# *Imputation, Absolute Righteousness, and Justice*

***7LW-011***

**Adam's Sin Resulted in Our Position in God**

If people really understood the full consequences of Adam's sin, they would never imagine that they could possibly reach God and eternal life in Heaven by some efforts of their own. Once you understand what happened to all of us because of Adam's sin, you understand that there is no way that a human being can correct the problem that exists. There is a barrier between sinful man and a holy God, and it cannot be removed by any kind of human goodness, human effort, human ritual of any kind. The wall of separation between God and man can never be breached by man on his own. Therefore, we are all by nature doomed to an eternity in the Lake of Fire. Once you understand that, you've made the first step toward Heaven. There is no way to get around the wall that Adam's sin erected between each of us and God.

When we're born, please remember Romans 5:12 tells us that we bear Adam's guilt because he was the head of the race. He acted in our behalf. Just as Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek and recognized him as a priest of the most high God. Therefore the Melchizedek priesthood, which is the priesthood of Jesus Christ of which we are a part, is in Scripture described as being superior to the Aaronic priesthood. It is a superior priesthood because Aaron descended from Abraham, and Abraham was in subjection to Melchizedek, a superior priesthood. But Aaron didn't do that yet. God's federal headship principal, Aaron, was in subjection to the Melchizedek Priesthood.

So the same principle applies that Adam is viewed by God as our federal head. What he does, we do. When the federal government of the United States does something, all of the states do it too. Automatically what our federal head does, the rest are equally responsible for. They bear the consequences.

**God Solved the Problem**

So this is the principle here in spiritual things, that we are born into the human race bearing Adam's guilt. And our separation from God is there and there's no way it can be removed by human effort. However, the happy side of that story is that the Bible reveals that God Himself has done something to remove the wall of separation, while at the same time retaining His Holiness, His personal integrity. Now, I stress to you that that was the hardest thing that God has to do for a human being, how to take a sinner into Heaven and still not compromise His own holiness. He has done that. There's nothing else in your life that can be a bigger problem that God cannot solve equally well.

**Man's Faulty Reasoning**

However, there is so much ignorance about what God teaches in the Bible about His salvation provision, that people desperately create their own very own ways of trying to get to God. They're always wrong.

First of all, they can't do anything to please God. The sin nature has tainted everything that they do. Yet, without information, the Old Testament says my people perish for lack of knowledge. Where's the knowledge supposed to come from? It's supposed to come from the pulpit through the Scriptures to the world, to the people who come to church and listen and who are reached in various ways. Religious leaders are looked to as authorities, and they are the people who speak for God. Yet their words very often, by and large, are their own rationalizations. They very often are ignorant of Scripture, or they ignore what the Word of God has to say.

I was watching Good Morning America the other morning, and they brought on the deck a rabbi and a Roman Catholic Monsignor priest. They're periodically on that program. They're called the God Squad, and they were being interviewed on religious biblical questions by children. So one child came up to ask the God Squad. Well their answers prove that they had a total lack of knowledge of the Word of God, or at least a lack of respect for the revelation of God in Scripture. It became evident, as it almost does every time I get to see them, that they are not really the God Squad. They're not the God Squad of the creator of the universe; but what they are is the representative of a different god, the usurper of God, Satan. They should be called the Devil Squad. However, the children came up and asked the questions.

The first child asked about cats going to Heaven. It's always a good one. I love that one. The rabbi came right in and said, "Oh, yes. Your cat will be in Heaven, and they will have a special place in Heaven where there won't be any dogs. It'll be a lot of fun with your kitty in Heaven." Now, this is an authority. This is a rabbi. This is somebody who speaks for God.

Another child asked the reason for water baptism. The Roman Catholic priest took this over and I said, I'm going to be interested in seeing how he answers that. He gave it platitudes, where you get your name, and you get it associated, identified with your family and with your religion. And he carried on like that. But he never once proclaimed Roman Catholic doctrine on this subject-which is that your water baptism washes away your moral guilt from Adam's sin and you become a child of God. It's Work's Salvation by our human work, a ritual of water baptism, which isn't even baptism, it's just water sprinkling. But he never touched that. He just made it kind of a social custom, which very often infant baptism is today, a big party.

Another child asked what one does in Heaven. Oh, the rabbi jumped in on that one. He said, "Oh, you get up there, you meet your friend, they check you out, they check you in, and then they assign somebody to show you around the place. And you see this and you see that." But he couldn't say, you'll meet the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll meet the Son of God. You'll meet the one who made it possible for you to be in Heaven, because the rabbi himself is not going to be in Heaven. How ironic. This man who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ is explaining Heaven to this child, Heaven that the rabbi himself never read about in Scripture, obviously, and doesn't know anything about, and will never see.

And another child asked why there were so many religions. This was the top question. This was the coup de gras of the whole Devil Squad performance. The rabbi said, "Oh, you see? It's like in the world, if there was only one food to eat, it would be very monotonous. So God has all these different ways of approaching Him, religions, so it's not so monotonous." That gives you a chill, doesn't it? Millions of people are listening to this. Kids are listening to this. Different roads to Heaven, so it's not so monotonous? He's not even on the road to Heaven! I just wish I could have interjected the picture on our evangelism brochure on that television screen and say, here's the two roads ahead. Here's the two roads that you'll follow. It's the only two there are. Not one word of biblical truth was spoken by these two religious authorities, yet millions were lulled into thinking it's not all that bad a problem between God and man, so not to worry. But it is a bad problem. It is a very, very big problem, indeed.

**The Blocks in the Wall Thus Far**

The problem is that there is a wall that exists between a holy God and a sinful man. This wall has been removed block by block by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. There was first of all, the block of man's entrapment in the slave market of sin. Satan owns you when you're born in the human race. You're his slave; you cannot do anything else. The Lord Jesus Christ paid the price of redemption and that block was removed.

Secondly, there's a block of one's moral guilt. You're born with a guilt of the evil that you inherited from Adam's guilt and your own. The Lord Jesus Christ when He died on cross removed that by expiation. He blew it out.

Third block was spiritual death from the Old Sin Nature. You cannot approach God if you're spiritually dead. You cannot even understand spiritual things I just told you, including you wouldn't even understand the gospel because that's a spiritual truth. Except that's the one place that God the Holy Spirit comes into a human mind and He makes it clear. It's the only thing the Holy Spirit does for an unsaved person. So Christ removed that spiritual death by regeneration. He made us spiritually alive.

Then there is a block of the holiness of God. That has two facets to it. There is first of all, the perfect justice of God. Then there is the absolute righteousness of God. God's justice was resolved by propitiation. The death of Christ on the cross satisfied the just demands of God that death be the price of sin. And He solved the problem of absolute righteousness by imputation. He imputed to our credit the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. So that block has been removed.

Now, this is what we're interested in, this absolute righteousness. Because people think that by being good, they can make it into Heaven. But human righteousness is never perfect. So man cannot ever meet the divine demands of an absolute righteousness equal to that of Jesus Christ. Some people indeed are better morally than other people, but all are sinners. All fall short of God's absolute righteousness standard. Thus, there is no one born into the human race who is or can become God's absolute righteousness. So no one can qualify for Heaven. The Bible says "there is none righteous, no, not one." So you see what I mean when I say if people really understood what happened in the Garden of Eden, what Adam did, they wouldn't even dream of trying to come up with a way to make it on their own with God.

**The Extent of Man's Imperfect Righteousness**

Now, the extent of imperfect righteousness is total. We don't have time this morning to go through the extensive Scripture, I'll just mention them to you, but all classes of humanity fall short of God's standard of absolute righteousness. I say that because some people think there are some people who qualify, others who do not. You mention a Mother Teresa, and Bingo, you've got somebody who qualified; no, she doesn't. The greatest of the reformers qualify; no, they don't. Nobody qualifies for absolute righteousness by something which they have done.

First of all, for example, there's the immoral person. Everybody says, yeah, we know those low dogs, they're not going to qualify for absolute righteousness. But the apostle Paul who wrote Romans, zeroed in on these people right off the bat. Romans 1:18-32, you may read it on your own, it's an extended passage. But all that that section says is that immoral people do not have God's standard of righteousness. They are violators of the moral code of God and their evil is complete. There is no exaggeration about the fact that they are doomed. So there's no problem there that certainly those who are immoral, unsaved people, they do not have absolute righteousness.

Then there's the unsaved moral person. It's a little tougher. In Romans 2:1-16, the apostle Paul describes the moral unsaved person. This person claims to have a certain human goodness and is better than other people's goodness. But it's not enough for God's standard of absolute goodness. That's why Isaiah, 64:6 says your righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight. His sins, this person sins, a moral unsaved person sins, may be more refined than others. These are the people who go around with a lot of self-righteousness because we can't see their minds and they're shot through with mental attitude sins. Mental attitude sins are the worst, because that's where overt sins begin. That's what triggers it. So here these people walk around looking really good in the eyes of people, but they're condemned in the eyes of God.

Then there's the toughest person of all, the unsaved religious person. Jesus commented about these people. He said most of the human race is made up of religious people who are unsaved, who have not trusted in Christ as Savior. These people are on a broad road, Jesus said, that leads to destruction. But He said only a few, therefore, of the human race, actually become born again. They actually find the narrow gate which is Christ, and that small gate which is Christ, and that narrow road which is Christ that leads to eternal life. In Romans 2:17-3:8, the apostle Paul describes this condition, the religious self-righteous Pharisee type impressed with his own religious deeds and his own taboos. Yet these people, which look so good in the eyes of the other people of Israel and they were looked up to, the Lord Jesus Christ said don't let them fool you. He said these religious people without Christ are no better than the immoral person or the moral person who is self-righteous.

In Matthew 5:20 Jesus said, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of Heaven." That's a modest little term. Matthew 5:20 was a startling statement for people to be told this, that their religious leaders are not righteous enough to go to Heaven, and you're going to have to be better than the best of your scribes and Pharisees. That was inconceivable. But the truth was that all they had was the smug religious person who goes through his routines and his taboos, and he thinks he has something great.

But a person who actually understands the righteousness of God realizes what God is really like. He will have the attitude that's expressed in Job 42:5-6. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; [Job says to God] but now my eye sees Thee. Therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes." Job, understandably, because of his suffering, really got discouraged and he began to say things critical of God. And he began complaining to God saying this is unfair and You shouldn't be treating me this way. Suddenly God reveals Himself in all of His righteousness and perfection to Job. And Job says what was I thinking? Job says what a fool I am; that God who is righteous would do wrong, that I could criticize Him, that I could challenge Him on what He has said, that I could challenge Him on anything that is written in His Scriptures. So Job said, I repent in dust and ashes.

Isaiah said the same thing. Isaiah 6:5 [is] when Isaiah got hold of the realization of the nature of the righteousness of God. Isaiah 6:5, "Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord [Yahweh] of hosts [of the Angelic Army of Heaven].'" And Isaiah, a genuine man of God, was just crushed in the presence of God at his own lack of righteousness. So there is no way that man can meet this problem of removing the relative righteousness with which we live when God requires absolute righteousness by His holiness for Heaven. Man left to himself to solve this problem would be hopelessly doomed. He just couldn't do it.

**How Man Can Secure God's Absolute Righteousness**

But the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is a place where one finds the answer for securing this kind of righteousness. In Romans 3:21-22 Paul says, "But now," after listing all these people, the classes of human beings, the downright immoral character, the religious character with his self-righteous pretensions, the moral man in his smug ways, all of them unsaved. He says, "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God [not the relative righteousness of the immoral, the moral, or the religious person, but the absolute righteousness of God] has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, "even the [absolute] righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction." So the answer is believing.

**By Believing**

Believing what; believing the gospel. What is the gospel? Christ has died for our sins, the debt has been paid, it was confirmed by His resurrection, He is ready to be our Savior, He will cover our sins if we accept that as a gift. If you have it, you are born again.

It was Romans 1:17 that triggered the Reformation in the mind of Martin Luther. When he read "For in it [the righteousness, for in it the salvation by the power of God through the gift of the grace of God, for in it] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.'" From faith, a God kind of righteousness comes from faith to the one who has faith. From faith in Christ, one receives the results of faith, the absolute righteousness of God. When Luther read that, he said, wait a minute, everything my Roman Catholic Church has taught me has been the opposite of this. I've been told that it's what I do that gets me into Heaven. But that is not true. Suddenly the light burst and Luther had the sin and the burden roll off his back. Suddenly he realized that it was faith in Christ who's already done the job.

Now you understand that and you might think that you're glad that you had enough sense to do that. But you didn't. Scriptures say there is none righteous, there's none that seek after God, none that seek after God. The only reason you understand this, is because God made it clear to you and He enables you to believe it. So consider yourself privileged. That mass of human beings on that broad road to eternal destruction have no claim on God. They have no claim for salvation. It is only when He chooses to make it clear.

Now when he's done that, what kind of a life should you live? "How then should we live?" is the phrase from the Old Testament. Francis Schaffer, the Christian philosopher, made a series of enormously marvelous films on "How Then Should We Live." In these films he traced; the progress of Christianity and human civilization, the consequence of what God has done in the sin cast world, all the expressions in art and in architecture and in human relationships, in government, in education, and the Word of God and the impact that it has. It is my plan to show you that in a series of special Sunday nights, those magnificent films "How Then Should We Live," and walk through history and see what the impact has been of Christianity on whom and those that God has chosen and to whom He gave absolute righteousness?

**The Solution for Imperfect Righteousness-Imputation**

So what's the solution for imperfect righteousness? The moral bankruptcy of man, sin, puts us in moral debt to God, and we can't earn any way to pay it. We're born in the red, and we cannot earn the moral assets necessary to pay up what we owe God. So the provision is the doctrine of imputation. What God did was He imputed to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ by assuming our debt. And the means by which absolute righteousness is imputed to us we call the doctrine of justification. Justification means that you're as good as Jesus Christ in the eyes of God. Your account has been justified. Your debt has been removed. All issues have been rectified that were against you. You stand before God as perfect as Jesus Christ. So you see why I say if anybody understands what happened and what Adam did to us, they wouldn't ever even dream about trying to come up with a solution. Those that understand throw their hands up and go to God, what am I going to do? And He's told us what He has done to solve the problem.

**Why Imputation is Necessary**

Imputation means charging your debt to someone else. This word is used of the category of imputed sin that I mentioned a little while ago. The sin of Adam has been imputed to all of us. Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin." Oh, wait a minute! Adam sinned; the penalty is death. We understand that. But why do the rest of us die? How about a little baby who doesn't sin? Why does a baby die who hasn't done any sin? Because he's guilty of Adam's moral guilt. Our federal head condemned us all. So through one man, sin entered the world and death through sin upon us all. So death spread to all men because all sinned. A baby sinned? Yes, in Adam, that's the principle. So imputation means taking everybody's sin, from Adam's guilt on, and placing our sins to the account of Jesus Christ on the cross. After Adam, the only person ever born into the human race who did not bear Adam's moral guilt was the Lord Jesus Christ. In His humanity, because His was a birth without a human father thus the genetic structure that transmits the Old Sin Nature to the child through the father not through the mother was bypassed, Christ was born without Adam's moral guilt. He had no guilt of sin of His own. Imputation describes placing our sins to the account of Jesus Christ on the cross.

That's what Isaiah was speaking about in the famous passage of Isaiah 53:4. "Surely our griefs [our griefs or our sicknesses] He Himself bore, and our sorrows [or our pains] He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted." "Surely our griefs He Himself bored" means He carried what was not His own, what was placed upon Him because it was our guilt. It was our grief, it was our sorrows, the consequence of our sin, not of His. And how did our grief and sorrows come to be on the Lord Jesus Christ? How were they placed upon Him? Isaiah 53:5-6: It was done by imputation when He was on the cross. God the Father placed our guilt on Him as He bore our sins from 12 noon until 3 o'clock.

Isaiah 53:5-6, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him." What could be clearer? "The iniquity of us all to fall on Him." So, you see, it's not unkind for us to say that the rabbi has no business on the God Squad talking to people about how to get to Heaven when he himself is never going to get there. Unless, by the grace of God, he is touched with the illuminating knowledge that Christ is the Savior, that his iniquity has been borne by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that if he accepts that substitute, he is free to enter Heaven. If he doesn't grasp that, if he doesn't accept that, he will never see Heavens shores.

**Old Testament Ritual Reflected Christ's Sacrifice**

The Old Testament ritual reflected this in the placing of the hand of the sinner on the sacrificial animal to symbolize the imputation of the person's sins. I'm bringing my animal sacrifice to the priest. I put my hand on this animal, and I therefore impute to him my moral guilt symbolically, as this animal is symbolically representing Christ is going to die for my sins. So too, God placed His hand upon His Son with our sins, our sins to Him.

This is beautifully illustrated in Philemon i n the case where the apostle Paul is pleading for the runaway slave Onesimus, who became a Christian under Paul's ministry. Philemon verses 17-19 Paul says, "If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me." Paul is saying to Philemon, the master, if you regard me as a partner in God's work, I want you to accept Onesimus as you would accept me. Treat him the way you would treat me. [18]"But if he has wronged you in any way or owes you anything, charge that to my account." That's how God handled the problem of His Holiness, the absolute righteousness facet. Charge that to My account. It was charged to the account of Christ. [19]"I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand, I will repay it." I Paul write this with my own hand. I will repay it. You accept Onesimus, Philemon, as a brother in Christ, and if he owes you anything, I'll be his substitute and I'll pay for it. That's all the Lord Jesus Christ did. Now, when Onesimus arrived, came back to Philemon with this letter, Philemon says I forgive you Onesimus and what you have done, and I forgive what you owe, we're square.

What could Onesimus have done? He could have refused to accept it. Philemon would say you don't understand. You don't owe me anything. You can't pay me back. You're a slave. You don't have anything. Paul has covered everything for you. Onesimus could have insisted that he was still guilty, that he still owed him if he didn't believe him. That's what most of the human race does. God says, I've covered everything for you. I removed the wall and you can step across now because in place of the wall, there's the cross of Christ. Come on over. But they won't do it. They have their own way. They've got nothing but God Squad type of people teaching them. You can see why that is.

**The Problem With the Human Race**

You see, people are always wanting to change the implication of Scripture. I get hit so often by people who say, well, that's what you're interpreting Scripture to say. I go back and I look in Scripture and it says, that's just the way it is. That's the very words sure enough. And people are always readjusting Scripture and saying it's the same thing as what the Bible says. No, it isn't. And this is the problem with the human race until the Spirit of God gives them the understanding.

**God's Solution**

Namely, Jesus Christ paid for our sins, which brings us forgiveness. But he also ensures a permanent moral solvency by imputing to us its absolute righteousness. You see, it is not enough to have your sins forgiven to go to Heaven. If that's all that happened, you'd never get there? That's just your moral guilt removed. That's not going to take you there. You still have another problem. You're not good enough. You're not good enough to go to Heaven. So it's not enough to tell an unsaved person you accept Christ as your savior, your sins will be forgiven. Because the Bible says you have to have one other thing. You have to also have the imputation of His absolute righteousness. And that is also what God does. 2 Corinthians 5:21, magnificent verse, "He [God the Father] made Him [God the Son] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, [imputed our sin to him] so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him [that we would have the absolute righteousness of God given to us, swapping God's righteousness for our sin]."

**Many Christians Fail to Live to Potential**

Christians, therefore, are all spiritual billionaires, and yet so many are living on spiritual welfare. How many Christians do you know in a normal run of their "churchianity" know the depths of walking with the power of God, know the depths of walking where Christ is in you, is sounding off? Some of you have learned what I referred to as that intuitive direction, that intuitive thought. I tell you, it gets creepier all the time. The younger you are, the sooner you learn this, then the more magnificent life you will have. And suddenly, you're not hearing voices, but boy, the thought is so clear in your mind. And you can brush it off and ignore it, because the Holy Spirit works very gently.

But if you start paying attention, then you'll discover that you act upon that direction, and it's right every time. How many times in a day I can testify that an intuitive thought comes to me and I say, "Yes, Lord. You're right. I should take care of that right now." Or something I left! "Oh, yes, Lord, I almost forgot that. I've got to go back in the house and get that and take it." Or I have a caution thought. "Yes. OK, Lord, I understand. I'll be on guard against that. I'll keep my eyes open." All of a sudden you find it hard not to talk out loud so people really know you are crazy. Because suddenly the divine guidance becomes very real.

It's only for the hokey-pokey type that are trying to live by emotions that they think that they have some reality that really isn't there, people who are readjusting the Word of God so they can live their own lives without God butting in. Christians are billionaires spiritually, but it doesn't count for a Fig Newton if there isn't somebody who's explaining it to them, showing them what it means to be a member of the body of Christ, what it is to live under the power of the Holy Spirit.

So you don't have to be some sneaky little character going around trying to maneuver and manipulate to get along in life. You can just walk. You can just stand tall in the saddle and march off like the Israelites in the wilderness, with the cloud of fire of God before you.

**God the Holy Spirit - the Christian's Source of Power**

God the Holy Spirit permanently in-dwells every believer. Therefore, He is the power source. He becomes a power source when you understand principles of doctrine, such as we're teaching this morning, and you are in Temporal Fellowship, all known sins confessed. Then He will bring appropriate Scripture to your mind, and He will give you the intuitive guidance. Some people are never going to get that, even some Christians. They're dullards, they're going to be religious. They're going to be in an inane entertainment type of "churchianity." That's all they need. They want to go from one seminar to the next. They love seminars, the lowest kind of Christian loves seminars. And usually those poor people don't have anybody who's teaching them the Word. So they go to try to pick it up someplace else.

God has given us a blank check in 1 John 1:9. That is your power connection to the Spirit of God. Keep those known sins confessed. He is faithful and just. He is faithful, He'll do it every time. He's just, Christ has paid for that sin. That's the doctrine and the grace system works. We have promises, something like seven-thousand promises in the Bible to believers, all of them usable only now. Once you get to heaven, they're null and void. We have promises left and right.

You have prayer provided to enable you to have the divine guidance you need. The Jews would have loved to have the system of life that we Christians have with the age of grace, with a permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and not the least of which, you're your own priest. You represent only yourself before God. What other people do is none of your business. They are not the people that you are to be responsible for. Your responsibility is to give them the information. Then after that, they are on their own. But you are your own priest. That means you have great freedom to be able to use your life to the glory of God. Or you can be as some groveling little ant, that somebody just wants to step on, or some little slimy lizard.

I opened the back door to let my little dog Gretchen last night before I went to bed. Before she came bounding in, a slimy little lizard ran into the kitchen. And he went scooting about. The first stomp on the floor and he knew he was in bad shape, and I stomped again. The sucker got away from me. And I stomped. And pretty soon I'm doing a dance like you wouldn't believe over that kitchen floor, a real fandango. Finally, he made the wrong turn and I got him. His tail snapped off and it kept wiggling and jumping around in his final throes of death. Little Gretchen looks around the corner, says, what's going on in here? And that lizard is thrown out.

Christians are spiritual billionaires and they live like slimy lizards because nobody is a shepherd to the sheep of God, by and large. Jesus said that's how it's going to be, a harvest of people who are ready to say yes but who refuse to pay attention and just want to work with the negatives.

So we've got great promises, great techniques of the Christian life, and that is a tremendous series of our tapes. You ought to have that in prayer.

Imputation is God's method of bookkeeping. It is God's way of telling you that you're free to accept or reject it on any page of your ledger. He has imputed to you absolute righteousness. So live accordingly.

**Justification**

Now, justification is a way that righteousness comes to us that is declaring that we are in possession of absolute righteousness. Somebody asks you, "What does justification mean?" It means: that God has given me absolute righteousness, I am now justified in His sight, I have been vindicated before Him, I am equal to Christ in His esteem of me morally. This is what a judge in a court of law is guided by. A judge cannot declare somebody guilty if he is innocent. You cannot condemn a person because justice would not be served if that person doesn't deserve that condemnation. Some criminal cannot say, "Well, I'm innocent, but I'm going to plead guilty, so I'll get an easy sentence, get out of this and get rid of it." A judge can't do that. If he knows the person is innocent, he violates the Code of Justice.

**Justify the Righteous/Condemn the Wicked**

This is a divine principle that God established from the very first. He told the Jews back as far as the Mosaic Code in Deuteronomy 25:1, "If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked." They justify the righteous. They condemn the wicked. Then it goes on to say what happens to the wicked, what happens to the righteous? You cannot condemn the righteous. You justify the righteous. You condemn the wicked. God, therefore, has to deal with sinners on this principle of justice. He has to do this to remain true to His own character. He must deal with the facts as they are. He cannot say, "Well, My Son has died. He's covered your sins and I'll take you all into Heaven." That's a Phil Donahue idea. But God is not going to do that, because if you are guilty and you have not met the requirements of accepting forgiveness by faith in Christ, then that guilt stays upon you and you suffer the consequences.

Parents are often guilty of this. They love their children so much that their children do something that is wrong, but the parents look the other way. They do not treat them in justice. They let them get away with murder. Some of them are doing it now in schools. Everybody's wondering why they do it. Because their parents already at home taught them how to get away with murder, because they did not treat them with justice the consequences of their acts.

God has to do what is fair. Romans 3:26 raises this very question. Romans 3:26, "for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness [God the Father's righteousness] at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." The verse before says that Christ has been the satisfaction for our sins. Romans 3:23 summarized the problem that God faced, this wall of separation, " for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and God cannot declare somebody who is morally guilty to be just. How to bring about this condition that He can declare somebody else's righteousness who really is, because the penalty has been paid, was the problem to solve.

**Problem Solved**

In the Old Testament, from Adam on, God gave Heaven on credit. He justified people on credit. But God does not legalize a fiction. Through the death of His Son, He did remove the moral guilt. So Romans 3:24-25 says "being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation [a satisfaction] in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, [God's righteousness] because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed." He justified people on the basis of what Christ would do in the future. So you see, justification doesn't alter God's holiness. He is still true to His character. His justice has been satisfied, and His absolute righteousness can now be imputed. When that is imputed to a person, then that person is justified, and the penalty of Hell is removed from that individual. Believers receive by imputation the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." God's declaration of this right standing as a fact constitutes justification. It's a legal act of God the judge.

One of the most magnificent demonstrations of this doctrine of imputation, the imputation of God's blessing and righteousness, is none other than the father of the Jewish race, Abraham himself. We shall pursue that next time. Dr. John E. Danish, 1999

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