

# Justified

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Date: 12 March 2017

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So we're told in Romans chapter 8 and verse 34 things that God does. It's good for us to listen to hear what other people are doing but it's very important in the Christian life to hear what God does.

And to know what God does because when you read the papers they come and go and when you've read today's papers and tomorrow's papers and the next day so much of what we hear isn't really important at all.

But it's absolutely vital to know what God is doing. And the Bible tells us in Romans 8 verse 30 that God is predestinating and he is calling and he is justifying and he is glorifying people.

And it's absolutely wonderful. It's the famous golden chain of Romans 8. If you imagine what parents went through this morning in waking their children and in calling them to the breakfast table. Perhaps washing and dressing them. And then getting them in the car and turning up to church to the destination with a big smile as if the morning has been really lovely when it hasn't.

[ 1 : 1 3 ] It's what you call the church car park miracle. And when you turn up at the car park having fought all the way and suddenly you get out of the car and you smile.

How are you to everyone and you're saintly and sweet. And you have walked into church. Waking, calling, washing, dressing, driving.

It's a little bit like the picture that you have in Romans chapter 8. God wakes people from spiritual death. He calls them to Jesus. Then he justifies them, washes and dresses them.

And eventually he will deliver them to their destination of glory. And what we've done in the last couple of weeks is in the last few weeks we've seen what is God's work in the past.

The predestining work of God. His initiative. He wakes people up and he gives them new life. And then we looked at last week his calling.

[ 2 : 1 2 ] That he arrests our attention. That he is the one that turns our hearts around. That he is the one that makes us begin to follow the Lord Jesus. Which we wouldn't normally do. And then he transforms us.

And still hand in hand with all that we've seen in those two weeks. We are responsible. We have to make a response. To God. We do not lose our sense of responsibility. Just because God is a predestining and calling God.

I read one of the most helpful, simple illustrations of this from a Puritan this week. That the Christian message presents itself to people in the world like an archway. When you came in tonight you walked through that archway didn't you?

The big black arch. And on the top of the archway it says come in. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Enter. Join the family.

Join the kingdom. Whoever may come in. Everybody. And so you walk through the archway. And you find yourself walking through and you look back.

[ 3 : 1 6 ] And on the top of the arch as you look backwards it says. Chosen from before the foundation of the world. And you begin to realise that behind your decision was God's decision.

That behind your choice is God's choice. Now it may be that some of you begin to continue to think. Well it either must be God does that or I do that.

It's got to be either he does it or I do it. And if you think it's just the programming of God. That it's just some kind of ruthless ugly programming.

That will depress you. But if on the other hand you think it's all up to me. It's all my choice. My free will. Then it all hangs precariously and dangerously on you.

And the wonderful thing about the Bible is it refuses to go down either line. It's not either or. It says both. And so God chooses.

[ 4 : 17 ] So there is no boasting. And you are responsible. So no blaming. When you get to heaven there will be no boasting.

Because it is God. God is the one who saves. And there will be no blaming. Because you are responsible. And the Bible presents these two absolutely brilliantly. And he eliminates those two terrible problems of boasting and blaming. Now these doctrines are not just for theological nerds. And geeks.

These doctrines are not just for theological professors. These doctrines come in the middle of a normal letter to normal people. Who are going through the normal struggles and the sufferings. And they need to know that God is the one who is predestined. And God is the one who is called. And God is the one who justifies. And God is the one who glorifies.

[ 5 : 15 ] But the God who loves you is working in all the details of life. So our word today is justified. Let's read Romans chapter 18 verse 30. And those who be predestined he also called.

And those who be called he also justified. And those who be justified he also glorified. Three questions. What is justification? Why is it here in Romans 8? And how does it impact us? Number one. What is justification? And I think we need to teach this. And remind ourselves again and again of this.

Because it is nearly impossible to naturally grasp it. Martin Luther says. I treat the subject of justification again and again. Because I greatly fear.

That after we have laid our head to rest asleep. It will soon be forgotten. We cannot grasp and exhaust it with one sermon.

[ 6 : 14 ] To appreciate this is an everlasting lesson. Which we shall not finish in this life or your delight. He goes on to say. The subject cannot be beaten into our ears enough or too much. For though we learn it and understand it.

Yet there is none that take hold of it perfectly. Or believe with all their heart. So what is justification? Justification is a legal word.

Which is the opposite to condemnation. If a judge in a court is going to announce condemnation. Well you need to ask yourself.

What is the opposite word? And you might say the opposite word is acquittal. But justification is bigger and better. Than acquittal as I hope you'll see.

Justification is what the judge declares or announces. To a person who puts their faith in Jesus. They may be two years old. Or they may be 102 years old.

[ 7 : 12 ] But when they put their faith in Jesus. God declares in his word. That they are justified. What that means is that now. They are free of the guilt of sin.

And that now. They are entitled to the blessings of Christ. They are free from the guilt of sin. And they are entitled to the blessings of Christ.

So he predestines. And he calls. And then you respond in faith to Jesus. And when you respond in faith to Jesus.

He justifies you. It's more than forgiveness. Some people say that justification is just as if I never sinned.

But that is completely inadequate. Forgiveness is a clearing of the slate. But justification brings two benefits.

[ 8 : 10 ] One. The removal of sin's consequences. You are no longer guilty. Removal of sin's consequences. But also the arrival of Christ's consequences.

So. Your unfaithfulness. If you believe in Jesus. Your unfaithfulness belongs to Christ. And his faithfulness belongs to you. And it's a declaration you see. It's something that God does. So at a wedding.

I take a wedding. I hear the man say I will or I do. And I hear the woman say I will. And then I make a declaration. I now pronounce you husband and wife.

You're married. It's not a question of feelings. It's a question of fact. Justification. And just as Jesus bore our sins on the cross.

[ 9 : 10 ] And God looked at the cross. And his son on the cross. And he saw there a legal payment for sin. An effective full payment for sin. And then you take his gift by faith.

You call on him to be saved. And God sees a legal benefit. To you taking place. Justification. It doesn't mean that your character is suddenly perfected.

But it does mean that your status is perfect. Because it's a declaration. Not a transformation. When a judge. In a courtroom.

Announces that someone is condemned. He's not making them guilty. They are guilty. And so he announces that they are condemned. And when God.

When a judge. Announces that a person is justified. He's not suddenly making us perfect. He is announcing that we are to be treated as perfect. It's interesting.

[10:10] In Luke's gospel. When the people were watching Jesus do miracles. And they were listening to him. They responded. And they responded to him in a remarkable way. It says in Luke 7 verse 29. Do you know what they did?

They justified God. They declared God to be perfect. They declared God to be righteous. No. They didn't make God suddenly perfect.

They didn't make God righteous. No. No. No. They declared him to be right. They declared him to be righteous. They declared him to be just. Now the technical word for this declaring.

Or this crediting. Is the word impute. The word imputation. God imputes.

To you. This righteousness. So imagine. You're in the courtroom. You've been found horrendously guilty. But somebody agrees.

[11:06] To swap places with you. And to take your punishment. Your penalty. And so justice is done. And the judge turns to you. And he imputes to you.

Freedom. And pardon. And you walk out of the courtroom. Or imagine. You're in debt financially. And somebody agrees. That they will swap. Bank accounts with you.

That they will take your. In the red. And you will take their. In the black. And payment is done. And the bank.

Imputes to you. Their riches. Or imagine. You're standing outside. A prestigious hotel. A dress code is. Extremely high standard. And you are in. Filthy smelly rags.

And so there's. Absolutely no way. That you can be welcomed in. And included. But someone agrees. To swap clothes. With you. So the respectability.

[12:05] Of their clothes. You swap. And you. You wear their clothes. And suddenly. The manager. Or the doorman. Look. And he imputes to you. That you are suddenly clean.

And you are fit to enter. Imputation. Is the key to justification. And it's the key to the gospel. And it's the key to assurance.

To being sure. Because it means. That you are legally. Assured. By the promise of God. Having a real.

Status. Of righteousness. And if you don't grasp. Imputed righteousness. To all who believe. The problem for you.

Is that you will keep thinking. Is that. That Christianity. Is a joint effort. You'll probably think. That salvation. Is a joint effort. And you'll never get. The gospel. And you'll never get. Assurance.

[13:01] And you'll never get. Joy. And you'll never get. Clear. The Roman Catholic Church. Does not like. Imputation. It really.

Can't accept. Imputation. They don't like. The idea. Of it. Declared. Righteousness. For them. It's a joint. Effort. Process.

And so. God. Must. Make us. Righteous. Involves. It involves. Being baptized. And doing penance. And good works. And so.

They don't like. The word. Imputed. They like. The word. Imparted. The word. Imputed. Is placed. On you. Like a cloak.

So you're covered. In the cloak. Of Christ's righteousness. A real cloak. Imparted. Means. It's like. Fuel. Put into your tank. And filled.

[13:58] Into you. And it's pumped. Into you. Through the church's. Sacraments. And they call. Imputed. Righteousness. A legal fiction. They say. It's ridiculous. That God.

Would look. At a person. Who is plainly. Not righteous. And declare. That he. Is righteous. That's a fiction. A legal fiction. But it isn't.

A legal fiction. Because God. Looked. At the cross. And God. Saw. A very. Real. A payment. And he now. Looks at the believer.

And he sees. A very. Real. Recipient. And so. What Jesus. Achieved. Has actually. Been received. And what he. Paid for you.

You've grasped. And therefore. God. Is able. To give. A legal. Non-fiction. Imputation. Of righteousness. If that's enough. Long words.

[ 14 : 55 ] For you. Now. Martin Luther. 500 years ago. It's the 500th anniversary. Of the reformation. He agonized. Over this question. He said.

God is righteous. God is in the right. I am unrighteous. I'm not in the right. How can we connect? How can we relate? How can I stand before God?

How can I live before him? How can I face him? How can I face him? And then in the pages. Of the Bible. He realized. This amazing truth. That God's righteousness. Is not just God's standard.

It's also his gift. God gives. His righteousness. As a gift. So righteousness. Which had been for Luther.

The most terrifying thing. In the world. That God is holy. And righteous. It means. I'll never be able to face him. Suddenly becomes the sweetest phrase. Because he realized.

[ 15 : 53 ] That if God gives. Righteousness. Through Christ. To those who believe. That if you get it. By putting faith. In Christ. And you do. How can you be more secure? Understanding the righteousness.

Of Christ. He does give it. You have asked for it. He has given it.

You are covered by it. How could you be more secure? If you are a Christian tonight.

If you are somebody. Who has put their faith. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me ask you. How could you be more secure? It's not. There's that great line.

In the hymn. Isn't there? Where it talks about. The glorified saints. In heaven. They are more happy. Tonight. But they're not more secure. The saints in heaven.

[ 16 : 55 ] They're far more happy. Believe it. Believe me. But they're not more secure. You see. This is where Luther began to rejoice. He also realized.

That faith was not an achievement. So you look at others in the church. Going through the middle. And you think. Well I wish I had their faith. But faith is not an achievement. Faith is not climbing a high mountain.

To get a prize. What is faith? Faith. Is a sense. Of helplessness. Faith is. Being on your sick bed. And being offered medical help. Faith is. Being. In the poor house. And being offered financial help. And saying.

Yes please. That is what faith is. Faith is a sense. Of helplessness. Now the Catholic view is that.

[ 17 : 50 ] This righteousness. If you are going to get it. Is going to come by steps. You'll get it gradually. It's going to be what you do. And it's going to be a very slow process.

And you'll never. Ever be able to say. You've got it. Go to a Catholic funeral. There's no assurance there. You'll never be able to say.

You've got it. You always have to say. I'm going for it. But the biblical view. Is that righteousness. Comes as a gift.

That it's because. What Christ did on the cross. It comes. Immediately to you. When you call. When you put your faith. In Jesus. And it is. As sure.

And certain. And as fixed. As God himself. I don't want you to think. And I don't want you to.

[ 18 : 46 ] Easily fall into this trap. I don't want you to doubt. That the Catholic church. Believes in grace. It does believe in grace. And I don't need a doubt. That it believes in faith.

It does believe in faith. And I don't need a doubt. That the Catholic church. Believes in Christ. They absolutely do. We must not slander them.

The Catholic church. Believes in grace. Believes in faith. Believes in Christ. They see them. As necessary. But here's the crunch.

They don't see them. As sufficient. And that is why. The word alone. Is the key word. Of the reformation.

And that is why. 500 years later. We celebrate the reformation. Because the reformers said. It is by grace alone. And it is by faith alone. And it is in Christ alone.

[ 19 : 46 ] That saves you. R.C. Sproul says. That the eye of the reformation. Tornado. Was in this one little word. Alone. Alone. And you see.

If God saves by grace alone. That's it. And if he saves you. By faith alone. You. Your sense of helplessness.

That asks. Then that is it. And if he saves. By Christ alone. If you receive Christ alone. You've got everything. You've received everything. That God has to give you. And there's nothing to add.

And if you don't have the word. Alone. Then you. Keep on looking. For that extra thing. That extra job. That extra commitment.

That extra sacrifice. That extra sacrament. And you go on. And you go on. And you go on. And you go on. Waiting.

[ 20 : 43 ] Waiting. Waiting. And there's no good news. But once you've got. Grace alone. Faith alone. Christ alone. You've got the gospel.

Now why does justification. Come in chapter 8. Verse 30. That's my second point. Romans chapter 8. Verse 30. Why does justification. Come here. And I've been scratching my head. Trying to think about it. Why does the apostle Paul.

Want to tell us. That in the present. The one thing. You need to have. Is justification. Why did we say.

That the one thing. You need in this world. Is to be adopted. It's a lovely word. It's a biblical word. It's a warmer word. Than justification. It's to be adopted.

In the family. Why did we say. The word reconciled. That's a lovely word. Or to be redeemed. They are biblical words. Aren't they. But why do you think.

[ 21 : 42 ] The word justify. Justification. It's got that legal. It's cool. It's clinical. It's got a sharp sense. To it. That word. Why does he want you. To know. That the most important thing.

In the world. Is that we be justified. So remember. Predestination. Is past. Calling. Is in the past. Glorification. Is in the future.

And so there's only one thing. He tells you about the present. That God wants you to know. The one thing. That you need. Is you need to be justified. And it's because. That I think.

That Paul is writing. A long letter. Called Romans. Which is very much. To do with the courtroom. Of God. That God. Is the judge. And we are guilty. And that doesn't change.

Whatever culture you come from. That Christ. Saves the guilty. And so he's building up. A courtroom picture. And the picture of the courtroom.

[ 22 : 37 ] Is. Is not just. Accentive to Paul in Romans. Actually Jesus uses it. All the time. Doesn't he. Jesus speaks again and again. Of the judge. And of judgment. And of being prepared.

And so this fits right in. With the New Testament. And Paul is just sort of. Filling it out. That if you want to live in this world. And if you want to walk in this world. And if you want to enjoy this world. The one thing you need to do. Is to be right with God.

Everything else can go. But the one thing you need to do. Is to be right with God. To be justified. And that's difficult to say. Because we live in a world.

Which is very secular. Particularly this city. And this city could not care. Two hoots. Whether God is a judge. Or that there's judgment. Or that you be justified. It's not the slightest bit interested.

But when you go back. To the world of the New Testament. The world of the New Testament. Tells us that we live. In the framework. Of the God. Who is just. And merciful. And it doesn't matter.

[ 23 : 37 ] Whether you change your mind. It doesn't matter. Whether you walk away. From Christianity. It doesn't matter. Whether the church. Walks away from Christianity. The Bible says. That God is just. And merciful. And if you. If you are going to meet him.

One day. You need his mercy. And if you are going to cope. With God's justice. You need to be justified. It's a fact. And we've got to ourselves.

To go back. To the biblical framework. That God has given us. You cannot. Take justice. Out of the Bible. And justification. Out of the Bible. And think that it's just. One piece.

Out of the jigsaw. But basically. You've got the whole picture. Now it's more like. A windscreen. When you take this.

Justice. And justification. Out of the Bible. You've smashed. The windscreen. And there's nothing left. It is the biblical framework. And therefore. It is making God. Tell us.

[ 24 : 30 ] That the one thing. A person really needs. Is to be right with God. And so I sat in two meetings. One of us. Our own press. Actually. Where somebody said.

Actually. If the Reformation today. If Martin Luther was around today. The big issue. Wouldn't be justification. I can see why you'd say that. But that is incredibly foolish.

To think that. Because justification. Is at the heart. Of the gospel. And justification. Is at the heart. Of how you and I.

Live the Christian life. So let's see that. Thirdly. How does justification. Impact us. First of all. It means that. When you put your faith.

In Jesus Christ. You have acceptance. With God. And I refuse. To believe. That this is irrelevant. And it seems to me.

[ 25 : 26 ] That if I understand. My own heart. And my own system. A huge amount. Of my heart. And system. Is looking for acceptance. Social media. In so many ways. Isn't it.

Is a movement. Looking for acceptance. And my guess. Is that most people. Sure. Are looking for acceptance. Deep down. And we just. Want to be accepted.

We want to be accepted. By our family. Of course. We want to be accepted. By our friends. We want to be accepted. By our peers. And the church. And the world. And the Bible. Says. Well the Bible says.

That the most important acceptance. The one that really matters. Is that you be accepted. By the God who made you. And as soon as you put your faith. In Jesus Christ. You are immediately accepted.

By God. It's the most important acceptance. In all the universe. It's the only one that really counts. It's the one that gives you security. Isn't it? To face almost everything else.

[ 26 : 25 ] To be accepted by God. Secondly. Justification means. That you've got the final verdict. Today. We are not in A-levels. Or GCSE territory. Where you wait.

Don't you. With bated breath. To go to the school. To get the envelope. To open it up. Oh. We. We. We don't have to wait. God is so kind.

That he tells us the verdict. Of the last day today. So do you know. What God will say to you. When you meet him. You're a person.

Who's put your faith. In Jesus. Do you know what God will say to you. God will say to you. You're accepted. Welcome. Come on in.

Welcome home. Is this pie in the sky thinking. Is it just optimism. No. This is what justification means. It means that you are right. With God.

[ 27 : 31 ] And you will always be. Right. With God. And so it should be. No surprise to you. One day. When you stand. Face to face. With God. And him saying.

Welcome. Come on in. Because that's what he says. In the gospel. You're welcome. That's what he says. In the gospel. Right.

With God. Today. Right. With God. Forever. And that is not a proud thing. Let no one tell you. That is a proud thing.

To talk like that. It seems to me. That it is a very proud thing. To doubt. That God means what he says. Isn't it? The third thing it means.

Is that God is for us. And not against us. It says in Romans 8.31. He is for us. And not against us. Sometimes we have days.

[ 28 : 25 ] Don't we? When things go really. Really well. And we think. God is really for me. And then when we're thinking.

Really stupidly. We have a feeling. That it's got to do with. That I have my quiet time. For three days in a row. And that is why God is for me.

But no. No. No. God is for us. Because Christ died for us. And you've put your faith in him. And if he is for you.

And you suffer. You can be absolutely sure. Absolutely sure. That God. Is not suddenly attacking you. That he's not suddenly curting you. That he's not suddenly decided. He's going to turn against you.

Because the fact of the matter is. That he has pronounced. That he is for you. And so whatever takes place. In terms of suffering. Or difficulty. Has to do with him.

[ 29 : 28 ] Wielding. Those. particular elements and aspects of your life. For your own good. He's not attacking you. He is for you. And the last thing is that you need to preach this to yourself.

Again and again. And again. And again. And again. John Piper. And to one another. John Piper very helpfully writes. That if you've grown up in an environment. Which has been very condemning. And especially if you've grown up in an environment. Where you never received. And now can hardly give any encouragement. It's even more important. Martin Luther.

So wonderfully says. The gospel is a stranger to my nature. The law is a familiar dweller in my nature. Luther says.

I teach the gospel to others very ably. And then in my hour of need. The law rises up. And clouds the gospel. Instead of asking what Christ has done. And what Christ deserves.

[ 30 : 28 ] Says Luther. I foolishly ask. What have I done? And what have I not done? And what have I offended God in? He says. I envy the young people.

Who are growing up in the reformation. Because you are not as infected with error as I am. I have. He said. As much to do. To hold out this gospel.

And remove the terrors in my heart. And plant the truth in my heart. I am learning to apply the word me. To me. That God predestined me.

That God called me. That God justified me. That God glorified me. And that is the fact.

That if you put your trust. And your faith in Jesus Christ. All these facts are true. And so therefore. How do we live the Christian life?

[ 31 : 22 ] If we meet the Christian life. By meeting our feelings. With the facts. By preaching the gospel to ourselves.

Human life. Human love. Is very very shaky. When a wife says to her husband. Why do you love me. The husband says.

Because you are so pretty. And because you are so clever. And because you are so hard working. That is very dangerous ground. Because there will come a day.

When she will not be pretty. Or so clever. Or so hard working. And where does the love go. God tells us.

In the Old Testament. And the New Testament. He loves us. Because he. Loves us. It's his decision. And it's got nothing to do. With our prettiness. Or our cleverness.

[ 32 : 22 ] Or our hard work. He loves us. Because he loves us. And when Jesus came into the world. He was faced with the cross. And he had the decision. Will I stay with the Father.

Where I have been. For all eternity. And give up on these people. Who are sinners. Or will I go. With and after the sinners. And lose that fellowship. With the Father.

And he made his decision. I will go with the sinners. And stuck with the sinners. And he lost fellowship. With the Father on the cross. And that is the same God. Who loves.

Like that. And who continues. To love like that. And will finish. Lovingly. What he's begun to do. Let's pray.