

# Justification through Christ alone

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[ 0 : 00 ] Could you turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 5? I know it seems like a while since Romans chapter 4, at least since we brought the message there. Can I also say as you're turning to Romans chapter 5, I didn't mean to leave any women out by what I just said. Most of the conversations I have in this church actually tend to be with the women in the church. Men are... but there.

So my pastoral council goes out to both men and women in the church. Make use of it. I don't go anywhere. I'm here all the time. I mean, if it was around sort of 3 in the morning to 5 in the morning, that's ideal at the minute. You can come round and, you know, someone will keep you busy. So Romans chapter 5, verses 1 through to 11. Now hear God's word.

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance and endurance produces character and character produces hope. And hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God chose his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we now, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Well, may God bless both the reading of his word and the explanation of it in a moment. Chapter 5.

[ 2 : 55 ] One of the reasons I want you to have your Bibles, I mean, if you don't have your Bibles, then you're incredibly trusting of me. That's a good thing, hopefully. I think it is. But, you know, this reading the word of God for yourself is where your attention needs to be. So, I'd much rather have your eyes down on the text than anywhere else. So, we come then to Romans chapter 5 and we begin with a very clear statement. And that is of how a person is right with God.

And what Paul is saying is this. You're either justified by faith. In other words, you're either made right with God by faith alone or not at all.

Yeah, faith here is of supreme importance. You know, the last couple of Sunday evenings, we looked at faith. Tonight, this evening, again, we're looking at faith. How important is faith? Well, Paul says, you're made right with God by faith. You have peace with God. You have reconciliation with God. You are justified. And what Paul is saying here is something very simple, and that is, just think for a moment, how do you get right with anybody?

Well, God here makes you right with him by the actions of another. In other words, this is deeply personal. You know, many of us enjoy a faith at a distance. You know, not too many of us are all that comfortable all the time when faith gets personal.

[ 4 : 38 ] Yet, Paul is saying that justification is deeply personal. It means that, you know, before God, you have to admit certain things are true about yourself. It means that you see that certain other things are true about God. And that God alone, only God alone, can make you right with himself.

And the way that you're right with him, from your point of view, from your standing, is through faith. Hebrews 11 verse 6 says that without faith, it is impossible to please God.

You know, faith is of supreme importance here. It's mentioned because it's involved in your salvation, of you being right with God. And the reason for this is because there are two obstacles to overcome for anybody who needs to get right with God. Here's the first one.

My sin. Your sin. It gets in the way of God getting close to me. It gets in the way of God getting close to you. And I want you to think about this even as a Christian. You know, Jonathan Edwards in his book, *Religious Affections*, if you buy the Banner of Truth Edition, it's on page 121.

He says that wherever there is remaining sin in a person's life, their spiritual senses dim to the things of God. You know, sin just isn't a problem in God's, you know, not being able to come close to us.

[ 6 : 03 ] It affects the Christian in the same kind of way. Remaining sin, unconfessed sin, living in sin, it dulls our spiritual senses. We get tired of hearing the Word of God. We get tired of singing. We definitely get tired of praying. It causes all kinds of problems.

Here, our sin stops God from getting close to us. God has to deal with sin. He has to judge it. And so if God comes close to us, that's a problem. Because he's going to have to judge sin. And despite what you may have heard elsewhere, you cannot separate the sin from the sinner. Oh, God loves the sinner. He hates the sin. I think you need to reread the Bible. Because the people whom he loves, he redeems and brings into heaven. And hell has an awful lot of people in him. This idea of being able to separate the person from the sin, not possible. If it was possible, there'd be no need for Christ to die on the cross. No need whatsoever. The death of Christ exemplifies the fact that you cannot separate sin from the sinner. So that is a big problem, because God cannot draw close to people who are sinful.

Here's the second problem. Our sin. Only this time, from our point of view, people who are living in sin and have sin, don't want a relationship with God. You know, you even know as a Christian that in those moments where you have lapsed in your spiritual walk with God and sin has taken reign, praying is really difficult. You don't want that kind of intimacy that God freely wants to give you. You don't want that kind of walk where you can really draw near to him. Why? Sin doesn't produce those kind of desires in our life. In fact, sin makes us walk away, makes us say, well, I don't really need to pray, you know.

So sin is a problem on both sides. God can't get close to us because of our sin. And when we have sin, we don't want to get close to God either. So from sin's point of view, it's a win-win situation. It's a win-win situation from the point of view of sin. God can't get close to us, and we don't want to get close to God. Here's the issue, though. How does God, who loves this world and who loves people, get to enjoy a relationship with people that he can't get close to? That's a serious problem. That's a serious issue. How does God get close to a people that he can't get close to because of their sin? How does God to enjoy a relationship with the people that he loves, but he can't get close to them because of sin? And that's what we saw last time.

[ 8 : 51 ] The importance of Jesus Christ taking upon himself all the sin and giving in return all his righteousness. Something has to happen. Something big has to happen, and that's the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. An exchange has to happen. Sin has to be removed, and a righteousness has to be given. And unless that exchange happens, there is no wonderful relationship with God, and that's the very thing that God wants. So think about that question. How does God, who loves people, get close to them? When the very thing that he hates is the very part of them?

He has to get rid of sin. And so he does by giving us his son, Jesus. So we come then, I think very importantly in Romans chapter 5, to this issue of justification. How a person is made right with God. They are justified by faith. They have peace with God by faith. And now you have this relationship with our Lord. You'll notice Paul is very careful to say that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, if I said our kids and your kids, you would understand the difference. Our relates to a relationship that I have with a particular set of children in the church. If I said your children, you'd understand that that kind of relationship is not the same.

That they're both children, but the word our indicates a relationship. Paul's doing exactly the same thing when he says our Lord Jesus. You know, don't overlook the importance of that little word. He is indicating to us that we have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, a wonderful relationship. In other words, there is no more hostility towards Jesus.

[ 10 : 50 ] There is no more internal rebellion against the Son of God. You know, we actually want to walk with him. Why? Because we've been justified by faith. You know, where are you standing with

God this morning?

Well, wherever you stand, it has to be on the foundation of faith if you're standing with God. So any kind of opposition that we have towards God, it disappears in the hour.

Our Jesus. Our Lord. Justification then also speaks of the great exchange which we've already mentioned. 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21. You know, God can't get close to us because everything about us he doesn't like.

Yet he loves us. We need something else. We need what Jesus has. And so Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 verse 21 says this, For our sake he made him, Jesus, who knew no sin to become sin so that we might become the righteousness of God.

And it is the great exchange that God is saying, look, everything about you, I can't get close to you. Everything about Jesus I love. So what I'm going to do in order to establish a relationship with you, I'm going to swap.

[ 12 : 15 ] And the place of the great exchange is going to be the cross. So that everything about you, I'm going to love because you're going to have the righteousness of Christ. In everything about Christ, in when he takes on sin, I'm going to have to judge.

Because God judges sin. So what God does is he takes the righteousness of Christ and gives it to you. I don't know how perfect you feel this morning.

But just think about that this morning. How perfect is Jesus? I'll give you an example. Let's say on to my right, Jesus is standing there. And let's say on my left, Adolf Hitler is stood there.

I'm a Christian. Which am I closest to? No. Hitler. The righteousness of Christ is so perfect that as a sinner before God, that is my condition, I am much, much closer to Hitler than I am to Christ.

And yet what God is saying here is, I'm going to change all of that. Christ's perfections is so perfect. His righteousness is so righteous. That's the very thing that God gives us.

[ 13 : 44 ] I don't know what you feel about yourself. And in many ways, I'm not too interested in hubris. It gets us into all kinds of trouble.

Ego. I'm much more interested in the reality despite whatever we're feeling. And the reality is this. That God has made you right with him by giving you the very righteousness of Christ.

That's how right you are. Are you going to walk away from here with your head down? Well, maybe. Should you? No. Not when you really understand what God has given to you by giving you Christ Jesus.

God made you right with him by giving you his very son. And just take time for the moment to count the things of justification.

Verse 1. Justified by faith. Verse 1. You have peace with God. Verse 2. You have obtained access to God, God's grace, by faith.

[ 14 : 51 ] You're able to stand before God. You're able to rejoice in the hope of glory. Verse 3. Not only are you able to rejoice, but you're able to suffer.

Yeah, that's... You know, it goes from high, high, and then all of a sudden you get thrown off a cliff. Suffering. Do we enjoy suffering? Yeah, not for a moment.

But why is suffering in there? Well, Paul says, because suffering produces endurance. Endurance produces character, which produces hope that will not put us to shame because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

In other words, Paul is saying that you need to take special care and attention to the reality of justification. Despite how you're feeling, despite how you're feeling this morning, you have peace with God.

You are reconciled to God. You are right with God. You have access into His grace. All of these blessings and benefits are always true, despite what you may feel.

[ 15 : 55 ] They can never be anything other than what they are. But here's the crunch. We know them by faith. We're justified by faith and we know all these blessings by faith.

Are you struggling with your faith? Well, maybe. But know this. We enjoy the blessings that we do by faith in the things that God has spoken. Very simple. Difficult.

Okay. But yet simple to understand. So we come then to what Paul is actually saying here. that God, the very thing that God requires of us, He gives to us.

That's the point. That the very thing that God requires of us, righteousness, He gives to us when He gave us His Son. How often, you know, we can expect something from other people and they've got no means of being able to give.

They just can't live up to the expectation. They just can't do it. Yeah. And what God does is that He's asking of us the absolute impossible.

[ 17 : 06 ] And then He gives us the very thing that He requires from us. The righteousness of God. And He gives it to us by exchanging our sin for that righteousness at the cross of Christ.

And that's what we have faith in. Paul says we're justified by faith. Let me try and, let me just try and illustrate what's actually going on here. Imagine for a moment I stopped you this morning and I said, you won't believe this, but you really ought to.

I stopped something from happening before it happened so that you didn't have to go through with it. Yeah, let's just say for a moment I'm one of those type of ministers.

No, let's not even go there. But, you know, this says, you know, I stopped all this from happening before it even happened so that you didn't have to go through with it. You can guarantee that there's going to be one person or two.

Well, maybe it wouldn't have happened anyway. How do we know? You know, I've got a sneaking suspicion why politicians allow things to fail.

[ 18 : 09 ] I think they have to. Because we don't trust politicians who say, I stopped 5,000 jobs from leaving the country. Because you can guarantee someone's going to go, oh, did you?

Maybe it wouldn't have happened anyway. You see, we all realise that we want things to happen just to prove that we can point to it or something. Faith.

What does it mean? Well, think about it this way. Jesus Christ came, he lived and died. Let's just say for a moment you've got to see it with your own eyes. Let's just to see you've got to stand at the foot of the cross and you've got to see his body there and taken down and put in the grave and the empty grave.

Let's just say for a moment you've got to see all of that even with your own eyes. It would still require faith to believe that what was actually happening through all of those events was God reconciling you to himself.

It doesn't matter if you're there or you're not there. At the end of the day you still have to believe that what is happening is happening as God says it is.

[ 19 : 22 ] That's the role of faith. You know, too often people will say things perhaps it wouldn't have happened anyway. You know, the politician who says I've stopped 5,000 jobs from leaving Scotland.

Okay. You know, depending on their reputation we're probably not very likely to believe them. Right? Why? Because it's just words.

But what if he actually did? Or she did? What if the actual politician did stop 5,000 jobs from leaving Scotland and nobody got to see it? It wasn't printed in any newspaper. It was just one statement in Parliament because of a deal that he struck with a business owner or whatever.

Nobody got to see. No one spoke of it. It happened. Yeah. Some people will believe and some people won't. It all depends on the reputation of the person speaking largely.

And here we have God's word and God the Son on the cross. And even if you stood there looking at it witnessing with your own eyes the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus it would still require faith to believe that what God was actually doing there was reconciling you to himself.

[ 20 : 37 ] You know, you've got to remember that in the day that this was happening crucifixions happened a lot. You know, a lot of people were crucified.

You know, crucifixion was a common activity of Rome. It happened all the time. So, you're going to have to be able to point to one person being crucified on one particular day out of all the others. Why does that one mean so much more? Why is that one so different? Or we're justified by faith? Because we're being told what it means. We're listening to the one who is being crucified. So, we're saved by faith alone.

We're justified by faith alone or we're not saved at all. We're justified by faith alone in the work of God alone. And that's also how we know the love of God.

[ 21 : 41 ] You know, it's interesting, isn't it, that when it actually comes to knowing the love of God, the first thing that's said to young believers, probably the youngest believers in the early church, which is the John letters, very young believers, John says this to them, this is how you know what love is.

This is how you know the love of God that Christ laid down his life for us. And that requires faith. Even to know the love of God requires faith. It is to know that what Jesus was doing, he was

actually doing for you.

A person is made right with God by believing that what God was doing, he was doing it for you. Very simple. Very simple.

We turn then to the fact that Christ died for us. Think about it this way. When we read that Christ died for us, he died for sinners, it's one thing to focus on the death of Christ, it's another thing to focus on the Christ who died.

I hope you understand the difference. It's one thing to focus on the death of Christ, where all of our focus and attention is on what is actually happening in his death.

[ 22 : 55 ] Another thing that we ought to do is focus on the Christ who died. Think about that. Think about the person who's actually dying for you. Think as you stand at the cross and you've got to remember that on either side of Jesus, there are two other men being crucified.

Why? Why attention to this particular man? You know, Paul says to the church at Corinth, now I am determined to know nothing among you except this one having been crucified.

Speaking of Jesus, why? Well, why is he focusing so much on the person who died? Lots of people died on crosses. Yeah, but it's this one that makes the difference.

It's this person that actually dies and takes away your sin, not the thief to the left or the thief to the right. They can do nothing to redeem you.

So it's not just a focus on the death of Christ, but it is a focus on the Christ who died, on who this person is. Paul is very, very clear of focusing on who it is that's dying for you.

[ 24 : 04 ] God the Son. And so God the Son is the righteous one who dies for the ungodly. God the Son is the righteous one who dies for his enemies.

God shows his love towards us that while we are still sinners. You know, Paul says a person is made right with God by believing that, by believing those very actions.

We're justified by faith alone. And so notice what Paul says. You know, when he talks about suffering and he talks about hope and he talks about access by grace, he's not saying live life differently.

You know, how often have we heard that? What he's saying here is you have a different life to live. That's very different. You know, salvation is not about living the old life differently.

It's about living a new life altogether. That's Paul's point. Justified. Peace with God. Access to God. You have all these wonderful blessings given to you, but you also have a life of suffering.

[ 25 : 11 ] You know, Paul's very clear on suffering in Romans, almost in the same way that James is very clear about faith in his letter. You know, faith without works is dead.

Why, you know, faith, listen to that, faith without works is dead. Don't protect dead faith as though it's real faith. If your faith doesn't look like loving your neighbor and serving people in the church, it's not faith.

It's dead. It's dead. And I'm not going to be the sort of pastor, hopefully ever, that's going to go out of my way to protect dead faith. Living faith.

Looks like something, feels like something, it turns up in the church. Paul says exactly the same thing about suffering. Christians suffer.

And they suffer simply because they are Christians. Why? Well, because we live in direct opposition to a world that hates God. and God says, Jesus says, if they hated you, remember they hated me first.

[ 26 : 20 ] You're going to suffer. Pleasant? No. Profitable? Yes. Why is suffering profitable? Why can't something else be profitable?

Why does character have to come through suffering? Why does endurance have to come through suffering? Well, I think there's only one way. Paul says in Romans, later on in chapter 8, that we are heirs with Christ provided that we suffer with him.

We're heirs with Christ provided that we suffer with him. What does that mean? It means this, that as a Christian, you are willing to encounter the sufferings you do because you are a Christian. No more, well, you know, I'll give over to the world.

You know, we will divvy it up, how much I'm allowed to be a Christian in the home, and how much I'm not allowed to be a Christian in the home. You know, we'll divvy it up at work, how much I'm allowed to be a Christian, and how much I'm not allowed to be a Christian.

You know, remember, remember the photography company that phoned up the photographer and says, I want you to go off and to take a photograph of a gay wedding.

[ 27 : 36 ] and he says, well, I can't do that, obviously, I'm a Christian. He says, and they said to him, well, as long as you work for us, you're an employee, that's who you are.

And they're asking him by going off to photograph this wedding to change his very identity. That's what's at stake. Let's divvy it up, that while you're at home, you can be a Christian, but while you're here under an employment, you have to be someone different.

And yet, those same demands are not made on anybody else to change their identity. But that's the very issue here. So, provided that you suffer, what does it mean? You're heirs with Christ, provided that you suffer.

It means it's provided that you're going to protect your identity as a Christian under all circumstances. That's the suffering. That's why Christians encounter suffering. They are willing, to protect their identity under all circumstances.

We saw that last week with the persecution of Christians. There were ways to avoid the persecution. Deny your identity. And that's what Paul's saying here.

[ 28 : 50 ] We suffer because those who suffer, rather, do so because they are unwilling to deny their identity. identity. So, we are heirs with Christ provided that we suffer.

In other words, don't deny your identity as a Christ one, as one who has been justified by faith alone. Let's conclude.

Here's the exhortation. Remember this. Your right standing with God is a right standing because of what God has done. everything that God requires of you, he has given to you.

Remember that. Everything that God requires of you, he has given to you in the Lord Jesus Christ. He asks nothing from you that he has not given to you first in Jesus.

That is why we are justified. That is why we are justified by faith alone. Here's another thing. Your faith can waver. Your assurance in these truths can also waver.

[ 29 : 56 ] But here's the beautiful thing about it all. The reality can't waver. The reality can't waver. Your faith can go up and down. Your assurance can go up and down.

But the work of God can't go up and down. It's not, well, maybe I have saved you or maybe I haven't. You'll just have to wait and see. No, your faith in what God has done can waver like that. But the reality of what God has done can never waver.

That's the reality of justification. So think of it this way. This is a declaration of what Christ has accomplished for you. And the cross of Christ can only make sense to the person who truly believes that what was happening there, it was happening for them.

And so remember that even if you were stood at the foot of the cross, even if you were looking at it with your own eyes, even if you got to touch Jesus as Thomas did with your own hands, it would still require faith to believe that what Jesus did, he did for you, and he was who he said he was.

That's what we trust. That's why Paul opens up here, therefore, since we have been justified with faith, by faith, we have peace with God.

[ 31 : 15 ] That's what it means to be justified, and that's what it means to be justified by faith. Amen. Amen.