

# Bringing God Under Indictment

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, you have that passage in front of you. I heard a really interesting illustration this week. I don't know what it illustrates, but it's such a good illustration, I thought I'd use it anyway.

Maybe you can help me figure out what it illustrates. A fellow whose name is, some of you may know him, Bob Carson, was a principal of a high school way up in the high Arctic.

And in the art department up there, they taught the children to do soapstone carving. And his daughter went to school there and came home with a magnificent small soapstone seal that had been carved.

And she said, I did this. Well, he was a bit skeptical as to how she could produce this, what he regarded as a valuable piece of soapstone carvings since she just started.

And it turns out that the teacher up there, who was an Inuit, taught art by almost completing the art piece down to some final detail and then gave it to the children to put on the final detail.

[ 1 : 32 ] And then as the classes progressed, he would give them, he would do less and less of it so that they would do more and more of it, you know, which is different from the doting parents who put some totally indecipherable thing up on their refrigerator, which their four-year-old has done and said, isn't it wonderful?

Well, it's just a different approach. Now, if that illustration fits, I'll come back to it. If not, I'll just leave, I'll leave you to think about it.

So, I'm, this passage here is so, it's so key to the understanding of the New Testament that I am hesitant to approach it even.

But look at it. And I'll rush in where angels fear to tread. It talks about a righteousness from God. Now, righteousness is the chief objective of the whole of our lives, to achieve righteousness.

[ 2 : 54 ] It's exactly the same word in its root, in Greek, as justification. How do you justify yourself?

And most of us spend most of our life working at the business of self-justification. We work at it all the time.

We dress that way, the car we drive. I remember a guy who went bankrupt in Toronto. I always think of him at this point in my life, who used to drive a big Lincoln before he went bankrupt.

But after he went bankrupt, he still drove a big Lincoln. He rented it for, I guess, the welfare check he got or something.

I don't know how he did it. Because in a sense, that was the thing by which he wanted to be known in the community, and that was the one thing he couldn't let go of. And all of us have that same kind of basic drive towards self-justification.

[ 4 : 02 ] I've told you about lots of time spent in long Bible studies in Kingston Penitentiary, where inevitably the story is always one in which people can justify themselves for what they've done, no matter how horrendous it may be.

You have to live with it. So in some way, you have to make it into a pearl that shows that, well, it is self-justifying.

You've got to do it somehow. Now, there are different ways that you can do it. And all of us have, I mean, you might look at it like this.

I don't know whether this would work right or not. But, this is a machine, which is, it's a generator, you can tell, because it's round.

And, it's, all of us have this machine, and for some of us, it takes an enormous amount of energy to keep it going.

[ 5 : 13 ] This is our self-justifying machine, or our justifying machine, whatever it is. And, we have to, it's very costly to keep it going.

But, we keep it going nonetheless, because that's what, what our life is all about. There is, there's different kinds of justification that it produces, that are satisfying to us.

I mean, you can justify yourself as an individual over against the whole of the rest of society, if you want. Lots of people can do that. You can justify yourself within the ethnic, or linguistic, or racial group that you belong to, because you're a member in good standing, and you use your justifying machine to work on that.

You can, you can use a, you can, you can, it's, there's a kind of victim generator, which says that, which portrays you as being, the victim, and, you generate a justification, which condemns everybody else, because everybody else, is responsible for having made you a victim. And so, all these clever processes, go on all the time, by which we justify ourselves. And, we have to do it.

[ 6 : 38 ] It seems compulsively, that we have to do it. And, and it's, it's so basic to our self-awareness, that this process goes on.

Now, when it comes to justification, you will remember, I think, and I can, I can remind you, of the, the, the tablets on which the, the Ten Commandments are written, the justification, according to the law.

Now, that is, in terms of moral principle, in terms of ethical principle, in terms of lifestyle, and everything else, that is, a very high level, to which we attain, by conformity to it, and, we achieve, what is called, a justification, by the law.

Now, that's fairly universal. I think every, all sorts of groups do that, but, certainly the Jews, in the Old Testament, tradition, of Israel, they really knew, how to do it.

They knew, how to justify themselves, by the law. And, they lived for that. Now, the difficulty is, that with all our systems, of generating justification, all of them, prove to be inadequate.

[ 8 : 09 ] That's what I talked about, last week. No matter how hard, these engines work, they, they don't do it. They open up, a vista to us, they make us, see a possibility, ability, but they don't, ultimately, provide it.

And, so, we are left, in the position, of, trying to work, to the best we can, and yet, having at the end, a sense, of failure. failure.

And, that's why, Paul, who, himself, was deeply involved, in this process, of justification, so that when he wrote, to the Philippians, he says, as to justification, by the law, I am blameless.

But, that wasn't enough. And, we have, different modes, and methods, of justification, which we all discover, to be inadequate.

They don't do it, for us. Now, one of the reasons, I feel guilty, and inadequate, all my life, I mean, that's my congenital condition, but, is that, when you stand up here, and talk about, the uniqueness, of the gospel, of Jesus Christ, the inspiration, and authority, of the Bible, over against, every other world religion, over against, every other system, of ethical attainment, or achievement, or moral accomplishment, you feel like, you're betraying, your country, you're betraying, your culture, you're betraying, your own mind, because, it couldn't be possible, that you're right.

[ 9 : 50 ] You know, and, so why do you insist, that you are? And I think, I mean, I think that's a problem, that gets to lots of people.

Well, the difficulty with it, is that, you can't, you can't sort of, prove that you're right, and yet, this, that Paul says here, in Romans, says that, well, I mean, the way it says, is this, that no matter what, engine of justification, you use, it doesn't produce, the end product, you want, you know, that's what Paul meant, when he said, I know what it is, to do right, but I find in myself, a falling short, of that. And so that, the human condition, unless it resorts, to hypocrisy, of some kind, or other, has to live, with this constant, contradiction, that we know, so much better, than we are.

There's something, missing, that we can't do, so that no matter, what engine, of justification, we may use, then, all the discussion, of world religions, and all those things, from, in one sense, I think, are like saying, well, my engine's better, than your engine, or aren't all the engines, ultimately the same, trying to accomplish, the same thing, and doesn't mine, produce as much, as yours produces, and, we argue about, the argument, between world religions, I think, is largely, on the topic, of whose, engine of justification, is the most adequate, which group, of people, have achieved, the highest level, of intellectual, and emotional, and spiritual, and ethical integrity, who really has it, you know, and if you live, in the west, you're sure, that the people, in the east, have it, if you live, in the east, you're sure, the people, in the west, have it, but, it works like that, you don't know, what's happening, now,

Paul, I think, is speaking, from that background, he spent Romans, chapter one, and chapter two, saying that, he said, okay, so you Jews, have a better engine, you produce, a higher level, of such, self-justification, you have higher standards, but they still, don't meet, the requirements, that you know, must be met, in your own heart, so that in that sense, you're the same, as everybody else, he says, the pagans, the Gentiles, they have their generators, too, and they generate, a whole lot, of moral, and ethical achievement, and goals, and ideals, but none of them, with that, none of them, is it accomplished, now, you need to get, that kind of background, straight in your mind, before you read, the first line, of this passage today, because this passage, says, and I commend it, to your reading, now, a righteousness, from God, in other words, this isn't, man in his attempt, to achieve, some godliness, in his life, this is a righteousness, which comes down, from God, and replaces, all the engines, of our, moral achievement, of righteousness, the righteousness, from God, apart from, different from, the righteousness, which comes from the law, see that in the first verse, this has been made known, that means, it's been, revealed, and the law, says, yes,

[14:03] I know, that's what we're looking for, that's the kind of righteousness, we want, but can't produce, and the prophets, look at them, and say, yes, I know what you need, as a people, but you're not there, now, something happens, that a righteousness, which comes from God, has been made known, and he says, this righteousness, verse 22, from God, comes, through faith, in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, it comes, through faith, to faith, so that, the heart of the gospel, is, the presentation, of the person, of Jesus Christ, as being, what it says, in verse 21, is the righteousness, from God, this, this engine, as it were, this thing, that God has produced, is, Jesus Christ, and this provides, in him,

God has provided, a whole, different, basis of righteousness, it's not, this is where I, get back to the, soapstone fish, you see, God has given us, perfect righteousness, in Jesus Christ, now, we can't, mar it, but we can't, improve on it, you know, we can take it, and mess it up, but we can't, improve on it, so that the story, of the church, is the story, of messing it up, and having to come back, to the original, to see, how, how it works, so the righteousness, from God, comes, through faith, in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, now, Paul, Paul states, that, that we come, to faith, in Jesus Christ, by the proclamation, of the gospel, of Jesus Christ, and, the gift, of faith, is given to us, so that, this righteousness, which comes, comes to us, by reason, of our, believing in, putting our faith, in Jesus Christ, but, but faith, you must remember, is not, one of a series, of law works, that we do, to achieve righteousness, faith, faith, is appropriating, something, because you can, no longer resist it, faith, remember, is, is the,

I mean, I think, I think, it's, I think, it's, Nygren describes it, he says, it's like a, it's like a field, of fresh green grass, for cows, you see, once you let down, the barriers, you don't have to do anything, to get the cows, into the field, they just go, and, once, and, and, Paul says, once the barriers, are let down, to Jesus Christ, you don't have to persuade people, they move in, because, they come to believe in him, so he ends chapter, verse 22, by saying, there is, no difference, that, now, there's no difference, in Paul's mind, because, God has done that, and he does, hasn't done it, for this group of people, or this group of people, he hasn't done it, for the Jews, and not for the Gentiles, he hasn't done it, for the sophisticated, spiritually elite, and not for the clods, of this earth, he's done it, for everybody, there is no difference, what he has done, he has done, for everybody, that's why, it was very important, if you weren't here, last year, last week, that, by the tape,

I don't know what to say, but, you see, the universality, that was established, last week, was, that we all, come justly, under the condemnation, of God, because we're not, what God wants us to do, now, available to, all of us, to the whole, of humanity, is what God, has done, in, making, a righteousness, available to us, which isn't, our achievement, which, but which comes, from him, he says, there is no difference, because, all have sinned, and fall short, of the glory of God, and, we're all conscious, of that, that's not, that's nothing new, to know that, you don't have to look, at yourself, very long, to realize, the truth of that, that all have sinned, and fall short, of the glory of God, but, having, encompassed, everybody, in that, he says, now, what happens, the thing, that is, the basis, of our life, is, you are justified, freely, by his grace, through the redemption, that came, by Christ Jesus, it's,

God has, has made you, perfect, in Christ, whole, complete, utterly, categorically, unquestionably, undeniably, you are made, righteous, in Jesus Christ, and you are, in Jesus Christ, because you have, put your faith, and trust in him, you are perfect, now, you have the rest, of your life, to do some finishing, touches, if you want, but, but the essential, thing is perfect, that's been given to you,

you can mess it up, and mar it, you can revert, to your own, you know, your own, two cylinder, self generating, machine, if you want, but it's been done, for you, and the fact, that it's been done, for you, means, that you don't, have to spend, the rest, of your life, generating, your own righteousness, it's been done, for you, you don't have to, labor, at that, you are now, free, to do something, for somebody else, that's the way, your life, is meant to be, because, this, primary, essential, task, of our lives, has been done, for us, perfectly, by Jesus Christ, in whom, we've come to believe, and so, you're free, to go on from there, you don't have to work, at it, anymore, and I mean,

[ 20 : 32 ] I, I mean, human, I just know, it's so easy, to get sucked, into working, at your own, self, self, justification, and to be exhausted, through trying, to do it, because it's an, impossible task, but you are justified, freely, by his grace, and, you, you know, that, you know, what needed, to be done, and what was impossible, to do, has been done, by God, in Jesus Christ, so that's what it means, freely, by his grace, he has redeemed you, and, and you know, the, the, the concept, of redemption, is the concept, that, that something, is bought back, which was, owned, by, somebody else, something, which once, belonged to you, has been taken, away from you, and now, it's been brought, back to you, and,

God has done that, for you, in Jesus Christ, that's what it means, when it says, he, you are justified, freely, by his grace, through the buying, back, that came, by Christ Jesus, and, and then, it describes, how God did that, and it says, God presented him, as a sacrifice, of atonement, through faith, in his blood, it's interesting, you see, that, if you look, in verse 21, it says, God made known, and then, here, it's, God demonstrated, and, verse 26, God demonstrated, God made known, this is something, that God has done, and God, has made known, and, that what happened, you see, I mean, you remember, the story, that, that, we thought, that it was he, that should redeem Israel, but, our chief priests, have taken him, and have turned him over, to be crucified, and he was crucified, and now, it is the third day, that that crucifixion, has taken place, it has happened, and when they tell the story, it sounds like, inevitably, a good prospect, a high hope, something we all believed in, that was going to be happening, it didn't happen, he was crucified, and it's all over, but now, you see, he talks about it, in an entirely different way, here,

Paul talks about it, and says, what was happening then, was that God, was presenting him, as a sacrifice, of atonement, that wonderful word, which means, you know, which everybody, should take back, to their union shop, and put it up on the wall, at one-ment, it's a good word, God presented him, as a sacrifice, of atonement, through faith, in his blood, through faith, in his violent, death, on the cross, and that's why, you know, I think that, that the Roman Catholics, confronting you, with a crucifix, whenever you go, into their church, and it's a bit of a horror, but it's something we, I mean, it seems a bit of a horror, but it's something, we have to keep, central in our lives, because this is what,

God has done, as the basis, of our justification, he has presented him, on a cross, as a sacrifice, of atonement, to bring together, you see, the demands, of God's justice, on the one hand, and the inadequate, attempt, at our self-justification, on the other hand, and these two things, could never come together, because God's demand, for justice, was too high, and our achievement, of justification, or righteousness, was too low, and so they could never, be brought together, until God acted, in his son, Jesus Christ, and presented him, as a sacrifice, of atonement, through his faith, through faith, in his blood, then it goes on, to qualify that, by saying, he did this, to demonstrate, his justice, because in his forbearance, he had left, the sins committed, beforehand, unpunished, humanity, in its rebellion, against God, in its sinful disobedience, of God, has called down, upon itself, the just punishment, of God, and God has not, allowed that, to happen, you know, so often, we cry out, to God, you know, why did you, let this happen, but what we really, need to cry out is, thank you, that you didn't, let it happen, for much of our lives, you know, that it's,

God has, in his forbearance, he has left, sins committed, unpunished, and he can't, simply say, well, we'll write them off, no, justification, has to take place, and those, who committed, the sins, cannot do it, so somebody, has to do it, for them, and in their place, and God, has presented, Jesus Christ, a sacrifice, for the atonement, through his blood, on the cross, to do that, and to bring us together, and that's, that's, that's what he's done, his forbearance, he did this, to demonstrate, his justice, at the present time, so as to be just, and the one, who justifies, those who have faith, in Jesus, I mean, he talks about, at the present time, you know, we're, we're almost taught, to live, that, we live our lives, we do the good, we do, and we do the bad, we do, we succeed, to the extent,

that we succeed, and fail, to the extent, that we fail, and finally, we come to a day, of judgment, and on that day, of judgment, the balance, is held up, and we're seen, we're seen to be, success, or failure, and that's the way, it all works, but what Paul, is saying here, is no, that's not the way, it works, justification, is right now, it has happened, it's done, it's finished, and it's yours, by faith in Jesus Christ, you are made perfect, through what God, has done for you, in Christ, you can't do it yourself, you can perhaps, mar what has been done, but the perfection, of what he has done, remains undeniable, and so he says, that this is done, to demonstrate, that God, is just, the God, whom has been portrayed, for three chapters, in Romans, as the God of wrath, is now revealed, as the God, who has, who is just, and not only, is he just, but he is also, the God, who justifies, the one, who believes, in Jesus Christ, now that is, the staggering, reality, of the heart, of the gospel, that justification, which is conferred, on you, by faith, in Jesus Christ, undeserving, totally undeserving, as you are, and as we are, and as our world is,

[ 28 : 46 ] God has done, for us, what we cannot, do for ourselves, and all human religion, and all human aspiration, and all human, ethical achievement, doesn't accomplish, what needs to be done, that can only, that can only, be accomplished, through what God, has done, in Jesus Christ, and he has brought us, to faith in Jesus Christ, and to share, the gospel of Jesus Christ, with others, he has done, the perfect thing, and that's, where he wants us, to start, doesn't want us, to start by, trying to do our best, because our best, isn't going to lead anywhere, he wants us, to start, with the reality, of what he's done, for us, and to live our lives, on that basis, let me pray, our God, we are, very little people, and a very little part, of the world, and a very little corner, of the geography, of this globe, and our individual, minds, struggle a lot, and the engines, of our self-justification, are totally inadequate, and we thank you, that you have intervened, into our lives, in offering, the sacrifice, of your son,

Jesus Christ, on the cross, whereby his death, he achieved, for us, standing with you, which could never, be possible, on any other terms, grant that each, one of us, may in a new, and fresh way, be brought, to realize, your grace, and goodness, to us, in calling us, to believe, in Jesus Christ, we ask, in his name, amen, and heaven, amen,