

- I. Session 44: Righteousness of God Part 2: Forensic Justification by God's grace alone
- a. Review: Last session we defined and demonstrated that God is righteous and we also explored what that means for our lives. We often think of God's righteousness as God treating the righteous righteously and punish the unrighteous. But there is a third way that God's righteousness is expressed and that God's work of forensic justification of sinners.
 - b. Purpose: In this session we shall explore what is the doctrine of forensic justification followed by three reasons why we need the forensic justification of God and also explore some implications
 - c. What is Forensic Justification?
 - i. "The term forensic is often used in judicial context (in law court contexts), where a declarative meaning is evident."¹
 - ii. Forensic Justification is the act of God as judge to declare sinners who are guilty that they are righteous (not-guilty).
 - iii. It sometimes help to understand forensic justification in contrast to the view of transformative righteousness.
 1. Transformative righteousness has the idea of God MAKING someone right by transforming them.
 2. Forensic righteousness has the idea of God DECLARING someone right.
 - iv. This is important and how you answer either undermine or support the Gospel! Are we declared not guilty before God as judge because of what we do and what is within us (justification by transformative righteousness) or because of God grace, He declares us righteous and not guilty?
 - d. We need God's grace to declare us legally righteous because God's righteous judgment of our sins means sinners who are guilty deserve God's wrath
 - i. "*And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.*" (Romans 2:2)
 1. What does Paul have in mind when he said "*such things*?"
 - a. Romans 2:1 talks about those who judge others hypocritically: "*everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*"
 - b. But it's not just the sin of hypocritical judgment, it's also all the sins mentioned in Romans 1 since Romans 2:1 use the term "*therefore*" that connects Romans 1 and Romans 2:1.
 - c. Romans 1:32, which is right before Romans 2:1 even include the opposite of sin of hypocritical judgment: approval and support of sinners in sinning.
 2. Consequence: Here Paul tells us "*the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.*"

¹ Thomas Schreiner, *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 164.

- This judgment is described as being done “*rightly.*”
- ii. “*But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,*” (Romans 2:5)
 - 1. Again this judgment is described as being “*righteous.*”
 - 2. To those who do not repent Paul addressed them and said “*you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation*”
 - e. We need God’s grace to declare us legally righteous because we can’t be justified by works or works of the law
 - i. Works righteousness is clearly condemned as grounds for justification:
 - 1. “*because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin..*” (Romans 3:20)
 - 2. “*For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works [b]of the Law*” (Romans 3:28)
 - 3. “*because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin..*” (Romans 3:20)
 - 4. See also Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:11, Galatians 5:4.
 - ii. Why can’t we be justified by the law or works?
 - 1. We must keep the whole law: “*For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.*” (James 2:10)
 - 2. Because we keep on sinning!
 - a. Sinners will keep on sinning!
 - b. This is why the transformative righteousness view is problematic if that’s the basis for justification!
 - 3. We also can’t justify ourselves by our own work because inherently in our hearts we don’t want to seek God (Romans 3:10) nor do we abide by His ways.
 - 4. By justifying ourselves by our own ways, we already are breaking God’s law of how He wants to save us: “*For not knowing about God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.*” (Romans 10:3)
 - f. We need God’s grace to declare us legally righteous because of the works of Christ
 - i. Good news: “*But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*” (Romans 3:21)
 - 1. What is this revealed righteousness of God? The next verse in Romans 3:22 states: “*even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction,*”

- 2. According to **Romans 3:24** this is a gift of God!
- ii. Christ's declaration of us being righteous is not an unjust and arbitrary declaration because of the works of Christ! Listen to **2 Corinthians 5:21**: "*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"
- g. Implications:
 - i. Do you marvel that are justification before God doesn't fluctuate?
 - ii. Do you thank God for Jesus Christ being the demonstration of the righteousness of God?
 - iii. Does this doctrine of forensic justification excite or bored you?
Worship God!