

Good morning

My desire this morning is to accomplish two things.

First I want to give you an overview and an invitation to our new Wednesday evening study that will begin Wednesday, September 7th at 7 PM called We Are Protestant.

Last year around this time the Roman Catholic Pope - Pope Francis came to America. Pastor Barry took that occasion - with all of the media attention surrounding the Pope's visit and preached a sermon entitled WHY I AM PROTESTANT

This sermon is one of our most frequently downloaded sermons - it asked and answered many questions concerning who we are as Protestants.

In that 2017 is the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation the Elders have determined that we as a Fellowship should know why Harvest Fellowship is an evangelical Protestant church.

We will examine the PEOPLE, the PRINCIPLES and the POWER that God used to create this great Reformation.

We will learn why we profess that salvation is BY FAITH ALONE, BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH CHRIST ALONE, REVEALED BY SCRIPTURE ALONE, TO THE GLORY OF GOD ALONE.

We will explain the Doctrines of Grace and hear about the lives of the men God used to shake the world through the proclamation of the Gospel and to stand up against false doctrine and man made traditions.

Please set aside your Wednesdays and as a family take advantage of the means of grace that the Lord is providing our Fellowship.

The second thing I want to do this morning is to communicate to you the great doctrine of Justification by faith alone.

My desire is twofold:

First - I want to explain what this doctrine is and Secondly - I want to explain why this doctrine is important to you personally.

In order to explain this great doctrine of justification by faith alone the first thing we must do is understand this word justification - to understand a teaching or concept knowing what the words mean is crucial.

The words that are translated "justified" are words that are found both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Justified is sometimes used as a noun, an adverb, a verb and an adjective.

Justified is used 104 times as a noun in the New Testament.  
As an adjective 81 times, 39 times as a verb and 5 times as an adverb.

Now, you might ask, why are you telling me all of these statistics?

Well - obviously any word or concept that is used so often is an important one.

I will go so far to say that unless you understand the use, meaning and application of the word "justification" by the Apostles you cannot understand the books of Romans and Galatians - I will go even further to say - you cannot properly understand SALVATION.

it is sad today that in many of the churches that call themselves Evangelical this word "justification" is not frequently used and this doctrine of justification by faith alone is unknown.

The doctrine that John Calvin said, was the hinge upon which the door of the reformation turned has been pushed aside and a therapeutic moral Deism has taken it's place.

Churches rather than preach verse by verse through books of the Bible as the main format of their preaching and teaching now feed their people a steady diet of sermons that are titled: "5 Tips for Better Parenting" or "3 Ways to be a Better Friend."

Here is the problem with these kinds of sermons - they are nothing more than a substitute for the Ten Commandments.

As a sinner I have already proven that I can't obey or keep the 10 commandments - the last thing I need is another set of rules to obey to become a better parent, friend or person.

We can't change our lives by doing or by obeying rules or following tips to success -

No - we need the Gospel to change and transform us.

That is why understanding this great doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone is so important.

One doesn't have to look at our world for very long to determine that there is something seriously wrong.

Watching the evening news has become an R rated viewing experience where children should be removed from the room when it is on.

Mankind has a problem and the Bible very plainly tells us that we have a sin problem.

Man is unrighteous - he is unjust. God is wholly righteous - wholly just

The Bible tells us that we are separated from God and because of our sin we are under the wrath and condemnation of this perfectly Holy God.

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," - Romans 3:23

The Apostle Paul quoting the Psalmist David gives us this frightening indictment of all humanity:

" as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;  
no one understands; no one seeks for God.

All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." - Romans 3:10-12

### **"None is righteous, no, not one"**

Man's problem is that he is unrighteous - you're problem this morning is that you are unrighteous.

We are separated from God because we don't have a righteousness of our own that enables us to enter into the presence of a righteous God.

"None is righteous, no, not one"

How then do we obtain this righteousness that we need in order to enter into the presence of this righteous God? - how do we get out from under this wrath and Condemnation of God?

Every other major religion in the world requires us to **do** something.

They have created a system of works whereby you do good works and hopefully when you come to the end of your life the scales of justice will show that your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds and you will be accepted by God.

We see this doctrine of works righteousness is Roman Catholicism, we see it in present day Judaism and we see it in frighteningly in Islam where the act of a suicide bomber guarantees him immediate access to heaven.

But Christianity which takes its teaching of Salvation from Scripture alone - teaches that **our** salvation - **our** hope is based upon this doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone.

Now, there is our need - we are unrighteous - we need righteousness

The entire message of the Book of Romans is an explanation of this very issue.

And in that I can't teach through all of the book of Romans this morning - let me give you this brief explanation.

I began by telling you we need to understand this word - this concept of justification.

Let me explain this word Justification

1st - Justification is a legal term - a forensic term - it comes from the language of the courtroom.

It doesn't matter if you find this word in the Old Testament or the New Testament - it is always used in the judicial - the forensic sense.

Justification then is a legal declaration from the bench of God's justice wherein He declares that His justice no longer condemns us.

He legally declares that we who **are** guilty are not under condemnation and that this is not based on any merit of our own, but is solely based upon the merits of Christ alone.

This pronouncement from God's bench of justice does not say we are **made** righteous it says he **considers** us or **regards** us as righteous.

Last week Pastor Barry took us back to the life of Abraham - listen to what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 4:

For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." - Romans 4:3

In Romans chapter 4 Paul explains this entire matter of imputation or crediting or reckoning.

He explains that even while we are still sinners God **regards** us - **considers** us as righteous.

The human judge can say that a criminal is acquitted - that the charges against him are removed - that he is no longer condemned but that doesn't change his nature.

What an eye opener it was for me as a young man to come to understand the great doctrine of justification by faith alone and this whole matter of imputation, crediting and reckoning.

I was told as a new Christian that I was a new creature and I was free from sin.

I was told that God had forgiven me and cleansed me from all of my sin and now I needed to go out and try to be a good person and that if I failed - if I sinned - God understood and that He was only looking for me to try harder. Unfortunately maybe you've been told something similar.

Can you imagine the turmoil I found myself in when I sinned?

The first thing I did was doubt my salvation.

How could I be saved and then sin?

I was devastated - how can I be without sin and then here I am sinning?

Do you see the bondage that I was in?

Do you see why understanding the correct doctrine is so important?

Our doctrine determines how we live.

Once the Lord so graciously revealed to me this great doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone and that I was declared righteous not by my own performance but solely upon the merits of Christ's perfect life of obedience to God and His sacrificial death upon the cross in my behalf - I understood and experienced true freedom!!!!

I now no longer look at myself for proof of my salvation - now I look to Jesus - I see Him and His life - His death - His resurrection through new eyes and I can cry out like the great Hymn writer:

"Nothing in my hand I Bring - simply it the cross I cling." [PAUSE]

Justification is a great act of God where He declares us righteous even though we are not.

This is what bothered the young Augustinian Monk Martin Luther - he examined his life - he saw his sinfulness - he read these verses that said, "**the righteous one shall live by faith**" - he compared his righteousness to God's righteousness - he saw how far he fell short and came away helpless and hopeless.

Martin spent hours confessing his sins. At one point one of the older priests who heard his frequent and long confessions of sin told him, "Go and come back when you have some real sins to confess."

It was during His studying the Book of Romans and the Book of Galatians that he was so overwhelmed with his own sin and unrighteousness that he was asked if he loved God.

He replied, "Love God? Why sometimes I hate God!"

He saw this righteous God as unapproachable - He knew that His sin separated him from God.

But then the Holy Spirit opened his eyes to see this matter of Justification by Faith

Luther saw that the books of Romans and Galatians in dealing with righteousness were not talking about his **condition** but his **status**.

He came to see that he would never be righteous in himself by his own works and his own efforts - all of his efforts and sacrifices as a monk did nothing!

But that his only hope was the imputed - the reckoned - the credited righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.

That righteousness that Luther was seeking was not **His** own righteousness - but the legal declaration that came from the bench of God's courtroom that credited to him Christ's righteousness.

Listen to the words of 2 Corinthians 5:21 "For **our** sake **he** made **him** to be sin who knew no sin, so that in **him we** might become the righteousness of God."

This great verse teaches us the doctrine of double imputation.

My sin is imputed - put upon Christ upon the cross - and Christ's righteousness is imputed put upon me.

I can't earn this, I don't deserve this it is a gracious gift of God! [PAUSE]

NOW - let me give you 4 bullet points to remember from what I have just told you.

1. Justification is a forensic - legal term - a judicial term - a legal trial term - it is a courtroom word
2. Justification is a declaration by God
3. Justification is in antithesis to condemnation
4. Justification is a declaration that we are free from the guilt of sin - God regards us as righteous

Now in explaining this matter of Justification by faith alone - we sometimes fall into the error of confusing Justification with Sanctification.

This is one of the major flaws of the Roman Catholic teaching on justification that was confronted by the Reformers.

Whereby Rome said you had to **be** Righteous before God would declare you righteous.

How then in Roman Catholicism do you become righteous? Why you are baptized and you live a life on the treadmill of sacramentalism where you earn your righteousness by you own efforts. And when you fall short at the end of your life you must go through the torment and the purging fires of purgatory to pay for any remaining sins.

Oh, do you see why this doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone is so amazing? [PAUSE]

So, now let me give you 4 quick comparisons to clarify the distinction between Justification and Sanctification

1. Justification - is act of God the Father as judge - it is a legal declaration  
Sanctification - is the work of the Holy Spirit
2. Justification - is an INSIDE work - it is unseen - it is invisible to those around us  
Sanctification - is an OUTSIDE work - it is seen - it is visible to those around us. - it is the fruit of justification not the root of justification
3. Justification - deals with our GUILT of sin  
Sanctification - deals with our POLLUTION in sin
4. Justification - is a once for all act never repeated  
Sanctification - is a continual process - it is progressive and continues until the day we die.

So then let me give you a summary quote by James Buchanan:

“By Justification we mean—man's acceptance with God, or his being regarded and treated as righteous in His sight—as the object of His favour, and not of His wrath; of His blessing, and not of His curse.”

Excerpt From: Buchanan, James. “The Doctrine of Justification.”

**So** then why is the understanding of the Doctrine of Justification by Faith Alone important to **you** this morning?

This is a question we should always ask when we are given any information.

So what? How does this apply to me and what do I do with this information.

How does the fact that 500 years ago a monk with a mallet nailed his 95 theses upon the door of the church of All Saint's Church in Wittenberg Germany effect me in August of 2016?

Here it is - this is why you need this information and why you must apply it to your life.

Are you ready?

You in your own works and merits are unrighteous.

You and I do not have the ability to make ourselves righteous.

If you or I die in this state of unrighteousness we will be sent by God to a sinner's hell.

Let me quickly read you a few Scriptures on this matter of justification by faith alone:

“Gal. 2:16. "Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Ps. 32:1-2: 1 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

“Acts 13:38, 39. "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins; and by Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

Why do I keep emphasizing that this Justification - this legal declaration from the bench of God is by faith alone?

Because there is nothing that you or I can do to make God declare us righteous.

We are totally dependent upon the mercy and kindness of God alone.

In God's sovereign and loving grace - through the proclamation of the Gospel - He reveals to us our sin and our unrighteousness.

In God's sovereign and loving grace - He reveals to us that we are under His condemnation and wrath

By His divine grace He reveals to us that we are without hope if we continue to trust or depend upon our own "good" works or efforts to gain His favor.

Then In God's sovereign and loving grace - He reveals to us His Son

And we hear the glorious words of His gospel.

That if we will repent of our sin and wholly trust by faith in Christ alone he will forgive us of our sin and grant us eternal life.

He will "JUSTIFY" us!!!

He will declare us justified upon the merits of Christ alone.

We cry out then with the hymn writer:

Not the labors of my hands  
can fulfill thy law's commands;  
could my zeal no respite know,  
could my tears forever flow,  
all for sin could not atone;  
thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to the cross I cling;  
naked, come to thee for dress;  
helpless, look to thee for grace;  
foul, I to the fountain fly;  
wash me, Savior, or I die.

Our justification is by FAITH alone...

It is by trusting in the completed work of Christ upon the cross in our behalf ALONE!!

Oh, my friends - in what is your faith resting?

May I call you this morning to place your faith - solely upon Jesus Christ alone?

Repent and believe the Gospel and you will be saved.

And if already trust in Christ and Christ alone take this message to your family, friends and coworkers.

Tell them of this glorious Savior that they must put their faith in the Rock of Ages!!!