

## Romans 8:30 Justification

### Prayer for Illumination

[Psalm 119:89-96] Forever, O Lord, Your Word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You have established the earth, and it stands fast. By Your appointment they stand this day, for all things are Your servants. If Your law had not been our delight, we would have perished in our affliction. O, let us never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given us life. We are Yours; save us, as we seek Your precepts. The wicked one lies in wait to destroy our souls, but we consider Your promises. We have seen a limit to all our knowledge, but Your commandment is infinitely broad. O Spirit of Truth, illuminate our hearts to see by faith Him who is called THE TRUTH, that we may take our stand against the enemy with our feet firmly fixed in a broad place. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Please stand for the reading of God's Word: Romans 8:30

**Because God justifies us as an act of His grace we need not fear that any charge against us will condemn us and separate us from His love. When we read Paul's letters, we hear one who champions the doctrine of justification by faith alone.**

This theme is pervasive in His letters. Just taking a look at some of his letters can give us a fuller understanding of what is meant by justification by faith. Justification is a legal act. It is the declaration of the judge that a person is not guilty, but righteous. So, in verse 33 Paul asks, "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?" The setting is a courtroom. God's people are the accused. But no charges can stick because, "It is God who justifies." He is the judge, and He has declared His people righteous. Now, don't misunderstand. He doesn't declare us righteous, because we've been perfectly law-abiding.

In fact, Paul says very clearly in Romans 4:5 that God justifies the *ungodly* who put their faith in Jesus. This is why we speak of justification by faith, not justification by works or good deeds. In Romans 3:28 Paul says, “For we hold that one is justified by faith *apart from* works of the law.” So, the corollary of justification by faith is the rejection of salvation by one’s own good works. Paul says this in no uncertain terms in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” To Titus Paul wrote, “But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, *not because of works done by us in righteousness*, but according to *His own mercy*, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that *being justified by His grace* we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4-7).

This justification entails the forgiveness of sins as we read in Romans 4:6, “Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.’” But it is not enough to be forgiven. We are made in the image of God, so to fulfill the purpose of our existence we can’t just be “not guilty,” we must be positively righteous. It’s not enough to be morally neutral. So, justification not only entails forgiveness, it also includes double imputation, that is the imputation of our sin to Christ and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us. Imputation is like transferring money from one account to another. We are drowning in debt because of our sin. But God transfers all of our debt to Jesus Christ. Then Jesus pays our debt. How does he pay our debt? Well, the wages of sin is death. So Jesus dies in our place under the wrath of God. When Jesus did this,

He paid our debt in full. In Christ, we are free and clear of our debt. Our sin was imputed to Him, or transferred to His account, and He paid for it. We are forgiven. But that's not all, as we already said. God also transfers from Jesus' account to our account. Now, Jesus never sinned, so His account is full of obedience. In fact, His obedience is so perfect that He was obedient even to the point of death, even death on a cross. Jesus has the most mature, the most perfect obedience that can be had. Everything He did pleased God the Father. If goodness were money, we would say that Jesus had unlimited wealth. And that has been transferred to our account. So when God, the Judge, declares us righteous, He gives us the perfect righteousness of Christ. This is what Martin Luther called "that glorious exchange." Paul described it like this in Galatians 3:13-14, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . . so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to [us]." In 2 Corinthians 5:21 he wrote, "For our sake God made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." So, in numerous different contexts, with careful reasoning from the Scriptures, Paul emphatically insists that no one can be justified, or accepted by God, on the basis of one's own good works. Instead, justification is God's declaration that one is righteous, only because the righteousness of Christ is imputed to Him, and his own sin is imputed to Christ, so that he is forgiven. And this gift of grace is received by faith alone.

Why this persistent theme in Paul's writings? First of all, Christ was addressing the needs of His people through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit upon Paul. Secondly, Paul is a good interpreter of the Old Testament under the inspiration of the Spirit, so he is expounding a major theme of the Old Testament, even though it was a theme grossly overlooked by his

kinsmen according to the flesh. But why was Paul particularly suited for this task of trumpeting justification by faith. **Paul champions justification by faith alone as one who had tried to be justified on the basis of the law.** Paul had been saved from self-righteous legalism. He had lived most of his life quite satisfied with himself. But when the scales came off, and he saw his wretchedness in the light of Christ, he was undone. It was the grace of Jesus Christ that put him back together again. Let's consider his story.

When Paul warned the Philippians about people who would come with impressive résumés to lead them away from the faith, he wrote honestly and frankly about his superior credentials, if what they wanted was to compare *curricula vitae*: "I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more" (Phil. 3:4). In his succeeding summary he does not even tell the half of what he could have included. He proceeded to speak only of his Jewish heritage, in order to silence those who would boast in their ancestry in Abraham. But Paul had a threefold cultural privilege with an especially rich pedigree as a Jew. The two names by which we know him already point to two of the cultures to which he belonged. Saul was his Jewish name, while Paul was his Roman name. Many people mistakenly believe that Jesus changed his name from Saul to Paul, much like Jesus changed Simon's name to Cephas or Peter. But there is no record of a name changing ceremony. Instead, Luke simply informs us, as Paul is getting ready to leave on his first mission among the Gentiles that Saul was also called Paul (Acts 13:9). Saul would be his *nomen*, the name by which he would have been called by his family. Paul, his *cognomen*, was probably chosen because of its assonance with Saul, which gave him a Roman name to suit his Roman citizenship. Being a Roman citizen, Paul enjoyed special privi-

leges under the Roman law which ruled the Mediterranean world at that time. Paul was also a citizen of Tarsus, which gave him a rich Hellenistic background in Greek language and literature. So, Paul had standing in the Jewish community giving him religious clout, he had standing as a Roman citizen giving him special legal provisions, and he had standing in the Hellenistic culture giving him academic credibility.

Paul did not just have Roman citizenship, he was actually born with Roman citizenship (Acts 2:28). Since it was rare for people living in the provinces to have Roman citizenship, most historians are agreed that Paul's father or grandfather must have rendered meritorious service to a military proconsul such as Pompey or Antony. So, in the city of Tarsus, Paul's would have been a leading family. He was born into privilege. As a Roman citizen, he would have had freedom to travel about the Roman Empire without any hindrance, and he could have expected to be treated with dignity by the authorities. For example, in most provinces, a suspect could be arrested and beaten during questioning, before his case had even been heard by a court of law. But as a Roman citizen, Paul had a right to trial before they could punish him.

In addition to the legal privileges of Roman citizenship, Paul also enjoyed the cultured learning of the Hellenistic world. Paul once described his hometown of Tarsus as "no mean city," which was a roundabout way of saying that Tarsus was pretty important. It had been visited by Julius Caesar, which was temporarily renamed Juliopolis. Tarsus had supported Octavian and Antony against the senate after the assassination of Caesar. It was even the site of a tryst between Antony and Cleopatra. Because of its loyalty to the Caesars, the city had been favored by Augustus Caesar so that it was exempt from Roman taxation. The capital of Cilicia, Tarsus was a

commercial center and the seat of a great university. The Greek geographer Strabo, who died in A.D. 24, wrote that Tarsus surpassed Athens and Alexandria in its love for philosophy. In fact, during Paul's youth Tarsus was successively ruled by the Stoic philosophers Athenodorus and Nestor. While a faithful Jewish family would have avoided many things "Greek," such as the Pagan shrines, esoteric cults, and games in the arena, they certainly did not disdain the Greek language and literature. In the record of Paul's speeches and in his writings Paul betrays at least a familiarity with Greek philosophies. He seems quite at home in Athens, even though greatly agitated by their idols, where he engages with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, even quoting some of their poets and sages as he criticizes their obsession with idols. Paul's Greek, as we find it in his letters, demonstrates a command of the grammar and vocabulary of Hellenistic Greek, with definite influence from the "biblical Greek" of the Septuagint when it comes to technical terms and theological language. The fact that Paul does not employ the flowery Asiatic imitation of classical or Attic Greek popular among some provincial authors, is probably indicative of his abhorrence of affected rhetoric that draws more attention to the writer and away from the substance of what is written. Again, Paul shows maturity and refinement as an intellectual of his day. That the high culture of Tarsus would have been available to Paul is indicated by the fact that he was not a mere resident of Tarsus, but was a citizen. Now in a day and age in which citizenship was not granted to you just because you were born within the borders of a country or city, to be a citizen meant that you were a person of some means. In Tarsus the property qualification for Tarsian citizenship was 500 drachmae, which would be equivalent to about \$200,000.00. We don't know how wealthy Paul's family was, but they were comfortable enough to at least afford their son access to Tarsus' intellectual venues.

So Paul had the social dignity of Roman citizenship along with the intellectual sophistication of Greek culture. But the most important aspect of Paul's social matrix, that which would give him the most clout among his own people and distinguish him from his peers, was his Jewish heritage and training. He tells us in Philippians, that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, which says that he was Jewish through and through without any Gentile blood to speak of. His choice of the ethnic term Hebrew instead of Jew, may have been to emphasize his facility in the Hebrew tongue, which we know he had because he delivered a speech to the Jews in Jerusalem, getting their attention by speaking to them in Hebrew, not Aramaic or Greek. Not only that, but his father was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6), and we see his adherence to the Law of Moses in that he had Paul circumcised, or given the covenant sign, on the eighth day, as prescribed in the Law. He also boasted a birthright in the tribe of Benjamin. This tribe gave Israel their first king, and it is no accident that the first king's name was Saul, the Jewish name given to Paul at birth. Certainly, Paul could be proud of his heritage, especially as the tribe of Benjamin was the only tribe apart from Judah and Levi that most Israelites could trace their ancestry to by this time.

Not only was Paul the son of a Pharisee, but he could also boast that he had followed in his father's footsteps to join the party which he described as "the strictest party of our religion" (Acts 26:5). Now, we have a bad taste in our mouths for the Pharisees because we have been brought up on Jesus' scathing rebuke of the hypocrisy found in many of the Pharisees in his day, so we assume that Pharisee equals hypocrite. But what makes Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees so shocking is that they were held in such high esteem by the average person. They were the hard-working, successful, and scrupulous-

ly religious small businessmen of the day. They were very popular with the people, both because of the heritage that they boasted and because of their moral superiority to the parties of the Sadducees, the Herodians, and even the High Priests, who were all so politicized that they had lost any moral authority in the nation. The Pharisees traced their party back to the Hasmonean period, among the religious supporters of the Maccabean Revolt that won Judah its independence from Greek rulers during the second century B.C. When the Maccabeans established their dynasty the Hasidim, or pure ones, with whom the Pharisees identified, opposed their royal aspirations because they were not of the line of David, and thus not legitimate rulers. As the Hasmonean's, supported by the High Priests and Sadducees allied with the pagans and accepted many religious compromises, it was the Pharisees who stood firm on God's law, and taught the people to resist assimilation into the world. It was the Pharisaic interpretation of the law that would survive the destruction of the second temple in A.D. 70, in the form of Rabbinic Judaism. The Sadducees and the High Priests were regarded as the unscrupulous politicians who did not live by principle, but used their offices for personal gain and power. The Pharisees were seen as the preservers of Jewish identity and biblical morality. When Paul says that "as to righteousness under the law" he was blameless (Phil. 3:6), he was speaking of his outward observance of the Law of Moses supplemented by the Oral Torah, or traditions and laws passed on by the Pharisees and leading Rabbis that provided an extra layer of moral duty to ensure that one would not even come close to breaking one of the commandments.

Now, Paul said that he was so zealous for the traditions of his fathers that he excelled many of his contemporaries (Gal. 1:14). He had, after all, been sent to Jerusalem in his youth to



study at the feet of Gamaliel—who was to the Pharisees what Yoda was to the Jedi. Mishna Sotah 9:15 says of Paul’s teacher, “When Rabban Gamaliel the elder died the glory of the Torah ceased, and purity and separateness died.” So here is Paul, the crowning glory of pure Jewish awesomeness. He was a brilliant intellectual, well trained by the most pious and learned Rabbi of his day, and, to top it off, he was extremely committed. His peers and younger men could look up to him and admire him. Every mother might have hoped that he would favor her daughter for marriage. The older men would have looked on Paul and been reassured that the Jewish faith would survive the Roman era with fine young defenders of the faith like Saul of Tarsus on the job. He could go toe-to-toe with the best that the Sadducees or High Priests had to offer. And if any heretics troubled the community, Paul was the go-to guy both to refute their teaching and zealously silence them.

And that is exactly how we meet Paul for the first time in the Bible. There is the self-righteous Pharisee, holding the coats of the men who were stoning Stephen. And what was Stephen’s crime? He preached Christ crucified! He said that the Righteous One, the Messiah, was betrayed and murdered by his own people, just like the prophets of old. Now, to Saul, the Pharisee, this was heretical blasphemy. “Do you mean to say that God’s chosen one, the son of David, the promised Messiah, who is to come and deliver Israel and elevate Zion above the nations of the world, the one to whom the kings of the earth will bring their tribute, was hanged on a tree? You obviously did not go to an accredited Seminary, because if you had, then you would know that the Law of Moses says that anyone hanged on a tree is cursed by God. So you are saying that God’s curse came upon His Anointed One. That’s preposterous. And what’s more, it’s blasphemous! You deserve ex-

actly what you're getting." It has been a popular interpretation among modern commentators to psychoanalyze Paul and suggest that his conscience so vexed him after he heard Stephen's prayer to forgive those who stoned him, that Paul had an emotional breakdown which led to his conversion. Now, I think this totally misses the mark and ignores Paul's own personal testimony. He did not feel bad for stoning Stephen. He believed he was doing God's work. He was convinced that Stephen was a false teacher, proclaiming a false messiah. In accordance with the law, they stepped out and put him to death, like good disciples of Moses. He wasn't worried about being a meanie. He was defending the faith and being a good shepherd to his people. This is evident in the immediately following narrative of Acts 8:1-3: "And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made a great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. By his own testimony, he was intent on destroying the church. This is why he proceeded to meet with the high priest to obtain letters to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any followers of Jesus among them, he might arrest them and bring them to Jerusalem to stand trial.

It was while en route to Damascus to put an end to this Jesus movement when Paul came face to face with Jesus and was cast down from his self-righteous pedestal. "And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?'" Do you ever wonder at that question? Here is Paul with letters to arrest more Christians and put a stop to this teaching that Jesus is the Christ. He has been knocked to the ground by a

flash of light from heaven, followed by a voice that says “Why are you persecuting me?” and he doesn’t know who is talking? Or maybe, he has a good idea of who is talking, but he’s hoping that just maybe he’s wrong and things aren’t as bad as they appear. Maybe he’s thinking, “Please, let it be anybody other than Jesus! Because, if this is Jesus, then I am in big trouble. Just like my teacher warned us, I will have found myself fighting against God.”

You see, the Jewish leaders, including the Pharisees, had been cautioned by Paul’s teacher, Gamaliel, not to be too quick to judge the Christians. In Acts 5 we read about the debate at Peter’s trial: “When they heard [Peter’s speech], they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. And he said to them, ‘Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!’ So they took his advice.” But Paul, apparently did not agree with his teacher, maybe he even thought that Gamaliel had grown too soft in his old age, so he was determined to pursue these people to the end of the earth if necessary. He would put it this way to King Agrippa, “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so

in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blasphemous, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities” (Acts 26:9-11).

So, now Paul is lying in the dirt, blinded by a heavenly light, being addressed by the Lord of heaven and earth, hoping that it is anyone other than Jesus, whom he has been so savagely persecuting. “Who are you, Lord?” Likely thinking, “Please don’t say Jesus. Please don’t say Jesus. Please don’t say Jesus.” When Jesus answers, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” Suddenly, Paul’s whole world came to an end. That’s, in fact, how Paul understood his conversion: “The world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14). Everything that had defined his existence was shot through. His pristine righteousness was suddenly revealed to be filthy rags. Most of what he had boasted in, he was now ashamed of. “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish” (Phil. 3:7-8). Everything that fueled his self-righteousness, he now saw as rubbish, garbage, dung. In that moment, what dread, what self-loathing, what condemnation must have washed over him to realize that he had been fighting against God all the while thinking he was serving God. Jesus highlights Paul’s great offense by accusing Paul of persecuting Him. Paul wasn’t just mistakenly persecuting some pious individuals. He wasn’t just misjudging some good teachers. Paul was attacking the Lord Christ Himself. He was persecuting the Lord’s Anointed, the Chosen One, the Savior of Israel, and as he would learn, the Savior of the world! He had probably had to

swallow his pride before and admit that he was wrong. We all have. We've all probably been in a situation in which we offended someone who could really make life miserable for us. But this was the offense of all offenses. Paul had been persecuting the Son of God in an openly hostile manner. What condemnation! Paul had to have been drowning in a sea of guilt. One minute he is basking in the sunlight of his self-righteousness. The men traveling with him would be more holy just for spending time with him. In the next minute he would be struck blind at the sight of the truly Righteous One, Jesus Christ. How would Paul ever remove the filth and stain of this guilt?

Luke tells us that for three days Paul neither ate nor drank, but he prayed continuously (Acts 9:9-11). We don't know the content of those prayers, but I suspect that the penitential Psalms featured prominently in those prayers. "Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment. . . . Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51). How marvelous then, when the disciple Ananias came to Paul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:17). "And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; and taking food, he was strengthened" (Acts 9:18-19).

The self-righteous Pharisee died to all that he was, all that he boasted of, and put on the righteousness of Christ. This is the Paul who wrote to the Romans about justification, saying, it is “just as David speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin’” (Rom. 4:6-8). Paul knew that blessedness first hand. He would go on to say, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Just about at the pinnacle of his thought, Paul exclaimed in Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation—none, no condemnation—for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Paul says to the Philippians, and through the inspired Scriptures continues to say to us today, “You want to be justified by your works? You think you have what it takes to earn God’s favor by your good deeds? Do you think you are extreme enough to please God with your righteousness? Well, let me tell you something, you don’t have a chance. You can’t even touch the station I once had. I had all the merit points that religion and culture could afford. If anyone thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I had more! And that wasn’t enough. In fact, everything that I thought weighed in my favor, all that moral gold that I had stored up, turned out to be skubala—rubbish. Now I count it all as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (Phil. 3:4, 8-9). He said to the Galatians, “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (6:14). This is the sovereign grace of God that Paul celebrates here in Romans 8:28-30: “For those

whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified . . .”

So, what about you? **What are you depending on for your acceptance with God? Are you depending on self-righteousness or on the righteousness of Christ?** Listen to Paul. He will tell you that self-righteousness is futile. You cannot do enough to earn a wage from God, except death. If you count on your own righteousness, like an ancient king, you will be weighed in the balances and be found wanting. But In Christ, Paul says, no charge can stand against you to condemn you. “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies” (8:33). God is the highest court in the universe. In Christ, He has already declared the verdict over you that you are righteous. And it’s not like someone is going to introduce evidence into the court of which this Judge was unaware. “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died (He was already condemned in your place)—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (8:34). Jesus is your defense attorney. For every charge that is leveled against you, He simply points to the payment He already made on your behalf.

Now, we often apply these truths to our guilty consciences. And that is certainly a legitimate application. But the circumstances Paul mentions in the following verses are not only at the last judgment. Certainly, *the* enemy, Satan, does hope to accuse and condemn us at the judgment. He does so even now, like he did with Job. And Christians need assurance of God’s grace against those accusations both today and at the day of judgment. But the Roman Christians lived in a time and place where they might, for the sake of Christ, face tribulation,

distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword. James, the brother of John had already been beheaded in Jerusalem. Stephen had been stoned. In some of the cities throughout the empire converts to Christianity were flogged, imprisoned, their property was confiscated. Many times, Paul was compelled by the authorities to leave a city because the gospel was creating a disturbance both among Jews and among idol worshipers. On the near horizon would be the persecution of Christians in Rome under Nero, in which Paul and Peter would be martyred among many other faithful witnesses. Not only would they be accused of believing in Jesus, they would be falsely accused of many things, such as hating the world, trying to burn down Rome, cannibalism, incest, and treason. Hebrews 10:32-34 reflects the experience of many early Christians, "But recall the former days when after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and afflictions, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one."

Such were the days of the early Christians; and we are not promised exclusion from such suffering. Many Christians around the world right now are suffering for the sake of Christ. Christians in communist countries, Muslim countries, Hindu countries, are suffering as witnesses for Christ. Many in our own country consider Christian missionary labor an immoral imposition of one culture upon another. We are just supposed to live and let live. To do otherwise is the unpardonable sin. When we stand up for biblical morality we are shouted down as haters. When Christians in the service industries try to obey their consciences regarding what activities they will or will not participate in, they are fined, and in some



cases shut down. When the CEO of Mozilla can be forced to resign because he supported a campaign to preserve traditional marriage in California, do we imagine that the Church will be left alone? Christians have already been punished by the leftist thought-police.

So, can you joyfully accept the plundering of your property for the sake of Christ and the love of neighbor? How can we stand if we are being killed all the day long; regarded as sheep to be slaughtered? By remembering this, that no matter what the world says of you, “those whom He called He also justified. So, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.” “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (8:37-39).

You do not need to live in fear. In Christ you are accepted with God, He is for you, so You can say in the words of Isaiah 50:8-9, “He who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.”

Let us pray:

O Lord our Righteousness, we praise Your name, for in Your great mercy and grace You have covered our transgressions with the blood of Christ and clothed us in His righteousness. By Your grace we stand justified and at peace with You. We bless You for bringing us into the enjoyment of Your presence. Keep us always by Your grace. Deliver us from our accusers

and keep us from all self-righteousness. Through Christ, our righteousness, we pray. Amen.