

How Can God Accept Me?

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- [0 : 0 0] Well if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's guidance, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, Paul's letter to the Galatians, and reading in chapter 3, the first three verses.
- Galatians chapter 3, from the beginning. O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.
- Let me ask you only this, did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
- But particularly the words of verse 2. Let me ask you only this, did you receive the Spirit by works of the law, or by hearing with faith?
- Amen. For most people in the West, who live in the Western world, the 31st of October is always remembered as the day for Halloween, where children put on fancy dress and they go door to door and they ask for sweets, they go trick or treating.
- [1 : 2 9] And I'm sure that many of us probably did it when we were younger. But next year, the 31st of October, 2017, it will mark 500 years since the Reformation.
- Because on the 31st of October, 1517, the Roman Catholic priest, Martin Luther, he nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, in Germany.
- And that stand that Martin Luther took against the heresies which plagued the church in Rome, it was the catalyst that started the Protestant Reformation to spread across the whole of Europe.
- And by presenting his 95 Theses, it's clear to see that Luther had quite a few issues with the teaching of Rome. From the position of the Pope, to indulgences, to penance, to the sacraments, to the authority of Scripture.
- He had all these issues in his 95 Theses. Yet, what caused Martin Luther the greatest concern personally, was that he didn't have peace with God.
- [2 : 3 6] Because for many years, Luther had this personal spiritual struggle with assurance. Where he was desperate to be right with God, and have a right relationship with God, and have a right standing with God.
- And with all his might, and with all his willpower, Luther sought to follow all the penitential systems of the medieval Catholic Church. He followed it right to the letter.
- And he excelled in his works of righteousness, and submission to all the monastic rules and disciplines. He even excelled above all those who were his clerical colleagues.
- But it still brought him no peace. That was until Luther turned to Paul's epistles, and he stumbled across the doctrine of justification by faith alone.
- And what Luther discovered was that you can be a sinner, and be righteous with God at one and the same time. Which means that our righteousness cannot be bought, or earned, or worked for.

[3 : 42] It is simply received by faith alone. And what Luther later wrote in his lectures on Galatians, he said, If the doctrine of justification is lost, the whole of Christian doctrine is lost.

If we lose the doctrine of justification, we lose simply everything. And so for Luther, as he says himself, justification is the article of a standing or a falling church.

And so in Luther's mind, the newly reformed church was one which was standing. And the Roman Catholic church was the one which was falling. But let's not think that the Protestant Reformation was something new.

Because the desire of all the reformers, such as Luther and Calvin and Knox, they all wanted the church to reform, both in her teaching and in her practice.

And they wanted her to reform back to the original teaching of the Bible. Because the events of the Reformation were primarily taken up with going back to the source of all our authority.

[4 : 50] And my friend, the source of all our authority, both in our teaching and in our practice, it has to be, and it has to come from, Scripture alone. And that has been the emphasis of the reformed church for the past 500 years.

That we don't need a different gospel with new emphases and all the innovative methods of the day. We don't need these things in order to be saved. All we need is this glorious gospel of God's saving grace.

Where it says to us that we are made righteous in God's sight, not by our works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ alone. And you know, that's what Paul was stressing to the Galatians.

In his day. Because he was emphasizing that they don't need another gospel in order to be right with God. All they need to do is lay hold of the fact that their salvation from beginning to end, it's all of grace.

And in order to teach the Galatians that God accepts us, not because of what we've done, but solely upon the basis of what Jesus Christ has done, Paul presents to them this wonderful doctrine of justification by faith alone.

[6 : 06] And so as we look at the doctrine from question 33 in the Catechism, the question, what is justification? We're looking at that question this evening.

But the question I want us to be asking, I want you to ask yourself this question. How can God accept me? How can God accept me?

And I'd like us to answer this question under four headings. Problem, pronouncement, pardon, and perfection. Problem, pronouncement, pardon, and perfection.

So if we look firstly at problem. Problem. Look again at verse 1. O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.

Chapter 3 in Paul's letter, it begins with such stern words. O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? But the reason for Paul's unyielding description of the church in Galatia is because they had received the gospel.

[7 : 17] And they had believed the gospel. Even though they had never heard the gospel before, this Gentile region of Galatia, they had welcomed the message of the crucified saviour of sinners.

And that's what Paul says. He says Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified. And so the Galatians knew what the gospel was all about.

They had been taught that they were created righteous in God's image, right at the beginning of creation. But that we fell into ruin by Adam's disobedience. Yet God provided that remedy in the person of Jesus Christ.

And Jesus accomplished the plan of redemption by his death on the cross and by rising on the third day. The Galatians knew the gospel. They knew God's story of redemption.

Righteousness, ruin, remedy, redemption. They knew the gospel. And as Christians, they had enjoyed the gospel. They had drank in the gospel. They loved the gospel.

[8 : 18] And they desired to follow Jesus and all his teaching. But because the Galatian churches were young churches, and they were young in the faith, the church was infiltrated by false teachers.

And the false teachers dragged these spiritually immature Galatians into thinking that they still needed to keep all the laws of the Old Testament in order to be a Christian.

The false teachers taught them that their Christianity was sub-Christian. Because in order to be a faithful Christian and righteous in God's sight, the men in their church still had to receive circumcision, and they still had to obey all the food laws and all the ceremonial laws.

But when Paul writes to the churches in Galatia, when he writes to them, he doesn't waste any time in reporting where he's been and what he's been up to. Instead, Paul is straight to the point.

Because he says in chapter 1, at verse 3, he says, And in that introduction, that's the gospel in a nutshell.

[9 : 41] that Jesus Christ died according to the will of God in order to deliver us from our sins. And Paul says, that's the glorious gospel that you have already received.

But then Paul says, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel.

And he says, not that there is another gospel, but that there are some who want to deceive you and to distort the gospel of Christ. Paul couldn't believe that after hearing the message of the gospel, the Galatians had been deceived by this false teaching.

But as Paul writes his letter to the Galatians, he tells them how he was converted. And he tells them how he came to know and love the gospel. And you can read that for yourself.

But then it's what he comes on to in chapter 2 at verse 20. He's explaining the faith that he has and the turning experience that he has gone through.

[10 : 45] And that's why he says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose. And what Paul is building up to is that if we think Christianity is anything to do with our works of righteousness, then we haven't understood the gospel.

Because if we think Christianity and our justification, our acceptance with God, if we think that it's anything to do with our works of righteousness, then our understanding of the gospel is Jesus plus.

It's Jesus plus. And this is why Paul was asking these, as he says himself, foolish Galatians. He's saying, Who has bewitched you? Who has led you astray?

Who has made you swallow this lie and convinced you of this heresy? And you know, when the Reformation began nearly 500 years ago, the Reformers believed that they were facing exactly the same heresy as what Paul is addressing here.

[12 : 04] And like Paul, the Reformers believed that the Roman Catholic Church had bewitched the people. They believed that the Church of Rome had made them swallow a lie, that God couldn't accept them if they didn't carry out all their religious acts of righteousness.

And this is where Reformed theology diverges from Roman Catholicism so clearly. In fact, all human religions, all false religions, all man-centered religions, whether it's Roman Catholicism, Islam, Buddhism, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormonism, Sikhism, whatever it is, whatever religion that doesn't elevate Jesus, Christ and Jesus Christ alone, they're a religion that is based entirely upon self-justification, in which they earn justification and acceptance with God by being good people and doing good works.

But my friend, any gospel which teaches that we need Jesus plus in order to be saved, it's a false gospel. And for Paul, the false teachers in Galatia, they were bewitching the people and they were saying that they needed Jesus plus circumcision, Jesus plus all the food laws, Jesus plus all the ceremonial laws.

For the Reformers, they said the Church in Rome was bewitching the people by putting fear into them that they needed Jesus plus baptism, Jesus plus penance, Jesus plus confession to the priest, Jesus plus Mary, Jesus plus the Mass.

And it always was and it still is, Jesus plus. But you know, somehow, and somewhere along the line, that thought has also crept into the Reformed Church.

[14 : 06] Because there are some who think that God accepts us because of our knowledge or our practice. and that the message of the gospel is Jesus plus my baptism, Jesus plus my church attendance, Jesus plus my Sabbath keeping, Jesus plus my tithing, Jesus plus my hat, Jesus plus my suit, Jesus plus my Bible knowledge, Jesus plus my prayer life, Jesus plus the confession of faith, Jesus plus my spiritual experience, Jesus plus, Jesus plus, Jesus plus.

Jesus plus my faith, Jesus plus my faith, Jesus plus my faith, Jesus plus my faith, Jesus plus my friend, it's faith in Jesus Christ alone. It's faith in Jesus Christ alone.

And so how can God accept me? Well, like the Galatians, the problem many of us have is that we think that our acceptance before God has something to do with us.

But it doesn't. It's nothing to do with us. It's all about what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. And what God has done for us in Jesus Christ is that he has made a pronouncement.

He has made a pronouncement. So let's look secondly at this pronouncement. Problem, pronouncement. Look at verse 2.

[15 : 33] Let me ask you only this. Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? And so having explained to the Galatians that it's utter foolishness to trust in anything else other than Jesus Christ alone, Paul asks, did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

And what Paul is asking them is, how did you become a Christian? Did the Holy Spirit apply the death of Christ to you or have you done it all yourself?

And it's a rhetorical question because the answer, it's obvious. Salvation is all of God. And the application of Christ's death on the cross is only applied to us by the Holy Spirit because the work of the Holy Spirit is to reveal Christ to us.

And this is what we have been looking at for the past few weeks. That the work of the Holy Spirit is to illuminate and to exalt Jesus Christ to us in the Gospel.

And the Holy Spirit does this by regeneration, by making us alive again. He does it by our union with Christ in which we are united to Jesus inseparably.

[16 : 47] Where we are in Christ, Christ is in us. And as we saw last week in our effectual calling, it's also the work of God's Spirit in which we hear the Gospel.

We hear the call to come to Christ pressing upon our heart. Where Jesus is knocking at the door of our heart. And because of this knock we experience conviction of sin.

And we see with clarity that Jesus is a glorious Saviour and He is able to save to the uttermost. And His love is constraining us and compelling us to accept this offer and commit our life into His hands by faith.

And when we think about all this, it's no wonder Paul was asking, did this all really happen by works of the law or by hearing by faith? Did the Holy Spirit work in your heart by applying the death of Christ to you?

Or have you done it all yourself? And he says, are you so foolish to think that you became a Christian by the Spirit but you have to be made perfect by the flesh, by your own righteousness?

[17 : 58] No, he says, Paul, it's all of grace. It's all of grace. And because the Holy Spirit has worked in your heart, your standing in Jesus Christ is that you are proclaimed righteous in His sight.

You are justified by faith in Jesus Christ. And that's what Paul goes on to say in verse 11. Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith.

And these words, the righteous shall live by faith, they are the words of the Reformation. because for centuries, the Catholic Church fatally taught that they mean that we are made righteous by acts of faith.

In the sense of a moral or spiritual transformation where the Church of Rome taught that justification was a renovation of the old nature.

it wasn't a change of standing with God, it was an increase of righteousness, an infusion of grace in which someone could be made righteous by all the sacraments, by baptism, the Mass and penance.

[19 : 15] And upon doing these things hinged forgiveness where a person was forgiven because they were righteous. They were forgiven because they were righteous.

Not the other way around, made righteous and forgiven. And this is where Martin Luther had the biggest problem because he was asking himself, what if you weren't righteous?

What if the sacraments weren't enough? What hope would you have then of forgiveness and peace with God if these things weren't enough?

And it was through searching the scriptures that Luther came across Paul's statement. And as a scholar of the original languages, Luther realized that when Paul said, the just shall live by faith, he knew that for Paul, Paul never for one moment meant that we are made righteous with God by our acts of faith.

It was the complete opposite because what Luther discovered was that the word to be made righteous, it was a legal word, it was a legal term in the sense of a verdict being pronounced in a court of law.

[20 : 30] And by understanding it through the eyes of Paul, Luther understood that Paul was implying that God is the judge of all the earth. He's the judge of all the earth and that one day we will all have to stand before this judge on the day of judgment and we will be judged according to God's law, God's standard.

And so for those who are still out of Christ, still in Adam, he was saying that on the day of judgment they will stand before their judge and they will be found guilty, unrighteous and condemned.

But what Luther discovered is that what Paul was teaching is that because of faith in Jesus Christ there is a life. The just shall live by faith.

Therefore in the eyes of God's divine law, the believer is pronounced not guilty. And the case, if you can imagine it, a court of law, God is the judge, pronounced not guilty, the case is dismissed and they're free to go.

Free to go because their legal status in relation to God's law is that they are justified, made righteous by faith. They are pronounced righteous in God's sight because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

[21 : 51] And this is the teaching which sparked the Reformation. This is the teaching that changed everything. But you know, we have to be clear on this, that when a person is justified before God, their legal status changes.

Where it changes from being guilty to not guilty. And that legal change, it never changes back. Our legal status, it doesn't revert back to guilty when we sin after we become a Christian.

Our righteous standing before God, it doesn't fluctuate or change in any way. It doesn't depend even on how much we sin or how often we sin or how we feel in ourselves or how strong or weak our faith is.

And that's because justification is a one-time act. and it's an act of God. And that's what the catechism means when it says that justification is an act of God's free grace.

One-time act in which he changes our legal status from guilty to not guilty. Now, our justification means that our legal standing with God has changed.

[23 : 08] But it doesn't mean that we as a person have changed dramatically because justification doesn't change our spiritual condition or character.

That's the work of sanctification which we'll look at in a few weeks' time. And we mustn't confuse the two. We mustn't confuse justification and sanctification because justification is the act.

Guilty to not guilty. Sanctification is the work. And the work of sanctification is that the believer has been made more and more holy. more and more like Christ.

But justification doesn't wait for that. Because while we are still sinners, God graciously acts to pronounce us not guilty. Therefore, my friend, when it comes to our status before God, who we are or what we've done or what we know or how we feel or what we've been through in the past, none of that matters.

All that matters is that we believe what Jesus Christ did at Calvary 2,000 years ago. Faith means trusting the cross.

[24 : 21] And it was John Calvin, the French reformer, he said, faith looks at the mercy of God and a Christ dead and a Christ risen. Faith looks at the mercy of God and a Christ dead and a Christ risen.

Faith receives and rests upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation. So justification, it's not a matter of doing, it's a matter of receiving.

In which we receive it by faith alone and rest upon it for our salvation. So let's ask our question, how can God accept me? The problem is we think we need to do something.

But it's God who acts to pronounce the believer righteous in his sight by faith. And when he does so, there is pardon.

Which is what I'd like us to look at thirdly. Problem, pronouncement, pardon. Pardon. Paul's letter to the Romans, not Galatians, but the Romans, it's probably the most theological of all his letters.

[25 : 36] Because Paul touches upon every aspect of the Christian life. He covers every area of Christian theology and doctrine in that one letter. And Paul wrote his letter to the church in Rome in order to remind them that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a beautiful gospel.

And as Paul progressed in his letter, he addressed the issue of justification by faith alone. He came to it in chapter 5. And he said that if we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And as Paul went on to expound what he meant by this, he went on in the following chapters, he emphasized that justification doesn't mean that we are sinless. No, he says we are still sinners.

Because in chapter 7 of Romans, Paul explained this from his own experience. And he said, I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh.

I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep doing.

[26 : 46] And Paul looks at himself and he says, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death? But then he goes on to say, I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

But why does Paul thank God? Why does he thank him for Jesus Christ? He thanks God that as a Christian, he is not guilty.

He thanks God that because, he thanks God that Jesus has entered into his experience and has made him righteous. Because that's what he says, the following verse it says, there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

And that statement has got to be one of the most beautiful statements in the Bible. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

Because in these words, we have God's great definitive statement of what he thinks of us. This is what God thinks of us. There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.

[28 : 04] And so, if you're a Christian tonight, if you have faith in Jesus Christ alone, if you're resting upon the finished work of Christ on our behalf, this is what God thinks of you. No condemnation.

No condemnation. Justified by faith, pronounced righteous in his sight. No condemnation. But you know, there's more than that. There's more than that.

And this is what Paul was picking up on, that if we are justified by faith, we have peace with God. Which means that God has pardoned all our sins.

And as we said earlier, this is what caused Martin Luther the greatest concern. Because he saw in the Catholic Church, he saw the emptiness of all the rituals, and all the masses, and all the pomp, and all the ceremony.

But even with all that, and doing all these things, he still didn't have the assurance that he had peace with God. And he lived in fear that he was going to burn in hell because he hadn't done enough to earn his salvation.

[29 : 08] That he hadn't confessed to the priest his every sin. That he hadn't prayed enough times to the Pope and to Mary or to all the saints. And he didn't have enough indulgences.

And he hadn't given them all to the church. And the big question over Luther's own salvation is how can I have my sins pardoned? How can I have peace with God?

How can God accept me? But when Luther discovered this wonderful doctrine of justification, he realized that faith in Jesus Christ alone was all that is required.

God because when we have faith in Jesus Christ alone, there is no condemnation. None at all. Therefore, our justification means that God's forgiveness extends to all our sins.

All our sins, whatever the number of sins, whatever their enormity, whatever their extremity, all is forgiven. All is forgiven and they're forgiven forever.

[30 : 18] Forever. In fact, when the Bible describes God's forgiveness, it says that God casts our forgiven sin, this repented sin.

He casts it into the depths of the sea, never to be seen again. And you know, it was Donald MacLeod, Professor Donald MacLeod, he picks up on this point in his book A Faith to Live By.

If you've never read it, I'd encourage you to read it. It's a great book that talks about Christian doctrine. But when he's talking about justification, he says, it's often the case that although God forgives the sinner, the sinner never forgives himself.

That may be true as a matter of fact, he says, but it's not true as a matter of theology. It's bad theology. Because if God forgives us, we are bound to forgive ourselves.

And it's an interesting point, isn't it? That the issue with forgiveness of sin, it doesn't lie with God. It often lies with us. Because we often hold on to our confessed sin and we keep confessing it to God.

[31 : 34] But God says to us that he has already cast our sin into the depths of the sea. If we have repented by faith, he has cast it into the depths of the sea.

And so we are the ones who are going trawling for it. We are the ones who are bringing it back up and dwelling on it and feeling guilty for it. Yet God says all is forgiven. All is forgotten.

You are not guilty. You are pardoned. You are justified. And my friend, this is the sweet promise of scripture that if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just, faithful and righteous to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Why? Because the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin. Therefore, when we confess our sin, God forgives all our sin.

He pardons all our sin, our past sins, our present sins, our future sins. And because of this, we have the assurance that we are justified before a holy God.

[32 : 43] We can have the assurance that we are forgiven. We can have the assurance that we have peace with God. All because the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin.

It's because of the perfect obedience of Christ, in which he has perfectly been obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

it's a wonderful thought, to know that if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

we are pardoned if we confess. But the reason we are pardoned is because of this perfect obedience of Christ, which brings us to look lastly and briefly at perfection.

How can God accept me? The problem is we think we need to do something, but we don't. it's God who acts to pronounce the believer righteous in his sight.

[33 : 56] And when he does so, there is pardon, there is forgiveness of sin, and there is perfection. Perfection. The problem pronouncement pardon perfection.

So perfection. Look at verse 5. Does he who supplies the spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith?

Just as Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness, know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

What does God see when he looks at a forgiven sinner? He sees perfection. He sees perfection.

And Paul tells us that that's what God saw when he looked at Abraham. Even though it was way back in the Old Testament when God looked at Abraham, when he looked at him, he saw righteousness.

[35 : 00] He saw perfection. And that wasn't because Abraham kept the commandments or he performed acts of works righteousness or he upheld God's covenant.

No, Paul tells us here that Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness. righteousness. Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness. But Abraham's faith wasn't accounted to him as righteousness because his faith was strong.

Abraham's faith wasn't the basis for his justification because like everything else about us, our faith is often weak and tainted. It ebbs and flows.

It has good days. It has bad days. Therefore, Abraham's faith was accounted to him as righteousness because of the object of his faith. And the object of Abraham's faith is the same object of our faith and that is Jesus Christ.

Abraham looked forward. He looked forward to the day what Jesus would do on the cross. And we, by faith, we look back to what Jesus did on the cross.

[36 : 09] Which means that Jesus is the reason why we are accounted righteous. righteous. Because his righteousness is the basis of our justification. And we can look to nothing else.

We can look to nothing else but to the righteousness of Christ. Because when Jesus Christ took upon himself our nature, he fulfilled all the righteous requirements of the law.

He perfectly upheld and obeyed the moral law. He loved God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength and his neighbour as himself. But more than that, he kept the covenant for us.

He fulfilled all its stipulations of its obedience and in his obedience he endured the curse due to our sin on the cross. He endured all our anathemas, all our curses.

He endured the hell that we deserved. And he had all our guilt and our shame and our sin imputed to him. And he made it his own.

[37 : 11] He became sin for us. And because he became sin for us, all his righteousness by faith is ours. By faith we are made righteous with the righteousness of God.

And that's the teaching of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5, the last verse. He's just closing that chapter. It's often been described as Calvary's great transaction.

Paul says, He hath made him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

And if Paul used the language of the courtroom to describe the act of justification, he used the language of banking when he described the imputed righteousness of Christ.

because Paul says that when Jesus went to Calvary, our sins were credited, they were imputed to his account, where our account was emptied of sin, the sin that condemned us under God's law, and it was accredited to the account of Jesus Christ.

[38 : 28] But the moment we have faith in the perfect obedience of Christ, that he died in our place, in that moment his righteousness is imputed to our account, and we are justified.

We are justified by his righteousness. And you know, many people describe being justified as just as if I'd never sinned.

And to some extent, there's nothing wrong with that. But looking at what Paul is saying, I actually think that that takes away from the beauty of justification.

Because in the act of being justified, we're not only forgiven and cleansed as if we'd never sinned, but we also have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.

We have the righteousness of God's Son, God's holy and just and righteous Son, his righteousness, imputed to us.

[39 : 36] That when we're justified, we are made righteous with the righteousness of Christ. Which means that if you're a Christian tonight, if your faith is in Jesus Christ tonight, then you are as justified today as you ever will be.

Even when you reach heaven itself, that justification will not change. we are as righteous as Jesus is because we are, as the Bible says, clothed in his righteousness.

It's a wonderful thought, a beautiful thought, to know that everything is safe and secure when we are clothed in his righteousness.

And so as we conclude, let's ask our question, how can God accept me? Well, the problem is we think we need to do something in order to be accepted, but we don't.

It's God who acts to pronounce the believer righteous in his sight. God declares us not guilty. And when he does so, there is pardon. If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[40 : 55] Why? Because of the perfection of Jesus. And because of his perfect obedience in life and in death, we are clothed in his righteousness.

That when God looks at us, he sees perfection. He sees the righteousness of his own son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Problem pronouncement pardon, pardon, perfection. But how can all this be yours? My friend, it's all yours.

The moment you turn away from every other human resource of righteousness and you put your faith in Jesus Christ alone and rest upon his finished work on your behalf.

Then and only then are you accepted as righteous in God's sight. Then and only then are you justified. Then and only then are you a Christian.

[42 : 03] As one commentator said, the sinner now a Christian may sing thereafter the words of Horatius Boner.

You have them all in front of you. I'll just read it to you. This is what Horatius Boner wrote. Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul.

Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole. Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God. Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load.

Your voice alone, O Lord, can speak to me of grace. Your power alone, O Son of God, can all my sin erase. No other work but yours, no other blood will do.

No strength but that which is divine can bear me safely through. Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin. Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.

[43 : 05] Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee, can rid me of this dark unrest and set my spirit free. I bless the Christ of God, I rest on love divine, and with unfaltering lip and heart, I call the Saviour mine.

His cross dispels each doubt, I bury in his tomb, each thought of unbelief and fear, each lingering shade of gloom. I praise the God of grace, I trust his truth and might, he calls me his, I call him mine, my God, my joy and light.

tis he who saveth me and freely pardon gives, I love because he loveth me, I live because he lives.

My friend, does that describe you? May the Lord bless these thoughts. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the wonder of justification to know that we can be made righteous by faith alone.

And O Lord, enable us to see how simple it is to just rest upon Jesus, to rest upon his finished work, not to look to self or to look to anyone around us, but to solely just let go, to let go and to live for him, to know that we have a great life in Jesus Christ, when we trust in him for time and for eternity.

[44 : 43] O bless us, Lord, we pray. Bless our gathering as we gather for fellowship this evening. Enable us, Lord, to hear of the wonder working power of our Saviour, that he is one who saves to the uttermost.

Bless us, Lord, we ask. Go before us and do us good and keep us in the week that lies ahead, a week that is unknown to us, but known to thee. Do us good then and keep us for Jesus' sake.

Amen. We shall conclude by singing the closing verses of Psalm 32. Psalm 32 at verse 8.

Psalm 32 at verse 8. Psalm 32 at verse 8 down to the end of the psalm.

David has confessed his sin. Now he has the promise from God. I will instruct thee and thee teach the way that thou shalt go and with mine eye upon thee set I will direction show.

[46 : 01] Then be not like the horse or mule which do not understand, whose mouth lest they come near to thee a bridle must command. And to the man that wicked is his sorrow shall abound, but him that trusteth in the Lord mercy shall compass round.

Ye righteous in the Lord be glad, in him do ye rejoice, all ye that upright are in heart, for joy lift up your voice. these verses in conclusion to God's praise.

I will instruct thee and thee teach the way that thou shalt go and with mine eye upon thee set I will direction show.

Let be not like the horse or view which do not understand.

Earth's mouth lest they come near to thee a brighter must come man unto the man that wicked is his sorrows shall abound, but in that trust trust in the Lord mercy shall come past round.

[47 : 56] Ye righteous in the Lord be glad in him do ye rejoice.

all that have right are in heart for joy lift up your voice.

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