

Justified Rather Than the Other

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Date: 30 October 2022

[0 : 0 0] Please join me back in Luke chapter number 18. What a blessing to be reminded of so much truth before we ever even come to the sermon. Beautiful song. Brother Steve Morgan has been helping some of the students or young people have been getting some coaching.

And I won't get all this right. But basically somebody who knows a whole lot about music says our church is really blessed with musical ability and talent. And we're all biased. We just love all these young people so much.

But not only are we biased but we are just really blessed as a church of any size to have such wonderful singers. Luke chapter number 18.

Good news. This publican like you and I came in one day and left the room justified. Which is wonderful. That's the promise that I'm celebrating today in faith alone.

He is faithful to his promise. And he says that by faith in Jesus Christ that we can be made declared righteous. Be justified. Verse 14.

[1 : 0 1] I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. Contrast between two men. Through justification there was a relief of a man that lied. He lived underneath the load and burden of a guilty conscience.

Unable to raise his head. That Jesus Christ justified him. And we celebrate that today. There's an expression some churches use. And I find nothing wrong with it.

It just isn't complete. Which is come as you are. And we can say that as a church. But thanks to Jesus Christ we invite people to come as they are. But to leave as only Jesus would make us.

Which means we can come in and we can leave justified rather than the other. Rather than the other stance that we were in when we came in. Or somebody else. We can leave justified. Churches across the country that would have a Protestant heritage will be celebrating Reformation Day.

I shared with you last week. My understanding as Baptists were neither Protestant or Catholic. But it is a story worth knowing. And it is a story that can highlight the truth of faith alone.

[2 : 0 6] So I'll just share with you briefly with you. Martin Luther around 1505. He was walking in a German countryside. He was almost struck with lightning. He is in terror. He is quite afraid.

So he cries out the saint and the spare him. And he would become a monk. This is a Catholic response. Not one I would recommend. But from his understanding he cries out in fear.

Because he knew that he was not righteous. He was not ready to meet his maker. He was not ready to stand before God. Over the next decade he would be consumed by fear of divine judgment.

Many parts of his story would talk about he would be cleaning a floor. He would be doing something but aware of the stain upon his heart of where he was not clean. And he tried earning God's favor through good works and acts of penance.

Which is an act or some type of action done out of the demonstrator repentance of sin. That's his understanding of it. It was a works-based becoming righteous is what he was working at.

[3 : 04] But we will see the day that it's not that it's something our righteousness is it's declared. It's not developed. It's forensic. It's not formative.

It is received. It's not rewarded. It's immediate. It's not gradual. It's provided. It's not progressive. We'll talk about all of that today.

But we are declared righteous because of Jesus Christ. But the more he worked at it, the more he was frustrated, recognizing he could never do enough good to appease the wrath or atone for his sins.

He began to hate the expression, the righteousness of God, because he saw nothing but his own condemnation. And Nathan Berzinski says concerning this, a time of his life and his work says, Through the study of Psalms, Romans, and Galatians, this monk came to understand that the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel speaks not only of God's perfect standard, but also of righteous provision in which the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to those who embrace him in saving faith.

Not only a righteous standard that is given in the gospel, but a righteous provision. So we celebrate that the mercy of God is demonstrated to us in the death of Christ, and it's his only basis for our forgiveness and acceptance.

[4 : 21] The history tells us that on October the 31st, 1517, Martin Luther approaches the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, and nails a piece of paper containing 95, as history would say, revolutionary opinions which would begin the Protestant Reformation.

This caused no small storm in the Catholic Church. Around 1545, they organized an ecumenical council of Catholic churches, and they condemned this teaching as heresy.

Do any of you know what the name of the council was where they organized and called this teaching Faith Alone? It is, that's if you could show us here, it is a slide. It is the Council of Trent, all right?

This is not the Council of Trent. So this is me, and this was me a thousand years ago, all right? We look like. It was on a meeting of all the Trents of the day to come up with an opinion. Please get rid of that.

But in that council, the Catholic Church says, we got to do something about this because this truth is going to destroy this false religion. And if you're in here today and you grew up in the Catholic Church and influenced by it, I would like to let you know that in my small town in Kentucky, there was only one Catholic Church.

[5 : 33] But almost all of us in here were in some understanding of a works-based religion before we realized the beauty of Jesus Christ.

And it had a different name. It had a different label. It had different traditions. Maybe it didn't take you to church. Maybe it just left you on the front porch when you were hearing from your grandfather or your parents, I'm a pretty good person.

But that is the false belief that we celebrate when anybody comes out from underneath that. And so we will not see this here as revolutionary opinions. At a later date, we will see how these have been around forever.

But today, I want to focus on the fact that these are not opinions of a former Catholic monk, but they are the eternal truth revealed to us by God and His Word. So two walked in, one walks out justified.

Two went into a temple in verse 10, but one of them is justified rather than another. He is justified by God. A declaration by God that you are righteous because of Christ.

[6 : 34] Last week, I mentioned to you a very elementary starter definition would be to say, just if I had never sinned. Well, the consequences would be that, but that's not possible.

Even all the way back in the garden, Adam and Eve could not say, can we just pretend like this didn't happen? Because God in His holiness and that great dilemma, He was committed to His holiness and also as He is the mercy.

And there had to be a sacrifice all the way in the garden that was a picture of the coming sacrifice that would be made of Jesus. But better yet, we are declared by God to be righteous because of the death of Jesus.

Our sin wasn't ignored, but it was paid for by Christ. Only two religions of the world. You've heard it said in many ways. There's one that's grace. There's one that's works. There's one that's all about doing.

There's one about being done. There's one that says there's something in my hand I bring. And there's one that says there's nothing in my hand I bring. Basically, it's true and it's false. And long before Lutheran, this has become a point of contention in our world where the lie that Satan would tell you is not to avoid religion, but to give yourself trying to achieve the righteousness.

[7 : 47] Working so that one day you'll stand before God and He'll say, based upon your good works, I can allow you into heaven. The apostle Paul preached this. Same message that he preached in Acts 13, 38-39 is our message today.

He says this, Over and over again, only Jesus will make you righteous.

The law cannot do it. But as long as there's been people like the apostle Paul, and there has been, the fact that we have this truth today that was preached by the apostles just lets you know that there's been a history of people all the way from Christ that have been preaching this message.

As long as there's been a group of people doing that, there's been another group of people that Paul speaks about in Acts 15, verse 1, that preached their message as loud and as long as we have.

And this is what it says there. It says, And certain men, which came down from Judea, taught the brethren and said, Except you be circumcised after the manner of Moses.

[9 : 02] And you can replace that with whatever you want to replace it with. Being baptized in the same creek that your grandparents were baptized in. You do good by your neighbors. You don't do this or that.

They came down and they said, Unless you're circumcised in the manner of Moses, you cannot be saved. There's always been that message. In Kentucky, 50% of churches in the mid-1800s moved from being Baptist churches.

Those that were Baptist moved to a works-based salvation and became the Church of Christ in the mid-1800s because there's always been a certain man who came down that says, You cannot be saved unless you follow this rule, this law, you meet this standard.

Paul addresses this. And he says, I'm not going to put up with any of this nonsense because it puts people under bondage. Look how he says in Galatians 2, 4, and 5. And that because of false brethren, the ones that I just mentioned to you in Acts 15, unawares brought in who came in privately to spy out your liberty, which you have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we gave place subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

There is no place for that message. We will not entertain it at all because, as it says in 2 Peter 2, 1, this is why it's worth fighting about. It says, But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you who privately shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying that the Lord brought them and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

[10 : 41] The belief that you can earn your salvation is no small matter. And as there was people in the time of Paul after Christ, all through the years until our day, it's something that we got to say it's of the utmost importance.

But where does the Apostle Paul get that type of strong confidence? To speak in that manner. We know that he studied at the feet of Gamaliel, that he memorized large portions, if not all, of the Torah.

But you don't have to have to do either one of those to understand this truth. It's so accessible and it's so clear that this old boy from Kentucky can explain it to you.

And it's in the Scripture in such a place that you'd have to work to ignore it. So let's look at the use of the word justified in Scripture. And we'll see how the Bible uses the word justified so that we'll know how we can be declared righteous, how we can be justified.

Any of you spelling bee champions? Anybody? There are great spelling bee champions in here. The day, Danny, I'm looking to you. You probably know. No? Anybody? Nobody. Okay, great. I'm at home among you people. One hand, Steve Morgan.

[11 : 48] All right. You know, in the spelling bee, this never helped me, but they would say, can you? They'd say the word and then they would say, can you use that in a sentence? I'm like, how's that going to help you? There's a word I don't know how to spell in a sentence.

All right? Did that do anything for you? And so hearing a word in a sentence will help you define it and know what it is. Let's look at how the word justified is being used throughout the Scriptures.

Every culture would have some understanding of something being declared right, a declared verdict. The courtroom system would be different from culture to culture in history.

You may picture the courthouse. If you've been paying a speeding ticket recently, you may be picturing somebody, but it's universal, this idea that there'd be a person that would make a judgment upon what is right and what is wrong.

Deuteronomy 25.1. If there be a controversy between men and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them, that they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

[12 : 48] Use of the word justify is to declare, to make, to say that is righteous. We can also see through the contrast. The condemn is to pronounce guilty or worthy of punishment, but the justify is to declare not guilty, or that justice does not demand punishment, or the person concerned cannot justly be condemned.

It's how it's used in Job 34.17. Shall even he that hateth right govern, and wilt thou condemn him that is most just? They are seen. Either you're going to be condemned, or you're going to be just.

The opposite of being justified is having your charges laid at your feet. Romans 8.33. Who shall lay any of the things to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

You can't lay things, charges at the feet of the justified, because the justified have been declared innocent and righteous. An argument from other uses of it, the expression here, throughout the Bible.

Such is not coming to judgment, John 5.24. Not to be condemned, John 3.18. To remit sins or impute righteousness, Roman 4. Or to be reconciled.

[13 : 58] If justified means to progressively, to formatively get better, then how would we ever in the Bible be expressed that Jesus is justified?

If you're justified by works, then how would Jesus, how would the Holy Spirit ever declare that Jesus is justified? See where I'm, 1 Timothy 3.16.

See what I'm talking about. And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on the world, received up in the glory.

If justified means to progressively get better, and it doesn't mean to be declared righteous, how would that ever be ascribed to our Jesus Christ? But the Holy Spirit declares that Jesus is righteous because he always has been and always will be.

This will not work if you would justify means to progressively make righteous. So much of Paul's life is giving to the defending of this truth. Romans chapter number 1. We'll look at several verses in Romans 1.

[15 : 04] In 1.18 he says it's been revealed from heaven that this truth has been revealed to us by God. That those that were living in rebellion to God, he encourages them to know that their sin can be paid for.

Romans 1.32, who knowing of the judgment of God, that which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them. Those that recognize that they are sinners and encourage other people to sin, it's worthy of death.

And the whole world stands guilty before God. Romans 3.19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

The whole world is guilty before God. And the pronounced guilty is to condemn. The pronounced righteous or not guilty is to justify. Galatians 2.16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even when we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no man be justified.

The Bible's teaching from beginning to end says that the word justified is a judicial term, that it is an act that is declared as you would picture in a courtroom.

[16 : 23] It is not something that you earn, it is not something that you merit, but it is something that you can receive from God because of what Jesus Christ did. A person can deny the authority of Scripture, and if they do that, it would be conceivable that they would deny that justification is a judicial act, but it is impossible if you should deny that it is represented in the Bible.

So there is two religions in the world. The Bible will only be represented in one of them, only one of them can have this. So any religion, any teaching in the world that would teach a works-based salvation in your family or in your friends, if they have the Bible, then they have no defense for that belief.

So where we ought to take them is to the Bible. We should show them. Growing up, I thought I had several friends that grew up in a church that were like this. They had conservative values.

We would do the same thing at the school dance. We'd stand in the corner awkwardly. We had the same ideas about things, but our churches were completely different. They might have looked different, and they might have looked the same on Sunday morning, and I thought this is the hardest thing in the world is that we're looking at the same Bible, but we've come to different understandings of it.

But where we should have spent our time is going deeper into the Word because the Bible makes it clear. There's so much confusion comes, and we must see that there's a distinction between justification and sanctification because God's not the author of confusion.

[17 : 53] He wants peace. And it says in 2 Corinthians 11, 3, But I fear lest by any means as a serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, his craftiness, so your minds shall be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

is that they have been taken what was simple and it's been made complicated. Those who come to the Word of God and they don't understand that we can be declared righteous by Jesus, they have taken what is simple and now has been made complicated to them.

And I'm not more intelligent than them, but thanks to God, we can see in simplicity and not confusion because when you understand the gospel, all the other teachings fall in the place.

So let's have a brief debate. I hear that the bridge builders already did this today and they already had a debate on the subject. And so here would be an opening statement we would have in a debate.

Romans 3, 28. Therefore we conclude that no man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Pretty straightforward, isn't it? That no man can conclude that he's justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

[19 : 03] That would be my opening statement. And what would be the natural rebuttal? James chapter number 2, verse number 24. You see then how that by works, a man is justified and not by faith only.

Then everybody gets real tense, right? Oh no, what just happened here? One verse couldn't be any more clear. The other verse by itself seems to be so clear. Here's a quote from a Catholic commentary.

It says, The main problem, in my opinion, is that the Protestant understanding of justification does not go beyond forensic or judicial. In other words, they don't believe that they are changed inwardly.

They claim to become new creatures, but they will deny with their last breath that any real change occurs to the man. They simply believe that they are covered over. And that is simply not true.

There's an understanding of justification and sanctification that the Bible teaches. And it's not true about us. So let's answer. As a teenager, if I would have seen that verse, I would have said, Let's get very far away from that verse, all right?

[20 : 08] I don't know what to do with that verse. Let's go to one of the passages that I know so well. But the book of James is written by the same person who wrote the book of Romans, which was the Holy Spirit, which means that they're not in conflict with each other.

Just like Romans will teach us about sanctification, James will teach us about justification as well. And so we can look at this here. Paul was teaching in Romans that man is accepted by God, that a man can be accepted by God.

He's dealing with the issue of how the unrighteous people can be accepted and be declared righteous and justified. James is talking about something else. He's dealing with hypocrisy in the church.

And so how do you tell the difference between somebody who claims to be a Christian but isn't and someone who claims to be a Christian and is? James 2.14 What does it profit, my brethren, though a man see he has faith and has no works?

Can faith save him? Has he been saved by faith if there's been no works in his life and showing it? This is the topic that is on the table in discussion there.

[21 : 10] And so James' answer is clear. Faith brings forth the fruit of holiness. A faith will bring forth a righteousness that can be evidently seen.

So faith and obedience demonstrates a person as a believer. So we can stay in the same passage and demonstrate a judicial understanding of justification.

And can just a publicly stated faith demonstrate a person as really a Christian? That's what he's talking about. The person that says that they are, is their faith real or is it dead?

James talks a lot about a dead faith. James 2.26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. If I was to lay here on the floor and you would say it doesn't appear that that body has any life to it, I can't declare to you that I have faith if it has not brought a new life to me.

Dead faith is referring to a faith which is empty or hollow. It doesn't have a living reality. So this is a verbal profession, but there's no reality of life in the heart of a believer.

[22 : 17] Then he takes us to the same place that the apostle Paul went in the book of Romans often, which is a story about Abraham. In Romans 4, Paul tells the story of Abraham and he shows that justification comes by faith alone.

The book of Galatians were told that it was accounted unto Abraham to be righteous some 400 years before the law ever came. Paul speaks about it and James brings it up, which if you're James and you're trying to make a case against justification, this would not be the story to bring up.

If James is wanting to prove something, because in Genesis 15.6 it says, and he, Abraham, believed in the Lord and it counted to him for righteousness. You'd be aware of that today. Those listening would have been aware of that.

So what are we to make of James 2.21? It says, was not Abraham our father justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Is James contradicting himself when he speaks of Abraham being made righteous before Isaac?

Look there in verse number 23. So in James 2.23 it says, and the scripture was fulfilled with saith Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness and was called the friend of God.

[23 : 29] Which is it, James? Are you saying he was justified when he took his son up there? That taking Isaac to be sacrificed is what made him righteous? Or are you saying that the belief that he had is what made us righteous?

James is talking about Abraham's demonstration that he belongs to God. That when Abraham took his son, it was a demonstration that there was a living faith in him.

So James and Paul are in agreement because as I said, the writing comes from the Holy Spirit who is most certainly in agreement. Paul speaks about obedience as a result of faith as well.

Paul teaches the same truth that James is emphasizing. Romans 3.31, And we'll find these truths.

If I was to ask you today to give me one verse that teaches us that we are saved by faith alone, all you good Awana Cubbies and Sparkies and all of you that grew up, any kind of program that teaches would take us to this verse, Ephesians 2.8.

[24 : 33] Which you could probably say it with me. It says, That's justification.

But just a couple of verses later, it's going to teach us what we understand to be sanctification, which is, For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Those who have been declared righteous, that put their faith in Christ, He has made you unto good works. Same teaching in Romans that you find in the book of James. And there's no conflict. There's no contradiction.

Both are teaching this. So we disagree with the false claim that I read to you in the quote that we just believe in justification that makes no inward change. That is not what the Bible teaches at all.

And we agree with what Martin Luther would say when he says, Christians are not made righteous and doing righteous things, but being now made righteous by faith in Christ, they do righteous things.

[25 : 36] Because he has changed us from the inside out. And so there's a distinction that is made. Justification, which makes us righteous, and sanctification, we make the distinction because the Bible does.

The distinction is clearly seen in the book of Romans 6. It says, Grace doesn't give us a license of sin. We now walk in newness of life. We were dead in our sins, but now we're freed from bondage. And with that freedom from bondage, we live lives that are marked by obedience.

Romans 6.22 But now being made free from sin, which is being justified, we become the servants to God to have your fruit unto holiness and to the end everlasting.

That our growth and our behavior has been changed by our faith in Jesus. So let us walk back to Luke chapter number 18. We looked at that last week, and we've been looking at today.

The Pharisee, he demonstrates this kind of formative, progressive, this is what I'm doing, this is my resume, it's the belief that justification is earned by good behavior and not just wrong actions.

[26 : 41] He gives it positively and negatively. Stephanie loves a good court trial. Any of y'all ever watch court trials online? Anybody weird with my wife in here? Okay, you're alone there on this here. All right, I'm noticing they're not raising their hand for anything.

It's a dangerous thing to raise your hand in a Baptist church. You get signed up for the nursery or something. Holly always looks around. She says, you raise your hand. But she was watching one recently where a man decided to defend himself.

I wouldn't recommend it. All right? Get a lawyer, even if it's a court-appointed one. And the man's defending himself. That's what this man is doing, the Pharisee is doing in his prayer as a resume. He's defending himself before God.

He says, I'm not an extortioner. I'm an unjust, no, I'm not an unjust man, which isn't true, right? He says, I'm not an adulterer. I'm not as this guy over here.

You know what I do when I'm not doing bad things? I fast twice a week. I give tithes that all I possess. You've heard that speech. You've heard that speech by friends and family. Many of you gave that speech for years.

[27 : 42] You had some type of resume that said, This is why I believe that I will be made seen as innocent or righteous before God. The justification is an act of God's grace, wherein He pardons all of our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 5, 5 that God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. The Pharisee didn't humble himself before God, and as a result, he did not receive the grace of God.

He did not have faith in Him. He did not leave declared righteous. But the publican story is different. He left justified that day. He did not have time to earn His salvation, but He was able to be declared righteous as a free gift from God.

Maybe He would have a conversation with a man that was saved on the cross beside Jesus. I've shared this story before, great sermons by Elister Begg that says, Can you imagine the man that was on the other cross beside Christ?

He dies, he goes to heaven, and he gets there. And we know this isn't what the Bible teaches, but if you can imagine with this, there'd be somebody at the gates and say, Why should you be here today? Have you ever attended the Bible Institute at Vision?

[28 : 57] And no, and so John shakes his hand, not sure if he should be allowed in here. Have you ever volunteered at any of the events? Have you ever been involved in any of these things? Have you even been baptized? No.

You haven't done any of those things? Then why should you be allowed in here? And his answer is, The man on the middle cross said that I could come. The testimony of the man on the cross, the testimony of this publican, is I had nothing to offer.

I had nothing that says I should be here today. But the work of the man on the middle cross says that I can come. The work of the man on the middle cross declares me righteous today.

The testimony of the publican. It's your testimony if you have one today. And my testimony. So with the time we have here, Romans 4, 5, it says, But the him that worketh not, but believeth on him, that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for him for righteousness.

And so there's different views. That God either gives us righteousness and puts it on our account, an imputed righteousness, which we'll look at. Some people would say it's an infused righteousness, where he gives you as a reward as you work hard enough, you will eventually earn it.

[30 : 06] Some religions would teach a joint righteousness, which is that when Jesus died on the cross, he died for your original sin. Now you're on your own. Brother John and I saw a picture, a motivational poster one time from a certain religion, and it said, I never said it would be easy, but it's worth it.

All right? And that was Jesus on a poster, which is to say some religions teach that Jesus died from your original sin, but now it's up to you to make sure you're good, outweighs your bad.

I can't think of anything that would be more terrifying to me than a poster of Jesus telling you it's not going to be easy because I have messed up everything in my life, and if he had not done it completely, I would be without hope.

There's an enabled righteousness that says, because he died for you, then now you're able to do enough good works. And then there's this self-righteousness, which is I can obtain righteousness, and I don't need you, Jesus.

I can do this on my own. But what the Bible teaches is an imputed righteousness. A great transaction happened for that publican that day.

[31 : 09] Romans 4, 7, 8, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven. That's the word justified. All right? So those that your iniquities have been forgiven, whose sins are covered.

And blessed is the man whom the Lord will not impute sin. Our blessings came to us as given, imputed righteousness from God. Those of you in the IT community maybe think of it as imported righteousness.

All right? That word doesn't fully do it, but you've ever imported something into your account. So I have a picture here in closing, and I just want to make sure it's so wonderful as we celebrate the day.

And you may not be able to read it all, but I can. I'm much closer than you. Okay? And so imputation, the verse that I just read, and we're forgiven. We've been justified. See, what the story of the Bible, the simplicity of the Bible, the Bible God gave us, His Son came to earth to make Himself known to us.

Then He gave us the Word of God so we wouldn't miss this. And every story of the Bible, it echoes and it loudly tells this big story. And Satan wants to beguile you.

[32 : 21] He wants to confuse you in this matter. But in the very beginning in the garden, what happened was sin entered through Adam, and because of that, every generation, death has been passed upon us, and we all were born as sinners.

So the idea that you can work out your own salvation and say, during my life, I'm going to do more good than bad, it's not possible, and you're not doing a very good job at it. And I don't even know you, and I can tell you, you're not doing a very good job at it.

But also, what you got to take into account was, you were born a sinner, so now you're going to have to be reborn, not as a sinner. Because that's the first thing that you had on your account when you came. So it was imputed unto you.

The sin of Adam was brought to you, and then you, volitionally, you chose the sin. All right? And so that was brought on to all mankind from Adam. But on the cross, the great exchange happens.

For he had made him to be sin for us. God made Jesus sin for us, who knew no sin, that we may be made righteous. My unrighteousness upon that cross that day.

[33 : 25] What was in my account was now put upon his account. And so what we're celebrating today on Faith Alone Sunday, and we can do this 52 Sundays out of the year, is this fact here, is about of him that are in Christ Jesus of God, is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that through Jesus we have been now made righteous in him.

By faith alone, it's been declared unto us. Someday, you and I, and everyone who has ever lived, will stand before God.

And will we enter already declared righteous, being justified, because the righteousness of Christ has been put upon our account, imputed unto our account, or will you stand there that day, as the Pharisee, who was only justified in your own eyes, with your resume, and tell him, I wasn't that bad.

It's the most important decision you will ever make. The Bible is very clear on what is available to you today. And I want to encourage you to make the decision that you would, the day you would accept Jesus Christ, and by faith, you could be declared righteous, you could be justified.

Also in here, believer, there is so much confusion around God's word, and it's not necessary. It just takes somebody who knows to take the Bible, to walk them through it, and to show them.

[34 : 54] It doesn't mean that they're going to make the right decision. That's between them and God. It is not our responsibility that all the world would come to know Christ, but it is our responsibility, church, is to make sure that people have the information needed to make the choice that they've been given in life.

One of the largest groups of unbelieving people in our community are the religious lost. Those that are working so very hard that earn their salvation, that believe justification is earned, that it's either going to be formed, it's going to be progressive, and they don't understand that it's something that is declared by God towards us because of the work of Christ on our behalf.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, I thank you today as I think about Sunday school teachers and pastors and Bible teachers and friends who helped me make sure that I did not miss the simplicity that is found in Christ.

And Father, I thank you. In this room here, that's what has happened in the lives of my brothers and sisters here. Father, I'm going to pray now if there's those in here today who have not understood this, that have been strict, Lord, that Satan has brought confusion to their lives and they came here today wanting to take yet another step, Lord, to get rid of their sin, to take another step, Lord, to earn their righteousness, I pray that they would recognize the story of your word.

They would recognize the truth that is there. With every head bowed and every eye closed, would you stand with me today? Continue to pray as you're standing. I just want to speak to you for a moment.

[36 : 37] If you came in here today and you would say you were represented by the Pharisee and not the publican, while every head is bowed and every eye closed and nobody's looking around, would you just raise your hand today in acknowledgement to God and say, God, I came in one way, but if I leave that way, I will not leave justified.

I will not leave declared righteous. Yes, but God, I'm going to respond to God's word today. If that's you, let your hand be seen by God and I will pray for you. Never do anything in this world embarrass you, but becoming honest before God is what you must do today if you're going to believe Him at His word.

Well, by your testimony, there's a room full of us today that's unlike most of the world. You knew that truth when you walked in today and all I had to do was the opportunity to remind you of it, to celebrate it, to help provide some clarity.

I want to remind you, you know that message. You could teach that message and you should be teaching that message. There's so many people out there today that are confused, who are going to live their whole lives trying their very best to obtain something that is unattainable, but it must be received as a free gift.

Would you renew your commitment to not just sharing the gospel, but explaining it from His word, the sitting with people, taking these verses and walking them through it, showing how in any part of the Bible, whether it be James or the Old Testament, we were never taught a works-based salvation, but we're always being taught that Jesus Christ has died in our place.

[38 : 08] If you feel like you're not able to do that, take a step today and say, I want to be able to explain that message. I know it, I've experienced it, but today I want to take steps to be able to explain that to other people.