

GALATIANS 2:15, 16

CERTAINTIES: JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

“We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”¹

Justification is the great theme of the Word of God. Theologians and preachers talk about justification a lot, but we seem to be almost ignorant of justification in this day. The concept of justification was central to initiation of the Reformation; today, justification continues to be the primary issue segregating professing Christians into two classes—those seeking to placate an angry god and those who rest secure in the God of mercy and grace.

Justification is the especial focus of two books of the New Testament—Romans and Galatians. Though the Apostle Paul will speak of justification elsewhere in the New Testament, it is in these two letters that this vital theme is developed most fully. Paul’s Letter to the Churches of Galatia was quite possibly his earliest missive to have been included in the canon of Scripture. Because of the early date for this letter, it is reasonable to assume that justification reflects a cardinal element in New Testament theology, rather than being a concept that developed only with the passage of time. Justification was central to the Faith from earliest days. Without the idea of justification by faith, there is no Christian Faith.

If the doctrine is essential to the Faith of Christ the Lord, why should there be controversy? The simple answer to that question is that mere mortals are involved in the conduct of the Faith, and mankind is composed of fallen, broken people. How the Faith is expressed, the various elements of the Faith that are emphasised and the relationship of justification to the full expression of the Faith are all dependent upon one’s view of justification.

Churches and denominations often become hidebound, guarding their histories more zealously than they guard the truths of the Word. Even when we disagree with some tenet of our denomination, we are prone to maintain a view that allows for acceptance by our fellow worshippers; and in the case of pastors and elders, we count acceptance by our peers as sufficient justification to keep quiet—we “go along to get along.” Because justification is so vital, and because it was being distorted, Paul was compelled to focus on the issue in this letter.

THE CENTRAL ISSUE—JUSTIFICATION — “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.” God is holy; man is base. God is righteous; man is corrupt. God is perfect; man is fallen. A great gulf yawns between God and man, a gulf resulting from the fall of our first parents. We are born estranged from God; as we grow, we deliberately move ever farther from the Living God. If we are to have any hope of knowing the Living God, it will be because God Himself has spanned the gulf between us.

In the study of religion, the serious scholar will discover that there are actually only two concepts of how an individual can know God—either one can do something to compel God to receive the individual, or one looks to God for mercy, trusting that God will extend grace. There are not hundreds of religions in the world; there are, in the final analysis, but two religions.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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One of the two religions in focus is multi-faceted; it is expressed with hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of exterior shells. Each of these religious expressions claim to be unique, differing from all other religions. However, upon even a cursory examination, it becomes evident that they all share one common, essential feature—all alike attempt to coerce God into accepting the devotee. All these religions share in common the idea that God can be compelled to accept individuals through human effort.

The other religion, regardless of where it may be found, regardless of what language is spoken in the practise of the religion or what outer garb may sheathe the practise, shares at the heart an identity that distinguishes it from the other multi-faceted religion. In contradistinction to the first religion mentioned, this second religion approaches God without attempting to present man's merit. This religion confesses mankind's inherent sinful nature, confessing the individual's sinful condition even while casting oneself on the mercies of the Living God.

This simplifies our understanding religion—either we approach God while attempting to compel Him to accept us, or we approach Him seeking His mercy. Either we attempt to make ourselves righteous, or we seek God's righteousness imputed to us. Either we are attempting to create a standard for righteousness, or we accept the perfect standard of righteousness revealed by the Living God. In short, we either make religion about us, or we place the Living God at the centre of our religious practise.

As he writes these Christians of the churches of Galatia, the Apostle returns to the core issue of the Faith—justification. Far too many of the professed congregations of our Lord have made the Faith about themselves. Denominations seek to protect their bailiwick, even should it mean exalting the denomination above the Christ they profess to serve. Even among many Baptist congregations, the name is often more important than the Saviour. This should never be the case; nevertheless, it is often the situation that prevails—denomination above Christ.

Many times, individual churches fall into a similar trap of exalting the congregation above Christ. I grieve whenever I hear of a congregation that cannot move beyond their present location because the old build has such warm memories. I have witnessed congregations where God was blessing and people were coming into the church; however, some within the assembly opposed expanding the facilities. Neither would they consent to move to larger facilities and they refused to provide more opportunities to worship because they were wed to the building. When a building or a location becomes a hindrance to advancing the cause of Christ, it is likely that the congregation is slipping into a form of idolatry; they have begun to exchange justification by faith for a form of justification through identity with a temporal structure.

Tragically, assemblies can slip into declaring a message that is best described as justification through human effort. They proclaim a message that says we can and must make ourselves acceptable to God. When such a message is proclaimed, churches begin to measure their success by the world's praise—the lost are made to feel good about themselves. The message of self-actualisation, of bettering oneself, of making oneself acceptable to God does appeal to the flesh. However, it is a message that condemns those who accept it, for it compels people to turn from humbling themselves before the Saviour even as they exalt themselves.

Justification is the concept that one's actions are approved. To be justified means that there is no violation of God's demands—the individual who is justified is declared righteous. Though justification is not technically identical to righteousness, the concepts are sufficiently similar to be related. The one who is justified will be found righteous; and the one who is declared to be righteous will have been justified before God. Paul will teach that “one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men” [see **ROMANS 5:18**].

From a theological perspective, justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins and accepts us as righteous in His sight. He does this through imputing the righteousness of Christ Jesus as we receive His sacrifice by faith.² This is where the conflict arises among the various attempts at religion.

People often imagine that they can do something to enhance faith, or they suppose that faith is somehow insufficient to secure God's forgiveness. So, we hear preachers and proponents of the religion of doing something making statements that salvation is by faith *and*... The Word of God is quite clear in warning that there is no *and* when it comes to salvation—salvation is all of grace. One passage of Scripture that makes this emphasis is found in the Ephesian Letter. There, we read, “By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” [EPHESIANS 2:8, 9].

We need to hear the message that is thundered throughout the Gospels. Paul writes, “By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin” [ROMANS 3:20]. If one cannot be justified by keeping the Law, then it is certain that no creed or code of conduct invented by mankind will prove better than the Law that God has given. And the Law is insufficient to justify mankind.

Again, we read in that same third chapter of Romans, “The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

“Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith” [ROMANS 3:21-30].

The point is sufficiently vital that I am compelled to point you to yet another passage. “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” [ROMANS 5:1-11].

² See C. H. Spurgeon, **A Catechism, With Proofs** (Logos Bible Software, Bellingham, WA 2009) 14; **The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs**, 3rd edition (Logos Research Systems, Inc., Oak Harbor, WA 1996)

I have found great comfort in a pointed observation the Apostle recorded for the benefit of the Corinthian Congregation. Paul challenged the members, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” [**1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11**].

I find comfort in the Apostle’s statement because I am a sinner who has been washed, sanctified and justified. Left to my own efforts, there is no question but that I would be excluded from the Kingdom of God; I would be condemned as unrighteous and excluded from the precincts of grace. However, there was a day when I turned from my maddened pursuit of sinful pleasure and received the grace of God offered in Christ the Lord; there was a day when I ceased depending upon my own effort to be justified to receive the justification offered in Christ Jesus.

Week-by-week I point all who hear me speak to the message of life. In almost every message I cite the words of the Apostle recorded in the tenth chapter of Romans. There, Paul has written, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” [**ROMANS 10:9, 10**].

I am very bold to declare that any individual can be declared just before God. I preach a message that offers pardon for sin. You have sinned against Holy God. You have violated His righteous demands. You have offended the True and Living God. You are deserving of eternal banishment from His mercy. Yet, I am able to offer forgiveness of sin, a divine pardon to bring you into a right relationship with this God. You cannot make yourself acceptable to Him; but you can be accepted in the Beloved Son. The righteousness of Christ the Lord can be counted as righteousness for you as you receive His sacrifice because of your sin.

JUSTIFIED BY FAITH IN CHRIST — “We also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.” You will notice that in the text, Paul moves quickly to point the reader to faith in Christ the Lord. This is an apologia, if you will, for the true religion of which I spoke earlier in the message. With these words, Paul is pointing to the heart of the Christian Faith. Thus, in this context, religion is not what we do for God; rather, it is what God has done for us.

Faith secures justification. We are saved by faith. As we saw just a short while past and as it is written in the Word of God, “We hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith” [**ROMANS 3:28-30**].

To be justified is to be saved. “Saved” is a term we don’t hear very often today. However, it is a sweet term that should be declared more frequently from the pulpits of our land. Saved indicates that we were in peril, but now we have been delivered. Saved speaks of being rescued by One with greater strength than our own strength. Saved points to a transition from insecurity to security. Saved demonstrates that we have been deemed precious and hence reserved by the One who delivered us from the condemnation we once faced. The contrast between the two states of “lost” and “saved” is revealed in the Apostle’s statement, “The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” [**1 CORINTHIANS 1:18**].

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Just as we are saved by faith, we also walk by faith. Again, the Word of God declares, “We are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight” [2 CORINTHIANS 5:6, 7].

We speak of being saved, and too often we imagine that our salvation is solely for our benefit. We are not saved to sit and soak—we are saved to serve. Jesus the Master has given us a charge to declare His message of life to all the world. After His resurrection and before His ascension, Jesus charged those who would follow Him, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” [MATTHEW 28:19, 20].

Jesus expects those who would follow Him to make disciples, bringing others to faith that He might be honoured. As Jesus prayed His high priestly prayer before He had gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane, He made a request of the Father that revealed His understanding of our relationship to Him. “I have manifested Your name to the people whom You gave Me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they know that everything that You have given Me is from You. For I have given them the words that You gave Me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them” [JOHN 17:6-10].

Jesus’ words in this tenth verse anticipate the revelation Paul delivers as he writes the Thessalonians, teaching that the Master is coming “to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed” [2 THESSALONIANS 1:10].

Jesus is glorified as we obey Him. You will recall that Jesus stressed the necessity of keeping His Word. For instance, you may remember that He said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” [JOHN 14:15]. Jesus also taught His disciples, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me” [JOHN 14:23, 24].

Earlier, I pointed to **EPHESIANS 2:8, 9** while speaking of being saved by faith. Those two verses are particularly important because of what follows. Orient yourself with those verses so that you will be focused on the verse that follows. “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” [EPHESIANS 2:10].

Christians are saved for God’s special purpose of glorifying His Name through obedience to Him. Because we are walking by faith, we are to live as Christ lived. Listen to this passage, noting in particular the final verse. “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” [EPHESIANS 4:17-24]. Christians are “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” The world does not always see the reality of who we are, and that is to our shame. Nevertheless, we are truly righteous and holy.

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Why is faith so important? It is precisely because I am weak. Sin has contaminated my life, just as it has contaminated your life. Because our lives are weakened by sin living in us, we lack the strength to offer God the obedience He requires. Thus, our faith looks beyond ourselves. We put no faith in the flesh, for we know that flesh to be weakened by sin. Our faith looks to Christ in order to appropriate to ourselves the righteousness He alone can give. Therefore, before the throne of God, we are declared without sin because we are in Christ.

No one should imagine that faith is some novel theory conjured up in latter days. Looking back to the fathers of the Jewish Faith, Paul observed, “What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.’ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;
blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.’

[ROMANS 4:1-8]

Each of us stands arraigned in Heaven’s court. We stand before the throne of God, charged as sinners. If we plead “Guilty,” we are confessing our broken, sinful condition and casting ourselves on the mercy of God. It is at this point that One steps forward to plead the case for all who confess their guilt. The Son of God presents the case that though we are sinners, He has already received the punishment that we deserve in Himself. We are taught in Scripture that, “We see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” [HEBREWS 2:9].

We look to the Living God for mercy and not for justice. If we received justice, we would all be condemned. Scripture states darkly, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” [ROMANS 3:23]. However, if we confess our sinful condition and seek mercy, we will find mercy. As the Apostle has said, “We have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” [1 TIMOTHY 4:10].

THE FAILURE OF WORKS TO JUSTIFY — “By works of the law no one will be justified.” The Apostle concluded our text with the dismal warning that human effort is futile. A brief while ago, I spoke of how we are arraigned in God’s court. If we plead “Guilty” and cast ourselves on the mercy of the court, Jesus pleads our case and we are judged on His merits. However, should we plead “Not Guilty,” we are taking the position that we are prepared to present our works before Him to justify what we have done. Such an effort can only result in failure for us.

Why wouldn’t it be sufficient to plead that we are not guilty? To be certain, the majority of people make excuses for their refusal to put faith in the Son of God. Some argue that they are religious. However, *religious ritual without transformation only brings greater condemnation*. This was the reason Jesus excoriated religious leaders. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves” [MATTHEW 23:15].

Others will argue that they aren't that bad. They can always find someone who acts worse than they act. ***We are not judged according to a standard we made up***; we are judged according to God's perfect righteousness. Because this is the case, none of us measure up to the perfection of the Living God. Paul compiled a series of passages from the Old Testament to demonstrate how futile it is to attempt to present our own efforts as justification. He wrote,

“None is righteous, no, not one;
no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one.”
“Their throat is an open grave;
they use their tongues to deceive.”
“The venom of asps is under their lips.”
“Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”
“Their feet are swift to shed blood;
in their paths are ruin and misery,
and the way of peace they have not known.”
“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

[ROMANS 3:10-18]

Others will contend that they were made Christians when their parents arranged for them to be baptised. Perhaps they then passed through a confirmation class. They have carefully adhered to the tenets of their church since that time. Surely, they imagine, that is enough to satisfy God! God has no step-children; only those who are born from above and into the Family of God can claim to be known by God. Others united with a church. Rite and ritual do not make one a Christian; rite and ritual are expressions that have meaning only when one *is* a Christian.

An appeal to ***the relation of a parent or a grandparent to the Father will not suffice*** for you to be saved. When Nicodemus came to Jesus, seeking knowledge of a relationship, Jesus stunned this learned scholar by informing him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” [JOHN 3:3]. When people were coming to the Baptist, some imagined that their earthly relationships would impress him. John shattered their illusion when he demanded, “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham” [LUKE 3:8].

Still others have stated that they had ***a great experience*** that proved to them that they are saved. Perhaps they had “a burning in their breast,” or they experienced some stunning religious experience, losing control over their speech or seeing visions. I caution anyone who clings to a mere experience that they may well be deceiving themselves. Recall an account of the death of a rich man as related by Jesus. That rich man lived without thought of responsibility to others and without concern for his conduct before God, until after he had died. Then, “in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes” [LUKE 16:23]. When he begged for someone to go from the dead to warn his brothers, he was told, “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” When he continued pleading, he was told, “If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead” [LUKE 16:29, 31].

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Because of our perverted, fallen condition, we are capable of twisting even what is good until it becomes evil. The Law is good, but the Law incites sin. It is not because the Law is sinful; it is because we are sinful. The Apostle, looking back, saw what had happened in his zeal for the Law. He wrote, “What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

“Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin” [ROMANS 7:7-14].

The purpose of the Law is to expose our inability to live up to God’s standard. Paul writes, “The Law was like a strict tutor in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ and learned to be justified by faith in Him. Once we have that faith we are completely free from the tutor’s authority” [GALATIANS 3:24, 25 PHILLIPS]. Rather than being driven to Christ for mercy, many begin to excuse their proclivity to sin. Focusing on minutiae, these individuals are blinded to what they have become. Like Sméagol when he is transformed into Gollum, they cannot see the ugliness their vain attempts are creating.

Jesus confronted this precise situation when He warned the scribes and Pharisees, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So, you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” [MATTHEW 23:25-28].

If one is not justified before God, they shall surely be removed from His presence. It is a frightful scene that John paints when he writes, “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” [REVELATION 20:11-15].

I read that account, not to frighten or intimidate anyone; I read that account to warn you. As one who seeks your welfare, I tell you what lies before you if you are lost. If you attempt to enter God’s Heaven on your own merits, on the merits of your family or even on the merits of your church, you have deceived yourself. You are headed for divine judgement; and there shall be no escape. You will have forfeited freedom and goodness for all eternity. Yet, it need not be that way. I pointed to the Saviour and urged all who are willing to receive His offer of life.

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A person is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. He took your punishment upon Himself. He was put to death so that you could have life. The message of life calls all who will to believe in Jesus as Master over life. This is the call of God to all who are willing to receive Him. If you agree with God, openly saying the words, "Jesus is Master," believing with your whole heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be set free. With the heart one believes and is justified; and with the mouth one agrees with God and is set free.

Think of that! You can be free of condemnation. You can be free of guilt. You can be free to be all that God created you to be. The curse of sin can be removed. It is all accomplished when you put your trust in Jesus, the Living Son of God. The Apostle simplifies the matter when he cites the Prophet Joel, saying, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" [**ROMANS 10:13**].

As one who is justified by faith in the Son of God, I invite you to be justified even today. Amen.