Sermon Highlights

Justified Freely: The Righteousness of God Through Faith Alone

Summary:

Drawing from Romans 3:21-31, this sermon examines how God provided a complete and perfect salvation for both Jew and Gentile, not merely through forgiveness but through the imputation of His own righteousness to the believer. Pastor Bruce Gordon distinguishes between simple forgiveness and the full declaration of righteousness that God grants to those who place faith in Christ, arguing that forgiveness alone leaves a guilty conscience, while justification declares the believer righteous before God. The sermon traces the sacrificial system of the Old Testament as a forward-pointing shadow of Christ's ultimate and sufficient sacrifice, explaining that all people in all ages are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. Satan's scheme to trap God through man's sin in the garden was ultimately undone by a plan he could not foresee or interrupt, a plan rooted in God's holiness, justice, and grace working together at the cross.

Key Points:

- God's holiness demands that sin be judged exactly and appropriately, not arbitrarily, which is why a perfect sacrifice was required

- The Old Testament sacrificial system was never sufficient in itself to remove sin but served as a shadow pointing forward to Christ's atoning work

- There is a critical distinction between forgiveness and justification; God does not merely pardon the believer but declares and imparts His righteousness to them

- Justification means being counted just as if one had always possessed the righteousness of Christ, which is the only basis for confident standing before God

- All people, without exception, have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, which is the standard represented perfectly by Christ Himself

- Salvation is by grace through faith alone, apart from works or religious routine, and this has been the only means of salvation across all ages

- The law was never designed to save but to expose the impossibility of self-righteousness and to point sinners to their need for Christ

- Boasting is entirely excluded from salvation because it is entirely the work of God, not the effort of man

- God is the God of both Jew and Gentile, and His plan of justification through faith applies equally to all people

Scripture Reference:

- Romans 3:21-31, which serves as the primary passage, addressing the righteousness of God revealed apart from the law, the universal sinfulness of mankind, justification by grace through faith, propitiation through Christ, and the establishment rather than the abolition of the law through faith

Stories:

- An illustration of a person who steals money out of desperation, is brought before a judge, and has their debt paid by a benefactor; Pastor Bruce Gordon uses this to show that even when a debt is paid and forgiveness is granted, the guilty conscience remains, contrasting this with God's justification which not only covers the debt but declares the person fully righteous

- A reference to the amusement park height requirement sign, used to illustrate what it means to fall short of a standard, applied to the impossibility of measuring up to the perfect standard of Christ

- A reference to the character Barney Fife from The Andy Griffith Show, described as being stretched to try to meet the physical requirements for a law enforcement position, used to illustrate futile human effort to meet a standard one cannot naturally reach

- A retelling of the fall in the Garden of Eden, emphasizing that Satan believed he had trapped God by causing man to sin, not foreseeing that God had already planned a redemptive answer through the sacrifice of Christ

- A reference to Cain and Abel returning to the gate of the garden to present their sacrifices, used to illustrate the continuity of the sacrificial system established immediately after the fall