

## TRIUMPHANT LIVING

### *“THE REMOVAL OF GUILT as a MOTIVATION”*

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Let's go to a moment of silent prayer and ask the Lord to be our teacher. Let's be still and know that He is God.

Gracious and merciful heavenly Father, You alone are God. In the quietness of these moments, may our hearts be directed to you. Remove all the frustration of this week, the consternation of life in general, and may we be focused on the matchless grace of Jesus. And may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Continuing our study of Triumphant Living, we have an outline now for lesson number 14, entitled, “The Removal of Guilt as a Motivation.” We'll be looking at 2 Corinthians chapter 5, specifically verses 11-17.

While you're opening your Bibles, I'd like to read from the English Standard Version, the ESV version of the Scripture, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, beginning at verse 11.

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. For what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance, and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that One has died for all, therefore all have died. And He died for all, that those who might live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him, who for their sake died, and was raised.

May God be pleased to open our eyes, that we might behold wonderful things from His word.

Let's be honest, brothers. Many of us don't know how to function, unless we feel guilty. Guilt, it seems like, in the Christian life, is a primary motivator. Recently, a friend of mine said, “Bruce, if I don't feel guilty, what will keep me from sinning? If I don't feel guilty, what's going to keep me from sinning?” Well, that's a pretty good question.

Guilt is not a motivator in the Christian life; guilt is an inhibitor. God never uses guilt as a motivation for us to do anything spiritually or to please Him. God never uses guilt as a means of motivating us to please Him.

So what is it that will motivate us to do the right thing? Well, Paul has already answered that question for us in our recent weeks of study in verses 11-14, when he said that it is the fear of God, and the love of Christ. In the fear of God, he sees God as a righteous judge, and that is what begins to condition his thinking. And that creates within us a sense of reverence, a sense of awe, a sense of respect, a sense of dignity, because we see Him as a righteous judge. And Paul is saying this: the thing that motivated Him was his fear of God, seeing Him as a righteous judge.

But he also said this. The other thing that motivates me is the love of Christ. He saw Christ as a gracious Savior. He saw God as a righteous judge, which conditioned his thinking, and saw Christ as a gracious Savior, which controlled his actions.

But what is it that happened to Paul that made that a possibility, because if anybody ever had the right to be motivated by guilt, (if there is such a thing as a right to be motivated by guilt), it might be the apostle Paul, because look at his life prior to his conversion. What was he known for? He was known as the primary persecutor of the church, not only individual fellowship groups known as the local church, but also individual followers of Christ. He was the primary persecutor of the local church. Now, all of a sudden, he is the primary preacher for the church.

So what happened to Paul that changed his mind, so that he was not motivated by the guilt of his past life, his past actions, and all of a sudden, he says, “you know, guilt is not my motivator. There are two things that really motivate me in my ministry to the church for the glory of God, and that is this: it is the fear of God which conditions my thinking. I see God as a righteous judge. And that conditions the way I look at God, the way that I look at myself, and the way I look at people, because I see Him as a righteous judge, and that conditions the way I think about myself and the world.”

And he said, “But not only that; it’s the love of Christ. I now see Christ as a gracious Savior. And that’s what controls my actions, the fear of God, and the love of Christ.”

So, something wonderful happened to Paul. But what happened to Paul is exactly what happened to you and me, to every other believer, to everyone, to every person who trusts the Person and finished work of Christ. You see, God in His great mercy and grace has dealt with guilt as the motivation for us once and for all. And He does that through what we call justification.

God justifies us. He sees our sin. He sees our guilt. And He declares us righteous before Himself. And therefore He sees us as worthy, and declares us righteous and worthy of life and all of its privileges, as a righteous person. It’s called justification.

I don’t believe there is any doctrine in Scripture that is more important than the doctrine of justification. In fact, Martin Luther said, “It is the doctrine on which the

church stands or falls.” The doctrine of justification. It involves the whole method of the salvation of sinners. It is connected to all other doctrines and issues of the Christian life. It affects how we see God, and how we see ourselves, and how we see everybody else, and how we see the world.

In a discussion of this vital doctrine, it is best presented in taking a look at it this way according to your outline. First of all, I want us to see the definition of justification. Then I want us to see the need for justification. Once you understand it, I want you to see the need for it. And then we need to explore the origin of our justification. What’s its origin? And then what is the nature of justification? And then lastly, what are the grounds for our being justified, so that God, once for all, removes guilt as a motivation for us to do anything spiritual? Remember this: God never, never uses guilt as a motivator to do anything to please Him.

So let’s take a look, first of all, at the definition of justification. Justification is a declaration of God that a sinner is free from the demands of the Law, and entitled to the rewards due to the obedience of his substitute, Christ. Let me give you that again, just briefly. The declaration of God that a sinner is free from the demands of the Law, and entitled to the rewards due to the obedience of his substitute, Christ. It is not something that is accomplished in man; it is something God declares of man. It’s not something we achieve; it’s something we receive. You were once declared a sinner under God’s wrath; now you are declared righteous, and eligible for God’s rewards and God’s blessings.

So what happened between when you were under His wrath, and now you’re in a position of receiving His blessings, and eligible for all the benefits of following Christ? What happened in between those two parameters—under His wrath, and now you’re under His mercy and grace?

So let’s take a look at the need for justification. We’ve seen what justification is. It is the declaration of God that you are sinlessly perfect and perfectly obedient. But what is the need for justification? Why do we need that? Well, in Romans, the book of Romans, Paul establishes the basic truth of man’s sinfulness, and God’s judicial wrath upon man for our sin. We can look at some verses that will help us understand that.

Read Romans chapter 1, verse 18. The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men, who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Now that’s where we are, prior to being justified. In Romans 1:18-3:23, Paul argues that all men are sinners, and therefore are unworthy, and condemned before the law of God, and they are without excuse.

Take a look at Romans chapter 3, verse 19. “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world be held accountable to God.” Now in Romans 3, Paul points out two

major results of man's sin and need for salvation, and need for justification. The first one is this. Paul teaches us that man is rendered unrighteous in his person. His person is unrighteous. That's(not) just talking about the condition of us individually. He's talking about our person. And he's saying that man is rendered unrighteous in our person.

Take a look at Romans 3:10-18. Secondly, Paul says this: that man is rendered guilty in his position, or standing before God.

Take a look at Romans 3:19, which we've just read.

So he's saying this: Man is rendered unrighteous in his person, but he's also rendered guilty in his position. Two things we have to deal with, and that is our person and our position. Another way of looking at it would be our condition and our standing. There's something wrong with our condition in our nature, and there's something wrong as a result of that with our standing before God's righteous judgment.

Now that's what Paul is teaching us in Romans chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Now you combine those two, and what you see we are, and how God sees us before He justifies us. You've got to put those two things together—your unrighteous condition, and your guilty position. That is how God sees you prior to the marvelous grace of justification. Now here's how God sees you when you put those two things together: our unrighteous person, and our guilty position; our condition before God is how He sees us.

Here's how the Scripture says that He sees us, before justification. Take a look at the book of Habakkuk, chapter 1, verse 13. God does not see you because God's eyes are too pure to look upon evil. How about Isaiah 59:2? He does not hear you; you are separated from Him and on your own. In Romans chapter 3, verse 10: "No one is righteous, ... no one understands, no one seeks God." Romans 5:10: you're considered an enemy. Romans 3:23: all fall short of God's perfect character; all fall short of God's glory. How about Psalm 5, verse 5? "God hates all who do wrong." Psalm 11, verse 5: "God hates all who do violence." And Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, a summary statement: man is dead in his trespasses and sins.

How does God see you prior to justification? Well, He doesn't see you. He doesn't look at you. He hates the sinner in his condition, because he is guilty before God's only standard. As the Scripture says in Hebrews 12, verse 14: "Without holiness, no one will see God." How can a person, who is unrighteous in their personhood, and guilty in their position, see God? They can't, because God does not see them, because they're an offense to Him, and are under His wrath.

Now that's what Paul was, prior to his justification. And that's why Paul says, "If anybody had a right to be motivated by guilt, it would be me, because look at what I was prior to my justification. I was the primary persecutor of the church. Something

happened to me that changed my motivation, and it is not by guilt!” You see, that’s our condition and our position before God acts on our behalf, and for His glory.

Now in Romans chapters 3, 4 and 5, the apostle explains how a sinner’s guilty position before God and His law can be removed by God’s wonderful loving plan of salvation. In chapters 6, 7 and 8, Paul tells us how God deals with the sinful condition of man. It’s in this context in dealing with our sinful condition, and our guilty standing before God, that Paul introduces the concept and the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

So I want us to emphasize that man has a problem with real judicial guilt before God and His law. There’s a difference between feeling guilty and being really guilty. Our problem is that we have a real judicial guilt before God and His law. It is not merely feelings of pangs of conscience, but real guilt before the high court of God’s sovereign grace, the high court of God’s holy justice, the Ruler of all the earth.

Now there will be all kinds of psychological ways we will try to remove guilty feelings. There are numerous books. Go to your local Christian bookstore, and you’re going to find all sorts of psychological ways of getting rid of your personal guilt. That has nothing to do with your real guilt, your guilty position and your guilty person. It has to do with your emotions and your feelings of guilt. Here’s what you can do: you do these ten things, and it will remove your feelings of guilt. But it doesn’t deal with the root cause, which is your unrighteous person and your guilty position before a holy God. You see, our real problem is not our guilt feelings, but it’s our guilty position, and our guilty standing before God’s holy justice, and His law.

Now guilt feelings come from either not resolving or fully understanding your position before God. It’s only when one understands and accepts by faith what justification accomplishes for us, for God’s glory on our behalf, will there be any joy or peace in our lives. Notice Romans chapter 5, verse 1. “Therefore, having been justified by faith,” (alone), “we have peace with God. ...” Now we flippantly offer people the peace of God. In our evangelism we say, “Would you like to have the peace of God? I know your life is a shambles. You’ve got all these difficulties going on in your life. Would you like to have the peace of God? Just come to trust Christ.” Well, friends, you can’t have the peace of God until you have the peace with God. And that means you have to deal with your judicial guilt before God’s holy law. That’s what justification does! You’ll have no peace of God until you have the peace with God. Paul says this: “Having been justified, therefore, we have peace with God.” It’s when you have the peace of God because you have peace with God. That’s what Paul is telling us. And that’s why guilt is never a motivation to do anything spiritual.

So what’s the origin of justification? Well, man’s condition and standing are of such a nature that only God Himself can deal with it. Read Job chapter 9, verse 20. “If I justify

myself, my own mouth shall condemn me.” Now look at that! Job says, “Look! If I try to justify myself, by my unrighteous person, and my guilty position before God, all I’m doing is condemning myself, because that is not something I can do on my own.” You don’t achieve justification. It’s something you receive, because only God is the origin of it. And Job makes it very, very clear that if you try to earn that justification, you’re doing nothing but condemning yourself.

The Scriptures are very clear that it is God who is the Father and the origin of the ministry of justification. Look at Romans chapter 3, verse 30. “since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith, and the uncircumcised by that same faith.” There is only one God who can justify. How about Romans 8:33? “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.” In other words, who can bring any charge against you, if you have been justified by Christ, in God’s gracious mercy? Who can bring any charge against you? No one can, because the only One who can deal with the charges against you is God Himself, because He’s the origin of your justification. If you try to justify yourself by thinking you can earn it, by doing good deeds, and doing good works, and gaining merit on God’s behalf, you’re going to do nothing but condemn yourself, because you can’t do that. God alone is the source of our justification.

And the reason that God is the origin of our justification is because of two things. God is not only the Lawgiver, but He is also the Judge. He’s the One who gives the law, but He’s also the judge. Only the declaration of the Judge sets the sinner free of all the demands of the Law, because only the Judge is the Lawgiver. And He confers upon us all the blessings pertaining to our new condition of being justified by faith alone. Now you see it is necessary, because the Law has been broken. But the Lawgiver is the same One who is the Judge. And anyone who has completely fulfilled the Law—get this!—does not need to be justified. Anybody who has ever fulfilled the Law does not need to be justified. Now, is that you? Is that me? Of course not; we’ve already seen that it’s not! But anybody who has completely fulfilled the Law does not need justification, because the Lawgiver has said, “they are guiltless, because they have obeyed My law and have done everything that is pleasing to Me.” You don’t need justified, because you’ve met all the demands of the Law!

So that’s the origin. God alone is the origin, because He is the Lawgiver as well as the Judge, and He’s the only One who can pronounce the guilty sinner guiltless, because of the broken law.

Participant: “When the rich young ruler comes before Christ, is that a naïve question that he says to Him, or was there a sense in his day that people did keep the Law? He says to Christ, “What else should I do?” It seems kind of preposterous in our day and age to even say that, from what we know and what you just said.”

Bruce: Well, no, actually I think most people today would say the same thing. They would say the same thing the rich young ruler would say. “What do you mean? I go to church. I tithe. I’m involved in C.L.C. Look at all the things that I do. And you have the audacity to tell me that I’m not meeting Your holy standard?” And the answer would be “Absolutely correct,” because, you see, it’s the same thing that Job just said. “If I’m trying to justify myself, I’m condemning myself.” I think people today are doing exactly what this rich young ruler did. They’re asking the same question. They’re saying, “Look at all the things that I do!”

Participant: “I always thought that was more of a perspective of those that aren’t deeper into the faith. People joke that Catholics think that. They just show up and they’re blessed, and they—“

Bruce: Well, I would say that anybody who is not justified by faith alone would say the same thing, whether they be Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, or whatever. They’re all saying the same thing. They’re basically saying, “Look, I can achieve this justification! I can accomplish the Law, and therefore derive all the benefits.” I think that’s exactly what’s going on in the church today. We don’t understand what we’re talking about today. Ted?

Participant: “Many Protestants believe they have the capability—“

Bruce: Absolutely they do.

Participant: “That’s the issue, that you have the capability, and maybe you get almost there, and Jesus just helps you out with the last bit.”

Bruce: There you go. Exactly right.

Participant: “And that’s a grievous teaching!”

Bruce: You see, the church doesn’t understand this doctrine of justification, because it involves all the aspects of our salvation! What we say (is), “Would you like to have the peace of God? Then embrace Christ.” That’s such a flippant oversight. The issue that’s really at hand is that we are judicially corrupt, and judicially have violated the Law, because the Lawgiver has said, “You have not met my standard (of) perfection.” I like to ask this question: Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven?

Men: Yes!

Bruce: Absolutely yes! Absolutely yes! Somebody says, “How can I do that?” With God all things are possible. With man it can’t be. Yes?

Participant: “Bruce, going back to the fear of God and the love of Christ, my question and statement is, when Paul’s saying “for the love of Christ,” is he talking about himself loving Christ, or—“

Bruce: No.

Participant: “Or Christ loving him?”

Bruce: “Christ loving him.”

Participant: “’cause that’s my biggest problem. I don’t have a problem with fearing God, but I have a problem with loving Christ.”

Bruce: Your loving Him, or Him loving you?

Participant: “Me loving Him.”

Bruce: Okay. The only way you’re going to love Him is (to) understand His love for you. Our love is a love of response in obedience to His love for us. So you can take a look at that both ways. There is this issue of God loving us. Christ is a gracious Savior when you understand that. That’s why we made the little bracelet, WHJD? What has Jesus done? So when you understand that, you see that’s demonstrated by His love for us, that our love response is a love response in obedience. If we have a difficult time loving Christ, it’s because we don’t understand His love for us. So it’s both and. So what Paul is saying is that, to the degree to which I understand God’s love for me is the degree to which I will love Him. What does Jesus say in John 14? “If you love Me, do good works.” No, He doesn’t say that. “If you love Me, obey the law. Obey Me! If you love Me, you’ll obey Me.” That’s our love response. Yes, Bill?

Participant: To address that issue, dealing once again with our proper love for Christ, I think it gets back to your excellent teaching that, if we base our actions on truth, our feelings will follow. And so, you know, you have taught as many times to think, then act, then feel. You know our feelings for Christ will develop more naturally. We actually have to think about the attributes of God, and what Christ has done for us.”

Bruce: Thank you, Bill; that’s a good reminder. Remember this little card we gave everybody? “Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your—“

Men: “Minds!”

Bruce: You’ve got to think right! What Paul is teaching us is how to think right about motivation. He’s saying it’s seeing God as a righteous judge, which creates in you the



sense of reverence, awe, dignity and respect. It's also understanding and thinking correctly about Christ's love for you. And you see Him as a gracious Savior. (He) did something that you could not do yourself, and your response is a love response in obedience. It's based upon how you think. You've got to think right! And then, when you think right, you're going to act right. And when you act right, you're going to feel right. Feelings become the consequence of your thinking, not the cause.

Participant: Amen!

Bruce: The world's going to teach you to operate on your feelings. You feel insecure, you feel defeated, therefore you act on that, and all of a sudden you develop a thought pattern that says, "I'm worthless; I can't do it," whatever it may be. Paul says, "Don't do that." You've got to think right! And when you think right, you're going to act right. Feelings become the consequence, they're not the cause. And when you understand justification, that's why guilt is never a motivation for ministry, because that's a feeling! We're dealing with real judicial guilt before God's righteous throne when we're talking about our unrighteous person and our guilty position. You see, God is dealing with both of those through our justification. We can't deal with either one! That's why we operate with our feelings, and we feel guilty; therefore, my friend says, "How can I be obedient if I don't feel guilty?" He's on this side of the chart, because his feelings are dictating his thinking, or he wouldn't ask the question. Paul is saying, "No, don't do that! Something happened to me that changed my desire, my capability. I realize I don't have the capability to do that. God alone is the One who is adequate to do it." So he's teaching us about dealing with judicial guilt before God's righteous throne. Yes, sir?

Participant: "Yesterday I had the opportunity of listening to Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones \_\_\_\_"

Bruce: Oh, good!

Participant: "His sermon on justification. He has a website with all of his sermons on it. Absolutely tremendous!"

Bruce: It is! It's <http://www.mljtrust.org>

Go on there and you'll see. You can (list up) titles and themes. He's got all of his sermons; (it's) quite excellent. There are a lot of resources out there, brothers, that we can listen to. And we need to take charge of that, because what goes into your mind comes out in your life. Remember this: "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks." What do you put in? That's going to determine what comes out. Any other questions as we go ahead? Did you have something?

All right, let's take a look now at the nature of justification. Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven? Absolutely! Justification concerns what God says about us, not what God does in us. What God does in us is called sanctification. Justification occurs in heaven, while sanctification occurs on earth. Now certainly they both occur on earth, but I'm saying, basically speaking, justification is what God declares about us, and sanctification is what God works in us. Justification deals with a person in a legal sense. It is a single act of grace.

Now understand this. Justification is a single act of grace, and results in a change of standing before God's holy law. Sanctification deals with a person in a physical sense. It is a continued act of grace, and results in a change of character. One deals with a change of position; and one deals with a change of your character. Sanctification is progressive. It's constantly going on because God is at work.

God is our sanctification. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 31 and 32. "He is our wisdom, our righteousness, and our sanctification." Sanctification is a continual grace, (where) God is changing our character. Justification is a one-time act, where He changes your legal position before His holiness, so your legal position is changed radically. And now He deals with us and sanctifies us, and deals with our character through His continual administration of grace.

And remember this, brothers. Grace is available at the moment of application, not contemplation. You don't need to sit and frustrate yourself by saying, "I wonder what I will do when this happens." You'll be given the grace the moment you need it! Grace comes at the moment of application, not contemplation. So often we create worry needlessly, frustration needlessly, because we're saying, "I wonder what will happen if she says this, or if he does that, or this doesn't happen that way." You see, we're conjuring up all these frustrations and emotional feelings, when really we (should) understand this: at the moment of my need, I'm going to get the grace. Paul says this. "My grace is sufficient." Yes, Bill?

Participant: "I want to postulate (that) just as guilt is not of God, worry is not of God either."

Bruce: Absolutely! What is worry? It's a feeling of being guilty. The two are linked together. You see, worry is a function of our guilt. And God is dealing with our guilt once and for all. Paul is saying, "look, it's over! " You don't need to feel guilty anymore! There's a different desire that you have, a different motivation. And that is called justification

Remember, justification is a single act, and deals with your standing before God. Sanctification is a continuing act of God's grace, and deals with your condition before God and your character.

God's declaration of justification includes two things. Here are the two things that God is saying when He justifies us by faith, because of the accomplishments of the Person and work of Christ. He's saying this: that before the Law, we have never sinned. Perfect sinlessness. Secondly, that before the Law, we have lived in total obedience, and therefore merit eternal life—perfect obedience. Now, does that sound familiar? Who lived a life of sinless perfection and perfect obedience? Christ did. That's what God is saying about you when you are justified. Because of the accomplishments of the Person and work of Christ, you get credit for His sinless perfection and perfect obedience. Now notice! What God has done when He declares a person perfect in sinlessness, and perfect in obedience, He says that you have met My standard of ... (pause) perfection. Do you see that? Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven? Yes! And He gives us the means of accomplishing that, of receiving that. (It's) not something we achieve; it is something we receive. Therefore, having been justified by faith alone, we have peace with God. That means I'm no longer plagued by the guilt of the previous choices of my life. Those have been dealt with, have been nailed to the cross. When He was on the cross, I was on His mind. You see, what has Jesus done? Quit trying to figure out what would Jesus do? Concentrate on what Jesus has done. He has purchased your justification! He has dealt with your legal standing before God and changed your condition and your character before a righteous Savior and a righteous God.

Now we need to understand a couple more things about justification. Are you tracking with me, guys? I mean, am I teaching this to the point of understanding? I mean, we could spend weeks on this subject. I'm trying to go through this in one lesson. Yes, Bishop?

Participant: Just to say that there is a work that God does in us in conjunction with justification, and that's regeneration.

Bruce: Absolutely! Apart from that, we have no saving faith. And that is, you've got to understand that God declares something about us, and then He regenerates us. God calls us to ourselves, He cleanses us from ourselves, He creates a new life within us, He completes us with the Holy Spirit and He causes us to be (unclear.) That's regeneration! In our evangelism, we avoid the term "regeneration." We don't teach the Scripture about regeneration. That's a consequence of justification. You see, that's why I said earlier that the doctrine of justification, the church will stand or fall on that. It will stand or fall on that, because if you don't talk about justification, you don't understand regeneration. Regeneration is being born again! How can you do that? You can only do that when you have your guilty position dealt with, and your unrighteous person dealt with. That's what causes regeneration. Yes, Bill?

Participant: To follow up on Bishop Rogers' comment, I want to remind us that we have a Triune soteriology.

Bruce: Good point! Let me remind you of that. When did you become a Christian? You've got three answers. I'll use myself personally, because I can't speak for you, and forgive me if I ever try to do that. I can only speak for me. I know I became a Christian when God the Father chose me from before the foundation of the world. In God's heart and in His mind, He purposed that when I was born I would become a believer. God chose me from before the foundation of the world. My name was written in the Lamb's book of life, solely on God's merit and the accomplishments of His Son, nothing I ever said or did, because I wasn't even born. That is the marvelous, compassionate, loving, tender, merciful doctrine of—election! In my mind, folks, the most compassionate, merciful, tender, doctrine in all of Scripture is this glorious, glorious doctrine of election, that God chose me for no reasons that I had to have earned it, from before the foundation of the world. That's when I became a Christian.

Second, I became a Christian at the cross, when Christ accomplished my salvation. He didn't make it possible; what the Father ordained the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applied. I became a Christian when Christ was on the cross. My name was on His mind. He was paying the penalty for my sin, and He accomplished my salvation, and that's why He said, "It is finished!" There's nothing for me to do but to trust it. So the second way I became a Christian was at the cross, when Christ accomplished my salvation.

The third way I became a Christian was when the Holy Spirit applied the truth to my soul, and I was regenerated. He took that heart of stone that was insensitive to spiritual things. He replaced it with a heart of flesh that is now sensitive to spiritual things, because I was justified by the accomplishments of the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ, and the Holy Spirit applied it to me, and it broke my heart. And all of a sudden, I didn't want to be God's enemy anymore. For me, the verse that the Holy Spirit was pleased to use was Romans 5:10. "If, while we were God's enemies—"

I couldn't get any farther than that. I went to my dad, and I said, "Dad!"

Now you need to understand me as a little teenage boy. I was in ninth grade. I wanted to go to the Naval Academy and become an admiral. So I knew the difference between being an enemy and being an ally. I knew the difference. Now what hit me was that word "enemy." "If, while we were God's enemies!" I went to my dad, and I said, "Dad, am I God's enemy?"

Now I'll always be grateful for my father's courage, and love of me to tell me the truth. He said, "Bruce, in your unregenerate state, you are God's enemy." And I said, "Dad, I don't want to be." And he said, "Then let's read the rest of the verse.' You see, if, when I was God's enemy, He reconciled myself to Him, how much (more) am I going

to be saved by Him by His life! My dad explained to me Romans 5:10, and all of a sudden I realized I don't want to be an enemy of God anymore.

I was a good guy! Let me tell you about me! (Laughter.) Then you'd really be proud of me! You'd want to put me up on a pillar as a ninth grader! I was captain of our football, baseball and basketball teams, all three! I was the jock of all jocks! I didn't date girls because it was unjockish to do that. (Laughter.) Athletes didn't date; it was unmanly. (Laughter.) I was president of the Methodist Youth Fellowship. My mother was a choir director and organist. My dad was chairman of the Fisher Board. I mean, I had it all nailed, folks! That was me, but my dad said, "Bruce, in all that goodness that you're doing, because you're unregenerate, you're not born again, you're God's enemy." And I said, "Dad, I don't want to be." He said, "You don't have to be. Read the rest of the verse."

When did I become a Christian? When the Holy Spirit applied His gracious mercy to me, in granting me salvation and regenerating my heart. He took that heart of stone, did a heart transplant, and gave me a heart of flesh.

So, brothers, you have to understand, you have a Trinitarian salvation. What God the Father ordained in your salvation, God the Son accomplished in your salvation, and God the Holy Spirit applied in your salvation. We have a Trinitarian salvation—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Justification deals with two things. We need to talk a little bit about the pardon. Justification includes pardon, but it includes something more than just pardon. Pardon means you're declared guilty, but you're delivered from the punishment that you are due. Justification is a declaration that we are not guilty, and therefore not worthy of punishment. Pardon assumes this: you're guilty! And you deserve punishment! But I'm not going to give you the punishment, because I'm going to pardon you. There is a degree of that in justification, but justification goes farther than that. Justification says, "You are not guilty, and therefore you are not worthy of punishment."

Now we need to understand this. Before God's holy law, we are not the guilty awaiting trial. We're not the accused awaiting trial. We are the guilty awaiting execution. Do you understand the difference? We are not the accused awaiting trial. Scripture has already said, "You are guilty; you're awaiting execution." Pardon comes along and says, "Yes, you deserve execution, but we're going to pardon that; you don't get it anymore." Justification comes along and says, "You're not guilty! And you don't even deserve the punishment, because your guilt has been dealt with." Instead, God positively declares that we are righteous before Him, and therefore we have the wonderful privilege to receive all of the blessings and privileges of a righteous man before God. When a criminal is pardoned, he is freed from an obligation to suffer death

for his crimes. When a person is justified, he's declared worthy of life, as an innocent person before God.

Thus, we can see that there are two parts to justification, the pardon of the sin, and the acceptance of the person. But there's also this: the removing of the guilt, and the right to life. Justification deals both with the person, and the position. He deals with our unrighteous person, and our guilty position. That's God's way of dealing with man's sin. Sin renders man unrighteous in his person and in his condition. Justification pardons the sin and accepts the person. Sin renders man guilty in his position or standing. Justification removes the guilt, and changes man's position. God does what must be done with our sin, for we cannot do it ourselves. What has Jesus done? That's the question we have to remind ourselves (of.)

So the question then becomes for us, how can God do that on (those) grounds, when you read such a declaration as you find in Job chapter 9, verse 2? "How can a mortal be righteous before God?" And Romans 4:5 says this: How can God "justify the ungodly?" So, what are the grounds for justification?

We've seen that justification is something that God does, and man cannot do. Therefore, the grounds of justification lie outside the capabilities of man. The beauty of the Gospel is that it reveals the righteousness of Jesus Christ as the grounds of justification. By His death (and) His resurrection, He accomplished two thousand years ago what was necessary for our justification. The meritorious work of Christ can be seen in three areas, relating to our justification: Christ's perfect life of sinlessness and total obedience to the law of God is imputed or assigned to your account, to us individually. God accepts us as righteous by virtue of the substitutionary obedience of the life of Christ.

Look at Romans 5:18. "Consequently, just as a result of one man's trespasses was condemnation of all men,) (that's Adam), "so the result of one Man's act of righteousness was justification that brings life to all men." The contrast is between the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Christ.

How about 2 Corinthians 5:21? "God made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ." How about Galatians chapter 3, verse 13? "Christ redeemed us." The word "redemption" means rescue through the payment of a price. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, by becoming a curse for us," (a Greek word), on behalf of, for us. "for it is written, ""Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."" You see, the ground of our justification is the sacrifice of the Person and the work of Christ. By resurrecting Christ from the dead, God demonstrated the fact that He accepted the obedience of Christ in His life and His death.

In summary, God declares us righteous because we are legally righteous by virtue of the imputation of the assigning of Christ's sinless perfection and perfect obedience to us.

Now let me try to wrap this up in the few minutes we have with an illustration. I know that sometimes when we create illustrations we've got to be careful, but I trust the Lord will be pleased to let us understand this one. You and I are standing before the bar of God's justice, before a holy God, a righteous God, and He gives you a book that has your name on it. And inside that book is every thought, word, deed, and action you've ever participated in. It's got your name on it. And you take a look in that book, and it is divided into two segments. The first part of this book says this: "Did you always perfectly obey the Law, and do everything in your life to please God?" And you notice in your book that that is completely blank. And then you look at the second part of the book. It says, "Did you ever violate God's holy Law, or do those things that are forbidden by the Law?" And you look at the second part of the book, and you just see page after page after page of your disobedience. Then, as you're looking at your book, you see the Man who is standing there before you, and you hear these words, by the righteous Judge who read another man's book. And He says, "Depart from Me, because you do evil, into the eternal damnation," and you're just gripped with fear. And then the righteous Judge says, "Bruce, bring your book up, the book that says, 'This was your life. Bring your book to Me.'"

And just before you get up there, Someone stands up beside you, who is your Representative, who defends you, and He has a book that has His name on it. And He takes a look at His book. And it says, "Did you completely obey God's Law always, and do the things that are pleasing to Him?" And you see page after page of obedience. And then, you see, the second part of that book says this. "Did you ever violate God's Law, and do those things that it forbids?" And you see it is totally blank. And then the righteous Judge says, "Bruce, hand Me your book." And just before I hand Him my book, with my name on it, my Representative comes up and says, "Bruce, give Me your book. And He takes His name, and puts it on my book, and puts my name in His book.

And then, my Representative, who is defending me, stands before a righteous God, and hands Him the two books. And God takes a look at the book with my name on it, but it is my Savior and my Representative's book. And he takes a look at that, and then He takes a look at His book that has my name on it, and then He makes this pronouncement. He says to my Representative, "You are guilty!" And He says to me, "You're not guilty." And then I hear my Representative scream out with a loud voice, "Eloi, eloi. Lama sabachthani?" "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" And then you realize what happened, that you were given credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of your Representative. It was credited to you. And what was credited to Him was your violation and disobedience of God's law. And then you understand the significance of what just occurred. I have now been justified! He who knew no sin became sin on my behalf, so that I might become the righteousness of God."

Brothers, that's justification by the wonderful, matchless grace of God. What has Jesus done? He has accomplished what you and I could not do. He has removed guilt as a motivation for you and me once and for all, because you are justified by faith in the person and work of Christ. God declares you as sinlessly perfect, and perfectly obedient. What has Jesus done? He has done what we could not do ourselves. Don't worry about what Jesus would do. Think about what Jesus has done, and watch what happens to your motivation.

Let us pray. Lord, this is such a powerful, powerful message that in our humanness we can only do damage to try to explain it to the point of understanding. So we're absolutely dependent upon the mercies of Your Holy Spirit to be our teacher. And Father, be merciful to me as a communicator. If I've said anything that is contrary to your Law, your holiness, your glory, your nature or Your attributes, that You would be gracious and kind to remove those thoughts from our minds. And only let us focus upon those things which are truly representative of who You are, and Your desire for us to know You. Thank You, Father, that by faith we've been justified, through faith alone, in Christ alone, to the glory of God alone, revealed in the Scripture alone. Sola Deo Gloria! And may it be so. And all God's children said, "Amen!"