

God through all the difficulties of his life but what God assures us of if you don't have that kind of strong faith as long as it's still real faith faith that has accepted and received and rests upon Christ and you're justified you can't have that faith without being justified it's the great thing about it you cannot have that believing without it being accompanied by or followed by justification by acceptance with God by forgiveness of sin pardon complete pardon it all comes through this switch of faith so the most important thing for me today is not how strong is my faith that's important but how real is my faith do I have this faith do I have this faith by which Christ is in my life by which I've reached out accepted him received him rests upon him if I do I am justified whatever anybody else tells me whatever my own remaining sin tells me whatever the devil tries to persuade me of I am justified by faith in this Christ and if I am justified by faith in this Christ I have cause to celebrate and I will celebrate because nothing else can compare with that acceptance with which God accepts me and has my record stamped approved faith and pardon justification and pardon justification and faith and finally justification and grace because the tenses here are important therefore since we have been justified by faith without going into it it really just is in the Greek language of the text it's you've got a passive and you've got a complete tense as well and what that really means essentially is this justification justification is complete the moment [32 : 06] God justifies then that's justification it's absolutely complete in itself you can't add to it you can't take away from it you don't need to and it's also something in which we're passive in other words it's from the grace of God that it comes we don't deserve it we don't manufacture it we're not capable of creating it the grace the favor the undeserved favor of God provides it for us we are justified freely by his grace through faith in Christ Jesus and when it is that well that adds to the cause of celebration doesn't it because if you and I had something to contribute to the manufacture of this justification if you really and I were given by God something that we ourselves had to contribute to it before it was complete how could you possibly have assurance from it that things weren't going to change in the future if some element of it is from your contribution through your obedience to the law of

God through your faithfulness in following Christ whatever if it is anything at all to do with anything that you and I do then it's liable to failure now or at some point in the future but when it's all from the grace of God there's no danger of that and you can actually then add that to the reason you have for celebration there's no celebration in the fact of being a sinner sinner but boy there's every celebration in the fact of being a justified sinner you worship the Lord with praise and glory to his name you worship him with gusto when you know that you're justified through his grace by faith in Christ

Jesus when you know that you're accepted with God as accepted as Christ himself is let's pray Lord our God how glorious are your ways how wonderful are your works what cause of praise you give to your people when they consider what you have done for them as well as what you continue to do we thank you Lord today for the grace of justification for the way by which we have come to be set right with you for the way that that is maintained on the basis of the perfect work of your son for the way that we are assured it will never change not even throughout eternity we thank you Lord for that acceptance we thank you that you looked upon us miserable undeserving sinners in such an act of grace and in such a wonderful provision as you have given to us in justification enable us we pray to celebrate and praise all that you are and all that you've done for us we ask it all for Jesus sake

Amen Amen