

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
SOTERIOLOGY
THE STUDY OF SALVATION
PART 3

This morning, in our series Foundation of Faith, we are continuing to look at the topic of Soteriology or the salvation of man. Obviously this is an important subject because if you don't get this right, you are not saved! Thus, what Satan loves to do is twist the Scriptures to take you off course. He loves to see Bible translations that have been corrupted by man. He loves to see man distort the Scriptures. Let me give you an example to show you what I mean and this is from August of 2011, just a few months back. We are told,

BBC.co.uk, 7/22/2011: Church in Wales inquiry after rector burns Bible pages [excerpts] - The Church in Wales says it is investigating after a Gwynedd rector burnt some pages from the Bible. The Reverend Geraint ap Iorwerth of St Peter ad Vincula Church, Pennal, also cut up pages from the King James Bible to create an artwork. Unveiling it at a church event, he said it revealed a "cruel and vile God."

Mr. ap Iorwerth told BBC Wales he had burnt scraps of [the] cut up passages at the public event because he had been making a statement as part of an art experiment. He said he had had nothing but support from people at the church near Machynlleth, close to the Gwynedd-Powys border. He revealed his controversial piece of art at an event to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible.

He said: “I find it highly offensive that people would think I have given my life to serving that type of God and that I would regard the words of the King James Bible as sacred truth. “I cut out all the nasty bits of that Bible, the language of which is being celebrated all over the place this year, because I don’t think you can separate that language from the God it is representing. . . . My version of God is Jesus, who was pure compassion and unconditional love.

“The King James Bible should be praised for its language but not for the God it represents - the two need to be separated.” He said he burnt the pages, which were the remaining scraps of those he cut up to make the display, as a “symbol of all the suffering in the world.”

“The point being that some people are more concerned about destroying a few bits of pages than about those who have died after suffering.” He said he had not yet heard anything of an investigation against him and will be pursuing his own “evangelical” investigation after the summer into “how such a cruel God has so prominent a place in national life.” He said he also planned to create a “wall of shame” at the church naming all of God’s “cruel actions.”

- The Berean Call, August 2011, p. 8

I find it interesting that he sees God as cruel and I guess man is not? Go figure. And think about this, one day he will have to stand before that God he says he dislikes because the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament! And think about this once again. Man is good and God is evil? Just turn on the news and see how cruel man is today. Here is the problem; man is dead in his trespasses and sins with no way out on his own. You see, dead men can't help themselves and thus, God steps in and He becomes flesh to pay in full the penalty that is due for our sin. In fact, He not only bore our sins on the cross of Calvary but the punishment that was due us He took upon Himself. I don't even think we understand what that all entails but that just shows me that God loves us. He gets no pleasure in the death of the wicked the Bible says. (See Ezekiel 18:23, 32).

And we did cover this in our first study, The Fall of Man as we saw that man has not only inherited the sin of Adam but he also has committed sin and thus, has missed the mark of perfection and is sentenced to death, separation from God for eternity! In our last study we looked at the Salvation of Man and we saw that through Jesus we have been saved. But what have we been saved from? That is a great question and we are going to look at three aspects.

We are going to be looking at how Jesus has ***FREED US FROM THE PAST PENALTY OF SIN – JUSTIFICATION***. We are going to be looking at how Jesus has ***FREED US FROM THE PRESENT POWER OF SIN – SANCTIFICATION***. And we are going to look at how Jesus has ***FREED US FROM THE PRESENCE OF SIN – GLORIFICATION!***

Now before we dig into this, let me just say this in regards to the Bible as we see people putting it down, looking at the traditions of the Church that contradict what the Bible has to say, and making the Bible say what they want it to say instead of letting God speak through the Bible what He wants to tell us. Charles Spurgeon wrote these words back in 1855 in a sermon that dealt, in part, to the infallibility of the Bible. He wrote,

Then, since God wrote it, mark its truthfulness. If I had written it, there would be worms of critics who would at once swarm on it, and would cover it with their evil spawn; had I written it, there would be men who would pull it to pieces at once, and perhaps quite right too.

But this is the Word of God. Come, search, ye critics, and find a flaw; examine it from its Genesis to its Revelation and find an error. This is a vein of pure gold, unalloyed by quartz or any earthly substance. This is a star without a speck; a sun without a blot; a light without darkness; a moon without paleness; a glory without a dimness. O Bible! It cannot be said of any other book, that it is perfect and pure; but of thee we can declare all wisdom is gathered up in thee, without a particle of folly. This is the judge that ends the strife where wit and reason fail. This is the book unstained by any error, but is pure, unalloyed, perfect truth. Why? Because God wrote it. Ah? Charge God with error if you please; tell Him that His book is not what it ought to be . . . Blessed Bible, thou art all truth.

- Russell H. Conwell, *The Life of Charles Haddon Spurgeon*, pp. 574-576

You see, if you don't approach the Scriptures that way, how do you know what to believe? You don't and that is just where Satan wants you, not trusting what God has told us in His Word! With that said, let's begin looking at what Jesus has done for us, He ***FREED US FROM THE PAST PENALTY OF SIN*** or He ***JUSTIFIED*** us!

1. FREED US FROM THE PAST PENALTY OF SIN – JUSTIFICATION

If there is just one book of the Bible that lays out the plan of salvation in great detail it is the book of Romans. For almost 3 chapters, the opening chapters Paul speaks of the condemnation of mankind. He shows us that the whole world is guilty before God, that there are none who are righteous, not even one!

To do this Paul begins looking at the unrighteous heathen who are condemned by creation itself. You see, creation testifies that there is a God and yet they reject the One who created them and worship the creature rather than the Creator! Then Paul moves on to speak of the self-righteous moralist who is condemned by his conscience. He knows what is right and what is wrong and he does not do it and it just shows that he has missed the mark of perfection. And lastly Paul speaks of the super religious person who is condemned by the commandments of God. Now that may sound strange, how do the commandments of God condemn a person?

The answer is really very simple. The Laws of God were never established to make a man righteous but to show that he is a sinner. It is not just a matter of outward observance; it is a matter of the heart! You see, the Law was only a mirror to look into our heart by, you might say. It has no power to save us it is only a standard that God has set and you either accomplish it or you don't!

And think about this for a minute for those of you who think you are pretty good. Imagine getting pulled over by the police for speeding and you were speeding, you were traveling 65 mph in a 45 mph zone. As the police officer comes up to your car, as he begins to write the ticket, you tell him, “Look officer, I have been driving for 37 years without a ticket. Doesn’t that say something about my driving? Doesn’t that help and thus, I don’t deserve this ticket?”

What do you think he is going to say? I don’t have to tell you, you already know. But in case you don’t get it, he will tell you, “That is great that you have not gotten a ticket for 37 years but it doesn’t make any difference now. You broke the law, you are guilty and you will get a ticket because that is the law!” The law could not save you here, it just showed you are guilty and it doesn’t matter how good you are or were, even if you sinned just once, you are guilty before God. James makes that very point in James 2:10, **“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”**

That is why you need a Savior! The penalty for sin is death, separation from God. That is why you need Jesus! And that is what the Law does, it points us to Jesus because we can’t keep the Law, all the Law does is it shows us that we are guilty before Him or as Paul put it in Romans 3:23, **“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

As Paul continues on in Romans, from Romans 3:21 through Romans 5:21 Paul speaks of our justification. He does this by showing us that the righteousness of God has been revealed to us from heaven and it is separate from the works of the Law, it is a justification by faith and not by works.

Let's read what Paul said in Romans 3:21-26 and then we will deal with this idea of what justification is all about, what it means to us and how we obtain it. Paul wrote, **“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

Again, this is a very powerful section dealing with our justification and how we are justified, not by works but by faith. And as you read on into chapter 4 Paul illustrates how Abraham and David were justified in the Old Testament, not by works but by faith in the coming Messiah and we are justified by faith in the Messiah who has come! Salvation did not come to the Jews by works in the Old Testament, never did and never will and the same is true today even though some like to teach that way.

In fact, this was the cry of the reformation, “justification by faith alone!” In fact, some of the major cries of the reformation were: “Sola scriptura – by Scripture alone – and this affirms that only the Bible is the final authority for faith and life.” Then there was “Sola gratia – by grace alone – and this affirms that God’s salvation comes as His free gift, not by human merit.” And then there was “Sola Fide – by faith alone – which affirms that God’s gift is received by humans by faith and not by works.”

And yet the Roman Catholic Church opposed this and they believed and still believe in a justification by faith and works! The Catholic Catechism teaches that we are justified through baptism, “Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism.” (para. 2020). The problem with that teaching is it contradicts what the Scriptures teach.

Let me show you what I mean. In Romans 3:24 we are told, “**being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.**” In Romans 5:1-2 we are told, “**Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**” You see, it is through faith in Jesus Christ and this grace gift, which means we don’t deserve it but it is freely given to us by Jesus, we receive this justification and are declared free from the penalty of our sins, not through baptism or any other work or religious activity. It is only through Jesus and His shed blood and we receive that free gift by faith and not by works!

Let me share with you one more and there are others, but you will see how the traditions of men supersede the Word of God and that is a very dangerous place to be. That is why the Catholic Church tried to keep the Bible out of the hands of the common people because they knew that the truth of God’s Word would set them free from the tradition of men! That is why the Catholic Church put many Christians to death because they believed that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and it went against what the Catholic Church was teaching people.

Once again in The Catholic Catechism we are told, “The Council of Trent teaches that the Ten Commandments are obligatory for Christians and that the justified man is still bound to keep them; the Second Vatican Council confirms: ‘The bishops, successors of the apostles, receive from the Lord . . . the mission of teaching all peoples, and of preaching the Gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain salvation through faith, Baptism and the observance of the Commandments.’” (para. 2068).

So according to the Roman Catholic Church our salvation is obtained through faith, baptism, and the observance of the Ten Commandments. Sounds good until you compare it with what the Scriptures teach. Paul said in Ephesians 2:8-10, **“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”** You can also check out Romans 3:19-28 and Romans 4:4-5.

But what these verses are telling us is that we are saved by the gift of faith, not by works and this is apart from the works of the law. There is nothing wrong in keeping the Commandments of God, we should but not as a basis for salvation but out of love towards Him. We are honoring Him when we do but salvation is a free gift given to us by God!

Now what is this justification all about, what does it mean? Once again look at Romans 3:24 where Paul wrote, **“being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”** First of all this word **“justified,”** comes from the Greek word DIKAIOS (dik-ah-yo’-o). This word is a legal term and it speaks of being “declared righteous” or “acquitted.” Of this Spiros Zodhiates said:

Paul concludes that since all men are guilty, they cannot be “justified” by their own personal character or conduct (v. 20). Justification is a legal term meaning to remove the guilt (liability to punishment) of the sinner. It does not involve making one inwardly holy, but merely declares that the demands of justice have been satisfied. Hence, there is no grounds for condemnation (Rom. 8:1). Not even obedience to the law can justify one before God, Paul reasons, because the very nature of the law is to prove to man that he is sinful and deserves God’s punishment. Thus, the purpose of the law is to lead man to renounce his own righteousness and trust in the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as the only grounds for acceptance with God.

- Spiros Zodhiates, The Complete Word Study New Testament, p. 506

And please understand that this justification, God declaring us righteous is given to us “**freely**,” DOREAN (do-reh-an’) in the Greek and it speaks of being “without cost.” You can’t buy it, you can’t earn it, all you can do is receive it by faith, it is a gift of God. Again, this is hard for some to believe and thus they feel they must do something or live a certain way to obtain this or maintain this, but Paul tells us that we are justified through faith in Jesus, by His “**grace**” or unmerited favor that He has bestowed upon us, giving us something that we don’t deserve – **LIFE!**

Also, the word “**propitiation**” in verse 25 of Romans chapter 3 is the Greek word HILASTERION, (hil-as-tay’-ree-on) and it is used in the Septuagint for the mercy seat which was the lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant where the Law of God was kept. And on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of a goat upon the mercy seat to atone for his sins and the sins of the people, Leviticus 16:15. That sacrifice could never take away your sins, it covered them for a time and that was the problem and it pointed us to Jesus, the Lamb of God who has come to **TAKE** away the sins of the world!

You see, Jesus has come to be that perfect sacrifice and to take away, not cover our sins. It is as Isaiah 53:4-6 tells us, “**Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**”

Clark put it like this as he wrote, “Here we learn that God designed to give the most evident displays of both his justice and mercy. Of his justice, in requiring a sacrifice, and absolutely refusing to give the salvation to a lost world in any other way; and of his mercy, in providing THE sacrifice which his justice required.”

Thus, justification is an act of God, not a work of man! God declares us righteous because of the Person and work of Jesus Christ. That means that God’s justice is proclaimed because our sin has been paid for!

The best way to illustrate this is with this story. Here John Flavel is explaining justification and I think he does a great job. Listen carefully to what he wrote,

My friend Dr. Roy Gustafson has the finest illustration of justification I have ever heard. It seems that there was a man in England who put his Rolls-Royce on a boat and went across to the continent to go on a holiday. While he was driving around Europe, something happened to the motor of his car. He cabled the Rolls-Royce people back in England and asked, "I'm having trouble with my car; what do you suggest I do?" Well, the Rolls-Royce people flew a mechanic over! The mechanic repaired the car and flew back to England and left the man to continue his holiday. As you can imagine, the fellow was wondering, "How much is this going to cost me?" So when he got back to England, he wrote the people a letter and asked how much he owed them. He received a letter from the office that read: "Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls-Royce." That is justification.

Did Christ finish the work? How dangerous it is to join anything of our own to the righteousness of Christ, in pursuit of justification before God! Jesus Christ will never endure this; it reflects upon His work dishonorably. He will be all, or none, in our justification. If He has finished the work, what need is there of our additions? And if not, to what purpose are they? Can we finish that which Christ Himself could not complete? Did He finish the work, and will He ever divide the glory and praise of it with us? No, no; Christ is no half-Savior. It is a hard thing to bring proud hearts to rest upon Christ for righteousness. God humbles the proud by calling sinners wholly from their own righteousness to Christ for the justification.

- John Flavel

I think that is a perfect illustration of what Christ has done for us. He has saved us from the past penalty for our sins and it is speaking of justification. And keep in mind that Jesus did not make us righteous, He has declared us righteous because His blood has washed away our sins, we are as white as snow before Him because it is His righteousness that flows through our lives! That is Paul's point in II Corinthians 5:21, **“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”**

It is as Erickson wrote, “The resulting righteousness is not ethical perfection; it is ‘sinlessness’ in the sense that God no longer counts a man’s sin against him (2 Cor. 5:19). [Thus we find in the New Testament that] justification is the declarative act of God by which, on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning death, he pronounces believers to have fulfilled all of the requirements of the law which pertain to them.” (Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, 4th ed., p. 956).

Now is that true? Does God see us as white as snow? Does God no longer see our sin, keep an account of our sin? It really does not matter what I have to say, but what do the Scriptures teach us regarding this? What does the Bible say regarding what God has done for us in regards to saving us from the past penalty of our sins? We will spend a little time looking at this issue.

Let's begin in the Old Testament and see what the Lord has to say. In Psalm 103:12 we are told, "**As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.**" Now that is interesting to me. You see, if the Lord were to cast our sins as far as the north is from the south that would be a problem. You see, the north and south do meet but that is not what the Lord is telling us here. He said that our sins are removed as far as the east is from the west and they never meet! Did you get that? That is how far He has cast our sins away, never to be seen again, they will never meet!

Not only that, but in Isaiah 43:25 the Lord tells us, "**I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins.**" He not only casts them away but He doesn't remember them anymore! In other words, the Lord has taken our sins and cast them into the sea of forgetfulness and placed a sign there that says, "***NO FISHING!***" You see, God has done this, don't go back and drag them up again, it is finished, all our sins have been paid in full!

In Psalm 32:1-2 listen to what David says, "**Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit.**" The Living Bible puts these verses like this, "**What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.**"

This Psalm of David is born out of the sin that David committed with Bathsheba. Psalm 51 also deals with this time only its focus is his confession of sin before God while this Psalm, Psalm 32 speaks of the joy that is found in the forgiveness of sin. God forgives fully, not because of how good we are, but the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary. His blood paid the penalty for all our sins. You should rejoice in what God has done, how precious that is, that God has forgiven and forgotten my sin and your sin in Christ!

Paul put it this way in Colossians 2:13-14, **“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”**

You see, we were all spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins before we came to Christ! If you are having a hard time with this, then think of it like this. We were not sick in need of a doctor, not at all! The problem for man is that we were dead in need of a Savior, in need of Jesus! And thus, God stepped in; paying in full the penalty for our sins and brought our spirits back to life so we could have fellowship with God once again!

In Isaiah 1:18 we are told, **“‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ Says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.’”** The Living Bible puts it this way, **“‘Come, let’s talk this over!’ says the Lord; ‘no matter how deep the stain of your sins, I can take it out and make you as clean as freshly fallen snow. Even if you are stained as red as crimson, I can make you white as wool!’”**

This is a rational choice on our part. Once we see ourselves as sinners separated from God, our only hope, our only answer is Jesus, the Savior of the world and it doesn't matter how bad you were, you are cleansed by Him, washed as white as snow! Not only that, but God forgave us of all our transgressions, all our sins. Paul uses the Greek word CHARIZOMAI (khar-id'-zo-ahee) and it is the verb form of the ancient Greek word CHARIS or grace! Thus, we are forgiven or saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! It was the cry of the reformation and it should be our cry today!

Now what was this “**handwriting of requirements**” that Paul was speaking of in Colossians? This was the debt a person owed. If a person committed a crime and they found him and arrested him he would have to pay his debt to society. Once he has paid his debt to society, he did his prison term or paid back what he owed, then the words “Tetelestai” would be written across the paper that spoke of his debt that he owed. In other words, he paid in full the debt that he owed and now he is free. He can't be arrested or found guilty of that crime because it has been paid.

Now Paul is taking this and applying it to our Christian life. You see, we are sinners separated from God and the debt that is owed can never be repaid by us. In other words, the debt of sin condemned us to Hell or as Paul put it, this “**was against us.**” And God has come, taken all our sins, nailed them to the cross, and they are completely taken away, and the paper which contained all our debts has written on it **TETELESTAI** or paid in full! Now you may struggle with this and think, “Wait a minute, what about this sin or maybe that one?” Forget about it because the debt has been paid in full by Jesus, **TETELESTAI!**

You see, as Jesus hung on the cross of Calvary he cried out those words, “Paid in full!” or “It is finished” *TETELESTAI!* Jesus completed the work for us and all we must do is receive the free gift by faith!

Now some of you may feel that your sin can never be forgiven. You feel that whatever you have done is beyond forgiveness. I totally disagree with that. Think about it, did Jesus come to save the good people? No, He came to save sinners, you and me! Remember what Paul said Hebrews 7:25, “**Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**” God can save completely, forever, all those who come to Him! Now when we *forgive* someone, many times we don’t *forget* what they did to us, but that is not the case with God. When God forgives our sins, He remembers them no more. And this is so important for us to understand, that God has cast our sins as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more! That past penalty for sin has been paid in full by Jesus, we are justified not because of what we have done but what He has done for us and we receive that free gift by faith!

Listen carefully to what Paul tells us in Titus 3:5-8, “**not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.**”

Here is one of those eye opening statements you might say for those who believe in a works salvation. We might ask, “How are we saved?” and Paul answers us by saying, **“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us”** Who saved us? Jesus saved us and it was not by any works we have done. And here’s the thing, and we have talked about this before. If my salvation is based in the work of Jesus and my own works it is no longer grace because grace speaks of unmerited favor, I don’t deserve it and yet God freely gives it to me. Not only do we negate grace if we believe in a works salvation but we now make God a debtor to man, and as I have said, God is a debtor to no man!

The bottom line is this. We did not save ourselves by our own self-effort or by any other means; we were dead in our trespasses and sins. It is God who has saved us and it is not based on the things we have done, the deeds we have done for Him in our own righteousness, but it is according to His mercy towards us. That is what God has done and we are the recipients of that gift of life that is found in Jesus!

And the problem for many today is that they refuse to see that God is reaching out to them and wanting to save them from their sin. They feel they are okay on their own, they don’t need any help and they will die in their sins as this story illustrates for us. We are told,

In 1981, a Minnesota radio station reported a story about a stolen car in California. Police were staging an intense search for the vehicle and the driver, even to the point of placing announcements on local radio stations to contact the thief. On the front seat of the stolen car sat a box of crackers that, unknown to the thief, were laced with poison. The car owner had intended to use the crackers as rat bait. Now the police and the owner of the VW Bug were more interested in apprehending the thief to save his life than to recover the car. So often when we run from God, we feel it is to escape his punishment. But what we are actually doing is eluding his rescue.

- Source Unknown

How true that is. Man is dying in his trespasses and sins and the Lord is seeking him out, reaching out to him and man is on the run, trying to get away from the One that can truly help him, save him! There is no justification apart from Christ I don't care who you are or what title you have. You can't go before God and declare yourself righteous, that would be foolish, it is ridiculous to even think along those lines and yet, many still do today! And it is not only foolish and ridiculous but it is also dangerous as Thomas Watson points out for us. He wrote, "Justification is the very hinge and pillar of Christianity. An error about justification is dangerous, like a defect in a foundation. Justification by Christ is a spring of the water of life. To have the poison of corrupt doctrine cast into this spring is damnable." (Thomas Watson, A Body of Divinity, p. 226).

How true that statement is. It is so dangerous that you can lose your life over it. And yet we see so many people feeling that they have to do good, they have to be good people to be accepted by God. They see God as this kind of cosmic Santa Clause and thus, he is making a list, he is checking it twice, and he is going to find out who is naughty or nice because Jesus is coming back to town!

You may laugh at that and feel that is foolish and it is, but many feel that way. They think if they do good then God will accept them and if they do bad then God will reject them. The only problem with that theology is that it is totally wrong; it goes against what the Scriptures are teaching us.

The problem is not if we are good or bad because we are already bad, we are dead in our trespasses and sins and that is our problem. That is why Jesus came as I have said. And how tragic it is when people add good works to their salvation, you are not justified by good works, you are justified in Christ and His finished work! I like the way that Ladd put it. He wrote, "The root idea in justification is the declaration of God, the righteous judge, that the man who believes in Christ, sinful though he may be, is righteous – is viewed as being righteous, because in Christ he has come into a righteous relationship with God." (George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 437).

And think about this. Does this justification then make us more holy? Absolutely not, all it does do is make a legal pronouncement that you are not guilty because the blood of Christ has cleansed you from all your sins! Now let me make this point before you take this to a wrong conclusion. That does not mean we don't become more holy in our lives after we are saved, we do and it is called the sanctification process. If there is no growth then are you really saved? I don't think so! You see, we are saved in Christ and a result of that is our lives will change, we will live for Him and that is the evidence for our faith, the good works, the sanctification process! You see, justification pronounces us righteous, it does not make us righteous. What is imputed you might say is not imparted or passed on in regards to justification!

I realize that may be hard for some to understand but think about it like this. When a judge justifies a person, does he then make that person upright or blameless? No, he did not make any changes in that person whatsoever; he just declared that he was justified! That is what God has done for us, declared us justified in Christ and as we will see in our next study, as soon as we are saved the sanctification process begins in our lives!

I like the story that James Montgomery Boice told in his book, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*. He wrote,

Quite a few years ago a society for the spread of atheism prepared a tract containing a half a dozen sketches of Old Testament characters combined with a lurid [shocking] description of their misdeeds. No efforts were spared in describing their sin. One figure was Abraham. The leaflet pointed out that he was willing to sacrifice his wife's honor to save his own life. Yet he was called "the friend of God." The atheists asked what kind of God this is who would have a friend like Abraham.

Another figure was Jacob. He was described as a cheat and a liar. Yet God called himself "the God of Jacob." Moses was portrayed as a murderer and a fugitive from justice, which he was. David was shown to be an adulterer who compounded the crime of adultery with the murder of the woman's husband. Yet David was called "a man after God's own heart." The atheists asked what kind of a God he must be who could be pleased with David.

Remarkably, this tract had hit on something which even God acknowledges. God calls himself just and holy. Yet for centuries he had been refusing to condemn and instead had actually be justifying men and women such as these. We might say that for these long centuries there had been a blot on God's name. As Paul says, he had indeed been passing over former sins. Is God unjust? No. In the death of Christ God's name and purposes are vindicated. It is now seen that on the basis of that death, God had justified and continues to justify the ungodly.

- James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, p. 420

Aren't you glad for that? I am and you should be too because apart from what God has done for us, we are still dead in our trespasses and sins! It is all because of what Christ has done that our sins can be forgiven and the Father can declare us justified, that there are no sins any longer in our account and the reason being is that Jesus has paid the price for our sins with His sacrifice! We are declared righteous because of what He has done and we are declared unrighteous apart from Christ because of what we have done. Those are the only two options folks! And make no mistake about it, because of what Christ has done; this justification that has been given to us does not make God unrighteous or unholy. Why is that? Because, as I have said, the price has been paid for our sin!

Let me just finish up with a few statements regarding our salvation, what the Lord has done in our lives as He has justified us. And this is really a summation of what we have been looking at this morning.

A. THE MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION

The meaning of justification is speaking forth or declaring someone righteous and in both the Hebrew (sadaq) and the Greek (dikaioo) the idea is to announce or pronounce a favorable verdict or to declare someone righteous. It in no way makes a person righteous it is just a declaration that the person is righteous.

B. THE PROBLEM IN JUSTIFICATION

Now this may be a hard one to figure out, how can there be a problem with justification? Think about this for a minute. If God is a holy and righteous Judge, and He is, that means whatever He does is right, it is just. Then how in the world can a holy and righteous judge pronounce sinful man as being righteous?

If you think about this, God has only three options here with sinful man. He can declare him as unrighteous and He would be perfectly just in doing so. Or He can ignore their sin and declare them righteous but that would make God unrighteous in His actions. And thirdly and what God has done is that He has paid in full the penalty for man's sin and thus, He can declare man justified, not guilty, righteous because of this and God remains righteous, just in His actions!

C. HOW ARE WE JUSTIFIED?

How does God change sinners into righteous people? It is as Paul tells us in II Corinthians 5:21, "**For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**" Or as The Living Bible puts it, "**For God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then, in exchange, he poured God's goodness into us!**" And as Paul said in Romans 5:19, "**For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**"

You see, we were all born into the sin nature of Adam, we were unrighteous. But through Christ we were made righteous, not because of how good we were but how good Christ is. Thus, our unrighteousness, our sins were placed on the cross with Christ, we were emptied of our sin and the righteousness of Christ was poured into our lives by faith! And remember that faith is the channel you might say through which we receive our salvation. And that faith must be in Christ, He must be the object of our faith! It is as Paul said in Romans 3:26 as he is speaking of what Jesus has done for us, **“to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”** Notice that there is no mention of works because works don’t justify us, Jesus does! And that is the reason that God can justify us, the price has been paid!

I hope that clears this issue up for you, that Jesus has freed us from the past penalty of sin, He has justified us! We will be looking at sanctification and then glorification because I believe it relates, obviously, to what Christ has done and is doing and will do in our lives! Let me close with this story. We are told,

During the Spanish-American War, Clara Barton was overseeing the work of the Red Cross in Cuba. One day Colonel Theodore Roosevelt came to her, wanted to buy food for his sick and wounded Rough Riders. But she refused to sell him any. Roosevelt was perplexed. His men needed the help and he was prepared to pay out of his own funds. When he asked someone why he could not buy the supplies, he was told, “Colonel, just ask for it!” A smile broke over Roosevelt’s face. Now he understood - the provisions were not for sale. All he had to do was simply ask and they would be given freely.

- Our Daily Bread, October 11, 1992

You see, all you need to do is ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life, to forgive you of your sins and you will be justified, not because of what you have done but what He has done for you. It is free; you don't have to pay anything because the price has already been paid by Jesus as He cried out, "Tetelestai" or "Paid in full."