TITLE: Justification

TEXT: Is. 1:18; Ro. 4:1-8; Ja. 2:10; Ro. 10:9-10; Heb. 10:11-17; Ps. 103:11-12; Ephe. 1:7-8; Acts 13:38-39

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about what, I believe, is the most wonderful aspect of our salvation and that is justification.

 Justification is a theological word that unfortunately doesn’t get much press. We don’t talk about it nor contemplate it nearly as much as we should….

 Just what does it mean to be justified?

 When the Ritz-Carlton Hotels won the Prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the owner of that organization, William Johnson, stated that now they would need to work even harder to earn the respect that came with the award.

 Quality, he said, “is a race with no finish line.”

 How true that is. Quality is a race with no finish line.

 Especially in the competitive areas of our world.

And we live in a very competitive world don’t we?

 Every workplace is a competitive place. Banks are competing with other banks, construction companies are competing with other construction companies, hotels compete with other hotels, and restaurants compete with other restaurants….

 And competitive excellence requires 100% all the time.

 Have you ever thought about the consequences of Less then 100 %? The consequences of “Almost, but not quite?”

 According to some research done by a researcher named Natalie Gabal, if 99.9% were considered good enough, then this year alone….

 2,000,000 documents would be lost by the IRS; 12 babies would be given to the wrong parents each day; 291 pacemaker operations would be preformed incorrectly; 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions would be written every day….Just to cite a few of her examples.

 But instead of applying this negatively to the practical side of life, let’s compare it positively to the theological..

 Let’s compare it to justification.

 So just what is justification….

 The word for justified in Greek is:

**dikaioō *dik-ah-yo'-o*** **From G1342; to *render* (that is, *show* or *regard* as) *just* or *innocent:*—free, justify, be righteous.**

 In theological terms, Justification is the sovereign act of God whereby He declares righteous the believing sinner while that person is still in a sinning state.

 When we confess Jesus as our Lord and allow Him to become our savior we become justified.

 God doesn’t suddenly make us righteous (we still sin). He declares us righteous!

 How righteous does God declare us? 100% righteous!

 Stop and think about it…

 Upon believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and confessing Him as our Lord, upon believing in Jesus substitutionary death and bodily resurrection, the once-lost sinner is instantly, unconditionally, and completely declared 100% righteous.”

 Anything less and we would not be righteous.

Anything less, and at best, we would be “almost righteous.”

 If we were declared 99.9% righteous when we come to believe in Christ then many Scriptures would have to be re-written…

Such as…

**Isa. 1:18** **18“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD.**

**“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be light pink; though they are red as crimson,**

**they shall be like polyester.**

 Is that what the promise of Scripture is for those justified by the blood of Christ?

No! Scripture says…
**Isa. 1:18 (NIV)
18“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.**

The promise of our sins being forgiven is all or nothing…

 Unlike the earthly race for excellence, the race against sin had a finish line. Otherwise when Jesus breathed His last breath on the cross He would have said, it is almost finished. And we would have to keep working at it, adding to something Christ didn’t finish at the cross.

 But Jesus said, “It is finished”. Nothing else needs to be done. Sins price has been paid and it has been paid in full.

 Now there is a way to be declared righteous by God. Now you can be justified before God….

When we talk about justification, being declared righteous by God there is probably no better example then in the life of Abraham.

 In fact, in trying to impart this truth to his hearers the Apostle Paul uses Abraham as the example…

**Rom. 4:1 -8 (NIV)
1What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? 2If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God.**

**3What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”**

**4Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. 5However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. 6David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:**

**7 “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.**

1. **Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”**

 Abraham was a good man and did a lot of good works, good deeds, in his lifetime. But Abraham was not declared righteous because of his good works, his good deeds…

 Why not? Because no matter how many good things that Abraham did he was still a sinner. He still had a sinful nature and his sins, no matter how small they might have been, made it impossible for him to be justified, be declared righteous, in Gods sight. Because it is our sin that separates us from God--

 Not the degree of sin nor the severity of sin but sin itself…

 A person can live a good life, keep 99.9% of Gods law and still find themselves in hell when they die.

 A person may have lived their life never having killed anyone, stolen from anyone, coveted anyone’s wife, possessions or property, never swore and even never missed a Sunday of going to church, and yet in the end, find themselves in hell…

 Maybe the only thing that they ever did in their entire life was one time when they were having a bad day they spoke unkind words to their neighbor and in doing so they sinned against God because it was God who said love your neighbor as yourself --and love does no harm to its neighbor.

 That one sin that most of us would see as a minute sin would be enough sin to give us a death sentence in hell eternally separated from God..

 Why? Because it is not the degree of sin that separates us from God and puts us under the just penalty of hell, but it is sin that puts us in that place. Any sin--- All sin.

**James 2:10 (NIV)
10For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.**

 How so?

If we break one law, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem to be, we become a lawbreaker.

 And as a lawbreaker we stand condemned under the law.

 And good deeds don’t cancel out sin.

 Example: Whoops I messed up God, I broke one of your commands so this is what I will do… I’ll make sandwiches and take them down to the homeless shelter for a month to feed the poor to cancel out that sin…

 Won’t work! There is only one thing that cancels out sin and that is the shed blood of Jesus Christ applied to our life.

 How do we apply the blood of Christ to our life so our sins can be cancelled out?

 Only one way and that is through surrender and Lordship. Our surrender to His Lordship….

**Rom. 10:9-10 (NIV)
9That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.**

 In my view this is the most important passage in Scripture in that it tells us how we become saved from the just penalty of hell. It tells us how we achieve our justification.. How we are declared righteous by God and enter His state of Grace…

**9That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved!**

Saved from what? Saved from hell! Saved from the just penalty of sinning against an all holy and all righteous God!

 How are we saved?

 **By confessing with our mouth, “Jesus is Lord and believing in our heart that God raised him from the dead…**

Two key words here…confess and believe..

Both verbs, Both action words. Actions that must be done on our part if we are to receive the promise of salvation.

 Confess and believe. Confess Jesus as Lord and Believe in His resurrection….

 Confess= **Hom-o-log-e-o**= means “come into agreement with”.

 The verb always applies to the subject.

 The subject is the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Or “we need to come into agreement with God about the Lordship of Jesus Christ!” And Come to Believe in Jesus. Come to Believe in His resurrection.

 Believe = **pis-tu-o** as a stand alone word means to be mentally persuaded, the acceptance of a fact….

 I believe that Perry is sitting in that pew this morning… I have accepted the fact, been mentally persuaded that Perry is sitting in that Pew.

 But that is not what Scripture is telling us in how we are to embrace Christ.

 We are to believe “in” Him. Pis-tu-o en—believe in!

The preposition “in” means to take up a fixed position and when added to the word believe changes it from ones just being mentally persuaded or accepting a fact, to meaning, because I have been mentally persuaded and accepted the fact I now take up a fixed position in Him. I allow Him to lead and I will follow that leading.

 Belief in Christ is not just believing that he exists but because we believe he is who he said he is we take up a fixed position in Him! We place our trust, our confidence in Him! We place our life in His hands! We advocate control of our life to Him through the Lordship that we have confessed!

 In short, we give Him control. We allow Him to lead and we follow His leading.

 That is confessing Jesus as Lord. That is believing in Him. The result is Justification..

 We are then declared just, declared righteous, by God.

 Not by anything that we have done but we are declared righteous because of what Christ has done.

 Declared righteous because we have identified ourselves with Christ through Lordship.

 Through our act of Lordship God takes what Christ did on the cross and applies it to our life.

 Christ paid the price of sin in full.

 Through lordship we sign the deed of our life over to Christ and we become covered by the price that He paid.

 And once we sign the deed of our life over to Christ through Lordship God justifies us. He declares us righteous in and through His Son.

 And once we have been declared righteous then we stand before God as one forgiven.

 In speaking about our justification through Jesus’ completed work on the cross the Apostle Paul has this to say….

**Heb. 10:11 -17 (NIV)
11Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.**

**15The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:**

**16 “This is the covenant I will make with them**

**after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”**

**17Then he adds: “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.”**

**“When this priest, Jesus, had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God…Because by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. “Their sins and lawless acts He will remember no more.”**

That is justification!

He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

 “Their sins and lawless acts He will remember no more.”

King David describes our Justification this way in:

**Psa. 103:11 -12 (NIV)
11For as high as the heavens are above the earth,**

**so great is his love for those who fear him;**

**12 as far as the east is from the west,**

**so far has he removed our transgressions from us.**

I think that one of the all time greatest inventions ever made is white out. I love that stuff!

 For those of you who know how to spell correctly and possibly have never heard of it, Whiteout is opaquing fluid…

Opaquing fluid is the magical liquid that covers over your errors, your typos, your unfortunate slip-ups. You make a mistake---just brush on the liquid and start all over again--hopefully this time with no unfortunate mistakes.

 Opaquing fluid is forgiveness in a bottle, an obliteration of a goof with no telltale traces that the goof ever happened at all.

 Now, where else will you come across forgiveness like that?

 Only in Jesus Christ---Gods opaquing fluid. Once applied to our life Christ covers up all the goof ups, all the mistakes and allows us to go on with a clean slate.

**Eph. 1:7 -8 (NIV)
7In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.**

Redemption, the forgiveness of sins is how we are justified.

 We are justified, we are declared righteous by God only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ as we apply His blood to our life through surrendering our life to Him.

**Acts 13:38 -39 (NIV)
38“Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.**

Again, in my view, justification is the sweetest word in the English language! It is the sweetest word in any language!

-- Richard Hooker

*God justifies the believer--not because of the worthiness of his belief, but because of His worthiness who is believed.*

This morning, do you stand before God as one who is forgiven?

 Has God declared you righteous?

 Have your sins been removed as far from His sight as east is from west?

 Have they been buried in the depths of the deepest sea?

 In Gods sight are your sins and lawless deeds remembered no more?

 That is what justification is…

 Have you been justified, been declared just by God this morning?

 Have you made Jesus the Lord of our life allowing Him to become your savior?