

All that believe are justified

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[0 : 0 0] Will you come with me this evening to that chapter of God's Word in which we read, the book of Acts, chapter 13. And let us read again at verse 38.

The words of the Apostle Paul. He is known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man, that is through Jesus Christ, through this man has preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him, or in him, and in him all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

And he says in the words of verse 39, in him all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses.

The fullness of salvation may not often be doubted by the Christian believer.

It may not even often be doubted by the non-Christian. But the absolute freeness of salvation is something that God has continually to impress, even upon his own people.

[1 : 3 3] And the absolute freeness of salvation to this sinner is something that the unconverted man knows nothing about. For if the unconverted man were truly to believe that he could be freely justified on the basis of what Christ has done, he would scarcely remain an unconverted man.

For if the unconverted man, he would scarcely be justified on the basis of what Christ has done, he would scarcely be justified on the basis of what Christ has done.

For if the unconverted man, he would scarcely be justified on the basis of what Christ has done, he would scarcely be justified on the basis of what Christ has done. And the doctrine of justification is the great doctrine upon which great focus fell. In that great spiritual revival of the 16th century that we've come to know and talk about of the Reformation.

Reformation was not just an intellectual rediscovery of the great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ.

It was primarily a movement of the great faith. It was primarily a movement of God's Holy Spirit that enlightened the mind and that redeemed the heart and that brought this focus of the reformers back to the centrality.

[3 : 1 6] That this doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone must have in any gospel that was truly to be worthy of the name gospel.

That movement of God's Holy Spirit, that sweeping revival uncovered, took away a lot of the rubbish that had been down through the centuries.

Heaped up on the gospel until the gospel had been totally lost. its rediscovery, the rediscovery of justification by faith in Christ and its full proclamation through the countries of Europe and in our own land of Scotland that brought the gospel back into prominence Adagospel Martin Luther went as far as to call this doctrine the article of a standing or a falling church in other words by it and by the place that it holds in the preaching and in the hearing of any church or denomination by it and by that can be known the health of that church and the church that lays aside or that overlays or pushes out of sight the doctrine, the wonderful, glorious sovereign doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone that church he declared is falling it's fallen from the truth and it is there to fall in ruin there is a chance that the justification of a sinner presupposes faith in that sinner by him, by Christ, says the Apostle Paul all that believe all that trust all that commit themselves to him are justified are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses justification presupposes faith that's why the reformers had the slogan justification by faith alone in fact they had a triple slogan salvation he said was by grace through faith through Christ grace alone faith alone

Christ alone and of course faith presupposes something else in our sinners it presupposes regeneration presupposes the work of the Holy Ghost because only the regenerate soul can believe in the sense of trust and committal whosoever says the Apostle John whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God how does John know that because those who are born of God cannot but believe in Jesus the sinner believes in Jesus because he is born of God the person who does not believe and who is not committed who does not trust Jesus is not born again for justification by faith presupposes faith and faith itself presupposes regeneration something else happens in regeneration and always accompanies faith and that is union with Christ he that believes is one with the Lord

Christ Christ is in him that's a very common New Testament expression that Christ as the Apostle Paul may dwell in your heart how by faith ah but the converse is also very common in the New Testament and it's something that Paul simply thrills in and delights in he talks about how being in Christ not only is this true that Christ is in the believer but the believer is in Christ there is no such thing as a believer who is not in Christ faith the faith of a regenerate soul unites with a saviour and that basis underlies God's justifying union of the sinner union with Christ must result in justification of the sinner who is so united it would be impossible it would be unthinkable it would be blasphemy for one whose sins were not pardoned and forgiven for one who was not justified before the law of God to be even thought of as in union with our holy redeemer and saviour that's why our shortest

[8 : 43] Catholicism defines justification in this way as an act of God's free grace wherein he pardons all our sins beautiful definition an act of God's free grace wherein he pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us or reckoned to us and received by faith alone that justification is the basis it's the very foundation rock of our salvation and I want us to take time tonight to look at some aspects of justification as it relates to our salvation now I want first of all to look at something which is essentially very simple it may seem like a truism at first and yet it's important for clearing our way to a further step into an understanding of the justification of our sinners this first thing is justice salvation the salvation of the gospel involves God in the justification of sinners

I want to repeat that the salvation of the gospel involves God our holy and righteous God in the justification of sinners now that's altogether a different model from the justification of a righteous creature the justification of a sinner is something altogether unmerited by the sinner that the justification of a righteous being is something that that being merits in its own right the justification of a sinner is totally apart from good works the justification of a righteous being is carried forth on the very basis of good works the justification of a sinner is free pardon from sin and the accepting of a sinner as righteous when he is not righteous the justification of a righteous being declares him righteous because he is righteous the gospel salvation the salvation of the bible deals not with the justification by god of righteous passion but the salvation of the gospel deals with the justification by god of sinners of those who cannot be justified on any merit that belongs to themselves or on the ground of any good works which they have done now that may seem a truism but I say it is not a trite truth god if he is going to save sinners requires a basis on which to justify sinners the salvation of the bible old testament and new deals with saving men and women who are lost men and women who are under guilt and who are polluted because of the sins it deals with the salvation of those who have earned not heaven but hell that's the what the salvation of the bible deals with and my friend that's the salvation that the bible forwards to us let us never forget that that the bible says that god justifies the ungodly and let it amaze your mind this is the god holy righteous god declared to be of pure eyes and to behold iniquity and yet the very central trust of the gospel is this that he is god who justifies the ungodly now that brings the whole thing down from the realm of mere doctrine we shouldn't even say mere doctrine but it brings it down from the level of high christian doctrine to the level in which you and i have to live to the level in which you and i have to die and face eternity and divine judgment it brings it into the realm of reality and practicality my friend this is not just doctrine this is something upon which your eternal destiny will hang on mine now i want to go on to take the next step we have been saying that

the salvation of the gospel involves god in the justification of sinners not of those who are righteous but of sinners let's go on to see what the salvation that the gospel proclaims demands that justification would include what must god include what does justification consist of well justification must consist both in the pardon of sin and the acceptance by god of the sinner it must include both the pardon of sin and the acceptance of the sinner whose sin it is either one of these alone would be an incomplete justification of the ungodly in the case of the sinner god's law requires two things it requires total satisfaction for past disobedience and it also demands for the present and for the future a total and perfect obedience let me illustrate that when a criminal who has broken the civil law when a criminal who has broken the civil law suffers the penalty that that law imposes upon him when he suffers the penalty which his crime attracts from the law he has done a part but only a part of what the law demands of him he still owes when he has paid all the penalties when he's come out of Berlin if he's been paying the penalty of the law in

Berlin when he comes out of the of the Berlin is he free from the demands of the law no it is required of him that in the future he renders a perfect obedience to the law for breaking the law again would incur a new penalty the fact that he has paid the penalty for his criminal offence doesn't free him from the demand of the law he is still under obligation so it is with the sinner and in order to have full justification there must be not merely the payment of the penalty but there must be an obedience to the precept the sinner whether he knows it or not is under a double obligation he is under the obligation of penalty for his wrongdoing and he is under the obligation of obedience lest he incur further wrath that's why at the beginning

I spoke of justification as being necessarily the justification of a sinner I was talking freely in suppositional language when I was talking of a righteous passion the justification of a righteous passion the sinner owes the obligation of penalty for wrongdoing and he has the obligation of obedience for the future the holy angels don't owe any penalties the angels owe only obedience and as they render that obedience they stand in perfect righteousness and they are justified before God you see the difference consequently the justification of a sinner must not only deliver him from the penalty of the law the penalty due to disobedience but it must provide foreign an equivalent to total personal obedience you see when God justifies the ungodly he must justify him in such a way that he provides not merely from his delivery from punishment his delivery from hell but he must provide a justification which will be a ground for his entrance into heaven and in order to place a sinner in which he is righteous in every way before the law right in every respect of what God's law demands of him it's necessary that that law be fulfilled for him not by him but for him on his behalf both as penalty and precept so you see the justification of a sinner involves not only pardon of sin but involves a right and are titled to the reward of the righteous and God has provided in the work of Christ both these things the wonderful fullness and freeness of it

[20 : 08] God has provided in Christ not merely that which lifts totally the penalty but he has provided in Christ that which gives the sinner pardon from a sin a title a permit of entry a visa a passport for eternal glory all theologians used to speak of two parts of Christ's obedience it's a pity that we've lost the terminology they spoke of his passive and active obedience and you see his passive obedience was his giving of himself up the man Christ Jesus to all that the penalty of a broken law would demand upon him in your place and in mine to do thy will I take delight he is led as a lamb to the slaughter he is totally passive but it is the passiveness of obedience and then

Christ gave an obedience that our older theologians spoke of as his active obedience he obeyed the law of God in all things he rendered a full hearted active perfect obedience to every demand of God's law upon him and although he was passive under suffering at the same time he was active and he was by his activity and action in suffering he was establishing a righteousness which he did not need for himself because he was righteous and him was no sin and so you see we say that Christ passive obedience is suffering the penalty of a death which was not due to him that is what lifts off the penalty of the broken law from the sinner and his active obedience is fulfilling of all righteousness that is which is counted to us as our pyramid of entry our visa for the heavenly lamb our title to eternal glory you see two sides to meet the two needs both depend totally upon what

Christ has done for the sinner because Christ the divine substitute has suffered for the sinner that sinner the moment he believes he obtains release from the punishment of his sins because Christ his divine substitute has obeyed God's law for him the believer obtains a reward which he never merits and never can merit he obtains the reward that he would have obtained had he never sinned at all the reward of eternal life justification two aspects to it the removal of penalty and the obedience to precept both of them undertaken provided fulfilled completed by Christ that relates to justification in this way justification in the sense in which we're using it means acquittal what it is for a prisoner to be acquitted from the buyer it means that all the claims that the law thought it had upon him have for some reason been released just last week we read that one of these men in one of the

I don't know I can't remember all the terms that are involved but the UDA or the UFA or whatever but one of these men in the trials in Glasgow all charges against him were dropped do you remember what the people said the judge said to him the judge said to him you're a free man you can walk out and when God justifies the ungodly who believe in Jesus God said to him you're a free man you can walk out and it's not because the law has been bent I'm not saying the judge bent the law in Glasgow sometimes they do that but it's not because God's law has been bent it's not because any of its demands or obligations have been lessened or mitigated or made lighter but God acquits because the law has been totally satisfied another has stood in the sinner's place and has borne the penalty a life sentence someone else has gone into bodily and done your life sentence for you someone else went down into the belly of hell and suffered not merely physical death but the pains of eternal death about someone with an infinite passion he was the holy son of god and he was a man because only a man could stand in a man's place that's the justification of the gospel isn't it a wonderful justification doesn't it meet your need of a sinner than mine does it not thrill your soul but god has done such a work it's the thing the apostle paul delighted in so salvation the salvation of the gospel demands that god justify sinners sinners and then the salvation of the gospel demands that god justify sinners in such a way that their need will be met in two directions the penalty will be lifted off them and the precept will be fully obeyed thirdly this thought the salvation of the gospel demands that god justify the sinner on a righteous basis otherwise it would be a contradiction of all that god is although god justifies the ungodly he does it on a basis which does not lay any slur upon but which magnifies his perfect righteousness now there are two possible kinds of righteousness which could be a ground for justifying a person before god's law a part of these would be a legal righteousness or we would call it the righteousness of the covenant of works although the bible doesn't use the term again our oldest theologian spoke of a covenant of works being made with adam for himself and for his posterity you see adam was on probation and god said to him do this and live or don't do that or you will die now had adam obeyed he would have been justified on the basis of a legal

righteousness the angels who have not sinned stand upon the basis of legal righteousness they have rendered obedience to the demands of god's law upon them so you see a person could be justified upon the basis of a legal righteousness because that would be legal innocence perfect personal conformity to god's whole law would ensure that the law had no penalty to bring paul tells of that romans 10 and 5 he says this moises he says describes the righteousness which is of the law that the man which perfectly does these things shall live by them and paul is not saying that moises believed that men could be could do that paul doesn't believe it but he is stating a truth a holy being is justified by this kind of righteousness but a sinner cannot be pronounced as righteous upon the ground of legal righteousness in fact there is a sinner debars god from doing that he is a sinner therefore he has not rendered a whole a perfect a total obedience and paul takes all men and he says god has included all under sin for all has sinned and come short of the glory of god and he goes on to say in romans 3 20 by the deeds of the law shall no flesh no sinful man be justified in god's sight why because there is an unrighteous no not one if the sinner had rendered perfect obedience he would be pronounced just upon that ground but if he had rendered self-defeated obedience he wouldn't be a sinner so justification upon the grounds of legal righteousness is out as far as any one of us is concerned but there's another possible basis of righteousness upon which god can justify and that is gratuitous righteousness or imputed righteousness we've lost these the sense of the meaning of these great words or to put it again this way the righteousness which is provided by the covenant of grace the covenant of works fails us but the covenant of grace doesn't because it's designed for people like us what is it gospel righteousness the righteousness held out to us in the preaching of the gospel if only we saw it

[31 : 51] Paul calls it the righteousness of god great phrase found in romans and galatians great phrase and he calls it the righteousness of god in order to distinguish it i think from legal righteousness and this term the righteousness of god refers to what has been worked out by the passive and active obedience of christ it is his substitutionary suffering in our place that enables god to be just while he is also the justifier of the ungodly it is the work of christ that is in paul's mind when he talks of the righteousness of god for i may know him he says in philippians not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but the righteousness which is of god through faith in christ it's the righteousness that christ worked out in his perfectly obedient life and in his innocently suffering death his atoning death and it's gratuitous righteousness because it's the righteousness which god's grace has provided and freely provided and it's gratuitous because you and i can never pay for it were we to live the most holy lives from this moment till the end of eternity and that's a terrible phrase because it's meaningless but could you live for an eternity and could you render righteous holy obedient service to god it would not pay for the righteousness that god provides through christ that righteousness is provided by a fully flowing free love it's unbelievable but it's there it's the gospel oh everyone that fished just come ye to the waters the old testament had it too you'll find that in

Isaiah and you'll find paul saying justified how am i justified i'm justified freely by his grace he's picking up the thought of Isaiah without money without Christ psalm 32 that psalm we were singing and i was glad to hear you singing out singing of the blessing of that psalm why not sing out if you know the blessing of sin forgiven and if you know that god has not imputed you should be shouting the top of your head off almost there well psalm 32 describes the blessedness of the man to whom god imputes not his sins or he is really the man to whom god reckoned this righteousness you see he takes that righteousness objective righteousness of christ and he takes it over and he reckons it to the sinner who believes and he says this is yours and it's yours are free and he looks upon that man then as though he had never sinned at all christ's death his atoning death for sin is not the sinner's death you see christ's atoning death is not the sinner's death but god looks upon it as though it were the sinner's death but christ is paid so the righteousness of god the righteousness provided by christ is the ground upon which god justifies and you see all the demands of his own holy nature are perfectly met in christ and that righteousness of god is the ground and it's the only ground upon which us a sinner who believes is pronounced to be righteous christ has suffered the penalty for him and he's pronounced righteous before the law and freed from the law and finally just this thought the salvation of the gospel and god justifies the sinner on the ground of christ's obedience he justifies us sinners for one and for all justification is not something that can grow for it is an act of growth justification justification is not something which can increase because it is full and perfect the moment god justified all of us are too apt to confuse frequently two different things justification and sanctification justification is an act of god whereby he declares for jesus sake a sinner to be righteous sanctification is a work of god spirit justification puts our standing with god right and sanctification puts our state our condition right we've given our nature for our greed without standing there are times when our awareness and stance have been justified by god you know we can lose sight of it we don't feel its force and its power but in

one act of justifying the sinner god justifies not only the sins which are past but he justifies sins past present and sins to come the whole course of the believer's life is in the eye of god when he justifies them on the grounds of christ's obedience that is why some theologians have written on this doctrine and included what they have called justification from from eternity in it in a sense of life I would be very cheery of how I would use the term but there is a sense in which certainly the sinner is in the mind of god or at the bar of deity declared just for all of time and for all of eternity and that free justification on the grounds of what christ has done to exist in all his sins time heaven and future it's all lifted off and you see the doctrine underlines the three measures on grace and love of our wonderful god and he presents us with our wonderful saviors and an absolutely sure and complete salvation down through the ages men have said you can't preach a doctrine that makes salvation as free as that one does or people will take advantage of it they'll free if all my sins have been paid them and free to sin well men have often used the grace of god in that way grace can be abused but when the sinner sees how fool and how free his salvation is and when he sees what it has cost his love to the saviour is the one thing that will make him seek to obey make him seek to repent and forsake his sins and you go on in life not abusing the free love and grace of god but saying this i love him because he first loved me for nothing shows love the way that justification fool and free for jesus bade death and death free leave to not y because that quotidien died only jesus to to want you