

Made Right with the Holy One

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Date: 20 January 2020

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[0 : 00] In tonight's lesson on justification by faith, we're going to cover some areas already covered! and explore some new areas.

And we're actually winding down this portion of our study. In a few weeks, we're going to move on into the topic of adoption, that we are all adopted into the family of God.

We'll spend a couple of weeks there. And then we begin the vitally important topic of sanctification. Now I don't think sanctification will take as long as justification.

Sanctification is the longest of all our topics. And then after sanctification comes perseverance, and after perseverance comes glorification, and after glorification comes summer vacation.

And then a new topic in September. The question that we've been trying to answer all these weeks is this.

[1 : 13] How can a man be made just before an absolutely holy God? Put it another way, how can we be made right with the Holy One?

The question is more complex than it seems perhaps on just the surface. It is not just how can a man be made just with God.

I've got to include an adjective at this juncture, and I know it's an adjective because I looked it up in the dictionary. The question then becomes how can a sinful man be made right or just with an absolutely holy God?

When we inject that word sinful into the equation, the apple cart is upset and the tables are turned. Sin is always against God.

There is not a degree in the sense of, well God opposes this sin and this sin, but He is okay with these. Sin is always against God.

[2 : 24] The degree is not the issue. Sin is always against God. Sin is always against God. Every sin, however small, is against God. And of course, Scripture reveals just who sinners are, doesn't it?

Romans 3.23, you've got it memorized. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All. These are hard sayings, but we have to be honest at this point.

If we don't, we're sinning. The person who sins against God is against God.

He's opposing God. And God's against that person who sins. Because God doesn't allow sin in His presence. We can go all the way back to the beginning of the human race and prove that point.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit, enmity came into being between our original parents and God.

[3 : 30] I looked up in Noah Webster's first dictionary, Noah was a brother in Christ. In his original dictionary, which was published in 1828, I have a reprint. It's a great tool to have.

And his definitions were often based on biblical truth. He would define a word and he'd say, see Ephesians 3.18 or, you know, look up Romans 6.23 to further define what he was talking about. And Webster defines enmity as the quality of being an enemy. Well, when you have an enemy, you're basically at war with that person or that group.

So a war broke out. A war broke out. And when our original parents sinned by entering into a conscious act of disobedience toward God, the human race fell into sin and disobedience.

Everything that has flowed from the wellhead in the garden has been laced with sin.

[4 : 43] I mean, it's like taking a quart of nice pure water and putting some drops of strychnine in there. Who wants to drink that? Sin became the natural state of the human race.

Put another way, it is our nature to sin. We have a sin nature. And may I say God is not indifferent to or complacent toward sin because sin is a contradiction of himself.

And we know God is perfectly holy. And we know that he recoils with righteous indignation toward all sin. And with what does God recoil?

What's his ammunition? Wrath. He has wrath toward sin. Paul gave us a very clear statement on this in the great book of Romans.

Romans 1.18, the first part of that verse. For the wrath of God. There you have it. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

[5 : 58] It's revealed from heaven. And the operative word in this passage is the word all. All ungodliness. All unrighteousness.

There's not degrees. And when you reach this level, now you've adopted God's wrath. Given that this is our status with God, I again ask, how can we be made right with him?

Can we make ourselves right with God? Because everything hangs in the balance here. This is a critical question. Heaven or hell hangs in this balance.

Of course, the answer is that we cannot make ourselves right with God. Most people in the world don't know that. Most people do not know that.

The prevailing theology is you've got to figure out a way to be more good than bad. And that was my theology for years. I mean for like 29 years.

[7 : 02] You've got to scale. If I could just tip that scale with enough good to outweigh the bad, then I thought I was okay. And then I went around and pretended I had done that, although deep down I knew I hadn't.

I knew I hadn't even come close. This is a colossal problem for modern man. The church in the 20th and now 21st century has largely ignored the doctrine of justification by faith.

And that's grave danger. When the church did that a thousand years earlier, it ushered in the dark ages. It really did. It's dangerous to lose the doctrine of justification by faith.

But many churches and denominations have done just that. Now the lost world has supplanted it with a doctrine of justification by death.

If you get a copy of this lesson and it says justification by death, ignore that. It should be death. I don't know who typed that in.

[8 : 19] According to fallen men, everyone who dies goes to heaven. And you hear this all the time. Oh, he's in heaven or some other nice place.

But you hear that all the time. You die, you go to heaven. And I'll tell you, it's like running your fingernails down a blackboard.

Some of you young guys don't know what a blackboard is, but they used to be blackboards. When people will say to me, and you know this guy was a reprobate and lost as a snow goose in June. And that's mighty lost. And they'll say, he's in a better place. And he may be in unspeakable, eternal horror.

And when he's been there 10 trillion millennia, as we measure time, he will not have reduced by one second the amount of time he needs to spend there. He's just there.

[9 : 20] I have a good friend, former member of our church. I'll tell you who does later, unless you guess it. He's moved away years ago.

Married to a girl named Penny. To say the least, he was outspoken. He learned that from his dad and mom.

The wife of a friend of his died. And Charles went to the funeral. And he told me about it. Both the wife, who was now dead, and her husband, were practicing atheists.

I mean, they gathered together on whatever day of the week they gather in Tulsa at the American Atheist Society branch down there in Tulsa. And the funeral for her was conducted by an atheist professor of philosophy in a university in Tulsa.

The professor summed up his funeral by telling the audience, and especially the bereaved husband, that his wife's elements that made up her body were now being released, and she is becoming part of the stars.

[10 : 47] The cosmos. The husband came up to Charlie and said, wasn't that a beautiful thought about my wife and the stars? Well, Charlie was outspoken.

And Charlie said, your wife is not part of the stars. She is in the pit of hell crying out for you to repent and embrace Christ, or you're going to end up in the same place. And he told him that.

I don't think they've talked since, but he told him that. That's justification by death. You die, and then you automatically end up in heaven or some nice place.

Now, the modern church has replaced justification by faith with justification by works. If you do enough works, you're going to go to heaven.

If you've been good enough, you're going to go to heaven. And you can be good by, you know, you brush your teeth and comb your hair and go to church at Christmas and Easter.

[11 : 54] This is the message of Matthew chapter 7, which I read to the church during the Sunday morning message last December 29th. And I said then, I say again, it's the most frightening passage in the Bible.

Jesus speaking, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. But the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name?

Cast out demons in your name? Do many mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

Frightening passage. And the Lord, let me put this in the proper context. I didn't do that on the 29th. I wish I had. The Lord speaks here of an event that was yet future when He was on earth in the incarnation.

This had not occurred yet. You notice the use of the words there of what will happen. So this is yet future. It remains future in our day.

[13 : 07] It's still future. The event the Lord is referring to occurs at the great white throne judgment of the unsaved. At the end of the millennial reign of Christ.

You know, the church departs. There's a seven-year period called the tribulation. The Lord comes back, establishes His millennial reign for a thousand years. At the end of that, there's a final rebellion.

It's put down. Then we enter into the eternity of eternities and the unsaved appear before the great white throne. And Jesus is going to see if their name is written in the Lamb's book of life.

And they're not in there. So He said, well, let's look at the book of works. Maybe you did something that would surpass my sacrifice on Calvary. That's really what He's saying. And it doesn't.

Well, these people, in the example Jesus has given, have just spent a thousand years during the millennial reign in the abyss.

[14 : 10] And I think it's actual time. If they've got a Time X, it's still running, you know, and they're looking at their, you know, when is this going to be over? And they were there for a thousand years in the abyss awaiting final judgment.

Guys, let's be honest. We've got family members who are going to be in that place. We've got parents or children or grandchildren that are going to be in that place. That's frightening.

And the whole time, they're sitting there in that abyss and they're thinking, the Lord's made some kind of mistake. I belong to Him.

I belong to Him. I'm a Christian. I'm not supposed to be here. And they finally get out. And this is why they cry out to Him, Lord, Lord.

And they're crying because they've just, they don't understand, why did we just do that? You made an error. You made an error. And I have to admit, they did some impressive things while on earth.

[15 : 24] Now, for one, they were obviously very active in church. They prophesied, meaning preached, in the name of Christ. They cast out demons in the name of Christ.

They did other mighty works in His name. And this is their plea to Him. And that is why they are in utter shock that they just spent a thousand years chained up in the abyss awaiting final judgment. But do you see the problem? And I wish I'd mentioned this on the 29th, and I didn't. There's a major problem with all this.

And it leaps off the page to us. They thought they were saved because of the things they had done. I prophesied.

I cast out demons. I did mighty works. They're injecting personal pronouns into this. Look what I've done to get myself saved.

[16 : 31] This is the sin and curse of justification by works. And I'm going to enter into the confessional.

Mark and I talked about that a little bit. I'm going to enter into the confessional. About a year ago, I'm sitting in my study. Diane's asleep. It's like 11 o'clock in the morning. She's asleep. Don't mention that, Mr. Lee.

And so I'm thinking, well, what if I stood before the Lord today? And he said something like, why should I let you into my heaven?

And I started thinking about that and said, well, you know, I've been a teacher in church for years. And I've been overseas. And then all of a sudden, I was reduced to tears.

I got on my knees in repentance. My answer is, you shouldn't. If you're going to let me into your heaven, it's by your grace, your mercy, your sacrifice at Calvary.

[17:38] It's the gospel. That's the only thing I can even recommend myself. I believe. Help my unbelief. I mean, that's the only answer.

This was the curse of the church at Rome in Luther's day. Rome taught you were saved by faith. They injected faith in all this.

Plus, there were various works within their system that you had to accomplish. Luther came along and said, not so. Not so.

You are saved by faith alone plus nothing. But we must also remember, and Luther would affirm this as well, that though we are saved by faith alone, it is not a faith that is alone.

That's a crucial crossroads. Crucial. Good works always accompany genuine salvation.

[18:47] Always. We're not saved because we do good works. We do good works because we're saved. We do good works because we're saved. People say, well, I don't know any good works I can be doing.

Well, go to Galatians chapter 5 and read, you know, love, joy, peace, patience. Start there. And there's a lot of other places we can go. I bet there's many.

Don't raise your hand, but I imagine there's guys in here that have been believers for years and you don't know what your spiritual gift is. You can actually take a test online. I took it the other day.

I've taken it before I took it. I was shocked. He said, your spiritual gift is teaching. It was unbelievable. That's what it said. Good works always accompany genuine salvation.

MacArthur puts it this way. You know, we're going to get rewards. And he said, but all of us have a lot of plastic rewards that aren't any good.

[19:51] They're going to burn up with wood, hay, and stubble. He said, but MacArthur says this. I believe every true believer has a reward for good works.

He said, you may have to get a microscope to find it. But he said, I believe every genuine believer engages in that. Why don't we, I mean, let me back up.

We don't do good works to get saved. We do good works because we are saved. And Paul gave the summary message on this great truth in Ephesians. And you have it memorized.

Ephesians 2, 8, 9, and 10. And we like to read 8 and 9, but then we leave 10 out. Don't ever leave 10 out when you read 8 and 9. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not of your own doing.

It is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

[21:05] God's already got them in mind, and He'll reveal them to you. If He hasn't revealed them to you and you're a genuine believer, ask Him. He'll reveal them to you. So how are we living out our lives in the 21st century going to come to grips with the realism of the wrath of God in light of the reality and gravity of our own guilt before our holy God and His divine condemnation of sinners?

Because God is in the business of condemning sinners. We can only be rehabilitated by a correct understanding of God's grace in the justification of the ungodly.

And that's what He does. We begin this evening with three questions. Let me adjust it one last time.

It is not how can a man be made just with God. It is how can a sinful man become just with God.

Not made just, but becomes just with God. There we have the question in its purest and most complete form.

When we were lost, we became aware in some crude way that we were lost. That was the Holy Spirit whispering to us that there needed to be a complete reversal in our relationship to the Almighty.

[22:37] How is that a reversal achieved? It is achieved by justification. And justification is solely an act of God without our input.

We don't maneuver God or manipulate God into position, well, I've got to justify Him. I wasn't going to, but I'm going to have to. That's not justification. Paul puts it in beautifully simple language in

Romans 8.33.

It is God who justifies. It doesn't get any simpler than that. It is God who justifies. It's eternity hangs on those five words.

It is God who justifies. In Romans 4.5 we read that it is God who justifies the ungodly. Wow, God is in the business of justifying the ungodly.

And you know my brothers that are Islam, they totally reject that. They totally. One of my dearest friends, and you can tell he's Islamic by his name, Abdul Hakim Janna, good friend of mine.

[23 : 51] We've been all over the world together. All over the world together. Been in his home. Had dinner with his family. Talked to him about the Lord. He justifies the ungodly.

Islam says no way. They can't even call God Father. The Jews, remember the Jews in Jesus' days, wanted to kill Him because He referred to God as His Father. It was too intimate.

When God justifies the ungodly, do you realize what that means? Even a person like me can have hope because He justifies the ungodly.

The Lord Jesus said this in Mark's Gospel, chapter 2, verse 17. Jesus speaking, I came not to call the righteous, as if there were any, but sinners.

He said, I came to call sinners. You don't send the physician to a healthy person. You send the physician to the sick person. He was and is the great physician.

[24 : 56] To go deep in our understanding of what justification is, we must first learn what justification is not. And this really gets somewhat technical. Many an individual, a theologian, a church, and entire denominations got it wrong when they came to the doctrine of justification.

The Roman system got it wrong, hence Luther's ultimate separation from them. The truth is that this great doctrine has suffered greatly at the hands of fallen men.

The doctrine of justification became so perverted because men who taught it had no understanding of it. They didn't have a clue what it was.

So what does the term mean? And again, we'll define it by what it doesn't mean. Justification does not mean to make righteous or good or holy or upright.

And we have to be careful on this point because it is true that when God redeems a soul, He initiates the process of making that person all of these things and more.

[26 : 12] This begins at redemption, but it is carried on through the process of sanctification, which is what we're going to be studying here in a month or so.

Now, someone may be thinking, boy, I'd like to be sanctified. That's what this class is all about. This is part of the sanctification process. That was my intention anyway. We've been in a sanctification process since September 2018 when we started teaching this whole block.

And the process has carried on in here on Sunday mornings, on Wednesday night. Pastor Willard doing Malachi. Great study. You need to be here unless you're somewhere else rolling around the building with kids or whatever.

We're to be sanctified. And sanctification comes from the pulpit. Sanctification happens in the songs we sing that are so rich in doctrinal truth.

I can't sing a note, but you know what I can do? I've got song books at home. Some of them are very old. I read them. I read the old hymns. There's great doctrinal truth.

[27 : 29] You go read A Mighty Fortress by Luther. He wrote that hymn. You talk about a doctrinally pure hymn. A Mighty Fortress is our God.

It's amazing. Through sanctification, God is renewing us in His own image. He will perfect that process in glorification.

That means in heaven. And that will be the last topic we study in this series this spring. We'll be finishing up about the second week of May if my timeline stays consistent.

But justification does not refer to the process by which we are renewed and sanctified. That was the era of Rome which did hold to that and Luther saw the mistake.

And he criticized them for it and they threatened to burn him at the stake. They were pretty serious about their beliefs. Let me use an earthly example to teach a heavenly truth.

[28 : 36] That comes from Dr. McBride. A man goes on trial for murder. I've been in many murder trials. And after weeks of testimony the jury finds him not guilty.

95% of my trials ended in guilty but I had some that ended up in not guilty. I sat through a 22 week trial in Texas. I was a criminal investigator and worked on the case.

And there were many of us on that case. The man had committed multiple murders. He had confessed to them but the confession was not admitted and the jury found him not guilty. The judge was then required by law to publicly declare that the man was not guilty. But make a note please. The man is not declared to be innocent.

It's a big difference. Neither does the judge judge's declaration which is a matter of law make that person upright or holy or good.

[29 : 47] It doesn't do that at all. In fact in many such cases many such cases the man goes out and begins to commit crimes almost immediately.

Recidivism is a real high. These guys are repeat offenders. They go back. But as it pertains to the crime for which he was acquitted the judge declares him to be not guilty.

And you know you only have one shot at that. The DA can't say I'm going to file it again. No, no, no, no. That's *res judicata*. You can't do that. Double jeopardy. This is a clue as to what justification is for us.

The judge of the universe makes a declaration a legal declaration or a pronouncement with respect to that person's relationship to the law of God.

Now remember the law of God never saved. No one ever got saved by keeping the law. Any of the law all of the law the Ten Commandments but all the law the civil law the dietary laws the military laws no one ever got saved by keeping the law.

[31 : 12] First of all no one ever kept it. But the law doesn't save. It wasn't meant to save. The law condemns. That's the purpose of the law.

It condemns. And the point of all this is that justification is a declaration whereby the God that God as judge declares a person to be righteous.

Wow. The word of God in both Old and New Testament supports this interpretation. Deuteronomy 25.1 If there be a controversy between men and they come into judgment that the judges may judge them then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

Those are earthly judges in Deuteronomy. It was not the Old Testament judge's function to make men righteous. They had no power to do that. It was his function to declare a man righteous when they had actually behaved righteously or to declare a man condemned when he had behaved unrighteously.

There's a passage in Proverbs 17.15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.

[32 : 42] God has no tolerance for a judge who declares the wicked righteous and he has no tolerance for a judge that declares the righteous to be wicked.

right. He just doesn't. It would be most commendable if we were able to turn a wicked man from his wickedness and make him just and upright but that's only a miracle that is best left to God.

Only he can do that. It is what God does when he regenerates a man. It is to declare him to be righteous even when he's not particularly on the human level.

This has to do with the fact that he's now a new creation hidden inside the righteousness of Christ and that's the key. When we are regenerated we're in Christ and he is righteous.

When God looks us up he sees the righteousness of Christ. He sees us in Christ. Dr. Luke in his gospel made a very interesting observation.

[33 : 58] And all the people when they heard and the publicans justified God. That's Luke 7:29. Did the people and the publicans make God righteous?

Perish the thought. That thought would be blasphemous. It means they declared God to be righteous and there's nothing wrong with that because he is righteous.

In my private prayer time I come to the portion where I offer praises to the king and I will say you are holy just righteous pure perfect you deserve all blessings all honor all glory.

I did not make the Lord any of those things I just declared him to be so because those truths are already abundantly established in scripture. I'm just praying the scriptures and that's what we should all be doing praying the scriptures.

Let me again quote from Romans chapter 8 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? People try all the time.

[35 : 03] Who shall successfully bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies who is to condemn. Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God and who indeed is interceding for us.

We've got a nice system we're under. We've got the king of the universe interceding for us 24 hours a day. When you're asleep, he's interceding for you. When you're awake, he's interceding for you. What is in view here are the demons or unbelievers being used by Satan and demons to attack the true people of God. And this has gone on for generations to such an extent even millions have been martyred for their faith.

Gave Ted a book tonight on the book of martyrs. Here we see an adversary making accusations against one of God's saved vehicles.

Saved vessels rather. How do we know they're saved? Because they're the elect of God. They're his elect. Only the elect of God are saved and justified by God.

[36 : 18] And again the passage says it is God who justifies. Please understand why we see so many such references in the epistle to the Romans.

We really hang out in Romans. Why do we do that? Romans is God's masterpiece and its grand theme is the justification of sinners.

That's the theme of Romans. God the Holy Spirit wrote this book. He used the human abilities of the apostle Paul. Paul understood justification well because he was the chief of sinners and declared himself to be so in the book of Romans.

He was a persecutor of the church. He was a killer of Christians. participated in the death of Stephen who's listed as the first martyr of the church.

If Paul can be justified any of us can be justified. Paul would say that if he could come into the classroom tonight. Paul understood that in exercise his justification God was declaring that person to be just and righteous.

[37 : 39] A legal declaration. Justification did not make them righteous or holy or upright or good. Again that's the sanctification process and it never ends in this life.

Never. John Wesley taught perfection. Perfectionism. And it's a horrible doctrine not found in scripture.

I mean read the first chapter of 1 John and you'll see there's no perfection. If you ever say you're without sin you lie. I mean that's pretty graphic right there. But Wesley thought you could be perfect in this life.

And he taught that. I ran into a guy at the YMCA one time. I was an FBI agent and I actually worked out in those days. And he believed in perfectionism and he said he'd achieved it.

And so I took issue with him. By the time I was three he was cursing my name. He lost his salvation I think before we finished up. This process is only completed in heaven when we see Jesus and we will be like him because we will see him as he is.

[38 : 55] Now in fairness I have to say supposedly Wesley on his deathbed said I never achieved it. I never achieved perfection. So as I depart this life don't believe that you're going to achieve it.

That's alleged to have been a comment by John Wesley. But this leaves us with a major problem and a major question.

How can God do this? How can God declare an unrighteous person to be righteous? How can God do that? and at the same time remain holy and pure and righteous himself?

Is God not on dangerous ground here? Well those are good questions and there's a lot more. And we're going to address those next time.