

d. How does knowing the above impact how you share the Gospel?

5. a) Read the sermon excerpts for this question, especially the portion that quotes Psalm 51. b) For each verse of Psalm 51, write at least one observation about God and one about mankind. Some verses only speak of God, and others speak only of mankind.
- c) State an important principle you have gleaned from your observations.
- d) In the summary paragraph, John told what David abandoned. Could you say the same is true of you? Why or why not?

Notes for Lesson 4

Question 2 (“Justification”, 9/17/17, p.7-9). Describe the heavenly courtroom: a) Tell who will be there and who will not be there; b) Give the two books that God will use to accuse mankind; c) Provide examples that verify this scene is familiar to you.

The stage must be set as we delve into this incredible truth. The Bible describes this great courtroom of God. Sinful man will be summoned and judged according to his deeds and, as we have seen in the first chapters of Romans, it will not go well with man. Revelation 20:11-12 *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*

I want to make some simple observations. First, Satan is nowhere present here as the one who accuses. By this time, he has already been cast into the lake of fire. The basis of judgment is what is written in some books. Concerning some of the books mentioned here, I believe one of those books that is opened and from which all are judged is the Bible.

Listen to what Jesus said in John 5:45-47 to the Jews who had the Old Testament writings: *“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses [this is courtroom terminology referring to the Revelation 20 passage], in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?”*

So Jesus clearly points to Moses' writings as that which will judge men in the courtroom of heaven. My friend, that is a solemn reminder to you and me. You have the writings of God, and those writings will judge you if you do not believe and act upon what they say. Jesus told His apostles in Matthew 10:14-15, *“Whoever does not receive you nor heed your words as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.”* Why? Because if people will not listen to the Word of God, the Word of God will judge them.

Another book that is opened on the day of judgment is a record of all that a person has said in his lifetime. I do not know about you, but I would not want to be judged according to the garbage that has come out of my mouth. In Matthew 12:35-37, Jesus said, *“The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”*

So here is the courtroom of heaven. There is the Judge, God Himself; there are the accusers, the Bible and record books; and guilty people of all time are there in the courtroom. Each one will be judged according to his or her deeds and words. This is a picture of justice.

This heavenly courtroom is not altogether strange to us. I want to mention one example

among many of how God reinforces the reality of justice in our daily lives. For example, God has established government as His messenger to carry out consequences for men breaking the laws of the land. Laws may differ from country to country, but generally there are laws which are the same. For instance, it is always wrong to murder. Generally, it is always wrong to lie and steal. The consequences for violating these laws are not pleasant. In some cases, the result is death.

Romans 13:1-4 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

You find this same thought concerning the process of law in the Old Testament. For example in Deuteronomy 25:1-3, *“If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. He may beat him forty times but no more.”*

God has built into our existence the reality of justice. Violation of law brings negative consequences. We live by this every day and no one is complaining about it. In the text before us in Romans, we are simply projecting the picture of justice to an eternal heavenly setting.

There are many other avenues where God establishes the reality of good and evil, justice and consequences for breaking the law. God has revealed through history, through His Word, and through government foundational truths that govern law, righteousness, justice, and consequences.

All of this leads up to what God has revealed in His Word that there is going to be a grand, cosmic day of justice in His heavenly courtroom. There will be a day where ungodly mankind will have his day in court and be judged for his deeds that he carried out while on earth. However, only the guilty will be at that judgment. You might say, “Well, that means everyone, right?” No, some will never set foot into God's courtroom. The whole point of this next section in Romans is to describe in detail and to spell out how one can be just, righteous, perfectly holy, and not guilty before God; in a word: justified.

Question 3 (*“Justification”, 9/17/17, p.9-11*). Explain what is at the heart of justification. Please include in your answer what occurs when a person is justified as well as its result.

Justification is a courtroom declaration in which God regards and counts your sin as paid for and forgiven, and Christ's righteousness is placed upon you (or imputed to you) so that you are declared as righteous as God in His sight.

We see this legal, courtroom facet of justification in many portions of Scripture. For instance, let's take a look at Romans 8:33. *Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies.* Do you see that? The setting is in a courtroom and God is asking for any prosecuting witnesses against believers, and there are none. Satan, the Law, your conscience, or that person of whom you took advantage, or those people with whom you were angry--none of them show up. Why? Because God has already declared that you are as righteous as Christ.

This declaration of justification in the sight of God means that He declares that we have no penalty to pay for sin, including past, present, and future sins. Romans 8:1-4 *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.* [There is nothing left for which to blame you. There is no basis for accusation. Why?] *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

That is the heart of justification. The requirements of the Law have been fulfilled in us because we are in Christ. My friend, if you are in Christ, you have never broken the Law in the eyes of God. You have never lied; you have never lusted in your heart; you have never lashed out in anger; you have always obeyed your parents. You have always loved God with all your heart, soul, and mind. Why? Because that is how Jesus lived. You are perfect as far as the Law goes. Your sin has been put on Christ, and His perfect law-abiding life has been given, or imputed, to you.

Those who are justified will never see the courtroom of heaven so as to be judged. Listen to what Jesus said in John 5:24, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."*

I was talking to Jeanine this past week and she reminded me of the saying that "justified" means, "Just as if I'd never sinned." That is fine for how far it goes, but in reality, it is far richer than that. Biblically, justification means, "Just as if I were Christ Himself" or "Just as if I were as righteous as God." The courtroom of God is for the guilty. But believers will not be there because they are declared not guilty and made as righteous as God Himself and do not come into judgment.

That is what Paul is referring to here when he says in verses 21-22, *"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested . . . even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe."* Essentially, Paul is saying this, "But now the infinite righteousness of God is given to sinful man through faith in Christ, not by man's own efforts."

But now . . . begins to tell us how to be perfect before God. What could not be produced by man is here seen as provided for man. What the Law could not accomplish is here seen coming by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul switches gears and is going to tell us how man can be justified before God apart from his own fruitless efforts at being good.

What we find beginning in Romans 3:19 to the end of the chapter are references to the Law,

accountability, righteousness, justice, justification, and how God provides justification for those who have broken the Law. All of these terms are grammatically interrelated and are courtroom terminology. Accountable—ὑπόδικος. Justified—δικαιόω. Righteousness—δικαιοσύνη. Just and justice—δίκαιος.

I told you at the beginning of our study of Romans that God's righteousness is categorically, infinitely other than man's righteousness. Man's attempts at righteousness cannot even begin to be compared to God's righteousness. Paul is here referring to that very righteousness of God being imputed or infused into believers.

Man cannot exist in the presence of this infinitely righteous God. The just nature of God demands justice and judgment of sin and unrighteousness. Man is accountable to God. Because God is transcendently otherworldly righteous, and if man is going to be reconciled to God, then man must be made as righteous as God.

Question 4 (“*Justification by Faith*”, 9/24/17, p.5). Answer the following questions taken from Romans 3:21-22.

- a. What is the theme of Romans that is also the theme of the New Testament?
- b. What are two truths concerning justification?
- c. What is the fact that separates Christianity from all other religions?

We find that words addressing righteousness and justification appear eight times in 11 verses from verse 21 through the end of the chapter. Paul takes up the great theme of righteousness by faith apart from the law. It is the theme of Romans. It is the theme of the New Testament. God's righteousness imputed to man by faith, apart from the law, is a primary theme of the whole Bible.

This theme involves God making sinful man as righteous as Christ so that man doesn't contaminate heaven and so that God remains righteous. This righteousness is apart from the Law or any of man's attempts at being good. This righteousness is apart from man deserving justification. This righteousness is given by God's grace because it is God's nature to be merciful, gracious, and compassionate. So we consider two truths concerning justification: 1) Justification Is Apart from the Law; and 2) Justification Is Through Faith.

Only Christianity states that man can do nothing for God but that God has done everything for man. There is no in-between. You are either trusting fully upon yourself and your goodness, or you are trusting fully upon Jesus and His finished work on the cross. I believe many people who fall under the umbrella of Christianity live frustrated lives because they attempt to mix their own works with God's finished work.

Question 5 (“*Justification by Faith*”, 9/24/17, pp. 7-8).

- a) Read the sermon excerpts for this question, especially the portion that quotes Psalm 51.
- b) For each verse of Psalm 51, write at least one observation about God and one about mankind. Some verses only speak of God, and others speak only of mankind.
- c) State an important principle you have gleaned from your observations.
- d) In the summary paragraph, John told what David abandoned. Could you say the same is true of you? Why or why not?

So the Law bears witness to the truth that righteousness comes, not by attempts to keep the Law, but by God's grace through a sacrifice. Furthermore, Paul states that the prophets also bear witness to this truth. There are many portions of the Old Testament prophets that we might consider that bear witness to this justification by faith through the grace of God.

One of the most penetrating passages is Psalm 51. The New Testament refers to King David as a prophet. Here in Psalm 51 is David's heart being laid bare for all to see for all of time. He essentially ordered the execution of Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. He impregnated Bathsheba in his adultery. He was confronted with his sin by the prophet Nathan, and having been confronted, he made no excuse for his sin, saying, "*I have sinned.*"

Following is Psalm 51, which is David's confession of sin and appeal to God for cleansing. I have made a few comments along the way concerning righteousness apart from good works.

Psalm 51 For the choir director. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

1Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. [Notice right away David approaches God on the basis of God's grace, not his own efforts.]

2Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

3For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

4Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge.

5Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. [David does not attempt to downplay his sin. He admits that he needs cleansing. He points to the fact that the greatest aspect of his sin was against God, even though it involved many others. He points to the fact that his sin nature was already present at conception. David does not mean that physical intimacy is sinful.]

6Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

7Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. [This hyssop is a reference to blood sacrifice. The priest used the hyssop bush to make a utensil by which he sprinkled blood on that which was to be cleansed. David understands that only the death of another can make him clean and wash away his sin.]

8Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

9Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities.

10Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

11 Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.

13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You. [None of David's pleas mentions his past goodness or his attempts at keeping the law. He simply pleads for grace. It is only God that can restore him and justify him.]

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation; then my tongue will joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

15 O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Your praise. [Having repented, David is showing full trust that God will restore him, and that he will in turn be able to speak to other sinners of God's grace.]

16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise. [David makes clear that outward religious acts are not what God seeks. The issue of the heart is always the point with God. Brokenness over sin and a contrite heart before God are what God desires. Only after brokenness and repentance does substitution take effect.]

David abandons any thought of righteousness in himself and comes to God's altar to receive righteousness on the basis of God's grace through a substitutionary atonement. The same is true for us today. So many portions of the prophets speak of justification by faith apart from the Law.