

THEME: "THE KEY WORDS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE"

SUBJECT: "JUSTIFICATION:" NOT GUILTY!"

INTRODUCTION

SOME OF YOU MAY RECOGNIZE THE NAME P.P. BLISS.

**IF YOU KNOW EVANGELICAL MUSIC AND HYMNOLOGY,
YOU MAY HAVE SEEN HIS NAME IN OUR HYMNAL.**

**HE WAS A MAN WHO SERVED AS A MUSICAL SONG WRITER
AND ASSOCIATE EVANGELIST FOR THE GREAT D.L. MOODY.**

**IN THE EARLY YEARS OF MOODY'S CAREER, P.P. BLISS WAS
HIS FAVORITE SONGWRITER AND THE MAN HE TOOK WITH
HIM TO ALL HIS REVIVAL CAMPAIGNS.**

**ALTHOUGH P.P. BLISS DIED AT THE YOUNG AGE OF 38, EVEN
BY THAT AGE HE HAD WRITTEN MANY GOSPEL SONGS
THAT ENTERED EVANGELICAL TRADITION.**

**IF YOU WERE RAISED IN THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH, EVEN
WITHOUT KNOWING IT, YOU HAVE DONE A LOT OF SINGING
OF THE MUSIC OF P.P. BLISS.**

HE WROTE THE SONG HALLELUJAH, WHAT A SAVIOR.

**HE ALSO WROTE THE INVITATION SONG ALMOST
PERSUADED.**

**HE WROTE THE TUNE THAT GOES WITH THE WORDS IT IS
WELL WITH MY SOUL.**

HE ALSO WROTE THAT PEPPY LITTLE CHORUS, DARE TO BE A DANIEL.

I WAS PLEASED TO DISCOVER THAT HE ALSO WROTE THE SONG JESUS LOVES EVEN ME.

HOWEVER, I WILL SAY THIS ABOUT P.P. BLISS. OF ALL THE SONGS THAT HE WROTE, WITHOUT ANY DOUBT IN MY MIND THE MOST FAMOUS AND LOVED, AND THE ONE SUNG THE MOST IN THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH IS THE SONG THAT GOES THIS WAY,

“SING THEM OVER AGAIN TO ME, WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE.

LET ME MORE OF THEIR BEAUTY SEE, WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE.

WORDS OF GRACE AND BEAUTY, TEACH ME FAITH AND DUTY,

BEAUTIFUL WORDS, WONDERFUL WORDS, WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE.”

I THOUGHT ABOUT THAT FAMOUS GOSPEL SONG THIS WEEK AS I WAS PREPARING THIS MESSAGE.

WE ARE BEGINNING TODAY A STUDY OF SOME OF THE WONDERFUL WORDS OF THE BIBLE.

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU'VE EVER STOPPED TO STUDY THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE, BUT IF YOU TAKE YOUR BIBLE AND BEGIN TO READ THROUGH IT, ESPECIALLY THE NEW TESTAMENT, YOU WILL SOON DISCOVER THERE ARE SOME WORDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT ARE OF SUCH CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE, THAT IF YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THOSE WORDS MEAN, YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BIBLE IS TEACHING.

AND THEY ARE SO IMPORTANT THAT IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THOSE KEY WORDS MEAN, THEN YOU HAVE MISSED THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THE BIBLE ITSELF.

WE ARE GOING TO BE LOOKING AT SIX OF THE KEY WORDS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

THESE ARE NOT THE SMALL WORDS. WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT SIX OF THE BIG WORDS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

IN FACT, THESE ARE SOME OF THE BIG WORDS THAT WE TEND TO READ AND IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND THEM, WE JUST SORT OF SKIP OVER THEM.

HERE ARE THE SIX WORDS WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT: JUSTIFICATION, PROPITIATION, REDEMPTION, RECONCILIATION, REGENERATION AND ADOPTION.

THOSE SIX WORDS ARE GOING TO LEAD US BACK TO THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I THINK THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE SOME TIME TO STUDY THESE KEY WORDS FOR THREE REASONS:

(1) TODAY EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY IS FEARFULLY BIBLICALLY ILLITERATE.

ALL THE SURVEYS REVEAL THE SAME THING. THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH TODAY BASICALLY VALUES EXPERIENCE OVER BIBLE DOCTRINE.

ALL TOO OFTEN TODAY IF WE HAVE TO MAKE A DECISION BETWEEN AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE AND STANDING ON BIBLE DOCTRINE, WE ARE SWAYED BY AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE INSTEAD OF BY THE CLEAR TEACHING OF THE BIBLE.

(2) UNTAUGHT CHRISTIANS FACE GRAVE TEMPTATIONS.

THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO ARE NOT TAUGHT IN THE TRUTH OF THE WORD OF GOD FACE MORE TEMPTATIONS AND SUCCUMB EASIER AND FASTER TO TEMPTATION BECAUSE THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS.

(3) SOUND TEACHING PRODUCES STRONG CHRISTIANS.

THAT IS WHY THE APOSTLE PAUL, WRITING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, ALWAYS BEGINS WITH BIBLE DOCTRINE.

HE DOES IT IN COLOSSIANS, IN PHILIPPIANS, IN ROMANS, IN EPHESIANS, AND IN I CORINTHIANS.

THEN HE TAKES THE BIBLE DOCTRINE AND APPLIES IT TO LIFE.

SO WE ARE GOING TO GO BACK TO THE BIBLE TO LOOK AT SOME OF THE GREAT DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE.

I TRUST THAT WE WILL BECOME STRONGER CHRISTIANS AS A RESULT.

THE FIRST KEY WORD THAT WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT IS JUSTIFICATION.

I THINK IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY WE ARE BEGINNING WITH THAT WORD.

ALL CHRISTIANS AGREE THAT THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IS A CENTRAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

IT IS A RED-LETTER TEACHING.

MARTIN LUTHER CALLED JUSTIFICATION "THE CORNERSTONE OF CHRISTIANITY."

J.I. PACKER SAID THAT ANY CHURCH THAT HAS LAPSED FROM JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH CAN SCARCELY BE CALLED A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

I THINK THAT IF YOU UNDERSTAND CHURCH HISTORY, YOU KNOW THAT JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH WAS THE HALLMARK, THE TOUCHSTONE, OF THE PROTESTANT

REFORMATION.

YOU REMEMBER THE STORY OF HOW MARTIN LUTHER WAS A ROMAN CATHOLIC MONK IN WITTENBERG, GERMANY, AND HOW HE SOUGHT FOR YEARS, EVEN AS A LEARNED TEACHER OF THE BIBLE, TO DISCOVER PEACE WITH GOD.

HE WAS READING THROUGH THE BIBLE, SEARCHING FOR PEACE AND COULDN'T FIND IT.

HE FELT GOD WAS ANGRY WITH HIM AND FAR AWAY.

THE TURNING POINT OF HIS LIFE CAME WHEN HE MADE THAT JOURNEY TO ROME.

AS HE WAS CRAWLING UP THE STAIRS OF THE CHURCH IN ROME, WITH TEARS RUNNING DOWN HIS FACE, SAYING THE "OUR FATHER" AND PRAYING TO GOD FOR HIM TO MAKE HIMSELF REAL TO HIM, KISSING EACH STAIR, WHILE HE WAS CLIMBING TO THE TOP OF THOSE STAIRS, SUDDENLY A TEXT OF SCRIPTURE BURST INTO HIS MIND— "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

IN THAT GREAT AND GLORIOUS MOMENT MARTIN LUTHER UNDERSTOOD THAT IT IS NOT BY CRAWLING, IT IS NOT BY KISSING, BY GOING TO CHURCH, NOR BY HUMAN EFFORT, BUT IT IS ONLY THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST THAT A MAN IS MADE RIGHT WITH GOD.

FROM THAT GREAT REALIZATION CAME THE SPARK THAT IGNITED THE FLAME THAT BECAME THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION THAT SPREAD AROUND THE WORLD.

WE ARE HERE TODAY AS HEIRS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATIONAL TRADITION BECAUSE WHAT MARTIN LUTHER BELIEVED IS EXACTLY WHAT WE BELIEVE TODAY, THAT MAN IS JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, WHOLLY APART FROM THE WORKS OF THE LAW.

THIS, THEN, IS THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION THAT JOB ASKED THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, "HOW CAN A MAN BE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD?"

THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER IN THE BIBLE. HE IS MADE RIGHT WITH GOD THROUGH FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS

CHRIST.

(I). LET US FIRST LOOK AT THE DEFINITION OF JUSTIFICATION.

WE USE THE WORD JUSTIFICATION, OR MORE OFTEN THE WORD JUSTIFY, TO SPEAK OF A MAN JUSTIFYING HIMSELF. WHAT WE REALLY MEAN IS HE HAS DONE SOMETHING WRONG AND IS GOING TO OFFER SOME EXCUSES TO MITIGATE OR SOMEHOW CAUSE PEOPLE TO FORGET ABOUT WHAT HE HAS DONE. FOR US, TO JUSTIFY MEANS TO GIVE EXCUSES FOR BEHAVIOR OR MISBEHAVIOR. THAT IS NOT WHAT THE WORD JUSTIFY MEANS IN THE BIBLE. IN THE BIBLE IT IS A LEGAL TERM, A FORENSIC TERM, A TERM FROM THE COURTROOM. IN THE GREEK, TO JUSTIFY MEANS TO DECLARE RIGHTEOUS. YOU JUSTIFY SOMEONE WHEN YOU DECLARE THEM NOT GUILTY AND INNOCENT AND RIGHTEOUS IN THE EYES OF THE LAW. IT DOES NOT MEAN TO MAKE RIGHTEOUS, IT MEANS TO DECLARE RIGHTEOUS. IT MEANS TO LOOK AT SOMEONE WHO IS GUILTY AND DECLARE THAT THEY ARE NOW NOT GUILTY; THEY ARE INNOCENT, RIGHTEOUS, FREE TO GO. THE RECORD HAS BEEN WIPED AWAY. IF YOU WANT A TECHNICAL DEFINITION, I WOULD GIVE IT TO YOU THIS WAY: JUSTIFICATION IS THAT DIVINE MIRACLE WHEREBY GOD DECLARES RIGHTEOUS THE SINNER WHO BELIEVES IN JESUS.

II. THE MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION.

IN ORDER TO GIVE YOU THE MEANS OF JUSTIFICATION, I WANT TO READ SOME WELL-KNOWN VERSES. IF YOU GO BACK AND READ THE BIBLE, YOU'LL DISCOVER THAT THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION IS FOUND THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT. THERE ARE MANY PLACES WHERE YOU FIND IT, BUT THERE IS NO PLACE LAID OUT SO CLEARLY AS IN ROMANS CHAPTER 3. HOW, THEN, CAN YOU BE JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD?

A. JUSTIFICATION IS BY THE GRACE OF GOD.

ROMANS 3:24 SAYS, “AND ARE JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE.” JUSTIFICATION STARTS WITH THE GRACE OF GOD. IT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT YOU HAVE TO WORK UP. IT IS NOT SOMETHING YOU DO THROUGH YOUR EFFORT. YOU ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD BY COMING TO CHURCH OR BEING BAPTIZED OR GIVING MONEY. THOSE THINGS COUNT FOR NOTHING AT ALL WHEN IT COMES TO JUSTIFICATION.

B. JUSTIFICATION IS THROUGH FAITH.

READ ON IN ROMANS 3, “THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT CAME BY CHRIST JESUS. GOD PRESENTED HIM AS A SACRIFICE OF ATONEMENT, THROUGH FAITH.”

C. JUSTIFICATION IS ALWAYS ON THE BASIS OF THE DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.

“THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD.” JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS AND SHED HIS BLOOD. HE WAS BURIED AND HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD SO THAT THROUGH THE EFFECTS OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST YOU COULD BE JUSTIFIED OR DECLARED RIGHTEOUS IN THE EYES OF GOD.

D. JUSTIFICATION IS WHOLLY APART FROM ALL HUMAN EFFORT.

READ ROMANS 3:28, “FOR WE MAINTAIN THAT A MAN IS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH APART FROM OBSERVING THE LAW.” THE LAW HERE IS THE OLD TESTAMENT. THE LAW IS THE LAW OF MOSES, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. WHAT GOD IS TELLING US IN THIS PASSAGE IS THAT YOU AREN’T GOING TO BE JUSTIFIED BY ANYTHING GOOD THAT YOU DO, NO MATTER HOW GOOD YOU ARE, AND THE REASON IS THAT NOBODY HAS EVER BEEN GOOD ENOUGH TO BE JUSTIFIED. DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY SINS IT TAKES TO SEND YOU TO

HELL? ONLY ONE. IF YOU COMMIT JUST ONE SIN AND THEN ARE RIGHTEOUS FOR THE REST OF YOUR DAYS, THAT ONE SIN IS ENOUGH TO SEND YOU TO HELL FOREVER. SO IF GOD IS GOING TO JUSTIFY YOU, IT HAS TO BE APART FROM THE LAW, APART FROM COMING TO CHURCH, OR MAKING ANY HUMAN EFFORT WHATSOEVER.

IF YOU HAVE NOT MEMORIZED ROMANS 4:5, THIS IS A VERSE EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW BY MEMORY. IT READS, "HOWEVER, TO THE MAN WHO DOES NOT WORK (DOESN'T COME TO CHURCH, HASN'T BEEN BAPTIZED, FORGETS TO BRING HIS TITHE ON SUNDAY MORNING, DISOBEYS IN MANY WAYS) BUT TRUSTS GOD WHO JUSTIFIES THE WICKED, HIS FAITH IS CREDITED AS RIGHTEOUSNESS." NOTICE THE SHOCK IS ALWAYS IN THE FIRST PART OF THE VERSE. IT IS NOT TO THE MAN WHO WORKS, NOT TO THE RELIGIOUS MAN, NOT TO THE CHURCH MEMBER, BUT TO THE MAN WHO TRUSTS GOD WHO JUSTIFIES THE WICKED. THIS, MY FRIENDS, IS THE HEART OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY, THAT OUR GOD JUSTIFIES THE WICKED. I THINK THE THING THAT KEEPS SO MANY PEOPLE FROM COMING TO CHRIST IS THEY FEEL THEY AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH. THEY FEEL THEY ARE TOO LOST IN SIN. THEY FEEL AS IF THEY ARE LOST IN SEXUAL SIN, LOST IN ADDICTION TO ALCOHOL AND DRUGS, TO ANGER OR BITTERNESS, LOST IN A TERRIBLE, DESTRUCTIVE WAY OF LIFE. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO SAY, "YOU DON'T KNOW HOW I HAVE BEEN LIVING." NO, I DON'T, BUT LET ME TELL YOU THIS: OUR GOD IS NOT IN THE BUSINESS OF JUSTIFYING THE GOOD. HE IS IN THE BUSINESS OF JUSTIFYING THE BAD. HE DOESN'T JUSTIFY THE RIGHTEOUS. HE JUSTIFIES THE WICKED, BECAUSE THAT IS THE ONLY CATEGORY OF PEOPLE GOD HAS ON EARTH TO DEAL WITH. HE JUSTIFIES THE WICKED WHILE THEY ARE STILL WICKED. HE JUSTIFIES THE SINNER WHILE HE IS STILL A SINNER. WHAT I AM SAYING IS GOD NEVER SAID TO ANYBODY, "CLEAN UP YOUR ACT AND THEN I'LL SAVE YOU. GET YOURSELF IN A BETTER SHAPE AND THEN I'LL FORGIVE YOUR SINS." NO, NO, NO! MAYBE WE IN THE CHURCH HAVE SAID THAT. MAYBE IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

WE HAVE UNCONSCIOUSLY SAID THAT TO LOST PEOPLE. MAYBE WE HAVE TOLD THEM THEY ARE TOO DIRTY, BUT IF THEY WOULD GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER, WE COULD GET THEM TOGETHER WITH GOD. BUT GOD NEVER SAID THAT. GOD SAYS, "TURN FROM YOU WICKED WAYS, RUN TO THE CROSS, EMBRACE JESUS CHRIST AND YOU WILL BE JUSTIFIED EVEN WHILE YOU ARE STILL IN A WICKED STATE."

A FEW MONTHS AGO WE HAD THE CASE OF JEFFREY DOMMER, WHEN HE WAS KILLED UP THERE IN THAT PRISON. PEOPLE ASK IF I THINK HE IS IN HEAVEN. I DON'T KNOW THE GENUINENESS OF HIS HEART. THAT IS BETWEEN HIM AND GOD. BUT HE IS A REALLY GOOD EXAMPLE FOR US TO TEST OUR DOCTRINE ON BECAUSE WHEN WE LOOK AT A GUY LIKE THAT, MOST OF US SECRETLY SAY, "IF HE'S GOING TO HEAVEN, I DON'T WANT TO BE THERE. I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT GOD LETTING A MAN LIKE THAT INTO HEAVEN." IF OUR EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION MEANS ANYTHING, IT MEANS THAT GOD JUSTIFIES SERIAL KILLERS WHILE THEY ARE STILL GUILTY OF THEIR SIN. IF THERE IS NO HOPE FOR JEFFREY DOMMER, THERE IS NO HOPE FOR YOU AND ME.

1. JUSTIFICATION IS A DIVINE MIRACLE OF GOD. IT STARTS WITH GOD. IT IS NOT SOMETHING YOU WORK UP. IF YOU ARE JUSTIFIED, IT IS BECAUSE YOU HAVE RECEIVED A MIRACLE FROM GOD.

2. JUSTIFICATION IS NOT AN EXPERIENCE. IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU FEEL JUSTIFIED OR NOT. JUSTIFICATION HAPPENS TO THE BELIEVER AT THE MOMENT YOU TRUST JESUS CHRIST. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS SOMEBODY WHO IS PARTLY JUSTIFIED OR HALF-WAY JUSTIFIED. THERE IS NO ONE MORE JUSTIFIED THAN SOMEONE ELSE. JUSTIFICATION HAPPENS TO EVERY BELIEVER AT THE MOMENT OF SALVATION.

3. JUSTIFICATION MEANS YOUR SALVATION MUST BE ETERNALLY SECURE BECAUSE IT DOES NOT REST ON YOU,

BUT WHOLLY ON GOD AND HIS WORK ON YOUR BEHALF.

III. THE EFFECTS OF JUSTIFICATION.

A. IF YOU ARE JUSTIFIED, YOU ARE COMPLETELY FORGIVEN.

B. IF YOU ARE JUSTIFIED, YOU HAVE A NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS. THAT IS WHAT II CORINTHIANS 5:21 IS SAYING, "GOD HAS MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US WHO KNEW NO SIN, THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM." LET ME SEE IF I CAN EXPLAIN THIS SOMEHOW. LET ONE OF MY FISTS REPRESENT YOU IN YOUR SINFUL STATE. THAT IS THE STATE OF EVERY MAN AND EVERY WOMAN. A FIST, BLACKENED WITH SIN, RAISED TOWARD GOD. WHAT HAPPENS THE MOMENT THE SINNER COMES TO JESUS CHRIST? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE SINNER SAYS, "OH LORD JESUS, I BELIEVE YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD. I ASK YOU TO COME INTO MY LIFE AND SAVE ME?" AT THAT VERY MOMENT GOD JUSTIFIES YOU. HE DECLARES YOU RIGHTEOUS. THEN HE TAKES THE PERFECT AND PURE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST AND HE COVERS YOUR SIN SO THAT WHEN GOD LOOKS DOWN FROM HEAVEN HE DOESN'T SEE THE BLACKNESS OF YOUR SIN ANYMORE. ALL HE SEES IS THE PURITY OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS SON. YOUR SIN IS COVERED AND IT IS GONE FOREVER. ALL THAT GOD CAN SEE WHEN HE LOOKS AT YOU IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST.

C. YOU ARE DECLARED NOT GUILTY AND YOU CAN NEVER BE CONDEMNED. "THERE IS THEREFORE NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THOSE WHO ARE IN JESUS CHRIST." YOU CAN NEVER BE CONDEMNED BY GOD. YOU CAN NEVER BE CONDEMNED BY SATAN OR ANYBODY ELSE, INCLUDING YOURSELF. WHAT DOES ROMANS 8 SAY? "WHO SHALL BRING ANY CHARGE AGAINST GOD'S ELECT? IT IS GOD WHO JUSTIFIES. WHO SHALL CONDEMN US? IT IS JESUS

CHRIST WHO DIED, YEA WHO ROSE FROM THE DEAD AND IS NOW SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD MAKING INTERCESSION FOR US.” CAN THE DEVIL CONDEMN US? NO. CAN OUR FRIENDS CONDEMN US? NO. CAN OUR ENEMIES CONDEMN US? NO. CAN THE DEMONS CONDEMN US? NO. WILL GOD CONDEMN US? NO, HE WON’T. WILL JESUS CONDEMN US? NO, HE WON’T. HE DIED AND ROSE AGAIN FOR US. CAN WE CONDEMN OURSELVES? WE CAN TRY, BUT WE CAN’T EVEN CONDEMN OURSELVES, BECAUSE THROUGH JUSTIFICATION YOU HAVE A STANDING THAT IS ETERNALLY SECURE IN THE EYES OF ALMIGHTY GOD. GOD IS NOT CONFUSED BY YOUR CONFUSION. HE IS NOT BOTHERED BY THE FACT THAT YOU DO NOT EVEN UNDERSTAND THIS COMPLETELY. GOD SAYS HE WILL NOT CONDEMN YOU, AND HE WON’T. THAT IS THE GREAT IMPLICATION OF JUSTIFICATION.

THIS WEEK JOHN TAHL PASSED ALONG AN ILLUSTRATION OF JUSTIFICATION FROM WARREN WIERSBE, FROM ONE OF HIS BOOKS IN WHICH HE SAID HE GOT IT FROM DR. ROY GUSTAVSON, WORKING WITH THE BILLY GRAHAM ASSOCIATION. THE STORY GOES THAT THERE WAS A MAN IN ENGLAND WHO HAD PURCHASED A ROLLS ROYCE. THE MAN DECIDED TO TAKE A HOLIDAY IN EUROPE AND HE WANTED TO TAKE HIS ROLLS ROYCE WITH HIM TO TOUR THROUGH THE FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE. SO HE PUT THE ROLLS ROYCE ON THE FERRY AND WENT ACROSS THE ENGLISH CHANNEL. HE WAS GOING THROUGH EUROPE, LOOKING AT THE SIGHTS, WHEN SUDDENLY HIS ROLLS ROYCE BROKE DOWN AND THERE WAS NOBODY THERE WHO COULD FIX IT. HE SENT A CABLE BACK TO THE COMPANY IN ENGLAND AND THEY FLEW A MAN OVER WHO DID THE REPAIRS. HE GOT THE CAR RUNNING AGAIN, THEN LEFT AND WENT BACK TO ENGLAND. THE MAN THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, “THIS IS GOING TO COST ME A TON OF MONEY.” THEY NEVER SENT A BILL. WHEN HE FINALLY GOT BACK TO ENGLAND, NEVER HAVING RECEIVED A BILL, HE SENT A LETTER TO THE COMPANY TELLING WHAT HAD HAPPENED, HOW THE MECHANIC HAD COME OVER, AND WONDERING WHAT THE CHARGE WOULD BE. HE GOT A

LETTER BACK FROM THE ROLLS ROYCE COMPANY, SAYING AS FOLLOWS, "DEAR SIR, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR LETTER. YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE NO RECORD IN OUR FILES THAT ANY ROLLS ROYCE HAS EVER BROKEN DOWN AT ANY PLACE, AT ANY TIME, FOR ANY REASON." BROTHERS AND SISTERS, THAT'S WHAT JUSTIFICATION IS ALL ABOUT. YOU MAY FAIL, YOU MAY BREAK DOWN AND RUN YOURSELF INTO A DITCH, BUT GOD ALMIGHTY LOOKS DOWN AT YOU AND SAYS, "THERE IS NO RECORD THAT MY CHILD HAS EVER BROKEN DOWN AT ALL." THAT'S WHAT JUSTIFICATION IS. IT IS JUST AS IF YOU HAD NEVER SINNED AT ALL. THE RECORD IS WIPED AWAY AND YOU ARE CREDITED WITH THE PERFECT, ETERNALLY SECURE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

NO WONDER THIS IS A CENTRAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. NO WONDER MARTIN LUTHER SAID THIS IS THE CORNERSTONE OF CHRISTIANITY. NO WONDER THIS WAS THE FLAME THAT WENT AROUND THE WORLD, BECAUSE IT IS THE HEART OF ALL THAT WE BELIEVE. I THINK THAT YOU COULD ARGUE THAT JUSTIFICATION IS THE GREATEST MIRACLE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH, GREATER EVEN THAN THE NEW BIRTH ITSELF, BECAUSE THIS IS THE MIRACLE WHEREBY GOD DECLARES RIGHTEOUS A WICKED SINNER, WHILE HE IS STILL LOST IN HIS SIN. IT IS ALSO, THEN, THE ANSWER TO JOB'S QUESTION, "HOW CAN A MAN BE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD?" THERE IS AN ANSWER, AND THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER. YOU CAN BE RIGHT WITH GOD THROUGH FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WHO PAID IT ALL FOR YOU.

I CLOSE WITH THIS QUESTION: HAVE YOU EVER BEEN JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, OR ARE YOU STILL TRYING TO JUSTIFY YOURSELF THROUGH RELIGION, THROUGH BAPTISM, THROUGH GOOD WORKS, THROUGH TRYING TO DO THE BEST YOU CAN, THROUGH TRYING TO OBEY THE TEN COMMANDMENTS? OH, MY FRIEND, RUN TO THE CROSS, LAY HOLD OF JESUS CHRIST, GRAB ONTO HIM AND LET HIM TAKE YOU ALL THE WAY TO HEAVEN. TURN FROM YOUR SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

AND SELF EFFORT AND GRAB ONTO JESUS. YOU WILL NEVER REGRET IT. NOT IN THIS LIFE AND NOT IN THE LIFE TO COME. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN JUSTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST WHO PAID IT ALL FOR YOU? I BID YOU AND URGE YOU IN JESUS' NAME, OPEN YOUR HEART, PUT YOUR FAITH IN HIM AND FIND OUT THE TRUTH THAT IN THIS MOMENT, HERE AND NOW, JESUS CHRIST WILL SAVE YOU. HE WILL FORGIVE YOU. YOU WILL BE JUSTIFIED BOTH NOW AND FOREVER MORE. GOD HELP YOU TO DO IT. AMEN.