



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“The Riches of Divine Grace – II: Justification”

TRANSCRIPT

Begin and let's begin with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the opportunity and privilege that is ours tonight of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee most of all for Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. And as we study tonight the riches of divine grace may the greatness of our salvation become more dear and precious to us. Give us illumination we pray through the Spirit.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the second in our series in the study of soteriology on the theme of “The Riches of Divine Grace.” And for those of you who were here last Monday night you'll remember that we studied the doctrine of regeneration because that really is the beginning of our study of divine grace. And you will remember that we began with regeneration, its meaning, its necessity, its nature, the efficient cause, and then we stopped about there. And I wanted to say just a few quick things about the remainder of the outline of last week before we begin tonight. Remember that capital E in our outline was “The Evidences of Regeneration.”

These evidences are both internal and external. The internal evidences are belief in Jesus Christ and love for Jesus Christ. The external evidences as set forth in numbers of passages of Scripture include these; a person who is born again does righteousness according to 1 John 2:29. He also produces good works according to Ephesians chapter 2 in verse 10 which is much the same thing of course. For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God had before ordained that we should walk in them. And we also could say that the one who has been born again is delivered from Satan. And we should, therefore, not see the evidences of control by Satan in his life and John tells us that in 1 John chapter 5 in verse 18 and verse 4 of chapter 5.

And then we put on the outline capital F – “The Human Condition of Regeneration.” And I’m sure that almost all of you in this room recognize that the Bible teaches that the human condition of regeneration is our personal faith in Jesus Christ. And then I had also, the last point in the outline, “The Divergent Views of Regeneration.” And I wanted, under that heading, to say just a brief word about different views of regeneration held by various branches of religious people. And the first I wanted to say something about was the Pelagians.

Now, you know who the Pelagians are by now, I hope. But to the Pelagians regeneration is simply moral reformation which man can accomplish of himself. Second, to the Church of Rome regeneration includes justification and forgiveness is by baptism. Adults may lose regeneration by certain forms of sin. In the Anglican Church while some believe in baptismal regeneration all do not. They believe that baptism changes one’s relation to the church like circumcision and the covenant among the Jews, and further, that baptism is a means of grace.

Reformed theologians have believed that only faith produces a change of nature. The Lutheran church has believed that man cannot contribute anything to his regeneration, but baptism is the usual means by which God effects regeneration. However, Lutherans generally also believe that a man may be regenerated by the

preaching of the word. Regeneration, however, to a Lutheran is amissible. That is, it may be lost. Now, you ought to learn this term because sometime you might want to cross it. Amissible means it may be lost.

The Arminians have believed that regeneration is the fruit of man’s choice as he cooperates with the influences of the word of God. They do not assume that this is the product of the influence of God and to an Arminian regeneration may be lost. The Wesleyan Arminians, who are more scriptural than Arminians, regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, as at least I believe. I hope you do. Although in cooperation with the human will they assume a prior work of the Spirit an enlightenment, an awakenment, and endrawing but man may resist this work of the Spirit.

Now a man who follows the Bible believes that when a person is regenerated, he is regenerated by God and, therefore, he is the recipient of efficacious grace. It is irresistible in the sense that it is sure to gain its object, which is the regeneration of the one who is among the elect. Liberalism of today, most of the Liberals of today are Pelagians for the most part. Regeneration is simply an ethical change in human character. So to the modern liberal salvation is, to borrow a Churchillian phrase, a riddle wrapped in the mystery inside an enigma.

Now, tonight we want to look at “The Riches of Divine Grace.” And so we’re going to begin right now. Now, that was just a quick resume of my notes without any exposition. I hope you don’t mind. We are now in our study of soteriology stressing the content of our salvation. And we’re seeking to answer the question what does God do for us when he saves us or to put it in another way what has Jesus Christ in his saving work provided for the elect. In our last study then we began with regeneration and we saw that it was the work of God to communicate to us life. And out of this life there came new births. In this study, we want to take up the subject of justification. In Job’s words, it is I know it is sore but true but how should man be just with God. And so I’m going to ask you if you will to take your Bibles and let’s turn to the Book of Job. And then after

we’ve read a few verses in the ninth chapter of Job, we’re going to read a few verses from the third chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans. Job chapter 9. Job chapter 9 in verse 2.

Now, there are some people in the auditorium who do not have Bibles and so if you do not have a Bible and you would like a Bible perhaps one of the men will get you one. So if you raise your hand, we will get you a Bible. Mary? You didn’t raise your hand. You have one? All right. I have to check up on my wife. Chapter 9 in verse 2. You have it now? That’s all going on the tape. I forgot that.

“I know it is so of a truth: but how should man be just with God? (Now, verse 20) If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. (Now, verse 30) If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both.”

Now, we’re going to turn to Romans chapter 3 and we’re going to turn to a passage which if Job had known it, he would have never had said what he just said “That there is no daysman betwixt us that might lay his hand upon us both.” For had he known Romans chapter 3, he would have known the daysman who has laid his hand upon us both and brought us into fellowship with God. Now, in verse 21 of Romans chapter 3 we read,

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

By the way, Luther, in his rendering of the text for the German version, which became the Authorized Version for the German nation, added the word alone after faith and some criticized him. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith *allein*, alone without the deeds of the law.” Or *allein*, if you’re a German. Without the deed of the law but he was absolutely true to the sense of Paul for if a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law, he’s justified by faith alone. There is no other way for us to express it.

“Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

The greatest problem with which the Bible deals in the eyes of some is how can a just God justify the unjust? After all, our text has said right here for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. How is it possible for a holy God to justify unjust men? And we are all unjust. That is an enigma in the minds of men. And it is a great problem which only God could have solved. There are only two ways for men to meet the demands of the Lord God, a holy God. One of those is to keep the law perfectly. Paul says in Galatians chapter 3 in verse 10, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all

things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” In other words, if we are going to be justified on the basis of our works we must do the law perfectly, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

Now, theoretically and hypothetically that is one way for men to be justified before God. “Keep the law of God perfectly” from the time we draw our first breath until we draw our last. Now, of course, this we have not done. No one has ever done this. No one shall ever do this except one that is Jesus Christ. And this is particularly significant in the light of the fact that we are unable to fool God. Paul said that he was walking in all the ordinances of the law blameless but that was in the sight of men as they interpreted the Law of Moses not as God interpreted it. Paul was not blameless. No man has ever been blameless. We have all broken the law of God and he is a God who cannot be fooled.

Dr. Ironside used to tell the story of a [black] man who was hailed before the court for stealing a watch. Now, I know we’re not supposed to tell stories like this in the present decade or so but I’ll tell it just the same. And after the trial had proceeded to the time when the judge was to announce the decision, he announced that the sentence of this court is acquittal. And the man leaned forward and said “What was that you said judge?” He said “The sentence of the court is acquittal.” He looked a little puzzled. He said “Judge I don’t just understand what that means.” Well he says the judge said “I mean you are acquitted.” “Well judge does that mean that I gotta give the watch back?” [Laughter] He was guilty, but he had managed to fool the judge. That is something that we cannot do with God. So if keeping the law perfectly is one way to get to heaven it is a way that you and I could never traverse because we cannot keep it and cannot fool a holy God.

The other way to meet the demands of the law is to pay the penalty. And, of course, if we pay the penalty then we cannot enter heaven. And so if in the one case we

have not done the law in the other we cannot pay the penalty of everlasting separation from God and enter heaven. So the problem of justification is the problem of how a holy God is able to bring unholy individuals into fellowship with him and that’s what we want to look at tonight. So roman II in the outline because remember roman I was justification, we’re going to talk tonight about the meaning of the term justify. And I really forgot to tell you the honest truth but this was Roman II. So strictly speaking, I should have up here this two justification. I should look back at my outline. And then this should be A and then this should be 1 and 2 and so on. This should be B and this should be 1, 2 that should be little a, little b. Are you thoroughly confused? [Laughter] You should be.

Now, it is not important the outline, the content is. “The Meaning of the Term Justify,” and we’re going to look at two passages from the Bible. So turn back to Romans chapter 2 verse 13 for the first of our passages. I want you to notice that Paul states here in verse 13, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” Now, notice, “The doers of the law shall be justified.” This is the first occurrence of the verb “to justify” in Romans, justified.

Now, what does it mean? What does it mean to be justified? Well, let’s see if we can analyze this text and draw out of it some things that will help us to understand what it means. I think we can see first of all that this text shows that justification does not mean to be pardoned, since if it meant to be pardoned the justified man as a doer of the law has nothing to be pardoned for. Notice, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be pardoned.” Well if he does the law he doesn’t need any pardon. So consequently, justified does not mean to be pardoned that should be evident from this text. The doers of the law shall be justified not pardoned. He doesn’t need any pardon if he has done the law. You get the point? Secondly, it cannot here mean to be made just because he’s already that by the supposition. The doers of the law shall be made just. Well, if he’s done the law he already is just. He doesn’t need anything to be pardoned for and he already is just because he does the law.

Now, it just happened that tonight was the night that my wife came. And the explanation is simply this. She was meeting her cousin at the airport who has come to visit us for a few days. We hope that she’ll stay a week or two. And as you get to know her, but she is here and so this illustration that I’m going to tell she may not be happy about but I’ll just have to bear the consequences. But twenty years ago when I was first doing some serious study in the exegesis of Romans, I remember going into the room where she was and asking her a question. I said Mary does justification mean to be just? And she answered yes and, of course, I pounced on that like all good husbands do. And I said “No, it doesn’t.” Then I said “Does it mean to be made just.” She said “I guess so.” And I rather triumphantly said “No. It means to be declared just.” And we discussed it a little. So today twenty years later I wanted to see if she had learned her lesson. So I very surreptitiously said to her this morning “Mary does justification mean to be just, to be made just, or to be declared just?” She said “It means to be declared just. What in the world made you think I didn’t know that?” [Laughter] And, of course, she was right. For that is exactly what this text means. The doers of the law shall be justified not pardoned. They don’t need that. Not made just because they already are that if they’re doers of the law but declared just or righteous in the sight of God.

Now, that’s what the word to justify means. It means to declare righteous. That means it’s a forensic term. It’s a legal term. Forensic is a word derived from the roman forum and in ancient days justice was carried out in the forum. That’s where the law courts sat. So to declare righteous is a forensic term. So when we say that a man is justified by God through faith in Jesus Christ, we mean that he stands legally before God declared righteous by God declared righteous. Now, he’s not righteous in himself. He is still sinful. He is not made righteous. That is evident with the next breath or two that he draws. It does not mean that he is pardoned. It means that he is declared righteous. He is given a position before God as judge in his court. He is declared righteous.

Now, let’s turn to an Old Testament passage. It has been contended by some theologians that the idea that a person could be declared righteous by God is not a biblical idea. And I want you to turn to the Old Testament. And I want you to see from Deuteronomy chapter 25 in verse 1 that this is a biblical idea and it is one which Paul did not manufacture but it is one that he derived from the Old Testament itself. Deuteronomy chapter 25 in verse 1. Now, let’s read it carefully.

“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.”

“Justify the righteous but condemn the wicked.” Now, you can see from this justify the righteous does not mean to pardon, does not mean to make them just. They are already just. And so to justify people who are already righteous is simply to declare that they are righteous. It is to treat them as righteous. It is to pronounce them as righteous. And that is precisely what the Hebrew word here means. The Hebrew word is the word *tsaddiq*. And it is used in the Hebrew stem which is *tsadi*. And in this form it means to treat as righteous. And so here to justify the righteous is to pronounce them right, to declare them right. So when a man believes in Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures, according to the verses that we have looked at, it must mean that God declares that I am righteous before him. He pronounces me righteous. He treats me as righteous.

Now, he does that because he imputes to me. He reckons to me the benefits of the saving work of Jesus Christ. And so by virtue of that, which Jesus Christ has done, there is reckoned to my account a righteousness that is acceptable to God. And thus, I am declared righteous because I possess as a free gift from God, a righteousness that avails with him.

Now, let me say to you that this is the heart of the Protestant reformation. This is the heart of the truth that Luther discovered. Remember he said that he had always

thought of God as an angry God sitting upon a rainbow waiting to hurl thunderbolts of judgment at men. But then, he discovered the expression the righteousness of God, and he discovered that the expression the righteousness of God did not refer to his attribute by which he judges men, though sometimes it may, but it refers to the righteousness which he graciously is willing to give to men if they believe on Jesus Christ. So to justify then, what does it mean? Let me put it in a sentence. Justification, then, is that act of God whereby he through the redemptive sacrifice of his Son declares righteous those who exercise faith in Christ. Let me say it again. Justification, then, is that act of God whereby he through the redemptive sacrifice of his Son declares righteous those who exercise faith in Christ.

Now, let’s go on to capital B if you want to have a real good outline. “The Seven-Fold Aspect of Justification.” And I think just by looking at the way in which the New Testament sets forth this doctrine of justification, by looking at the different aspects of it in this way, we should be able to understand it about as well as we possibly could. So “The Seven-Fold Aspect of Justification.”

First of all, and this, in the outline, would be Roman I – “Justification by God.”

Now, whenever you see in the outline a three without any reference to a book before it like 3:26 and 8:33 it’s a reference to Romans. So let’s look at Romans chapter 3 in verse 26 and then Romans chapter 8 and verse 33. Romans 3 verse 26 Paul writes, “To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Now, you can see that God is the one who justifies and it would be proper on the basis of that text to say that the expression justified by God is a biblical expression. Turn over to chapter 8 verse 33 where we have it even plainer. Chapter 8 verse 33 reads, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.” Justification by God. Now, this expression “justification by God,” it is God that justifies refers to the source of our justification. It proceeds from God. It is the

source. We can look at it this way. It is righteousness planned because it is God who plans. It comes from him.

Well, let’s see the outworkings of it in Romans 3:21 and following. Verse 25 is the verse I want you to particularly notice. Paul says verse 24, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth.” God hath set forth Jesus Christ. Now, I think that’s important that word “set forth.” And you’ll notice it is God who has done it. The priests when they wish to set forth a truth of God set forth something that is to take the place of the work of Jesus Christ. Some set forth a dogma. Some set forth a feeling. Some set forth an effort. The text here says God sets forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation.

Now, he says it is a propitiation, the satisfaction, the mercy seat. Well this word really means mercy seat. Do remember in the Old Testament what the mercy seat was? Well, in the tabernacle in the holiest of all, remember the tabernacle was in two parts. And this is the court. And out in the court there was the brazen altar and the brazen labored and this is the holy place and this is the holiest of all. And in the holiest of all there was the arc of the covenant. And remember that the high priest could not enter the holiest of all but once a year. And he entered it once a year only on the Day of Atonement in order to sprinkle blood upon the top of the arc of the covenant, the top of which was called the mercy seat. And it was there that God met with the children of Israel. He said he would meet with them on the mercy seat and when the blood was offered and Israel’s covenant relationship with God was restored for one more year. In other words, they owed their relationship to God to the shedding of blood.

Now, that is what Paul says when he says “Whom God hath set forth a mercy seat.” So the antetype of this is the cross of Jesus Christ. It is there that we have the mercy seat. It is there that God meets with men. It is there and there only that he will meet with you. If you have never come to the cross of Jesus Christ acknowledging that you need the work that he did and that your only hope is the blood that was shed there

you have not met God for this is where he meets with men at the cross of Calvary. So when we read, “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation,” a satisfaction, a mercy seat, we’re talking about Jesus Christ on the cross. Now, that’s why we say “justification by God.” It has come from him and he has set forth Jesus Christ as the satisfaction for our sins.

Now, he states in verse 26 that “He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” Now, remember the great problem with God is how can he bring an unjust man into fellowship with him who is just? God is completely just. And you are unjust. So how can he bring you into fellowship with him? That’s the great problem. We might put it another way. The biggest problem that God had is not so much how he can get you there is how he himself can enter into fellowship with you because of his infinite holiness. But how can he be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus? Well, Jesus Christ came set forth by God as the mercy seat and there on the cross at Calvary remember he uttered those memorable words, “My God my God why hast thou forsaken me.” By the way, that is the only time that Jesus ever addressed God in prayer as my God. Twenty-one times he turned to God in prayer. Twenty times he said “Father.” One time he said “My God my God.” Why? Because you see the relationship here was not paternal, the relationship of a father to a son but a relationship of a judge, the one who is made sin for us. A criminal as Paul puts it, for he died such a death even the death of a cross, a criminal. So “My God my God why hast thou forsaken me?” Paul said “He was made sin for us, him who knew no sin, he who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” And so here God was perfectly just, for the sins of the whole flock were upon our Lord.

And there he bore to the uttermost, the infinite judgment of sin. God was just in meeting out judgment upon his Son. But you see by this very act of meeting out judgment upon his son, he is free to extend the gift of eternal life, perfect justification, eternal justification, one hundred percent justification to all who believe, and so he is the

justifier of those who believe because he has provided the justifying sacrifice. So he is just in the sacrifice of Christ and he is the justifier both by the gift of his Son. And the problem of the ages is solved. No preaching of the gospel that does not ultimately come down to an explanation of what happened when Christ died like this is, in my opinion, true preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And I want to tell that’s good news. That’s wonderful news. You know what good news is? Why good news is the kind of news that you rush out the back door and say “me is home” or “it’s a boy,” “it’s a girl.” I may be doing that before long, by the way. So if I come in the pulpit some morning and say “it’s a boy” that’s means it’s good news. It’s the kind of news you want to shout about. Well that’s the term that’s used for the gospel. It’s the good news and it’s used in Paul in Romans chapter 1 of justification. So this is good news. We shout it out, justified! Think of that. Just look at me. If you could see what a great work this is. Justified by God that’s the source.

Now, we could talk a long time about that but that’s enough for now. Second, justified by blood. Look at chapter 5 verse 9. Here we read, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood.” Now justification by God is a reference to the source of this justification. Justified by blood is the ground of our justification. We shall never, of course, understand what is involved in the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ. Who would be able to expound that? We have a man in our congregation here, a Braniff pilot, whose been studying the blood for years. He knows more about the blood of Jesus Christ than anyone I know. But I think he would be the first one to say you cannot exhaust the meaning of the blood of Jesus Christ. When I think of the significance of the blood of Jesus Christ I think of an iceberg because an iceberg has only a small amount of its mass above water and visible. The great mass of it is invisible. And the great mass of the significance of the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ is invisible. And I have a hunch. Now, this is pure speculation. So I’m warning you ahead of time. I have a hunch that when we get to heaven, we’re not going to understand the blood fully then because I

think that this dealing between God and the Son and the Spirit is such a dealing that we shall probably be learning things about it all down through eternity. But I know it is by blood sacrifice that I am saved. Forsyth said he was the 'Barthian before [Barth](#)'. He said “Christianity is not the sacrifice we make but the sacrifice we trust.”

Now, thirdly, justification by faith. Justification by faith, of course, is common in the New Testament. Look at chapter 5 verse 1, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God.” If justification by God is the source and if justification is the ground, justification by faith is the means whereby we procure righteousness. Paul, of course, is anxious to show that his method harmonizes with the method set forth in the Old Testament. In chapter 3 in verse 27 he says after he has expounded his method of justification, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith (with Luther) without the deeds of the law.”

No boasting. Why is there no boasting when a man is justified by faith? Well, because faith is self-renouncing. The minute you say that I am justified because I trust in Jesus Christ, you have in effect said that you’re no longer trusting in yourself and so faith is self-renouncing. It looks to what God does. It does not look introspectively into man. It looks extraspectaviely to the cross and that which Jesus Christ has done. So don’t ever get into the place where you think of your faith as something which you have and which maybe someone else doesn’t have and thereby you seem to think or fall into the trap of thinking yourself a little better because you have faith and others do not. What have we been saying about faith all along? It’s a gift of God. We’ve been saying that this salvation is a gift from first elect. We are not in any way meritorious as a result of what Christ has done. So when we say we are justified by faith, we are acknowledging we are not justified by ourselves. We are justified because we look off to the cross. So it is self-renouncing. Where is boasting then? It’s excluded. It’s shut out Paul says. “Justified by faith alone.”

Now, verses 29 and 30 of chapter 3 say, “Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God.” In other words, God saves men only one way because he is one God. He doesn’t have one method of salvation for the Jews and one method of salvation for the Gentiles. He has only one way. And what way is it? It’s not law. “Seeing it is one God, who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.”

Now, listen. Don’t you ever in reading Romans chapter 3 forget who is writing this? Do you know who is writing it? No, Paul right. What kind of man is Paul due to the Pharosés? Now, what if the Pharosés, what did they love think of themselves? Well, of course, they loved to think of themselves as the pure representatives of Judaism. And what is the primary doctrine of Judaism? Well, it’s the Shema Israel remember. Hear oh Israel the Lord our God is what? One Lord. The lord our God is one Lord and mind you here is a Pharosés who all his life in instruction in Judaism and he said he advanced in Judaism beyond his contemporaries. Here is a man who learned to say the Lord our God is one Lord and here he is saying he is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. Now, that is an amazing transformation because he is acknowledging that there is another person who may be called God too for only God can say, for there is tremendous transformation that has taken place in Paul.

Fourth, justification by works. Now, let’s turn over to James. A lot of people have great deal of difficulty with James chapter 2. When I get through, you will not have any difficulty unless you’ve been sleeping. Now, somebody came to me a few weeks ago and said did you notice so and so. I said no. He said it’s a good thing you didn’t because he was sleeping. I said well I didn’t notice it. He said well he thought you did. And he just wanted to say that the reason he was sleeping was because he had to work real late the night before. Now, have you found James?

Now, if you’ll listen as I read verses 21 through 26,

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works?” There it is justified by works. After all we’ve been saying. Here we are justified by works. Now, what does James mean when he says we’re justified by works? Well, let’s notice what he says, “When he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” Brought to completion. “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”

Now, what does that mean? Well, the first place it means that we have a problem of the church of Christ. It means that we have a problem with other organizations that are supposedly Christian because this text has become the banner text of those who like to dispute salvation by faith. How can we believe in salvation by faith when James says “Faith without works is dead and that Abraham was justified by works?” Well now, we must first of all acknowledge that there can be no contradiction in the word of God. Some scholars have said that Paul and James were out of harmony with one another and when James writes in verse 20, “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” What he really had in mind was Paul. Paul was a vain man and James wrote his book in order to counteract the Pauline teaching which was becoming popular.

Now, we do not accept that hypothesis of criticism. But what it does it mean justified by works? Well, I think the key expression is in verse 22, “Seest thou how faith wrought with his works.” it is a faith that works that James is speaking about. In other words, what he is saying is that it is not really faith if it doesn’t work. That true faith is a living vital faith that produces good works. And in the illustrations that he uses you can see how that is the idea because he says take Abraham, for example, he was justified by works when he offered Isaac up on the altar but he had already been pronounced

righteous by God in Genesis chapter 15 in verse 6. How can he be declared righteous in chapter 22? Well, only because that was the outworking of the faith that he had first exercised earlier. So that in chapter 22, we have the culmination, the completion, of his faith, the evidence that his faith was a living vital faith. So when James says “Faith without works is dead,” he means that the evidence of justifying faith is a man’s good works.

Now, the reformers understood this and so they said “Faith alone justifies, but not the faith that is alone.” And that’s right. “Faith alone justifies, but not the faith that is alone.” *Sola fides justificat sed non fides qui est sola.* Is that clearer? “Faith alone justifies but not the faith which is alone.” In other words, it’s only the faith alone that justifies that produces good works. So when the man says I have faith James says he may not necessarily be justified if that faith does not produce good works. Is that hard doctrine? Well, it ought to be challenging. It ought to make us realize that it is not just a mental ascent to truth, but that there is a living vital relationship to Jesus Christ which must produce good works.

My wife and I have a very good friend, who now lives in California, but she used to live or visit in Dallas quite frequently because her daughter was the wife of one of our seminary students. And she was very troubled over these statements of James in chapter 2 and spoke to Mary about it. And Mary asked me if there was anything that we might send her. I think she requested some book to be sent. And so we got a little book by Guy King on the Book of James called *A Belief that Behaves*. That’s a good title, *A Belief that Behaves*, because he named that *A Belief that Behaves* because a [black] man had once said there be two side to the gospel. There be the believing side and there be the behaving side. And so he called his book on James *A Belief that Behaves*.

And so we sent the book to her and she wrote back Mary a note of thanks. And she said in it. I copied the words out because I thought it was a good illustration. She said I had always intended looking up James in heaven and telling him what a poor

testimony he had been to the grace of God with his book. Now, I intend to look up Mr. Guy King and tell him what a blessing he has made the Book of James become for me. Thank you, Mary. To be justified by works is to be justified by the evidences, the products, of a living vital faith. It is the faith that saves but the living faith that brings salvation produces works.

Now, fifth, justification by the Spirit, 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 11. I’ll just simply say this. This is the sphere of justification. Righteousness place of abode. It is not in man’s flesh. It is in the Spirit that we are justified. And when you get a chance look up 1 Corinthians chapter 6 in verse 11.

Sixth, justification is by grace. Now, we ought to read Titus chapter 3 verse 7. So will you turn back a few pages to the Book of Titus chapter 3 and listen as I read beginning at verse 5 through verse 7. Paul writes,

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace”

Justified by grace. Now, we’ve had justified by God, justified by the blood, justified by faith, justified by works, justified in the Spirit, and now we have justified by grace. This, I think, is the essence of salvation. It is grace. It is a free gift as Paul puts it in Romans chapter 11 inverse 6, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.” So when we say we’re justified by grace we mean we’re not justified by works. It is a free gift. God’s righteousness at Christ’s expense, grace free unmerited favor extended to those who deserved the opposite justified by grace. By the way, if you’re ever speaking to anyone who is troubled over the essence of our salvation. Do not point them primarily to justification by faith because people define faith in different ways. Men can so define faith that it becomes a work, but point them to text

like that justified by grace, justified freely, justified without anything in ourselves. It's a grace justification.

And finally, justification by the resurrection. Notice, Romans chapter 4 in verse 25 here we have two minutes, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again on account of our justification." That word "for" should be rendered "on account of" in Romans 4, "He was raised on account of our justification." Now, this is the seal upon our justification, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is, in a sense, by the resurrection of Christ that our justification is proclaimed. "Justified on account of the resurrection or by the resurrection."

Notice the verse, "He was delivered on account of our offenses, he was raised on account of our justification." You know what that means? Why it means that when Jesus Christ was hanging upon that cross and he had paid the penalty when all of the fires of divine judgment had searched his soul and all the plagues of God's justice had been poured out upon him the time came when it was over and the Lord Jesus remember died just after saying "It is finished. Father into thy hands I commit my spirit." The work was done. Now, that was on Friday afternoon. And then on Sunday morning, Jesus Christ arose from the dead. He was raised on account of our justification. In other words, because Jesus Christ had born that judgment to the full on the first day of the week, he rose again from the dead. It was God's way of saying I accept the finished work of the Lord Jesus. It was God's way of saying I approve what he has done. And so it was God's way of saying he accomplished the saving work.

Now, you know some people have thought that our salvation really is dependent upon his resurrection. The resurrection is the evidence that the salvation had been paid for. It is a proclamation by God. That is why in the New Testament, almost universally, not quite, resurrection is attributed to the Father because it is the New Testament way of saying that God accepted the sacrifice that the Son brought.

Now, that means that we are not justified in Christ’s resurrection. We are justified in his death. Now, in the meetings of the Christian church, occasionally you find the song leader call out let’s sing hymn number so and so it’s called “One Day.” And it has a chorus that goes like this if you have sung it well you can smile. The chorus goes “Living he loved me. Dying he saved me. Buried he carried my sins far away. Rising he justified freely forever. One day he’s coming. Oh glorious day.” Now, I never sing that hymn. That is that part of it. I never sing rising he justified. Could you? Why he did not justify us in his resurrection. He justified us in his death. The resurrection is the evidence that the death was accepted. So I would like to see the day when some one stranger came into Believers Chapel and called out on Sunday morning let’s sing number whatever it is “One Day.” It’s in our hymnbook. And so we sing “Living he loved me. Dying he saved me” and the congregation is singing vociferously. “Buried he carried my sins far away.” And there is utter silence. “Rising he justified” and only the song leader is singing. “Freely forever.” And then we come back in “One day he’s coming. Oh glorious day.” Because that would be singing scripturally. Hymn writers are not very good theologians often. Many of them are going to get to heaven so as by fire.

Now, I said I was going to say something about justification in modern theology by our time is up and so we’re going to have to postpone that matter until next hour.

Now, we’re going to have a few minutes of refreshment as usual. And then a question and answer time about ten to twelve minutes from now. Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for Thy word and for the privilege of studying together. And most of all Lord we thank Thee that we are justified through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and that Thou hast through the work of the Holy Spirit brought us the faith and trust in him. And Lord if we have learned nothing else tonight, help to

remember that all that we are in Christ righteous in him is a gift of God and may gratitude characterize us.

For that for Christ’s sake. Amen.