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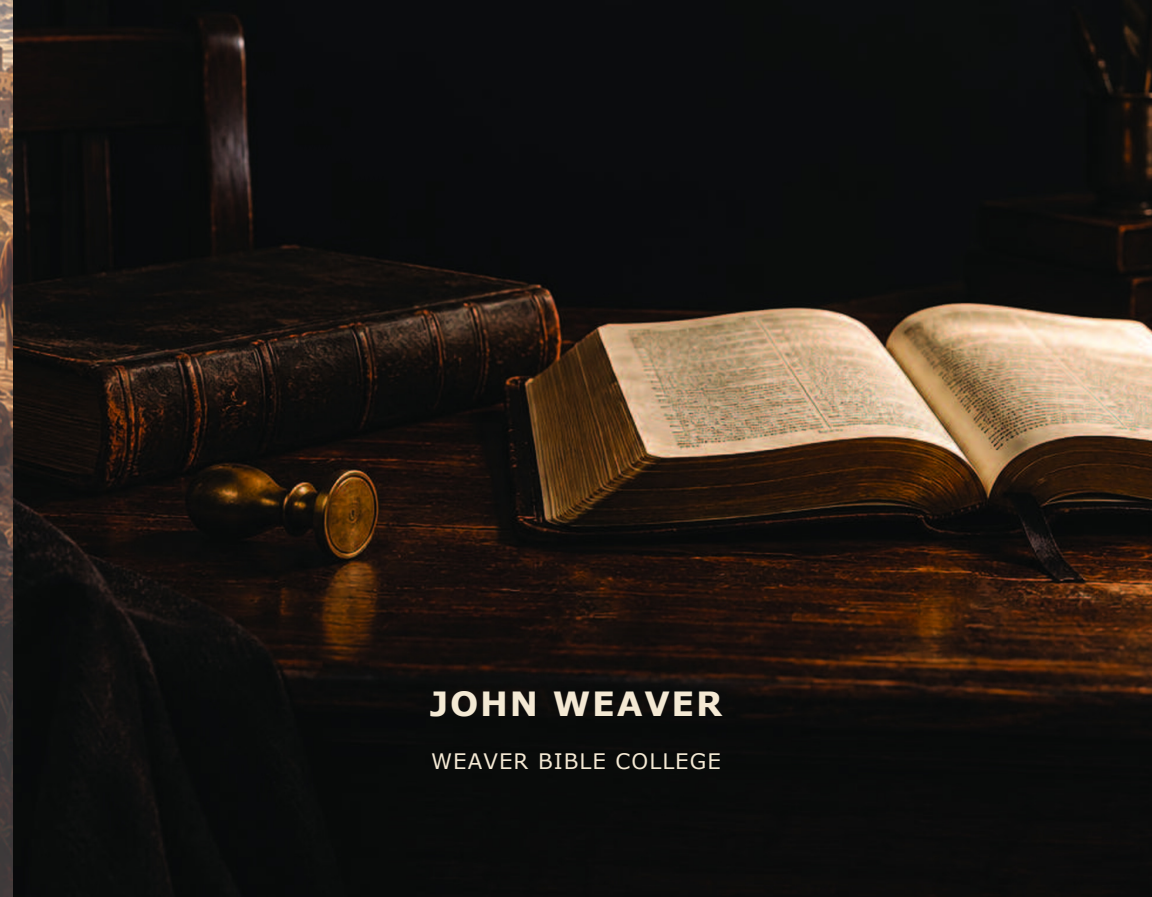
BIBLICAL STUDIES

Justification

by Faith Alone

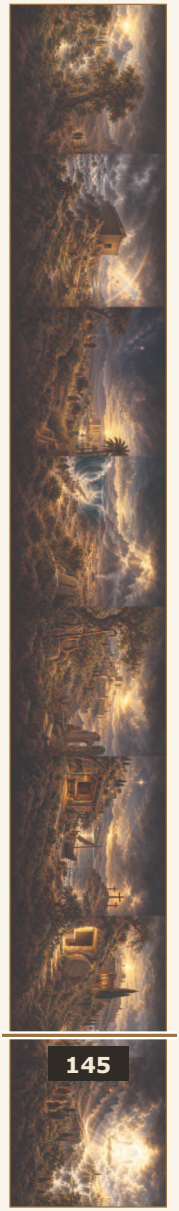
"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE



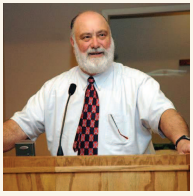
Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

ROMANS 5:1

Justification is God's gracious declaration, grounded in Christ's work and received through faith. John Weaver distinguishes it from regeneration and sanctification while considering grace, imputation, and the believer's standing before God. These messages explain why forgiveness and righteousness must be understood through the finished work of Christ rather than through human merit.

"Justifying faith is nothing more than an outstretched hand receiving the righteousness of God by receiving Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the gospel."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.

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CHAPTER 1

Justification by Faith Alone - 1

Justification by Faith Alone

Our Father, we are thankful for the Lord Jesus Christ and for His grace and mercy. We are thankful for each one here tonight, and we ask, Lord, that Your blessed will be done, that You would open our ears, open our hearts, open our understandings, and give us Your grace and Your Word. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

The Joukowskis made it. Their name is Janoski, but they were at Front Sight with an old retired sergeant major who could not say that, and he called every one of them Joukowskis. So they have never lived it down.

Let us open our Bibles to Romans chapter 5. I am going to do something tonight you may not like, but it is the way it goes. I am going to begin a message tonight that I will not finish until tomorrow night, so it will be one message in two parts. The title of the message is Sola Fidei, or justification by faith alone.

Look in Romans chapter 5 and verse 1. Keep your fingers limber, because we will be turning to a number of Scriptures tonight. Romans chapter 5, verse 1, the Bible says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note, if you would, “therefore being justified by faith.”

Introduction and Importance of Justification

Probably everyone has heard of the five solas. The five solas is a term used to designate the five great foundational rallying cries of the Reformers. They were, and are, sola scriptura, the Scriptures alone; sola gratia, grace alone; sola fidei, faith alone; solus Christus, Christ alone; and soli Deo gloria, to God alone be the glory.

The doctrine of justification by faith alone was the principal truth that God used during the Reformation. It was this truth that led the Reformers out of Rome and a host of other individuals as well. Martin Luther, the Reformer, declared that the doctrine of justification by faith alone was the article of the standing or falling church.

By that he simply meant this: To the degree that the church understood the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it stood. It was a standing church. But once the church lost this, or did not understand it, then the church basically fell, or was fallen. Why would Martin Luther say that justification by faith alone was the article of the standing or falling church? The answer is that the basic question asked in Job 25 and verse 4 is, “How then can a man be just with God?”

Paul answered that question in Romans 1, verses 16 and 17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” He then said, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Notice what he said about the gospel: “For therein,” that is, in the gospel, “is the righteousness of God revealed.”

So very obviously, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is indeed the article of the standing or falling church. Any error on this point is fatal and far-reaching in its implications. Our doctrine, our

understanding of the doctrine of justification, affects other doctrines as well. It affects your Christology, the doctrine of Christ; your theology, the doctrine of God; your soteriology, the doctrine of salvation; and anthropology, the doctrine of man. It also affects the doctrine of the Trinity, as well as the assurance of salvation. Why in the world is the doctrine of justification by faith alone so important? It is important not only for the glory of God, but also for the good of man.

In Luke chapter 2, when the angel was announcing the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, in verses 13 and 14, the Bible says, “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” Scripture then reveals that the works of God in creation, redemption, and providence are the manifestations of God's glory to His rational creatures. In fact, the Bible says in Revelation 4 verse 11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” Certainly the glory of God is revealed to us and manifested in the way that God has sovereignly designed to justify the ungodly. Where justification by faith alone is perverted, the glory of God is robbed or stolen from God, because it is one way that God reveals His glory. It is also revealed for the good of men—not only the good of men who have already been justified by faith, but also those who are yet to be justified by faith.

That is why Paul said, as I quoted earlier in Romans 1 and verse 16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of God. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” Why? “For it is the power of God to everyone that believes.” When you think about the doctrine of justification by faith alone, it was not just the grand doctrine of the Reformation. This doctrine has been used practically in every major revival in the past.

Definition of Justification

So you have to ask yourself this question: What is justification? Here is the definition: Justification is the act of God's free grace unto sinners in which He pardons their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them or

done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ by God imputed unto them and received by faith alone. In this definition, we have the author of justification.

Justification is an act of God. It is an act of God's free grace unto sinners. The subjects of justification are sinners. Its essence is that God pardons all of their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight. Its ground is not anything wrought in them or done by them, but only the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ. Its method is God's righteousness imputed unto them, and its instrument is faith alone, by which that righteousness is received. So justification is indeed a very important doctrine.

I would say it is probably one of the primary doctrines of the Bible. If you do not understand justification by faith, then you really do not understand salvation. And if you do not understand salvation, then obviously there are a lot of things in relation to salvation that you are not going to understand either. You do not have to be a scholar, a Bible student, or a Greek student. That does not matter.

James Buchanan said it like this: "The best preparation for the study of the doctrine of justification is neither great intellectual ability nor much scholastic learning, but a conscience impressed with a sense of our actual condition as sinners before God." You do not have to be a scholar or have a great intellect; your conscience must simply be impressed with the fact that you are a sinner and with what you really are before God and in the sight of God.

When we talk about justification, if we need justification, it does mean that we are condemned. If we are condemned, it means that we are guilty before God. If we are guilty before God, it means that we have trespassed, sinned, and committed iniquity. If you and I are going to understand our condition, then we must understand it in light of Holy Scripture. If we do not understand our condition, we are never really going to appreciate what God has done for us.

Hold Romans chapter 5, but look in your Bibles, if you would please, to Matthew chapter 9. Note how our Lord addressed this issue. Our Lord had gone into the house to eat with publicans and sinners. And verse 11 says, "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said

unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?"

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Notice what our Lord said: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." He then said, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth." None of you are going to wake up in the morning feeling absolutely wonderful and say, "I've never felt this well in my entire life. I think I'll just go by the doctor's office and let him check me out and give him 150 bucks anyhow." You would never do that. "They that be whole need not a physician." You are not going to give a doctor money just to be giving him money.

When you get sick, most of you, if you are like me, are not going to run to the doctor anyhow. You are going to doctor yourself. You will go to your own medicine cabinet, your herbs, or something else to take, and try your best to get well. If that does not work, in all probability you still will not go to the doctor. You will call your neighbor or friend and say, "Look, I've got this and I've got that and I've tried this and I've tried that, and nothing seems to work." Your friend may say, "I had the same thing you had. And guess what? I ate a peanut butter, mayonnaise, mustard, ketchup and onion sandwich and I got well." You know what? You are going to try a sandwich like that.

Once you have tried your remedies and your friends' remedies, and they do not work, finally, when you understand that you need a physician, then you will go. That is exactly what our Lord said: "They that be whole need not a physician." As long as you do not believe that you are a sinner, guilty before God, and in a desperate situation, you will never seek the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Savior. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

He said, "Go ye and learn what that meaneth." You have to understand your condition before God if you want to understand the doctrine of justification.

Let me give you two caveats or two warnings before I ever get started. First of all, we must understand that the object of faith is that which justifies, and not faith itself. The proper object of faith is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It is the object of faith in which we glory. It is in the object of faith that we find our assurance. Faith does not look to itself. Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone. So you are not trusting in faith. You are trusting in the object of faith, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And secondly, it is faith alone that brings us to Jesus Christ, and yet real, genuine, saving faith is never alone. Real, genuine, saving faith always comes with other graces, as well as biblical works. But it is faith alone that saves us.

The Meaning of Justification as a Legal Declaration

Now, I have given you the definition of justification by faith, and we are going to work our way through it momentarily. But let me ask this question: What does it mean to justify? The Bible says, "Therefore, being justified by faith." What does it mean to be justified? Justification means to declare or to pronounce one righteous in light of the standard of the law. Justification is a legal, judicial, forensic term. It is a term of the law courts, and the definition holds true either in light of God's law or even in light of man's law.

The point I am trying to make is this: Justification has to do with the legal side of salvation. Now listen carefully. You do not want to be in error on this point. Justification does not refer to any subjective change wrought in a person's disposition, but it is solely and completely an objective change in his standing in relationship to the law.

Justification does not do anything in a sinner. It does something for the sinner, but it does not do anything in the sinner. It does not change his moral character, and it does not infuse righteousness, contrary to the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. All justification is a change in one's legal status, from being condemned and guilty to one of forgiveness and righteousness.

Consider a man who has been accused of robbing a bank. He has been indicted, and now he must stand in a court of law. If the jury hears all the facts and the law and comes back saying, "We find the defendant not guilty," then the judge declares him not guilty in light of the law that he was alleged to have broken. In other words, when the judge says, "Not guilty," he could be saying, "You're justified. You're justified." You are right, and you have a right standing and a right relationship in the eyes of the law.

When you think about justification, it is a legal, judicial, forensic term referring to the law of God. Justification is that change of status in which one who is guilty before God, and therefore under the condemning sentence of the law, deserving nothing but eternal banishment from God, is pardoned, received into God's favor, and given a right to all the blessings of Jesus Christ because of His perfect obedience and satisfaction. Justification is a pronouncement, a legal declaration.

Biblical Evidence for Justification as Declaration

I want to show you that from the Bible. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 25 and look at verse 1. Remember, justification does not mean that you infuse righteousness. No; that is absolutely impossible. The Bible says, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked."

What are the judges doing? They are not infusing righteousness into the righteous. What does it mean when it says that the judges shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked? They pronounce, they legally declare, that the righteous man is innocent, not guilty in light of the law. Then they declare condemnation to the wicked: he is guilty in light of the law. Both justification and condemnation are legal terms. When you read them in the Bible, you must understand them in light of the law and in light of God's law court.

Proverbs 17:15 says, "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord."

Now, stop and think about this. The Catholic Church teaches that to be justified, you are infused with righteousness. But the Bible says that the one who justifies the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Do you think the Lord would be angry with someone who was able to infuse righteousness into a wicked man and make him righteous? No. What is He saying? He is saying, "He that justifieth the wicked." In other words, here is a man who is absolutely, totally, positively wrong, wicked, and vile, and the judge declares him innocent. God says that is an abomination. And when you condemn the just, when you say that the just man is guilty when he is not guilty, that also is an abomination to the Lord.

So, in each of these passages, justification and condemnation are legal declarations. We saw it in the Old Testament; now look at it in the New Testament, in Luke chapter 7. Our Lord is talking about John the Baptist and his preaching. In verse 28 He says, "For I say to you, among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Then He says, "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him."

If you try to tell me that justification is an infusing of righteousness, then you have a real theological problem in this verse. The Bible says that all the people and the publicans justified God. How could you infuse righteousness into the absolutely righteous One? He is already perfect. He cannot become more perfect, nor can He become less perfect. He is the perfect God. How, then, did these people and the publicans justify God? John was preaching the doctrine of repentance.

He told them that they were sinners and needed to turn from their sins. They justified God by saying, “God, You are right. We declare that Your sentence is just. You are holy. You are right. We are wrong.” But in Luke 7:30 we read, “But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves.” In other words, they said, “No, no, no. God’s not right. We’re right.” The people and the publicans justified God by pronouncing and declaring Him right. The Pharisees condemned God by saying, “No, He’s not right; we’re

right.” Thus, this passage plainly shows that justification is a declaration.

Look in Luke chapter 16, beginning with verse 14: “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided him.” That is, they mocked Jesus Christ. “And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” Note that He said, “Ye are they that justify yourselves.”

If justification, according to the Roman Catholic Church, is correct, then they were infusing righteousness into themselves and becoming more righteous. No. He said, “Ye are they which justify yourselves before men.” What were they doing? They were declaring that they were right and holy, but they were not. That is why He went on to say, “...for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” “Lord, You’re wrong.” You may justify, or declare, yourself righteous, but that does not make you righteous at all.

Justification is the antithesis, or opposite, of condemnation, just as hot is the opposite of cold, and little or small is the opposite of huge or big. Look in Romans 8:33–34: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” Watch the question: “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Notice again: “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?”

If someone is justified, he is not condemned. If someone is condemned, he is not justified. They are opposites. Therefore, Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The world, Satan, and all the hosts of hell cannot undo God's legal, forensic declaration of justification. It cannot be undone, controverted, or disannulled. The answer to our guilt and condemnation is justification. Justification is the passing of a sentence in favor of a person, by which the reward prescribed by the law is given unto him; it is a declaration of the judge.

Distinctions from Regeneration and Sanctification

Justification differs from regeneration and sanctification. These three things always go together, but they are different. If these doctrines are confused, confusion follows. Justification differs from regeneration, although they are inseparably connected. Regeneration is an act of God the Father. James 1:18 says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Justification is the sentence of God the Judge. That is why Abraham asks in Genesis 18:25, "...shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Regeneration gives me a place in the family of God; justification secures my standing before His throne.

Regeneration is internal, since it is the implantation of divine life in the soul. Justification is external, since it is the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ to my account, which will be explained tomorrow night. In regeneration, I am drawn in repentance to the Father's house. In justification, I am given the best robe which fits me for His presence.

However, there is no such thing as a justified unregenerate person. Those whom God justifies, He regenerates; those who are regenerated have been justified. Although justification and regeneration differ, they are always together. Justification also differs from sanctification. Sanctification is moral or experiential; justification is legal and forensic. Sanctification is the operation of the Holy Spirit within me; justification is based upon what Christ has done for me. Sanctification is gradual and progressive.

You should be more sanctified tomorrow than you are today, and more holy next week than you are this week. Sanctification is gradual and progressive; justification is instantaneous and immutable. Sanctification admits degrees in this life and is never perfect. Justification is complete and admits no increase or decrease.

Some of you tonight are more holy than others—not that I am picking out each one and saying you are holy or unholy, but because there are degrees in sanctification. A father in the faith should be more holy and godly than a young man in the faith, and the young man in the faith should be more holy and godly than a babe in the

faith. There are degrees in sanctification, and degrees in holiness, if you please, but there are no degrees in justification.

Do you realize that the mighty Apostle Paul is no more justified than you or me? We are just as justified as Paul, Peter, or Apollos. Justification does not admit degrees. Sanctification concerns the state of the sinner, while justification concerns the standing of the sinner. Sanctification produces a moral transformation of character; justification is a change in legal status.

Although justification differs from regeneration and sanctification, regeneration and sanctification always accompany justification. There is no such thing as a justified, unregenerate, unsanctified person. When you confuse these doctrines, you become thoroughly confused yourself and cannot progress in the faith as you should. Justification is an act of God when He remits the sins of guilty men and accounts them righteous freely by His grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, the ground of justification can never be the works of man.

The Author of Justification: God Alone

Justification is an act of God's free grace. First, notice the author of justification. It is an act of God, something that God alone does. Romans 8:33 asks, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" The answer is, "It is God that justifieth." Justification is the work of God alone. Yet, because it is the work of God alone, the Bible ascribes justification to all three persons in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

To explain this, when you talk about the Trinity, you have to understand the ontological Trinity and the economical Trinity. The ontological Trinity is based on the Greek word ontos, which is being. The ontological Trinity is the logical order of being: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That is the ontological Trinity. The economical Trinity is how God works and moves. Everything is out of the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. That is how God works. So, first, I want you to see that justification is ascribed to God the Father.

Romans 8:33 asks, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.” In Romans 3:23–26, God the Father

is designated as the author of justification: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God” —that is, God the Father—“hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he” —God the Father—“might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Verse 30 says, “Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.” Justification is an act of God, and here it is ascribed to God the Father.

In Acts 13:37–39, justification is ascribed to God the Son. Speaking of Jesus Christ, whom God the Father raised again and who saw no corruption, the passage says, “But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.” Then it declares, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Thus justification is ascribed to God the Son. It has been ascribed to God the Father, and now it has been ascribed to God the Son.

Justification is also ascribed to God the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, the apostle identifies those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” These are the people described as unrighteous, and the warning is that they shall not inherit God's kingdom. Then he says, “And such were some of you.” The ones who had been characterized by these sins had been changed. The passage continues by ascribing justification to the Holy Spirit.

Justification Is an Act of God's Free Grace

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by

the Spirit of our God." Here, justification is ascribed to God the Holy Spirit.

Think about it like this: God the Father justifies when He declares or pronounces us righteous. God the Son justifies as He imputes His righteousness to us. God the Holy Spirit justifies as He clears up our titles and seals us unto the day of redemption. Justification is therefore an act of God. It is important that you understand that justification is something God alone can do. Man cannot justify. Only God can justify because it is His act.

The Source of Justification: God's Free Grace

Justification is an act of God's free grace.

Go back to Romans 3. We just read it, but notice the source of justification. The Bible says in verse 24, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Let that verse twirl around in your mind for a moment: "being justified freely by his grace."

The word "freely" is from the Greek word dorean, and it means far more than simply a gift. When we think about God's free grace, we normally think of a gift. Suppose Greg tells me, "Brother Weaver, if you come meet me tomorrow at the cafeteria, I'll buy your dinner." I meet him, we fellowship together, and he buys my dinner. Then I tell Brother Ray, "Brother Greg just bought my dinner. I got a free meal." By that, I mean it did not cost me anything; it was a gift. Greg bought it for me.

That illustration shows what this word does not mean. You can still invite me to dinner, but that is not what dorean means. When the Bible says, "being justified freely by his grace," dorean literally means freely, or without a cause.

Turn to John 15 and look at verses 24 and 25. Our Lord is speaking, and verse 25 is a quotation from the Psalms. In verse 24 our Lord said, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin."

“But now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” You see those

three words in our English Bible, “without a cause.” “They hated me without a cause.” It is the Greek word, dorean—the same exact word that is translated as “being justified freely by his grace.”

What did our Lord mean when He said, “They hated me without a cause”? Jesus Christ is perfect God and perfect man, the sinless Son of God, God incarnate. He was pure, holy, harmless, and undefiled. There was nothing in Jesus Christ that drew forth, merited, or earned their hatred. They hated Him freely. There was no cause of their hatred. Likewise, in being justified freely by His grace, there is nothing in us that drew forth or merited the grace of God.

You did not earn it, merit it, or deserve it. It was not because you were pretty or handsome or smart or dumb. There was nothing in you that drew forth the grace of God. God freely moved upon us in His grace. Just as men freely hated Jesus Christ when He did not deserve to be hated, and nothing in Him drew forth their hatred, there was nothing in us that merited or drew forth the grace of God.

Romans 5:20–21 says, “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” If grace reigns, it is sovereign. It comes at God’s pleasure and not ours. There was absolutely nothing in us that constrained God or drew forth that grace. Someone says, “But you don’t understand, Brother Weaver, I just needed to be saved.” Really? What about all the other people in the world that need to be saved, really need to be saved, that are not saved?

Do you remember in John chapter 5, our Lord walked among those at the pool of Bethesda? The Bible says that in that area lay a great multitude of impotent folk, lame, blind, waiting for the moving of the water. What did our Lord do? He walked through, singled out one man, and said, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man said, "I have no man to help me when the water is being stirred to get down there. While I am coming, another steppeth down before me."

Our Lord said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." And he did so. How many of those people did our Lord heal? One. How many needed healing? All of them. Could He not have just as easily healed

every one of them? Yes. Why did He only heal one? Our Lord answers that in John chapter 5: "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." In other words, just as sovereignty demonstrates that God the Father is God, sovereignty demonstrates that Jesus Christ is God. Multitudes may have needed it, but grace is sovereign, grace reigns, and grace comes only at the pleasure of God. There was nothing in us that drew forth the grace of God. There was everything in us that would repel God, because all we did was sin and violate His law.

Any justification that glories in anything other than free grace is an unbiblical and unscriptural concept. So we have to ask this question: In what way is justification an act of God's free grace unto sinners? First, it was pure grace that God was willing to accept satisfaction at the hands of a substitute or a surety. You have to understand that you owed the debt. I owed the debt. We sinned, violated God's law, and transgressed. We are the iniquitous ones. We owed the debt.

It is like this: If Mark came to me and said, "I need to borrow $10,000," and I had it, I might loan him the money with the stipulation that it be repaid in thirty days. Thirty days comes, and Mark does not have my money. Finally, after forty-five days, I come to him and say, "I want my money."

He says, “I don't have it.” I said, “Mark, let me tell you something. If you don't give me that money by tomorrow, I'm going to take it out on your hide. I'm going to beat you to a bloody pulp. You will wish you had given me that money a hundred times over by the time I get through with you.” Greg overhears me saying that to Mark and says, “No, no, no, no, no. You don't have to hurt him. Here, I'll give you the money for Mark.”

I could look at Greg and say, “Who are you? You don't owe me any money. Get out of my sight. Mark is the one that owes me the money, and he better get it or I'm going to beat him half to death.” I don't have to take satisfaction at the hands of another. Mark owes the debt. So it is pure grace that God was willing to take satisfaction at the hand of another.

Secondly, it was wondrous grace that God Himself wonderfully provided the substitute and the surety. Romans 3:24-25 says, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God,” that is, whom the Father, “hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” God sent His Son. God set Him forth. God said, “I will not only accept a substitute, I will not only accept a surety, I will provide Him.”

That is why Galatians 4:4-5 says, “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” It was pure grace that God was willing to accept a substitute. It was wondrous grace that God graciously gave us His Son. Thirdly, it was amazing grace that Jesus Christ willingly undertook to suffer in our place and in our stead. Hebrews 10:6-7 says, “In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.” Jesus Christ willingly took our place and suffered in our stead.

Next time you sing the hymn, “O to grace, how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be. Let thy grace, Lord, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.” Sing it with zeal, because you are a debtor to grace.

I want you to consider just a couple of applications. The first is this: I’ve already given you the author of justification—God. What one thinks or believes about justification does not alter this truth: God is the author of justification, not man. If God does not justify, it does not matter what you do or how you live; you are still condemned and not justified. God is the author of justification, not man. You may say, “But I’ve lived for Him all these years. I’ve done this and I’ve done that.”

Applications and Conclusion

Do you remember that passage in Matthew chapter 7? Our Lord said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity, I never knew you.” “Oh Lord, Lord, do you not remember us? In thy name we've cast out demons. In thy name we've done wondrous works. In thy name we've done all these things. We've even prophesied and preached in

your name." Jesus said, "I never knew you." Do you want to trust in your works?

The truth is, God justifies; you cannot justify yourself. Your works will never cut it. God is the author of justification. Secondly, if God is its author, justification is a declaration none can alter or cancel. There is no court of appeals; you cannot go above and beyond God. He is the supreme judge. What did he say in Romans 8 and verse 33? "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

It does not matter what the devil says, or if the demons of this world, all the unbelievers, and all the ungodly unite in rebellion against God's legal forensic declaration. They cannot change it. When God says justified, no one can alter or repeal it.

Thirdly, if God is the author of justification, it is a declaration founded upon truth and reality. God does not do what He condemns as sin and wickedness: "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination in his sight." When God pronounces a man righteous in regard to the law, he has been made righteous in Jesus Christ. His declaration is grounded in truth and reality.

If God is the author of justification, his act must be based solely upon his grace. Each of us has foully revolted, transgressed his law, rebelled, sinned, been disobedient, and been full of iniquity. Not one deserves God's grace or mercy. Justification is an act of God's free grace.

When is the last time you really thanked God for your salvation? When is the last time you sought to understand the person and work of Jesus Christ and how God saves sinners, that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus Christ? You have to understand this.

The only reason you are alive tonight and did not die in your sleep last night is because of God's grace and mercies. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is Thy faithfulness.

If you learn tonight, learn this: God is the author of justification, and its source is His free grace.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank You for Your Word, truth, Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the great salvation He has purchased and worked out. We give Thee praise, honor, and glory. We worship Thee as the one true and living God through Your Son, the Lord Jesus, in the Spirit. In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Justification by Faith Alone - 2

Review of Previous Message

Alright, if you would open your Bibles to the book of Romans, chapter 5, verse 1. I started this message last night. I told you that I would be finishing it tonight. I will take a few moments to try to review and bring those few that are here tonight that were not here last night up to date. But the title of the message is Sola Fide, or justification by faith alone. So if you look in Romans 5, in verse 1, the Scripture says, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Note, if you would, the phrase, "being justified by faith." Last night I pointed out that justification is a legal, judicial, forensic term. It is a term of the law courts. I also pointed out how justification differs from regeneration and sanctification.

Although they go together, they are not the same. They are different. So, there is no such thing as a justified, unregenerate, unsanctified person. All those whom God justifies, He regenerates and He sanctifies as well. So, I gave you a definition that we were

trying to work our way through. The definition was simply this: Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners in which He pardons all of their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ by God imputed unto them, and received by faith alone. I went last night and showed you all through the Bible how justification is a legal verdict. It is a legal pronouncement. It is a pronouncement of the judge in light of the standard of the law. When we got to looking at that, we understood that God and God alone is the author of justification. I showed you in the Bible how justification is ascribed to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father justifies as He declares us righteous, God the Son justifies as He imputes His righteousness, and God the Holy Spirit justifies as He seals up our pardon and seals up our life until the day that our Lord comes to take us. All three persons of the Godhead are dealt with in justification. There is a difference between the ontological Trinity and the economical Trinity. God is the author of justification.

The source of justification is God's free grace. Justification is always by the grace of God. In Romans 3:24, we are "being justified freely by His grace." The word "freely" means that we are justified without a cause. The Greek word is dorean, the same word translated in John 15:25, where our Lord said, "but they hated me without a cause." As there was nothing in Jesus Christ that drew forth the hatred of man, so there was nothing in us that drew forth the grace of God.

The Bible teaches that God is called the God of all grace in 1 Peter 5:10. Free grace is the very core of the Gospel and the only hope of fallen man. We do not have the slightest merit. In fact, all we have is demerit. God does not save us because of anything in us or because of anything that we do; He saves us merely out of His free grace.

In Isaiah 43:25, He said, "I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." God says, "I do this not for you particularly, but for my own sake." Psalm 106:8 says, "Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake,

that He might make His mighty power to be known." He saved them for His name's sake.

We cannot look for one moment outside of the grace of God for any motive or reason why He should notice us or save us. We are justified freely by His grace. Nothing in us drew forth or merited the grace of God. The source is merely the free grace of God.

In Titus chapter 3, beginning with verse 3 and going through verse 7, the Apostle Paul says, "For we ourselves sometimes were foolish and disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But after the kindness and love of God our Savior toward men appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His own mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that, being justified by grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Notice the phrase, "being justified by grace."

The Subjects of Justification

Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners. The third point is the subject, or subjects, of justification. The Bible teaches very clearly that its subjects are sinners. Since justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, who are those whom God justifies? The answer may be given from three particular standpoints, beginning with the standpoint of God's eternal decree: those whom He justifies are His elect.

Romans 8 and verse 33 asks, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." Those whom God justifies are therefore referred to as God's elect. In Ephesians chapter 1, verses 3 and 4, the Apostle Paul said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Notice carefully verse 4: “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” God chose us in Him, that is, in Jesus Christ, before the foundation of the world. In 2 Timothy

chapter 1, verses 8 and 9, Paul is writing to Timothy and wants to make sure that Timothy is not ashamed of his bonds. He says, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor me as prisoner,” for Paul was in prison at the time; “but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” Now notice what God has done: He “has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

When you consider the subjects of justification from the standpoint of God's eternal decree, the answer is that God justifies His elect. From the standpoint of the effects produced by the quickening of the Holy Spirit, we see the subjects of justification in Acts 13:38–39. The Bible says: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man,” that is, Jesus Christ, “is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Thus, from the standpoint of the quickening of the Holy Spirit, those whom God justifies are those who believe.

Romans 4:23–24 says, “Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,” that is, Abraham, “but for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.” From the standpoint of the quickening work of the Holy Spirit, the subjects are those who believe.

But thirdly, from the standpoint of what we are in and of ourselves, Romans 4:5 says, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Notice that the subjects here are the ungodly, or sinners.

If you contemplate the subjects under God’s eternal decree, the subjects are His elect. If you contemplate the subjects based upon the person and work of the Holy Spirit, they are those who believe. If you contemplate the subjects of justification based upon who we are and what we are, we are the ungodly. We are the sinners. The

Apostle Paul made this exceedingly clear in Ephesians chapter 2, verses 1 and 3:

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and in sins, wherein time passed, you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The Apostle Paul is making it exceedingly clear that, in and of ourselves, we were and are the children of wrath. Therefore, when he writes, "but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," he is describing what we are in and of ourselves.

Romans 4:5 says, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." I want you to understand what this verse is actually saying. God does not justify those who try their best. He does not justify the moral. He does not justify the upright. He does not justify the self-righteous. He does not justify those who try to make their good works outweigh their bad works. No. He justifies those who are absolutely destitute of righteousness and have nothing in and of themselves. They have no acceptable works. They have no good deeds. They have absolutely nothing to recommend them unto God. They are sinners, they are ungodly, and they are undone. So the subjects of justification are sinners. Verse 5 says again, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

John Owen, the Puritan scholar, said this: "To say he who worketh not is justified through believing is to say that his works, whatever they may be, have no influence upon his justification, nor hath God in justifying him any respect to them. Wherefore he alone who worketh not is the subject of justification, the person to be justified, that is, God considereth no man's works, no man's duties of obedience in his justification, seeing we're justified freely by His grace."

If you study Romans chapter 4, you will find two historical figures whom the Apostle Paul places there as illustrations of justification by faith. Those two historical persons are Abraham and David. Abraham is known in Scripture not only as the friend of God, but also as the father of the faithful. But do you remember where God found Abraham? Do you remember what he was when God found him? Abram, at that time, was living in Ur of the Chaldees, and he was an idolater. He was not seeking after God. God found him. God came to him. And God, in His grace and mercy, saved him. The same thing is true of David. Scripture says that David was a man after God's own heart, and that is true. But may I remind you that David was an adulterer? He was also a murderer.

He was not one who deserved anything from God. He was a sinner in a multitude of other ways as well. Yet it was the grace of God that came to David and saved him. Here the Apostle Paul is giving us what you and I would call a divine miracle: God comes to sinners with a mercy that is righteous in spite of all their depravity and rebellion. He enables sinners, through faith in Jesus Christ, to enter into a new and blessed relationship with Himself. Mercy is extended through Jesus Christ to the very chief of sinners. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:15, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.” Jesus Christ saves the very chiefest of sinners.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ differs from all other religions and all other false religions. It does not hold out hope for the moral, the upright, the Pharisee, the self-righteous, or the good individual who thinks he is so good.

No, no, no. The Bible does not hold out any hope for those individuals. Instead, the Bible holds out hope for those that are sinners, those that are wicked, those that are ungodly, those that are undone. What did Jesus Christ say? "I came to seek and to save that which was lost." He did not come to seek and to save the Pharisee. He did not come to seek and to save those who had no need of Him. No, "I came to seek and to save those that are lost." So the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ can be extended then to the chiefest of sinners.

There's a hymn. I really love the hymn. I hope you're aware of it. The title of it is, "Come Ye Sinners."

Let me just give you the stanzas, then I'll tell you the chorus. The stanza goes like this: "Come ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore. Jesus ready stands to save you, full of pity, love and power. Come ye thirsty, come and welcome, God's free bounty glorify, true belief and true repentance, every grace that brings you nigh. Come ye weary, heavy laden, lost and ruined by the fall, if you tarry till you're better, you will not come at all."

"Let not conscience make you linger, nor fitness fondly dream, all the fitness he requires is to feel your need of Him." And in the chorus, "I will arise and go to Jesus. He will embrace me in His arms. In the arms of my dear Savior, oh, there are ten thousand charms." When he says, "come ye sinners," that is an invitation to those who have nothing in and of themselves. They are the ungodly, the undone, the hopeless, and the helpless. This is what the gospel sends forth a call unto: people that are lost and undone. So the subjects of justification, in and of themselves, are sinners.

The Essence of Justification

Now, let us go a little further and talk, fourthly, about the essence of justification. Justification is the act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight. Stop and think about this for a moment. The essence of justification deals with that which justification really consists. In this definition, it consists of two parts: one negative and one positive. The negative is this: He pardons all of our sins. The positive is that He accepts and accounts our persons righteous in His sight.

Both aspects of justification are absolutely necessary. Most of the time, we do not consider both parts of justification. We normally think about forgiveness of sins, and that is it. I have heard preachers and well-meaning Christians ask a lost loved one or friend, “Do you not want your sins forgiven in order that you might go to heaven?” Now, stop and think about this with me.

Forgiveness of sins alone will not take you to heaven. If you get into the presence of God, you need far more than forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins alone may keep you from punishment, but it would not get you into the presence of God. Why? Because to enter God's presence, you not only have to have the negative dealt with—that is, your sins, transgressions, and iniquities—you must also have a perfect righteousness.

You have to be accepted and accounted as righteous in His sight. There must be a righteousness as well as forgiveness of sins.

As sinners, we sustain a two-fold relationship unto God. First, as responsible creatures, born under the law, we are answerable, responsible, and accountable unto Him.

Secondly, as guilty criminals for violating and transgressing that law, we must answer to Him. Since we are totally depraved, according to Scripture, we have lost our ability to please God: “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8). But although we have lost our ability, we have not lost our responsibility. We are still obligated to glorify and please our heavenly Father, because we are still His creatures.

Therefore, when God justifies us, there must be a part that deals with our sins and transgressions, and a part whereby we are accepted and accounted righteous in His sight. Justification deals with both. First, there is an acquittal from guilt and condemnation because we have broken and transgressed His law. In Galatians 3:13, the Bible says, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Jesus Christ dealt with that curse and the broken penalty of that law; He now gives us forgiveness of sins. But secondly, there must be in justification a reception into God’s favor, and that reception must rest upon the sentence of the law’s approval in God’s sight through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, the Bible says, “For He,” that is, God the Father, “hath made Him,” that is, God the Son, “to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” We are not only forgiven; we are to have a righteousness in Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, the Bible says, “But of Him,” that

is, God the Father, “are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Jesus Christ not only forgives us of our sins; He is actually made unto us our righteousness.

Jesus Christ has not only paid all of my debt; He has also fully discharged all of my responsibilities. My lawgiver is my law fulfiller. In justification, God pardons all of my sins, and then accepts and accounts me righteous in His sight. The essence of justification has two parts. You must be forgiven; that is true. But you also must be given a perfect righteousness.

Fifthly, we need to look at the ground of justification: justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight.

The Ground of Justification

Here is the ground: “…not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ.” So again, we have a negative and a positive. First, the negative: “…not for anything wrought in them or done by them.”

Scripture makes it clear that our justification does not depend upon our works. I quoted Titus 3 and verse 5 earlier tonight: “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” Here is a verse that says, “not by works of righteousness.”

If you do not know this verse, I would encourage you to memorize it, because it is a very powerful verse. This is something that you should absolutely know. Notice what the Apostle Paul says in this passage. Galatians 2:16 says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even 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 flesh be justified.”

In Romans 3:28, the Apostle said it like this: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Why does the Apostle Paul say in Galatians 2:16, “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law”? He says, “By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” How can the Apostle Paul be absolutely sure that no one has ever been, or ever will be, justified by the works of the law?

Here is how: the law demands three things from every sinner—a personal obedience, a perfect obedience, and a perpetual obedience. Jesus Christ is the only one who has ever rendered those three things to the law of God.

Everyone in this room is a sinner. Let us assume that everyone became absolutely perfect and neither you nor I ever sinned again in word, deed, or thought until the day we died. From this moment forth, we lived an absolutely perfect life and gave a personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience to God's law, exactly as the law demands. Here is my question: If we became perfect right now for the rest of our lives and rendered to the law that which it desired and demanded, would that be sufficient to get us into heaven?

And the answer is no. What about those sins that we committed before we got perfect? It is absolutely impossible for anyone to be saved by the law. Our works can never be meritorious because we cannot possibly render to the law that which it demands.

I was preaching this past week and quoted a verse where David said, "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love." I looked at our people and said, Do not tell me that you never had a vain thought. If you tell me you have never had a vain thought, then I am telling you, you have never prayed. Is it not true that when you pray many times, all of a sudden thoughts come into your mind? You think, Where did that come from? Here I am praying, and all of a sudden, here is something just the opposite. "I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love."

We cannot give to the law that which it demands. A fallen creature cannot do that. Our best is nothing but failure. That is why in Isaiah 64 and verse 6, Isaiah said, "But we are all as an unclean thing." Notice, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away." All of our righteousnesses are nothing

but a filthy rag. It is impossible to be saved by works. If it was possible to be saved by our works, then Jesus Christ died in vain.

There was no reason for Him to die. The Apostle Paul said it like this in Galatians 3:21: “Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid! For if there had been a law which could have given life, then righteousness should have been by the law.” Paul says there is no law that could give life. It is impossible to be justified by the works of the law.

Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners in which He pardons their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ. Nothing wrought in us or done by us will secure our justification. But what about those things that are wrought in us?

Simply stated, we are not justified because of repentance. We are not justified because of faith. We may be justified in faith and through faith and by faith, but we are not justified on account of faith. Nor are we justified through regeneration or because we believed. Those are things wrought in us. We are not justified by any works that we have done or anything that is wrought in us.

You say, “I believe.” But that is not the ground of your justification. “I repented.” That is not the ground of your justification. “I am regenerate.” That is not the ground of your justification. What, then, is the ground of our justification? It is not anything wrought in us or done by us, but only the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the only One who ever gave God’s law exactly what the law demanded. You remember that passage in Galatians 4:4–5? “But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Why was Jesus Christ made under the law? The answer is so that He could perfectly fulfill that law. Do you remember what He said to those Pharisees in John 8 in verse 36?

He said, “Which of you convinces me of sin?” Not one could point to anything that Jesus Christ had ever done that was wicked, wrong, or sinful. In John chapter 8, verse 29, He says to the Father, “For I

only do always those things that please Him." Jesus Christ was perfectly obedient to God the Father and to the law of God, and He gave His life. His whole person and His whole work are referred to as the satisfaction of Christ. He satisfied the Father's anger, wrath, holiness, and justice. You remember the Bible says, "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation." You should study the word propitiation. The word propitiate means to appease, to satisfy. Jesus Christ, in His sacrifice and in His obedient life, appeased and satisfied God the Father.

Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews, chapter 13, and notice what is said concerning Christ in this passage. Hebrews chapter 13, beginning with verse 10: "We have an altar where they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." The book of Hebrews is written to those who are warning to go back to the tithes and the emblems. Jesus Christ is our true tabernacle, our true altar, and our true sacrifice. So the apostle says here, "We have an altar," talking about Jesus Christ, "whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." In other words, if you want types, emblems, and shadows, you have no right to Jesus Christ.

Note verse 11: "For the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought in the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp bearing his reproach." Over and over in Scripture, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 8, Hebrews 9, and Hebrews 10 that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. But Jesus Christ offered Himself once and for all. We are justified, and the ground of our justification is based upon the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. It is this work that God honors, because God does not set aside His law. His law is holy.

The Method of Justification

That is what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 7: His law is holy, just, and good. Jesus Christ came, submitted to that law, and obeyed it perfectly. Therefore, you read in Romans chapter 3, "that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." God is absolutely just. He has not negated His law, nullified His law, or set

it aside. It has been totally and completely fulfilled and obeyed by Jesus Christ. Then Jesus Christ died as our surety, substitute, and sacrifice. Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone—His person and work—is the total ground of justification.

The Method of Justification: Imputation

The sixth point is the method of justification. Justification is the act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight, not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed unto them. What is imputation?

The method of God's justifying us is through imputation. Although the doctrine is far deeper and involves far more than can be addressed in a few moments, if you do not understand the doctrine of imputation, you cannot possibly be sound in the faith. The word impute, or imputation, is used repeatedly in Scripture.

In one sense, we already know what it means; in another sense, we do not. Consider this illustration: Amy goes to the mall, enters a dress shop, and sees the most beautiful dress she has ever seen. She immediately wants it. It is the only one in her size, but when she looks at the price tag and then in her purse, she does not have enough money.

She reaches down, takes out a little plastic card, hands it to the sales lady, and says, "Impute this to my husband's account." No, she does not say that. She says, "Charge it." Do you realize that to charge is to impute? When you impute, you credit something to someone or put it to someone's account. We use the word charge. Paul used essentially the same word.

In the book of Philemon, chapter 1, verse 18, Onesimus was the runaway slave. He had stolen from Philemon and fled to Rome. I do not know what he did, but he did something wrong and was thrown into the dungeon with the Apostle Paul. While he was there, God saved him. When his time was up, Paul sent Onesimus, the runaway slave, back to Philemon.

He says, “to receive him as myself.” In other words, treat this man exactly as you would treat me. Then he said in verse 18, “If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on my account. I will pay it.” When he said, “put that on my account,” he was saying, Impute it to me. Charge it to me. Whatever he owes you, put that on my account.

There are only three acts of imputation in the Bible. The first is the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, which is very easily proven. The second is the imputation of believers’ sins to Christ. The third is the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers. As for the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, we are taught clearly in Romans 5:18, “Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” Verse 19 says, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners.” Romans 5:12 says, “…wherefore, as by one man sin entered in the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Death is proof positive that Adam’s sin is imputed to his posterity.

But turn to 2 Corinthians 5:21. This is not dealing with Adam’s imputation of his sin to his posterity, but with the imputation of believers’ sins to Christ and of Christ’s righteousness to believers. “For he,” that is, God the Father, “hath made him,” that is, God the Son, “to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” This is the classic verse on imputation. One author said it this way: “Christ was not made sin by the infusion of depravity, nor are we made righteous by the infusion of holiness.”

Though personally holy, our surety, the Lord Jesus Christ, by entering our law place, rendered Himself officially liable to the wrath of God. And so, though personally unholy, we are, by virtue of our legal identification with Christ, received in the favor of God. As the consequence of Christ being made sin for us was that the Lord laid on Him the iniquities of all, so the consequence of Christ’s obedience being reckoned to our account is that God lays righteousness upon all them that believe. As our sins were the judicial ground of Christ’s sufferings, by which He satisfied justice, so Christ’s righteousness is the judicial ground of our acceptance with God, by which our pardon is an act of justice.

Look in verse 21 again: “For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” This is very simple. If I were to hold up this tube of chapstick and this little pocket knife, I could place the chapstick here and say, “This is all the sins of believers.” This is what made us deserve wrath and punishment. We have sinned grievously against God, trespassed against His law, and violated His Word. Jesus Christ, represented by this pocket knife, came and obeyed the law of God perfectly. He worked out an absolute, perfect righteousness, and now He is about to suffer the wrath and anger of God. Why? Because all our sins are being imputed, or charged, to His account.

He is going to be officially guilty, although personally innocent. Once He pays that account, having already worked out that perfect righteousness, God takes Christ’s full satisfaction and perfect righteousness and imputes, or charges, it to believers. The believer’s sins were imputed to Christ, making Him officially and judicially liable; then His righteousness is imputed to us, making us stand in favor with God and in right relationship to His law, so that God can be just and the justifier, and pronounce us justified.

That is why Paul asked in Romans 4:1, “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?” In verse 11, Abraham “received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised,” that he might be the father of all them that believe, “that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.” Verse 22 says, “And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.”

It was charged to his account. Verse 24 says, “But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed,” charged to our account, “if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.” The framework of imputation is the eternal covenant in which we are made one in Jesus Christ. God imputes righteousness to us because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is ours because we receive it, but it is His because He did it and worked it out. He likewise imputed our sins to Him. In justification, God actually unites us to Jesus Christ.

He is our Head; we are His body. As Jesus Christ is perfectly obedient, so are we. As Jesus Christ is perfectly righteous, so are we. Horatius Bonar wrote:

"Upon a life I have not lived, Upon a death I did not die. Another's life, another's death, I'll stake my whole eternity. Not on my tears which I have shed, Not on the sorrows I have known, Another's tears, another's griefs, On these I rest and rest alone."

Imputation is when God took our sins and imputed them to Christ, and took the righteousness of Christ and imputed it to us. We rest totally and completely upon the person and work of Jesus Christ alone. It is not Jesus Christ plus, Jesus Christ but, or Jesus Christ and. It is Jesus Christ and Him alone.

The Instrumental Means: Faith Alone

The instrumental means of justification is this: justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which He pardons all their sins and accepts and accounts their persons righteous in His sight—not for anything done by them or wrought in them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, imputed to them and received by faith alone. The one little word "alone" makes the difference between truth and error.

So let me put it this way: Faith alone is the instrumental means of justification. A man is justified in faith, through faith, and by faith, but never on account of faith. Faith is neither the ground nor the substance of our justification; it is simply the hand that receives the divine gift as it is offered in the gospel.

The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:9, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He says in Romans 3:22, "even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." Then, in Romans 3:28: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

How are we justified by faith? The instrumental means is by faith alone. Thomas Goodwin gives this explanation: "How are we justified by faith?" Having given a threefold negative answer—not by faith as a joint cause with works, as the Romanists teach; not by faith as an act of grace in us, as the Arminians teach; and not by faith as it receives the Spirit's witness, as the Antinomians teach—we now turn

to the positive answer. Faith justifies only as an instrument which God has ordained and appointed to the apprehension and application of Christ's righteousness.

When we say that faith is the instrument of our justification, let it be clearly understood that we do not mean that faith is an instrument whereby God justifies, but the instrument whereby we receive Christ. Christ has merited righteousness for us, and faith in Christ is that which renders it meet in God's sight that the purchased blessings be assigned. Faith unites us to Christ; and, being united to Him, we are possessed of all that is in Christ, so far as is consistent with our capacity of receiving Christ and God's appointment in giving. Having been made one with Christ in spirit, God now considers us one with Him in law.

The only reason faith works is because God ordained faith to receive and apprehend Jesus Christ. The Westminster Larger Catechism, question 73, asks, "How does faith justify a sinner in the sight of God?" Its answer is: "Faith justifies a sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which always accompany it, or good works that are the fruits of it, nor is the grace of faith or any act thereof imputed to him for its justification, but only as it is an instrument by which he receives and applies Christ and His righteousness." Why does the Bible speak of being justified by faith alone when faith does not always travel alone, but brings other graces and produces good works? Faith is the only grace that is absolutely, totally receptive. Justifying faith is nothing more than an outstretched hand receiving the righteousness of God by receiving Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the gospel. Stephen Charnock said, "Our justification by faith is always expressed in the passive and not in the active. We are justified by faith, not that faith justifies us."

"The efficacy is in Christ's blood. The reception of it is in our faith." We are beggars with outstretched hands, and faith is the hand that receives Christ. It receives His person and work. The only reason faith is viable, the only reason faith works, is because God ordained it and God appointed it.

It is not our faith that saves us. Faith does not look to itself; faith looks to an object, and the object of our faith is Jesus Christ. Jesus

Christ is the one who saves us. Faith is simply the means by which we get to Christ. Let me give you a poor illustration, but one that I think you can understand.

Let's suppose that I am starving to death. I have not had anything to eat in 40 days; I am perishing. Tony comes along and says, "Well, Pastor, you don't have to die. Here's this great big bowl of cereal that I've got here. Fresh milk and cereal. Help yourself." But I have been without food for 40 days, and I am weak and unable to get that heavy bowl of cereal to my mouth. What good is that bowl of cereal? I am starving to death. I am helpless and weak. I cannot lift it or get to it.

Then Tony says, "Oh, here, by the way, here's a spoon." I take that spoon, eat the cereal, light comes back into my eyes, I get energy, and I live. Would it not be absolutely stupid for me to hold up that spoon and say, "The spoon saved my life"? Did the spoon save my life? No. It was the milk and cereal that saved my life. The spoon was merely the instrument by which I received that life-saving nourishment.

Faith is nothing more than the spoon that dips into the righteousness and the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is true that faith does not travel alone. Everybody in this room can quote Ephesians 2:8-9: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." But how often we stop there and never quote verse 10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

What is the Bible saying? Faith alone receives Christ, but faith never travels alone.

Consider one last illustration. The Bible speaks of weak faith, strong faith, and great faith. Which faith is required to receive the saving work of Jesus Christ? Is it weak faith, strong faith, or great faith? Remember how the people were bitten by serpents in the wilderness and were dying. God told Moses to make a brazen serpent and hold it up, and everyone who looked would live.

Let me change the illustration slightly. Suppose a bad virus is going around, and everyone who gets it dies within thirty days. Once

you have it, you are going to die. Suppose I say that this pocket knife has power to cure you of the virus, and that if you merely touch it, you will be healed. One person has had the virus for twenty-nine days. One more day and death is sure. Very weakly, he raises one hand, barely touches the knife, and is instantly healed.

Another man has just gotten the virus. He has had it only two days and still has his strength. He comes up, grabs the pocket knife, mashes it, and is healed. Another comes up, is barely able to get it, holds on to it, and is healed. Which of those three was healed? All of them.

It does not matter whether you have weak faith, strong faith, or great faith. When you touched it, you were healed. People have said to me, "Brother Weaver, I don't know if my faith is the right kind of faith." Do you remember the woman with the issue of blood? What did she say? "If I can but just touch the hem of his garment, I shall be healed." She touched it, and she was instantly healed. It is not the quantity of faith that counts. It may be weak, strong, or great.

But if it receives Jesus Christ as He is fully and freely offered in the Gospel, it brings God's salvation and justification. We're justified by faith alone because faith alone receives Christ as He's offered in the Gospel.

Have you ever stopped to thank God for what He's done in saving you? Have you ever thanked God, "You justified me. I don't understand everything that You did for me, but now I know: my sins are forgiven. I have a perfect righteousness. I'm united to Jesus Christ. What You did for me was only by Your free, sovereign, unmerited grace through the person and work of Jesus Christ."

If you're trusting in Jesus Christ alone, you should be glorifying God and thanking God every day for His unspeakable gift. Without Jesus Christ, we would still be undone, ungodly, and lost, without hope. But in Him, we have life and salvation.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, Your truth, and Your blessing. Thank You for Your justification, for Jesus Christ, for the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and for the Word of God. Thank You for working in our hearts

and lives. We ask Your blessing upon Your people. In the name of Jesus Christ we ask and pray, Amen.

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