

The Beauty, Basis and Blessings of Free Justification

Studies in Romans
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We are turning this evening to Romans chapter four. We will be considering verses six through eight, but we will read the first eight verses of the chapter together.

Romans chapter four. Before we start reading let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Our gracious God and our Father in heaven, we thank thee tonight for this Word of God which lives and abides forever. We thank thee for the great truth that this epistle to the Romans conveys to us. We thank thee for this central doctrine that the Bible reveals about our acceptance with God and the justification of believers through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee for the gospel as we have been singing it. Lord, we bless thee for the virtue, value and efficacy of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. We thank thee that we are redeemed by blood. We thank thee that we are reconciled to God by blood. We thank thee that we are justified by Christ's blood. We thank thee that we are made nigh and given access to the throne of God by blood. We rejoice that we have the victory over Satan and over sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. We rejoice, our Father, that every blessing of the covenant of grace is a blood bought blessing. Lord, we would rejoice this evening that God has said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you."

Father, we rejoice in the person and in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee for the purity and for the simple truth of the gospel. We thank thee, Lord, that this way of holiness is plain. We thank thee that thy Word sets forth before us not some esoteric philosophy, but a plain man's gospel, a plain man's guide to heaven. We thank thee, our Father, that Jesus said, "I am the way."

We do bless thee, the gracious invitation of Scripture. We have been reminded even as the men sang tonight of how the Holy Ghost finished the book of Revelation. And, oh Lord, we thank thee for that wonderful, wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that having set himself forth, having set forth the glories of his grace and of his power, the glories of heaven and the awful horrors of hell, he ends the whole book of Revelation by again saying, "Whosoever will, let him come and drink of the water of life freely."

Lord, we would come tonight to take of what is in Christ. Oh, Lord, we pray, give us hearts to receive from the Savior tonight.

Remember the saved and encourage and edify them through the Word of thy truth. Remember the unsaved. Lord, they need grace. They need a miracle of grace and we pray that thou wilt perform that work of grace and save the lost. Bring them to justifying faith in Christ. To this end, fill this preacher with the Holy Spirit. Give power from on high. Save us from the words of man's wisdom and grant us that glorious, marvelous outpouring of the Spirit's grace and power and grant that thy Word will go forth with the unction and the authority of him who is its true author we pray in Jesus' name and through the merits of his precious blood. Amen.

Romans chapter four, we commence at verse one and we will read through the first eight verses, but we will be concentrating on verses six, seven and eight.

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. 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

Amen. The Lord will add his own blessing to this reading from his precious and inspired Word for his name's sake.

Verses six, seven and eight and anybody who knows the rate of progress I have been making through Romans will understand that that is easier to say than to do. But by the grace of God we will do it either in one week or in one month. But we will try to do it, get through these three great verses.

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.²

And that is a direct quotation from Psalm 32 and the opening two verses.

In all spiritual and religious controversy it would be a good thing to settle matters by the plain statements and teachings of the Scriptures of truth, not by human feelings, not by human opinions, but by divine revelation and by divine authority.

¹ Romans 4:1-8.

² Romans 4:6-8.

Now, having said that, I must say I am very tempted and I have been for some weeks and I have resisted until now so I had better be careful, but I would be very tempted to get away from Romans four for a few minutes and expatiate a little on that which is consuming—and not in a good way—consuming so much of the interest and so much of the debating that is going on among Christians in these days. And that is, of course, the Hollywood movie on the last 12 hours of Christ's life.

It is a wonderful thing when a Hollywood production is better known to most evangelicals than the Bible itself; wonderful in the sense of causing amazement, not wonderful in the sense of being praise worthy.

I don't want to get into the whole issue tonight except to say this. One thing that has really struck me and it has grieved me far more than Mel Gibson's film, far, far more than Mel Gibson's film with all its Romishness, with all its ecumenical undertones and overtones. Some things have grieved me more and that has been the response in the evangelical and even in some parts of the reformed community and certainly in many parts of the fundamentalist community.

I have been amazed at how little people really know of what the gospel is. And I suppose in many ways that is the most distressing thing of all. But—and I don't want to say I told you so. We are now finding where the compromise of fundamentalists and the reformed with popery for many, many years has led us.

When Reggie Kimbro, our brother minister up in North Carolina was invited by a Christian radio station to appear for a call in program fielding calls in this, he was the only one, of course, they could get who would take a stand against the thing. And when he went on there he took flak from the presenter who is a student or was a student along with him who is running a Christian operation, but he took flak from him and from many listeners, not because he was against it merely—although that is a great sin—but because he dared to invoke the plain statements of the Second Commandment.

And I have heard preachers say we cannot really invoke the Second Commandment—and this is something that was said to Reggie as he was on the radio that day—because, after all, we fundamentalists and we evangelicals, we have our pictures of Jesus, we have Bibles with pictures of Jesus, we have our plays which present Jesus, we have had our own evangelical films with Jesus in them and if we have been able to do it we can't make that an argument against Mel Gibson doing it. And they are dead right they can't make a argument against Mel Gibson.

When you sink into idolatry yourself, you can't blame anybody else for being an idolater. And it is idolatry.

Let me put it to you very simply. We are not talking about imagers merely. We are not talking about pictures in general. We know there is many representations of Moses leading the children of Israel through the Red Sea as you want. There is a general rule of

thumb what may, what has been seen and may be seen with the human eye and therefore is interpretable by the human intellect and heart may be a legitimate representation in art. That is a general rule and it is a Mosaic rule. It is not one I am making up.

But there is a deeper rule. And let us not get away from it. You are prohibited. It is not a word of advice. It is not a word of opinion. You are prohibited divinely from making any representation of God, of deity.

Now it is the central truth of Christianity. This is the central truth. This is the first truth in the apostolic statement of fundamental Bible doctrine apart from which there is no doctrine of the atonement. There is no doctrine of the resurrection. There is no doctrine of salvation. There is nothing apart from this. Jesus Christ is God.

1 Timothy chapter three verse 16.

“Great is the mystery of godliness.”³

What is the first item on the list of fundamental doctrine?

“God was manifest in the flesh.”⁴

Now I freely admit to human eyes could see the man Christ Jesus. But I submit to you that human eyes never saw him as he really was and never interpreted him as he really was, for he is God manifested in the flesh. But any painter takes his brush, he is blaspheming. When any artist or any actor presumes to say, “This is how the holy, sinless, spotless Son of God felt. This is how he expressed his feelings with looks. This is how he expressed his feelings in any way that may be represented by human art,” he is a liar and he is a blasphemer. And I say that very reverently because no man... we are sinners one and all. Mel Gibson not more than I or you or anybody else. We are sinners one and all. And it is impossible for a sinless or a sinful man even to begin to conceive—never mind represent by facial expressions, by actions, by whatever art can portray. It is impossible faithfully to represent the sinless feelings of Christ.

But beyond that to represent God in the flesh.

I have been told and, of course, popery has been saying this for centuries, “We don’t bow down to that celluloid picture,” or whatever it is, a DVD or whatever. “We don’t bow down to the actor portraying Christ.”

Everything I have read in favor of this film says what a wonderful experience it is. Paul Harvey said you don’t view it, you experience it. In other words, it is something being used to promote worship. That makes it idolatry.

Now if that is too harsh, don’t blame me. Blame the God who said it, not me.

³ 1 Timothy 3:16.

⁴ Ibid.

I have been told about [?] we don't worship those pictures of Jesus. Well, neither do the Greek Orthodox. Neither do the Roman Catholics. They tell us they don't worship the pictures either. They are merely stimulants to their mind. They are things to stir their heart.

I put it to you that if you as a Christian can look at any representation of the Lord Jesus Christ without a feeling of worship for Christ either you recognize the things are blasphemy or there is something wrong with your heart. A Christian cannot conceive of looking on Christ or anything that leads him to consider Christ apart from worship.

And the Bible is plain. And, again, I say to you and I don't blame Mel Gibson above the Bible producers who have desecrated the holy page of God's Word with their blasphemous little pictures or above the protestant reformed evangelical fundamental churches that offend the sensibilities of any Bible believing Christian with their portrayals of Jesus Christ. I don't blame him more than they, but I say it is a sad day when we have taken right out of our hands the very Word of God and we are told you can't use the Second Commandment because you yourselves have been breaking it for years.

And I say God help us.

But all that to say I don't care how many millions of dollars Mel Gibson has made on his picture. I don't care how violent or otherwise it is. You couldn't portray crucifixion honestly without making it horrendously violent. What offends me about it, but no more it than other things is when people think they none better than God almighty and he says, "You will not make any representation of your God. If he is the object of your worship, he must not be represented to your sight."

That is God's law.

That is why I say in religious controversy, it is much, much better to be able to go to what God says than what I think. I am not an art critic. In fact I am a Philistine when it comes to art criticism. I am not a film critic. I know nothing at all about the art of making films. If you had ever seen my productions from the holy land in the days of cine cameras and all of the rest you would understand that. But I do believe that Bible.

And I am going to make a statement. I have no doubt that even here there will be people likely offended at the vigor of the outspokenness of what I have said. I am sorry for you, but I do not express one glimmer of regret for what I say. For I believe that book. And if we ever—and I think we are reaching this stage—if we ever reach the stage in our Bible believing churches when people are twisting like eels in order to justify what our Puritan forefathers—and as a Presbyterian I am glad to say, our Presbyterian forefathers—bled and died to protect, the severe spirituality and simplicity of Christian worship, if ever the day comes that I can't say that and people are so twisting as to

protect their popish views that they want to impose on the Bible, then it is a sad day and I suppose, I suppose it will cause the cause of Christ a great, great deal of trouble.

But there is the controversy. And that is as much as I want to say on it. It is very simple. What does the Bible say? And once you have got what the Bible says, you have got the last word on the subject.

Now that is true in every controversy. I could go down the list of controversies that perplex and people fight and argue and give opinions and it seems to me in all the... As I have said in other contexts, what does it matter what it seems to you? What does it matter what seems to me? It really doesn't matter at all. If you are not willing to bow to Scripture, then you are no better than the Jews were because that was Paul was doing, hitting them with the Scripture.

Just before we came into the meeting tonight there was a young fellow back here manning the board that sends out this broadcast live over the internet and gets it ready then for downloading onto SermonAudio. But as we were coming in I was behind his back. He couldn't see me. And I had my Bible like a hammer over his head and was saying to him, "Mr. Brame, what do you think? Do you think he would like me bringing the full weight of the Word of God to bear upon his head?"

And that might have been quite a shock to him.

Well, what we are doing is bringing the full weight of the Word of God to bear upon our heads and upon our hearts and if we are not willing to take that, then we are in the same position as the Jews who were not willing either.

You remember the argument that Paul and the Jews were having. They were not he subject of a man's acceptance with God. There is no more basically important thing for any man. How can I be accepted with God?

The Jews argued that human works and human merits had a lot to do with it, a large part in getting there. And Paul was arguing that human works and human merits had no part whatsoever in obtaining justification even though—and, of course, and we will do this in due course—he went on to show that holy living is the fruit of being accepted with God and justification. But it is not the cause of it. The Jews objected and said, "Well, look at Abraham. Abraham we know was a good man, a righteous man, a faithful man, an obedient man. Look at Abraham. That proves that there is a man whose righteousness God rewarded."

There was even merit according to the Jews in Abraham's faith. So God blessed him because of what he saw in him.

So Paul takes up the challenge and, in effect, he says, "Well, let's look at Abraham. What does the Bible teach?"

That is what I am saying. Bring it all down to the Bible. What saith the Scripture?

“What shall we say then that Abraham...”⁵

And this is according to the Scripture record.

“...has found?”

And he goes on in the first five verses to show that Abraham was justified by grace through faith apart from his own works.

Now he goes on to say this is not even an isolated instance.

I have talked about Abraham. But lest you think this is a trick of interpretation, something I am imposing on Abraham, let me bring you to another man. And so he cites David and quotes one of his most famous psalms.

Notice how he starts verse six.

“Even as David also...”⁶

The word “even” means just as David also. It is consciously linking David with Abraham. He is saying there is one truth in this subject. David occupied the same ground as Abraham. David took the same position as Abraham and, indeed, as Paul. He confessed the same personal sin and guilt. He confessed his personal inability and lack of merit to remove sin and guilt. He confessed his same dependence and free grace. And he expressed that faith without works was the only way of receiving that grace.

So he says, “Now, let’s look at David. Having dealt with Abraham we are going to deal with David.” And so he proceeds to show what David says in support of this vital truth of justification by faith.

Now as we get into David’s words I want you to understand what he is really talking about. Because if you go back to the 32nd Psalm you will see that David does not mention the word “justification.” David does not actually use the words that God imputes righteousness, which is the same thing as saying God justifies. David doesn’t use those words.

But Paul is saying, “I want you to understand what David is really talking about. Understand this.”

“God imputeth righteousness without works.”⁷

⁵ Romans 4:1.

⁶ Romans 4:6.

⁷ Ibid.

That is what David's words prove. So understand the subject here. And notice the terms in which he couches this subject. Back in Romans 4:7 he says, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."⁸

We are going to pay particular attention to the terms in which David expresses this. And as we do so I think you will find that David is revealing to us here a wonderful subject. And I trust it will be a blessing to you, an eye opener if you are not saved, a way that will lead you to the light of the gospel of grace and the experience of it in salvation. If you are saved it will lead you to understand more fully what it is you have in Christ and the ground of your security. The subject is the beauty, the basis and the blessings of free justification.

Now remember Paul has just made a statement that he knows quite well will sound revolutionary to Jewish minds. Indeed, it still sounds revolutionary today.

Roman four verse five. This is the great statement that he is using David to support.

"To him that worketh not..."⁹

To him that does not depend on doing any good works, to him who has not a work to present in his own behalf before God as a reason for his acceptance in salvation.

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."¹⁰

Now notice what he is saying and this is the revolutionary sounding thing. God justifies the ungodly. Now to the Jews that was outrageous.

Can I say to you that to most people, Roman Catholic and Protestant, to say nothing about the heathen religions that united in a doctrine of works, it is outrageous to say that God justifies the ungodly.

Notice very carefully that this is the way divine grace deals with the ungodly.

Now a holy God, a just God must deal with ungodliness. And let me put it to you very simply. There is only one thing that a just and holy God can do with ungodliness. There is only one way he can deal with it. And that is he must condemn it. He must condemn it. If otherwise, then he becomes a party to it. That is why the Scripture says, Nahum chapter one, he "will not at all acquit."¹¹ The idea there is to declare innocent.

⁸ Romans 4:7-8.

⁹ Romans 4:5.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Nahum 1:3.

He “will not at all acquit the wicked.”¹²

God can no more take ungodliness and accept it and pretend it doesn't exist than he can sin himself. And he cannot sin. There is only one thing that a holy and just God can do with ungodliness and that is he must condemn it.

And yet here we read he justifies the ungodly. And not only so, but he justifies the ungodly without the ungodly doing anything at all to deserve it. Now that is the launching point for Paul and for us tonight.

Keep that in mind and you will see, first, the beauty of free justification.

Watch carefully the terms of verse seven, because here Paul is defining and describing sin, guilt, ungodliness. Notice the words he uses. He uses the words “iniquity,” “sins,” and then in verse eight “sin,” in the singular.

The word “iniquities” in verse seven carries the idea of lawlessness. The idea in the Old Testament, in the Hebrew of Psalm 32 and here in the Greek of Romans chapter four, the idea of both words carries the notion of rebellions. These iniquities are rebellions. They are revoltings against God.

You remember how the Lord Jesus in his parable in Luke chapter 19 said something that really expresses the heart of the natural man against God and his Christ.

“We will not have this man to reign over us.”¹³

That is the spirit of rebellion. That is the spirit of revolting. That is the idea of these iniquities or lawlessnesses.

No in verse seven we have also the word “sins.” This is the word that you have heard preachers say many a time carries the idea of missing the mark. And that is true. And I have dealt with this in some detail before, so I am not going to go into it in detail again tonight. It does mean missing the mark.

But I want you to keep something in mind here. When you talk about somebody missing the mark, you have a picture in your mind, say, of a man with a bow and arrow. We will not talk about guns. But we have somebody aiming at something and he is trying to hit it. Maybe because he has got bad eyesight or bad equipment or lack of strength or whatever, he doesn't hit it. Missing the mark. He is trying, but failing. That is emphatically not the idea in this word. This is not an accidental failure to hit the mark. These, rather, are acts of willful, criminal refusal of God's standards and replacing God's standards with those of our own invention. That is the idea of missing the mark. It is rebelling and revolting against God who has set the mark. It is rejecting of the standard that God has set and it is

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Luke 19:14.

replacing it with one of our own devising. We miss God's mark because we are aiming at something totally different.

That is what he is saying.

So there is a lawlessness and then there is a missing of the mark.

Then in verse eight he talks the last word in the verse is "sin." The singular is distinct from sins. This is sin. And it is translating a word that David used in Psalm 32 that speaks of deliberate turning aside. It is a verb that has the idea of doing something perversely, doing something wickedly. It carries the notion, quite simply, of doing wrong, deliberately turning out of the way.

Now you put all those three together and you get a picture of ungodliness and of guilt. Rebelling against God and his law, men replace both God and his law with themselves and with their own desires and, thus, they turn aside wickedly out of the way.

Isaiah 53 verse six describes the result. It doesn't use the same verb for turning aside deliberately, but it does convey the result.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; [and then it says] we have turned every one to his own way."¹⁴

I like what the American Lutheran commentator, Lenski, had to say on this. He said, "Each would be his own God in godlessness and his own law in lawlessness."

Now anybody who has ever read Lenski would know that he always likes to put things in his own cryptic fashion.

What he is saying is this. And it is very true. Men express their godlessness by making themselves their own God. Men express their lawlessness by making themselves their own law. This is the sin. This is the guilt. This is the ungodliness with which justification ultimately has to deal.

Now stop there for a moment. Put those three things together. This is God giving us a picture of human nature in its activities. It isn't a flattering picture and God is not at this point in time—there are other parts of the Bible where he is quite willing to note some things that evil men do under the force of his common grace. He can let evil men do things that are good for society, good even for the Church. And God will take note of that.

Jehu is an outstanding example, a bad man who did some good things, necessary things.

But in this God is not interested in saying, "Now there are some mitigating factors here. There are some things here that soften the image. After all, these people still do this, this,

¹⁴ Isaiah 53:6.

this and this. They are good to cats and dogs. They have opened a children's home. They have done this. They have done that. They have done the other thing.”

No, no. He is not interested in any of that. He said, “Look. This is the heart of the matter. Ungodly, depraved. This is their wickedness.”

And I would put it to you that such guilt and ungodliness deserves to be condemned and there is not a man in the world could ever complain against God for damning him for such sin. And yet we read, having emphasized the awful, vicious, willful, wretched, criminal nature of ungodliness, we read God justifies the ungodly.

Now understand the full force of that. Here is something that goes deeper than any subjective change of feeling. This goes deeper than us feeling miserable for sin and feeling happy that we are saved. It goes much deeper than any subjective change of feeling. It goes much deeper than even any change of personal character. When we look at a man all we can see is a change in his behavior or a change in his character.

I knew men who once were deep into booze and drugs and today they are living clean. I can see the difference and rejoice in the grace of God that has made them different. But this is something that goes much deeper than any change of personal character. This is a statement that describes a radical change in our standing before the holy law of God.

Now notice how verse eight ends up.

“The Lord will not impute sin.”¹⁵

Or, as David put it, “God will not impute iniquity.”

Now what does this mean? Paul has said what it means. It means he will impute righteousness.

Now put this together. This is an astonishing statement. Here we have these three words that emphasize the total wickedness of man, his lawlessness, his deliberate perversion in that he misses God's mark and he is aiming for something selfish and wicked, something totally different. There is a deliberate turning away, a perverse doing of wrong. There is this wickedness that would make himself his own god and his own law. He deserves to be damned and yet we read God the Lord does not impute this iniquity. But he does impute righteousness. That is the statement.

And what a wonder of divine grace, for this is an act that is worthy of God. Only divine wisdom and divine goodness could devise such a plan. Nobody else could think of it.

I want you to see this. God declares the ungodly righteous.

¹⁵ Romans 4:8.

When we get into the end of chapter four and into chapter five we will see more fully how he can do this, but God is not telling any lies here. God is not play acting. He is not pretending.

I said a week or two ago what he says, "You have perfect righteousness." Then there is an objective possession that is really ours. We do have a perfect righteousness.

To anticipate, it is the righteousness of Christ's obedience. It is made over to us, but it is ours just as our sin became his, his righteousness becomes ours. God is declaring the ungodly righteous before his judgment bar and he can do this without compromising his own character and without lowering the standards of his own law.

Now mark it well because here is the beauty of a free justification.

People fail to understand this and so I am going to labor the point. Some of you may grasp it very easily, but believe me, even in this church tonight there would be plenty of people and they will find it very hard to grasp.

This addresses our legal standing before God.

Now God does a whole lot more than that when he saves you. Understand this. When God saves you he regenerates you, he reconciles you, he renews you, he sanctifies you, he... well, you can down the list.

This is not the only thing God does, but I want you to understand this. This is fundamental to everything else. Unless the Lord justifies, then there is nothing else he can do to save us. Without this, there is nothing. Understand clearly what I am saying. This justification and this comes as always. You see, at heart everybody is a Roman Catholic in soteriology. That is the doctrine of salvation.

Why? Because it is the expression of a depraved human nature. Every body has a natural propensity to the popish position of salvation or justification by works. That is the way the human heart leans. It is pride. It is ungodliness, leads in that direction.

And, therefore, it comes as a shock to people when they hear that justification does not describe God's action to make us holy. That is not what it is about. Justification does not describe God's action to make us holy. It is not the action of God in changing us into his image.

In justification the righteousness we receive is imputed, not imparted. It is placed to our account. It is a legal transaction. It is a fundamental alteration in our standing before the law and judgment of a holy God. Justification is not sanctification. Justification is not even an aspect of sanctification. The whole hodge podge of Roman Catholic theology in this is based on confounding justification with sanctification. We must maintain the distinction.

Justification is a legal term. It is a term to do with the law courts of heaven. It defines our change of legal standing before God who is our righteous judge and in due course we will see, as I have said, the ground in which he makes this declaration. We will see the results that it produces in our lives. But for the moment I want you just to get the simple beauty of the truth. God justifies the ungodly. God declares the ungodly righteous.

That is what Paul is saying.

The beautiful picture of this in the Old Testament in Numbers 23:21. You remember how Balaam came to curse the children of Israel. And, remember, curse is condemnation. When Christ redeems his people what does he do? He redeems them from the curse.

When God justifies, Romans chapter eight, we will get there sometime hopefully.

“Who is he that condemneth?”¹⁶

It is God that justifies.

When God justifies then you can't be cursed or condemned. That is the simple truth.

Now Balaam was hired to curse, condemn, bring under the wrath of God, the judgment of God, the children of Israel. And I like those chapters because it is good to see an apostate forced to tell the truth. He didn't want to. He wanted to take his money and go. He wanted to curse the children of Israel. But he said, “I can't do it.”

Why? This is what verse 21 of Numbers 23 says.

“He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.”¹⁷

Now we see God chastising the children of Israel again and again through the wilderness. But I want you to see what is happening here. We are dealing with curse, condemnation and acceptance with God. We are dealing with a fundamental, legal standing of the Israelites before God.

Balaam looks at them and Balak looks at them and says, “Will you look at them? They are miserable bunch.”

Quite true.

“Can you not see them in all their filthiness and wickedness? Can you not see them? Are they not worthy of being cursed?”

Has the devil never told you that about yourself? Has the world never taken that and hurled it in your face. Who are you? You are worthy to be cursed.

¹⁶ Romans 8:34.

¹⁷ Numbers 23:21.

God's question is: Is Jesus Christ worthy to be cursed? Can I condemn Christ for these are in Christ? These are under his redeeming and justifying blood. And I have not beheld iniquity. There is nothing in those who are justified by faith in Jesus. There is nothing to bring them under the curse. That is the beauty of free justification.

I said we would get through this all either in a week or a month or six months or a year. We will deal with the basis and I would suggest we will get to the blessings when next we return to Romans four. But as we leave God's house tonight I want you to understand this. If you can grasp this, you are going to get a hold of something that will revolutionize your life. It will give you the basis of victorious Christian living. It will deliver you from the bondage of Legalism. It will deliver you from the insinuations and the attacks of Satan. At least it will give you the answer to them.

Satan keeps on saying, "Have a look at yourself. Have a look at you. Are you worthy to be justified? Who are you?"

And the more you know of yourself, this is one place where you have got to agree with the devil. And you have got to say, "Yeah, I am guilty, rotten, filthy, ungodly, wicked. You name it. I am it."

Well, who are you to... how could you be justified? What have you ever done that would lead to this conclusion?

And the answer is. Hallelujah, not a single thing. God does not justify ... under the covenant of grace he does not justify the godly. He justifies the ungodly.

That lifts my view and it will lift your view away from here to there, from the heart and yourself to the Savior. And you will see ultimately—and I am anticipating myself here—but you will see ultimately I do have perfection. It belongs to me. I have a perfection that satisfies the God of glory. And he can find no fault with it. And because of that perfect obedience to his law, he is going to bring me into heaven. And that perfection is in Christ.

I was thinking this week of a hymn and I think we have it in our book. And if my throat surgeon had really done his job right I would now be able to sing it for you, but I can't.

In land or store I may be poor,
My place unknown, my name obscure;
Of this I have the witness sure:
O bless the Lord, I've Jesus.

Bless the Lord. I have Jesus.

All he ever did, he did for me. All his righteousness is made over to me and just as surely as he bore my sins in his own body on the tree, I bare his righteousness as I stand at the throne of a sinless and holy God. For God justifies the ungodly.

There is hope for every sinner. However deep and dark the stain of sin, however much you can look at yourself and identify your own portrait in this depiction that we have looked at in this portion of Scripture, however clearly you see yourself as the ungodly, hear the Word. How was Abraham saved? How was David saved? How can you be saved? By believing on him who justifies the ungodly.

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

In just a moment the meeting will be over. You will be free to leave. If you are saved I hope that you will go out with a renewed rejoicing in what it is to be justified. Oh, it is good to have a new life. It is wonderful to have a new set of feelings and objectives. It is wonderful to have a desire to choose good. Those are wonderful things and only the Lord can produce them. But thank God that he does do those things in his people. But, oh, let's get to the very fundamental tonight, what it is to be justified.

Understand this. Here is the beauty of a free justification. He didn't wait until you and I could do something that will deserve acceptance. He justified us freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

I hope that if you are saved you will go out tonight and get your eyes beyond the preacher. Get your eyes beyond the church and be able to say, "Hallelujah, what a Savior."

And if you are not saved, sin burdens your heart and guilt attacks your conscience and you freely admit and feel the wickedness, the undeservingness of your own sin. Perhaps even tempted to despair and the good news is Christ died for the ungodly. The very people God justifies are the people for whom Jesus died.

So come. With all your ungodliness, don't wait till you get rid of it. If you are going to try to get rid of it first, you will never come to Christ. You can't get rid of your ungodliness. But thank God he can deal with that.

Mr. Brame and Dr. Barrett and I are here after the service to be of help to you, if we can, to open the Scriptures, to point you Christward. So come and let's open that book. It is time to seek the Lord.

Father in heaven, bless thy Word to every heart. Lord, write thy Word upon every soul. We pray that the beauty of divine grace in free justification will fill and thrill our very being and, oh God, we pray that those who have come here without Christ, whatever else they may have, they feel the lack of saving grace, Lord, we pray that tonight thou wilt turn them unto Jesus and we praise thee that him who comes to Christ finds that he is never cast out. Lord, how we rejoice in that, how it thrills our hearts that our Lord Jesus

Christ said that God didn't send him into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. We thank you, Lord, that therefore when by thy grace poor sinners come to the Lord Jesus, they find a welcome. They find a Savior. Bless God, they find one who doesn't cast them away.

Lord, look on every heart tonight. If there are those here wounded by men, cast aside by men, destroyed by self or sin or the world, Lord, we pray, draw them with the cords of love and draw them, oh Lord, we pray, by irresistible grace to justifying faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear our cry. Part us with thy blessing and keep us in thy fear.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus, the love of God our Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit our comforter be with us now and evermore. Amen.