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Series: Romans: The Just Shall Live by Faith
Message: Justified!

Transcribed Message
July 18, 2021
Romans 8:30

I am fairly certain that most of you are aware there is a growing trend in the church in America to move into an area of Biblical illiteracy, which is simply to say we don't know our Bibles very well. it's a trend that's been happening for many years now unfortunately. It's born largely from the failure of Christians just to read their Bibles every day. It's amazing when you read your Bible what the Holy Spirit reveals and shows us about Himself and about His Word. but I think it also might be because somewhere, somehow, someday, people accepted the idea that theology and doctrine and the study of the Word of God is best left for pastors and ivory tower people because their model very often is expressed something like this: I don't really want or need doctrine or theology. Just give me the practical stuff. If you say that out loud, I hope the apostle Paul isn't in your group because the apostle Paul has a decidedly different view of that than many people have. He loved doctrine. He loved theology. He loved to plumb the depths of the truths of the Word of God. Rightly understood, theology and doctrine are as practical as it gets. Theology and doctrine solidify and fortify our lives against the very things that come against us. In Paul's greatest work that we've been looking at, the book of Romans, it is really a book in which he brings before us some of the biggest, most important theological doctrinal words that we have in the Bible. He obviously does so without apology. He does so because evidently he thinks we need these things and we need to know these things and understand these things.

One of those big words we look at again this morning is the word "justification". Justification. Our big idea this morning: Being justified by faith not only gives us peace with God but peace and confidence in the trials and difficulties of life. Now when you look at that statement, is there anything more practical than that? There isn't anything more practical than being in a place and a position where we not only have peace with God, but we have peace in the midst of the very storms and circumstances of life. We

come to this fourth word. There's five of them in this Golden Chain that we've been looking at. The fourth one is this word "justified".

A quick review. We have said repeatedly first of all that justification is what Romans is all about. We come to this word "justified" in Romans 8:30 and in reality what we're going to do this morning is basically a review of everything that we've studied to this point because he's really going to take us back to the first 8 chapters. This is the theme. For I am not ashamed, Paul said. Remember in the opening chapter. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation, for in it the righteousness of God is revealed. The just shall live by faith. That's the very theme of the book. It dominates chapter 3 through chapter 5. Just one statement after another with regard to this matter of justification.

Justification by faith was the impetus of the great Reformation. It was the impetus for the recovery of the gospel itself in the great Reformation. It was the cry of the reformers: *sola fide*. Justification comes to us by faith and by faith alone. We are stepping into a review this morning of the book of Romans because that's the theme of this book.

Secondly, justification is a work of the Father. Justification is a work of the Father. Our salvation is truly a Trinitarian work. It is a work of the Father. It's the work of the Son. It's the work of the Holy Spirit. When we baptize these folks at the end of our morning and we celebrate their new life in Christ, you're going to hear repeatedly: I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We're Trinitarian in our understanding of what God has done. The Father has His role. The Son has His role. The Holy Spirit has His role.

If you've been with us, you've noted in this 8th chapter of Romans that this is the greatest chapter in all the Bible with regard to the Holy Spirit. If someone would ever say to you what is the one chapter in all the Bible that tells us more about the Holy Spirit than maybe any other chapter by itself? You would say of course Romans 8. That is true up until verse 28. When you get to verse 28, it transitions from the Holy Spirit to the work of God the Father. That's what we've been looking at. God the Father is the one whose purpose is now at the end of verse 28 being realized. God the Father is the one who has foreknown, in that He has set His love upon. He has entered into a love

relationship with those whom He will call to Himself. He is the one who has predestined. He's the one who has determined the destiny that we would become like Christ. He's the one who calls. He's the one who justifies. He is the one as we'll see, Lord willing, next week who glorifies. We see this as the work of the Father.

Then the last thing. Justification rightly understood can only lead to worship. It can only lead to worship. That's what we're doing here. That is why we gather here. What would we have to celebrate if we didn't have justification by faith? There wouldn't be a lot of joy in our coming, in my mind anyway, week to week wondering if we're going to make it or not. That doesn't sound very joyful at all. That sounds rather precipitous. That sounds rather doubtful. But we come together because we understand the depth, width, height, breadth of the love of God and the greatness of the salvation. Our hearts are filled with joy and when we think about the doctrine of justification by faith, all we can do is what Paul says at the end of his great proclamation in Ephesians 1. It is all to the praise of His glory. That's what we do. That's what we celebrate. That's who we are. Baptism as we end our morning is a signal to everybody that observes this that this person is a Christ follower, that they've stepped into this truth and they are proclaiming that through their obedience in baptism.

Let's look at the doctrine of the rising or falling church. The doctrine of a rising or falling church. Literally, what we're going to do is we're going to take a quick overview of 8 chapters of Romans. If you haven't been here to this point, then we're going to catch you up all the way to this point. And, if you've been here all along, then you'll know the answer to all the questions and you'll just fill in the blanks as we go. The very first thing Paul says to us with regard to this matter of justification by faith, and it doesn't take him very long, is we have a problem. Romans chapter 1. We have a problem. That problem, he says, is not an isolated problem. It's a universal one. It's not a few people here and there who have this problem. Paul says that everybody has this problem. Having just told us in the 16th and 17th verse that he's not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it's the power of God into salvation, look what Paul says in verse 18 chapter 1. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth."

The wrath of God, as we said way back in chapter 1, does not get a lot of press. The wrath of God does not get a lot of publicity. The wrath of God does not get a lot of preaching time. People don't want to know about the wrath of God. They don't want to hear about the wrath of God. But right after Paul says what he does in verses 16 and 17, he tells us why this is so important. It is so important because we all have a problem. The problem is universal. The problem is not isolated. Chapter 3. Remember we looked at this a number of times. Verse 10. There is none righteous, no, not one. No one understands, no one seeks for God, all have turned aside. Together they have become worthless, so no one does good, not even one. I'm in that category and so are you before Christ. That was us. We had that same perspective of life. Chapter 3 verse 19. "Now 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 before God." And then of course the familiar words in verse 23 where we read: for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. So it's not an isolated problem. It is a universal problem.

Secondly, it's not a minor problem. It's a major one. It is not a minor problem. It's a major one. Some problems are defined as being not that big of a deal and we find a solution rather easily. Then there are problems that fall into the major category. What Paul said in Romans 5:12: Therefore as by one man (that is Adam) sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned. Then he goes on to say in the 6th chapter the 23rd verse that the wages of sin is death. The wages of sin is death. That's why this is not just a minor problem. That's why this is a major problem. Sin has by its very definition brought separation. In fact, when you're reading your Bible and you come across the word "death", a helpful exercise is just to think of the word "separation". In that context, you'll know what he's talking about. Separating the body from the soul is physical death. Physical death – the body is present, but the soul, the person, is departed. There is separation from the body and the soul.

Spiritual death. The condition into which we're born into this world, Paul says, for by virtue of Adam sin, into which we all participated, we're born into this world spiritually dead. What does that mean? We're separated from God in time. We have no personal

relationship with God. There's a large gap between us and God and it's been created by sin and our sinful choices.

Then of course there is eternal death. Eternal death is separation from God for eternity, a terrible outcome. That's why he says to us this is not a minor problem. This is a major problem.

Now here's the equally startling news. We have no solution to this problem. Not only do we have a problem, not only is it not minor, it's major. Not only is it not isolated, it is universal. He says to us that secondly, we have no solution that solves the problem. Now here's what Paul does and those of you that were with us for these studies will remember this, but beginning back in the 2nd chapter, Paul sequences through all of humanity and he puts all of humanity into one of three categories. You and I either are or have been in one of these categories.

The very first category that Paul lists of those people who have no capacity to solve this problem he would call I think the hedonist. The hedonist. Chapter 1 verse 18 all the way to the end of the chapter. The hedonist is not at all worried about God. He is not at all worried about the wrath of God. He's not at all worried about the righteousness of God. He's just not worried about God at all. He has no time, no place, no reference point for God in his life at all. His view of morality is eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. Live for today. Enjoy all that you can. Go for it. I'm my own judge. You've got your deal and I've got mine. That's how Paul puts this first category of people together. They are obviously those who look at life in a very short-term perspective. You probably know somebody that falls into that category. Maybe you were in that category. Maybe you still are in that category. You think about your life being yours to live anyway that you want to, irrespective of whether there's a God or not.

The second group of people are called the moralist. The moralist. That began in the 2nd chapter. In the 2nd chapter, he talks about moral people. Moral people are certainly not hedonists. They're not hedonist. They have a moral compass. Generally speaking, there's something that they're organizing their morality and ethics around. Very often today people would say the 10 Commandments. I live my life as best I can by the 10 Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount or the Golden Rule. I do my

best to love my neighbor. Whatever it is, they're convinced that their good works give them an inside track to heaven.

I did a funeral some time ago. A friend of the man who died shared in the service and he shared some kind things about his friend. When he came to the end he said something like (I can't remember what the guy's name, let's say it was Bill) Bill, put in a good word for me there in heaven. I'm doing the best I can but I could use a good word. That is a moralist. That is somebody who's thinking that by doing the best that they can God is going to say come on in. You did the best you could. That's the person who when asked the question if you were to die tonight do you know for sure if you would go to heaven, they would probably hesitate a little bit and say yeah. I think I would. When you followed up with what why should God let you into heaven, they would say something like what a moralist would say. I've done my best. I have tried my best to keep your commandments and to be nice to my wife and children. I haven't kicked the dog that often. I just basically do the best that I can. That's a moralist.

The third group of people Paul would call the religious. The religious. Chapter 2 beginning at verse 17 to the end of the chapter. In this context of Romans, the religious are the Jewish people that he's writing to Rome at this church. Today it would be anybody. This is the person then who is basically banking on their religious heritage. They're banking on the fact that they go to church, maybe not every Sunday, but a lot. They do again good things. They serve. They give. They've been baptized. They take communion. Whatever it is that a religious person does, Paul puts these folks in this category. Paul's answer back to them is I'm sorry, but even being a religious person is not good enough.

The reason, my friends, it's not good enough is because a holy, righteous God isn't looking for good people to save. A holy, righteous God is looking for absolute perfection. The only person who's lived an absolutely perfect life was His Son Jesus. That's why Jesus came. That's what Jesus did for us on our behalf. It's not good enough because God needs more than just people who are trying to be good. That's why what Paul says in chapter 3 and verse 21 but now the righteousness of God has been manifest apart from the law. You move from the hopelessness of chapter 3 and verse 20 to the hopefulness of chapter 3 verse 21.

That brings us then to point C which is but God. But God has provided a way. But God has provided a way. This takes us to the end of the 8th chapter where we have been for a while and it takes us to that statement that those that God has foreknown, He has predestined. Those He has predestined, He has called. Those whom He has called, now we're here. He has justified. Justification. One of the great words in all of the Bible. Abraham (Genesis 15:6) believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Abraham believed God and God justified Abraham on the basis of his faith. Luther said justification by faith is the doctrine, it's the article of a rising or falling church. That's why when you're looking for a church, all of the things that a church can offer you or do for you, you better have at the top of your list tell me what you believe about justification by faith alone. Tell me what you understand to be the gospel, because if you don't have the gospel then you don't have the good news. We've already said we don't have a solution to this problem apart from this gospel. Here is the cornerstone of Christianity that we're looking at. JI Packer said this: "To fall away here is to not be a Christian church." If you fall away from justification by faith, according to Packer in his mind, you're not even to be under the moniker of a Christian church.

What is it that we need to know about justification by faith? First thing we need to know. It's an act of God. It's an act of God. That's what we've been seeing in that Romans 8 passage. Every single person whom God foreknew, predestined, called, He then justifies. Think about that fact. We have been for a few weeks. We've been trying to wrap our head around, what does it look like, to step back into eternity past and think about the fact that God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit in that eternal council of eternity past had you and I in mind before we were born, before the worlds were even created. I didn't make that up. I didn't say that. That's what it says all through Scripture. God is the one who is at work on our behalf. He is the one who has pursued us into the present. It is the Holy Spirit who is at work in your life bringing you to this place of rescue.

Secondly, every person justified has something taken away and they have something added. Every person who is justified has something that's taken away and something that is added. What is it that is taken away? It's sin. Sin is what is taken away when we are justified by faith. We call it forgiveness. It is what Paul spoke of in the 4th

chapter in the 7th verse “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven.” The psalmist says as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our sins from us.

There’s something else that you could’ve said that’s taken away. Paul speaks of it in Romans 8:1. Condemnation. Condemnation is taken away. When we are justified by faith, not only are our sins taken away, but the very idea of condemnation is taken away.

But then there is something that’s added. Some things are taken away (sin) and something is added. What is it that is added in the process of justification? In this moment of time of belief and we’re justified by faith, what is it that is added? Righteousness is added. Righteousness is added. Our sins are removed. Now frankly, that would be enough. That would be enough to cause a celebration. Our sins are paid for. Our sins are dealt with. But God doesn’t stop just with the blessing of forgiveness. He adds into that account, if you will, His very own righteousness. Think about that. Your bank account emptied out and put in the place of our sin is the very righteousness of Christ. That is why there’s no condemnation to those who are in Christ. As God looks at you as His son or His daughter, what He sees is the very righteousness of His Son Jesus.

This then brings us to the definition of justification itself. To be justified is to be declared righteous. To be justified is to be declared righteous. Now there’s an important distinction that we make when we word it in that way. To be justified does not mean that we are made righteous. We are not made righteous. We are declared to be righteous. There’s a difference between those two. God doesn’t make us righteous. He declares us to be righteous. This word “justification” is a word that is taken right out of the courtroom. It is a forensic term. It is a legal term. It is the very idea of standing before a judge. You’ve committed a crime. That judge in issuing his verdict and for whatever reasons, he declares you to be innocent. He declares to you that you are free to go. You still had committed the crime. He can’t undo that in that sense of erasing that act, but he can declare that legally before the legal system you are totally and completely exonerated. That is a change in our status and standing before God. It’s not a change in character. That’s coming with sanctification. It’s a change in our status.

Here's the thing. It's based on Christ's obedience and death. It is based on Christ's obedience and death. It was a great price that was paid. It was a great cost. The 9th verse of the 5th chapter. "Since therefore we have now been justified by His blood much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath to come." It is free to us for sure. The gospel is free to us, but it was incredibly costly to Christ.

One thing that God could not do. God could not say to us as guilty sinners: hey, you know what. Just don't worry about it. We're going to just pretend like it isn't there. He can't do that. He is holy and He's righteous. A provision had to be made and that provision was made through Christ and through His death on the cross. It was a great imputation. Another big word that Paul uses in Romans. it was a great imputation that took place, that transpired because of what Jesus did at great cost.

The Bible speaks of these three great imputations. You remember that there is first this idea of Adam's sin to us. He was our representative head. We would've done what he did. He did it in our place. Adam's sin is put to our account. But then of course, the second imputation is our sin is put on Christ on the cross. On the cross Jesus took my sin and yours. Then that third and final imputation, Christ's righteousness is put into my account when I put my trust in Christ alone.

Thirdly and finally, it calls for faith on our part. It calls for faith on our part. In one sense we have to say nothing in my hands I bring, as the song said. Nothing in my hands I bring; simply to the cross I cling. That's the point that Paul makes repeatedly. Chapter 4 and verse 5. And to the one who does not work but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. Titus 3:5 – not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy He saved us. Folks, here's the thing. I've said it before and I'll say it again. God's not out there looking to populate heaven with good people. You can stop working or attempting to work your way to heaven. He's not looking for good people. Jesus said I have come to seek and to save the lost. Jesus said that the healthy don't need Me. It's the sinner who needs Me. That's me. That's you. we bring nothing to this equation. Justification is by faith alone. Justification is by faith alone. That's what Paul declared in the 5th chapter. Therefore since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God. Romans 8. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2. For by grace are you

saved through faith, not of yourselves, not of works lest any man should boast. Justification. To be declared righteous is by faith and faith alone.

What do we take away? What we take away this morning is this thought: preach the gospel to yourself every day. Preach the gospel to yourself every day. The gospel rightly understood is the entry point into the Christian life. The gospel is the entry point into the Christian life. We understand that, but sometimes what we forget is the good news never becomes old news. The good news is always good news. It is good news the day you accept it and trusted and believe that what Jesus did is enough, and it's good news every day after that. You never move beyond the gospel.

When Bonnie and I exchanged wedding vows 45 years ago, we said things to each other. We made commitments to each other. We did that one time but we live in the light of those commitments and those vows every day of our lives. That's the gospel. You enter into it by faith on that occasion in which you say to God I agree with You that I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I can't get there by myself. I have no solution to this problem but Jesus has done everything that needs to be done. I trust and I believe in what He has done.

There is an interesting story that is told about a wealthy man in England. He had enough money to buy a Rolls-Royce and he had enough money to decide that he wanted to go tour Europe in his Rolls-Royce. He had it ferried across the channel and he began to tour around Europe in his Rolls-Royce. Unfortunately, his tour didn't go very far when his car broke down. The car stops in the middle of nowhere and there he is stuck. He wires word back. They didn't have cell phones back then. He wires word back to England. This is what happened. This is where I'm at. What am I supposed to do? They sent word back to him. We will have a technician on the way within the hour. Sure enough, however long it took for him to get across the channel and find the guy out there in the countryside, he finds the car and fixes it him. The guy is back on the road again to enjoy his tour of Europe. He gets back to England and he's thinking I wonder if that's going to cost me anything. That guy coming over and working on the car and get it going. I'm going to reach out to Rolls-Royce and see what they have to say about this. I don't want to cheat them out of something if they forgot about it. So he sends a letter and he gets a letter back. In the letter it says this: Dear Sir, thank you so much for your

letter. You need to know that we have no record in our files that any Rolls-Royce has ever broken down at any place at any time for any reason.

Now, my friends, if the Rolls-Royce company can do that for their car, that's what God says He has done for us in Christ. I have no record. I cannot recall Carlon that you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. What I see when I look at you because of your faith and trust in Christ alone, I see the righteousness of My Son Jesus.

Let's pray. Gracious Father, we thank You again for this glorious gospel. We thank You, Father, for this amazing grace. We pray again as we come to the conclusion of this part of our morning, Father, that Your Holy Spirit will give understanding to anyone here this morning that falls into any of these categories of a hedonist, a moralist, or religious, anyone who has not yet put their faith and trust in Christ. Father, we pray that You would open their eyes to understand this gospel, to believe and trust in Christ and in Christ alone for their salvation. We pray these things in Jesus's name, amen.