

# The Extent and Efficacy of the Gospel

*Studies in Romans*

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**Bible Text:** Romans 3:21-31

**Preached on:** Sunday, November 16, 2003

## **Faith Free Presbyterian Church**

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I would just like to add one announcement and that is a matter for prayer. One of our members—sister Linda Davis—is having extensive foot surgery this coming Wednesday. I am not going to go into all the history of it, but Linda has had a lot of trouble there and the last surgery was not particularly successful. This surgery really includes the work of taking the foot back apart and reconstructing everything. And it is going to be a lot of work for the surgeons and no doubt for Linda a lot of suffering as well. She has suffered a lot over the years and she is one of those ladies that I often marvel at that manages to keep working and even keep smiling under tremendous adversity and a lot of pain and agony.

So we trust you will keep her in your prayers. Pray that the Lord will guide the surgeon's hand and that this time this surgery will be highly successful and that Linda will have some ease and that we will be able to rejoice in what the Lord has done for her at this time.

I did say to Mr. Barnes, if he wanted, he could preach again tonight, but he declined. Not that he is declining, mind you. But he declined. I said to Stanley, "You are in a different league entirely," when you do what he does. I went to my study this morning and found that he was there, had my Bible opened and he wasn't copying any notes out of it, mind you, but there he was with my plain block of paper in front of him and writing from scratch.

And I said, "Most preachers when they go away they have sermon notes that they bring with them and they... these are things that are easy to reproduce. Their mind is well in groove for them."

But he comes it, "No, I didn't feel right with any of those. And so we just start off from scratch and away we go."

He is Dr. Barnes, but he is much more than that. I have given him a special degree. It is S S M, Stanley Barnes, S S M, sermon sausage machine. It really has to be seen to be believed. You just preach, Stanley, a text of Scripture and just like that he can turn you out a sermon outline that other preachers would die for. They would give their eye teeth

to get it after a week's study. On top of that any text you mention—and I say this with great admiration. I wish I could do it—any text you mention he can normally tell you a story whether it is of D L Moody or Jonathan Edwards or C H Spurgeon or Saint Augustine or somebody else. He would have read that and with the memory he has, he remembers it. I read it and I proceed to forget it. But I say all that to say that I was glad he preached for us this morning. If you didn't get to hear him, I trust you will get the tape and it will do your heart good. I know a lot of people were greatly encouraged by the Word that was brought this morning.

Stanley and [?] will leave us tomorrow morning—at least they leave Greenville tomorrow morning. They have a long layover in Newark, New Jersey. That used to be the worst international airport not only in America, but anywhere outside the Middle East. It was terrible. The pits would have been three or four stars up from what Newark, New Jersey used to be. But now it is one of the most beautiful airports and five hours of a lay over there will not be too much trouble. But pray for them as they go back to Northern Ireland and the many duties of the ministry there.

We have appreciated having them with us.

Stanley saw a shark when we were in Savannah and they were keeping him at lunch today, but the story grows by the minute. It was 10 feet from the shore, 20 feet from the shore, which is true. The water comes in and out about 10 to 20 feet. This thing coming in and it was having a good feed to itself. The funny thing is I had said to Stanley just a few minutes before that, "You know, you should really get your socks and shoes off here." And I said, "You should paddle," as we call it in Northern Ireland, going for a paddle. That is what you used to say at the beaches there in Northern Ireland in the old days. You would have seen the men dressed in collar and tie and sport coat and they rolled their trouser legs up over their kneecap and taking off the socks and shoes.

If the sun was shining really hot and the temperature was over 60 they would get a handkerchief and knot it at the four corners and stick that on their head and the funniest looking sight, sport coat and trousers, tie, collar and tie, pants rolled up above the knees, this knotted handkerchief and they were in for a paddle. It can only be seen in Britain.

But, anyway, I said to him, "You should go in for a paddle."

He thought that that shark smelt his supper, so he decided he wouldn't go in for a paddle.

But they were keeping him going and that shark is now a 15 foot great white and he is going to go home and describe how that is the hand that battled the shark as the teeth were just about to close over Cairns he went in and did that.

But then he is not going to tell that story because if he did, he would be shot. Why did not you let the shark finish his work?

But anyway, we have had a good time and we trust that the Lord will bless them as they

go and you will be able to get a word with them after the service this evening before they take their journey.

Tonight we are back to Romans chapter three. Last we read verses 21 though 31. We are going to read that portion again. I made a mathematical, or, at least, arithmetical error last week. I said we had five points to cover in three weeks and I was lying because there were six. We have got one done and two weeks to go: this week and, God willing, next Lord's Day evening.

We will start off by reading this passage of Scripture together, Romans chapter three verse 21, reading to the end of the chapter.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.<sup>1</sup>

Amen. The Lord will add his blessing to this reading from his Word for his name's sake.

Some years ago an Englishman was planting his field and in doing so, he unearthed a very considerable treasure in rare and ancient Roman coins. The *Times of London* reported that story and it used the story to indulge itself a little in what was almost poetic imagining of the people through history who had walked on that field. The idea was it would take all these different characters and describe how they had walked over this very ground with this great treasure under their feet. And yet they were unaware of what they were walking upon.

I think that story is a fair illustration of what happens usually to the book of Romans and particularly to this passage in chapter 3:21 to the end. Here we come to a field that has been read, a field of Scripture that is being memorized, walked upon again and again and again. Yet how infrequently do we really stop to plow deep, to try to unearth the treasure that is here. Because in this passage of Scripture there is treasure, treasure far more than coins of Rome or of any other nation, treasure far more than money can buy or men can

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 3:21-31.

compute. Here I think you have what you could call the Magna Charta of Christianity. You could say that about the whole book of Romans. But here in chapter 3:21 to the end, the apostle is expounding in depth the gospel according to Paul.

He has given us his theme. The theme in chapter one verse 17 is that in the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith as it is written, the just by faith shall live. That is his theme. The righteousness of God revealed for the salvation of the believer in Jesus Christ. He shows the need of that salvation in chapter one and chapter two and the first part of chapter three.

Now at verse 21 he gets right into the exposition of the gospel that meets the need. He has already shown that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. He has shown how that the Gentile nations are under the wrath of a holy God, how the Jewish nation is under the wrath of a holy God, how that the religious and the irreligious are likewise under the wrath of a holy God and under the curse of a broken law. Now he comes to tell God's answer for man's sin, God's remedy for the curse that has fallen by sin upon the human race.

Here is his great exposition of the gospel. Here is Paul's divinely inspired answer to man's need.

I am tempted—though I daren't give in to it—but I am tempted to take time to point out what the answer isn't. It is very important to recognize where the answer is not. Men are always prone to look in the wrong place for the answer to the needs of their soul.

You remember when Naaman the leper was told that there was a prophet in Israel who could cure him of his leprosy. You remember that he went to his master the King of Syria who immediately wrote out a royal letter and sent it to the king in Israel. And Naaman came up to the door of the king's palace and he presented this letter. And the King of Israel threw up his hands in horror.

“How can I cure this man of his leprosy? There is no way.”

Down through the centuries of time people have made a habit of going to the wrong place for the answer to the needs of their soul.

Paul does not say a word about the rubbish that is filling the pulpits of Protestantism today, the rubbish of positive thinking, getting a good image of yourself. That is not an answer. Paul does not say a word about the rubbish of sacramentalism that your baptism or your getting to the table or any other thing that the church can do to you or for you is the answer. It is significant that the apostle does not point us to the priest or pope or preacher or church, but directly he points us to the provision that God has made in the person and through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is God's answer. And as Paul begins to expound this great answer that God has given for man's sin, he shows us more about the righteousness of God.

I need to emphasize that while there are places where that indicates the divine attribute of righteousness or justice, technically here in Romans that righteousness of God means the righteousness that God provides for the saving of sinners, what some have called his saving righteousness.

Last week I pointed out this great doctrine that Paul is here expounding, that God righteously justifies sinners.

Now that seems to be a contradiction in terms. He takes it up again in the fourth chapter when he speaks of God justifying the ungodly.

Human religion—be it Roman Catholic or Protestant or Muslim or Hindu or anything else—knows only a justification of the righteous, people who make themselves righteous and on the ground of what they have made themselves, they are somehow or other acceptable to God. It is not the gospel. It is the very antithesis of the gospel.

God justifies the ungodly. He justifies sinners. But the beauty of this passage is that God does that righteously. That seems a contradiction in terms. As Paul says he is “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

God, therefore, has this way of salvation whereby he righteously justifies sinners. And he does it—and here are two very important words—by graciously. The second word is gratuitously providing them with a perfect righteousness that he presents it a gift, a righteousness worked out by Jesus Christ, culminating in his death upon the cross. He gives them that righteousness as a gift and they receive it by faith alone in the merits of Christ and his atoning sacrifice.

That is the salvation of God. And when God does this he demonstrates his justice and his mercy.

As the psalmist says in the 85<sup>th</sup> Psalm, “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.”<sup>3</sup>

Here is justice in tandem with mercy. And as God does this, Paul says, he silences the pride of man and establishes the law of God.

Now that is the doctrine.

Last week we looked at the essence of this gospel, the righteousness which is apart from the works of the law, how God brings us to the place of establishing us—as the preacher

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 3:26.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 85:10.

said this morning—in such a standing that we stand before God as righteous as Jesus Christ is.

Just think of that. God takes an ungodly wretch, a foul and filthy, hell deserving sinner and he places him before the judgment bar of heaven and such is the miracle of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Such is the clothing of that sinner with the garments of Christ's righteousness, that with that righteousness upon him, in union with Christ that man is no longer condemned, but accepted in the beloved and accepted as the beloved. That is the very essence of the gospel.

Now, I preached that to some extent last Lord's Day evening and through this series in Romans I have come back to that again and again and again and again and again. And I am loathe to go on to leave it behind, because this is the key first to the freedom from guilt that so afflicts many souls. This is more than a come to Jesus and he will make you feel better gospel. This is more than some little theory of man that comes and tickles your feeling for a moment. This is something that goes to the very heart, the depths of the needs of the souls of men. We are afflicted by guilt because of sin. We are alienated from God by wicked works. We are under curse and condemnation by nature. We need something more than a band aid we need something that will give us, on divine authority, a certainty of a new standing with God. And that is what the gospel is all about, the essence of the gospel. It is the story of God providing us with a perfect righteousness that will stand the test of the Judgment Day, that will give you peace of mind, peace of conscience, that will silence the attack of the devil.

I was just thinking this last night. In the early hours of the morning just thinking of this very thing. Does Christ now appear for me in heaven? Is the blood of Christ now pleading for me in heaven? Is the righteous merit of Jesus Christ now imputed to me by God almighty?

Stop and think of that. Answer the question honestly. Is that so according to Scripture? Let's get away from: Did I pray the right prayer, did I weep enough tears, did I feel deeply enough? Let's get to what Christ is and what Christ has done. Is this true? Because if this is true, then it is well with my soul.

That is the very essence of the gospel, a righteousness given by faith in Jesus, through faith in him alone without works.

Now we must proceed.

Verse 22 is a quick look at it, 21, 22. Now we want to have a look at the extent of this gospel in verses 22 and 23.

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Romans 3:22.

You will notice that there are no verbs before the “unto all” and “upon all.” And that leads to some divergence of thought. Many believe—and I think with very good grounds—that we should carry forth the verb from verse 21, “manifested.”

“Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ...”<sup>5</sup> manifested or which is manifested, “unto all.”

It is very good theology there. God has one gospel for all men. He has manifested one way of salvation for all, Jews and Gentiles. They all must be saved in the same way. The Jew, the Gentile, the rich, the poor, the Black, the White, the educated, the illiterate, men of every distinction. They must all be saved the same way. Whatever distinctions race or religion confer upon us, and they do at times. The beginning of chapter three tells us the advantages that the Jews had by their race and by their religion over the pagans.

But whatever those advantages may be, there is no difference in the spiritual standing of men by nature before God. There is one gospel for all men. Why? Because we are told there is no difference. How is that?

I want you to see this now.

In the great scheme of things God is saying the things that man count important, differences of standing, differences of culture, differences of race, differences of religion, differences in their economic position, differences in their worldly attainments. He says they count for nothing. It doesn't matter.

Stop and think. If I scaled the heights of human fame and fortune and I had gained acclaim of the whole world and die and go to an endless burning, eternal hell, what is the use?

I thought of that and I think of it many, many times.

It was back in the 1960s I watched on television the most moving television event I have ever seen and that was the funeral of Winston Churchill. I love Churchill's writings. I stopped reading his multi volume biography with 1100 pages per volume because it was taking up too much in my time. After six volumes I thought it is time to give it a rest.

I love his writing. I liked his spunk. And I admire the common grace of God that raised that English bull dog at a time when the whole of western civilization stood in jeopardy.

The greatest broadcaster I have ever heard [?] did the commentary. The pomp, the pageantry would have brought tears to a stone.

Someone graciously bought me a copy of *Life* magazine way back with all the pictures of the Churchill funeral. And every so often I pull it out and I relive that moment. And then

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

my mind turns to some of the things I read from Churchill. And I thought all this, all this and if there hasn't been at the end a miracle of God's grace, burning in hell.

There is no difference.

The distinctions that men count important are nothing. For, as verse 23 tells us, "All have sinned."<sup>6</sup>

The tense of the verb in the Greek text simply says all sinned. I think the reference is to Adam's initial sin. We all sinned in him and fell with him. And, therefore, we are sinners in our own person and all come or fall short of the glory of God.

To come short means to lack or to be in want of or to be destitute of. We all sinned in Adam. And we are now, therefore, all sinners who fall short of the glory of God.

What is the glory of God? Surely the supreme glory of God is his holiness. We may fancy that we meet some standards of ethics and morality among men. But we fall short of the glory of God. We cannot reach that. We have lost the glory of conformity to his holiness that God gave our first parents by their creation. Adam lost it in the fall and lost it for all his posterity. Not only so, but because of sin, we refuse to live for the glory of God.

Isn't the command of Scripture, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"?<sup>7</sup>

That is what we are supposed to do. Never has there been a man, unless it be the God man, the Lord Jesus. Never has there been a man who has ever lived for the glory of God as he ought to.

I have often quoted the words of Revelation four and verse 11 that it is for God's pleasure that we are.

Here we come to one of the greatest questions that men can ever face. Why am I here? Why do I exist? Why did God ever give me life? Why am I?

We hear an awful lot of existential rubbish today where people are trying to find themselves. Who am I?

We had a famous case in a little town called Hollywood in Northern Ireland where a big time realtor was in a café and they had made it non smoking and he went in and sat in the middle and started smoking.

The waitress came to him and said, "Sir, we have a non smoking policy. Would you please put out your cigarette?"

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<sup>6</sup> Romans 3:23.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthian 10:31.

And he said, "Ok."

She went on and he continued smoking.

She came back and told him again and a third time. And finally she went in to the owner and pointed him out. So the man, who was also the chef and hat and all on him, he came out and he said, "I understand my staff has told you two or three times that this is a non smoking restaurant."

And this fellow got really angry and he pushed his chair back and he roared at the owner. He said, "Do you know who I am?"

And just like a flash in one of those things I would think of about a year later, just like a flash the owner said, "Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention for a moment. Can anyone help this gentleman? He seems to have forgotten who he is."

Rather than getting into all that existential rubbish, who am I. You really don't have too much trouble knowing who you are.

A good question to ask is: Why am I here? Why am I? And the answer is it is for God's pleasure. That is why we were created.

But because of sin we come short of that. We have failed to live for the glory of God and there is no distinction here. It is true of Jew and Gentile, Black and White, rich and poor, educated and illiterate, the whole bunch of us. We fail to live for the glory of God.

But the word "glory" has another significance and it simply means praise. And when you read it this way, how true it is. We fall short. We lack. We are destitute of the praise of God. We may preen ourselves about our self righteous attainments. We may tell ourselves that we have done very well, thank you. But the Lord is not praising us. We read of priests who preferred the praise of men to the praise of God and, therefore, they rejected the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps you are just in their category tonight and you are satisfied with the praise of men. But let me tell you. None of us, by anything that he has ever done, has ever earned the praise of God, not one. And that is true even of our Christian service.

Do you remember what Jesus said even to his disciples when they were serving him?

This is what you should say to yourself. "When we have done all..."

Now where is the one among us who has done all? Have you ever done all you ought to do? For I must confess I haven't. But when you have done all, this is what you should say. We are unprofitable servants.

The only thing that earns a Christian any praise for his service is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ who fills our imperfect service with his perfect merit.

We fall short of God's praise. That is another way of saying we lie under God's condemnation. All sinned and all fall short of the glory of God. And ultimately they fall short of it because the glory of God—according to Romans chapter five verse two—it is a description of eternal life.

“[By Christ] we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>8</sup>

We rejoice in hope of eternal glory with Christ. That is eternal life.

For all have sinned and all fall short of eternal life. There are no exceptions to this rule, none whatsoever.

Archibald Maysmith, Scottish Plymouth Brethren evangelist tells the story of an evangelist many years ago who visited a place called Rutherglen near Glasgow in Scotland. Those were the days when cameras were not very familiar, at least they weren't very plentiful. They would be carried around. Oh, some of you may even remember these, the little Kodak Brownies. And they would be carried around in a little brown case. This evangelist had his little Bible in a little brown case. It looked like a camera case. And as he was going through the glen with a friend, a bunch of young people saw him and they were full of high spirits and they came up and they said, “Sir, would you take our photograph?”

Quick as a flash he said, “I have already got it here.”

They couldn't understand until he opened the book at Romans three and 23 and said, “Here is your picture. ‘All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.’”<sup>9</sup>

Come short.

It is strange how foolish people become. We, as Paul warned the Corinthians, we tend to judge ourselves by other people. Have you all heard it?

Well, I am not as bad as he was. I haven't done what he did. I haven't sunk to the depths that he sank to. All that sort of thing, judging yourself by other people. You could make yourself believe you are almost as saintly as an archangel. But you are not.

I read J Vernon Magee talking about his boyhood pranks in California. If you were to stand, according to him—I have never been there. Maybe Craig could tell us at Santa Monica pier, Catalina Island is 25 miles away over the water. And he said as boys they

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<sup>8</sup> Romans 5:2.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 3:23.

would come and they would run along the pier and they would jump to reach Catalina Island.

Some jumped for 10 feet. Some jumped for 15 feet. Some of the very athletic might have made 20 feet. But he said they all fell short of Catalina Island.

Multiply that into infinity.

We come short of the glory of God.

That is our predicament. There is no difference.

But to all such... that is the force of unto all, to all such, God has manifested the gospel of a saving, justifying righteousness wrought by the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ to be received by faith without works. You don't have to jump the distance between your sin and the glory of God. You don't have to span the gulf between you and your sin and God in his glory.

The message of the gospel is that God has spanned the gulf and how he extends that revelation of righteousness unto all of us.

But add to that, in verse 22, the thought of the efficacy of the gospel, the effect of this [?].

Notice that it says not only is it manifested unto all, but it is upon all them that believe.

Now, commentators have argued for centuries as to why these two very similar prepositions are put together. Unto all and upon all. Some have denied any real difference in them at all. But I don't believe the Holy Ghost is multiplying words to no effect. The truth is, it is not only revealed to all, Jew and Gentile without distinction. But it is upon all them that believe. It is effective only in believers.

Do you remember what we read in Romans 1:16?

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek,"<sup>10</sup> or to the Gentiles.

Here is the truth that on every believer God gives a verdict. Upon every believer God stamps the verdict of the court of heaven and that verdict is "righteous."

Now the world will look and say, "He, righteous? I know him."

The devil will come along and say, "That man, that woman, righteous?" and remind him of all the sins and failures.

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 1:16.

When you to the Wartburg in Germany and see the room in which Luther did his translation of the German Bible, was held a prisoner, you will see the desk at which he sat and you will hear the story. And this is where Luther was sitting when the devil came reminding him of all his sin. And Luther took his ink pot and threw it at the old serpent and said, "Bring them all and millions more. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin."

He was justified and he knew it. He was declared righteous and he knew it. For this is a verdict upon all believers. And understand this. This is a verdict equally upon all believers.

This is where justification differs from sanctification. Sanctification is at different stages of advancement in different believers. We are not all equally holy. We are not all equally mature. We are not all equally wise. We all know that. But, you see, justification is our legal standing before God. And it does not depend on our wisdom or our works. It does not depend on the level of our maturity or sanctification. It depends on the fullness and perfection of the merit of Jesus Christ.

Can you improve upon perfection? He is made unto us righteousness. Jehovah Tsikenu, as we sang last sabbath evening, the Lord our Righteousness. If Christ is my righteousness I have a perfect righteousness. It can't be bettered.

That is equally true for all believers.

I want you to see what Paul is saying here. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ never fails to receive the gift of saving righteousness. Now, understand that. You come to Jesus as you are: weary, worn and sad. You come to Christ with all the burden of your guilt. You come with all your history. In due time will get... well, in due time, certainly by next sabbath evening we will have to get to the wonderful words of verses 25 and 26.

The remission of sins, dealing with the things that are past. You come with all of your past. You come with all of your history. You come with all all of the things in which you are totally ashamed. You come with everything that would make you blush. You come with all that can condemn you to hell and what happens?

By faith in Jesus Christ, instantaneously, irreversibly, eternally, justified, declared righteous, acceptable to God. God is satisfied. The law is silenced towards you accept to cry for your entrance into heaven. And all the covenant blessings of grace are vouchsafed to you.

Faith never fails to receive the gift of Christ's righteousness. It is upon all them that believe. It is actually imputed. It is actually placed to the account of every single believer in Jesus Christ.

Now that brings us full circle.

Are you a believer in Jesus Christ? That's the big question. Are you a believer in Jesus Christ? Don't let anything take the place of this. Don't fool yourself that there is any alternative.

We read of the publican. The Lord Jesus told us that he went into the temple and he smote upon his breast. He couldn't lift his eyes to heaven. I want you to see. There is nothing. There is no easy believism here. This is real conversion. He is convicted of his sin. He feels he is guilty and worthy of hell. He is humbled under the mighty hand of God. He cannot even lift his gaze heavenward. But from the depths of humiliation and shame he cries, "God, be merciful. God, be propitious. God, deal with me on the ground of the propitiatory sacrifice," something of which Paul goes on to speak in the 25<sup>th</sup> verse of this passage. "Lord, deal with me on that ground."

And Jesus said, "That man went down to his house justified, clothed in the garments of the righteous merits of Christ."

I wonder tonight. Have you ever personally experienced the liberating power of this gospel? Have you ever come as a believer in Jesus Christ to receive freedom from sin's guilt, that you are not struggling to impress God with what you do or how well you do it? You are no longer struggling to make an impression upon God by your paying or by your praying. But you are cast entirely upon the finished work of the complete merits of Jesus Christ to free you from the guilt of sin, to make you acceptable to God and to assure you of eternal glory.

When the Philippian jailer stood on the edge of eternal hell, on the edge of a suicide's grave, Paul intervened and trembling, that big sinner cried, "What must I do to be saved?"<sup>11</sup>

And the answer is startling in its simplicity and in its directness. He did not get a course in reformed theology. He did not get—as I think we have—and I hate to be critical here, but I think we have inherited, sadly, from the excesses of some of the Puritans—he did not get a deep psychological evaluation as to how deeply he was humiliated, how well he was prepared.

Oh, as a trembling soul crying, "What must I do to be saved?"<sup>12</sup> he got the answer.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."<sup>13</sup>

Because faith always receives justifying righteousness. Isn't that what we read in John chapter one?

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Acts 16:30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 16:31.

Even to the believing ones upon his name.

The question tonight is not whether you are a Baptist or a Presbyterian. The question is whether you are a believer in Jesus Christ, not a believer about him. But a believer in him.

You say, "What is the difference?"

I have told you before. And it comes to mind as I think of the almost suicidal depressive person over in Michigan who threw himself over Niagara Falls a couple of weeks back and somehow lived to tell the tale. And a great circus actor, really, a great tight rope walker was going across the falls. He did so in the sight of a great crowd. The rope swayed and he went straight across anyway.

He turned to the crowd and said, "Do you believe I could carry you across that rope?"

"Oh, yeah, you could."

"Well, jump on."

"I don't think so."

And then he took his manager and he put him on his back and he carried him right across the falls.

The first man said he believed. He believed about him, but he certainly didn't believe in him.

The illustration, like most illustrations falls down because, you see, there is no possibility of Christ failing. Every tight rope walker has his falls. Jesus Christ never fails.

There are still people. They know all about him. But they don't know him.

You are living in sin. You don't know him.

Fooled by the devil, perhaps, into thinking if you knew Christ you somehow would lose out on life. Man, how good a deceiver is the devil. You have people drinking poison and thinking that it is the water of life, living a life of miserable rejection and rebellion against God, a heartbeat from hell and they say, "Man, this is living."

Tonight, the question is: Are you a believer? And if you are not, why not?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John 1:12.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 16:30.

For this righteousness of God is revealed to all, including you. And it actually is given without fail to every single believer in Jesus Christ.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Let us all pray.

As our heads are bowed and our eyes are closed, let's have a moment of quietness before the Lord. It is a wonderful thing to be saved. It is a wonderful thing to be sure you are saved. It is a wonderful thing to be free from the guilt of sin and the accusation of conscience and of the devil, to know that Christ is my righteousness and I have a place in heaven because Christ has a place in heaven. He is my guarantee of reaching there.

If you are not saved tonight, the command is simple. The call is plain.

I trust you will come to Christ.

Mr. Brame and I are here to help you. If you are not saved, we would love to talk with you to point you to Christ. If you are battling with assurance, the answer to people battling with assurance is usually have clear understanding of justifying grace. Again, we would be happy to help you. Come let's open the book of God. Stay as the others leave. It is time to seek the Lord.

*Father in heaven, bless thy Word to every heart. Lord, after the faltering voice of man is silent, speak on for the voice of the Spirit of God. Oh we thank thee for justifying righteousness. We thank thee for the free grace of God that imputes the righteousness of Christ to every believer and thereby places in his hand the title deed to eternal glory. Lord, in Adam all die. In Adam surely all of us fall short of the glory of God. And thank God in Christ we do not fall short of the glory of God. In Christ we are assured of eternal life. In Christ we have a perfect righteousness.*

*Lord, save the lost tonight. Lord, give assurance to every believer. Give us a clear sight of Christ. God, grant that we will, as we were singing this morning, be able to address our own souls with the words of faith, "Arise, my soul, arise. Shake off thy guilty fears. The bleeding sacrifice in thy behalf appears."*

*Lord, answer prayer tonight and give fruit for the preaching of thy holy Word.*

*Part us now with thy blessing. Keep us in thy fear. Be the abiding portion of all thy blood bought people. And to thee, oh God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, we will give the praise and the honor and all the glory. Amen.*