

Justified by faith

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 January 2000

Preacher: Rev Murdo Macritchie

[0 : 00] We have this whole problem of how to become right. If you look at various creeds, you see people with breathless activity trying to be right before their concept of God.

And what we are up against here is, how are we to be right before the God who is holy and who is just, the God against whom we have sinned, and the God who is brought before us in his whole holy word, in that revelation which is so precious.

If we didn't have this revelation, where would we be? We'd be just like a philosophical society, debiting the merits and demerits of every clause and every doctrine. But we don't need to. We have this word, special revelation, and how are we to be right before him or just before him?

Now, we do know that this is a judicial term, that it doesn't speak of experience. We don't just say, well, I feel that I'm right before God.

I have a feeling in my own heart that I'm right before God. How can anyone have a feeling in his heart that he is right before God? That doesn't make any of us right before him. That's not the way in which people are made right before God.

[1 : 23] It is not something that God does in my heart or in your heart that makes us right before him. The thing right before God, as we have spoken of here, is a relationship with God, a relationship with God himself, with a holy God against whom we have sinned.

And it doesn't matter whether we feel that we are right with him or even that we feel that we aren't. It doesn't mean to say that we're not right. Any more than feeling that we are right makes us right before God.

And we know that the grounds of this justification, of being just before him, being right before him, is the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's the work of the Saviour. Oh, you say, everyone knows that. Of course everyone knows that. It has been taught in the Scriptures. But is that exactly what we need to know?

What we do know already? It isn't that we want to bring to you notice strange doctrines, strange forms of words.

[2 : 42] It's the doctrines that we believe in. It's the doctrines that we know. That we want to go over them again and again. And by the aid of God's Holy Spirit, these very doctrines can become so very fresh to our understanding.

And every time we go over them and reflect upon them, we will see something new in them, something fresh, something more relevant than ever. The doctrine doesn't change, but our insight up into the doctrines do change indeed and increase as they feel.

So that the person who is bordering on glory here tonight has a much greater insight into the doctrines of justification by faith than the person who has just become justified before God.

There is a progression in one's knowledge and understanding of these things. But the thing itself doesn't change, as you know, and you've known it from childhood, that justification doesn't increase.

You have it when you are believed in Christ. And you don't become any more justified in glory than you are tonight sitting there. You are as justified now as you'll ever be.

[3 : 55] No, not even in glory. You are as adopted as you will ever be. So you'll be more sanctified undoubtedly and you'll be glorified. But you won't be any more just before him.

Isn't that a wonderful thought that the righteousness of Christ in all its fullness is yielded through faith in his blessed name, the righteousness of the glorious Saviour, that righteousness which he worked out for a particular and specific purpose, that he would redeem his people from their sins. And this is now imputed or reckoned to you. When God looks up the book of our sins or the book of our debts, these have been cancelled because against them the answers which Christ provided in

his own life and death and resurrection, shown in the resurrection, these things are put against his debt, put against his sins, and these things have been blotted out.

Some of you know that the branch of the Protestant church in Europe called the Lutherans, which are a very evangelical branch and in the States, for example, probably they are the most aggressive evangelical group of any church.

But in their creed, they have confined this standing before God or this justification, they have confined it to forgiveness of sins.

[5 : 34] That is, that God forgave sins. Now that is true enough, that God forgave sins. But you know very well from the sort of catechism that we do not confine it to that.

You also remember how that we have, that we are accepted. We are accepted. That the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.

And with that, it is received by God alone. We are accepted as righteous in his sight. But you see, that's just quibbling about words.

Not at all. There's far more than quibbling about words here. because you can see the danger to which you are thrown if you think of this as just that your sins have been forgiven.

If that's all that it means, what happens then is that when you sin again, and there isn't anyone who doesn't sin, you are back to square one.

[6 : 34] You have to be justified again. But that is not true. There's forgiveness of sin because I shall also accept it before God as righteous in his sight.

And this is by the righteousness of Christ imputed to you. And I feel, as you notice that the economy of words that those men used, they did not.

They didn't use superfluous wording at all but they put in the word alone there by faith alone by no other way. And it would take a lifetime and no doubt an eternity to understand truly what this faith means as it receives what God has provided for us in the law of Jesus Christ.

Now, on a person who's made righteous, the question with many people, the reason I am going out on this line is that Friday of the communion season was usually in the olden days given to the question day and they were given to considerable marks of grace.

Now, some people say that they don't need that. Well, maybe you don't need it but there are which you might need it. And what's meant to have the weak in the faith?

[7 : 58] There's a progression in the life of the Christian. And there are Christians who are weaker in the faith than others. Now, there are times in the history of the church that it becomes new subjective.

But there are other times and places where it becomes a true objective and that objectivism is bound altogether.

And I think both ways are wrong. There is the objective and there is the subjective. There is what God has done for you and what God has done in you.

I know justification is not something that you or I can feel. this is what very many Christians question to look for forgiveness in their own heart.

They're looking for justification in their own soul. But it isn't to be found there. It's a judicial act of God. God justifies and no one asks.

[9 : 03] See, we do not forgive ourselves for the sin for which we are forgiven by God. I'm not saying that we should not acquiesce in what God has done and in what God has done in the forgiveness of sin.

But we do not forgive ourselves for the sins for which we are forgiven by God in the sense that we do not say, it was all right for me to have sinned. That sin was not heinous in any way.

That sin was not very big at all. We should never come to that conclusion just because our sins have been forgiven. Now, as I said, forgiveness of sin is not something that happens in the heart of man.

It's something that God does and God does on account of the righteousness of Christ. Have you ever thought of what God says that he justifies the ungodly the ungodly?

It's a very humbling thought. When a person, for example, comes under the conviction of sin and he tries to justify himself and does something, everything he can think of in order to be justified.

[10 : 14] He goes to church twice a day, starts increasing his contribution to the church, he starts also getting involved in other activities of religious and semi-religious nature in order to add to his credit.

and then he finds that all these things are nothing, that he can never be just before God by any of these things. And the way of salvation and redemption, the way of justification is already perfected in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is our justification. and it is not, as I said, something that happens within my soul or their heart. It is not something of which you are conscious.

Now let me hasten to say though you are not conscious of justification, you are conscious and you should be conscious and you ought to be conscious of the effects of justification because the person God justifies, he doesn't leave him just being justified, he also adopts him.

And the person he justifies and adopts, he doesn't leave him like that, he also sanctifies him. And it is in the process of sanctification, of making you holy, that you become conscious of your own justification in Christ.

[11 : 33] That's what gives you assurance. It is not the justification itself. It's a wonderful, stable doctrine. You don't need to be going as up and down like I gave you.

When you're down, I am not saved. When you're up, I am saved. Leave that together. Your doctrine is much more basic, much sounder, much more established than that.

It's established in the throne of God and in his act. God, the Holy One of Israel, justifying the sinner. He's not just saying, oh, you haven't sinned so much, not at all, but in all that the Lord Jesus Christ did.

For our women's dead, he appears to us. And when you read that, remember in the autobiographies of many of the saints of old, you find this, when they came to the place that they were able to understand the gospel.

I feel many of you came to church for years and you didn't understand the gospel. You would go out and say, well, that was a good sermon, or that was a dull sermon. That was rather boring. There wasn't much in that sermon.

[12 : 44] That was a very eloquent sermon. But at the same time, you'll have to confess today that we didn't really understand the gospel. You'd never have the key to open. Christ is the key to the whole of scriptures.

See, without Christ, the whole of the Bible is just a compendium of laws and all kinds of things and some things that you can't put together. But when the key is found, it's easy enough, everything falls into place, and the key, friends, is Christ.

He is all justification. Now, I haven't dealt with justification at all, and I had no intention of, but I'm saying that it is not something that happens in my heart or in your heart.

But it has fruit. It has fruit. fruit. By whom also it is, we have access, by faith, into this grace wherein we stand.

We have peace with God. Now, I'm sure that when you first of all began to follow the Lord, you thought this peace would be with you today, and then you would do something wrong, and this peace would go away.

[13 : 55] You are referring, of course, to the tranquility of your own mind. You are referring to whether your conscience was accusing you of something today, and you are getting over it. And you know, there's a great danger there that people can get over the father they are given by their conscience by praying.

And it's exactly what makes the Roman doctrine so very popular. That if you think that by praying to God and confessing, that that will do, not at all.

God doesn't mean that our confessions of our sins take the place of the work of Christ. Certainly, he has tied confession with forgiveness in his own word, but our confessions are not the basis of our forgiveness before God or our peace before him.

And then, this peace is not it's not the peace that we have in some measure and then lose to some extent. It's a peace far more basic than that.

It's a peace with God that he has made in the Lord in the reconciliation in Christ. And we are partakers of that peace. We are now at peace with God.

[15 : 16] Do you remember during the war when there were relations broken between countries and there was no coming and going between them. There was no commerce at all.

They were at war and there was no relationship as had been the case before the war. Now, there's something like this that we find the sinner who is justified before God.

The lines of commerce are opened again. Or I should have said, the lines of communication are opened again.

and the sinner, as the lines of communication are opened and they're not opened in relation to any, but those who are at peace with God.

Those who are at peace with God. And as we are reminded of the Shorter Catechism, through the fall, we all lost communion with God or fellowship with God. And this is restored in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[16:20] Now, I said, the lines of communication are opened and the lines of communication being opened is the signal and the sign that we have found peace with God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. And these lines of communication carry the messages both ways. It is not a one-way affair. It is not just God dealing with us or God's relationship with us, but we are dealing now with him.

It may come across in a desire. It may come across in a supplication. It may come across in a note of praise and adoration.

It comes across in various ways. You read the book of Psalms and you'll find there the very good nature of the messages that come from the soul to God and the experience of the soul of God's goodness, the peace of God.

We are at peace with God. We should try in a peace of conscience also. We should try in our good conscience, but our conscience is not the basis of our peace. There is this peace that is much deeper than that.

[17:34] The one that we have to some degree and that varies from day to day is not, I believe, the one that is referred to here. Now we have access into this by faith, into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God as we see this glory revealed in Christ.

But you must remember that this glory, the glory of God in Christ is to be revealed more to us than it is now in the day that Christ will appear.

They rejoice already in the glory of God. They rejoice in the revelation of this glory. When Christ ascended on high, he was glorified. Now I'm not saying that there aren't degrees in that glorification. There are and probably the very epitome of glorification will be seen when the children of God are brought together and the glory of the Redeemer is seen reflected in every one of them.

None of us then will try to be better than another. Every one of us will be content with what our Savior has done and this competitiveness and rivalry will be forever vanished from our minds and we shall be single-hearted in our praises of the Redeemer.

[19:01] He shall be over all and our minds will be filled and focused on him, the glorious Redeemer of God's elect. For whatever you do, don't try and have Christianity without him because he is the one who is the content of the prayers of his church and has been in every age.

So it doesn't matter what the Christian is found in the world, he should be able, even when he differs and disagrees with his brethren in many portions and many parts of the world and many denominations, the Christian, the child of God, should find a common ground with those who worship the Savior, with those whose trust is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the apostle was a realist. He knew very well that there was much in the life of every Christian that was causing much trouble. He wasn't just speaking in a detached way when he was propelling the gospel.

It wasn't something like the platonic ideas, and if a person would get away from matter, that a person was, to the extent in which he would get away from matter, that he was becoming more holy.

That is not the philosophy of scripture at all. And that philosophy, unfortunately, filtered through even after the Reformation. I think God is right in saying that, that it filtered through and that many others had that doctrine.

[20:38] that there is, after all, evil in matter. And the less matter and the more spirit, the more holy, the holier a person is. That is not at all true, because when God created us first, we were holy, we were innocent, and he created us out of the dust of the earth, and he breathed life.

But he created us out of the material which he himself had created, and that is not a make-up sinful. No, that does not make-up precious sinful.

And the devil has no body, and yet he is sinned, he is sinned. He is the father of lies, and he has no body with which to sin. He is a spirit, but yet he is the devil, and the demons, they do not have

bodies.

sinned. Now, the apostle realized that people had that tribulation, and tribulation in connection with the gospel, and not really so, he said, we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, the hope no doubt of this glory that has been revealed.

This glory, when a person sees the glory of God in Christ, he cannot have that hope, and he cannot have that understanding for measure, the fulfillment of the promise of God to him.

[22 : 03] He thinks, well, everything will be all right. A person beside himself, as it were, looking for peace, looking for forgiveness, looking how to be a Christian.

I remember someone coming to me one time and saying, well, I've given up being a Christian now. I'm not to be a Christian anymore. What can you say to a person like that? I'm not to be a Christian anymore.

Well, those who are Christians can't be but Christians. They may be backsliding Christians, they may be very poor Christians, but thanks be to God, they are by the grace of God what they are.

When a person is new in Christ he cannot nullify that. That is one thing that a Christian can't do. He's not given a Christian any license, none at all.

But those who are no creatures in Christ's faces, all things have passed away, behold, all things have become new. And this is one thing that he cannot do. He cannot nullify what God has done.

[23 : 09] He cannot nullify the status that God has given him. God says to God has given things according to the flesh, that he looked even on Christ according to the flesh.

But now he says not only that he doesn't know Christ according to the flesh anymore, but he says that he doesn't know anyone, that he can't reason that well. He can't reason in an unregenerate way.

There may be a lot of unregeneracy in his reasoning, but that doesn't mean to say that his reason in an unregenerate way. He can't get to the viewpoint that he had then.

He can't get to the vantage point that he had then. It's impossible. But the apostle goes on and says even glory and tribulation.

Now is that an isolated entity? Well I don't believe that it is. You may disagree with that. And you may be entitled to disagreement.

[24 : 12] And certainly there are from scripture that you write. But I can't appreciate that the apostle would be speaking of tribulation in isolation.

He is speaking of what is true of those who are justified and this is part of the truth that tribulation that the glory in tribulation also that he goes on.

He doesn't say the glory in tribulation period. That isn't what he says at all. Knowing knowing the process knowing what goes on knowing that all things are as it is put more clearly I would say in the eight chapters all things work together for good to those who love the Lord to those who love those who are called according to his purpose all things because it is that from the very foreknowledge through predestination through calling justification that it all converges on their glorification and from the very beginning to the very end it is the alpha and the omega so everything that happens happens within this and this is all in Christ maybe I haven't emphasized that in going along as much as

I should because once we forget that we forget everything it is all in Christ Jesus all in Christ Jesus a wonderful preposition there in the New Testament and we have sometimes great difficulty in understanding the precise connotation in meaning of that little word in Christ chosen in him and having life in him having the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus well I don't believe that population is spoken of here in isolation at all because it says knowing understanding this that tribulation work as patience but you say that is not in accordance with my experience maybe it isn't but if we speaking of expediency there are things which are not experienced and these things we mustn't look for them in our experience but there are other things and they are experienced but we must remember that our self consciousness of things never reflect accurately reality as long as we are sinful not just because we are finite creatures that might indeed affect our interpretation of our self consciousness but our sinfulness our sinfulness affects even our self consciousness of things now creatures the lower creation are not capable of this self consciousness which

God has given to the man he created in his own image and this is one of the of the boundaries that God has given to us that we can actually experience of what God has done and what he has done how can anyone for example join in the chorus of heaven saying for him who loved us and washed us from our sins his own blood without having some experience of that washing there will be no

spectators in heaven at all standing on the sideline and joining the chorus everyone will be the arena everyone will be a participant everyone will be our recipient will be one of those involved that we have a very definite involvement here now a tribulation is a work of patience but it's only in those who are justified tribulation ordinarily works in patience now as you know patience is a beautiful thing in anyone but that is not what is spoken of here the ordinary patience the virtue of patience some people have a tremendous amount of it and everyone admires it everyone likes it it is good for themselves and it is good for others but friends a patient can have a lot of that patience without having the patience of the

[29 : 09] New Testament without having the patience spoken of here and what is the patience spoken of here it is the patience of endurance the patience of continuing you see a person for example in a race and it gets the idea that it usually comes out first and then is in this race and it is not up to standard and it is not going to make it at least it comes out first and what does he do sometimes he lets go he just goes off the coat altogether and lies down what is that in New Testament language well that's fainting that's what it calls fainting and the children of God do not faint because they get a meal of strength patience means in New Testament means a going on against difficulty and enduring and keeping on very much like endurance some person tried to show the meaning of this by putting it this way say you had an inflated ball and you depressed it with your thumb and as long as your thumb depressed at all there was this dent but as you eased the pressure of your thumb the inflated ball would keep on following your thumb up all the way to its former shape and that he said is something like the patience spoken of the

New Testament the patience are spoken of in Scripture that as the tribulation eases that the person still goes on and goes on despite the tribulation so he begins to glory in tribulation also knowing that he is a person and he is a person and he is a person and he is