

Title: Justified

Text: Romans 4:13

Date: April 7, 2013

Place: Decatur Church of God

Picture this: a bride and groom dashing out of the church, through the showers of birdseed and into the limo, all aglow with the light of love from the vows they've just taken. In the backseat of the car, en route to the reception, they embrace and kiss. Then the groom announces that he has something to say.

Now you realize, my dear, that, as far as I'm concerned, we can't *really* say we're married, because I don't know yet what kind of wife you'll turn out to be. I hope for the best, of course. And I'll help you all I can. But only at the end of our lives will I be able to tell if you've lived up to my expectations. If you have—then, and only then, I'll agree that we truly got married today. But if you don't, then as far as I'm concerned we were never married at all. After all, how can I call you my wife if you fail to be a wife to me?

Under such circumstances, it will not be a happy honeymoon—if there's one at all. A wife cannot be a wife if her whole existence as wife is conditional and under constant scrutiny (likewise for a husband). She will certainly fail. This groom has completely misunderstood [the power of marriage to transform the beloved]. The couple that tied the knot only 60 minutes ago is every bit as married as the couple celebrating their 60th anniversary. Whatever happens in the course of the marriage does not affect the "married-ness" of that couple.

Romans 4:1-3

What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? [2] If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about--but not before God. [3] What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Romans 4:13

It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

The case of Abraham is decisive, at least to the mind of the Jew, because he towered above all other men in his moral grandeur, and if anyone was accepted of God, it must have been Abraham, for he was known as the “friend of God.” If he was not justified by works, no man could be; if he was justified by faith, there can be no other way of justification for any man.

-Charles R. Erdman, *“The Epistle of Paul to the Romans”*

* Do you remember the story of the church board meeting where a motion was made to purchase a chandelier for the sanctuary? One of the board members immediately responded...

“I am opposed to this motion,” he quickly proclaimed.

“First of all, we don’t need it. Secondly, no one can spell it so we can’t order it. And finally, no one here knows how to play it!”

Do you ever make decisions about something for which you have no knowledge? It sounds to me like a setup for disaster.

Can the same be true when we read “stuff” in the Bible that we simply skim over or pretend that we understand?

I. What does it mean to be “justified”?

Justification is the judicial act of God, by which he pardons all the sins of everyone who believes in Christ, and accepts the individuals, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law. All the claims of the law are satisfied. It is the act of a judge. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense; and so the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law ([Rom 5:1-10](#)).

- A. Because of Jesus, God no longer holds me responsible for my sinful choices and actions.
- B. The punishment that should have been due is declared satisfied.

* I'm a little like the duck hunter who was hunting with his friend in a wide-open barren of land in southeastern Georgia. Far away on the horizon he noticed a cloud of smoke. Soon, he could hear the sound of crackling. A wind came up and he realized the terrible truth: a brush-fire was advancing his way. It was moving so fast that he and his friend could not outrun it. The hunter began to rifle through his pockets. Then he emptied all the contents of his knapsack. He soon found what he was looking for—a book of matches. To his friend's amazement, he pulled out a match and struck it. He lit a small fire around the two of them. Soon they were standing in a circle of blackened earth, waiting for the brush fire to come. They did not have to wait long. They covered their mouths with their handkerchiefs and braced themselves. The fire came near—and swept over them. But they were completely unhurt. They weren't even touched. Fire would not burn the place where fire had already burned.

The law is like the brush-fire. I cannot escape it. But if I stand in the burned-over place, where law has already burned its way through, then I will not get hurt. Not a hair of my head will be singed. The death of Christ is the burned-over place. There I huddle, hardly believing yet relieved. Christ's death has disarmed the law. "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

- C. It is as if I have lived in “perfect obedience”; as if I have never sinned.

* The fact is that I know I have sinned. I don't deserve God's forgiveness. I am not truly righteous.

II. Justification is not the forgiveness of a person without righteousness, but a declaration that he possesses a righteousness which perfectly and for ever satisfies the law, namely, Christ's righteousness.

2 Cor. 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

- A. Blessed is the person who is covered by the righteousness of Jesus.

Romans 4:7-8

[7] "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

[8] Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

- B. Blessed is the person who must not depend upon his own righteousness.

* What did Abraham attain through his own natural efforts? How was he justified? Was it on the ground of his illustrious acts? These gave him a place of honor among men, but did they secure his justification and thus give him a ground of boasting before God? No, his efforts would fall woefully short.

So, what is the answer?

Romans 4:21-22

Being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. [22] This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness."

III. The sole condition on which this righteousness is credited to the believer is faith in or on the Lord Jesus Christ.

- A. Faith is called a "condition," not because it possesses any merit, but only because it is the instrument by which the soul acquires Christ and his righteousness.

Romans 3:25-26

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in

his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- [26] he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Galatians 2:16

Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

- B. Good works do not justify our previous behaviors but faith in Christ allows us to stand before God, not guilty.

* In the fall of 2010, billions of people around the globe were captivated by the story of the Chilean miners. Trapped beneath two thousand feet of solid rock, the thirty-three men were desperate. The collapse of a main tunnel had sealed their exit and thrust them into survival mode. They ate two spoonfuls of tuna, a sip of milk, and a morsel of peaches—every other day. For two months they prayed for someone to save them.

On the surface above, the Chilean rescue team worked around the clock, consulting NASA, meeting with experts. They designed a thirteen-foot-tall capsule and drilled, first a communication hole, then an excavation tunnel. There was no guarantee of success. No one had ever been trapped underground this long and lived to tell about it.

Now someone has.

On October 13, 2010, the men began to emerge, slapping high fives and leading victory chants. A great-grandfather. A forty-four-year-old who was planning a wedding. Then a nineteen-year-old. All had different stories, but all had made the same decision. They trusted someone else to save them. No one returned the rescue offer with a declaration of independence: "I can get out of here on my own. Just give me a new drill." They had stared at the stone tomb long enough to reach the unanimous opinion: "We need

help. We need someone to penetrate this world and pull us out.'
And when the rescue capsule came, they climbed in.

Why is it so hard for us to do the same?

You cannot pay God enough to cover up your sins but you
can accept Jesus into your heart and Jesus will make it all right.

Because of him, we can leave here today, justified.