

# Guest Preacher - Rev. RJ Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[ 0 : 00 ] Let us now turn to the New Testament and to Paul's epistle to the Romans and chapter 3. And we can read from verse 23.

Romans 3 at verse 23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus and so on.

This morning we saw that we are all sinners and as sinners we are lawbreakers. We break the law of God.

We have broken and do break the law of God. Therefore, as lawbreakers of the law of God, we are under the condemnation and curse of the law.

[ 1 : 30 ] And hence we have to be punished. No man is able to keep the law. Therefore, we are open and naked and desire to be punished.

So that we need a righteousness that can satisfy God's justice. If we are going to escape what our sins deserve, if we are going to escape from the wrath, the curse, the condemnation that our sins deserve, then we need a righteousness that can satisfy God's justice.

Again, as we saw this morning, Paul lays emphasis in this chapter that this righteousness that we need is a righteousness that is provided by God.

God has provided a righteousness. He had promised it before. He had promised it before and throughout the Old Testament in various ways.

But now he has revealed it. It is God himself who has provided this righteousness or this way of salvation.

[ 2 : 46 ] He has promised this righteousness through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God in his infinite wisdom and goodness made a way by which he can justify us.

We are all involved in guilt. None of us could plead not guilty. And being guilty, we lay under a sentence of death.

Now that the judge himself should find out a way to justify us, to set us free, this should fill us with wonder and with love.

The angels themselves admire the mystery of the free grace that is found in this new way of justifying and saving lost mankind.

And if they admire this mystery, surely we ought to admire it. Because we are concerned in it.

[ 3 : 53 ] We are the ones on whom the benefit is devolved. Therefore, should we not cry out with the apostle, O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

Here tonight we read, But now the righteousness of God has been revealed apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Then we read, And are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

What Paul brings before us here is a great doctrine. It is a doctrine of justification. Thomas Watson says justification is the very hinge and pillar of Christianity.

An error about justification is dangerous, like a defect in a foundation. Justification by Christ is a spring of the water of life.

[ 5 : 15 ] Now justification, that word is a word that is borrowed from law courts. It is a legal term. It is a legal act.

It is a declaration made by a judge that a person is innocent and can be set free.

Being justified is a declaration that is made by God, the judge of all the earth. It means that we are declared righteous by the judge.

We are declared righteous by God. Now, it does not mean that we are made righteous, but rather that God regards us as righteous, and that he declares us to be righteous.

Now this has often been a difficulty to many people, to understand this doctrine of justification. But let us hear how the Catechism puts it.

[ 6 : 26 ] Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

What that tells us is that justification is done not by us, but it is done for us, and that by someone else.

It is God that justifies. It is God that does it. It is an act of God. And if God justifies, who can condemn?

Justification is an act of God done once. It's done once. It is never to be repeated. It is never something that is continuous, or something that can be improved upon over time.

The saints in glory tonight, the saints in heaven, are not any more justified than me and you here on earth if we are put our faith in Jesus Christ.

[ 7 : 51 ] They are certainly more perfect. They are sanctified, but not any more justified than me and you.

And we may ask then, why is this doctrine of justification so important? Why is it so important for us?

Well, sometimes believers, because they are conscious of indwelling sin, they may conclude that they cannot be in a justified state before God.

And that shows immediately that they have no proper understanding of the doctrine of justification. Justification makes no actual change in us.

Justification is a declaration by God concerning us. A declaration by God concerning us.

[ 8 : 51 ] And here Paul tells us that justification comes to us freely and by grace. And not justified by grace as a gift, or as the authorised version puts it, being justified freely by his grace.

Well, what is meant by grace? What is grace? Grace means the unmerited favour or kindness shown to one who is utterly undeserving.

Saving grace arises solely from the love of God. Without anything whatsoever in us to produce it, it is entirely of God.

Grace arises solely from God himself. So Paul says that on our part, it is freely and by God's grace without any contribution whatsoever from us.

We are justified freely by his grace. But what is it that makes all this possible?

[ 10 : 17 ] On what grounds does God do this? On what grounds can God declare us to be justified? How can he justify us?

On what grounds does he declare us to be righteous in his sight? How can God justify the sinner? How can he declare the sinner to be righteous?

Well, Paul answers that question here. He says it is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. It is important for us to remember that although this righteousness is given to me and you freely, it does not mean that it is given to us merely as a result of a statement made by God.

It is not like it was with creation. In the matter of creation, God merely had to make a statement.

He said, let there be light and there was light. But justification is not possible in that way. Because of God's eternal justice and righteousness, something else had to happen before God could make that declaration of us as being justified.

[ 11 : 41 ] And Paul here explains it. He says it is through or by means of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How is it possible for God to justify the sinner?

How is it possible for us to stand in the presence of God as justified? It is all through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Well, let us look more closely at this word for a moment, the word redemption. Redemption means deliverance by the payment of a price, of a ransom price.

A thing is redeemed by the payment of a stipulated price. This is illustrated for us in the Old Testament. For instance, if a man had become a slave as a result of being captured or conquered by another, his nearest kinsman could redeem that person as long as the kinsman was able to pay the required price, the ransom price.

He could redeem him. He could buy him back. He could buy him and set him free. So it is a term that is used for, very often, in the Old Testament, for setting a slave free.

[ 13 : 06 ] So that immediately reminds us that although we have been justified freely and by his grace, that there was a cost. a ransom price had to be paid, not by us, but by God himself.

The ransom price had to be paid. We could not pay the ransom price. Psalm 49 reminds us of that. He says, Truly, no man can ransom another or give to God the price of his life, for the ransom of their life is costly and can never suffice.

How did God redeem us? How does he justify us? He redeemed us through his Son. He justifies us through his Son.

The apostle in writing to Timothy says of Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all. Again to Titus, he says, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify to himself or for himself a people for his own possession who are sellers of good works.

The apostle Peter uses precisely the same expression. Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without blemish or without spot.

[ 14 : 40 ] Jesus himself told his followers, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many.

So we are told that Christ has redeemed us by paying the ransom price. Paul says to the believers, you are not your own, for you were bought with a price.

So this word redemption means release as a result of a payment of a price. And as we have noted, the truth about us all is that we are not able to pay that price.

We cannot pay that price. But thank God another has come and paid the price for us. God sent his Son to pay the price for us.

Paul describes this redemption as that it is in Christ Jesus. And within this doctrine of justification, within this passage and within our thoughts at the moment, we have this great idea of substitution and other standing on our behalf.

[ 15 : 55 ] God's Son, Jesus Christ, the substitute, the one standing on our behalf and meeting what our sins deserve in his own body upon the cross.

All the glory must go to Christ. It is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that has made all the difference. His perfect obedience to the law, as we noted this morning, his paying the price of the ransom on the cross of Golgotha.

That is what has made redemption possible. That is what has made it possible for me and you to be justified in the sight of God, to escape the wrath, the condemnation, the curse that our sins deserve.

God has made it for us. As we have noted, the truth about us all is that we are not able to pay that price, but thank God another has come and paid the price for us.

It is in Christ Jesus. And all the glory must go to him. The Lord Jesus did not come to tell us about the love of God.

[ 17 : 12 ] Of course he does that. Of course he does that. But it is actual coming and living and dying and rising again that provides the payment of the price that was essential for our deliverance.

He came to pay the ransom price. His coming and his teaching alone could not have saved us.

We had to be ransomed and he ransomed us on the cross of Golgotha. His life and his death was all the necessary ransom price for our salvation.

Verse 25 elaborates more upon the ransom price. Whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to proceed by faith.

This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. Paul is now here going to describe this redemption which he has already told us the redemption that the gospel announces and declares in Jesus Christ.

[ 18 : 37 ] As we look at this verse the first thing that is important is this whom God put forward whom God put forward well we have reflected upon that since the beginning of our service whom God put forward regarding his son Jesus Christ.

This is the way that Paul describes the cross of Golgotha whom God put forward. God was there setting forth or making a public declaration by what happened on the cross.

The death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross was not an accident. The cross the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross was God's work.

Yes there were soldiers yes there were others who contributed to the death of the Lord physically but it was actually God's work.

The invisible hand of God was there. Jesus gave up his spirit and he bowed his head.

[ 19 : 59 ] And that's important for us to remember what John specifically takes note of that Jesus bowed his head. It didn't fall.

It didn't give up his spirit and his head fell. No. He gave up his spirit and he bowed his own head. He was still in control of everything.

The cross is God's work. It is God's action. What exactly happened on the cross? Well, what is the meaning of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross?

The answer is given in this verse and it is found in two words there, propitiation and blood. Now, I know that we're using big words tonight, but we need to have some understanding of these big words.

Propitiation and blood. The word propitiation means to appease or to avert wrath. The word propitiation is also found in 1 John chapter 2 verse 2 where it's written, he is a propitiation for our sins and not for us only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

[ 21 : 10 ] Also, in 1 John 4, we read, in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins, to appease his wrath.

Now, the word that Paul uses here, which is translated propitiation, although it is the same root word and belongs to the same family, it is not identical at all with the word that John uses.

The word that Paul uses here, and which is translated here for us as propitiation, is exactly the same word which you find in Hebrews chapter 5, which is translated mercy seat.

However, we must agree with a vast number of people who accept that it should be translated here as propitiation, or as we have it in our Gaelic Bibles, propitiatory sacrifice, eòd rege.

That is how it is in Gaelic. Because what Paul is teaching here is that what our Lord did by his death upon the cross was in order to appease God's wrath.

[ 22 : 23 ] In what sense is the Lord Jesus Christ this propitiatory sacrifice? And the answer we have is in his blood. Propitiation and blood.

In Ephesians 1, verse 7, we are told that we have been redeemed through or by his blood. Now, we may be surprised at that. We may ask ourselves, well, why did not the apostle say his death?

The apostle uses his tear in blood often when he is referring to our salvation. In Hebrews 9, he says, he entered once, that is Jesus, entered once for all into the holy place, not by means of the blood of goats and calves, but by means of his own blood, the securing and eternal redemption.

Peter tells us that we have been redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus. The apostle John reminds us that the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from our sin.

And you know, what is remarkable is this, that even the glorified spirits makes reference to the blood of Christ. For we read in the book of Revelation that they sing out to him who loved us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

[ 23 : 43 ] Well, the significance of using this tear in blood is that he is taking us back to the Old Testament. And he's taking us back to sacrificial language.

The Old Testament was saturated by the pouring and the sprinkling of blood. So he's reminding us of or showing us that the death of Jesus on the cross was a sacrificial death, that he sacrificed himself.

It was a sacrificial death. Because the tear in blood in the Bible means life laid down in death. It is the final proof of the fact that death has been accomplished.

We are sinners, friends. We are lawbreakers. And all lawbreakers are under the condemnation of the law and deserve to be punished.

And that punishment is death. And we cannot justify ourselves in the sight of God. We cannot provide a righteousness that will satisfy God's justice.

[ 24 : 51 ] But here is the wonder of it all. God intervened. God intervened. The one whose law we had broken intervened.

The judge of all the earth intervened. And he himself has provided a righteousness by which we can be justified in his presence, by which we can be declared righteous.

And he has provided this righteousness through his Son, Jesus Christ. God manifest in the flesh has provided a righteousness that can justify the sinner and give the sinner a standing before a holy God.

That is why we can come to the judgment seat of Christ at the end with boldness and confidence, not in ourselves, but in the righteousness that has been imputed to us, that declaration that has been made by God, that we are justified in his Son, by his Son's righteousness, which he purchased, being imputed to me and to you, to us freely, but it was costly to him.

In verse 25 we read, whom God put forward, that is Christ, as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he has passed over former sins.

[ 26 : 47 ] The event of Golgotha and the cross was to declare God's righteousness, to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins, or to show or manifest his righteousness.

Now this righteousness is not the one that God gives to us. We spent a lot of time in the morning speaking of that one, the righteousness that God gives to us.

We have spoken of it this evening as well. But when he comes to these final verses of this chapter, he is not speaking to us about that righteousness that God gives to us that we have in verse 21 and 22, but rather he's speaking here of the righteousness that belongs to God himself.

God is declaring here his own righteousness, or he is declaring to us his righteous character. He is declaring his righteous character for passing over former sins, it says, in his divine forbearance.

He is declaring his righteousness in respect of former sins which he has passed over. The New King James Version says, he demonstrates his righteousness because in his forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.

[ 28 : 18 ] In other words, he's declaring his righteous character for the overlooking of sins that are passed. Now, does that mean my past sins and your past sins?

Well, I don't think so, because Paul here is referring to a specific time. He had passed over former sins.

You know, what he's doing here is he's looking back to the Old Testament times. He's looking back to the sins of the Old Testament saints. And his point is that God passed over the sins of Old Testament saints.

He has done that, and now he has set forth Christ to do something about what he had done then. He passed over the sins of the Old Testament saints in his forbearance, in his tolerance, or in his self-restraint.

What Paul is telling us is that this public act which God enacted at the cross on Golgotha has reference also to God's action under the Old Testament.

[ 29 : 22 ] When he passed over or passed by the sins of the people at that time in his forbearance, in his tolerance, in his self-restraint. You know, in Hebrews 9 we have more or less the same thing where Paul writes, Hebrews 9, 15, therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

See, there was no real sacrifice under the Old Testament that could really deal with sin. All the blood that was poured out in the Old Testament, all the slaughter of animals that happened in the Old Testament could never truly deal with sin.

All it did was to point forward to this sacrifice that was coming and that could really deal with sin. We often speak of that moment in the life of Abraham as they were going to Mount Moriah with Isaac and Isaac asks him, Father, where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

Good question. They had everything else but a lamb. And Abraham turns and he says, God will provide for himself a lamb. And that is, as it were, the voice that is running through the Old Testament.

Where is the lamb for the burnt offering? And John the Baptist answers it, does he not? When he points and he says, behold the lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world.

[ 31 : 08 ] Well, all the Old Testament saints were looking forward to that lamb that takes away the sin of the world.

Were the Old Testament saints forgiven? of course they were forgiven. But they were not forgiven because of those sacrifices that they offered. They were forgiven because they offered those sacrifices by faith and their faith looked to Christ.

Their faith looked to Christ. They did not see this clearly, but they believed the teaching and they made the offerings by faith looking to Christ.

They believed God's word that he was one day going to provide a sacrifice that would deal with sin and in faith they held to that promise.

It was their faith in Christ that saved them, exactly as it is faith in Christ that saves me and you. A faith in Christ that was to come as we look and exercise faith on a Christ that has come.

[ 32 : 20 ] And what the cross does then is it declares that God is just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. Paul shows how the atonement not only provides for the justification of the sinner but also demonstrates that God is just throughout the whole process from the very beginning.

He is just He is righteous in all the process. It shows us how God has dealt with the sins of the Old Testament saints.

On the cross of Golgotha there God dealt with the sins of Abraham with the sins of Joshua with the sins of all the Old Testament saints. With my sins and your sins He dealt with sin.

He dealt with sin. James Denny in his book on the death of Christ writes and he says there can be no gospel unless there is such a thing as a righteousness of God for the ungodly.

But just as little can there be any gospel unless the integrity of God's character be maintained. And the integrity of God's character was maintained at the cross.

[ 33 : 38 ] It shows us that God is a righteous God. He's a righteous God. The problem of the sinful world then he says the problem of all religion the problem of God in dealing with a sinful race is how to unite these three things together.

How he can justify the ungodly and yet remain righteous in his character in himself. How are these two things brought together?

It's brought together at the cross of Golgotha. At the cross of Golgotha. In Jesus Christ whom God set forth as a propitiation in his blood.

In verse 26 we read it was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justified of the one who has faith in Jesus.

As we have already noted this righteousness is not the one that God gives to us that we have mentioned of in verse 21 and 22 but rather the righteousness that belongs to God himself.

[ 34 : 51 ] God is declaring his own righteousness his own righteous character he's demonstrating to us how he can justify the sinner who puts his trust in Jesus Christ.

Remember how in the first letter of John he writes if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You see whatever forgiveness would be it wouldn't be true forgiveness unless it was done in a righteous way unless it was done in a just way.

Forgiveness that I and you receive is a forgiveness that is done in a just way. God is right. He's righteous in forgiving me and you our sins.

He has declared his own righteousness. The integrity of God's character is maintained when he forgives us our sins and when he declares us to be righteous on the basis of Christ's life and death and resurrection.

[ 36 : 06 ] He is faithful and just. My forgiveness is a just forgiveness. If it was otherwise it wouldn't be forgiveness. And Paul goes on to say in the matter of our justification there can be no boasting.

Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded by what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. That is the lesson that Paul had to learn.

For before his conversion he was a very boastful man. He says, though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

But there came a time in Paul's experience, there came a but now, as he spoke in the morning, in Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, there came a but now, and now Paul, what does he say?

He says, but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

[ 37 : 38 ] Well, Paul has just been expounding to us God's way of salvation in Christ alone. He has held out to us what happened at the cross of Golgotha in the death of God's beloved son, and he asks, what becomes of our boasting?

How can we boast in anything? If it be true of us that we have probably understood the event of what took place at the cross of Golgotha, how can we boast? Are we still holding on to something that we can boast about?

Oh no, our boasting must be of Christ alone. The Pharisees, our moral boasting, like the Pharisees, I am not like other men.

See, I do my best, I attend church, I was baptized, or religious boasting even. My parents were godly, I belong to such and such a church, or such is the true church, and so on.

You find all these boastings around you. Boasting is always near our door. We can boast in the fact that we are believers, believers.

[ 38 : 48 ] And therefore, we must always be on guard against boasting in anything but in Jesus Christ and him crucified. That is where our boasting is.

Jesus Christ and him crucified. Paul writing to the Corinthians in his first letter, in chapter 1, writes, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. Well, the word there, he that glorieth, is the same word that we find here translated as boasting.



He that boasteth, let him boast in the Lord. What becomes of our boasting, asks Paul. It is excluded by what kind of law?

By a law of works? Oh, no, he says, but by the law of faith. By the law of faith. Both by his life and death. It brings before us here at the end of the chapter that by his life and death, Jesus established the law.

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means. On the contrary, we uphold the law. And it is this righteousness of Christ that can be imputed to us by which God declares us as righteous in his sight.

[ 40 : 02 ] Because he made him to be sin who knew no sin. That we might be made the righteousness of God in him. It is important, my friend, that we such ourselves and that we make sure that we have this righteousness that has been purchased by Christ on the cross of Golgotha.

That it is imputed to us by faith so that we can have a standing before God. But it is also important for us to understand that the character of God, that his righteous character is not violated by him forgiving me and your sins or by justifying us.

And his righteous character is not violated because of the person and the work of Jesus Christ in his life and in his death.

Therefore, he is just and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

Is that not tonight? For me and you, if we have committed our lives to Christ, is that not a great comfort? Is that not a comforting doctrine?

[ 41 : 29 ] The doctrine of justification, which is a declaration that is made by God regarding me and you, that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us so that we have a standing before a holy God.

That if we are, if this righteousness has been imputed to us, then we have confidence in going to the judgment seat of Christ.

Well, have you that confidence tonight? Are you assured tonight that this righteousness has been imputed to you? Well, it is free for you.

It is freely offered to you. It was at a cost, but the cost God bore himself. He bore the cost of it himself in his Son, in the one who was God manifest in the flesh.

He bore the cost. To you, it is free. To you, it is a matter of acceptance and of trusting in Jesus Christ.

[ 42 : 43 ] May the Lord bless our thoughts, let us pray. Eternal and ever, blessed Lord, we pray that we would this evening be strengthened by thine own word.

We give thanks, O Lord, that thine own character has not been violated in any way by forgiving us our sins.

That it has not been violated by justifying the ungodly. we give thanks, O Lord, that thou has intervened, that thou has come to do what man could not do, that thou has provided a means by which we can be brought to be at peace with thee, to be justified in thy sight, to have a standing before our God, and to have confidence in coming to the judgment seat of Christ.

O Lord, we thank thee for the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, and we pray that as it is proclaimed here from week to week, that it may go forth in the power and demonstration of thy spirit, in convicting and converting, and in the building of thy church.

We pray, O Lord, that thou would go before us as the breaker up of our way, and forgive us for all our sins. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. We shall conclude our service by singing to the Lord's praise from Psalm 116 in the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 116 on page 395.

[ 44 : 29 ] I love the Lord because my voice and prayer she deter, I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear. Of death the cards and sorrow stood about me compass round, the pains of hell to cold on me, I grief and trouble found.

Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray. God, merciful and righteous, O Lord, gracious, O Lord, God saves the meek, I was brought low, he did me help afford.

We shall sing these verses to the Lord's praise, Psalm 116, verse 1 to 6. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear. I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear.

I, while I live, will call on him who bowed to me his ear.

above me compass round, the pains of hell took hold on me, I grieve and trouble found.

[ 46 : 16 ] Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee humbly pray.

God, merciful and righteousness, yea, gracious is our Lord.

God says, how meek I was brought, though he did me help afford.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.