

Romans: By Faith

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[0 : 00] Tobin continues this morning with our study of Romans. And today's scripture comes from chapter 3, which you can find in your bulletin.

You can read along as I read. Starting in verse 21. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe. For there is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

This was to demonstrate His righteousness because in the forbearance of God, He passed over the sins previously committed. For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time so that He would be just and the justifier of one who has faith in Jesus.

[1 : 16] Where then is boasting? Is it excluded? Yes, it is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, by a law of faith.

For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the law. Or is God the God of Jews only? He is not the God of Gentiles also?

Yes, of Gentiles also. Since indeed God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith, is one.

Do we then nullify the law through faith? May it never be. On the contrary, we establish the law. This is God's word.

I just realized that I stepped in something squishy outside with our kiddos left behind. So I'll try not to move around too much up here as I, but on my way up I could hear squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak, squeak.

[2 : 29] But he is the justifier and he is the just. If you, we've been on a journey.

We've been going through the book of Romans. We have been basically in this pit. So you're probably glad if this is the first time you're here that you weren't here the last week or the week before that or the week before that.

Because we were just talking about stuff that is uncomfortable to talk about. It's uncomfortable to preach. And it's been very challenging as we look at God's word.

And remember we've said that if we come to God's word and we never get upset, if we hear something that never bothers us, then we're probably not listening.

Or we're probably worshipping a different God than the God of Scripture. And so one of the things we did or we tried to do is we opened up a telephone line and we had people text message questions in.

[3 : 30] And so I wanted to look at one of them that came in and just talk about that. So we've been trying to go on this journey and try to think about what happens. And I don't have a copy of what I have here. It says, Romans 2.6, You said that one day, that on the day of judgment, that we will all be judged according to the nature of our works, good or selfish, bad.

However, last week you said that all of our works are purple, sinful. What did I miss out? Okay, so I know that we caused a lot of tension as we went to God's word last week and we looked at what God's word has said about our hearts.

We used this word, do you remember the word we used? Total depravity, right? We said that total depravity, that the Bible, that Romans says that our hearts and our lives, that we're totally depraved.

And I know that some people had a really hard time. I mean, I've had people dialoguing with me and angry and I'm not that bad and I'm not that good and trying to figure out, what is going on there. But we said total depravity means that we're not as bad as we could be, but that there's not a part of us that isn't tainted by sin.

We do this picture up here and I think we have a slide of it. We tried to illustrate it. And I said that if sin were a color, if sin were the color purple, that all of creation would be tainted purple, that maybe we're not all Barney purple, but that we're all have some parts of us that are purple, right?

[4 : 47] And so we have to realize that. So when we talk about this idea of good works, some of the questions we have to ask is, what is the standard that we are determining what is good? What is good?

I used the illustration last week of Kip, and when he learned how to play the game of life. And he looked at this money, and my kids are really confused about money, and he thought, well, this is money, and can I go take this down to the bank?

And I made a great comment about HSBC. Elaine wasn't here, but I told her about that. And I tried, 15 minutes, I tried to explain to him that this isn't real money. And as a little kid, he has a hard time understanding that.

And the scripture says it in the same way, that's kind of what our good works are like. That we do these good works before the Lord, and we say, well, I'm good. I'm not that bad. I'm not that bad of a person.

But none of these works, none of these good works, are salvation good works. None of these good works are righteousness good works. None of these good works, apart from Christ, make God look at us and go, wow, Tobin's awesome.

[5 : 46] Look at what he just did. None of those things do that. Does that make sense? So we're talking about, when we talk about good works, apart from Christ, there's nothing good that we can do.

I used the illustration last week of going to visit Christina in Austin, and I went to the rose garden at DTS. Remember that? And I confessed before everybody that I sinned, and I stole roses from the garden, because I thought that they'd be dead by the end of the week, and I might as well give them to my wife, my future wife on the weekend, and I cut them, and I took them down to Austin.

When I cut those beautiful flowers, were those flowers alive or dead after I cut them? They're dead.

They look beautiful. They look great, but they're not plugged into a life source, a life-giving source. And Romans says that's the same way that our works, apart from Christ, that's what our works look like with God.

Now, almost inevitably, when I do a talk like this, or I answer a question like this about our motives, and our hearts, and why are we doing these things, you know, because there's this idea of this line of salvation, and we think this idea that faith plus works equals salvation.

[7 : 01] But Romans has been saying that, and the Bible says it, it's faith equals salvation plus works. And so when you look at this type of question, you want to ask, am I talking about the works I had before I became Christian?

Or am I talking about the works that I've done, and God's allowed me to do, after I've come into a relationship with him? I will say that you need to ask yourself continually, what is your heart?

And what's your motive? Almost always after I say that, someone's going to come up to me and say, oh, I just realized I've been serving on a worship team, my motive is terrible, I'm just going to leave the worship team, I'm not going to do that anymore until I get a good motive.

Well, my first reaction is, well, is that what God told you? But my second reaction is, well, what if I said that as a dad, or as a husband? You know, I realized that I've been a terrible husband, because I've only been nice to Christina, because I wanted to get sex from her, and I realized that terrible motives, and so I'm just going to stop being her husband.

I'm just going to stop being her husband, I'm going to go off to an island until I get my heart right, until I figure out how to do that. Is that the right thing to do? No. Scripture says we look at our hearts and our motives, and we need to deal with our motives and what's going on in our life.

[8 : 21] But we don't throw out something that God's called us to do, just because our motives aren't totally pure. I'm sure I probably confused everybody the moment I said sex with my wife.

So, I'll have to apologize to her afterwards. But you've got to look at your heart, and you've got to ask the Lord, one, do I know Christ? And two, as I know Christ, he's given me these gifts to serve.

When I serve, am I doing it to his pleasure and to his joy, or am I doing it for Tobin? Or you? A great way to ask that and answer that question is this.

If you're a Christian, and you're serving, and you're saying, I'm serving for the Lord, how do you react when you get no acknowledgement? How do you react when you've done all these things for God, but no one ever comes up and says, that's a great job, thanks for doing that.

What are your feelings when you don't get that pat on the back for serving God? And if your feelings are angry, frustration, oh man, I can't believe they don't appreciate me.

[9 : 29] I'm going to go to a church where I'm appreciated. And Romans says that probably our motives are not pleasing the Lord. Because we serve, and we use our gifts as an act of love for all that God has done for us.

Does that make sense? I know I'm speaking with a Texas accent, and some of you are looking at me like, what are you saying? But that's what we're saying. So if you've been with us for any length of time, we've talked often about Scripture like this.

That when we look at the Bible, we look at Scripture, we see it divided into categories. We see it into creation, we see it into fall, we see it into redemption, and we see it into restoration throughout all time.

In creation, we come to creation, and we look at the Bible, and we see how things should be. How did God mean for things to be? What are relationships supposed to look like?

What is marriage supposed to look like? What is serving God supposed to look like? We come to fall, and we see what happens when sin enters into our world. We see the purpleness that enters into our life and in our hearts.

[10 : 41] And we understand what's wrong with us. We understand why we do the things that we don't want to do. We come to redemption, and we look at how God fixes that.

And that's all about the cross. That's all about Jesus. Jesus comes in. Jesus fixes it. Jesus is the hero of the story. Right? Maybe one question we should ask ourselves every day we wake up or when we get done from our work, maybe if you have a great spouse or a great friend or a flatmate, maybe you should ask that person, hey, who is the hero of your story today?

Who's the hero Jesus? Or was the hero you? I think often, if I'm honest, the hero of my story throughout my day is me.

And that's what we learn in the fall. And when Christ comes, he redeems us. He makes all things new. And he is the only hero of the story.

And the fourth part is redemption. We look at redemption, and we say, okay, this is where we're, I mean, restoration. This is where we've been redeemed. We're here now. C.S. Lewis says we're in the shadow lands.

[11 : 52] We're in this in-between time. We talk a lot about we're in the now, but not yet. And so you and I are in the now, but not yet. And so the question we have to ask ourselves in restoration is, why does God have us here?

What does he want us to do? What does it look like for us to serve him? To serve him? To be used by him? The story of the Bible is not Old Testament and New Testament.

The story of the Bible is not little stories at all, kind of really neat little stories you tell your kids. But the story of the Bible is one big story. And it's the story of God.

And it's the story of how God is doing an amazing work in his creation. And what we see in Scripture and in our everyday life is that God is taking our stories and is intertwining our stories with his stories.

And if we let him, if we submit to him, if we surrender our lives, if we acknowledge what's going on, that when he does that, something amazing happens. Something amazing happens when he intertwines our story with his story.

[12 : 56] And so that's where we're at in Romans. So far what we've looked at is Paul is coming in the book of Romans. If you take out your passage here, Paul was looked at and so far what he said is creation, fall, and everybody's starting to redeem or try to redeem themselves.

One day I was in China. I was teaching. I taught in China for probably altogether about eight or nine years. And I shared this story of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration.

I shared the story with my students of how God is working even when we don't see him work. And in the middle of the class, a student raised his hand. And he stood up.

And he said this to me and I'll never forget it. He says, if what you say is true, if what you say about God is true, if what you say about the Bible is true, if what you say about me is true, then I need, I need a lot of help.

The student in front of all the other students said, because I realize that I'm broken inside. And so the question I have to ask you is, how can I be made right?

[14 : 17] How can God make me right? And this is where we're at today in the book of Romans. Throughout chapter one, two, and three, Paul has looked at people.

He's looked at the person who is far from God. He's looked at the person who is moral and they do all the right things. He's looked at the person who's religious. He's looked at the Jew. And he's looked at our hearts.

He's looked at our motives. He's looked at all the things we try to do. And he's put all those things under a microscope. And he's allowed us to examine our lives and our motives. And then he comes to this passage today.

And this passage is, I mean, this passage is an amazing passage. A lot of people would say that today Romans 33, 21 through 31 is the heart of the Bible.

Some people would say this is the most important passage in Scripture. That it's the center of the Bible. I mean, up until this point, mankind has been trying to make themselves right.

[15 : 15] We've been trying to fix ourselves. And at this point, Paul comes in and he kind of throws a monkey wrench into everything. And he says, stop. The pathway that you've been going is wrong.

But if you head down that pathway, you're never going to end up in the place that you want to end up. So my desire today, usually what I would say is I want to give you three points and then we're going to end with some questions.

What I want to do today is just basically this. I know it's going to be hard, but I want you to look at your Scripture. And what I want to do is I want to look at the passage. I want to go verse by verse at a couple points in the passage. I want to paraphrase them in Texan language.

And after I paraphrase them in Texan language, I want to bring out some theological terms. There's three or four really important theological terms. Now usually as a pastor, when you say theological terms, people get bored, they tune out, they stop thinking about things and that's just my wife.

Other people are doing that also, right? And so, but I want you to hang in there because I think that we can do this. I think God has something to teach us in this passage.

[16 : 26] So look at Romans chapter three verses 21 through 31 and let's go through it. Look at your passage. Look at your Bible. Look at your PDA. Please don't be playing flappy birds on your PDA.

We have people looking around and they're checking to make sure. Paul says this in verse 21. But now. And what Paul does there is counter historical.

What he's doing is he's switching the map, he's switching the road signs, he's telling every person basically something that they've never heard before because up until this point, everybody has heard all the cultures, all the religions teach that if you want to get to God, you have to do it.

That there's this done box or a do box and in this do box, you just add things into it, do, do, do, do, do. And eventually, if you get enough do's, then you get to God.

And in Romans 21, Paul says, stop. He says, now, apart from the law, and what he means is that we cannot earn it.

[17 : 33] That there's nothing we can do to earn it. There's nothing we can do to say that we're righteous. There's nothing we can do to earn it. There's nothing we can do to be awesome enough to get it into our life. What he's saying here is that righteousness, getting right with God, is apart from the law.

That there's nothing you can do, there's nothing that you can't do. Righteousness is this term. It means, we've talked about it over and over. It's a term about legal standing, and it's a term about relationship standing.

And what Paul says in 21 is, forget what you've been doing, because by now, or but now, the way to God is apart from your works.

It's apart from the law. And if it's apart from your works, and if it's apart from your law, then what you have to understand is that somebody else has to do it. And so the question we have to ask ourselves is, who is going to do it?

Verse 22, he goes, it's a right relationship with God, our creator. That this righteousness is needed by everyone because we're all broken. That this righteousness is available to everyone.

[18 : 36] He says it's by faith. And when we use the word faith, it's a very difficult word for some people sometimes. But faith just means believing God's words and trusting in what he says.

Believing in God's words and trusting in what he says. If you were to come into my house and I took this chair and you were tired and you were going to sit down and I said, hey, go ahead and sit down.

This chair is really comfortable. Go ahead and do it. And you looked at it and you go, oh, that's great. I believe it's good. I believe it will hold me up. And you just kind of look at it. Or maybe you go like this.

Or maybe if you're really daring, you kind of go like this but you keep one foot on the floor. But Paul says faith is believing God at his word and trusting him and putting your whole weight in his life.

I think sometimes we get that confused, don't we? A lot of times in our journey we say, yeah, I have faith. I'm trusting God. I'm giving all myself to God.

[19 : 47] But what he says here is that when we say that, what we're actually kind of doing and acting is we're keeping a couple feet on the floor. Because you know, I don't know if God is really good. I don't know if God is really good for me.

I don't know if God really knows what I need. So I don't know if I can put all of my faith in him. But in Romans chapter 3, verse 22, Paul says, having faith in God means sitting in the chair.

It means trusting him. It means giving all that you have to him. It means leaning on him. It means depending upon him. It means resting in him. It means receiving everything that you have based on a relationship with him.

Verse 23 says that we've all sinned and we fall short of the glory of God. And sin is this archery term in Greek. It means we've missed the center. We've missed perfection. We've missed a perfect bullseye. That we've all done that.

We've all failed. We've all failed. We've all broken God's laws. Sometimes we break laws by doing things wrong. Sometimes we break laws by not doing the right thing.

[20 : 56] I mean, often we think about it, well, I didn't do anything bad. But Scripture says that we need to do the right thing also. And so there's this idea that we've all failed God.

We've all lived for ourselves. We've all failed to glorify him. How many people have failed?

Come on. How many people have failed? All. All people have failed. All people have missed it. I think we forget that sometimes as we walk with God. Verse 24 goes on and it says, so God gives us this gift.

And this gift is justification. It doesn't mean that we're made righteous, but it means that we're declared righteous. It's a one-time act.

It's not a process. It means that God comes in and he takes all of our sin. And he takes all of our punishment. Everything that we deserve legally. And he places that on Christ.

[22 : 02] And it means that from now on, forever, if you are in the family of God, you are legally free of sin and guilt and shame and punishment.

What it means is that when God looks at you, what he sees is his son, Jesus Christ, standing before God. I mean, it's this judicial act. Sometimes we talk about it as being adopted.

I had friends once, they lived in Texas, and they adopted two girls. And they were seven and eight years old. And they came out of an incredibly abusive background.

I mean, they were just abused, abused, and abused. And so these friends loved these kids, and so they adopted them into their family. And they brought them into their family in the first three weeks.

And they would say, can I, can I, can I get something to drink? And the parents would say, of course, it's yours.

[23 : 09] All of this is yours. It's what you get when you enter into my family. Everything. The girls would walk around, and they would see TVs, and they would say, can we turn this on?

And the parents said, yeah, of course, it's yours. Everything here is yours. This house is yours. These beds are yours. These dolls are yours. This TV is yours.

This food is yours. You're in our family now. And the problem with us as Christians sometimes is we forget the message of Romans 3, 22, 23, and 24.

And we live our lives like we're still orphans. We live our lives like we're still in an abusive relationship. And what Paul says here is that when God looks at you, when he redeems you, when he declares you righteous, he takes all of the hurt, and all of the junk, and all of the shame, and all of the guilt, and everything that you deserve to be punished, and he puts it on Jesus, and he gives you everything that Jesus has.

Is that amazing? I mean, every time I think of that, I just get overwhelmed. Because for so long in my life, I walked around like I was still in an abusive relationship.

[24 : 32] But Paul says that the message of the gospel is that everything that God has given to Jesus he now gives to you. When Paul said this, no one understood him and his culture.

Because every religion and every philosophy in Paul's time said, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, do this, and if you do this, then maybe you'll get to heaven.

If you are the hero of your story, and you do it by doing things, and you get it by doing things, then maybe, maybe you'll get to heaven. But for the first time, Christianity comes in and it says, no, that's impossible.

That the only way that you can be right with God, the only way that you can be happy with God, the only way that you can be made right into a relationship with him, is by God coming into your life and making that possible.

The word there in 24, redemption, is this commercial term. When Paul used it, he would have thought, everybody would have thought of a slave market. And it was this idea that you walked into a slave market and you saw all the slaves and all the terrible conditions and the redemption part was that you came in, you saw how much a slave was worth, you paid the money for them, you bought them, and then you freed them.

[26 : 02] And what Paul says is, God came into our world, he saw all of us in this slave market, he saw the price that we had to pay to be freed, he knew that there was no way that we could do that on our own, even though for thousands of years people have been trying, and he put down the money, and he redeemed us for that.

He goes on and he says, by grace, by grace, grace is a word that basically just means that God has shown us favor, that God has given us something that we don't deserve, that God has given us this new status, he's given us this new position, he's given us Jesus Christ.

Grace isn't mercy. Mercy is when you don't get something that you deserve, like punishment. But grace, when they use it in the Bible, is when you get something that you don't deserve.

And that's the Christian life, and that's what makes it so different. When C.S. Lewis in Oxford heard this story, he said, this has to be true, because no human being would ever make up something like this.

No human being would ever say it doesn't depend on you and your works, but it depends on a God who loves you. And so what Paul says in verse 24 is that now when God looks at you, he sees you as his child and you have a new status.

[27 : 29] It means that all of your rights, all of Christ's righteousness was given to you. So when God looks at you, he sees you are right. He sees you are accepted.

He sees that you are forgiven. He sees that you're cared for. He sees that you're protected. He sees that you're worthy. He sees that you're perfect. He sees that you're loved. And Paul goes on, he says, most importantly, what he says is, you're mine.

You're mine. So when God looks at you as a child of God, he sees Jesus. Hang in there.

Verses 25 through 28. Paul says this. This is only possible at the cross. The only way unrighteous people can be made righteous, the only way our unrighteousness can be made righteous, the only way that that can happen is at the cross.

Because on the cross, God took our unrighteousness and he put it on a righteous man, his son, God. And on the cross, our unrighteousness was given to Christ.

[28 : 46] And so what that means is that all of God's anger, all of God's wrath, we've been talking about for the last five services, all of God's frustration with sin and how it's coming in, how it's broken up relationships and it's hurt people and it's hurt society, all of this hurt God has put on his son.

And the blood of Christ takes all of that away. You see, when Paul said this before, everybody in his congregation would have thought this. For 2,000 years, whenever I sin, I take a sheep and I take this sheep to the temple and in the temple, the priest takes the hand and puts it on my head and he puts a hand on this sheep.

And there's a symbolic transferring of our sin and God's wrath onto this sheep. And then the priest would take a knife and he would cut the sheep's throat and he would take some blood and he would go into the temple in this place called the Holy of Holies.

And in this temple, there was an ark of the covenant. If you're older than 30 years old, you've watched the movie Raiders of the Lost Ark. In this ark, there was the law, the tablets, the Ten Commandments.

And above this ark, there was this thing called the mercy seat. It was specially made with two angels coming together. And we're told that God's presence was above the mercy seat. And so when God was looking down at man, what he would see is the law.

[30 : 19] He would see a list of do's and don'ts and things we shouldn't have done and things we should have done and he would see all of our judgment happening because we didn't do those things. And the priest came in and he took the blood and he sprinkled it all over the mercy seat so that when God looked down, he didn't see the law.

He saw a sacrifice. But the thing about that sacrifice is that every year, you and I had to go back to the temple. And every year, we had to kill a sheep.

And every year, we had to be pronounced clean or covered. And every year, we would wonder, was it enough? Was it enough? Was it enough? And Paul says in his passage, that for a little time, God allowed those sacrifices to cover.

Not to forgive, but to cover. Because he was waiting for the perfect moment. And that perfect moment was when he was going to send his son who on a cross, after living a perfect life, died and shed his blood.

In the blood of Jesus now, Paul says in Romans 3, 21 through 31, saves us. It makes us righteous. It makes us able to come into God's presence.

[31 : 38] Not because of what we've done. Not because of what we haven't done. But all because of God's love. and care for you.

It's a little different message than we've been talking about throughout the last four weeks. For the last four weeks, it's been about sin, brokenness, sin, brokenness. What are you trying to do? How are you trying to fix yourself? And here Paul comes in and he says, you can't fix yourself.

You can't make yourself right. You can't obtain righteousness. You can't look good in other people's eyes. You can't even fix your own relationships. You don't even want to talk about the things that are broken in your relationships.

The only way that's possible is through Jesus. Is that good news? For people who know Romans 1, 2, and 3 and how bad off they are, that's amazing news.

And when Paul said that, it was the first time in human history that people heard that it's not dependent on me, that it's dependent upon God. I have three thoughts I want to leave you and then we're going to do communion.

[32 : 51] Three thoughts. I'm sure that I'm going to offend some people, but there have been things in my head and I've been praying through this passage and I'm trying not to spit on the baby in front of me as I talk and things like that. first thought is this.

The word justified, justification is a legal term. It means to be declared righteous. It means to be declared right. It means that no one can come into your life and say, you know, you owe this debt and you need to pay this debt.

It means that you owe no one. It means that you're seen as good. It means that you're in right standing. It means that you have favor. It means that you're pleased with those people around you.

It means that you're worthy of. It means that you're right in other people's eyes and in God's eyes. And in first three chapters, Paul is talking about how you and I go through our life and we try to make ourselves right.

We try to make ourselves look sexy in front of other people. We try to make our lives look good. We try to make us look righteous. We try to do things when we wear masks. And if we're honest, I think many of us still struggle with that today.

[34 : 08] I think many of us still struggle with Jerry's question. Remember Jerry's question at the beginning of this talk? Jerry's question was, if what you say is true, and all that's true about God, I know my heart, I'm in bad shape, what can I do to make myself right?

I think that we all struggle with what does that look like to make ourself right? I mean, it haunts me, those words, and I think it should haunt us.

How do I prove myself? How do I make myself look good to those around me? How do I make my actions look right in people's eyes when I know in my heart that they're not right?

We just watched the Olympics. And it's amazing as you watch the Olympics, there's a lot of weird things going on and a lot of weird things have happened afterwards, but you can count how many times the athlete held up that medal and either they or an interviewer said, this medal, it validates me.

I mean, this medal makes everything I did right. This medal makes me look right for practicing and sacrificing. This medal makes my whole life right.

[35 : 36] And I heard that over and over and over. You're going to go to work on Monday. I'm sorry for reminding you about that.

Some of you didn't want to hear that. But you're going to walk into your office and you're going to do things to make yourself look right. You're going to do things to validate your existence in your office, especially now as layoffs are happening for certain companies.

You're going to try really hard to look righteous. You're going to try really hard to look right, to make people think differently of you, to make them think that you're doing well.

For children, my little kids, it was surprising to me at the age of three and four and even today, 14, 11, and 11, and 7, how many times my kids came up to me and said, am I doing okay?

Am I right? Am I good? And I watched my kids over and over trying to validate themselves to me.

[36 : 56] And I realized that there's something inside of us that causes us to have this tension and this frustration. And we realize that maybe we're not as right as we think we are.

and we're trying to fix that. I have a lot of single friends. They're trying to validate themselves.

They're trying to show everybody that they're right by getting married. And if they can get married, then the world will think that they're right and everything is okay and everything's perfect.

I have a lot of friends with kids and it's amazing when we get together how often the conversation talks about how we can make our kids' life better.

How we can send our kids to the right school. How we can get our kids in the right track. How we don't want our kids to miss anything. What I realize as a parent is often I justify my own life through my children.

[38 : 05] And I feel like if I can do all these things for my kids then everything's good. I'm a good person. I'm a good dad. Everything's going to be okay. People are going to look at me and say wow you're right.

As a son for years and years as kids and as boys what do you want to be to be right? You want your dad to look at you and you want your dad to say wow I'm really proud of you.

Wow you really did well. Wow you are really good. And man you know what I'm talking about. There's something with inside of our hearts that we seek validation.

We want proof that we've done well. We want proof to know that we're right. We're all searching for things that justify ourselves and say you were good and you did well. Peter Singer he's a bioethicist at Princeton.

He's one of my favorite readers and authors. He's an atheist and the reason I like him is he just he bugs everybody. I mean he's probably what I've heard is he's probably the most influential atheist writer and professor in the world today.

[39 : 27] And he just bugs everybody. He bugs the atheist. He bugs the Christians. I mean he just he's and he talks about validation and righteousness and this is what he says. Listen to this. He says the only way that you can validate your existence the only way that you can validate your existence is to produce.

And if a person does not produce or they have lost their capacity to produce then they are not right. They might not have even earned the right to be called human.

They have not justified their existence. He's saying it right there. The way you prove yourself the way you show that you're doing well the way that you're doing your good is by doing right things.

eight years ago I heard this in a talk so I stole it. It's an article from a man in northern England by the York Railroad Station.

The man had no faith and he wrote an article in a London paper and he realized that as he went to work every day to the York Railroad Station in northern England I've never been there he said there's this billboard the billboard was on the way to the station and on the billboard there was this Bible verse and it had Romans 14 12 he said he went back home and he looked it up and this is what it said it said so that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God so that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God and he wrote this no matter whether you're religious or not the longer you live the idea of being able to justify your existence keeps coming up more and more you know I'm not a religious person but when I go by that sign I realize in my heart of hearts that the older I get

[41 : 38] I need to justify why I'm here as I talk to my friends both secular and religious they talk and we talk about this idea he says they look at me and they say you're stupid why do you need to justify your ideas and yourself and your worth why do you need to prove that you're worthy of being here you are who you are you live the way you want to live who cares what other people think about you he says you know people who actually believe that people who actually say those type of things people who actually say they don't need to justify themselves or they do not care what other people think or they don't need to prove themselves they don't need to do what they do they are they are who they are they're going to do whatever they want to do he says people who say that people who live that way those people are sociopaths and those people are capable of very very very bad things he goes on and he says every single person whether you're religious or not begins to know that you need to justify your existence but the problem is this when you start to ask yourself what does it mean to justify myself you start asking questions like this or saying things like this am I living the kind of life

I think people should live or am I the type of person that I think I should be or am I the type of person that I think other people should be this is when we talk about determining what's good and bad right and this was his answer his response he said the problem is this I'm not here's the problem with justifying my existence it's very hard it's very very hard not because I'm a really bad person but because I know I should could be and I should be far better than I am I know that I should be living differently but I don't you know it seems to me if we're honest we live in a world where everyone is trying to justify themselves they're trying to show everybody that they're right they're trying to show that their existence is worthy sometimes we do that openly in front of it with cars and houses and promotions and actions and attitudes that hurt people and often hurt ourselves but sometimes we do it within our heart and so the question I want to ask us today right before we go into communion is how do you justify yourself today how do you prove that you're righteous how do you prove that you're in right standing what do you look like what do you look at to justify your existence are you the type of person that everybody should be are you the type of person that you think everybody should be are you the type of person that you think you should be how do you find value in what you do everyone wants to live a life that's right and has value everyone is searching for it whether we know it or not and the question is where are we finding that are we finding it in our work what happens when we get laid off are we finding it in our families what happens when our families aren't doing too good or we get divorced are we having it in our health what happens when we get cancer we can no longer run the 10 miles that we did every day are we doing it with our kids what happens when our kids don't get into that perfect school and everybody looks at us and goes ooh you must be a bad parent

I was in China one time we had this meeting of teachers and the teachers brought in the parents and in the middle of the meeting the teacher goes okay who is Xiaotong's parents and Xiaotong's parents raised their hand and the teachers said your kid is the stupidest kid in this class how can your kid be so stupid what's wrong with you how come you're so bad parents how come you haven't done better in raising your kids if Xiaotong's parents found their validation and their righteousness in how they raise their kids what would have happened then where do you find your validation second thought as I look through all this we don't like talking about grace let's be honest I think in this culture we don't like talking about grace we don't like talking about this unmerited favor we don't like talking about gifts given to us there's something about an

Asian culture that we don't like talking about gifts we don't like talking about grace we don't want to owe anybody anything I mean the idea of getting something and not paying back for that that is beyond our comprehension I mean when we look at the Bible and we say that man this is too good to be true I'm not going to believe it because I don't want to owe God anything I don't want to be in debt to anybody else I can't believe it can I be honest with you and I prayed whether I should say this but I love us as a group this isn't my job it's my lifestyle what God has called us to but I want you to hear these words and I hope that I don't offend you too much but every one of us in here every one of us in here every one of us in here every one of us in here we all are in debt to

God no matter how you don't like to talk about grace the Bible says that we all owe God we all are in debt to him verse 24 goes on and says that we've all sinned we've all fall short of God's glory so we have a decision to make either we owe him a debt for our sin which we can never repay because verse 26 says that he is just that God will demand a payment that if there's a sin broken there has to be a sacrifice so either we owe God for our sin debt or we owe God for Jesus because verse 26 says that he came and he freely gave us his son he freely gave us grace and so we all are debtors we all owe him and the question is how are you going to pay him if we all owe

[49 : 05] God we all are in debt to him how are you going to pay him my third thing I want to share I'm going to ask the communion students to come down what Paul says in Romans 3 is this listen really closely grace is free you can be made right by faith in Jesus blood and sacrifice but we must accept the free gift we must accept the free gift as Paul would say is that every one of us in here we must have a but now moment we must have a but now moment we must come to a place where we realize that we need grace two months later 1991

I was teaching Jerry's class there was just so much information to talk about God and the scripture and what God has done in our life and everybody was getting overwhelmed and I was getting overwhelmed because we were trying to figure out distill it to the deepest the essence of the gospel and what does that look like in our lives and it was kind of like this sermon right there's a lot of information flowing out there whoa okay so we're all searching for righteousness we all have a debt grace is free what do I do with those things how do I handle those things and we had a Christmas party and in the party I talked about Christ coming to save his people that we had this debt on us that we couldn't relieve ourselves of and Christ came and he took that debt and he paid that debt and he made us right and now if we take that gift by faith grace we can be made right also

Jerry shot up you have broached my heart I understand I understand my prayer for us as a church family is that we'd understand the good news we'd understand God's graciousness we'd understand that we've been going off in this one direction and all along God has been pursuing us pursuing us pursuing us we've been doing we've been doing we've been doing and God's been saying it's already done it's a gift will you take it will you allow him to broach your heart and to give you a new relationship with his father father we thank you for this day we thank you for your goodness we thank you for this news which is intense and it's deep and it's complicated but in reality it's so simple the simplest is we're lost and that you found us you've opened our eyes and our ears to your son who is far more beautiful and wonderful than anything we could ever imagine and we fell in love with him and you adopted us into your family and now it's not theirs and ours but it's all ours everything that you have is ours everything that the son had you've given us may we be a church that thinks about this good news over and over and over may we be a church that thinks about those who don't have this good news over and over and over

Lord use us to share your son because we know that he is the only way that we can be made right we love you and we pray all these things in your son Jesus holy name amen