

Back to the Gospel Summary

Welcome everyone. For those of you who were with us in the month of August, you will remember that I did a sermon series entitled back to the gospel.. about how the gospel is about seeing the beauty of Christ, displaying the beauty of Christ and becoming like the beauty of Christ...

And while I did not use the technical terminology, I hope those three sermons served to change the way you think about regeneration, sanctification and glorification; namely, regeneration as seeing beauty, sanctification as the fight for sight and the fight to display the beauty of Christ and glorification as becoming like the beauty of Christ.

You see.. the gospel can be broken down into 4 key components: regeneration... or new birth.. sanctification.. becoming holy.. glorification... becoming glorious like Christ. and justification... we've more or less looked at all these except for justification... and it was intentional because I wanted to highlight the importance of this fundamental Christian belief.

So would you turn with me in your Bibles to Romans 5:1.

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today... we are just going to be looking for the most part at this one word... justified... very simple. Very foundational.

FNC

And you might be tempted to think - well Joseph... we already know this already... we are justified by faith... we are saved by faith. We have peace with God through Jesus Christ! What more possibility is there to know from this verse?

Well, let me be forward with you all. EVERYONE in this room needs to be reminded of this truth. Including me. Why? Because here's what happens after God saves us.

We sin. After God saves us miraculously by His grace, WE TURN AROUND AND SIN AGAIN! And again. and again. and again. And there comes a point when you start doubting... does God really love me? Or, does God regret saving me? Your sins starts piling upon you and you begin to drown in the cesspool of shame. Once that happens, you become ineffective, unproductive, unloving Christians.

The only way to fight this feeling of shame... the shame you feel over your sins even AFTER you are saved, is to know the glory of your justification. You MUST be reminded again and again of what your justification means because that is the only way you are going to live a unwasted life.

To show you how important this is... Martin Luther, the Great Reformer, said this of justification... "It is the article by which the church stands and falls" . Or in another place, he says...When the article of justification has fallen, everything has fallen...However, there are few who have through through it well and teach it well... and it is my hope today that we come to learn about and appreciate justification more...

But before we talk about justification, we have to talk about the Dark Exchange... which can be found in Romans 1:22-23

The Dark Exchange

"Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."

Theologians have long turned to Romans 1:23 for a biblical definition of sin... because what makes sin so horrid and DARK is that it attacks the glory of God. Sins like murder and rape are EVIL and we do right to be outraged at it... But what makes sin - no matter how small or big according to our standards.. what makes sin evil and dark is that at the root of all sinning is an exchange. At the root of every sin is an exchange.. A dark exchange that trades the glory of God for dirt...

illustration

Let me give you a helpful illustration drive the magnitude of that statement across... In Asian cultures, it is expected that you respect your elder... and so... the oldest person in this room, I think is Elder Park. Now, what if I were to spit in his face? (gasp) That would be WRONG. It be be more wrong than lets say, if I were to spit on Hyun's face. Why? Because the magnitude of a sin depends on who the sin is committed against.

Or what if you were to spit on a king's face? You would be imprisoned! You might even be beheaded! WHY? Because the magnitude of a sin depends on who the sin is committed against. And you will be punished accordingly. If you were to spit on your friend's face, your punishment might be a punch in the face... but if you spit in the face of someone to whom much honour and respect is due, you will be punished much more heavily.

Now. If this is true of us... who, at the end of the day, are just flesh and bones... how much more serious of an offence is it to spit in God's face? That is exactly what the dark exchange is... by trading the glory of God for images of man and animals... whom God created out of dirt... we are essentially spitting in God's face and trampling upon His glory by declaring - YOU ARE NOT WORHTY. You are not worthy of my devotion... You are not worth living for or serving. Instead, I will serve dirt. I will give my devotion to statues made in the image of animals or other men... I will live for my family and I will live for money...

(we ALL need the gospel... this is the extent that we al lend the gospel... it wasn't just Adam and Eve... it sin't just them... it isn't just ISIS... It is US... who are defacing and attacking the glory of God...

The Dark Exchanged is dark because it is like spitting in God's face.

This is what makes every sin DARK. Because behind every sin is the declaration that sin is more pleasing and satisfying and worthy of our devotion than the glory of God. When you sin, you are spitting on God's face. In the same way that the Jews spat on Jesus' face, each and every time we sin, we are spitting in God's face... the King of Kings and Lord of

Lords who commands angel armies and created us with the word of His mouth.. And not only that, after spitting in God's face, we TURN away from His glory and turn towards dirt.. and worship that instead of God..

THAT is SIN.

And so, each and everyone of us have committed a TREMENDOUS crime.. and are worthy of eternal punishment.. If the crime of dishonouring a earthly king costs you your life... then the crime of dishonouring the King of kings must warrant an even greater punishment.. namely, eternal punishment...

The Great Exchange

We've looked at the dark exchange... now we are going to look at justification... or what some of called the GREAT exchange.

So lets read Romans 5:1 again...

And we are going to be spending the rest of our time fleshing out this word "justified".

Justification comes from the Greek word δικαίωσις (dik-ah-yo-sis). It is a judicial word... the kind of word you would expect to here in court.. it means literally, to be acquitted... to be declared not guilty.. or to be justified.. declared to be righteous...

The key here is DECLARED... It is a declaration that a judge makes towards the defendant.

In justification.. you are not just forgiven of your sin... you are DECLARED righteous...

HOW? How do people who have spat in the face of God's glory... how do people who have spat on Jesus' face GO HOME FREE. Not only that, HOW are they DECLARED RIGHTEOUS!

In the Courtroom Illustration

Enter the scandal of the gospel. What makes the gospel so scandalous is that God, the judge, declares the sinner and defendant (us) NOT GUILTY by taking on all our sins upon Himself in the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ. What's more... HE DECLARES US RIGHTEOUS by clothing us in the perfect obedience of His Son...

And so there is another exchange going on here... except this time, it is not a dark exchange... It is a GREAT EXCHANGE.. a beautiful exchange.. God, the Son takes on ALL our sins... and in return, He gives to us His perfect righteousness. And ALL this is OURS THROUGH FAITH. WAIT! Surely, there must be a catch? Surely there must be something that I must do! No. All you need to do is believe in the message. Believe and you WILL repent. Faith and repentance are never taught separately in the Bible... If you believe this message that you are hearing, you WILL repent. You will turn away from sin and turn toward the God who loved you while you are still yet His enemy... You will turn toward Him who has taken on all your shame upon Himself...

Now, this is something that you have heard often if you have attended church for any length of time. And we have become desensitized to just how mind-blowing this truth is.

I hope however, that this quote by the pastor/rapper Shai Linne helps to awake you once again to the glory of justification! So here it is... what does it MEAN for Jesus to take on our SHAME?

Willingly, He's under the curse
To be treated as if the Son was the worst scum of the earth
The scene is the craziest
Jesus being treated as if He is the shadiest atheist
How is it the Messiah is in the fiery pit
As if He was a wicked liar with twisted desires?
The One who's sinless and just
Punished as if He was promiscuous and mischievous with vicious lust

The source of all godly pleasure
Tormented as if He was a foul investor or child molestor
how could He be bruised like He was a goodie two-shoes
Who doesn't think that she needs the good news?
He's perfect in love and wisdom
But He's suffering as if He constructed the corrupt justice system
We should mourn at the backdrop
Jesus torn like He's on the corner with crack rock with porn on His laptop
What is this, kid? His gifts are infinite
But He's hit with licks for religious hypocrites
He's the Light, but being treated like
He's the seedy type who likes to beat His wife
He's treated like a rapist, treated like a slanderer
Treated like a racist or maybe a philanderer
Jesus being penalized like He had sin inside...

And he goes on to say... even if I had a billion years, I still can't name,
all the sins placed on Jesus, the lamb slain!

In your stead, Jesus was treated like... you. A sinner who defiles the glory of God by looking at porn. A sinner who defiles the glory of God by beating his wife. A sinner who cheats and lies! A sinner who spat in God's face... AND in return, you get RIGHTEOUSNESS. God declares you RIGHT! NOT GUILTY! Not because of the good that you have done... but because you are clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ... Look it. Jesus did not just die for your sins by bearing the wrath of God against your sin... He also lived a PERFECT life and gives that to us!

This is why the gospel is so mind blowing.. We contribute NOTHING to our salvation other than SIN. That's the only part of our salvation that we contributed! Jesus got what we deserve and we get what we don't deserve... We don't get just mercy... that is, we are not just forgiven, we get this grace...! Therefore, having this GRACE of justification upon which we stand... we REJOICE! (v. 2)

Application:

So what? How ought these truths effect the way we live and think everyday?

God Does not Regret Saving You

Stretch and wrap your mind around this: God doe NOT regret saving you. He isn't just putting up with you... He LOVES you with the very love He has for His own Son... In all your weakness.. in your arrogance and lust and pride and laziness and greed... HE LOVES YOU! God looks at the ugly lump of dirt that you are and declares - RIGHTEOUS! BEAUTIFUL! PERFECT! Not because WE are great, but because we have received the perfect righteousness of Christ. That is justification. It is a declaration! Jun - you are RIGHTEOUS! David, you are RIGHTEOUS!

God doesn't just save you and then from there put up with you everytime you make a mistake... The mystery of this glory is so profound and so total... that even when you sin.. God sees you clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ... To be sure, God is grieved by sin.. but because we have been justified in Christ, God looks at us as if He were looking at His only begotten Son.

It is to the degree that you SEE this SCANDALOUS love of God in the great exchange.. Jesus gets our sin, we get His righteousness... He gets curse, we get blessing. He takes on shame, we are honoured. He is stripped naked, we are clothed. He gets wrath, we get LOVE... He is orphaned, we are ADOPTED! I kid you not - IT is ONLY to the degree that we BEHOLD THIS in AMAZEMENT and WONDER that we will be transformed...

If His blood is sufficient to save you... His blood is sufficient to change you... Don't get off thinking you can do it on your own...

Now, I could end my sermon here... but I have to take some more time and talk about one more practical application because... even after ALL this... we will inevitably end up feeling guilt over our sin. After this sermon... you will go home and you WILL sin again. And again... and again... and you

will be tempted to feel SHAME and guilt that is ungodly. You will be tempted to stand again on that pedestal inside the courtroom to be judged... What do you do?

Fight of Faith

Micah 7:8-9 models for us how a justified person should handle guilt.. And take this with you... highlight it, bookmark it... Take this home with you today....

What to do when you feel shame? In light of the justification we receive in Christ Jesus... we can say.. yes Satan. I have sinned. And I feel rotten. I feel shameful that I dishonoured my Saviour again... But I also know that I have a Father in heaven who has pleaded my cause... He is not looking over my case again... He isn't going to revoke His declaration that I am RIGHTEOUS ... BECAUSE.. He has already executed judgement on my behalf. That is, He has already judged me sins... past, present and future in the person of Jesus Christ. There is NO sin that you can commit that was not already placed upon Jesus and judged as God's wrath was poured out upon Him! And so... be GUTSY... When Satan and your own sinfulness makes you feel unworthy of God's grace... FIGHT back with the word and prayer.. fight back with Micah 7:9 - YES Satan! I know I am unworthy. I know I am a sinner! But that is not all that is true about me! I am ALSO JUSTIFIED! I am clothed with the righteousness of Christ and God has already pleaded my cause by executing judgement of my sins by crucifying His Son Jesus Christ!

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for all that you have done for us in Jesus Christ... through Him, we have not just been saved from sin.. but we have been clothed in perfect righteousness... And so... we approach you with confidence.. as sons and daughters... knowing that when you look at us, you see a beautiful and spotless child of God.. Even after all this, however - because our enemy is great and our sinfulness is great... we continue sinning and disappointing you... but even in those times, let us be reminded that your love is greater still. That we are still sons and daughter

of God.. and as we live in that truth... conform us to the image of your Son
in whose name we are saved... and in whose name we do pray... amen.