

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Afternoon

Reformation Sunday

Date 30th October 2022

**Preacher Rev Philip Knowles, Ps/Hymns Ps 32:1-5, Salzburg
312, 333 Tune 619 481. Read: Galatians 2:16-21 Text:
Galatians 2:16**

Title Justified by Christ Alone.

The protestant reformation throughout Europe centred upon the great question, how can guilty sinners find acceptance with God.

To use Biblical terminology this was the very question Bildad asked in **Job 25:4** "**How then can man be justified with God.**"

Before the protestant reformation, the spiritual state of Europe, and where Luther lived in Germany was superstitious, spiritual deadness, and darkness.

The Church of Rome made every attempt to hide the truth of the Gospel by church traditions, Mari-ology, idolatries, relics and superstitions.

The common people were taught to look to the Pope, Mary and Church. People could only listen to the priest's words.

This was finally exposed when the Pope Leo the 10th, was in the midst of a major fundraising campaign in Germany to finance the renovation of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome

In order to raise money, the Pope had a quick scheme, and if presented in the right way it would cause the people to give big and keep giving leaving themselves with almost nothing.

The Pope revived the selling of indulgences for the forgiveness of sins.

In Rome's teaching, the selling of indulgences was a document or piece of paper granting the pardon for sin.

According to Rome's teaching when a family member died and went to a place called purgatory, which they suffered for sin.

This piece of paper stated that time in purgatory would be cut short and they would enter heaven, because money had been paid.

The man chosen to deliver these documents was a Priest named Johann Tetzel.

He would carry his box and paper. Then said these words, "***as soon as the coin in the coffer rings that soul from purgatory springs.***"

However, Martin Luther was grieved, because the people were being deceived by the Church of Rome,

and let me say nothing has changed today with the Church of Rome she still deceives people, and perverts the truth of the gospel.

Allow me to remind you, The Pope is not the head of the Church, the Pope and his priests cannot forgive sin. The Pope is not the victor of Christ on earth.

Mary is not the Queen of heaven. Mary does not hear and answer prayer, Mary is not a mediator to help Christ. Pardon for sin is not a mixture of faith and goods works.

“There is no priest but Christ, no sacrifice but Calvary, no confessional but the throne of grace, and no authority but the Word of God.”

Martin Luther learned by his studies from Galatians and Romans, ***the just shall live by faith.***

He understood for the first time, pardon of sin and peace with God, could not be earned by human effort, **but rather it was the free gift of God for guilty sinners whose faith rests in Christ alone.**

On the 31st October 1517, Martin Luther, went to the Church in Wittenberg, Germany and nailed 95 theses or statements with gospel truth to expose the false teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

Though Rome accused the German reformer with new heresy, the gospel Luther preached and defended was nothing new, rather it was the gospel message as preached by Christ which had been hidden for centuries now rediscovered and re-emphasised.

The Reformation throughout Europe was essentially a great awakening, created, and sustained by the Spirit of God.

It impacted political, social, cultural and even economic life, the reason being wherever the Gospel is taught, it delivers sinners and impacts society.

God’s people, therefore, must always celebrate the Protestant Reformation and continually give thanks to God alone for His mighty works.

The reformation centres upon the teaching of Justification, the pardon of sins, by faith alone in Christ alone, that is because the message of the reformation flows from **Scripture alone**.

The Apostle Paul writes primarily of Justification in Romans and Galatians. **Romans 3:24** "**being justified freely by His grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** **Galatians 2:16** "**knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**"

I FIRST THE MEANING OF THE WORD JUSTIFIED.

Between **verses 16-17** Paul uses the word "**justified**" 4 times.

It is vital then, to look at the definition or meaning of the word justified," or its related words in order to grasp its truth.

What is justification, the **SC Q33** "**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.**"

The verb **justification or just** both in Old and New Testaments means **to declare righteous** –or **to be right with God**.

Justification was a legal term used in Paul's day. Therefore, when Paul takes the legal term and applies it spiritually, It is a term to do with the courts of heaven. It defines our change of legal standing before God who is our righteous judge.

This means **justification is a change in a sinner's legal position before God.**

Justification is a complete act. Justification is declared position.

Justification or your position in Christ, does not grow, progress, advance.

Believer you will never be more justified tomorrow than you are today. You will never be in a better position with God tomorrow, next year than you are right now.

Oh yes, your love will grow and your knowledge of Him deepens, but your legal position in Him remains eternally and unchangeably the same.

This is made clear in **Rom 5:1** “**Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**” The word **being** reads **having been justified**, refers to an act complete and finished.

We must grasp this truth, justification is a legal transaction. The justified sinner is no longer condemned before God, but declared forgiven by God.

The OT term to justify means to make the legal announcement that a person’s judicial position is in harmony with the demands of God’s law.

There is a legal scene recorded in **Deut 25:1** “***If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.***”

There is a matter of controversy and judgment to be settled in the court of law by the judge.

Notice that the two words “**justify**” and “**condemn**” are used in such a way as to show that the justifying of the righteous is a legal matter.

The controversy in this scene shows that the wicked or guilty party is condemned, meaning they are found guilty and fully liable for punishment.

At the same time, the righteous party in the controversy is justified of any charge; meaning they are not found to be guilty.

They are cleared before the judge and declared righteous by the judge.

The NT words also shows that to justify is a legal term, signifying that the demands of the law have been satisfied so that sinner is no longer condemned. Many examples of this could be given, especially in the book of Roman.

For instance, in **Rom 8:33** end with an statement ***"It is God that justifieth."*** Whereas **verse 34** opens with question ***"Who is he that condemneth?"***

Both condemnation and justification are legal terms, they do with one's standing before God.

The words **condemned, condemnation, condemneth**, is the statement or verdict given by the Judge about a person, concerning their guilt of sin and the punishment they deserve. They are condemned.

Rom 3:19 states God legal, judicial verdict of fallen humanity, ***"all the world ... guilty before God."*** The word ***"guilty"*** means, ***under judgment***. All men in this world are subject to the judgment of God.

The same applies with the word **justification, justifieth to justify**, is the statement or verdict declared by the Judge about a person, that they are no longer guilty and will never come under punishment for sin. When God justifies then you cannot be cursed or condemned.

Now both OT and NT definition of the word justify are illustrated in **Numbers 23**. Balak the King of Moab, purposed to destroy Israel, not by battle but by means of the false prophet named Balaam who was employed to curse the children of Israel.

However, Balaam said in **Num 23:8** ***“How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the LORD hath not defied?”***

He could not undo God’s blessings; he could not curse what God had legally and eternally protected.

Notice **verse 20** ***“He hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.”***
verse 21 ***“He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel.”***

The emphasis is a legal standing before God. God's having no sight of the sin of His people, ***“He hath not beheld...neither hath He seen.”*** As already noted, these words don’t mean that they had no sin, for they had.

Rather, the scripture declares that their sin was not beheld or seen, because they were ***perfectly pardon, or justified.***

This is the blessing of free justification, all transgressions are forgiven. The complete removal of sin from the sight of God. **Ps 32:1** ***“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”*** **Hebrews 10:17** ***“And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.”***

All your transgressions, and sins that have piled up like a mountain over the years in your life, God has remitted them with none act of grace. God has removed them all from you.

What a blessing this was to Martin Luther, he had the same comfort as **Samuel Whitelock** who wrote, **Hymn 333** in our book, ***“though the accuser roar of ills that I have done, I know well and thousands more, Jehovah findeth none.***

what a blessing to you believer, your account of sins, is legally settled, fully acquitted.

This why we need to grasp the meaning of the word justified.

II SECOND, THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORD JUSTIFIED.

In **verse 16** Paul states “...***that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ.***”

Paul is speaking of the foundation or basis of a sinner’s justification, and he makes it clear that is has nothing to do with the works or efforts of men, but in Christ alone.

This is vital to understand. You see, we can get into bondage and really believe that our justification depends on how well we work, and then are never assured of being accepted because when we have done are best we will realise, “we haven’t done enough.”

If justification depends on my loving God, then no matter how much I love him, do I love him enough? If it depends on my praying, have I prayed enough? If it depends on my read the bible, Do I read enough? Of obeying, have I obeyed enough? When have I ever done enough?

And the answer is never.

This is what **Martin Luther** discovered, he said “***I was a good monk, and I kept the rule of my order so strictly that I may say that if ever a monk got to heaven by his monkery, it was I,...if I had kept any longer, I would have killed myself with vigils, prayers, reading, and other work.***”

With all his effort, he had no peace, until he viewed himself an unrighteous sinner and Jesus the righteous Saviour.

To be justified is to be declared righteous on the foundation of and by the merit of Christ’s perfect righteousness.

Luther summed his testimony of grace, by this poem “*Lord Jesus Thou art my righteousness, and I am thy sin. Thou tookest upon Thee what was mine, yet set on me what was Thine. Thou becamest what Thou wert not, that I might become what I was not.*”

Paul said in **Romans 5:18** at the end of the verse “*by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.*”

The same in **verse 19** “*...so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*” These words make it clear that the only foundation whereby sinners are declared righteous or justified is by faith in Christ and His righteousness.

This settles our legal standing at the judgment bar of God. It is the righteousness of Jesus Christ freely made over to my account.

God takes all my sin and places it to Christ account, and then He takes all the perfect obedience of Christ and places it on my account.

That is the reason why believers must not, cannot and shall not perish, because Christ is there righteousness by faith without works.

III THE MEANS OF THE WORD JUSTIFIED.

Those who are justified are those who have received Christ as Saviour by the means of faith, they have **believed in Jesus Christ**, they are **justified by the faith of Christ,**”

My faith, or how amount of faith does not save me, my faith is weak, always doubting, but when my faith is in Christ then I'm and secure, I'm pardoned.

Faith must have a focus which is on Christ, otherwise it is an empty faith.

Saving Faith finds a resting place in the person and work of Christ. **Faith is** receiving Christ, or believing on Christ, as **John 1:12** says “***But as many as received him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.***”

It is an abandoning of self-merit, self-effort and resting by faith only and fully on Christ. Therefore, since the Gospel commands men to believe on Christ, to look to Him, to come to Him.

The song writer said, “***My Faith looks up to thee thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour Divine.***” To look anywhere else is to be eternally lost, but look to Him is to be forever forgiven.