

Justified By Faith

Sunday, SEPTEMBER 14th, 1986

Romans 5:1

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

“JUSTIFIED BY FAITH,” that’s my subject for today. I’m reading from the 5th chapter of Romans, Paul’s book to the Romans, in chapter 5:1.

Listen to the Word. If you would like, open your Bible to Romans 5. I will be referring to chapters 3, 4, 5, and chapter 8, also, in this message.

I don’t know of a more important message for you to hear or for me to preach than this one, on “Justified by Faith.” I’m going to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the hope of eternal life, as plain today from the Word of God as I can possibly make it.

It says, in Romans 5:1; *“Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* This single verse speaks of two things in which all of us ought to be interested. There are two things here in which you and I and every person who listens to me ought to be interested.

First of all: Being justified before God. Do you know what that means? That means to be holy. The only person that God can receive into His presence is a holy person. Justification means to be holy without sin and without guilt, absolutely pure and perfect in the sight of God, justified.

The other thing in which we ought to be interested in is having peace with God. I’m not talking about the kind of peace that the false prophets talk about. Isaiah said, *“They cry peace, peace, when there is no peace.”*

I’m talking about a genuine peace with God. I’m talking about being delivered from the curse and condemnation of sin and of the law. I’m talking about being justified before God, having peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, about two or three years ago I was preaching in the West Indies. I was invited to speak to the local prisoners. There were about 75 or 80 young men in prison on the Island of Saint Kits. I went down there to the prison to preach. I brought them a message on this subject, “Justified before God.”

I asked those men, “How many of you men know what it means to be pardoned?” They smiled and raised their hands. I told them that a man can be pardoned and still be guilty. He still has a record even though he is pardoned and released from prison. He is still guilty.

Then, I asked them; “How many of you men know what it is to be paroled?” They smiled; of course they did. I said, “Well; a man can be paroled and still be guilty.” I asked them how many of them knew what it was to be forgiven. They all nodded their heads in agreement. They knew what that meant.

I told them, “The very fact that you are forgiven means that you are guilty.” I asked them how many knew what it meant to be justified. Not a one raised his hand. There was no smile this time or nod of agreement. I said, “You don’t know what it means to be justified?”

To be justified is not to be pardoned or paroled or even forgiven. To be justified is to be not guilty. If a man is justified that means that he is literally without sin. That is what it means. It means that there is no charge against you on the books and no charge against you in the presence of God; you are justified.

Someone came up with this definition of justification; it is, just as if I had never sinned. My friends; it is having a perfect righteousness and a perfect holiness, not before men but before God in the sight of God. That is what it means to be justified.

That is the reason when I began the message that I said that I was speaking on a subject in which we ought to be interested. I’m talking about being justified without guilt, without blame, *“holy, unblameable, and unprovable, in the sight of God.”*

That is what it is to be justified. Is that clear? That is what justification is. I know that we are forgiven and that we are pardoned, but in Christ, the Scripture says; *“We are justified.”* That means that we are not guilty.

How is this possible when you talk about justifying a sinner? How is this possible since the Word of God says, *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God?”* Men are guilty, already guilty. We are not on probation, we are guilty.

The Scripture says, *“There is not a just man on the earth which doeth good and sinneth not.”* So, how is it possible for a man to be justified before God seeing that *“all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.”*

“The Lord God looked down from heaven to see if there was any that did understand and any did seek God and He said; they are altogether become unprofitable. There is none good, no not one.”

This is what the book of Romans is all about. If you want a key to the Book of Romans, this is it. The book of Romans declares an answer to Job’s question; *“How can man be just with God?”* Job and his friends asked that, two or three times; *“How can man be just with God?”*

“How can he be clean that is born of a woman? Behold, the moon it shineth not, the stars are not clean in God’s sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man who drinks iniquity like the water. How can he be clean that is born of a woman?” I’m talking about being “God clean.”

“How can man be just with God?” This is what the book of Romans is all about. How can man who is a sinner, be holy and righteous in God’s sight? The Scripture says, *“Who shall stand in His presence; he that hath clean hands and a pure heart who has never lifted up his soul to vanity?”* How can God be just and justify the ungodly?

This is what this book of Romans is all about; God must be Holy, and He is. He must be Just. How can He be Just and justify folks like you and me? That is what the book of Romans is all about.

In the first three chapters of this Book of Romans, Paul lays bare our sinful hearts. He deals with the Gentiles first, the pagans, the heathen, the idolaters. He just lays bare our wicked hearts in the Gentiles.

He says in Romans 1:29, *“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, and covetousness; being filled with maliciousness, being full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, back-biters, and whisperers, haters of God, proud, boasters.”* They not only delight in those things, but delight in those that do them.

That is what we are by nature. He just lays bare all of the wicked sins of our evil hearts and our evil imaginations and wicked deeds. He talks about God giving men over to reprobate minds, giving them over to do that which is *“not convenient.”*

Then, he deals with the Gentiles, Greeks and the Jews. He comes to verse 9 of Romans 3 and says, *“Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles, they are all under sin.”* They are under the curse and under the judgment. We are not on probation. The trial is over and we are guilty! We are guilty before God.

So, therefore, when Paul deals with these things in Romans 1, 2, and 3, he says finally in Romans 3, *“There is none good; there is none righteous; there is none that seek after God.”* He said, *“Our throats are an open sepulcher; the poison of snakes is under our lips. Our feet are swift to shed blood. There is no fear of God before our eyes.”*

He goes on that way and comes to this conclusion, he said; *“Therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.”* There is no possibility of him keeping the Law. You see; our sins and our guilt rules out any possibility of our being justified or made righteous before God by what we do.

What we do is wrong. What we do is evil. What we say and what we think is evil. The deeds of the Law, religious or otherwise; the deeds of the flesh cannot justify us before God. Listen to what he says in Romans 3:19 about every son of Adam. I’m not talking about the worst ones; we are talking about the best ones; *“Man at his best state is altogether vanity.”*

Romans 3:19 says, *“Now, we know, that what things so ever the Law saith, it saith to all who under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped.”* There are no alibis or no excuses, *“All the world becomes guilty before God.”*

Therefore, because of our guilt and sins, *“Therefore, by the deeds of the Law, there shall no flesh be justified.”* Paul said, “Just rule it out.” Rule out salvation by works; rule out salvation by the deeds of the Law. Rule out acceptance with God by anything a man does, says, or gives; it is impossible, knowing, *“that a man is not justified by the works of the Law.”*

That is what Paul wrote in Galatians 2 and 3; he says, *“No man is justified by the Law in the sight of God; it is evident, (it is perfectly evident), “The just shall live by faith.”*

So, what destroys salvation by works, human effort, or the deeds of the Law is our guilt. We are sinners and we are guilty before God. God charges us with being guilty of violating His Law. Consequently, because we have broken that Law, we are under the judgment of God, under the wrath of God and under the curse of the Law.

Now, then, here is the question; if God is to receive folks like you and me, if this Holy and Righteous, Perfect, Infinite God is to receive us or accept us into His fellowship, into His Kingdom and communion, then He has to find a way to make us holy.

He has to find a way to make us Just, a way to clear us and find a way that is consistent with His justice and His holiness. Isaiah said this, in Isaiah 45; *“He must be a Just God*

and a Saviour.” He just can’t be a Saviour. So, He has to be a Just God as well as a Saviour.

I come to this conclusion, God in redemption, in justifying sinners doesn’t destroy His Law. That is not the way He does it. You see; we are guilty before the Law. We have broken the Law and we are sinners before the Law of God. In order to redeem us or save us, God does not destroy the Law. Christ said, *“I didn’t come to destroy the Law; I came to fulfill it.”*

God doesn’t lower the standard of the Law. He doesn’t bring His Law down from perfection and fix it so that we can keep it. God Almighty does not make a new Law. His Law is just what it has always been; His Law is unchanging.

You see; the perfect, holy, Law of God, the infinite, majestic, immaculate, Law of God requires perfection and it requires holiness. God’s Law requires holiness that is as pure as the holiness of God. That is what His Law requires of you, me, and every son of Adam.

In order to be justified by the Law, we have to produce what the Law requires. His Law requires holiness, not only in deed, but in word, thought and imagination, inwardly and outwardly. His Law requires that *“we love God with all our hearts, minds, soul and strength and our neighbors as ourselves.”*

His Law still curses everyone that *“does not continue in all points of the Law to do them.”* James said, *“To offend in one point is to be guilty of the whole Law.”* So, the question stands out bold and clear, how are sinners saved? How does God justify men? How does God maintain the integrity of His Law, the holiness of His Law and the perfection of His Law and justice, and yet, save sinners like you and me? How does He redeem folks like us?

I have the answer; that is why the Lord Jesus Christ became a man. You know that He did and He became a man 2,000 years ago. The Scripture says, *“The Word was made flesh. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and without Him was not anything made that was made. The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.”*

In other words, the Lord of glory, Himself, came down here to earth and took on Himself flesh, bone and blood, just like you and me. He became a man, *“Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.”*

You see; this perfect, holy, matchless, Law of God was upon us. What it required it required of us. We could not meet it; we couldn't face it or cope with it. All that the Law does in our case is that it condemns us. The Law can't save us but it will condemn us. All that is required, we cannot keep, cannot match, and cannot obey.

The Law still stands there and it has to require that. God can't change His character or His Law. So, Jesus Christ came as our Representative and stood in our place before this Law. He became a man just like you and me, flesh, bone, and blood.

"He was made of a woman." The Scripture says, *"In the fullness of time, God sent His Son, (God the second person of the blessed trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). God sent His Son into this world, "made of a woman, made under the Law to redeem them that were under the Law."*

Jesus Christ was made of a woman. He became our Representative. He stood as our Federal Head. He stood in our place and stood. You see; *"By one man's disobedience, (that is Adam), we were made sinners, so by the obedience of Christ we were made righteous."*

"He was made of a woman." He came forth from her womb, just like we did. He grew in wisdom, stature and in favor with God and man. He was a small boy. He grew up in the home under the law of the home, under the civil law and under the moral law. He was under the Jewish law, the Sabbath law and under all these kind of laws.

As Christ grew up, *"He was tempted as a man, in all points of the Law just like we are."* He hungered, He thirsted and He was weary. He knew anger that people threw at Him. He knew their harsh words, misunderstandings, and all the things that your eyes see, your ears hear, your tongue speaks, your heart feels, and what your imagination copes with.

All of these trials and temptations He endured. He was a man. He walked in human flesh just like you and me. He endured all of these trials and temptations without sin, in the flesh, as a man, tempted as we are, *"yet without sin."*

"He knew no sin, He had no sin, He did no sin." He is the only man, the God-man. He is God in human flesh but no less, man. He's the only man who ever in all the history of mankind that obeyed God, and ever loved God with all His heart or loved His neighbor as Himself, or ever kept the Law without one offence. He absolutely honored, satisfied, and perfected Holiness. He was a perfect man, perfect before God and righteous before God.

This is what I am saying, as our Representative, His righteousness is imputed. Do you know what the word imputed means? It means to reckon to be mine. It means to charge to my account. It means to count it to be mine.

So, this righteousness before God's holy Law which Christ Jesus fulfilled and performed actually becomes mine by faith in Him. He is my Representative. *"In Adam we die; in Christ we are made alive."*

In Adam, we were made sinners; in Christ we are made righteous. *"As we borne the image of the earthy, we bear the image of the heavenly. The first man of the earth is earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven."* This righteousness is ours, in Christ and received by faith.

The word *"imputed"* which is counted or reckoned or charged is used eight times in the 4th chapter of Romans. It says in Romans 4:3, *"Abraham believed God."* He just didn't believe in God or on God; he believed God. *"It was imputed to him, (counted to him), for Righteousness."*

I've been talking about holiness. What is this righteousness? This righteousness is what the Law demands, it is holiness. What is this righteousness? This righteousness is what God must have. It is what the character of God must have to receive you and me.

Abraham didn't have it himself; he was a sinner, just like you are. He had the same struggles and trials, doubts, fears and temptations that you have. He failed just like you do. Christ didn't fail. Abraham looked to Christ, believed Christ and the holiness and righteousness which Christ performed and perfected was given to Abraham. It was charged to his account, just like he did it.

In Roman 4:5, it says; *"He that believeth on Christ, that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness,"* counted for righteousness. It is not in doing, but believing.

Look at Romans 4:6, *"Blessed is the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works."* Do you mean you can have righteousness without works? You can have it without your works. Christ did the work. You didn't do it; Christ did it. You couldn't do it but Christ did.

It says in Romans 4:22, *"Abraham believed God. He believed that God was able to do all that He promised. Therefore, it was imputed, (there is that word again), counted to him, for righteousness."* *He believed God.*

Look at verses 23 and 24, *“This wasn’t written for Abraham’s sake alone that righteousness was imputed to him by faith: But, it was written for us also to whom it shall be imputed if we believe on Him who died for us and who was delivered for our justification.”*

You see, the holiness that we have before God, the righteousness that a believer has before God, is not ours at all, for *“our righteousnesses are filthy rags.”* The best that I can do is not good enough. The best that I can do is shameful and filthy in God’s sight; the best that I can do is sin.

This righteousness which God has imputed to us and reckoned to us and charged to us is not ours at all. It is the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ which we receive by faith.

He did what we couldn’t do. He did keep the Law. A man kept the Law. A man was justified by works and that is Christ. A man was received before the Father by what He did. *“He was raised from the dead and was received up into glory and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High,”* because He is the perfect man.

He did that for His people. You see, Romans 8:3, says this; *“What the Law could not do.”* What couldn’t the Law do? The Law couldn’t make us righteous. The Law couldn’t make us acceptable before God because it was *“weak through the flesh.”* Whose flesh am I talking about? I’m talking about our flesh.

All right, what the Law could not do, that is to save us or redeem us, to make us acceptable, because it was weak through our flesh, *“God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, condemned sin in the flesh.”* He did it.

God’s Law says, *“Do this and live.”* Christ did and earned salvation. God’s Law says *“Walk before me perfectly.”* Christ did that also. God’s Law said, *“Love Me with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.”* Don’t even think an evil thought; Christ fulfilled it.

By His life, by His Holy, sinless, spotless, life; He satisfied the Holy Law of God for all who believe on Him. He was their Substitute. By His death on the cross, He honored and satisfied the Justice of God for all who believe.

You see; the redemptive work of Christ is two-fold in His life and in His death. In His life, you see; He fulfilled God’s holy Law. By His death, He met the requirements of justice. All that we owed, Christ paid in full by His sacrifice.

Do you know who Martin Luther was? He lived over 500 or 600 years ago. He was a great preacher of God's Gospel. He preached on "Justification by faith." He said this, "Although I am a sinner and a man is a fool to deny that; the Bible says, "*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.*"

Martin Luther said, "Although I am a sinner; I know Him, yet; I despair not, for Jesus Christ who is my Redeemer and my Righteousness, liveth. In Him I have no sin. In Him I have no sting of conscience. In Him I have no fear of judgment for in Him '*there is therefore now no condemnation.*'"

Oh, I am indeed, a sinner. As touching this present life, I confess it, admit it and regret it. But, in Christ I'm no sinner. In Christ, I have holiness and a righteousness which is above this life. That Righteousness is Christ Himself. In that and in Him, I can rejoice.

You see; this is what Paul is saying in my text that I read to you at the beginning of this broadcast. I said, "*Therefore; by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified. Therefore, we conclude, that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith.*"

"*Therefore, being justified by faith,*" although it is not the faith that justifies us, it is Christ, in whom we believe. "*Therefore, being justified by faith, then we have peace with God.*" The war is over. That is what Paul is saying in Romans 8; "*Who can condemn me; Christ died; yea, rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who also maketh intercession for us?*"

"*Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*" How can you lay charge to a man that is justified? How can you bring any condemning charges against a man who is justified, who is holy and perfect? If he is perfect, who can charge him? In Christ we are perfect.

We have peace with God and God is satisfied. God is with us and God is for us. God is pleased with Christ and therefore, He is pleased with us. I'm not saying that God is pleased with me; I am saying that He is pleased with Christ. Being pleased with Christ, He is pleased with me.

God has accepted Christ and therefore, He has "*accepted us in the Beloved.*" Now friends; that is good news! There is nothing complicated about that except the old, fallen, human will, complicates it.