

# Justification is STILL Good News

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please be seated. It's good to be with you all again today. My name is Jonathan. I've been with you all the last three weeks.

This is our fourth week. We've been looking at the topic of evangelism, and we're really, I'm pleased that you're here. I'm thankful that you're here. If this is your first time, welcome to Cheyenne Mountain Prez. We are really glad that you are here, and we hope that you'll come back or that you'll meet somebody new.

I would love to interact with you, especially afterwards, if you have thoughts or questions. Please come up and introduce yourself. That's one of my favorite parts about this is getting to talk to people who are exploring church again or for the first time, and so we're really glad that you are here.

As a personal, before we get started, as a personal word, thank you all so much for your hospitality the last four weeks as I've been up here in a lot of ways experimenting, putting down things that I've been applying on the college campus for the last seven years, eight years, and been beginning to think about how would we systemize what I've been exploring, and so in a lot of ways, you are my guinea pigs for things that I've seen work and on a college campus, but begin to actually train and teach others in it.

It's been really, really, really helpful and encouraging to me, and I hope it's been encouraging to you. If you have had thoughts or questions or would like to refresh, someone asked me to remind you all that everything that we've done the last three weeks is on YouTube, so you can go to the Shine Mountain YouTube channel and re-watch them.

[ 1 : 33 ] Also, you can find me. I've told you before, I hope you know, that I care so deeply about evangelism. It's one of my, it's what gets me out of bed in the morning. So my, you can look up RUF Jonathan Clark.

You can find my email address. You can get it from anyone on the session or from Pastor Matthew. Don't reach out to him right now. Let him rest. But I'd love to think more with you when you come up afterwards and say, what do I think about this situation or how do I do this particular case?

I love that. And so please keep those questions going. I also encourage you to stick around and listen to David. David and I were in seminary together, which is really a treat.

So I'm thrilled to, I haven't seen him since seminary, but it's really a treat to have him here with us today and to hear about his ministry. So stick around for that. I was reflecting, it's amazing that David's doing ministry in India and knew him in seminary.

Matthew and I were roommates in seminary and here we all are trying to follow Jesus and welcome others into that as well. We are looking at a passage in Romans today.

[ 2 : 36 ] I know that Matthew has been preaching through the book of Romans. So you've heard this passage preached to you recently in the last few months and I am aware of that and I still chose that we need to do it because it is, as we looked at our confession today, it's about justification.

And this is the most, I mean, as Andy said, the without which nothing of our faith. And if we cannot communicate this in evangelism, then what are we doing?

What are we doing? And so this is, we will be looking at a famous passage again. Again, you've heard this before, but I promise that you have not heard it the way I'm gonna talk about it today. So stick with me as we do it.

So if you have a Bible, turn to Romans chapter three or you have it printed in your bulletin and I will read it and then we will look at it. So this is Romans chapter three, we're starting in verse nine.

What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all both Jews and Greeks are under sin. As it is written, none is righteous.

[ 3 : 36 ] 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 and 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.

The way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Verse 19. Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now 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.

[ 4 : 57 ] This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he has 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.

This is God's word. Would you pray with me? Lord, as we look one more time at your word and consider how to speak it persuasively and gently and yet with courage and truth to our friends, would you do it to us first?

Would the gospel shine into our hearts? Would you illuminate our minds and our hearts to receive the good news of justification by faith alone? And would you give us the words and the wisdom and the courage to take that with compassion and bravery to our friends and neighbors for your glory and for our good.

It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Okay, so I'm going to start off by telling two different stories, describing two different people for you. The first person I want you to picture is a person who lives in the year 1519.

1519. And this person is a highly religious person. This person has taken a vow to devote their whole life to serving God and to obeying God.

[ 6 : 18 ] And he is so religious, so committed to God's law that he would beat himself up whenever he failed. If there was a moment where he realized that he had lapsed in his obedience to God's law, he would beat himself with a whip or with a stick.

And he was so zealous that his spiritual mentors would regularly tell him, hey, ease up on yourself, all right? Don't go so hard on yourself, right? You're going a little hard on this spirituality thing.

And yet as hard as this person worked, his conscience still plagued him. He had this deep, deep sense of I am wicked.

There is something wrong with me. There is a black spot in my being, in my heart that I cannot get rid of. And he had this nagging feeling that I am a wretched sinner before God.

And no matter how hard I try, it is not enough. This person wrote in his spiritual biography, he said, though I lived as a monk without reproach, a monk, a man who has taken vows of holy living, a monk above reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience.

[ 7 : 32 ] I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I raged with a fierce and troubled conscience. That's this person.

This is a person who is acutely aware of the demands of God's law for his life and painfully aware of his own sin, knowing that he deserved punishment, God's wrath for his sin.

And sometime in 1517, 1519, Martin Luther realized the good news of the gospel of justification by faith alone in Christ alone.

That God had imputed, that had injected or placed onto his account righteousness from outside of him, that it was not by his works, but simply by trusting in Jesus Christ.

And that good news, that gospel became to him a source of relief and of hope and of salvation. And he was transformed with joy and peace and hope.

[ 8 : 36 ] And he starts the air, he's the air of the tradition that we are now in today, the Protestant Reformation. That's the first person in 1519, 1517.

Second person I want you to picture. I had this conversation, this very conversation this last week. It's a college student. She attends UCCS. She grew up with a very vague understanding of Christianity, did not grow up in a Christian environment, knows the very bare minimum about Christianity, has a limited view.

Essentially, her view of faith is that God is out there. He's out there. And he punishes bad people. And he wants us to live a good life.

But basically, God is loving. That's Christianity. God is out there. He punishes bad people. He wants us to live a holy life. And I'll do my best. And I was talking with her this last week, describing to her the basics of the Christian life.

And I was describing, I said, God condemns all sinners to eternal punishment, but offers salvation to anyone who just trusts in Jesus. All you do is trust in who Jesus is and what he has done for you. [ 9 : 48 ] Isn't that good news? And she goes, okay. Okay, so what? Okay, so what? And right there, friends, is the urgency, the urgency of evangelism in 2025.

Because right there, we see revealed to us something seismic has happened in our world to where one man, Martin Luther, feels this dreadful sense of his own guilt, his own spiritual demise, that he stands before a holy, wrathful, judging God, and he knows his own deficiency and his own sin. And the college student in 2025 who just says, okay, so what? So what? I don't see the urgency of this.

And what I hope to do today is to try to remember together how justification by faith alone remains the heart and the goodness of the Christian gospel.

And most importantly, how do we tell our friends that? How do we tell our friends, how do we tell our neighbors that that is true in what we could call, what we will call, a secular age?

[ 11 : 10 ] And I'll describe that in a minute. So how do we communicate to a secular person that justification still is good news? That's our task today.

The way we will do it is we'll look at this in three ways. First, why is justification hard to communicate in 2025? Why is it hard? Second, why does it still matter? How does it still matter? And third, how do we do it? How do we do it with our friends and neighbors? So let's look at this.

The first thing I want us to consider is why is justification hard in 2025?

One of the background assumptions, and I said this the day, the first day that we started looking at the topic of evangelism the last few weeks, is that one of the background assumptions is that something seismic has happened in our world, in our culture, in the lives and hearts of your friends that do not know Jesus that has made evangelism really hard.

Evangelism has always been hard. But something has shifted in the last 500 years, in the last however you want to date it, to where Martin Luther feels, the average person says, how am I made at peace with God?

[ 12 : 17 ] How do I live at peace with God to today where it is just not a pressing urgent need in most people's minds? They just don't care. They don't feel the need of it. Scholars have called this shift secularism.

Secularism. Actually, Cheyenne Mountain is going to be hosting a seminar in a couple of weeks on ministering and secularism for chaplains at the academy, I mean, at the fort, which I'm thrilled by that y'all are, you know, that they're continuing to think through this because this is easily the most urgent missionary need in our world today.

Secularism. Now, here's what it is. For our main purposes, our main point here, we could go on for a long time about this. It's this, that most people do not have categories, do not have categories for the basic movements for the progression of the Christian faith.

Concepts such as sin and righteousness and faith and grace. They just don't have categories for it. They do not, the average non-Christian college student, the average person who grew up secular, doesn't understand what those are.

And even if they have grown up in the Christian faith and have either moved away or openly rejected it, they don't feel a sense of urgency. In fact, I would wager that if you're a non-Christian here and you're considering Christianity and you stumbled into the church, you're like, I don't frankly know why I'm here.

[ 13 : 37 ] I could be doing a whole lot of other things on my Sunday morning rather than coming to this place and spending two hours here. Categories of the Christian faith don't feel urgent in our world.

And here's the problem. When we do evangelism, depending on or hinging on the historic Protestant message of justification by faith alone, the way that we have historically understood and done it, we are solving a problem, A, that most people don't see as a problem, and B, with a solution that most people don't really feel is helpful.

When we offer justification by faith alone, the way that you and I often intuitively think through it, we are solving a problem that most people don't really think is a problem with a solution that doesn't feel helpful.

Does that make sense? So think of it this way. If you were to have a flat tire, you're driving down the road and you feel that you have a flat tire in your car and it's in the middle of a blizzard and some guy pulls up to you to help you and you say, oh, thank heaven, and he offers you a pet snake and a protein shake, you would say, uh, not what I need right now.

Not what I need right now. that's what happens when we offer the gospel to our friends in a secular age.

[14:59] They go, okay, so what? So what? I don't understand. Prior to secularism, for hundreds of years, human beings felt like Martin Luther, where there was a pressing need to be reconciled to God.

They knew that God was really involved in the human life and that he was holy and they were not and they sensed that and they said, we must be reconciled with our God. There is this thing called sin and it is a gap between me and God's holiness.

And evangelism during this season was basically persuading people of things that they already knew were true and they accepted. It was persuading people to believe what they culturally knew and today, all of those categories are gone.

Does that make sense? Do you see what the problem is? Often the gospel feels like superfluous news for a non-existent problem. It is superfluous news for a problem that people don't feel.

Justification by faith alone, that is God reconciling to us, simply by us trusting in Jesus, it feels unnecessary. It feels not urgent to most of our friends.

[16:13] Now, how do we share the gospel in that world? How do we make it urgent again? How do we make it relevant again? How do we evangelize in this?

Well, I hope to show you. But that's the first point. And that's why, often, when you share your faith or as you think through it, it falls on deaf ears.

People think, I don't see the urgency for this. So let's look at part two. Why does justification matter still? Or how is it still relevant? And this is where things get tricky and this is where things get really exciting.

This is where I come alive because this is where, because we can actually begin to communicate to our friends that it is relevant. But it takes a little extra steps. It takes some work. And here's the first thing that we must do.

The first thing that we must do is pay attention to the felt needs of our friends. Watch our friends, watch our neighbors, watch our family members, and just put up your spiritual radar and pay attention to their felt needs.

[17:17] What are they aware of? Where do they feel a gap in their lives? We talked about this when we looked at Revelation 21, where most people are asking, remember what I asked?

Does the story end happy? Does it have a happy ending? People are asking that question. Does it have a happy ending? There's this sense of, I need a happy ending in my life or my story.

Where are the gaps in our friends' lives? If they don't have this gap between their lives and God's holiness, where are there those gaps? And I would like to single out two for us.

There's lots of different options, lots of places, but I would like to single out two that I think are particularly common today. Two places where the average non-Christian secular person does feel an incompleteness or a need in their lives.

You with me? Okay, so the first one is shame. The first place is shame. Most people today have an acute sense of personal shame for some reason, from something, and where that can come from, my gosh, there are infinite options.

[18:27] But what that is, is shame is an internal voice that humiliates and denigrates and denies self-worth. Most people have a sense within them that there is something deeply flawed about their deepest self.

And it could come from something that they did, that you did. Perhaps this is you. As soon as I bring up the word shame, people go, whoo, and they start looking inside and they begin to feel it. Something that you did a long time ago or recently and you feel guilty, dirty, something's wrong within yourself.

It could be something that happened to you, some kind of abuse, something that someone else did to you that made you feel unworthy. Either way, most people are carrying around in their heart a list or an event or a thing that makes them feel deficient, dirty, or unworthy.

And I recently talked with a student who felt like no matter how hard he worked, he would never be enough for his dad. No matter how hard he tried, no matter how hard he worked and his grades and all that, that his dad would never value him.

And he felt tremendous shame about this. Now notice, he feels no need for God in his life. He feels no urgency to have peace with God, but he does feel a lot of shame in his relationship with his dad.

[ 19 : 53 ] We can work with that. Talked with another friend, he's a peer of mine, he's a former soldier. This is particularly relevant for the base, for the Cheyenne Mountain. He felt an incredible amount of shame over things that he did while he was deployed.

He had done things in war, he never told me. He said, how can I possibly breathe another breath after the things I've done?

doesn't feel a sense of wrong before God, just, I'm bad. There's something wrong with me. Now, what is the secular solution our non-Christian world's answer or solution to shame?

For the non-Christian, for the secular, the solution to shame is, hey, you just need to forgive yourself and accept yourself. That's what it boils down to. So, for example, college students will go to the counseling center at the college that I work at and the school counselors, very well-meaning people, will say something like, hey, healing is learning to love yourself and just accept yourself. That's what you need to do. Just learn to accept yourself. Some version of that. Do some deep breathing and some mindfulness exercises and learn to love yourself again.

[ 21 : 08 ] And that's well and good. There's a place for something like that, but it doesn't work. It does not ultimately work and our friends know that because they've tried. They've tried to heal their shame on their own and it doesn't go away and it continues to gnaw and eat at their hearts and they feel, though they feel absolutely no spiritual guilt before God, they feel deep angst within themselves about who am I?

Do I deserve to take up the air that I breathe on this planet? So that's the first felt need that many of our friends have and we can work with that.

Let me tell you. I'll show you in a minute how. Here's the second felt need that many of our friends have. It's the reality, the acknowledgement of injustice or oppression in our world.

Our non-Christian friends will look around their world, they will look around their neighborhood, they'll read the news and they'll say, something is wrong with our world. People with dark skin have it harder than people with light skin.

Women have it harder than men. Something like this. They'll look at something in our world and say, that is unjust. This is oppression and it should be fixed. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and that's not good.

[ 22 : 25 ] Something terrible happens on a social level or on an individual level. If you're a woman under the age of 25, statistically, the chances of you having something tragic happening by a man is almost 100% and they are deeply aware of that injustice.

They are deeply aware of the oppression that happened. A miscarriage of justice or an unreprimanded and unsolved oppression. And again, for the secular person, for the non-Christian, the secular solution to justice is either to have solidarity to create a new group with power who can go fight those bad guys or to just get revenge.

That's what they want. They'll say, well, there's injustice out there so why don't we just raise awareness, create solidarity, create a new group that we can then go fight them to the point of maybe getting even.

And this can take several forms. We can have cancel culture or it can be as simple as gossip and character assassination or it can reach the level of violence to use power.

And the problem with this is it sets up a new power struggle. It sets up a new us versus them. My tribe versus your tribe. And it never actually heals the injustice. It never actually deals with the oppression.

[ 23 : 42 ] It just keeps the spiral going. You see that? Okay, now, I want to zoom out. Justification is not important to our non-Christian friends. They don't care about it.

They don't feel a need for it. But shame and injustice are highly important. They are deeply aware of those things in their lives. And so what we need to do is pay attention to the felt needs, to the things they do care about in our friends.

And then, here's the next move. Pay attention here. The next move is to show them that Christianity offers a better explanation of what went wrong and a better solution of how to fix it.

It's to show our friends that Christianity offers a better explanation of what's wrong and a better solution of how to fix it. What we need to show them is that their diagnosis of what is wrong in their lives and in their world does not go deep enough.

A few months ago, I had a friend who had a car. His car was, well, he still has a car. He was having some car trouble. He's driving his car down the road and he starts to feel the gunk, gunk, gunk, gunk, gunk, gunk, the wump, wump, wump, you know, and he starts tinkering with it.

[ 24 : 53 ] He's not a mechanic nor the son of a mechanic. And he thought, well, maybe the air pressure's low. And so he puts some air in his tires. And then he tries driving again and all the tires are perfectly inflated and he still feels the gunk, gunk, gunk, gunk as he's driving down the road.

And he takes it into the mechanic and the mechanic says, no, it's not your air pressure. Your CV joints are off. Something deeper is wrong. And my friend thought he knew what was wrong. He thought he understood what was wrong, but his solution didn't go deep enough. It didn't go deep enough to what was wrong. And the same is true with our non-Christian friends. They know something's wrong, but their diagnosis can't go deep enough.

We get to show them that Christianity explains the deep level brokenness of the world. And that's where Romans 3 comes in.

That's where Romans 3 comes in. Verses 9 through 10, or verses, well, it's 9 through 18 in a lot of ways. We have already charged that all, in this context, Paul means every person who takes up oxygen on God's green earth.

[ 26 : 06 ] All are under sin. As it is written, none is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. They have all turned aside.

Together, they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. No one is righteous. The word righteous, of course, is a crucial phrase in the book of Romans and in the Bible, in the Christian faith, because it means spiritually accepted before God.

When it says no one is righteous, it means that no human being has right standing before and in the presence of God. There's a genre of TV shows that are particularly popular, well, they have been for a while.

Shows like Breaking Bad, a new one just came out called American Primeval. It's on Netflix. Cannot recommend it. It's brutal. Breaking Bad is another one. Yellowstone is one.

Ozark. These shows that come out, and the thing about these shows is that everybody's a bad guy. Everybody's a bad guy. You know, there are shows where there's good versus evil. We love these kinds of shows.

[ 27 : 11 ] But what these shows do, things like Breaking Bad, is it basically creates a set of characters who are all bad guys and lets them loose and just lets them go do their thing.

And there's no good guys. And I think we love to, they're very popular shows. We love to watch them because we like to imagine the reality that it's out there, but not actually here. But the terrifying reality of those shows is when you really encounter them, when you actually really sit with it, you go, oh man, that might actually be true, which then implicates me.

It implicates all of us. There's no good guys. Verse 15, they are swift to shed blood. These shows will create characters who are all selfish, all willing to sacrifice others for their own good.

And they're deeply unnerving because we are faced with the possibility that no one is a good guy. Everybody's a bad guy. And Paul tells us that those shows are actually reality, spiritually.

He's talking about what we call natural humans, natural man. And he says, natural man, separated from Christ, without God doing something, restraining or saving in our world, in our hearts, we would only deteriorate into worse and worse, selfishness, sin, rejection of God, and harm of man.

[ 28 : 39 ] No one natural man that seeks God. No one does what is good. And in evangelism, what we need to say is say, yes, you are on to something with shame and injustice.

But your explanation can't go deep enough. You're looking at tire pressure when there's a CV joint problem under the hood. And the doctrine of sin that the Christian faith offers cuts underneath it and offers a problem that is deeper, that's more systemic, that explains what's broken in my life and in our world far more accurately, far better than shame or injustice or anything else.

Let me try to show you how. For shame, shame says, sin says that there actually is something wrong with me. You know, the great fear of shame is that there's something actually wrong with me, so bad that I cannot just accept myself.

The secular counselor just says, well, just accept yourself. And you say, I can't. There might be something wrong with me. What does sin say? Your worst fears are more true than you ever thought. There actually is something wrong with you.

There actually is something deeply, deeply wrong with you. You actually ought to be ashamed on a level. There's godly shame. I am right to feel it because I am guilty.

[ 30 : 05 ] What about for injustice? Sin says, yes, there actually is something dreadfully wrong with our world. Yes, there actually is oppression, but it's all of us.

What it says, their feet are swift to shed blood and their paths are ruin and misery. And what it does is it implicates all of us. What does he say later on?

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Rather than what injustice systems of our secular world would do, which would create a good guy and a bad guy and us versus them where we just fight it out.

It says, no, everybody's broken. We're all in this reality show of broken characters together, fighting it out together, fighting out against each other. That explains the world better.

Our world is not an us versus them problem. It's an all of us are part of the problem. And sin explains the problems that your non-Christians have more realistically with a better solution than what they're trying to explain it with.

[ 31 : 03 ] And we must show our friends that their answers and their explanations that are wrong with the world don't go deep enough. Only sin, only total depravity actually gets to the root of what's wrong.

And so watch for how do they explain what's wrong with our world. If you're not a Christian, I would ask you, how do you? And I would challenge you to say, does it go deep enough?

I don't think it does. Whatever it is. If you want to challenge me on that, I'd love to buy a cup of coffee and listen to hear what you're thinking. I would love to do that.

The last move. The last move is to make justification good news again. To show them that the solution goes deep, as deep, even deeper than the problem.

If sin goes to the very deep, we show them that the gospel goes deeper. verse 21. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

[ 32 : 07 ] The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. The righteousness of God has been manifested, Paul says.

Manifested is the word for uncovered or revealed or exposed. What he is saying here is that in contrast with the unrighteousness of man, we have God's righteousness coming down and uncovering, exposing, punching down into our world to do something, to fix the sin problem, to deal with it.

The righteousness of God is God's perfection coming to make us perfect. It is God offering us righteousness, which is what? A perfectly right relationship with God.

It's God beauty coming into our lives to make us beautiful. It's God's light invading our darkness and shining forth. It's God's antidote to the poison that lies at the heart of every person.

It's God's love burning away all our love, our unlove and all our hate. It's God's righteousness giving us God's capacity to follow him again.

[ 33 : 19 ] That is what it is. Now how does this happen? How does God make us righteous? Verse 22, it's through faith. It's by trusting simply and only in who Jesus is and what he has done.

This means that God makes us righteous or he gives us standing before him the minute that we trust in him. We trust in what he has done. Verse 23, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified.

English fails here, but it says and are made righteous. and are made righteous by his grace as a gift. So in this broken world of shame and injustice and sin, God comes in and as a free undeserved gift makes sinners righteous.

How? Through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood. As a propitiation by his blood.

Paul tells us that God is the one who restores our standing before him and the tool, the instrument that he uses is Jesus and he tells us that Jesus is the propitiation. That word means wrath deflection.

[ 34 : 35 ] If God's wrath is hurtling, zooming towards us and we deserve it, Christ comes and stands in our way and deflects God's wrath off of us and onto himself.

And the moment we trust that, that becomes spiritually true of us. We said it today that it's an act of God's free grace. The moment we trust it is true that we are justified.

Now, this is where it gets fun in evangelism. Pay attention here. Justification by faith alone in Christ solves both the felt need and the deeper spiritual need of every person and of the non-Christian.

It solves the felt need and the deepest spiritual need. And when we begin to solve the felt need, the thing that they are aware of, it becomes good news again. It becomes something that they want and they desire.

Remember, how does this happen? Remember that most of our friends feel an overwhelming sense of shame. What does justification do? What does justification mean? It means that God imputes to us, injects into us an alien righteousness, that was Martin Luther's term for it, righteousness that comes from outside our world, outside of us, and injects it into us.

[ 35 : 52 ] What does that mean? It means that he cleans us, he washes us, anything that could or would make us dirty, shameful, the thing that we say, what if it's actually true and sin says it actually is true?

Justification says, and it's gone. It's placed on Christ. You are justified. The secular counselor just says, accept yourself and it doesn't work.

It does not work. But the gospel says the most judging person in the universe has judged you and he loves you now because of your faith in Jesus. He accepts you. That has the power to deal with shame.

Do you see that? That has the power to deal with shame. Now what about injustice? If sin makes injustice and oppression a human problem and implicates all of us, we are all oppressors.

We are no longer into just an us-them system but what does it say? Justification says that God is our propitiation through Christ. He is the one who bears our wrath.

[ 36 : 55 ] Rather than injustice, we say, well, let's just go judge them. Let's bring our wrath down on them. But then sin says, no, you're part of the problem too. You deserve wrath too. But what is Christ?

He is the one who bears the wrath that we deserve. He is the one who takes the injustice of sin onto himself. He was canceled.

He was killed. He was judged. He was obliterated in the place of mankind and it solves the felt need of the person looking to solve injustice with the perfect justice of Christ.

26, to show that his righteousness at the present time that he might be what? Both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. You see what it does?

You see what justification does? Our goal is to show our friends that justification offers a better solution to the deeper problem. But the way that we must do it is through what they are aware is the problem.

[ 37 : 55 ] It shows us that our worst fears about ourselves both as individuals and as a human race are more true than we dare to imagine. We are actually bad. And then the gospel shows us that God knows this and he still loves us and he deals with it and he does something to us, for us, and in us through the redemption that comes through Jesus Christ.

God demonstrates his love towards us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. this passage shows us, the gospel shows us that the most loving, the most just, the most wrathful, the most discerning, the most gracious, the most gentle, the most caring person in the universe judges, evaluates, and then accepts, loves, and cherishes me, you, despite your shame, despite your guilt, but based on Jesus' perfection given to us.

And that ministers to our deepest needs and it becomes good news. It becomes something that our friends desire to hear again. It marks us with love.

Really, that's what this passage shows us. It shows us what the whole gospel promises, which is that God loves us a lot. as simple as that. If there's anything you hear from this, it's that God loves

us a lot and he marks us with love.

I just finished reading the first Harry Potter with my daughter. We reach the climax of the Sorcerer's Stone when Professor Quirrell, who's a dark agent of Lord Voldemort, attacks Harry.

[ 39 : 42 ] But when he attacks Harry, he immediately, his skin starts burning. He cannot touch Harry. Why? Well, Professor Dumbledore explains it at the end.

He says, your mother died to save you. There's one thing Voldemort cannot understand it is love.

He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark.

To have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us has gone, will give us some protection forever. It's in your very skin, Dumbledore says.

Quirrell full of hatred, greed, and ambition. Sharing his soul with the dark Lord Voldemort could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good.

And in the world of Harry Potter, Harry's mother died to save him. She sacrificed herself for him.

She bore Voldemort's wrath sacrificially and marked Harry with love to protect him.

[ 40 : 43 ] Her sacrifice saves Harry. J.K. Rowling understands this. She knows that it points us to something far greater, to the one who marked all of us with love.

The minute that he died, he justifies us and it marks you with love so that the minute you believe that, you can say, I am a Christian, one who is justified before my God and there's nothing that you did to receive it, nothing you do to earn it, all you do is receive it by trusting in God.

And apart from God, we are all unrighteousness. That's what this text says. But through Jesus, God comes close with righteousness outside of this universe and all we do is trust.

It's as simple as that and we are marked with his love. This is an ambitious sermon. I know I pushed a lot of you and that's okay. Thank you for staying with me.

What's the point? The point is this. Justification by faith alone is still good news. It will always be good news because it will always solve our deepest problem, which is sin.

[ 41 : 55 ] Our task is to show our friends that the way that we do that is by paying attention to what they are aware of that they need and then to show them that their solution isn't deep enough, but the gospel solution is far deeper.

When we do that, as we do that, then justification becomes what it was for Martin Luther. It becomes good news and no longer does a person say, okay, so what?

But they say, this is what I need in my life. This is what I've always needed. And you say, let me show you, follow with me the Jesus who justifies the faithful because he loves me and he loves you.

Evangelism is that. That's all we're doing is saying, come follow the one who has marked me with love. He loves you. He's the one who justified you and it's really good news.

Let me pray. Lord in heaven, thanks that the gospel is timeless. Thanks that your grace, despite the coming and going of different cultural moments, is always been and always has been good news.

[ 43 : 12 ] We pray that you would give us wisdom on how to apply that to the people in our lives who need it. We can talk about culture all day long. We can talk about theology all day long.

At the end of the day, we need your spirit to make the gospel sweet to us and to give us wisdom on how to make it sweet to our friends. Give us all that grace and we will give you the glory. It's in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.