

TIME OF REFLECTION

“It should be a contest among Christians to neither give offense nor take offense. The best men are harder on themselves than they are to others.”

~Richard Sibbes (1577-1635), Puritan theologian in *The Bruised Reed* (text modernized)

Question 33: What is justification? Answer: Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed [credited] to us, and received by faith alone.

~Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647)

“We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works...”

~The 39 Articles (1571), originally drafted by Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)

“This is perfect and pure boasting in God, when one is not proud on account of his own righteousness but knows that he is indeed unworthy of the true righteousness and is justified solely by faith in Christ.”

~Basil of Caesarea (330-379), bishop in Cappadocia in *Homilies on Humility*

“[Paul] shows clearly that righteousness depends not on the merit of man, but on the grace of God, who accepts the faith of those who believe, without the works or the Law.”

~Jerome (c.342-420), church leader and theologian

“[God] has justified our race not by right actions, not by toils, not by barter and exchange, but by grace alone.... But the justice of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ and not through any labor and suffering.”

~John Chrysostom (c.347-407), prolific author and preacher

“My name is Patrick. I am a sinner, a simple country person, and the least of all believers. ...I was taken prisoner. I was about sixteen at the time. At that time, I did not know the true God. I was taken into captivity to Ireland, along with thousands of others. We deserved this, because we had gone away from God, and did not keep his commandments. We would not listen to our elders [i.e., presbyters], who advised us about how we could be saved. The Lord brought his strong anger upon us, and scattered us among many nations even to the ends of the earth. It was among foreigners that it was seen how little I was. It was there that the Lord opened up my awareness of my lack of faith. Even though it came about late, I recognized my failings. So I turned with all my heart to the Lord my God, and he looked down on my lowliness and had mercy on my youthful ignorance.”

~Saint Patrick, 5th century Roman-British missionary to Ireland in his “Confession”

SERMON – “The Heart of the Righteous Gospel” – *Pastor Don Willeman*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Romans 3:21-31 (ESV)*

Romans 3 (ESV)

⁹What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹no one understands; no one seeks for God. ¹²All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” ¹³“Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” ¹⁴“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” ¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷and the way of peace they have not known.” ¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the

uncircumcised through faith. ³¹Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

Romans 1 (ESV)

¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith.”

Exodus 34 (ESV)

⁶The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”

Romans 3:21, 25-26 (First Nations Version: An Indigenous Bible Translation of the New Testament)

²¹But there is a way to be in good standing with the Great Spirit that does not depend on us keeping tribal law!... ²⁵The Great Spirit sent Creator Sets Free (Jesus) to show through him the full meaning and purpose of the ancient mercy-seat ceremony, where our broken ways are washed clean when we trust in what the shedding of his lifeblood has accomplished. The Great Spirit did this to prove that he was in the right when he released people from their bad hearts and broken ways in the ages past. ²⁶He also did this to show people in this present age that he has the right to put people in good standing with himself because they trust in what Creator Sets Free (Jesus) has done.

