

The Basis and Blessings of Free Justification

Studies in Romans

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Bible Text: Romans 4:6-8

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Actually we didn't have any accidents up here at all. I just figured that pew needed a bit of washing and David's suit looked like it could be doing with white cleaning and, well, there we were.

It reminded me of the first pair of spectacles I got as a very young fellow. I suffered from a lot of headaches and they discovered that those days I played in the Salvation Army junior band. They watched how I looked at the music and they said, "Well, there must be something wrong with your eyes." So they did all sorts of tests and every test in the book. In those days they dropped the things in, you know, big frames and dropped new lenses in. And suddenly we came to this lens and that's it. I can see perfectly clearly now.

He said, "There is no lens in there."

After which they gave me something or other. It looked like plain glass, but it was supposed to help my headaches. I don't know if it ever would have helped the headaches or not for I decided to try and put them in the wrong end of my anatomy and I find when I sat on them it didn't help me to see any better or feel any better, but the glasses didn't like it. So I figured if it worked with glasses it may well work with water for the throat. So we have got now all together in the wrong place.

But these things happen. It gives David Brame something to talk about now.

We return this evening as we study the epistle to the Romans to chapter four. And we are reading again the brief passage, verse six, seven and eight. Romans chapter four verses six, seven and eight.

Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.¹

¹ Romans 4:6-8.

Amen. The Lord will add his blessing to the reading of his Word for his own name's sake.

Remember where we are in Romans in chapter four. Having established back in chapter 3:28, "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law,"² Paul is proceeding to defend that truth against typical objections that would come from his Jewish fellow countrymen.

They would immediately trot out the example of Abraham. Abraham was a righteous man, a good man who, because of his righteousness and because of the merit of his faith, was accepted and greatly blessed of God.

Paul immediately says, in effect, "Let us look at Abraham. Was he justified by works? Or was he justified by free grace through faith without his works?" And he concludes that he was not justified by works, but he was justified by the grace of God and that grace was not mediated—is the theological term. You might use the word obtained or merited, but it didn't come to him through his works. It came to him through faith alone.

In fact, in establishing that, Paul makes the argument: If Abraham worked for God's salvation, then what he received was not a gift, but a wage. If he worked for it, then he merited it. If God gave him what he deserved, then he gave him what he owed to Abraham. He didn't give him the gift of grace.

And, of course, the very thought of that is obnoxious to readers of both the Old and the New Testament. And so Paul goes on to argue, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."³

And if I might cut across all that I have said about that last part, faith counted for righteousness, the equivalent expression is he is justified by faith alone.

So what he is saying is, to the man who doesn't work to be accepted by God, doesn't work to establish the righteousness that he needs to be able to stand at the judgment bar of God, to that man who believes on him that justifies the ungodly, to that man is given justification by faith alone.

And at that point Paul says, "Now, let's come to a second outstanding example, having looked at Abraham." And, of course, he is going to return to Abraham. But on this point of justifying the ungodly he says, "Let me throw in the additional evidence that we can get from the experience of David.

"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works."⁴

² Romans 3:28.

³ Romans 4:5.

⁴ Romans 4:6.

And then he quotes Psalm 32 and the first two verses.

Now the subject of these opening verses of Psalm 32, the subject of Romans chapter four verses six through eight is a wonderful subject. It is one that really deserves more than a couple of sermons. It deserves the study of a lifetime because what Paul is talking about, what David is talking about is the subject of the beauty, the basis and the blessing of free justification, justification by grace through faith without works, the beauty of it.

Now we got as far as looking at that last Lord's Day. We didn't get any further than that very first thing, the beauty of it. The beauty of justification is that looking the full blackness of our sin straight in the face without palliating our sin, without excusing it, without in any way trying to work around it, facing it in all the blackness and darkness and hideousness that is in it, looking at our sin as it really is, justification deals with our legal standing before God, goes right to the root of our state before the Lord and gives us a legal ground upon which to come to God and be declared perfectly, absolutely, sinlessly, stainlessly... in fact, God irrevocably, eternally righteous.

That is the beauty of justification.

As I said last sabbath day and I repeat it this morning. There are other aspects to the saving actions of God on behalf of his people. Election is a saving action of God. Predestination to the image of Christ is a saving action of God. Sanctification is a saving action of God. Glorification is a saving action of God. There are many things that the Lord does in the whole scope of salvation, but justification is a key element apart from which there can be nothing else because this is the aspect of God's saving action that deals with our legal status before God.

As I pointed out last week, the righteousness with which justification deals is the righteousness that God imputes to us. It is not the holiness that he imparts to us by the action of his Spirit. That is another thing entirely. The ground of this whole thing is an imputed righteousness and that is the beauty of justification.

Now we come to the basis of this free justification. Remember that Paul is citing David and what he says in Psalm 32 in support of this apparently radical, revolutionary even outrageous statement---God justifies the ungodly.

Now that was one that really took the Jews by storm. And not only they, but the generations of professing Christians ever since. This is what sounds so revolutionary. Think of it. God justifies the ungodly. In other words, justification does not depend upon our being godly. Our justification with God, our acceptance with God, our legal standing at the throne of God does not depend upon our personal holiness or godliness. And that is what sounds so revolutionary.

Let me say it sounds revolutionary or radical only because men throughout the ages have consistently rejected the plain witness of the Word of God.

I have referred to the Jewish claim about Abraham, a righteous man who, because he was such, was accepted by God. And I spoke freely of the merit of Abraham's faith.

Of course Paul denied that entirely.

But, you know, when you look at the case of Abraham, if I may regress for a moment, where was he when God found him? He was in Ur of the Chaldees. What was he? He was a member of a heathen, idolatrous family. That is where he was and that is what he was.

We read in Joshua 24 verses two and three that, "Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods."⁵

They served other gods. Now the antecedent of "they" is Terah, Abraham and Nahor. They served other gods. That is where Abraham was. That is what Abraham was. And the Lord said, "And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood and I led him throughout all the land of Canaan."

In other words, the sovereign grace of God reached into the heart of heathendom. God placed his hand upon a heathen idolater, called him by his grace, revealed himself to him and Abraham believed God.

I believe that is the point at which he was justified. As I pointed out, the later reference in Genesis 15 does not identify that later time as the point of just justification. It is simply saying then he was already a believing one and therefore a justified one.

Abraham, therefore the heathen, was not righteous before, but as the result of being justified by faith.

In other words from Abraham we learn that godliness is the fruit, not the cause of justification.

Now, says Paul, David teaches precisely the same thing.

Now the reference to David is a very telling reference. Paul certainly knew how to argue. He certainly knew theological debate. In very crude vernacular terms he went for the jugular every time.

When I was teaching theology I used to exhort student never to waste your time trimming the little leaves and branches of an opponent's argument unless you have first gone to the very root of it. And if the root is rotten, cut down the root and you will not need to be

⁵ Joshua 24:2.

bothered with all the stupid fruit. That makes a whole lot of sense to me and certainly that is what Paul did. He went right to the very root.

You see, David towered as a giant over Hebrew history. Undoubtedly, in the eyes of the Jews, and I would have to agree with them, he was Israel's greatest king. He was the acknowledged forefather of the Messiah. He was the sweet psalmist of Israel. He was the man after God's own heart.

But just as with Abraham, though you could look at David and say if any man could be acceptable to God because of his devotion and obedience, despite the awful lapse and blot on his reputation through his dealings with Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite, if any man could be looked on as having been accepted because he was a good man, surely it was David. But as with Abraham Paul goes right to what David says and he says, "Far from being an example of getting what he deserved, David is an unequivocal example of a person justified, reckoned righteous, totally apart from his works.

Now let's go back to Psalm 32 verses one and two, because this is what Paul is quoting.

David says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity."⁶

That is as far as Paul is quoting.

Now remember what caused this psalm to be written. David, a justified believer; David, already accepted of God by faith—and I will go so far as to make it plain. He was justified by faith in Jesus Christ. David had fallen into sin. David had failed to go to war when he ought to have been in the battle field. He was lying lazy at home.

The old saying is always true that the devil finds work for idle hands to do. And David soon fell into wickedness and lust, immorality, adultery and then he connived at having one of his own mighty men placed in a position of danger and instead of being supported there, left there to be killed by his enemies.

It is not a very pretty picture. There is nothing more rotten, more vile, more nauseating in the pages of Scripture than the filthy, cowardly, lying treachery of David to Bathsheba and her husband.

But in starting the psalm that tells how he grieved in his heart, but did not make confession, in writing a psalm that tells of how finally he as a godly one sought the Lord and obtained forgiveness, he starts off with a statement that we can say on the authority of the apostle Paul is a statement of his justification. And therefore we have two deductions to draw.

Number one, David did not obtain justification by works. And, second—and this is even more difficult for many of us to grasp—David did not maintain his justification by works,

⁶ Psalm 32:1-2.

though, as we will see as we proceed in Romans, overall he certainly, like all Christians, demonstrated his justification by his works.

Paul clearly states—and understand what he is saying here about Psalm 32—Paul states that David is describing the grace of God in imputing righteousness without works. That was David's experience. In other words, David had the same experience as Abraham. David had the same experience as Paul. He knew what it was to be accepted by God. How was he accepted by God? By free grace through faith without works. And David knew that.

I didn't get to be accepted by my works, by my goodness, by my devotion, by my praying, by my obeying. That was David's whole experience. I came to be accepted by God as the free gift of divine grace received by faith without works. I have indicated he was not without a godly character. He was not without godly works, but they were the fruit of his being accepted. They were not the cause or the basis of it. So he didn't obtain righteousness by works.

But now we come to this more difficult thing for many people to grasp, neither did he maintain his justification by works. Remember what I said. Psalm 32 was written after David's sin in all its heinousness. It describes the bitterness of his backsliding and it traces the path of his return to fellowship with God. Oh, David needed a renewed fellowship. David needed to have his backsliding dealt with, but David did not need to be justified all over again.

You see, it is one of the glorious aspects of justification that it is an irreversible act of the grace of God. It is one of the glorious aspects of our justification that in dealing with our legal standing before God it deals with all our sin, past sins, present sins and even future sins.

And here is the security of the believer in Jesus Christ, that our standing with God depends upon our righteousness that is perfect. It has at its basis an absolutely perfect righteousness that is made over to our account quite apart from anything we have ever done. That is what gives us acceptance. That is what maintains our acceptance. That is what puts us in a proper legal standing. That is what keeps us in a proper legal standing. Jesus, thy blood, thy righteousness and none other. That is the witness.

You will see that there can be no increasing our justification. It is a cardinal error, or at least one of the cardinal errors of the Church of Rome in dealing with justification. In the definitive statement of the Council of Trent—and don't get mad at me for going away back in history to cite what was written in the 16th century. I do that because that is the last truly definitive theological statement of justification that the Church of Rome has made. It won't touch what the Council of Trent has said. The new catechism will try to expound it a little, but they will not touch what the Council of Trent has said because they recognize that there can be no more perfect statement of the Romish position than that which the fathers at Trent turned out.

It is one of the cardinal errors of their system that our justification may be increased or it may be decreased. According to them it is increased by the merit of the works that we perform after baptism. It is decreased by the demerit of our sins after baptism. And it may, indeed, be eradicated all together. But in Scripture our justification stands on another basis entirely.

The Father may chastise his children as he did David. But remember what Paul said to the Corinthians when he was talking about the chastening hand of the Lord, 1 Corinthians chapter 11. Even when the Lord has to take the ultimate rod of chastening, when he has to take that ultimate step to chasten a wayward Christian and snuff out his life because he has sinned unto physical death and God takes him out of the way, he says he does this in order that you may not be condemned with the world. In other words, very clearly, in David's failure the Lord did not impute sin unto him. And that is the revolutionary thing. That is the thing that doesn't make sense to the worldly mind. God chastened him for sins, but he did not impute sin unto him. In other words, he did not bring him back onto the legal footing of a condemned sinner. David was still a believer, justified on the basis of a perfect righteousness that was performed by someone other than himself, a righteousness that never fails.

What theologians call an alien righteousness. I must say I understand why they say that. I am not all together happy with the terminology. It means a righteousness by someone other than ourselves. But Jesus Christ, thank God, is not alien to his people. He is the head and we the body. We are one with him in the covenant of God's redeeming grace. And that righteousness never fails.

Now why this is so difficult to grasp is very obvious. You listen to what I have said tonight and immediately if you are thinking at all, immediately into your mind there comes the howl of an objection that Paul heard again and again and again.

We pick it up more fully when we get to chapter six.

“What shall we say then?”⁷

What is the answer to this objection that what you are saying is the death of all morality? If my acceptance with God does not depend on my personal godliness, then it doesn't matter how I live. That is the objection. If God has declared me justified and accepted and perfectly righteous and that is without any reference to anything I have done, I am now doing or ever will do, if I don't obtain and I don't maintain my acceptance with God by any works of mine, then you are telling me I can live whatever way I like. That is the objection.

Let me tell you that is always an objection that is found in the mouth of an unjustified and unsaved man because—and you can think this one through—you have never in your life, you have never once in your life ever met a justified believer in Jesus Christ who could make his justification an excuse for sin, never once. And the man who says he is justified

⁷ Romans 6:1.

and makes that the cover for his sin is a plain, downright liar and hypocrite and he is not saved at all.

That is how Paul will argue in due course. It is impossible. This doesn't overthrow morality. I will tell you what it does overthrow. It overthrows Satan's bondage. It overthrows Satan's power.

You see, if Satan can say to a sinner, if he can make you believe that your justification depends on how well you work, then you will never be assured of being accepted because when you have done your best you will realize, "I haven't done enough."

If justification depends on my loving God, then now how matter much I love him, do I love him enough? If it depends on my praying, have I prayed enough? If it depends on my obeying, have I obeyed enough? When have I ever done enough?

And the answer is never. And that is the bondage of Legalism. If you are going to ever fall for the lie that you obtain justification by works, you will never know what it is to be justified because your own conscience will condemn you to the bondage of admission, "I cannot do enough."

And if you are a believer and you haven't grasped the second part, that we don't maintain our justification by works, if you haven't grasped that, then you know what it is to battle this day by day. I have come up against this I couldn't tell you how many times over the years. In fact, I have to look inside my heart and realize I have had to battle it there as well.

A Christian fails and immediately, well, I... the thought comes, how could I be saved at all? What am I going to do?

Well, you point that person back to Christ. Now, you will know what I am talking about if you are a Christian. You will know exactly what I am talking about. You start doing penance. You come to the Lord, but, oh, that is not good enough. I have really got to do something to impress God. I have got to do something to get back to where I was. I have got to keep on doing and doing and doing. In other words, if I am not praying enough God doesn't love me anymore. If I am not giving enough, God doesn't love me anymore. If I am not obeying enough, then God doesn't accept me the way he said he would and the way he used to do. It all depends on how well I am working.

And, of course, it doesn't. It all depends on the acceptability of the righteousness of Christ.

Is Christ acceptable? Has he done enough? Then if I am in him by faith I have a perfect righteousness. If he is made unto me righteousness, I can have no better righteousness. I can't add anything to that by praying 24 hours a day. I can't add anything to the righteousness of Christ by working from now to the day I die 24 hours a day. I can't add to the righteousness of Christ. His is a righteousness that never fails. And when I come

to realize he set me in this standing before God by his righteousness and he maintains me in it by his righteousness, that is what sets me free to be able to pursue laboring for God. It becomes not an excuse for sin, but a motivation to sanctification, a motivation to service, a motivation to love him and labor for him, not to gain or maintain acceptance, but because he has gained it and maintained it for me. The basis of justification is not our godliness, but the imputed righteousness of Christ.

And, of course, the blessings of this free justification are given to us in the three terms that both David and Paul employed to speak about what God does to the believer. Transgressions are forgiven, sins are covered and sin is not imputed.

Now I am going to run through those things pretty quickly because I am trying to work to something of a half civilized time scale here to finish Romans quicker than you think, sooner than you think, should I say. We may not be too quick. We may take two hours per sermon, but we will get there.

The blessings of free justification: transgressions forgiven. Remove from us... the Old Testament verb has the idea of them being carried away. The New Testament verb here in Romans chapter four has the idea of them being released. That is, God has dismissed them. He has sent them away. He has removed them from us. Here is the first element, the first blessing for the justified. All your transgressions, all your disobediences, all your action, contravention of the law of God, all those transgressions and sins that have piled up like a mountain over the years in your life, God has remitted them. God has removed them from you. They are not yours anymore. They are gone. He has dismissed them.

If the devil, or anybody else... You know, the devil is called the accuser of the brethren, if he comes talking to the judge about your sins, the things that should condemn you to hell and keep you out of heaven, God in effect says, "There is nothing to talk about. I have removed them. They are gone and gone forever."

Transgressions forgiven, removed from us.

Bunyan pictured Christian as having a great burden of sin upon his back. When he came to that place called Calvary, that place somewhat ascending, what happened? The burden rolled away. It was gone, remitted, dismissed, released from him, sent away into the wilderness forever. It is gone. It is not ours.

As far as our eternal acceptance with God is concerned he says, "There is a people without sin." That is what he said. They are gone. Gone, gone, gone, all my sins are gone. What a testimony. What a blessing. You couldn't buy it. You couldn't merit it. You couldn't work for it. You could never produce it by any ritual or religious means. But God gives it as the free gift of his grace. I remove them forever.

Transgression is forgiven.

But then he says sins are covered. So they are not only removed from us, but they are removed from God's sight and from God's memory. When it says they are covered it doesn't mean they are hidden temporarily under some sort of a removable cover. It is not that somebody has put the lid on them and that sometime or later either God or Satan or ourselves may come and remove the lid and expose them to sight again. No, sir. The idea is they are covered so as never to be exposed again for all eternity.

But who could ever cover sins like that? How can sins be covered from the sight of the all seeing God? How can sins be removed from the memory of God's infinite mind? How can it be done? Only by the blood of Christ.

We have already looked at that wonderful statement in Romans 3:25 concerning our Lord Jesus Christ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, through the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, through the blood that was shed to cause an atonement and a covering. There is the removal of our sin from God's sight.

Thus we read that these are the terms of the new covenant, the covenant of grace set out in Jeremiah 31 verse 34, repeated in Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17. These are the terms of the new covenant. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."⁸

As Isaiah puts it in the beautiful words of Isaiah 43:25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."⁹

In the 44th chapter of Isaiah the 22nd verse Jehovah says, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."¹⁰

What a beautiful statement. Here is the blessing of the justified. Sin is removed in us, but it is removed from the sight and the memory of God. That is an astonishing, astonishing statement.

If the Bible didn't make it in such unequivocal terms, I would be afraid to say it.

I will not, I cannot remember your sin.

Let it sink in. Let it sink in, because, you know, there are so many Christians go through life fighting ghosts, getting scared of shadows. Satan injects the thought into your mind that God is mad at you, angry at you, rejecting you, judging you. And if you don't perk up, he will damn you.

⁸ Jeremiah 31:34.

⁹ Isaiah 43:25.

¹⁰ Isaiah 44:22.

And he is bringing up the sins that you committed way before you were saved. He won't let you forget. And God says, "I have blotted them by the blood of Christ from my memory, from my sight forever."

As we read last week from the book of Numbers chapter 23 and 21, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel."¹¹

It is gone.

I have told you before and I wasn't in the meeting. I was much too young to have been in that meeting, but I would love to have been able to have been in the meeting when the old somewhat at times rough Ulster evangelist Willy Nicholson was in a prayer meeting and some poor bemoaning soul was going over all the sins and bemoaning all the wickedness of before he was saved until Nicholson exploded that he could stand it no longer. He said, "Man, would you shut your mouth? God does not know what you are talking about."

You may not appreciate the preacher's bluntness, but his theology was dead on. God doesn't know what you are talking about.

He says, "I have blotted them out from my memory forever."

And then sin is not imputed. In other words, it is removed from God's record. God is our judge and we are going to stand before the judge of all the earth. The books will be opened. But I want to tell you, the man who has never trembled at the thought of God opening the books is a fool. The books will be opened. The record will be examined. The law will be stated. And every infraction and infringement in the record dealt with.

But what saith the Scripture?

Colossians 2:14. He has forgiven you all trespasses, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."¹²

When God opens up the judicial record, that law which once cried for my destruction now cries for my eternal acceptance. Why? Because not only is sin removed from us, not only is it removed from God's sight and God's memory, but it is removed forever from God's record.

Now this describes the blessings of free justification from the point of view of the removal of guilt. But remember, says Paul, never forget that this means that God has imputed a perfect righteousness to us.

¹¹ Numbers 23:21.

¹² Colossians 2:14.

What he is doing, he has taken all that I ever did, all that I ever merited and he imputed it to Christ. Why did Jesus die? What does it mean he died for us? What does that mean? It means, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “[God] made him to be sin for us.”¹³

He didn’t make him morally a sinner. He made him judicially responsible for all our sin. Can you see that mighty transfer? Look at all the guilt of all God’s people, from the time of Adam right throughout all of history, take all their guilt and all their sin and God imputed it to Christ. And that is the real meaning of the struggle in the garden. That is the real meaning of the agony of the cross. That is the real meaning of that awful cry of dereliction, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”¹⁴

God made him to be sin. He took all that we deserved and he imputed it to Christ in order that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. In other words, he took all that Christ deserved and he imputed it to us.

I want to tell you my place in heaven has been well earned. Oh, it is provided by grace because I didn’t earn it, but it has nonetheless been well earned and it has been well earned by the righteousness of Jesus Christ and that is what God imputes to every believer.

Here is the beauty of it. This settles our legal standing at the judgment bar of God. Here is the basis of it. It is in a righteousness that is perfect. It is not of my producing. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ freely made over to my account and here is the blessing of it. God deals with the guilt and the sin. He removes sin from me. He removes my sin from his sight and from his memory. He expunges it from the divine record. And then he takes all the perfect merit of the obedience of Christ and against the name of every believer he says, “That is their entrance to heaven. That is their legal ground of acceptance. That is the reason why they must not, cannot and shall not perish, because Christ is there righteousness by faith without works.

This is a real thing.

I always get a wee bit worried when preachers talk about dead doctrine and dry theology. Doctrine deadens and all the rest.

I want to tell you. I wouldn’t exchange the truth of justification for all the money in the world. I wouldn’t exchange it for everything that the world can give. I wouldn’t exchange it for any religious experience, for religious experience can be bogus. But I want to tell you. This is God’s eternal truth. This is the basis of life. This is the basis of joy. This is the basis of peace. This is the basis of overcoming victory in your life. This is the basis of service. This is the basis of everything. This, my friend, is the very heartbeat of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹³ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

¹⁴ Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34.

To David it was real. I failed my God miserably, but, oh, I bless God I am justified on the basis of a righteousness that is not my own. It is the righteousness of Christ.

Abraham had this experience, "I believe God and he is imputed perfect righteousness to me." Paul had this experience, "I believe God and Christ's righteousness is made over to me." It was real.

I wonder tonight do you know anything really about it? I wonder tonight are you justified by faith in Jesus or are you still struggling to try to make your way to heaven, doing the best you can, trying to satisfy God and his law, trying to live up to a certain level in order that perhaps God will receive you? Oh, that you would come to the end of human works. Oh that you would realize that the natural man cannot do what is essentially a supernatural work. Oh, that you would come to that place that Bonner described in the hymn that we were singing tonight.

Not what these hands have done,
Can save this guilty soul.

It is what Christ has done. That and that alone is the basis of our righteousness, our acceptance, our free justification.

Flee, then, to Christ and in Christ keep looking to Christ.

Oh, sure, as a Christian, face your failings, confess your failings, keep short accounts with God. For this shall everyone that is godly seek him in the time when he may be found. Why will they seek him? Because he is the God of mercy to his people. Certainly keep short accounts with God. And remember, as a Christian you can get forgiveness and restoration not in order to be justified again, but because you have been justified and freely accepted.

Christ, our righteousness, received by faith. There is the beauty. There is the basis. And there is the blessing of free justification.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let's all pray.

In a moment the meeting will be over. I trust tonight that you will give much thought to what is a fundamental truth of the Christian revelation. On this everything else in the gospel depends.

If you are not saved, if you are still trying to work your way to heaven, it is time to realize that you can never do that. You can't pray enough or pay enough or do enough, but Christ has done it all. Make sure you get to Christ.

Mr. Brame and I are here to help you in the things of God. If we can point you Christward it is our privilege to do so. Don't leave without seeking the Savior.

If you are a Christian and you have been struggling because of your failure, leave it at the cross. Sure, put it under the blood. Go on with God. God is not asking you to do penance. He is asking you to realize what you have in Christ your righteousness and in the light of that to live in the victory of his grace.

Father, bless thy Word to every heart and write it upon every soul. Take us beyond words. Take us beyond well worn phrases. Take us beyond even an acknowledgement of central biblical orthodoxy. Take us, Lord, we pray to the realization of faith, the recognition of faith in Jesus Christ, that he is the righteousness of all his believing people. Lord, do that work. Bring souls out of the bondage of a legal way of trying to work their way to heaven and rightness with God. Lord, we pray bring them to a place of faith in him who has done all that needs to be done. Hear our prayer and grant that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God our Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit our Comforter will be our portion both this sabbath evening and until the Lord Jesus either calls us home or comes again in all his glory. We pray these things in Jesus' name and through the merits of his precious blood. Amen.