

“But Now”

Romans - the Gospel of God

Romans 3:21-26

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October 8, 2021

Jeff: Our heavenly Father, we are so thankful to gather in Your presence this day and to study Your word. We're thankful for that Word. We know that it is Your word— infallible, inerrant and authoritative. Lord, it's a joy to study it. And Father, we pray that You will help us to mine the riches. We know that we will barely scratch the surface. And yet we ask and pray that even these surface gems that we find in Your word will be a blessing to us and enrich our lives. And we pray that they will edify us, not just in our thinking but in our doing. We ask, Lord, that we'll minister this gospel that we hear that we embrace and love so much to the lives of others, because we know that it's not simply an intellectual exercise—that is, the gospel—but it is most certainly the saving power of the triune God. And so, Father, we thank You for revealing Your Son, Your beloved Son who is precious in Your sight, and now in ours.

But we also thank You that You minister to our consciences in such a way as to relieve us from the guilt that we experience for past sins. Father, sometimes Satan afflicts us and sometimes the flesh rouses it again. Lord, we know that the gospel is a salve that we enjoy. And we're thankful for it because it brings relief in the presence of coming judgment. And Lord, we rejoice that now that judgment is borne by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, as we bow before You we recognize that this is a glorious gospel and that the world needs it. But we also recognize that we live in a world that is just wrecked by sin. And Lord, all of the losses that Sig reminded us of today, including those men who have lost relatives close to them, (we think about Roger and his mother-in-law.) We ask that Your hand would be upon his family. And we ask, Lord, that as the funeral approaches that You will be ministering to the family as they have need. And we think about Alex and the loss of his wife, and others.

We also ask, Lord, that You will continue to bless Bruce in these days, that You'll strengthen His body. We're thankful for the good presentation that he was able to make to Your glory at the dinner. Father, we also pray and ask for Ted. We're thankful for his ability to teach, for his grasp of Your word. We thank You for his willingness to step in and teach as he did this past week. And Lord, we ask especially for him in regard to his surgery. We pray, Father, that You will make it successful. And we pray now that he'll have a speedy recovery. Lord, we pray Your blessing on both him and Diane, and we ask that Your hand would be upon them for good.

Lord, there are many other things that we bring to You at a time like this, concerns of the heart. We pray that You'll minister to each one of us as we have need, and those we love. And Father, we ask that You would do this for Your glory and our good, and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Let me ask that you listen now to God's word. *“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, (although the Law and the Prophets bear*

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witness to it), the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom 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. It 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.”

Bishop Rodgers: Amen.

Don Maurer: This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. You know, it’s amazing how sometimes I remember that and sometimes I don’t.

Ted Wood: That’s just a Presbyterian thing. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: I know. *(:laughter)*

Sig Tragard: Whoa! I didn’t see that! Matt didn’t see it either.

Don Maurer: Jeff, what kind of mischief are you up to now?

Jeff: Oh, the slide went backwards to Sig standing on the beach.

Sig: It did not.

Don: Oh, it did! Wow; how about that!

Sig: It didn’t go backwards! *(Laughter)* Jim, help me out!

Jeff: Did you see that?

Brave Man: I saw it.

Matt Reichert: I didn’t want to see it. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right; let me ask you this. We started a long time ago with a question. And that question, if you remember, was this. How do we understand the righteousness of God? And there were three ways that we could understand the righteousness of God, remember? Is the righteousness of God who He is? Is the righteousness of God what He does—that is, His judgments? Or is the righteousness of God something that He gives? This is when we think about the imputation of the impartation of righteousness to the believer.

Now when we think about that question, those questions that were earlier in our time in Romans, one of the things that we said was that we see the first two. We see in the righteousness of God who He is and what He does. And you see that, for instance, in these passages.

For instance in 1:16, “*the power of God,*” right? Let’s go back and let me just point out some of these things in their context, and you’ll see how this works out. “*For 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 to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith.*” So the righteousness of God is revealed.

Now 1:18. “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness.*” And then in 1:19: “*For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.*”

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And then we see on and on that one of the things that appears very clear is that God is righteous, and God does righteously. And so we very clearly understand who He is and what He does. He is righteous and He reveals His judgment against unrighteousness as He looks at the world and sees its unrighteousness.

So we’ve been able to see that the first two questions have been answered pretty regularly—who God is and what God does. Who is He? He is righteous. What does He do? He judges on the basis of that righteousness.

But now what we’re going to see is *a righteousness expressed*, a righteousness imputed or imparted to the believer. That’s what we’re going to see here.

We’ve talked about these words. The bishop has a smile on his face. Last time he was anticipating those words “*but now.*” And we should understand that those words “*but now*” in Romans 3:21 are those words that remind us that all that God has been saying—that He is a righteous Judge who judges righteously—now there is a way out of that righteous judgment for our unrighteousness.

I want you to think about Martin Luther. Martin Luther understood God to be righteous and to be a righteous Judge. And he understood himself to be fundamentally unrighteous. And so he was always going and he was always confessing. He was never coming to the realization of the gospel until he understood Romans. And when he understood Romans, and words like “*but now a righteousness of God is revealed*” through faith in Christ,—when he understood those words, he said that it was like the doors of heaven were opened.

And that’s why people like Martyn Lloyd-Jones—a great preacher in our time; he’s passed now—but he said that “*there are no more wonderful words in the whole of Scripture than just these two words, ‘but now.’*” And that’s why, because the righteousness of God is revealed in such a way that shows us that we are not under condemnation because of a righteous Judge, because God is righteous and does righteously.

Now we’re going to see at the very end of the text that the just God becomes the justifier. And the question is how does the just God, the righteous God, the Judge who judges righteously, become the justifier of the unjust? We’re going to see that. This is the beauty of this text in front of us.

Bishop: It’s propitiation.

Jeff: What’s that?

Bishop: Propitiation.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: Not expiation.

Jeff: See, he’s anticipating already. Okay, so let’s make some distinctions before we actually get into the text—some distinctions that I think are really good and fundamental for us to make. First of all let me show you something that the King James says.

In verse 21 the King James says, “*The righteousness of God without the law is manifest.*” Now let me show you another way to translate this, maybe a better way to translate this. “*The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.*”

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Now what’s the problem? What’s the nuance that’s here? Well, the nuance, the difference that’s here between those two ways of understanding it, are a contrast. In other words, the King James makes it sound as if there are two sorts or kinds of righteousness, when there are not two kinds of righteousness. There is one righteousness; there is one righteousness that is revealed from God. And that righteousness is now revealed apart from works.

Now we’re going to understand what that means. But what does Paul mean when he says that now there is a righteousness of God that is apart from works? It’s not two kinds of righteousness. It’s not that there was this righteousness in the Old Testament, and now there’s this righteousness in the New Testament; it’s not that. What is it?

Well, we have to ask this question. What does it mean for this righteousness to be revealed apart from works? That’s an interesting question in and of itself. The question really sets us to thinking about this. Can the righteousness of God be attained by works? Or could it have been attained by works in the Old Testament, and now it’s being revealed apart from works? Is that what it means?

And we have to immediately say this, especially those of us who know what is a little bit further on into Romans. We have to say no; that’s not it at all. Why? Because if you go to Romans 9:32 one of the things that you find immediately is that Paul clears this up. He says that *“The Jews did not attain righteousness? And why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works.”* In other words, they tried this. They tried with all their might to be declared righteous by God on the basis of their works. And Paul says that there was never any chance of that happening.

And so that’s not what it means. What does it mean then, that this righteousness of God is now revealed apart from works? If it doesn’t mean that at one time you could receive the righteousness of God by doing, and now you don’t have to receive it by your doing; you receive it in another way,—if it doesn’t mean that, then what does it mean? What does verse 21 mean—*“apart from works?”*

Well, it means a different era. In other words, let me put it like this. The law here has reference to the Mosaic era. I put it like this. There is the covenant of works. And the covenant of works ends in Genesis chapter 3 with the Fall. And then what begins? Well, what begins is the covenant of grace. And the covenant of grace has five exfoliations—five beautiful petals that unfold, right?

And what are those petals? Well, it begins with Noah and the covenant of preservation. And then what? Abraham.

Now what happens after Abraham? Let’s stop and think about Abraham for a minute? In Genesis 15 is Abraham justified by works? No. He’s justified by faith.

Now let’s go here to Christ and the New Covenant. And we go to Christ and the New Covenant and look up Galatians chapter 3 and verses 7-9, and what do we find?

Transcriber’s Note: Galatians 3:7-9, NKJV. *“Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.”*

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Jeff: We find that we are children of Abraham if we have faith in the promise given to Abraham. And Abraham is called a believer. And it is said in that passage that the gospel was preached to Abraham.

I want you to think about that. That’s back in Genesis chapter 12. The gospel is preached to Abraham. He has faith in the gospel and he’s justified by believing that gospel. And so Abraham is a believer by faith.

Ted: What was the gospel preached to Abraham? What was the gospel?

Jeff: The gospel preached to Abraham is that the message that was given to Abraham would be a blessing to all nations. The promise given to him would be a blessing to the nations. At least that’s what’s quoted from Genesis 12 in Galatians 3.

Matt: Jeff, a question in chapter 9 in regard to the faith that they didn’t have. What would that faith look like then? What should it have looked like for Israel if they had exercised that faith?

Jeff: Yes; that’s a great question. Let’s talk about that right now. Plopped right down in the middle is the law. And think about Paul for a minute. I mean, think about Paul in terms of his coming to saving faith.

It’s kind of an interesting thing when you think about Paul’s chronology, right? Three years in Damascus in Arabia. And then there’s a short trip to Jerusalem. And then there’s a ten-year period where we just don’t know where he is. And then there’s a one-year period, and he spends that in Antioch with Barnabas. And those are the fourteen years he mentions in Galatians.

What is he doing for the three years in Damascus? I think he’s ministering in the ten years around Tarsus. But what’s he doing in the three years that he’s in Damascus and Arabia? Well I think that what he’s doing is that he’s asking himself some questions. And one of the questions that he’s asking himself is this. Why the law?

Because think about it. Here you have the law given. And it’s smack dab right in the middle of the promise of faith. Why the law?

Because if you think about it, what has happened? Well, in the life of Israel the sacrifices have really taken a back seat. They took a back seat in the Assyrian captivity and in the Babylonian captivity. They were reinstated at the return. And in 70 A.D. they’re going to come to an end again. When you think about Judaism you think about how the law has taken a preeminence in the life of Judaism, and not sacrifice.

In fact today, if you ask them about sacrifices, they’ll say, “Well, that’s really just prayer. Prayer substitutes for sacrifice.”

But here’s the main thing. The main thing is that they’ll say this. And I had a rabbi say this one time at a college trip we took for a class on indigenous religious traditions. He said, “The problem with you Christians is that you need Jesus. But we Jews have the law.” All of a sudden the law gets raised to a point of preeminence.

The question that Paul is asking is why the law? Why? Because the law for him as a Pharisee had taken a place of preeminence in his life. He was no different than those in Romans 9:32 who were pursuing this by the law. So he has to ask himself, and he does in two different epistles. One is in Romans and one is in Galatians.

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Why the law, though? And his answer is that the law was meant to drive us to the promise. And how is the promise visibly manifest in the Old Testament? Through the sacrificial system. The promise was that there would be a Substitute for you.

That Substitute was visibly manifest every time you would drag your lamb. The priest would put his hands on it, transfer your sins to it and then slaughter it on the altar. And you were supposed to see what you deserved being effected in that lamb. And the promise was that there was going to be One who would come and substitute Himself for you. And those sacrifices were only types and shadows and promises of that one to come.

But the law was only meant to drive you to that. In other words, you break the law. Go and offer that sacrifice. You broke the law again? Okay, then offer that sacrifice. And oh, by the way, there’s a morning sacrifice; go and do it. And oh, yes, there’s an evening sacrifice; go to that too.

Okay. So the point is that this was always about faith in the promise of the coming Substitute envisioned in the sacrifice. The law was to drive you to that. Okay? Does that make sense? Okay. So I think that was what faith was to look like. Yes?

Ted: Going back to Abraham, it says that Abraham believed the gospel.

Jeff: Yes.

Ted: For him the gospel was “You will be a blessing to all nations.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: So Abraham is sitting in his tent. And he’s thinking, *What happens after I die?*

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: “Does God have any expectations for me?” I mean, it just seems like such a truncated gospel for Abraham.

Ted: Yes. I mean, if you think about Genesis 3:15, that feels like a truncated gospel, right?

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 3:15:

*“He will bruise your head,
And you will bruise His heel.”*

Jeff: The Substitute is going to come and trample on the head of the serpent. And the servant is going to nip at His heel.

Brave Man: What God told Abraham was that in your Seed the nations shall be blessed. And then later Paul explains that this is Christ. Christ was the Seed that He was talking about. So they’re quoting a direct reference to Christ as the Seed.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Brave Man: And he also says that it wasn’t seeds; it wasn’t all your descendants; it was one Seed.

Jeff: One seed; that’s right.

Brave Man: It was Christ.

Jeff: That’s right.

Brave Man: Last time you were here it says that “*there is no one righteous; no, not one.*” If you go back to the Psalm reference, it says, “*There is no one who does good,*” which reflects the Old Testament vision of righteousness—doing good. So all those who

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pursue righteousness from the law should read Psalm 14. There is none who does good; there is none who does righteousness under the law.

Jeff: That’s right.

Brave Man: There is no one who becomes righteous by the law.

Jeff: That’s right. That’s excellent.

Bishop: It seems to me that the promise is also that *“It will be your God, and you will be My people.”*

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: That’s good news.

Jeff: Yes; that’s good news.

Bishop: Secondly, in the Abrahamic covenant only God passes between the animals.

Jeff: Yes; that’s right.

Bishop: That’s absolute grace; that replaces us.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: So these are deep things.

Jeff: Yeah. I mean, you know, it’s like you say. You’re indicating that we’re scratching the surface here, and you’re right. I mean, it’s the Genesis 15 model of separating and God passing through the halves in verse 17. *“I will secure your blessedness.”*

Bishop: Right. It’s grace.

Matt: Yes. And it was also emphasized that Abraham believed and trusted in the promise, whatever that promise was. The song comes to mind: “Standing on the promises of God,” right?

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: It’s trusting God at His word without fully understanding or comprehending it. I’m going to trust You anyhow.

Jeff: Yeah. You know, that’s the thing, isn’t it, wherein that you really have to be mindful of this, especially today. I think there are so many people today who are saying, “What do I do in this situation we’re in?” You fill in the blank with whatever that happens to be. And I think that the interesting thing that I would say is, look at the Psalms where David is praying. Or look at the New Testament passages. The government is telling the Christians Peter and John that you may not speak of Jesus. And they say, “Well, we’re going to have to disobey that.”

And then they go home. And the church says, “What are we going to do?” And they say, “Well, let’s pray because God is sovereign.” And they start out to pray, “O Sovereign God.” And they pray.

And the question is “what do we do then?” Well then they go to bed and they get up and they go to work, and they live faithfully before the Lord. I mean, that’s just it; that’s the mundane Christian life; you know what I mean? Bryan?

Bryan Whittington: I t’s sad to see that there aren’t many people that have people speaking the truth like we’ve been blessed to have with you and Bruce. False churches teach a truncated gospel. And we think it’s love; we think it’s good enough. Are we good enough? Are we praying enough? Or we doing missions enough? Are we doing that? And

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then we read things like Matthew 5:17 where Jesus said, “*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*”

Jeff: Yes.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bryan: So because we don’t know about propitiation, because we don’t know about Christ’s righteousness, because we don’t know the other side of the full gospel, we have this weight. Someone says, “I’m carrying this burden of guilt and I just don’t understand it.” And it breaks my heart that more don’t know this, because this is amazingly good news.

Jeff: Yes; great news.

Bryan: And as a father I messed up for years. And unfortunately I don’t know if I showed that grace as well as I ought to. But I tell my kids, “Don’t look at me. Look at Christ and the gospel. That’s where peace comes. I don’t think that’s shared enough.

Jeff: Yeah. It’s despite us; that’s for sure.

Ted: You were talking about the law with Paul.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: It’s interesting listening to a podcast by Jordan Peterson with Dennis Prager.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: A lot of you know Dennis Prager from videos. Prager is a very zealous Conservative Jew. And Peterson asked him what the Jews had that made them different or special. Prager really drilled down the law. That was everything; that was all of what made Jews special, because they had heard from God and they had the law.

Jeff: Wow!

Ted: So that confirms exactly what you said.

Jeff: Yeah. Oh, wow! That’s sad when you think about it.

Ted: But we all default to that, don’t we?

Jeff: Yeah, we do.

Matt: But the truth is, they are. That’s why they’re God’s chosen people; they have the law. And they were supposed to pass it on to everybody else, and they kept it to themselves.

Jeff: But not the law, right? They were actually supposed to pass on the promise given to Abraham. And the law was a tool to sort of get people to see the need for that promise, right?

Matt: Right. Without the preaching of the law there’s no conviction of sin.

Jeff: That’s right.

Bishop: Paul says that without the law there is no sin.

Jeff: That’s right.

Bishop: In other words the law is given to reveal that what we’re doing is sinful. We don’t know that.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: We think it’s painful.

Jeff: Yeah, yeah.

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Bishop: But now suddenly you discover before God that this is actually sin and that you are held accountable for that sin.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: Would there be a distinction between the Ten commandments, the Ten commandments being for everyone? And of course they had their Levitical system.

Jeff: Well, they had their application of those. So you had the ceremonial system and the theonomic structure of Israel; those kinds of things are particular to them. So those kinds of things are particular to them, although I think that some people would love to see a theonomic structure brought over into our own day. But I would rather just talk about the equity of the law being applicable, not the theonomic structure.

Matt: Don't we need to preach the law as far as—

Jeff: Absolutely. But there is a way of preaching the law that can become legalistic. Do you know what I'm saying by that? So you preach the law. And then what you say is, “How are you going to get out of this? Well, you get out of this by grace, because God is the One who takes the curse of the law upon Himself,” right?

And then what you say is this. You turn around and you say, “But how do you know you've received grace?” And then it becomes a matter of obedience to the law.

Now there's a sense in which that's true. A justified person will be a sanctified person. But there is such a way of presenting it that can be very much focused on the law rather than on Christ.

Matt: When you're sharing with people, their normal response is “I'm a pretty good person.”

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: And according to human standards they are. But we often say, “Do you know how many sins it takes to keep you out of heaven and to send you to hell? And the answer is just one.” So I think the human reality is that we don't want to think of ourselves as sinful.

Jeff: No; that's right, we don't.

Matt: Which one was that? I can't remember. *(Laughter)*

Sig: I'm getting a good workout this morning.

Ron Baling: I use the example when I'm talking to unbelievers that Christianity is the way the whole world works, because if we all would just concentrate on law, we wouldn't get anything done. We would be accusing each other and trying to rectify things. Everybody forgives somebody. If you have friends, you've forgiven them and they've forgiven you. That's the way the world works.

Jeff: Well, the great thing is that when you think about Communion itself, Communion is the way that Luke talks to us about what happened in the Upper Room, because Jesus said, “Take this and give it to one another and pass it to one another.” And what is it that you are to pass to one another? It's the cup of forgiveness, right? So how do you take the cup of forgiveness and pass it to a person on your right who you don't forgive? It's a convicting thing.

Bishop: Here's an example of Paul preaching law but in the context of gospel.

Jeff: Okay.

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Bishop: Colossians 3:12: “*Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving,*” and on and on he goes. But here’s the point we overlook. We don’t put on as God’s chosen ones obeying the law, but those are gifts. We are beloved; we are chosen; we are God’s holy ones set apart. Those are God’s gifts. He did this; we didn’t do it. We would probably have resisted it when it began.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: But because of that then we can talk about the things to put on. But you don’t put them on except for the fact that you already know that by grace you are beloved of God, chosen and set apart.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: Yes, there it is. If I weren’t a Presbyterian by conviction the bishop would make me want to become an Anglican. *(Laughter)*

Ted: He’s not like every Anglican. *(Laughter)*

Sig: He’s not like every Anglican.

Ted: And first of all he’s not like Sig. *(Laughter)*

Sig: Thanks be to God!

Jeff: All right. Moving right along here,-- *(Laughter)* All right, so let’s think about this. So the law is an administration of the covenant of grace that we talked about. However I want you to think about this point that Paul makes in verse 21. The Law and the Prophets bear witness to a righteousness of God that is expressed apart from the law.

Now you say, “Now where does that happen?” Well, it’s just like we’ve been talking about. Where does that happen? If you go to Luke 24:44 there is this. Remember, we’ve been talking about how the sacrificial system exemplifies how it is that we are to exercise faith. We’re to exercise faith in the Substitute who is to come. Jesus is that Substitute.

Now listen to what He says; this is Luke 24:44. “*These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you: that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.*” And so why the law? It drives us to the promise that’s captured in substitutionary atonement in the sacrificial system, which drives us to Jesus Christ. And so that’s the reason for the law: it’s righteousness to us through faith in Christ. Go ahead, Don.

Don: Yes. I would have loved to have been at that Bible study. It must have taken a long time, because if you understand the promise it’s all through Scripture, from Genesis 3:15 to Noah, to the almost sacrifice of Isaac to the Passover, Psalm 22, Psalm 16, all through the Scripture. And it’s progressive, as you know. And it just goes on and on and on, the promise of Christ; it’s beautiful.

Jeff: Yes, absolutely. Well, we’re actually going to talk about some of that, Don, in just a minute. But who needs this? Well, Paul says that “*there is no distinction. All have fallen short of the glory of God.*” All have sinned; all are in need of this sort of righteousness that’s expressed apart from the law.

However, “*They are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ*” is the statement that he makes that I want to pull apart a little bit. So let’s just do that.

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First of all, what is justification? Well, I can't think of a better summary of justification than what we find in the shorter Catechism. The Shorter Catechism of Westminster asks, “*What is justification?*” The answer is: “*Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.*”

Now actually you have three parts to justification as understood here, three parts. First of all let me start with Christ and what He did. So you have Christ. And when you think about Christ you think about the obedience of Christ. But we don't think about the singular obedience of Christ; we have to talk about it aspectively. In other words, what are the different aspects of this one obedience?

Well, we talk about the *active obedience of Christ*. And that is His adherence to the law. In other words He shows Himself to be a Lamb without blemish—spotless, righteous.

But we also see a *passive obedience*. And that passive obedience is Him allowing Himself to be placed under the curse for us on the cross.

Now I think it was Bryan who mentioned a truncated gospel. And oftentimes if you ask people “what did Christ do for you?”, (they will say), “Well, He died on the cross for me.” And you actually have only one aspect of Christ's obedience—His passive obedience. He goes to the cross for me. He bears the curse for me.

But that's a truncated gospel because if we don't have the active righteousness or the active obedience of Christ expressed in the gospel then we are in a very problematic way. Why?

Well, let's think of it like this. How does what Christ does on our behalf transfer to us? Well when I think about that definition I think about two things. I think about forgiveness of sin and I think about what he says: the imputation of righteousness, being constituted righteous. That's the example of my account being empty, and Christ taking from His account and transferring it to my account. And what is it that He transfers? His righteousness.

Now think about it like this. It is the passive obedience of Christ that gives rise to my forgiveness. In other words He bears the curse that I might be forgiven.

Now let's say that this is all we have. If I'm in a position where I'm just forgiven and not righteous, that means I start all over again. I'm like Adam in the garden. I get another shot at this. Now that are the odds of me being successful in that? Not very good.

So we need the active obedience of Christ, Christ's adherence to the law. Why? Because that becomes the basis for the imputation of righteousness to my account. And so I am both constituted righteous and forgiven of my sins. And I receive both of these by faith, which itself is the gift of God. Yes, Bryan?

Bryan: Is it possible to be going to heaven even if God forgave us—that passive part—because of Adam's imputed sin to us of original sin? Even with that forgiveness we wouldn't be able to go in because we still wouldn't have righteousness.

Jeff: No, you wouldn't be able to go in because you have to be righteous in the sight of God, right? And so if you're just forgiven you're placed in a position of neutrality. And that's kind of an unthinkable position in one sense, right?

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Let's just say it like this. One could say, “Well, God forgives me of all my sins.” Okay, fine. But you're still not righteous. Why? Because I need to obey. What does God's word say? God's word says that if I need to show myself righteous before God I need to obey all the law. To fail at just one point of it is to break all of it. And the odds of me keeping the law perfectly even after I'm forgiven are slim to none.

Bryan: Even after I'm forgiven, as soon as I take the next breath, I sin.

Jeff: Yes, that's right. Yes, Matt?

Sig: We have a question back here.

Brave Man: I've been reading Oswald Chambers. He talks about the essence of reconciliation. He notes the fact that we are sinners not out of choice; we're born sinners. It wasn't our choice and there's nothing we can do about it. So we have to totally rely on God. And as soon as we see our need for God, then that's when He steps in and gives us faith to believe.

Jeff: See, I would disagree a little bit with Oswald at that point, because I would say that we see our need because God has stepped in. I think that until God steps in we don't see that need.

Ted: But that would be Oswald Chambers; that's the way he thinks.

Jeff: I just don't; he's. Yes, Matt?

Matt: So this is the act of God. There is nothing we can do to get that, correct?

Jeff: Right.

Matt: So this pragmatically helps me. But when somebody claims to have received the forgiveness of Christ but he's still living like the world, usually they don't have the desire to be like Christ and to have His righteousness. And that would be the issue. We say this. If you know the Savior it's going to change your behavior.

Jeff: Yeah.

Matt: And so we call them RPGs for people who are kind of on the fence: repentance, purity, growth and service. Are those the characteristics of this person? That's the test of Christ in them.

Jeff: Yes, that's good; RPGs.

Ted: But that always makes me a little nervous, because it always comes down to obvious performance.

Jeff: Yeah, but I know what you mean, because you can sin grievously and still be a child of God. But in general you know what Matt is saying. Matt is saying that you have union with Christ, right? I am both justified and sanctified, and I can't have just one and not the other. So you would expect fruit from that, even though there may be a serious failure, or a length of time where he's just trundling along.

Ted: To me the key is not so much private and personal behavior, but incorporation into the body.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: That's where everything happens.

Jeff: Oh, I see; I see.

Ted: So it's not so much are they cussing, smoking, chewing or going with girls that do. Do they spend time and do they have joy being in the body?

“But Now”

Jeff: You leave Don out of this. *(Laughter)*

Ted: Do they love the brotherhood? Do they take joy in it? Because once you're in the body, that's where the chance comes for correction and encouragement and admonition and all those things.

Jeff: Yes. But it's not an either/or though, right? It's both/and.

Ted: I see it as one over another. You have to be incorporated. You have to do—

Jeff: I totally agree with that. You have to be in that body. And in the body there's personal accountability.

Ted: Everything—encouragement, joy, praise, etc.

Jeff: That's good.

Don: But you could be in the body and be a tare.

Ted: What?

Don: You could be in the body and be a tare; there's a possibility of that.

Ted: It's possible. But Jesus says, “Wait till the end.”

Don: True.

Ted: He's coming back for the pruning or the weeding, or whatever. That's absolutely true.

Jeff: Well I'm going to press on, although I have no hope of finishing today.

(Laughter) That's absolutely fine. You know, you guys are so unpredictable. *(Laughter)* Some days I think to myself, man, they are quiet! And other days I think to myself, this is great! So you know, I can't predict you. So I'm not going to try. *(Laughter)*

So “*by His grace*” is another phrase in that line that we need to consider. And I want us to think about that for just a minute. This is the important distinction that I would make. We often talk about grace as undeserved from God, and I don't think that's actually right, because think about it like this. When I was a kid my dad would sometimes just pull out a dollar bill and say, “Here you go.” And I would think to myself, *I didn't do anything to deserve that*. That's undeserved grace.

But that's not the position we're in, like we're just neutral, right? Grace is more like this. Let's say that I lit the house on fire, killed the family dog, poured sugar into the gas tank. And my dad came up and gave me \$100 and said, “Here you go, son. Go out and spend it on anything you'd like.” That would be more like grace. I'm getting it in spite of demerit. And so that's grace.

Ted: \$100 will get you a nice dog. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Maybe you can keep the rest and rebuild the house. You know, that sort of thing. But that's the idea of grace that we've been looking at in Romans the whole time, right? You guys have fallen short of the glory of God. We're undeserving of this, all in sin. And so the grace that's given to you is not just undeserved; this is in spite of your demerit.

And then “*the redemption that is in Christ*.” We're told that we're redeemed. And again you've got to think of it in terms of a payment for the penalty of sin. And that's what redemption is: the payment for the penalty of sin. And when we think about the payment for the penalty of sin we can't help but think about substitutionary atonement, which is at the core of the Old Testament sacrificial system.

“But Now”

Now I want you to see this. Don mentioned this earlier. I want you to see this, and you probably can't (see it) up on the screen, so I'll read it to you. This comes from Isaiah 53. And if you just listen to the pronouns you hear the substitutionary atonement found in the Old Testament. Just listen.

*“Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sins He carried.
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten of God and afflicted.
But He was pierced through for our transgressions;
He was crushed for our iniquities.
The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray;
Each of us has turned to his own way.
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him.”*

That's substitutionary atonement. Now I want you to think about that.

Sig: Hold on. That's Isaiah?

Jeff: That's Isaiah 53. I think it's verses 4-6. So I think what I'll do is that I think at this point I'll pick it up next time, and we'll start there, okay?

All right, why don't we pray? Father, thank You for this day, for the time You've given, and for the blessing of being together and being able to talk about these things that are in Your word. Lord, strengthen us; encourage our hearts. We thank You for Your word, for the Lord Jesus Christ and for the Spirit that indwells us, and for the life that You've given us to live today. Lord, let us live it well in Jesus Christ, as we know that we are pleasing in Your sight, for we ask it in His name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)