

# Salvation: God's Love Forever

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, June 9, 2013

## 'There Is Therefore Now No Condemnation'

This morning, we begin a consideration of the "when" of salvation. Salvation involves a 'past-tense' impact on us in that it sets us free from the condemning guilt of our sins. This is accomplished by our "justification" in Christ. Through faith in His sacrifice on the cross, we are declared "not guilty" before a holy God. It also involves a 'present-tense' impact. Our guilt may be taken away, but that only allows us to be declared 'righteous'. The way we are made 'righteous' in actual practice--and are progressively set free from our present sinful lifestyle patterns--is through our "sanctification" in Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Finally, our salvation involves a 'future-tense' impact. Our progressive sanctification itself does not result in our full deliverance from all sin. That will only be accomplished by our "glorification" in Christ--on the day when we will finally see Him and be made like Him.

Our justification, our sanctification, and our glorification all together give us the full picture of the whole scope of our salvation in the Lord Jesus in its past, present and future impacts. It would be hard to think of anything that can be more wonderfully life-changing than to think about these things and let them sink in! In today's study, we start off with the 'past-tense' dimension of our salvation.

### I. THE PROBLEMS THAT OUR PAST SINS PRESENT.

- A. The Old Testament saint Job stated our desperate situation well. After one of his friends launched into a lengthy defense of God's condemnation of sin, Job answered, "Truly I know it is so, but how can a man be righteous before God?" (Job 9:2).<sup>1</sup> We know our sin is real--and so is our guilt. But how can that guilt be taken away. The Bible tells us that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness" (Habakkuk 1:13); and it declares, "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3). We cannot make ourselves righteous before God through obedience to His law; because, as Paul puts it, "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20); and, "for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16b). And besides; even if we *were* to actually reform all our ways and never fail again to keep God's law, how could we be cleansed of the sins of the past that had already been committed? How can our dark blotches be removed from us?--and from God's sight?
- B. What's more, our sins present a problem to God Himself. Our God is a holy God, and He is also a just Judge. As a holy God, He *must* judge sin. But our God is also a pardoning God who loves mercy. How can God pardon our sins and still be a just Judge? How could He let sinners like us into heaven and still remain holy? Could He simply ignore our sins? No; because if He did, He would no longer be a holy God--nor would He be just; because the violation of His holy law demands the justice of punishment for sin. Could He just pour out His wrath upon all sin as a just God? He could; but He couldn't do so and still be true to His own character. If He *did* punish us as our sins deserve, He would not be true to His divine qualities of mercy and love--and what's more, He could have no fellowship with us as a result, because "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), and we would be eternally separated from Him. What a problem our sins present!--both to us *and* to God!

THE 'WHY'  
OF  
SALVATION

THE 'WHAT'  
OF  
SALVATION

THE 'HOW'  
OF  
SALVATION

THE 'WHO'  
OF  
SALVATION

THE 'WHEN'  
OF  
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THE 'WHERE'  
OF  
SALVATION

THE 'WONDER'  
OF  
SALVATION

## II. OUR SALVATION FROM THE PAST IS ACCOMPLISHED BY OUR 'JUSTIFICATION'. IN CHRIST.

- A. Praise God! He has a solution! This solution is described for us in detail in Romans 3:21-26. Charles Ryrie identified “five steps”<sup>2</sup> in the outworking of our justification from this passage:
1. The Plan. Romans 3:21 says, “But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets . . .” It was a plan that was hinted at in the law of Moses--but that could not be brought about by the law of Moses. In fact, it was made necessary *by* the law of Moses! It’s a plan that centered on the Person of Jesus Christ.
  2. The Prerequisite. Of this ‘righteousness of God’ now revealed, verse 22 says, “even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference . . .” Righteousness before God comes through faith. But in order for faith to be the channel that leads to salvation, it must have the right object. That object is Christ Himself.
  3. The Price. The price paid was the blood of the righteous Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. As verses 23-25 put it, “For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith . . .” The cost for our righteousness was great indeed! But all that is required from us is that we place our faith in the price that was already paid!
  4. The Position. Verses 25-26 say that God declares His own righteousness through the price Jesus paid; “to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness . . .” Sins had been committed in the past, and our holy God didn’t punish the ones who committed them. Yet, He remained righteous because, by faith, we who believe are placed in Christ who paid the full price and took our punishment on our behalf.
  5. The Pronouncement. Verse 26 gives us the declaration of righteousness: “that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” God is just because He judges our sin through Christ. And yet, He is also the justifier because He mercifully declares us to be officially righteous in His sight through our faith in Jesus’ sacrifice!
- B. It’s important to understand that “justification” as we’re reading about it in this passage is a legal term. It doesn’t mean that someone is “made” righteous; but rather that they receive the ‘legal declaration’ from God in which He declares the believing sinner to be 100% righteous in His sight on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ--a standing before God of righteousness that is credited to his or her account through faith alone. It’s the same thing as was declared in Romans 8:1, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” “No condemnation” in God’s sight means that we now stand 100% righteous before Him.

## III. THROUGH ‘JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH’ WE ARE NOW SET FREE FROM THE CONDEMNING GUILT OF OUR PAST.

- A. Our sins of the past have condemned us and made us guilty before God. But when He saves us, He completely saves us from all of the the guilt of the past in His sight. Paul “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new

creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). When God looks upon us in Christ, He no longer sees the guilt of our past. He only sees us as new creations who have the very righteousness of Jesus Himself forever credited to our account!

- B. And in practice, this means we are now set free to leave the past behind and follow Jesus in newness of life! We may have to make things right with others; but not to earn favor with God Himself. As Paul--a great sinner in the past--had put it, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:12-14).

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<sup>1</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New King James Version; copyright 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.

<sup>2</sup>Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), pp. 344-5.