

The Life Challenge

"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10

Sermon Series: It Is Finished

Title: Just Fixing the Problem

Speaker: Steve Berg

Text: Romans 3:21-31

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Introduction

When Jesus gasped His last words on the cross, "It is finished," He was speaking of much more than His life. He declared that something was profoundly finished about His cosmic work. The Bible uses numerous words to describe this - some are easier to understand, and some are more difficult. "Justification" is a difficult word, but there is a rich reward in digging for the meaning and application to life. The word justification in the Bible refers to what God says is morally right and fair. So let's "dig" into this scripture.

Discussion

1. When you hear words defending, explaining and justifying yourself (Steve called it "dexifying"), what have you discovered is really going on in the interior of your life? What is the spiritual root of this?
2. After reading the earlier portion of Romans 3:10-12, Paul uses a phrase: "But now..." Why is that in itself good news? We often think of righteousness as something to do with behaviour, but what is Paul saying about the "righteousness of God?" (Steve's clue word for your discussion is "worth in God's eyes.")
3. In Romans 3:21 it says, "The *righteousness of God* is apart from the law. But it was given witness to by the law and prophets." What does that mean?
4. The words 'just', 'justice,' and 'justification' are legal words. As you read Romans 3:22-25, think about a heavenly courtroom. How is God just? How does God bring about justice through Christ? How do people receive justification?
5. Paul uses another difficult and unfamiliar word—propitiation—to describe what He has done for us in Christ. There are two parts to this word: expiation - satisfies justice; propitiation - awakens love. What is the importance of this two part meaning? *
6. Read Romans 3:2-26 and discuss why God, in righteousness, must be both just and justifier of those who have faith in Christ.
7. At the end of this scripture, Romans 3:27-31, Paul lists ways that justification is good news for the whole world. Including these and your reasons, how is justification incredibly good news? God is our defender, God is our explainer, God is our justifier; how does that change your inclination to be your own defender, explainer, justifier of your life?
8. Declare this together: "Because I am justified through faith in Christ, therefore I can go on with purpose, and with confidence, and with love; without guilt, nor any sense of inadequacy or fear. I have perfect freedom to concern myself with the problems around me, and not be all wrapped up with the ones inside. Those are all taken care of, and that is truly good news!"

* What Paul is saying here is that human sin has injured God, just as that man was injured by the negligence of the company. Our sin has hurt and injured God, and justice demands that we be punished for that sin in some way. In the death of Jesus, that punishment was accomplished, so that God's justice was satisfied. If you read this as expiation, that is all the cross means. In a way, it means that it paid God off, so that He no longer holds us to blame. But that is not all that Paul is saying here. The word means also that God's love has been awakened toward us, and He reaches out to love us, and grants us the feeling of worth and acceptance and value in His sight. That is what propitiation means, that is what the death of Jesus does. It did satisfy God's justice, but it went further; it awakened His love, and now He is ready to pour out love upon us.